Intellectual Autonomy and Understanding

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1. Introduction

It seems to be unanimously agreed that the core of autonomy in the intellectual domain concerns the human competence to base beliefs on some particular or explicit reasons. In one traditionally influential view, an intellectually autonomous explorer of knowledge should not accept a belief that is obtained from another's testimony, until one can reflectively justify it to oneself. However, accompanying the recent growing focus on social dimensions of knowledge acquisition, epistemologists have come to doubt this assumption and begun to dispute whether an intellectually autonomous person can reasonably adopt a belief based on others' testimony as social evidence, and, if so, under what conditions.[1]

Alongside this social route to acquiring knowledge, intellectual autonomy also involves another social intellectual practice: argumentative exchange. In brief, "argumentative exchange" designates the process in which an arguer propounds arguments using premises regarded as reasons and evidence to support a claim to persuade their respondents. From an epistemic perspective, this discursive exchange can be construed as one of "interpersonal justification," which in essence means that a person is interpersonally justified if and only if they justify their claim to their peers.[2]

This paper will focus on the role of competence at understanding as it bears on interpersonal justification. Specifically, I will first delineate the dialectical nature of argumentative exchange by developing the notion of a chain of arguments, thus construing it as a form of interpersonal justification. I will then demonstrate that "understanding competence" is a fundamental constituent of intellectual autonomy. Although the notion of understanding has to date received less attention than that of justification in the literature on intellectual autonomy, our focus on the relationship between interpersonal justification and intellectual autonomy will highlight the importance of understanding.

The following paper comprises four parts. In section 2, by examining Elizabeth Fricker's and Linda Zagzebski's views concerning intellectual autonomy, I will present argumentative exchange as a neglected yet important setting for considering the nature of intellectual autonomy. In section 3, I will first describe argumentative exchange as one of interpersonal justification and then consider the relationship between interpersonal justification and intellectual autonomy. In section 4, I will expound on the understanding competence and endorse the idea that, alongside justificatory competence, understanding competence is a necessary component of intellectual autonomy. Finally, in section 5, I will summarize the arguments of this paper and suggest further research.

2. A critique of the literature on intellectual autonomy

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[1] For an overview of this controversy, see Rollins (2015). Fricker (1994; 2006), Roberts and Wood (2007), and Zagzebski (2012) present their views on epistemic or intellectual autonomy.

[2] In section 3, I will delineate the concepts of argumentative exchange and interpersonal justification and then examine the relationship between the notions more closely.

Elizabeth Fricker and Linda Zagzebski offer distinct insights into the essence of intellectual autonomy by focusing on its different epistemic aspects. I will first examine the advantages and shortcomings of their ideas concerning intellectual autonomy. I will then direct our attention to the activity of argumentative exchange as another important setting for considering the essence of intellectual autonomy.

Fricker begins by identifying an assumption that frames the classical notion of intellectual autonomy:

> The wholly autonomous knower will not accept any proposition, unless she herself possesses the evidence establishing it. Thus she will not accept any proposition on the basis of another's word for it, even when she has evidence of their trustworthiness on the topic in question. (Fricker, 2006b, p.225)

The ideal autonomous knower must never accept beliefs that other people tell them until they justify those beliefs to themselves. This idea was supposedly espoused by many philosophers, especially those of the Enlightenment. There is a risk that others' testimony contains false beliefs, whether intentionally or otherwise. This sort of risk can render the recipients of testimony epistemically insecure. This point will be illustrated by a familiar Aesop's Fable, entitled *The Boy who Cried Wolf.* A shepherd boy, discontented with watching sheep on the hill, lied to the local villagers, saying that a wolf was chasing the sheep. The villagers believed him and ran to the hill only to found that there was no wolf. After a repeat of this incident, the villagers no longer trusted the shepherd boy, even when he was ultimately truthful in informing them of the presence of a real wolf. Let us focus here on the villagers' attitude, although the fable may be intended to draw the moral that one should be honest unlike the shepherd boy. Apparently, the villagers at first were too naïve, in the sense that they trusted what the shepherd boy told them without any doubt. It was sensible of them to eventually ignore the boy's utterances, until they seemingly became intellectually autonomous.

Fricker challenges the classical notion of intellectual autonomy by drawing a distinction regarding the ideal of intellectual autonomy between the cases of a superior being and of humans. Suppose that the superior being has the supernatural power to observe all the events occurring in the history of the world and has infallible competences, including impeccable reasoning. The superior being could obtain truth firsthand without relying on others' testimony. It thus could fit the image of the classical understanding of intellectual autonomy. By contrast, humans are, in reality, restricted by their limited sensory faculties, such as bounded eyesight and finite memory, and are liable to err in reasoning. An individual does not always obtain true beliefs through limited sensory faculties, nor necessarily reach the truth by reasoning. Exercising humans' sensory faculties and cognitive capacities does not ensure true belief or firsthand knowledge, as these concepts are loosely understood.

