Strange Fish: Belief and the roots of disagreement

CHRISTOPHER W. TINDALE
Centre for Research in Reasoning, Argumentation and Rhetoric,
University of Windsor, Canada
ctindale@uwindsor.ca

I view deep differences as points of departure rather than impenetrable cul-de-sacs. This involves assessing ideas like that of deep diversity, and accounts of what it means to live a life. Differences that characterize the disagreements between communities are like those between members within a community and the diversity of values within individual lives. Such diversities are successfully managed, which can be a lesson extended to deeper differences. This approach recognizes an expanded sense of "reasons."

KEYWORDS: deep diversity, disagreement, Stanley Fish, forms of life, rationality, reasons.

1. INTRODUCTION

> Every "rationality" has its focus and range of convenience and a range of phenomena for which it is inappropriate. Each is open to critique if defended as a universal but has its place in the sun if defended as a local affair.
>
> --Charles A. Willard

On January 9th in 1493, as his ship approached the coast of what is now South America, it is noted in the journal of Christopher Columbus that he "saw three mermaids, which rose well out of the sea; but they are not so beautiful as they are painted, though to some extent they have the form of a human face" (Bourne, 1906, p.218).

Mermaids, those half-female, half-fish creatures of legend, have existed in maritime cultures at least since the time of the ancient Greeks. And Columbus would have been well schooled in such stories. What Columbus saw was undoubtedly a family of manatees. The editor of Columbus' journals, Edward G. Bourne, provides a footnote, as if by way of exculpation, in which he explains "Their resemblance to human beings, when rising in the water, must have been very striking. They have small rounded heads, and cervical

vertebrae which form a neck, enabling the animal to turn its head about. The fore limbs also, instead of being pectoral fins, have the character of the arm and hand of the higher mammalia." (Bourne, 1906, p.218.n1)[1]

What is of greater interest is that Columbus saw what he believed, even as he struggled to believe what he saw. In this way, the example illustrates the power of belief over perception. This is also one explanation for the kinds of disagreements that strike us as intractable and so resistant to the power of argumentation to resolve them. Cultural theorist Stanley Fish gave considerable insight into the nature of the challenge involved with such disagreements. They stem from different belief structures that condition the way the world is seen: "What you believe is what you see is what you know is what you do is what you are" (Fish, 1999, p. 247). More of the text is worth citing here, because it gives the rationale for this way of thinking. Fish is talking about Milton's creation of oppositions in *Paradise Lost*:

> Milton's motto is not "Seeing is believing" but "Believing is seeing"; and since what you see marks the boundaries of your knowledge, believing is also knowing; and since it is on the basis of what you know—whether what you know is that there is a God or that there isn't one—that you act, then believing is acting. What you believe is what you see is what you know is what you do is what you are (Fish, 1999, p. 247).

So, on these terms, you cannot appreciate a way of life that is not yours.

This sums up the depth of the problem: it is not a matter of "seeing is believing", as we might expect, where the way the world appears to us determines what we come to believe (about it, about ourselves, and so forth). Rather, some people or groups come to see the world through the lenses of their belief sets. One important result of this divide is that we cannot take two groups back to a common underlying world in order to find shared understandings on which to build some kind of agreement. Their *world*views are—in the term favoured by the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn—incommensurable. That is, there is no common standard by which two systems can measure each other. They may engage in conversation, but what they say will not resonate with each other to a level that would count.

---

[1] Or, consider the same phenomenon on a different register, the case of Arthur Conan Doyle, whose firm belief in the supernatural meant he had no hesitation in conferring authenticity on a photograph depicting a young girl surrounded by fairies.

Although they speak, like Wittgenstein's lion (but without the hypothetical)[2], they cannot be understood.

2. FISH'S POSITION

Fish is clear that the opposition is between two ways of believing and not ways of knowing, one based on evidence and reason, the other on belief. The problem's root is beneath this, while "on the level of epistemology both are the same" (Fish, 1999, p. 245). What is lacking in both cases in a first premise.

