The batch simulation data run gives Preston’s paper some real traction—and also a clearer sense of where it could be sharpened. The results show that polarization doesn’t emerge simply because agents are unwilling to change their minds (low cognitive agency) but because of the structure of epistemic access. Runs with narrow bounded confidence (low willingness to hear differing views) and limited out-group trust produced the highest polarization, especially when noise was present. By contrast, broadening epistemic intake and increasing out-group trust regularly dissolved polarization, even when agents were not highly “responsive” in the cognitive agency sense. This supports Preston’s claim that epistemic autonomy—the scope of reasons and inputs one has access to—is not secondary but co-determinative of epistemic outcomes.

At the same time, the sweeps show that cognitive agency mostly affects how fast agents move, not necessarily the long-term equilibrium. High CA without adequate EA just leads to entrenched camps forming faster. High EA, on the other hand, systematically reduces polarization over the long run by ensuring exposure to more diverse reasons. In plain terms: it’s not enough to be willing to change; you have to have enough reasons in play to make real change possible. This highlights that Preston could strengthen his model by making the asymmetry more explicit: autonomy shapes the destination, agency shapes the pace.

The data also help refine the “co-constitutive” claim at the heart of the paper. Preston is right that cognitive agency and epistemic autonomy depend on each other, but the simulations show their dependence is not perfectly symmetrical. Autonomy is the gatekeeper: without it, no amount of agency leads to improvement, just faster entrenchment. This suggests Preston should stress that epistemic autonomy provides the structural affordances that make agency effective in the first place, while agency supplies the individual responsiveness that allows those affordances to be realized. That adjustment would both clarify the thesis and show how the model maps onto real-world belief dynamics.

In short: the simulations vindicate Preston’s central idea that epistemic responsibility is relational, but they also indicate where the balance lies. For improvement, the paper could explicitly draw on this kind of systems reasoning—illustrating that cognitive agency is necessary but not sufficient, while epistemic autonomy is the decisive factor in whether a community converges, fragments, or polarizes. That would move the paper from a purely conceptual synthesis into a framework with demonstrable predictive power.