Thus, Fricker argues, the alleged ideal of intellectual autonomy is considered irrational to humans.

> The human would-be epistemic autonome on closer investigations is not an ideal, but either paranoid or severely cognitively lacking, or deeply rationally incoherent. We all can remember occasions on which someone we know has irrationally refused to change her opinion in response to testimony from someone evidently better placed to judge of the matter than she is. The individual autonome carries this irrational tendency to its irrational extreme. (Ibid., p.244)

Given humans' limited sensory faculties and fallible cognitive capacities, the classical ideal of intellectual autonomy is not the goal for humans to pursue. Other people may possess different cognitive competences and expertise and thus may be better equipped to obtain a certain truth than a given individual. Given this, there are cases in which humans can reasonably rely on secondhand knowledge. To consider the previous example of the naïve villagers, they could have gathered evidence regarding whether the shepherd boy was trustworthy prior to accepting his statement. Admittedly, there is still a risk of developing false belief involved in accepting others' testimony, but it does not follow from this that a person must justify all their beliefs *ab initio* to be intellectually autonomous. In the case of humans, it is reasonable to consider the social aspects of intellectual autonomy.

Fricker thus centers on the problem of under what conditions it is rational for a recipient of testimony to accept it (2002; 2006a). This is an intriguing question, which has been the subject of an ongoing debate between reductionists and irreductionists regarding the epistemic nature of testimony; however, I shall confine the present concern to its relationship with intellectual autonomy. Intellectually autonomous persons seek truth in relationships with others, which is distinct from the cases of the superior being and of creatures with no practice of trusting and doubting. For example, as recipients of information, experts can be more sensitive to evidence than laypersons in appraising the extent to which others' testimony should be trusted. Fricker claims, "it is crucial for the maintenance of epistemic self-governance that our trust in the word of others is given not blindly and universally, but discriminatingly" (ibid., p.239). Given this, an intellectually autonomous person is required to sensibly accept beliefs from others' testimony.

Conversely, one criticism of Fricker is that she draws exclusive attention to the epistemic scene in which true belief and secondhand knowledge are transmitted through testimony from informants to recipients. Consequently, Fricker fails to consider another important social-epistemic activity that we frequently encounter in ordinary intellectual lives; argumentative exchange. In essence, argumentative exchange means the dynamic process in which an arguer propounds arguments to support their claim to respondents, such as readers and listeners. Whereas the transmission of testimony represents a one-way flow of imparting true belief and secondhand knowledge, argumentative exchange structurally reflects a bi-directional epistemic relationship with others, in the sense that arguers and respondents mutually interact by asking and responding in pursuit of the targeted truth. This practice is commonly seen in everyday communication, including in law, science, and politics. In addition, argumentative exchange is nowadays conducted not only face-to-face but also through the Internet, such as in online meeting via video-phone. Accordingly, the notion of intellectual autonomy needs to be examined more closely in terms of argumentative exchange as a social-epistemic activity. Before we proceed, however, let us consider Zagzebski's idea of intellectual autonomy.

Zagzebski explores the nature of intellectual autonomy by drawing close attention to the relationship between a person's pre-reflective trust and reflective aptitude. Zagzebski agrees with Fricker on the point that an intellectually autonomous person does not need justify all of their beliefs. It can be rational by default for a person to pre-reflectively trust the functioning of our sensory faculties. For example, eyesight may be a reliable source of obtaining perceptive beliefs, and a person may trust her eyesight to reliably gain true beliefs. An important point here is that pre-reflective self-trust is to some extent natural, and that even intellectually autonomous persons

can rely on pre-reflective trust in our sensory faculties and cognitive capabilities unless there is a special reason to suspect that beliefs gained through the pre-reflective exercise of trust are doubtful.

This leads Zagzebski to argue that intellectual autonomy is the exercise of both pre-reflective trust and "epistemic conscientiousness."