It's to be noted that Fish's position shares affinities with Fogelin's (1985) on deep disagreements, although this is often overlooked. A common denominator—or assumption—in many of the critical responses (Levi, 2000; Feldman, 2005; Kock, 2007) is that parties *recognize evidence*, or reasons, or values, or issues. But Fogelin is insistent that in cases of deep disagreement what counts as evidence is itself in dispute. The argumentative standoff is so complete that there is no ground for any such recognition that what the other party takes as a reason is a "reason" in any common sense. And the same holds for "value" and even "issue." Looking at the world from completely different belief sets would involve different understandings of how it is set up, operates, and is understood. That is what a framework suggests. On the strictest reading of Fogelin's argument, such frameworks are impenetrable from the outside. We have, for both Fogelin and Fish, a conflict of rationalities without any reasonable means to resolve it. Thus, the only recourse is to unreasonable means (Fogelin, 1985, p. 6-7; Fish, 1999, p. 255).

There is a deafness here when contrary positions are voiced; we have what Marc Angenot has called "dialogues with the deaf" (2008). Angenot grounds his argument in a central empirical claim or insight: our attempts to persuade others invariably fail. In spite of our efforts to engage in the social practice of exchanging good reasons, those reasons too often fail to have the uptake we expect.

Angenot's is a far more general claim than those produced by Fogelin and Fish, and not one I can give detailed attention to here. For now, we can consider some of the grounds for this deafness made clear in Fish's follow-

---

[2] "If a lion could speak, we could not understand him" (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* IIxi, p. 223). In the same section he notes, apropos the discussion here, "one human being can be a complete enigma to another. We learn this when we come into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and what is more, even given a mastery of the country's language. We do not *understand* the people. (And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves.) We cannot find our feet with them." Fogelin's (1985) position on deep disagreements is influenced by Wittgenstein's observations.

up essay to "Why We All Can't Just Get Along." In this later text, he is responding to the objections of Father Richard Neuhaus (editor of the journal *First Things* where the original paper appeared in 1996), one of which is that Fish pits reason against faith. Of course, he doesn't; his point was that both positions were grounded on faith. But that does not mean that reason cannot proceed from there; "both are reasoning" (1999, p. 263), but in a different register.

As part of his reply, Neuhaus had asked: "In the course of reasoning cannot that first premise itself become the object of critical attention?" (Cited in Fish 1999, p. 265). But Fish thinks not: "Spinning your wheels is what you would be doing if you were to bracket your first premise and make it the object of critical attention" (p. 267). He illustrates his position by taking up the case of the reasonable Christian (no doubt with his respondent in mind). Should a Christian experience any "reasonable" doubt, it would have to have been raised by concerns internal to the belief system and not between that and some other system (p. 268). I emphasize "reasonable" here, because Fish adds the adjective to "doubt" so as to suggest a separate, internally consistent notion of reasonableness with its own modes of evidence. Doubt would not arise from supposed "evidence" that supports a claim in another system. To emphasize the point, Fish observes: "It seems unnecessary to say so, but when you think a view wrong, you don't see what is seen by those who think it right—those who live and move and have their being within it" (p. 269). And here we are back to the chain of connections with which we began, running from belief to being.

Someone might object here, and say: "Well, you do see what is seen by those who think a view right, but not in the same way. So, it's a matter of interpretation." Fish seems to recognize this as he goes on to dispute whether we understand others in the right sense of "understanding." In saying that a view is wrong, all we can really be saying is that we do not understand it from our perspective.[3] The utterances meet the requirements of grammar and appear meaningful, but they signify nothing.

3. COUNTER-CONSIDERATIONS

James Freeman (2012), in his ISSA Keynote, reads Fish's attempts to construct a Miltonian argument through the lenses of the Toulmin model, invoking the language of warrants. But he also shows the dire consequences of the Miltonian position for other theories such as (to mark two examples)

---

[3] Relevant here are the responses of Luria (1976) and his co-experimenters when their subjects made “mistakes” in reasoning.

pragma-dialectics (where adversaries could never proceed to the argumentation stage), or Johnson's manifest rationality model, where reciprocal rationality is impossible between people who do not share the original position (Freeman, 2012, p. 66). Freeman salvages the reputation of argumentation theory by challenging the idea that there can be warrants without backing, in Toulmin's sense. By including backing, warrants are subject to evidentiary support of different kinds (p. 68). Still, Freeman's argument assumes that people who disagree will recognize that their opponents are providing evidence for their warrants (p. 69; p. 71).

