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Reply to my Commentator - Goodwin

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Reply to my Commentator

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I need to offer my thanks to the very searching and helpful response of Bermejo-Luque, and to Pinto for his keynote address; both have enabled me to see how I can better formulate my conclusion.

In the paper, I adopted “pragmatic” and “epistemic” as labels for two broad categories of reasons which license (“make OK”) the adoption of one or another doxastic attitude about the information we obtain from testimonial sources, expert authorities, or indeed anyone's utterances. I understand that to some, these two terms may appear inappropriate or confusing. So I invite the reader to substitute terms from their own disciplinary perspective (such as those proposed by Bermejo-Luque) or simply to think of the two categories of reasons as “type 1” and “type 2.”

The first category of reasons (in the paper, called “epistemic”) proceeds directly: a doxastic attitude towards what the source says is licensed by a positive assessment of what the source knows.

The second category of reasons (in the paper, called “pragmatic”) proceeds indirectly: a doxastic attitude towards what the source says is licensed by a positive assessment of what the source does. Note that it is the information source's doings that are the focus here, not the doings of the person consulting the source. Note also that the source's doings are providing the person consulting the source with a reason for holding a doxastic attitude, not a reason for acting.

My contention is that our reliance on Wikipedia (admittedly, an extreme case) shows us that we do in fact use reasons of the second category, and that they can be sufficient. In particular, I have argued that our recognition of the Wikipedians' manifest passion for their project gives us a reason (or indeed a complex of reasons) to consider what is said in a Wikipedia article.

Now, *considering* what is said in a Wikipedia article isn't to give Wikipedia much credit. In particular, *considering* the information in a Wikipedia article is not the same as *believing* it. Quite the contrary; considering what is said in a Wikipedia article is generally just the first step in a much longer process of assessing the information we find there. But even this small credit is more than I would accord to many websites. For example, I generally would not consider the information offered by blogs, and so I do not even bother to consult them.

Our doxastic practices are varied and complex, and we should be using many of them in assessing whether (for example) to move from considering Wikipedia to

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believing it. My main goal in the paper has been to show that our doxastic practices are even more varied and complex than our previous accounts of testimony, expert authority, and the credibility of utterances have acknowledged: that as theorists we need to pay more attention to the reasons for trusting what people say, based on what they do.

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