> I call the quality of using our faculties to the best of our ability in order to get the truth *epistemic conscientiousness*. I think of this quality as the self-reflective version of the natural desire for truth…. Once a person becomes reflective, she thinks that her trustworthiness is greater if she summons her powers in a fully conscious and careful way, and exercises them to the best of her ability. What I am calling conscientiousness is the state or disposition to do that. (Zagzebski, 2012, p.48)

Conscientiousness, as Zagzebski delineates, is the disposition to reflect on a conflict in one's mental states, named "dissonance," when one recognizes it by obtaining a new, and alternative, belief. A dissonance requires conscientious persons to exercise self-reflection on relevant matters because the rigorous exercise of self-reflection may be the best way to handle the dissonance and to restore psychic harmony. People have a natural desire to maintain harmony in their mental state in their approach to the truth, so intellectually autonomous persons must possess epistemic conscientiousness because exercising self-reflection complements humans' natural desire for truth. In brief, in the situation in which dissonance in one's mental states is recognized, an intellectually autonomous person must be disposed to reflect on relevant beliefs obtained through pre-reflective trust. Zagzebski thus claims, "In my view, autonomy is the right or ideal of managing all parts of the self, not just decisions to act, in order to achieve a harmonious self" (Zagzebski, 2013, p.259).

Zagzebski's approach is illuminating in that intellectual autonomy can reconcile the requirement of a reflection process, as has been emphasized in the moral and political spheres of autonomy, and the unreflective yet reliable functioning of one's sensory, emotional, and cognitive capacities. Simultaneously, however, Zagzebski seems to overemphasize on an individual's mental state, thereby downplaying the social-epistemic circumstances for individuals to acquire true belief and knowledge.

In Zagzebski's understanding, intellectual autonomy is achieved by maintaining the harmony of an individual's mental state by exercising self-reflection. By contrast, with regard to heternomy, Zagzebski observes,

> A self is heteronomous in this way when there is outside interference in the capacity or exercise of self-direction. Someone is intellectually heteronomous in this way when there is outside interference in the self's direction of its pursuit of truth or other intellectual goods" (ibid., p.258).

A question arises here: in what case is others' intellectual challenge, such as criticism, regarded as interference, thereby leading to loss of intellectual autonomy? To illustrate, others' testimony might bring about dissonance in a person's beliefs, consequently forcing them to retract their earlier belief after due consideration. In this case, they might be seen as heteronomous according to Zagzebski's view, but it may be debatable whether they should be considered heteronomous. Likewise, suppose that a person receives a testimonial belief that is inconsistent with their original beliefs, and that they perceive it as a hindrance to maintaining truth, and consequently cling to

the earlier beliefs. It seems controversial whether they should be seen as an intellectually autonomous person or a mere dogmatist. These cases suggest that it is insufficient to understand the notion of intellectual autonomy only in terms of an individual's psychic harmony, and that relevant social aspects of intellectually autonomous personhood, as Fricker highlights, should be taken into account.

I have so far discussed points pertaining to the nature of intellectual autonomy by examining Fricker's and Zagzebski's views of intellectual autonomy. A fundamental moral drawn from their considerations is that we need not justify all of our beliefs *ab initio* for ourselves to be intellectually autonomous. As Zagzebski discusses, while pre-reflectively trusting in their faculties to obtain beliefs, an intellectually autonomous person must be disposed to exercise self-reflection on relevant matters in necessary situations. As Fricker describes, an intellectually autonomous person can rely on others' testimony under certain conditions to gain true belief and secondhand knowledge. Conversely, intellectual autonomy also involves another important social-epistemic practice: that of argumentative exchange. This dynamic process between arguers and respondents has yet to be investigated in either of Fricker's and Zagzebski's accounts. However, considering that people frequently engage in direct and online discursive interactions with their peers, in both scholarly and daily communicative dialogues, to pursue true belief and knowledge, argumentative exchange is considered another, crucial setting for considering the nature of intellectual autonomy.

What, then, are the specific features of argumentative exchange? In the next section, I will first characterize argumentative exchange from an epistemic perspective and then examine its relationship with intellectual autonomy.

3. An interpersonal-epistemic approach to intellectual autonomy

Alongside reports and explanations, argumentative exchange is encompassed in a discursive dialogue between an arguer and a respondent. Argumentative exchange serves to present a set of arguments between two opposing sides. I will first examine the pertinent features of an argument and a set of arguments to describe argumentative exchange as one of interpersonal justification. I will then consider the relationship between this version of interpersonal justification and intellectual autonomy.