Citing a 1996 version of the Fish paper, Freeman gives: "Evidence is never independent in the sense of being immediately perspicuous; evidence comes into view (or doesn't) in the light of some first premise or "essential axiom" that cannot itself be put to the test because the protocols of testing are established by its presumed authority" (Fish, 1996, p. 23). To this, Freeman responds:

> Is *this* true? Suppose one's experience leads to forming an inferential belief-habit expressible as a warrant. Suppose one meets another whose stock of inference habits does not include this warrant. If one presents the evidence or paradigm instances of the evidence which led to the forming of one's belief habit, why cannot the other appreciate that they constitute positive evidence for that warrant, and indeed may even constitute sufficient evidence for acceptance? How is some essential axiom necessary to recognize evidence *as* evidence? (Freeman, 2012, p. 69)

Again, he asks: could not the antagonists of the Milton case "agree on at least some statement if asked, agree on the evidence which might support it and that this evidence does support it?" (p. 69). But this is the key point, it is over the nature of evidence that the disagreement exists.

4. LEVERAGING THE ROOTS OF DISAGREEMENT

We learn little from dissent if we cannot leverage the roots of the disagreement. And if we cannot recognize evidence for what it is, then this is exactly the position we are in. Fish's challenge, like that of Fogelin, is over the nature of evidence. What *can* count as evidence? How is the range of reasons delimited? Depending when and where these questions are posed, the responses will vary considerably. Fish and Fogelin pose these questions within the same system of rationality. But both also assume that evidence is relative to rational systems, and that these systems do not share enough for "us" to recognize a common standard to evaluate them.

The first thing that should be observed here is the apparent privileged position of the "us," as if we held the position of a "god's-eye" appraiser occupying a view from nowhere.[4] It is testimony to the seriousness of the problem that there is no such position. The problem is our problem and we are immersed in it with all the epistemic commitments that position suggests. When we look at the issue, we look at it from the perspective of one of those internally consistent reasonable systems. It just happens to be the dominant one, insofar as the traditions of Western thought and science have supplied it, corroborated it, and come to depend upon it. When we look at other systems, if we do, we see the equivalent of what look to us like mermaids because that is all our system can suggest. When the advocate of a different system explains the evidence drawn from dreams, we recognize the explanation, but not the content; dreams are not a source for evidence. The question is whether, to recall Angenot's point, we are so deaf to the other's voice as to be incapable of learning to hear anything meaningful.

LuMing Mao (2003) issues two serious challenges with mounting import. In one place, speaking of George Kennedy's (1998) work on comparative rhetoric, he asserts "Kennedy consistently uses a host of Western rhetorical terms like *judicial, deliberative*, and *epideictic* to make sense of those other traditions, even though the latter are distinctly different from the culture that produced these terms" (Mao, 2003, p. 411). Elsewhere, he writes "our own most fundamental frames of reference or *epistemes* that are often rooted in or influenced by such Western concepts as reason, truth, logic, communication, and selfhood" (Mao, 2009, p. 67). There is much of value to extract from these observations. The critique of Kennedy raises the serious question of whether (or how) we can read another tradition/system without using the terms of reference from our own framework. What is lost if we are limited to translating other rhetorics in our terms? Rhetoric is a product of culture, and each culture expresses itself in its own way. Moreover, the second observation—claim really—is that concepts like "reason, truth, logic, communication, and selfhood" are Western concepts. Presumably, this is not to deny that others communicate and reason. Rather, their meanings and subsequent behaviours do not assimilate readily to our understandings of reason, truth, logic, communication, and selfhood.[5]

---

[4] The problems associated with this view have been detailed elsewhere, particularly by Hamblin (1970, p. 242). See also, Tindale 2004, Chapter 5 on the construction of "objective" views.

[5] See, for example, Clifford Geertz's (1983) examination of "person" in three different cultures as a "vehicle by means of which to examine this whole question of how to go about poking into another people's turn of mind" (p. 59).

Yet we know what it means for things to be meaningful, so there is the prospect of at least recognizing the appreciation of meaningfulness in others. I approach this challenge by looking in the next section at some cases, drawn from different sources, cases in which human experience is expressed differently, and thus not initially recognizable to every gaze.

