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Response Essay 8 – Reading: Epistemic Injustice

“Williams concedes too much when says that a limitation of the story so far is ‘that the values of Accuracy and Sincerity alike are instrumental: they are entirely explained in terms of other goods, and in particular the value of getting what one wants, avoiding danger, mastering the environment, and so on’; for this is not true. Part of their explanation has been that these values emerge as the response to the need for social pressure on individuals to be truthful even when there are strong countervailing instrumental considerations, so that those whose testimony is indeed accurate and sincere are revealed as moved by virtue and not merely by instrumental reasons.” (Fricker 112).

Here, Fricker states how she disagrees with how, early on in his analysis of the concepts, Williams considers Accuracy and Sincerity (capitalized to follow her convention) to be instrumental in that they serve some purpose as being a means to some other thing, like being useful for the goal of survival. She says that these concepts are explained to first arise because of society’s need to create pressure directed towards individuals to act truthfully despite all the instances where there are equal, if not greater, instrumental reasons not to do so. In such situations where people are accurate and sincere, it is because they are motivated by the concepts’ intrinsic value as virtues.

Are the “strong countervailing instrumental considerations” Fricker speaks of actually countervailing in that they are equally (or even more than equally) offsetting the need for social pressure on individuals to be truthful? If it is the case that the “countervailing instrumental considerations” are not actually equal or greater opposite forces, then it does not seem that Accuracy or Sincerity would emerge to be valued intrinsically as Fricker says. Regarding the “countervailing instrumental considerations,” she does earlier mention motivations for acts such as deception, among other things, as forces the societal pressure is supposed to counteract, but I wish she had dedicated more time explaining how these instrumental reasons were equal or greater opposite forces. I am curious how Williams would respond to what Fricker says here. Fricker afterwards moves forward using Accuracy and Sincerity as intrinsic virtues in her analysis. Does the change of them from being intrinsic to being instrumental considerably affect her analysis? If so, are there ways she can amend her analysis without drastically affecting what she was saying previously?