I begin with the notion of argument. An argument comprises a set of propositions or statements, categorized as premises, and a conclusion. The premises are regarded as reasons to support an argument's conclusion. To illustrate an argument, consider the following example. Kunimasa watched a TV program, in which a commentator recommended that athletes should drink liquids frequently during exercise. The commentator is an expert in sport science, which studies how sports promote human health. Thus, Kunimasa believed that athletes should drink liquids frequently during exercise. In this example, the first two statements – that a commentator recommends that athletes should drink liquids frequently during exercise and that the commentator is also an expert in sport science – constitute the premises of the argument to support the last statement that athletes should drink liquids frequently during exercise, which acts as the conclusion. This is known as an argument based on an appeal to expert opinion. Usually though, the structure of an argument is not as simple as the above example. For instance, some assumptions may be implicitly presupposed to help construct an argument. In the above example, it is probably assumed that the exercise is quite intense and engaged in outside on a hot day. The omission of implicit

assumptions can help an argument focus on its main point as far as it is reasonable for an arguer to expect the assumptions to be shared by their audience.

The inferential link between premises and a conclusion is made by reasoning in an argument. It is widely acknowledged that there are three distinct kinds of reasoning according to their degree of strength: deductive, inductive, and plausible reasonings. Deductive reasoning provides that if all premises are true, the conclusion is true: modus ponens is a representative example that is widely known. Inductive reasoning serves to infer the conclusion based on probability, such as scientific statistics. To illustrate, suppose that 80 percent of Japanese people have black hair, and that a researcher, whom Richard will meet tomorrow, is Japanese. If these statements are true, it is likely that the researcher has black hair. This argument is probably valid, although it can prove to be false. In this way, inductive arguments are based on probability. Finally, plausible reasoning serves to make arguments plausibly valid. There are a number of typical forms of plausible arguments, such as argument by an appeal to expert opinion and authority in a particular field. To illustrate, consider the following argument from analogy. A physician advises people over 40 to have a medical checkup every two years. Cars in Japan must be inspected every two years, or three years after the registration of a new car. Analogically, it is advisable that people over a certain age undergo a medical checkup. The physician's claim about biennial medical checkups for people over 40 rests on the analogical linkage between the cases of people over 40 and used cars. This argument may be valid to the extent that the analogy obtains between these two cases.

Plausible argument is most commonly used in ordinary communicative dialogues. Although, historically, common types of plausible arguments tended to be viewed as fallacious reasoning to deceptively persuade an audience, nowadays, some of these argument types are arguably considered well-reasoned means to support a conclusion to a certain extent. As was exemplified in the above argument based on appeal to an expert opinion and the one from analogy, plausible reasoning offers varying degrees of power to support a conclusion. An argument is generally regarded as better when a stronger inferential link between the premises and a conclusion obtains by reasoning, although there are other factors that strengthen an argument, such as the truth of the premises. Thus, some forms of plausible reasoning can serve to enhance arguments.

Argumentative exchange is more than a set of arguments. First, it has the general purpose of finding an answer to a question and a solution to a problem. Although the termination of argumentative exchange is ideally the ultimate conclusion, the argumentative exchange can be meaningful even when it is not attained, provided that progress is made toward the goal. For example, an initial question may be clarified and developed. Likewise, some hints to find an answer to the question may be found. These can be seen as progressing the argumentative exchange involved. Thus, a set of arguments in argumentative exchange constitutes a goal-directed activity independently of reaching a final conclusion.

A set of arguments may also be structured to represent the relationship between arguments. To illustrate, suppose that epistemology is a core branch of philosophy. Thus, it is studied in most university philosophy departments. Accordingly, epistemology may perhaps be a popular philosophical branch among university students. When focusing on the roles of the second statement, it functions in two ways: it serves as the conclusion of the first statement and as the premise of the third statement. As demonstrated by this example of the second statement, an earlier conclusion in one argument may function as a premise to support a conclusion in

another. The structure predicated on the relationship and the flow of arguments, and arguments are structurally connected in argumentative exchange.

In line with Walton's (2006) idea, I will call a set of arguments having the above features "a chain of argument."[3] As Walton's (ibid., p.22–6) observed, a chain of arguments can provide the perspective to take the relevance of arguments into consideration. To illustrate, suppose that epistemology is a core branch of philosophy, a core area of philosophy is popular, epistemology is thus popular, and epistemology should not be naturalized. Although the first three statements comprise a deductively valid argument, they may be assessed to be irrelevant as premises to support the ultimate conclusion. Here, this is attributed to the irrelevance of premises in terms of the purpose of a chain of arguments. In this way, even deductively valid arguments can be questioned and criticized concerning their relevance in a chain of arguments. Regarding a set of arguments as a chain of arguments enables a critical viewpoint of relevance to evaluate arguments.