The idea of the universal human (an idea that includes concepts like Perelman's universal audience) is brought into question by problems such as those discussed here. Charles Willard (1989) observes, in the epigraph to this paper, that claims to universality are invitations to criticism, while "rationalities" presented as local have a "place in the sun" (Willard, 1989, p. 167). And Clifford Geertz notes, in a way that anticipates Fish, that the image of a constant human nature may be an illusion: what humans are depends on where they are and what they believe (Geertz, 1973, p. 35). Instead, Geertz argues, we must attend to "the informal logic of actual life" (p. 17), immerse ourselves in the particularities of human experience, and build from them, on their terms, an understanding of how differentness is not so much a problem to be overcome but the position from which we begin to move, on parallel tracks, towards engagement.

5. CAN WE TALK?

Anthropological studies like those of Gertz (1973; 1983) show us that reasons come in many forms, forms not necessarily baptised as such in the Western tradition. Such studies, present "reasons" as expressions of meaningfulness, or simply sources of meaning. Luria's experiments involving "non-literates," noted in an earlier footnote, illustrate what happens when the standards of one system and the expectations that flow from it are imposed on people operating outside of that system. Such studies fall prey to the ethnocentrism that pervades the relevant literature in spite of the warnings that persist with equal fervour from people like Mao, cited above. But those same experiments, approached from a different direction, teach us that the reasoning of others can be described in ways that show them as both thoughtful and reasonable. Descriptions can render those responses as meaningful expressions of human experience in which reasons are understood in ways contrary to Western norms or different things are understood as reasons.

5.1 Case 1: Ancient Greece

Imagine an individual who, while deeply committed to many of the institutions of his society, is deeply immersed in the full range of human

experiences and draws his understandings, his reasons, from sources as diverse as dreams. He believes for example, that what occurs in dreams is relevant to events in waking life; that an event will not occur on a particular day because he dreamt it would not. In fact, his actions are generally guided by a voice that discourages him from pursuing certain courses of action, and he appeals frequently to this source to explain his behaviour. And his actions themselves serve as a further source of evidence, preferred over the expression of reasons in propositions.

This individual conveys all the signs of operating within a system of rationality different from our own. We tend not to extend credence to the promptings of dreams and we are suspicious of people who hear voices, and we have a deeply ingrained preference for propositional claims over actions. But these prejudices likely dissipate when we recognize the figure in question is the historical Socrates, as Plato describes him.

Awaiting execution, he tells his companion that he does not think the ship from Delos will arrive until the following day (no executions being permitted until the ship's arrival) because (for the reason that) he dreamt it to be so (*Crito* 43d-44a). The intuitive power of his inner voice, given authority in the *Apology* (40a) and elsewhere, that always tells Socrates 'no' and never 'yes', has been variously explained in the literature, but all those explanations have difficulty reconciling the Socrates of the inner voice with the paragon of reason celebrated in the Western tradition. In truth, it has more in common with the kisceral mode of the multi-modal account of argumentation (Gilbert, 1997). And as a central part of the argument he provides in his defense in the *Apology,* he offers the jury as "powerful proof" not "mere words," but what they "honour more—actions" (*Apology* 32a). He then gives two autobiographical narratives of times he opposed wrongdoing in Athens, once during the democracy, and a second time during the tyranny.

It might be suggested, given Socrates' position in the history of Western thought, that we are able to access his system of rationality. But these are exactly the aspects of his character that we tend to overlook or that present commentators with the most difficulty. In fact, Socrates is a transitional character between orality and literacy, and it is our prejudice in favour of the literate that brackets out the vestiges of the oral.

5.2 Case 2: Contemporary Canada

A very different example of difference emerges from the political arena, where a focus on differentness often distorts the underlying relationships, deflecting attention from the ways it is accommodated in practice. The case in question is that of Canada, specifically Quebec's relationship to the rest of

Canada. This is an example of what political theorist John Dryzek (2006) would call a "divided society": “A divided society is defined by mutually contradictory assertions of identity” (2006, p. 46). In the face of deep differences, Dryzek advocates a discursive democracy, where the deliberation and decision aspects of democracy are separated so that deliberation is located in an engagement of discourses in the public sphere (p. 47). Here, the aim is to detach deliberation from identity in order to facilitate the power of persuasive discourse (p. 57; p. 63). An example of what Dryzek's approach via discourses entails is captured in Martin Luther King Jr. On Dryzek's reading, King was able to separate white Americans from their identity by appealing to their emotional commitment to symbols like the Declaration of Independence and the constitution, leading to a change in the way dominant liberal discourse was understood (Dryzek, 2006, p. 63). This way of detracting from identity to accomplish change through discourse effectively overcomes difference, achieving agreement in the political sphere.

