

Does self-knowledge advance political justification? The case of public philosophy and Stout's "unconstrained discourse":

Keywords: political justification; reason-giving; self-knowledge; public philosophy; discourse

Can self-knowledge of personal attitudes and belief-formation figure as a requirement on those engaging in political justification? Would this not be asking too much of participants both at the personal and associational level and at the institutional and governmental level? Yet such a requirement seems to follow on Jeffrey Stout's pragmatist-expressivist account of political discourse and justification as reason-giving or "unconstrained discourse" (Stout, 2004). This self-knowledge requirement comes out in his emphasis on an individual justificatory standpoint, from which the person articulates reasons and beliefs and engages in (self-)storytelling and narration in order to express openly to the audience that person's motivations and justification for a given political position (Stout, 2010).

If his political epistemology so requires self-knowledge and "public" philosophy serves to guide political justification, the question remains by what means or resources "public" philosophy may advance the kind of self-knowledge required on the behalf of participants. To that end, Leiter (2016) may provide useful contrast as a critique of the notion of "discursive hygiene" in justification (as opposed to "rhetoric") by elaborating the challenges posed to this notion by the obscurity of belief-formation, emotivism and tribalism. If Stout is seen to advance a view of public philosophy and political justification akin to "discursive hygiene", Leiter's critique poses a serious challenge to the former's political epistemology and pragmatist-expressivist account of political justification. In short, "unconstrained discourse" would provide no meaningful standards for such justification or its participants.

Our first question then is to know whether Stout can overcome both the *prima facie* obstacles which this epistemological requirement sets participants and Leiter's naturalistic challenge to "public" philosophy and political justification. Provisionally, we may respond that Stout takes important steps to circumscribe the role of "public" philosophy and political justification within other publicly available modes of acculturation and moral inculcation. Our second question lies in whether Stout and Leiter then concur on the need for "rhetoric" as an argumentative standard for political justification. In the end, we will conclude that Leiter's "rhetoric" and Stout's "unconstrained discourse" are closer than they might at first appear.

Works cited:

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I: Introduction: Self-knowledge and justification

Our first question then is to know whether Stout can overcome both the *prima facie* obstacles which this epistemological requirement sets participants and Leiter's naturalistic challenge to "public" philosophy and political justification. (sort of)

Our second question lies in whether Stout and Leiter then concur on the need for "rhetoric" as an argumentative standard for political justification. (yes)

What relation might obtain between self-knowledge and (political) justification? Why should we expect any relation to obtain between the two? Certainly, any answer thereto will depend in part on the precise understanding of self-knowledge and (political) justification at issue. A broad understanding of self-knowledge might entail that a person has thin self-knowledge, i.e. of her own attitudes, beliefs and history. Self-knowledge might further involve thick knowledge of the upstream processes (further attitudes, beliefs and history) which led to the formation of the thin. For the sake of simplicity, let us call these thin and thick self-knowledge. We will also have occasion to broach other-knowledge in the same terms.

In parallel, we can put forward a broad understanding of (political) justification. Following Pryor 2004, justification admits of two basic distinctions: 1.) "what you have justification to believe, and what you're rationally committed to believe by beliefs you already have" (363); 2.) "having justification to believe something, and having a belief that is justified or well-founded" (365). In a way, justification for a "belief that p" amounts to "reasons r" which one might have for holding a "belief that p". If one does not base one's "belief that p" on those "reasons r" or opposes thereto other reasons or beliefs, then the "belief that p" is not justified. Only when one has justification for a "belief that p" and one bases the "belief that p" on those "reasons r" and one has no other reasons or beliefs which rationally commit one to an opposed belief is the "belief that p" then justified or well-founded. More simply, having justification for a "belief that p" comes apart from being justified in having the "belief that p".

