

# The Erotetic View of Reasons and Inquiry

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# A tension in inquiry

Getting things right or comprehending

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  - Where  $p$  is a complete answer to a question  $Q$ , one ought not: have an inquiring attitude towards  $Q$  at time  $t$  and know that  $p/\text{not-}p$  at  $t$  cf.

Whitcomb 2017, Friedman 2017, van Elswyk and Sapir 2021; see also Palmira 2020)

# A tension in inquiry

## Getting things right or comprehending

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- Yet, inquiring beyond knowledge is OK.
  - "[W]e might inquire about something we already know in order to understand why it's true. [Footnote:] Indeed, such cases sometimes occur in proof-checking in mathematics. For example, the great mathematician Michael Atiyah once reported having proven a theorem—thus *knowing that* it held—while simultaneously seeking to *understand why* it held. (Woodard, forthcoming: 3)

# A tension in inquiry

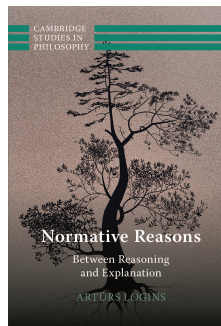
## Getting things right or comprehending

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- Simple pluralist view? Appears to be *ad-hoc*.

# Reasons to the rescue

Widening the aims and norms of interrogative attitudes

- The Reasons view of Inquiry: finding sufficient reasons (to Q-dependent F) as the aim of inquiry (into Q).
- The Erotetic (question-centered) View of Reasons: for  $r$  to be a reason (for S) to F is for  $r$  to be content of an appropriate answer to (S-directed) normative question 'Why F?' (cf. Logins, forthcoming: 168).



# Plan

- 1 Introduction
- 2 The Erotetic view of reasons
- 3 Reasons view of Inquiry

1 Introduction

2 The Erotetic view of reasons

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# The Why? questions in general

A fundamental ambiguity

- 'Why?' of arguments and 'Why?' of explanations (cf. Whately 1827, 1828, Salmon 1971, McKeon 2013).
- 'Why dolphins are not fish?'
- Contexts of challenge: because mammals.
- Contexts of better comprehension: because evolution.



# The Erotetic view

Reasons are answers to questions

## The Erotetic View of Reasons, full

For that  $p$  to be a reason to  $F$  for  $S$  is for that  $p$  to be either (a) (a part of) the content of an appropriate explanation providing (pattern of an) answer to a ( $S$  directed) question 'Why  $F$ ?/Why ought  $S$  to  $F$ ?' in its explanation requiring reading; or (b) the content of an appropriate premise in a good argument/reasoning providing (pattern of an) answer to a ( $S$  directed) question 'Why  $F$ ?/Why ought  $S$  to  $F$ ?' in its argument/reasoning requiring reading. (Logins, forthcoming: 170)

1 Introduction

2 The Erotetic view of reasons

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# Reasons view

## Of the aim and norm of inquiry

- A crucial desideratum: accounts of aims and norms of inquiry should respect the reasonableness constraint.
- "[G]oing to the local brainwashing service and having a certain belief installed will not count as inquiring into the corresponding question." (Kelp 2020: 368)
- Finding sufficient reasons to F as the aim of inquiry respects and explains the desideratum.

# Reasons view

## Of the aim and norm of inquiry

### The reason aim of inquiry

Where one's F-ing is a question Q-dependent, the aim of inquiry into Q is to find (sufficient) reasons to F, for any relevant F (e.g. belief, intention, action, attitudes).

### The reason norm of inquiry

Where one's F-ing is Q-dependent, one ought not: to be in an interrogative attitude concerning the relevant question Q at t and possess sufficient reasons to F at t.

# Reasons view

## Details of the solution

- Where  $F$  is believing that  $p$ , one ought not to be in an interrogative attitude about a question  $Q$  (where  $p$  is the answer to  $Q$ ) and at the same time possess sufficient reason to believe that  $p$ :

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  - (1) NOT: combine argument-seeking inquiry AND possessing sufficient argument-providing reasons to believe  $p$ ;

# Reasons view

## Details of the solution

- Where F is believing that p, one ought not to be in an interrogative attitude about a question Q (where p is the answer to Q) and at the same time possess sufficient reason to believe that p:
  - (1) NOT: combine argument-seeking inquiry AND possessing sufficient argument-providing reasons to believe p;
  - (2) NOT: combine explanation-seeking inquiry AND possessing sufficient explanation-providing reasons explaining why one ought/should to believe p.



- Recovering INI: when 'sufficient' in (1) is sufficient 'reasoning-wise' and if (theoretical) reasoning aims at providing fitting belief (cf. McHugh and Way 2016, 2018), 'sufficient' = producing knowledge (if fitting belief is knowledge).

# Reasons view

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- Recovering INI: when 'sufficient' in (1) is sufficient 'reasoning-wise' and if (theoretical) reasoning aims at providing fitting belief (cf. McHugh and Way 2016, 2018), 'sufficient' = producing knowledge (if fitting belief is knowledge).
- Recovering other aims (confirmation/understanding): sufficient 'understanding/confirmation-wise', explaining as aiming at providing understanding, 'sufficient' = producing understanding.

# A recap

- An apparent tension in aims and norms of interrogative attitudes (inquiry): ignorance/knowledge yet, counter-examples.

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- An apparent tension in aims and norms of interrogative attitudes (inquiry): ignorance/knowledge yet, counter-examples.
- If arriving at possessing sufficient reasons to  $F$  is the aim of inquiry, then Erotetic view (question-centered view) of reasons can explain and solve the apparent tension.

# Thanks !