The Canadian example retains difference in a tension of mutual accommodation. But it requires a special kind of relationship, as Charles Taylor (1993) explains. Taylor promotes two kinds of diversity: first-level diversity and second-level or "deep" diversity (1993, p. 182-3). The first involves the kind of identity that Dryzek eschews, where significant differences in culture, outlook and background are bridged by a common idea of belonging to Canada. Left out of the equation are Indigenous communities, for whom the "way of being Canadian is not accommodated by first-level diversity" (p. 182). To overcome this exclusion requires attention to deep diversity, "in which a plurality of ways of belonging would also be acknowledged and accepted" (p. 183). So, Taylor explains:

> Someone of, say, Italian extraction in Toronto or Ukrainian extraction in Edmonton might indeed feel Canadian as a bearer of individual rights in a multicultural mosaic. His or her belonging would not "pass through" some other community, although the ethnic identity might be important to him or her in various ways. But this person might nevertheless accept that a Québécois or a Cree or a Déné might belong to a very different way, that these persons were Canadian through being members of their national communities (p. 183).

The challenge, as Taylor seems to allow, is managing deep diversity at the same time as a sense of unity.[6] First-level diversity stresses the commonality,

---

[6] Interestingly, Dryzek identifies Canada as a positive example of the kind of discursive democratic engagement in a semi-public sphere that he advocates (2006,

building on the metaphor of bridging; deep or second-level diversity stresses the differences, building on the metaphor of the mosaic.

This case of "accommodated difference" through deep diversity seems far from the radical divergences captured in Fish's reframing of the seeing is believing commonplace. But are such cases really so far apart? To explore this question, I want to turn to the nature of diversity *within* individuals.

6. FORMS OF LIFE AND DEEP DIVERSITY

The full sense of the human reasoner involves the mind and body, reason and emotion, in all their intricate relations. The model of the sterile reasoner devoid of emotional reactions, like Sherlock Holmes or Star Trek's Spock, is a fiction. At times, perhaps, a necessary fiction when the focus of attention is on the power of deduction in human reasoning, but still no less of a fiction.

Not surprisingly, a turn to human experience with its intricate web of connections that characterize a life has been a popular move for philosophers engaging the problems associated with radical difference, incommensurability, and noncomparability.[7] It is such a return that Fogelin invites with his reference to "a form of life" in his account of deep disagreements.

Yet Fogelin is actually ambivalent in his remarks: speaking of the source of deep disagreements, he notes that what we find are not isolated propositions, but "a whole system of mutually supporting propositions (and paradigms, models, styles of acting and thinking), if I may use the phrase, a form of life" (1985, p. 6). But he then proceeds:

> I think that the notion of a form of life is dangerous, especially when used in the singular. We do better to say that a person participates in a variety of forms of life that overlap and crisscross in a variety of ways. Some of these forms of life have little to do with others. This explains why we can enter into discussions and reasonable arguments over a range of subjects with a person who believes, as we think, things that are perfectly mad (p. 6).

Fogelin's point—as he proceeds to clarify it—is that we can still trust such a person on other subjects. But the larger point recognized here, and that he

---

p. 64). But his focus is on disagreements between Anglophones and Francophones, and does not bring in the Indigenous consideration.

[7] The latter is most strongly advocated by Chang (1997), who distinguishes noncomparability from incomparability. This is not a distinction I will pursue here.

does not proceed to develop, is that human lives are sites or projects of diversity. Setting aside whether what is at issue here is multiple “forms of life,” what we can recognize is that the kinds of inner conflicts we so routinely experience are the results of clashing beliefs and commitments. In the closing sections, I want to consider the nature and implications of this deep diversity.

The shift to the agent, the one who holds the beliefs and so forth of Fish's chain, is a shift to preliminaries. It poses the challenge that in order to understand others we must first understand ourselves. That may be a serious challenge in itself and is certainly a discussion that warrants far more than could be extended to it here. All that matters, perhaps, is that we appreciate the ways in which differentness and problems of comparability of values are assimilated in, and are natural features of, the living of lives. Taylor observes (and this is an observation we can now support) that stating questions in terms of extreme positions, either no diversity or complete diversity, is problematic. In particular, for him, it ignores dimensions of the ethical life (Taylor, 1997, p. 171).