Extending these distinctions, political justification partly consists in appending the clause "relative to political deliberation" to the above. Accordingly, one may have justification for the "belief that p" (relative to political deliberation) while failing to have the "belief that p" due to ignorance, doubt, weakness of will, or conflicting beliefs. Likewise, a "belief that p" (relative to political deliberation) will only be justified when one has justification therefor, bases belief thereon and has no conflicting rational commitments. However, an emendation seems in order. For Pryor's breakdown of justifiable belief and justified belief remains within the realm of the intrapersonal and passive whereas political justification, i.e. political deliberation as justifying beliefs to others, moves us to the interpersonal and active. In this case, successful political justification would entail either of the following forms: transmission of a justified belief from one person to another; another's recognition of a belief's justified quality; adapting a belief to another's cognitive context. Both cases *prima facie* preserve both thin and thick self-knowledge requirements: one's expression of a justified belief must retain the relation between beliefs and reasons which render it justified on the interpersonal level.

Can we have one without the other? The properly amended Pryorian account seems to require it insofar as one must be aware of one's "belief that p" (relative to political deliberation) and of any other reasons or beliefs which commit oneself to opposed positions. Otherwise, one might simply have a justifiable belief without that belief itself attaining the status of justified. That said, there are cases in which justification, as either justification for a belief or justified belief, seems to proceed without self-knowledge, thin or thick. A person might hold a belief for a reason which they ignore or lack entirely. Somewhat differently, the Rawlsian original position stipulates that, to arrive at a conception of justice for the distribution of primary goods in society or the evaluation thereof, the person have no knowledge of her preferences or beliefs ahead of

the resultant distribution. The lack of self-knowledge in no way impedes political justification and may even facilitate consensus (a fact backed up by the empirical literature – cf. Frohlich, Oppenheimer, and Eavey 1987).

Nonetheless, we might have reason to reject this depiction as misguided for several reasons. On our Pryorian account of (political) justification, the class of reasons *r* and “beliefs that *p*” might be suitably narrowed such that the little which one knows about oneself figures all the same in the justified belief. So, some thin self-knowledge obtains. With greater emphasis on the Rawlsian account itself, we might have reason, more narrowly, to reject the original position as an untenable or unreasonable epistemological device or, more broadly, to reject knowledge- or justification-claims made from an unsituated, context-free standpoint, such that the original position cannot serve as an example to establish the sufficient, if not necessary, independence of self-knowledge and (political) justification from one another. Provisionally, this leaves us with four possible answers to our starting point:

Strong and thick version: Thick self-knowledge is necessary for political justification.

Strong and thin version: Thin self-knowledge is necessary for political justification.

Weak and thick version: Thick self-knowledge is important for political justification.

Weak and thin version: Thin self-knowledge is important for political justification.

II: Stout on self-knowledge and justification: piety, storytelling and inferential commitments

Both the narrow and broad critiques capture the most important aspects of Jeffrey Stout’s understanding of (political) justification and its relation to self-knowledge. In a word, (political) justification proceeds or should proceed with a view to the person’s relation to a context, namely a personal history in the broader historical setting of a given time, place and culture. Insofar as (political) justification is indexed to a given context and successful (political) justification turns on knowledge of that context and a given context includes the person justifying, then (political) justification’s success is indexed to knowledge of the person justifying. When justifying one’s views to another, justification then entails thick self-knowledge (strong and thick version). Hence, Stout’s understanding preserves the Pryorian outline sketched above.

It is this insight that Stout attempts to work out over the course of four books. 2004’s *Democracy and Tradition* confronts the reader with a view of political deliberation as earnest reason-giving. In short, when engaged in political deliberation, participants thereto should give their real reasons for a given political position, whether those reasons be tied to a political conception of justice or to a comprehensive doctrine, religious, philosophical or moral. It would be epistemologically unreasonable on our part to maintain that persons giving comprehensive reasons for a political position be excluded from deliberation insofar as such reasons can be responsibly held or P-justified (in the sense of in accord with the person’s rational commitments). Nor should we require them to voice reasons other than their own.