I now turn to the questioning and criticizing that are part of argumentative exchange. Arguments and a chain of arguments are open to intellectual challenge, including questions, doubts, and criticisms. For example, critical questions and criticisms may refute an argument propounded by an arguer. To illustrate, a criticism may unveil that the inferential link between the premises and a conclusion is weak, so that an alternative conclusion can also be inferred from the same premises. In a similar way, a question may cast doubt on a part of an argument, although not aimed at rebutting the argument. For instance, the meaning of words used in an argument may be ambiguous. An assumption implicitly presupposed as a premise in an argument may be found dubious. These intellectual challenges function to defeat an argument or a chain of arguments. A defeater here has the power to cancel and undermine the validity of arguments and a chain of arguments. In this respect, arguments and a chain of arguments can be characterized as defeasible.

Conversely, an arguer can respond to intellectual challenges in various ways. An arguer may anticipate and forestall possible objections that might be raised in their prepared argument. Alternatively, an arguer may counter a criticism by removing an assumption that was found to be unnecessary from a set of premises. Besides, an arguer does not always have to respond to all the criticisms and questions. As argumentative exchange forms a chain of arguments, some questions and criticisms may be found to be trivial and even irrelevant to the main point. This is one way to respond to a defeater: these responses act to defeat a defeater to an argument.

Given that intellectual challenge and response are components of argumentative exchange, in combination with prepared arguments, argumentative exchange highlights the dialectical aspect of arguments between an arguer and their respondents.[4] Argumentative exchange dialectically progresses to achieve its ultimate goal.

Considering the features of argumentative exchange detailed above, argumentative exchange can be construed as one form of interpersonal justification. First, an argument and a chain of arguments can be understood as justification to

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[3] I will develop Walton's idea of a chain of arguments, applying it to the features of interpersonal justification. It seems that Walton does not explore the notion of in other consideration of argumentation, but I think this will be a key notion in interpersonal justification.

[4] In the literature on argumentation or informal logic, the dialectical approach to argumentation is vigorously being studied. See Groarke (2015, Section 8) in more detail. In this paper, I do not argue for this approach but explicate the pertinent dialectical aspects of argumentative exchange to characterize it as one of interpersonal justification.

increase the likelihood that a claim as the conclusion of a chain of arguments is true, though not necessarily guaranteeing its truth. Justification in this context has an interpersonal nature in that a person who presents arguments is justified in believing their claim to their respondents.

Second, intellectual challenge can function as an epistemic defeater empowered to cancel or downgrade the degree of an arguer's justification to believe that a claim as the conclusion is true. A defeater either renders a part of arguments unjustified, i.e., locally unjustified, or its whole chain of arguments unjustified, i.e., entirely unjustified. To present an example of a local unjustified state, suppose that a leap in a scientific theory is found during a review process. The theory will be incomplete, but an arguer and their reviewers can identify an as yet unjustified part in a chain of arguments to support the theory. This will not ruin the whole argument as justifying the theory but can instead maintain a degree of certainty for the theory. Thus, a defeater to an argument and a chain of arguments allows for varying degrees of the power to defeat, depending on the strength of an arguer's responses.

Simultaneously, an arguer's responses to the intellectual challenges act as a defeater of questions and criticisms. For example, when a counterargument is raised by respondents that can act as a defeater to justification, an arguer provides a particular response to it as a defeater to defeat the counterargument. An arguer can restore the justification before their peers, although an arguer's justificatory state remains open to further possible defeaters, as is intrinsic to a chain of arguments.

Given these two features, an arguer may be entitled to be interpersonally justified in believing her claim as the conclusion of a chain of arguments when there is no defeater to contest. Moreover, their justification is relativized to their peers, including their possible audience. Suppose that "S" represents a person. With regard to the interpersonal justification, it can be stipulated that:

(1) S is interpersonally justified in a claim to S's peers if and only if no defeaters to S's justification are presented.

However, an arguer may later confront intellectual challenges acting as defeaters to their justification, as there is no way to anticipate and preempt all the possible intellectual challenges. Thus, it is reasonable to relativize interpersonal justification to a time as well as a person. Suppose now that "t" represents a particular time.

(2) S is *prima facie* interpersonally justified in a claim to S' peers if and only if no defeaters are given at t.

By relativizing interpersonal justification to a time, although a defeater may have the power to cancel an arguer's justification or downgrade its degree, an arguer can restore justification for belief that a claim is true at later time. For example, when S is locally unjustified in a claim at t, a strong reason to support that claim may be found or a means to verify evidence to support that claim may possibly be invented later than t.