Human lives are colored by experiences of inner conflict as we continuously struggle to reconcile values to which we give different weight at different times. Consider the young woman who both sees the merit of reducing government subsidies during times of austerity, tracking this to decisions she has made throughout her life, decisions that have reflected the value of fiscal responsibility, while at the same time disagreeing with the reduction of government subsidies because of the consequences she sees for the disadvantaged arising from it, a disagreement which also flows naturally from past decisions and the high value she has always placed on charitable action. These reactions are irreconcilable on any common level. They both speak to aspects of her character threaded together in her life. And we all experience such deep diversity of conflicts almost routinely.

We value incomparable goods, where there is no common register to weigh them and decide for one over another. We give particular weight to a good here, but not there; now, but not later. Much depends on how lines of significance are woven through our lives, rising to the surface in relation to each other, interacting at important moments. And this diversity is part of a fractured whole that constitutes a life. This situation mirrors the external clash of values in different frameworks.

Moreover, too much analysis conforms comfortably to the dictates of linear rationality and isolates actions into points in a sequence and fails to treat them as issuing from lives in which values and beliefs are integrated in complex webs. Is a life something we "lead" or "pursue," or something we accumulate, amassing experiences that encourage dispositions to act? Are we out ahead of ourselves like a Sartrean ego, gathering a self in reflection; or do

we follow on behind, monitoring alternatives and choosing the ways forward? In either case, there is a sense of directional movement, but only experienced in the moment, as lives remain susceptible to the kairotic (Taylor, 1997, p.180). The unifying force that gathers or monitors is what manages this diversity. For Taylor, "the intuition of diversity of goods needs to be balanced with the unity of life" (p. 183).

In the mirrored world with its clashing values, we assume that frameworks have unity, assigning them a static nature. Hence, we view diversity as arising *between* frameworks. In fact, we should be interested first in diversity that arises within them. Where Taylor finds "deep diversity" in the Canadian mosaic, we might identify it as an unavoidable feature of cultures and "systems" of belief.

Frameworks support lives, providing the contexts in which they are lived. Does the same type of fractured coherence apply to a life that characterizes a framework? Steven Lukes (1997) introduces a valuable distinction between sacred values (which may be secular or religious) that are partial and concrete, and those that are impartial and abstract (Lukes, 1997, p. 188). The impartial are the problematic ones, in part because they are not connected to a way of life. The partial, on the other hand, favour a way of life.

For Fish, the search for the impartial, for foundational standards that will connect frameworks, is doomed to fail. But how would he fare with the partial, where choice arises in diversity? Does he assume that operating within a system provides the coherence for agency to function? Lives are partial to certain values at certain times, they change and grow, and the systems that support them need to support this. So, they are always open to revision, to alternatives. Human lives feed off of otherness.

On a deeper level, it is strange Fish should read things as he does. I refer here to his reconfiguring of the causal chain reflected in the popular "seeing is believing." For Fish, we recall, the causal series begins with belief, and proceeds to perception, knowledge, action and identity. But our discussion has progressed toward a different conclusion: that the causal chain itself is the misconception. Rather, the elements of the alleged chain are parts of an integrated whole, centered by the self as experienced across the qualities of a life. Human lives are complex affairs, and part of that complexity is the interweaving of perception with belief, and with knowledge and action, and with emotion and identity, none of which has any primacy in a series of causal influence.

7. CONCLUSION

Diversity is not something to be overcome, but to be managed. For Fogelin, a "form of life" is a system of mutually supporting propositions, and we participate in multiple forms of life, overlapping and crisscrossing. There are two claims at work here, and they don't fit well together, because the second challenges the first. And so, we might suggest, following on the preceding investigation, that a "form of life" is a system of managed diversity, where propositions that disagree are reconciled in a dispositional nature governed by a force of character that ultimately can give coherence to our actions and make of our life a thread that connects past choices into meaningful narratives and gives some predictability to future action. This is a complex structure, and more than I have defended here. My principal concern has been to challenge Fish's causal sequence and reframe deep disagreements in terms of diversities. It is not a matter of whether seeing (perception) or belief is a first step in a causal series; it is a question of whether any such series is ultimately plausible. The interrelations of perception, belief, knowledge, action and identity in individual lives suggests the problem is not as Fish explains it.