Naturally, in order for the person to voice those reasons and to hold them responsibly, she must first know what those reasons are. All of which requires the person’s taking stock thereof. Wherefore Stout’s notion of “democratic piety” for which some clarification is needed. The author understands this notion as the person’s making an inventory of the different moral and social sources responsible for the shape of her life at a given moment in time and giving appropriate expression thereto (*DT*, p. 9). In that these intertwine with the person’s life history, they provide her with a horizon of reasons which may justify or fail to justify her political position (distinction 1) and which she may use to justify, successfully or unsuccessfully, her

political position (distinction 2). Elsewhere, he further specifies the context as “democratic” and the sub-context as “Emersonian”:

[F]rom a democratic point of view, the only piety worth praising as a virtue is that which concerns itself with *just* or *fitting* acknowledgment of the sources of our existence and progress through life [...] Imagining or conceiving of those sources and choosing ethically and aesthetically apt expressive means of acknowledging dependence on them are both things for which an Emersonian poet or essayist expects to be held responsible discursively (*DT*, p. 30).

On several occasions Stout himself practices democratic piety by describing those moral and social sources on which he depends: (97)/(173)

In the days of my adolescent sublime, Martin Luther King, Jr., was the hero of my humanitarian cause, and Jesus was one of three personifications of my loving divinity. Nowadays things have become more complicated, because I have come to know more about these figures of virtue than their hagiographers and publicists wanted me to know [...] Love and justice remain virtues [...] but now the relation between the persons and the virtues is more complicated. It requires a different, less doctrinal, more improvisational kind of explication. To the extent that King and Jesus exemplify virtues in my imaginative life, they now do so imperfectly and defeasibly. I therefore need an open-ended way to think the relation through, as it were, from both sides at once. Neither doctrine, nor principle, nor system, nor overarching plot, knowable in advance, constrains the course of thinking [...] We all have our examples, after all, and we all make something of them sooner or [sic] later. We do not, however, make the same thing of them. Neither do they make the same thing of us (*DT*, p. 173).

We can see how Stout takes inventory in “critical” fashion: recognizing sources as such; refusing one-sided tendencies to nostalgia, wishful thinking or idealization; introducing between person and sources two-sidedness via reflection, research and questioning. Just such an earnest stocktaking leaves the person ready to advance reasons, be it in the form of structured argument or personal storytelling.

Indeed, we will rightly wonder how the person may, in political deliberation, articulate for the audience her sources, reasons and commitments and, by extension, her cognitive context and conceptual economy of which she has taken stock via the practice of democratic piety. Stout's clearest answer in *Democracy and Tradition*, expounded at greater length in *Blessed are the Organized*, lies in the idea that the person should give voice to their deepest reasons and personal histories. In criticizing both particularist and universalist thinkers, he remarks:

[I]t seems clear that neither [Benhabib nor Hauerwas] has imagined the possibility, let alone the desirability, of a loosely structured democratic conversation in which variously situated selves tell their own stories on their own terms [...] Both back away at a crucial moment from the full significance of their common insight that the different ways in which selves are situated in the world can make a difference for ethics (*DT*, p. 179).

The only way for commitments and epistemological formations to come to light consists in the person's telling her own story and development. Indeed, storytelling enables the audience better to grasp the real horizon of reasons and commitments within which the person is working (supposing that the person knows the story elements and tells it accurately). Moreover, not only should the person's right to self-expression and storytelling merit respect from the audience; her reasons and commitments, as well as the person herself, deserve our respect, on the condition of being responsibly held or P-justified. In one instance, it is in such fashion that Stout enjoins the audience to respect both the believer's right to express and the content of that expression:

Insofar as [those who differ from us religiously] do acknowledge that dependence [piety] appropriately, given their own conceptions of the sources of existence and progress through life, they may be said to exhibit an attitude that is worthy of our respect, if not our full endorsement (*DT*, p. 34).