It might be argued that a person is required to convince their peers of the claim to justify it to them. This persuasion requirement is unnecessary for interpersonal justification. First, the requirement is too strong. Suppose that an arguer is *prima facie* justified in believing a claim before their peers, by presenting an epistemically sound justification, such as presenting compelling and relevant reasons to defeat a defeater that has been presented. This does not entail, however, that the peers are necessarily

persuaded. The peers may still be obstinate to their own views by forming an unfair judgment. Alternatively, even when peers possess fair-mindedness and reasonable competences, they may not yet be entirely convinced because most argument types are plausible, which means that they are always open to challenges. Rather, an arguer's *prima facie* justificatory state may encourage the arguer themselves and their peers to facilitate questioning by reflecting on relevant problems. Second, the persuasion of peers can be achieved regardless of the strength of justification (Goldman, 1997, p.157). For example, suppose that an arguer is a charismatic presenter who is good at alluring their listeners: they might be persuaded of the claim, even when it is not based on well-established arguments. Surely, it is controversial whether such appealing ways of speech are always bad. It might be viewed as an important tool in political debates. To illustrate, a TV commercial may appeal to pity through its reporting on poverty, which can help to convey an important economic and political message to the audience. Still, the point here is only that the relevance of the persuasion requirement to the strength of a chain of arguments may be uncertain from an epistemic viewpoint. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that the persuasion of peers is not a component of interpersonal justification.

Note that I do not dispute here whether justification is essentially interpersonal. This is a deeper question of the nature of justification. Still, considering the social dimensions of knowledge acquisition in everyday communication as detailed in the previous section, it seems important to consider interpersonal justification more basic than justification that is internal to a person, although individuals can pre-reflectively obtain beliefs from their reliable sensory faculties. Even when intending to justify a claim merely to ourselves, we often implicitly assume the existence of others as possible respondents and try to find a reason acceptable to them. Descartes, who famously advocates a unique method of certainty based on self-reflection in solitude, constructed an argument to support his claim to his contemporaries, such as Hobbes, in the manuscript entitled *Meditations*. The chain of his arguments could be construed as aiming to interpersonally justify his claim, regardless of whether it was explicitly intended. In the present context, it will suffice to grant that there exists an interpersonal phase of justification, which better fits the social aspects of intellectual autonomy.

Based on the above clarification of interpersonal justification, let us consider the notion of intellectual autonomy. As explained in section 2, an intellectually autonomous person must be equipped to interpersonally justify their claim. Thus,

> (3) S is intellectually autonomous only if S is entitled to be interpersonally justified in believing their claim to their peers at t.

However, this means that, in order to be intellectually autonomous, a person must be in a justificatory state with regard to any claim by defending their argument against all defeaters presented by t. This seems too strong to be realistic. As detailed above, there are many cases in which a claim is locally unjustified but an unjustified part can later be justified once identified and examined.

What seems more important for intellectual autonomy is that a person is willing to interpersonally justify a claim when it is subject to a defeater. Remember here that Zagzebski emphasizes a character trait of conscientiousness rather than a present mental state in considering intellectual autonomy. Zagzebski is right in that autonomy concerns a disposition or a character trait rather than a justifcatory state. Considering this,

(4) S is intellectually autonomous only if S is willing to be intellectually justified in believing their claim.

The difference between the stipulations (3) and (4) lies in whether the justificatory state regarding any claim of interpersonal justification is necessary for intellectual autonomy: in my view, it is not, because a person could be seen as intellectually autonomous when they are equipped to justify in later time and are positively responsive to intellectual challenge acting as a defeater. Accordingly, stipulation (4) is more suitable.

The remaining question is whether a proper justificatory competence and willingness suffices for intellectual autonomy. In the next section, I will pay attention to understanding in the context of argumentative exchange regarded as a form of interpersonal justification and argue for understanding competence as a constituent of intellectual autonomy.

4. Understanding competence as a constituent of intellectual autonomy

Intellectually autonomous persons have the desire to seek truth in relationships with others and are thus equipped to justify a claim before their peers. This interpersonal justification calls for proper justificatory competence and willingness, as might also be true for justification that is internal to oneself, or subjective justification. A question arises then: does a certain level of justificatory competence and willingness suffice for interpersonal justification? In what follows, I expound on understanding in the context of interpersonal justification and then argue that understanding competence is necessary for interpersonal justification, thereby constituting a requirement for a person to be intellectually autonomous.