Answers to radical differences between frameworks also involve an expansion of our sense of reason(s), that is, an openness to the range of experiences that influence human decisions. We are reason-giving creatures, creating dispositions that form us and confound us, making the diverse reactions of our lives inevitable. But what we give as reasons varies across forms of life and the cultures that support them. Socrates' voice is as valid for him (and operates as powerfully in his reasoning) as a scientist's appeal to the way fossil fuels break down in the atmosphere. Preferring one source over another makes sense according to the context; dismissing one source out of hand is the kind of prejudicial response that feeds the flames of deep disagreement.

One solution (but it is not a solution, if there is nothing to solve; so, direction, then) is not to seek any one-size-fits-all set of standards, because that inevitably would involve the imposition on some of the values of other. Further lessons from anthropology here demand that we recognize the enormous damage that ensues (to *all* involved) when standards are imposed.

We can focus on framework propositions and belief systems. That gets us so far. But from the perspective of argumentation, frameworks and systems are only the hollow husks in which and between which the real dynamics, the lived encounters, ensue. Argumentation is at its heart a human activity; we should never lose sight of this. The study of argumentation begins with the human and ends with the human. It explains our nature as

much as it forms the ways that nature is expressed in the world. The roots of disagreement are not frameworks or causal series, but human agents and their diverse commitments.

REFERENCES

Angenot, M. (2008). *Dialogues de sourds: Traité de rhétorique antilogique*, Paris, Mille et une nuits.

Bourne, E.G. (1906). Journal of the First Voyage *of Christopher* Columbus*,* 1492-1493, in E.G. Bourne (Ed.), *The Northmen, Columbus and Cabot, 985-1503.* New York.

Collection of the First Voyage" Document No. AJ-062. Wisconsin Historical Society Digital Library and Archives.

http://www.americanjourneys.org/pdf/AJ-062.pdf. Ret. Sept 18, 2018.

Chang, R. (1997). (Editor) *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Dryzek, J. (2006). *Deliberative Global Politics*. London: Polity.

Feldman, R. (2005) Deep disagreement, rational resolutions, and critical thinking, *Informal Logic* 25 (1), 13-23.

Fish, S. (1999) Why we can't all just get along, in *The Trouble with Principle*. (pp. 243-62).Harvard University Press. [This is a revision of the paper that first appeared in *First Things*, 60, (1996), 18-26. Freeman's discussion applies to the 1996 text.]

Fish, S. (1999). Faith Before Reason, in *The Trouble with Principle*. (pp. 263-75). Harvard University Press.

Freeman, J. (2012). Can argumentation always deal with dissensus? in F. van Eemeren & B. Garssen (Eds.) *Topical Themes in Argumentation Theory*. (pp. 61-75). Springer.

Fogelin, R. (1985). The logic of deep disagreements, *Informal Logic* 7, pp. 1-8.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books.

Geertz, C. (1983). *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*. Basic Books.

Hamblin, C.L. (1970). *Fallacies*. London: Methuen.

Kennedy, G. (1998). *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kock, C. (2007). "Norms of legitimate dissensus, *Informal Logic* 27 (2), pp. 179-96.

Levi, D. (2000). *In Defense of Informal Logic*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishers.

Luke, S. (1997). Comparing the Incomparable: Trade-offs and Sacrifices, in R. Chang (Ed.) *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason*. (pp. 184-95). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Luria, A. (1976). *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations.* M. Lopez-Morillas & L. Solotaroff (Trans.) Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Mao, L. (2003). Reflective encounters: Illustrating comparative rhetoric," *Style* Vol. 37 (4), pp. 401-25.

Mao, L. (2009). Doing comparative rhetoric responsibly" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 41 (1), pp. 64-74.

Taylor, C. (1997). Leading a Life, in R. Chang (Ed.) *Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason*. (pp. 170-83). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, C. (1993). *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*. G. Laforest (Ed.). Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press.

Tindale, C.W. (2004). *Rhetorical Argumentation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Willard, C.A. (1989). *A Theory of Argumentation*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations*. New York: The Macmillan Company.