Provided that the person abides by the virtue of piety and appropriately takes stock of and reflect her concepts and context in deliberation, there proves little reason to dismiss those concepts and context out of hand. All the more so in that such expression allows the audience to unearth

those reasons and commitments leading the person to back a given position; it may also grant the person an opportunity at greater thin or thick self-knowledge. Notably, listening to stories and according respect as due does not inevitably lead to a mere *modus vivendi*:

If [citizens] are discouraged from speaking up in this way, we will remain ignorant of the real reason that many of our fellow citizens have for reaching some of the ethical and political conclusions they do. We will also deprive them of the central democratic good of expressing themselves to the rest of us on matters about which they care deeply. If they do not have this opportunity, we will lose the chance to learn from, and to critically examine, what they say. And they will have good reason to doubt that they are being shown the respect that all of us owe to our fellow citizens as the individuals they are (*DT*, p. 64).

Far from isolating the audience into incommensurable spheres of discourse, respect proves the first stepping stone to critical examination and exchange of reasons and commitments. For without the knowledge afforded by listening and respect, critical examination would otherwise have no object on which to work. And, without materials for examination, no way out of an impasse will present itself to participants in political deliberation.

In addition, respect serves a second, more practical purpose. If, by virtue of listening to stories, respect grants knowledge of the person's real reasons and commitments informing a given position (other-knowledge), this practical exercise also makes the person more amenable to the exchange of reasons with the audience which follows. In some important sense, through respect, the audience recognizes the person as a full-fledged member of political deliberation and as perhaps P-justified in believing that to which she has just given expression. This comes out all the more strongly in Stout's 2010 book-length case-study of broad-based citizens' organizing and its look into "house meetings" and "one-on-ones", understood as "individual conversations" and "small gatherings". (For a general overview, cf. Stout 2010, 2-3; for a concrete example with interlocutors Carmen and Lupita, cf. *ibid.*, 151-6.)

Yet a person may not always be in a position to take (thick) stock herself or to draw out what follows from the critical inventory made during the phase of piety and aired out in the phase of storytelling. Accordingly, the person may have need of a spokesperson, be this a philosopher to work out the inferential commitments underlying the reasons for her political position or a community organizer to extract the issue taking shape therein. Hence Stout's view that public philosophy consists in making explicit and scrutinizing the commitments and norms implicit in political deliberation and reasons: in short, an exercise in "expressive rationality" as per Robert Brandom (5, 12-14). More concretely, this may entail taking norms or reasons, often expressed as material inferences "given that x, I shall y" for which we ordinarily acknowledge the premise x as a legitimate premise for the conclusion y, and working out the premise needed to make them formally valid (188-190). So, to statements like the following: "(a) Going to the store is my only way to get milk for my cereal, so I shall go to the store; (b) I am a lifeguard on the job, so I shall keep close watch over the swimmers under my protection; (c) Ridiculing a child for his limp would humiliate him needlessly, so I shall refrain from doing so"; we would need to append further premises: "(a) a statement expressing my *desire* to have milk for my cereal; to (b) the conditional that if I am a lifeguard, it is my *responsibility* to keep a close watch over the swimmers under my protection; or to (c) the principle that one *ought* not to humiliate people needlessly" (188). (Cf. Brandom 1994, 243-253)

This exercise presents the "advantage of putting the formerly implicit material inferential commitment in the explicit form of a claim, which in turn allows it to be challenged or justified inferentially in light of other considerations" and takes on still greater importance "when conflicts arise among different material inferential commitments that we have undertaken" (189). Certainly, political deliberation and justification may more often involve the strains of practical reasoning at work in (b) and (c) ("institutional" and "unconditional" obligations

(Brandom 1994, 252, as cited by Stout 2004, 189)) rather than the desire-based seen in (a). Stout will go on to work out the moral perplexity surrounding the dirty hands problem in drawing on just such a scheme.