I begin with understanding that is pertinent to interpersonal justification. As clarified in section 3, interpersonal justification encompasses a person responding to intellectual challenges that can defeat their *prima facie* justificatory state. The person is thus required to be responsive to challenges, which may increase the likelihood that a justified claim as the conclusion of a chain of arguments is true. Here, understanding is a matter of an arguer's responses. Let us consider two different challenges to which an arguer must respond: questioning and criticizing.

First, regarding questioning, some questions may ask an arguer to clarify the prepared argument. As argumentative exchange is structured to be a complex chain of arguments, an arguer's respondents may find it difficult to comprehend the structure and thus raise pertinent questions. To illustrate, as exemplified in the previous section, a statement may function both as the conclusion of an argument and as the premise of another in a particular chain of arguments. In such cases, an arguer may be asked to explicate the structure and flow of a chain of arguments. Later, their responses to questioning will also be a form of the chain of their arguments, which partially constitute their interpersonal justification.

An important component of responding to questioning is to illustrate the point of an argument. Suppose that a theory of physics endorsed by a researcher presupposes a Newtonian physics formula, represented as $f = ma$. A novice respondent may ask the researcher to provide a specific example of how the formula works and, in response, the researcher may offer a brief example. In this instance, the researcher's example should not be considered to be a premise to justify the researcher's theory. A single example may only provide feeble evidence to support a claim because of its defeasible

generalization; or, it may even be viewed as a fallacious reasoning, known as a hasty generalization. Instead, the researcher's example is considered a representative example to illustrate the point regarding the Newtonian formula. As this instance suggests, even a single example can help an arguer illustrate a point to facilitate their respondents' understanding of the complicated structure of a chain of arguments. Hence, in discursive exchange with others, providing a single example can be an effective response, leading to an enhanced degree of interpersonal justification.[5]

In preparation for respondents' questioning, an arguer must understand the structure of their chain of arguments. Although an arguer does not necessarily persuade their respondents of a claim to pursue interpersonal justification before them, it is necessary for their responses to "make sense" or to be comprehensible to their respondents. Thus, interpersonal justification seems to require an arguer to be prepared to more than present an established argument.

Second, regarding responses to criticizing, some criticisms and critical questions counter the arguments propounded by an arguer. Since, as clarified in section 3, intellectual challenges may work to undercut or undermine the degree of an arguer's justification, an arguer's responses are crucial in justifying a claim before their peers. Although an arguer's responses are expected to defeat a defeater with their justification, the strength of their responses to recover a justificatory state are of varying degrees. For example, a terrible response could arouse further doubt, failing to defeat a defeater. Thus, the quality of responses is relevant in the context of interpersonal justification.

Hence, an arguer must be competent in understanding the relevance of intellectual challenges aimed at defeating their argument. Remember that argumentative exchange structurally represents a chain of arguments. Considering this, to deliver proper responses to challenges, an arguer must not only comprehend the point of the challenges but also understand how each challenge relates to their chain of arguments. Here, some may consider that openness to intellectual challenges, or open-mindedness, may be necessary to cope with intellectual challenges. Although this may be true, openness is not sufficient for an arguer to qualify an arguer to be interpersonally justified in their claim. Rather, what is required for interpersonal justification may be for a person to embrace relevant challenges selectively.[6]

Considering the two cases of responding as a form of interpersonal justification, it may be concluded that an arguer's responses to epistemic defeaters qualify as a form of interpersonal justification only if a sufficient understanding exists. For example, an arguer who does not possess the ability to understand the relevance of an intellectual challenge to defeat their argument may fail to provide an appropriate response to it. Alternatively, an arguer who lacks understanding of the complicated structure of a chain of arguments may fail to justify their claim as its conclusion. Understanding relevant to an arguer's responses may well be classified into epistemic understanding.

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[5] Several forms of rhetoric, including metaphors, paraphrasing, and aphorisms, can also be effective responses if construed as means of illustration. For example, in response to questioning of the notion of an argument, an arguer may draw a metaphor. Perceiving an argument as parallel to a castle tower, the premises are to a claim what stone walls and frames are to the Lord's chamber. This metaphor is designed to facilitate the questioner grasping the image of an argument, rather than to provoke arguments over the correctness of the analogy between an argument and a castle tower. In a similar manner, paraphrasing is supposed to be used not to present a distinct argument for a claim but to supply another account of the argument that has been presented. Understood as responses to questioning in argumentative exchange, these can raise some degrees of interpersonal justification.

[6] How this is possible is a problem to be considered in future research. The relationship between intellectual autonomy and humility must probably be examined.