More important for our purposes is the way in which working out inferential commitments proves both case and exception to the link between self-knowledge and political justification outlined above. For, if our capacity for self-knowledge may help to secure the justified quality of our political positions by working out the entailments of our beliefs, our cognitive failings may also hinder arriving at (thick) self-knowledge and, hence, P-justified political positions. Such that the person may need to rely upon the public philosopher to arrive indirectly at the thick self-knowledge necessary for a justified political position. Indeed, the person may lack entirely the expressive resources necessary to render those commitments explicit (193). Likewise, those commitments may outstrip the person's capacity for thin or thick self-knowledge.

How does this impact our main question, i.e. whether self-knowledge advances political justification? We have seen that self-knowledge is an important part of political justification and, if public philosophy advances self-knowledge, then it likewise advances political justification. On the other hand, public philosophy's advancing self-knowledge hinges on thick other-knowledge and on the person's taking responsibility for how she forms beliefs before and after the public philosopher's work. Otherwise, the public philosopher's work on the raw material of piety and storytelling and on logical entailments of the political positions exposed therein is for nought. (Moreover, it is unclear whether this requirement figures on governmental and institutional political justification as well as on the personal or associational.) Likewise, we may wonder whether public philosophy and its practitioners are themselves capable of articulating thick other-knowledge and thereby advancing indirect self-knowledge, a question to which Brian Leiter has turned his attention in recent years and the subject of our next section.

III: Can public philosophy do the heavy inferential lifting?

Leiter takes aim at philosophy which sees itself as "contribut[ing] philosophical insight or knowledge or skill to questions of moral and political urgency in the community in which it is located" (Leiter 2016, 51). As this *prima facie* concerns Stout's appeal to public philosophy as an exercise in expressive rationality and inferential commitments, Stout must wrestle with the two paradoxes laid out by Leiter:

"[T]he first paradox of public philosophy is that philosophers enter into moral and political debate purporting to offer some kind of expertise, but the expertise they offer can not [*sic*] consist in any credible claim to know what is good, right, valuable, or any other substantive normative proposition that might be decisive in practical affairs." (*ibid.*, 53)

"That brings us to the second paradox of public philosophy. If it is not substantive normative knowledge that philosophers bring to debate, then perhaps it is a method or way of thinking about contested normative questions that they offer [...] Starting with certain normative intuitions, public philosophers work out their entailments, demonstrating claims of the form, "If you believe X, then you ought to believe Y," and, "If you believe Y, you should not do Z." What philosophers—at least those in the broadly Socratic traditions—are good at is parsing arguments, clarifying the concepts at play in a debate, teasing out the dialectical entailments of suppositions and claims, and so on: Socratic philosophers are, in short, purveyors of what I will call 'discursive hygiene.' [...] Although philosophers can contribute no substantive knowledge about the good and the right, they can contribute discursive hygiene. But discursive hygiene

plays almost no role in public life, and an only erratic, and highly contingent, role in how people form beliefs about matters of moral and political urgency. Both points deserve notice, but they are distinct.” (*ibid.*, 53-55)

If we can associate Stout’s view of public philosophy as expressive rationality with the notion of “discursive hygiene” but find ourselves obliged to note the lack of “discursive hygiene” in political deliberation, under one form or another, we might nonetheless maintain that participants are amenable to the work of “discursive hygiene” either at their own or another’s behest. Yet Leiter finds that two broader positions give us reason to temper optimism about the latter, namely, emotivism and tribalism, which he finds at work in the present state of public discourse and political deliberation. While compatible with public philosophy as “discursive hygiene”, emotivism acts as a limiting case on the former. Leiter associates emotivism with Charles Stevenson’s seminal position, according to which:

Ethical disagreements are at bottom a function of disagreement in attitudes, rather than disagreements about beliefs [...] the connection between particular facts and our attitudes is just a contingent *psychological/causal fact*: it is just a psychological fact about many creatures like us that if our beliefs change, our attitudes often change too [...] (*ibid.*, 53-4)