Although the nature of epistemic understanding is a matter of ongoing controversy, it is commonly acknowledged that understanding concerns discernment of the structure and relationships of complicated matters, such as the structure of a scientific theory, which is more than merely knowing (Grimm & Hannon, 2015; e.g., Kvanvig, 2003, Chapter 8). Given this and that the present context is interpersonal justification, understanding is needed to grasp the structure of a chain of arguments and the relationship between an argument and intellectual challenges.

I now consider the relationship between pertinent understanding in the present context and intellectual autonomy. Understanding can be categorized into the ability to understand and a willingness to understand. As some earlier examples in this section suggest, the ability to understand is necessary for a person to justify a claim before their peers.

Simultaneously, a willingness to understand is required for a person to be interpersonally justified in a claim as the end point of a chain of arguments. Suppose an arguer is proficient at understanding but lacks a willingness to understand: they are not moved to use their understanding capability but may instead limit themselves to a knock-down argument, which aims only to forcefully persuade peers into accepting the arguer's claim. Why does an arguer need to understand challenges to justify their claim before their peers?

My answer is that it may raise the likelihood that a claim as the conclusion of an arguer's and their respondents' chain of arguments is true. Indeed, in considering the nature of philosophical arguments, Nozick (1981) manifests his concern about overemphasizing persuasion as the aim of philosophical arguments: they appear to target refuting an arguer's opponents to persuade them into accepting the arguer's view. Nozick doubts that this is the exclusive aim of philosophical arguments (ibid., p.15); if it were, the respondents would simply have to contend that a premise is doubtful to thereby prove that a claim as the conclusion does not follow from an arguer's argument. Conversely, if an arguer and their respondents identify a problem, both sides may need to reconsider the whole chain of arguments in approaching the targeted goal, such as finding the solution to an original problem and the answer to a significant question. Accordingly, Nozick prioritizes understanding and explanation as another purpose of philosophical arguments. He illustrates this point by introducing the case of skeptical argument:

> In a discussion of skepticism, if q is said, someone can appropriately object that the skeptic will not or need not or should not accept q, if the purpose of the discussion is to convince the skeptic…I take what the skeptic says more seriously than someone does who merely sets out to convince him, for I view what the skeptic says as a problem for me, for my beliefs…If I succeed in my task, I (and others like me) learn from the skeptic, my beliefs change and are reorganized, while the skeptic need not learn anything…I do take what he says seriously enough to want to learn from it. It should be emphasized that, though internal to my (nonidiosyncratic) belief system, this task is not one of self-development; the goal is to explain, to understand (in this case) how knowledge is possible. (Ibid., p.17)

The attitude of being willing to learn from respondents' questions and criticism seems not only right but also necessary for interpersonal justification. As argued in section 3, an intellectually autonomous person can be *prima facie* justified in their claim by defeating defeaters that have so far been presented while being ready to understand an

alternative, perhaps more reasonable, conclusion by bracketing their *prima facie* justificatory state. Thus, when confronted by a compelling defeater, intellectually autonomous persons must reconsider and attempt to understand the structure of their whole chain of arguments. Once a willingness to understand is rightly placed in interpersonal justification, it is found to be necessary component for a person to be interpersonally justified to seek the truth before their peers. Hence, a willingness to understand is necessary for interpersonal justification.

I shall name a trait that comprises not only the ability to understand but also a willingness to understand: "understanding competence." [7] Considering both understanding ability and willingness as detailed, only those who possess both – encompassed in "understanding competence" – are qualified to engage in interpersonal justification. Based on this and stipulation (4) as was explored in section 3, the relationship between intellectual autonomy and understanding can be understood:

(5) S is intellectually autonomous only if S possesses understanding competence.

We began this section by considering the question of whether there is a distinct requirement for interpersonal justification other than a proper justificatory competence. In answer to this, understanding competence is another component of intellectual autonomy.

5. Concluding remarks

I have thus far demonstrated that, alongside justificatory competence, understanding competence is a necessary component of intellectual autonomy. In particular, I articulated the dialectical nature of argumentative exchange by developing the notion of a chain of arguments, thus construing it as a form of interpersonal justification. I then argued that a sort of epistemic understanding intrinsically buttresses interpersonal justification. This highlight of the understanding competence will have important ramifications. For example, the ethical relationship between intellectually autonomous persons will be considered. In addition, educating for intellectual autonomy in children will be explored.

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[7] I intended to expound on an advantage of the notion of understanding competence by comparing it with a rule or a principle requiring us to understand. I haven't had the time to deepen my thought regarding this point, so I withdraw addressing this problem in this paper. See Iseda's (2005) account of the application of Davidson's principle of charity to argumentation and critical thinking.

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