Political deliberation may take the form of conflict between either attitudes or beliefs. If between beliefs, then the conflict may be brought to an end by ensuring convergence between beliefs. If between attitudes, then the conflict may only be resolved with considerably more difficulty in that attitudes do not seem reason-responsive in the same way as beliefs. Certainly, we can allow that our beliefs influence our attitudes; we cannot, however, say with any certainty how or which beliefs influence attitudes. For we simply lack the means to plot the mechanisms by which such changes are effected. Moreover, attitudes may alter in light of beliefs which we ordinarily deem “ethically irrelevant” because “self-serving” (54-5). All in all:

[...] changes in belief do influence changes in attitude, but only as a contingent, psychological fact; this includes changes in belief about the logical or inferential relations between beliefs or between beliefs and attitudes [...] (*ibid.*, 55)

As Leiter attempts to make clear, there are no rules, inferential or otherwise, governing the transformation and causal interaction between beliefs and attitudes. This would seem to throw doubt on whether thin knowledge of one’s beliefs induces changes in one’s attitudes and whether thick knowledge of how one came by those beliefs brings on change in one’s attitudes even if beliefs had causal traction over attitudes.

To further this claim, Leiter marshals two examples: the 2014 Steven Salaita controversy at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign showing how discursive hygiene on hard and fast legal norms can fail; Jonathan Haidt’s 2001 “incest experiment” to test a social intuitionist model of practical reasons and:

[...] according to which in most ordinary situations, moral judgments are produced by emotional or affective responses, the reasons adduced in their support being post-hoc: they do not explain the judgment, as evidenced by the resilience of the judgment even in the face of the defeat of the proffered reason [...] (*ibid.*, 57-8)

If these considerations do not disprove the effect of discursive hygiene on moral and political judgments, it serves as a limiting case to the overly rosy or optimistic take offered by public philosophers. With this, Leiter moves to the second limiting case to the practice of “discursive hygiene” in public discourse and political deliberation. If “prejudice and bias are dominant forces in human life”, this owes in great part to what Leiter dubs “tribalism”, defined as follows:

Tribalism - the propensity of creatures like us to identify with those "like themselves," and to view others as unacceptably different, deficient, depraved, and perhaps dangerous - is, as any realistic appraisal of human affairs will reveal, the dominant force in public life (59).

If, as Leiter concedes, such tribalistic mindsets have given some way with the rise of international and transnational bodies, the fact remains that such institutions as the United Nations and notions as universal human rights first emerged following horrendous, widespread conflict. To this end, Leiter notes that "argument played little or no role" therein; rather, such progress is to be attributed to "emotional revulsion at barbarity" (idem.). Linking this to his emotivist point on attitudinal recalcitrance, Leiter remarks:

The key point, however, is that we philosophers must recognize that moral change depends fundamentally on the emotional attitudes of people, and that these attitudes tend in a strongly Tribalistic direction (60).

As evidence therefor, Leiter advances that Peter Singer, while perhaps the foremost public philosopher alive today, appeals similarly to attitudes with no deeper rational basis (i.e. the moral salience of suffering rather than species (60)) and argues most effectively when relying on "moral perception" (62) (cf. Stout 2004, 217-224), e.g. his description of factory farming (Singer 1973). The appeal of non-rational considerations "such as theoretical simplicity, methodological conservatism, and consilience" (60) might be adduced as still more evidence for tempering our expectations for public philosophy. If a leading public philosopher likewise counts on attitudes and emotional response to do the philosophical heavy lifting, Leiter, perhaps rightly, wonders what hope there can be for lay audiences at the time of public discussion.

Yet Leiter himself does not mean to sound the death knell of public philosophy and marshals several considerations therefor (62-3):

- 1.) Being unable to contribute meaningfully to urgent ethical and political matters in no way diminishes the importance of finding an answer to those matters.
- 2.) If we do not understand well the causal linkage between beliefs and attitudes at the time of discursive hygiene, this does not mean that discursive hygiene might not track the evolution of beliefs and attitudes. One should thus go on providing such hygiene.
- 3.) Law, the discipline closest to philosophy, practices and recognizes the need for discursive hygiene in the sense that logical entailments can constrain attitudes when the time comes to rationalize the reasons proffered and the attitudes adopted.

Perhaps the most important lesson which Leiter draws from 3.) is the contention that law has understood something which philosophy has not: "rhetoric – the art of persuasion apart from appeal to what follows from discursive hygiene – matters, and often matters decisively, in what the public believes" (63-64). Indeed, "'belief fixation', the process by which certain beliefs take hold in the cognitive and affective economy of the mind and thus yield action, does not necessarily track evidential, inferential and logical relations that interest philosophers" (64). Such that philosophers of a public vocation should add rhetoric to their argumentative toolbox while recognizing that "rhetoric does not tell us what *beliefs* we should try to produce with our rhetorical tools". As examples of philosophers of a public vocation for whom rhetoric was an integral resource, Leiter cites Marx and Nietzsche, influential independently of discursive hygiene.

In a word, Leiter contends that philosophical argumentation must, at least at one level, track emotional and affective responses and attitudes if it is to retain currency within public discourse and political justification. Before assessing whether Stout can meet this last charge, it is worthwhile to step back and to take stock of whether and to what extent Leiter's account

modifies the connection which we have sketched between self-knowledge and political justification.

His emotivist charge, in connection with intuitionism and sentimentalism, purports to show that the person has first an emotional or affective response to a given set of circumstances for which she only afterwards adduces reasons. This would seem to cast doubt on both her claim to thick self-knowledge in that she deceives herself on the means by which she came to hold that belief. As to her thin self-knowledge, if she is aware of her belief on a given political position, she nonetheless mistakes her reasons therefor (in part because of a failing of thick knowledge). Accordingly, her thin self-knowledge is incomplete in part because of the incomplete character of the thick, and her political position is, at best, justifiable if not justified. What then of Leiter's second charge of tribalism? If emotive or affective response determines political attitudes and emotive or affective response is divided along tribal lines, then political attitudes are divided along tribal lines. Such that the self-knowledge breakdown for the emotivist charge seems to cross-apply: while the person may know her belief on a position and the purported reasons for that belief, she also ignores how she came to hold that belief and adduce supporting reasons. Again, her political position is at best justifiable in light of other considerations but not justified by way of her own beliefs.

Given this failing of thick self-knowledge, Leiter contends that we must be ready to forego thick self-knowledge (if not thick other-knowledge) and apply rhetorical pressure to the thin self-knowledge. On a Pryorian reading, Leiter plays down the possibility of political justification in that few, if any, will hold justified (as opposed to justifiable) beliefs or political positions, however we might be attached to justified political belief. Does Stout have an answer to these challenges or is his view of public philosophy as expressive rationality consigned to obsolescence? For that matter, must we seek still another sense of justified political belief?

IV: Can Stout rescue public philosophy and political justification?

Stout might try either of two tacks to bring Leiter around to his take on the connection between self-knowledge and political justification. As to the first, Stout expounds, in "Rorty on Religion and Politics" (2010b, 16-7), on how the beliefs of religious opponents to same-sex marriage may be analysed with an eye to the role that reasons play in rationalizing their opposition. For those (sadistic) homophobes who use religious rationalization wittingly as a cover for the emotive or affective response motivating that position, they are not tracking reasons for that opposition, and there is consequently little hope that they will react to pressure from reasons. For those (unwitting) homophobes who use religious rationalization unwittingly as a cover for the emotive or affective response motivating that position, neither are they tracking reasons for that opposition nor do they have any helpful first-order self-knowledge, but there is some hope that they will react to pressure from the right kind of reasons. (In that they are hateful but unaware of their rationalizations as being such and might otherwise consider themselves decent people, hence an argumentative foothold for the right kind of pressure, e.g. appeals to that decency.) Finally, there are those who, while not homophobic (well-intentioned opponents), have a negative emotive or affective response and find religious teachings a plausible explanation therefor and for whom "reasons are playing a greater role in the formation of their political position in the first place" (17). Accordingly, even if they are unaware of those reasons (and so lack thick self-knowledge), their beliefs track or are keyed to reasons and they themselves are more likely to be responsive to pressure on the reasons upstream of their beliefs. It would suffice to "show them that their scriptural reasons for opposing same-sex marriage fail to cohere with other commitments they hold with equal or greater confidence" (*idem.*). Notably, Stout also takes care to link the beliefs above to aspects of the social structure (in particular, the distinction between genders and its importance to the division of labor) and hence shows sensitivity to non-discursive factors at work in the attitude- and belief-formation behind

political deliberation (17-9). Indeed, he thinks that changes in attitude are in part attributable to changes in the underlying social structure. In other words, Stout is aware, at least to some extent, of the emotivist, tribalist challenge posed by Leiter (cf. his discussion of alternative modes of moral inculcation at 2004, 162-8). We need only cite his recognition that “the intuitions from which moral reasoning proceeds are not the same” in different social structures. The question is then whether he fully understands and accepts the scope of the problem put by Leiter, namely that emotivism and tribalism are constitutive of all instances of attitude- and belief-formation and prima facie block self-knowledge and political justification. It is unclear whether Stout (or Leiter, for that matter) is ready to concede so much.

As to the other tack, other-knowledge (either thin or thick) leaves the public philosopher or interlocutor better-positioned to exercise precisely the kind of rhetorical pressure which Leiter envisions. A person’s thin self-knowledge can be brought to serve the same purpose. Put differently, the public philosopher or interlocutor may draw on discursive hygiene to arrive at (thin or thick) knowledge of the person’s perspective or inferential commitments from which the former may identify the kinds of reasons, at the level of form and content, most likely to apply the right kind of rhetorical pressure to the person’s attitude, belief or political position. This approach seems rather close to the practice of immanent criticism (see Singer, Bioethics Bites example). As Leiter himself allows, logical entailments can, at times, constrain attitudes, beliefs or political positions. At the same time, rhetorical pressure need not take the form of arguing from logical entailments, as Leiter remarked of Singer’s vivid description of animal suffering. Stout considers that “moral perception” has an important role to play in moral reasoning (Stout 2004, 216-24). Certainly, the emotional or affective responses constitutive of moral perception are “noninferential, but they are inferentially connected to moral passions, like awe and pity, and the actions for which they serve as warrant” (217). Accordingly, should we allow that emotivism and tribalism are constitutive of attitude- and belief-formation, this does not preclude their responsiveness to the right kinds of reasons depending on the circumstances. This last point is one for which Stout is well-prepared and has at the ready a battery of arguments.

To conclude, while Stout sketches a stronger connection between self-knowledge and political justification than Leiter thinks reasonable, Stout is ready to concede, to an extent, the limits which Leiter would set his account. Moreover, insofar as Leiter is not himself willing wholly to discount discursive hygiene and sees the need for rhetoric, he has need of a position not unlike Stout’s to flesh out his new discursive practice. In the end, while thick self-knowledge and justified political beliefs seem further out of reach than before, the exercises to which attempts at self-knowledge lend themselves in no way prevent the public philosopher or interlocutor from making full use of a mixed argumentative strategy to advance the end of political deliberation.

First-order – knowledge of oneself

Second-order – knowledge about one’s knowledge of oneself

Thin – knowledge of one’s attitudes, beliefs and reasons

Thick – knowledge of one’s upstream attitudes, beliefs and reasons