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The Wisdom Residue: Deep Disagreement and the Philosophicality Threshold

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Abstract

Whether the traditions of India, China, Africa, and elsewhere count as philosophy or as wisdom is a deep disagreement in Fogelin's sense. It turns on a framework commitment about what counts as philosophy, and that commitment is seldom argued for. This paper argues that the commitment ranks a theoretical register of thought above a cultivational one. The inclusionist reply to exclusion argues across the disagreement by accepting the opponent's framework. It shows that a tradition is argued and theorised, and in doing so it moves the tradition's cultivational dimension outside philosophy. The paper calls this remainder the *wisdom residue*, and the pattern that produces it *admission by conformity*. A worked case from Nyāya and a reading of the Greek tradition show that the disputed line runs inside traditions rather than between them. A historical argument shows that the line's evaluative charge reversed between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries. The paper ends with a qualified optimism about deep disagreement. Rival framework criteria can be compared by how stable they remain under a change of standpoint, and by that test an *answerability criterion* is less parochial than the inherited one.

1. Introduction

Most books in world or comparative philosophy pause over a familiar question: what entitles a body of thought to be called *philosophy*, and were traditions filed under "wisdom literature" or "religious thought" misfiled? The pause is short. A sentence concedes that the boundary is contested, and the real work begins.

The brevity is telling. Disputants who agree on what counts as philosophy can argue about whether a given text meets the standard. Disputants who disagree about the standard itself have nothing shared to argue from. This is the structure that Fogelin identified as deep disagreement: a clash of framework propositions, where the conditions for resolving the dispute by argument are absent (Fogelin 1985). The philosophy/wisdom question has exactly this shape. An exclusionist answer holds that much non-Western thought is edifying counsel without argumentative discipline. An inclusionist answer replies that the excluded traditions also argue, define, and systematise. Contemporary sympathy rightly lies with the second. Yet the second answer does not resolve the deep disagreement. It sidesteps it, by meeting the exclusionist's framework rather than questioning it. The debate therefore offers an unusually clean case for the theory of deep disagreement: a long-running dispute in which one side has won most of the arguments while leaving the disputed framework in place, and in which the framework is philosophy's own self-definition. A theory of deep disagreement that is to be applied as metaphilosophy should be able to say something about it.

This paper defends three claims.

1. **The framework commitment is a thesis.** The criterion of philosophicality at work in both camps ranks a *theoretical* register of thought (argument, system, truth about how things are) above a *cultivational* register (the transformation of the knower and the ordering of a life). The line this draws is the *philosophicality threshold*.
2. **Arguing across the disagreement has a cost.** Inclusion that proceeds by matching admits traditions to the extent that they resemble the theoretical register. It relocates their cultivational dimension to religious studies or area studies. That remainder is the *wisdom residue*, and the pattern that produces it is *admission by conformity*.
3. **The line runs inside traditions, and its value changed.** The threshold separates two registers present within each major tradition, including the Greek. What changed in Europe between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries was the line's evaluative charge. Features once credited as practical philosophy came to count as evidence that philosophy was absent.

Section 8 then argues that this deep disagreement is not interminable, and section 9 answers the main objections.

The argument connects to recent work in this journal. A collection on virtues, wisdom, and expertise treated practical wisdom as a demanding philosophical subject, arguing that it cannot be eliminated and that moral expertise is best understood pluralistically (Vaccarezza and Croce 2024; De Caro, Navarini, and Vaccarezza 2024; Bina, Bonicalzi, and Croce 2024). A recent paper read Madhyamaka with the later Wittgenstein as a therapeutic, non-foundational epistemology, in which removing the habits of mind that cause suffering is part of the epistemology itself (Pignocchi 2026). The first treats wisdom as an *object* of theory. The second treats a cultivational aim as internal to a theory. The present argument asks what follows if wisdom is also a *register* in which philosophy is carried out.

2. Method: A Deep Disagreement over a Disciplinary Hinge

Two accounts of deep disagreement are prominent. On the hinge account, disputants are divided by Wittgensteinian hinge commitments: propositions exempt from doubt because doubting them would stop a practice (Wittgenstein 1969, §§ 341–343). On the rival account, disputants are divided by fundamental epistemic principles about what counts as evidence or as a reason. Ranalli has argued in this journal that the second account handles more cases than the first, though neither covers the full range (Ranalli 2021). A collection in this journal on groundless grounds showed how widely hinges organise epistemic practice (Ramón Cámara and Vega Encabo 2022).

The criterion of philosophicality has features of both. It behaves like a hinge: seldom stated, never defended, yet presupposed whenever a text enters or leaves a syllabus. It also works as a fundamental principle of evidence about what counts as a contribution to philosophy. Disputes over such principles are prone to epistemic circularity, since each side can defend its principle only by using it (Lynch 2010). That is why the philosophy/wisdom dispute resists ordinary argument. Its persistence is itself evidence of depth. Defoort's mapping of the debate over whether there is a "Chinese philosophy" found that the

positions rested largely on unexamined assumptions about what the word means, and that the arguments rarely moved anyone holding a different assumption (Defoort 2001). The dispute is also not merely verbal. Both sides use “philosophy” with a shared normative role, as an honorific that settles what is taught, translated, and funded, and both treat their disagreement as one about that role. A dispute over how such a term should be applied is a metalinguistic negotiation with real stakes, not a misunderstanding to be dissolved by stipulation (Plunkett and Sundell 2013). The method here has two parts.

The first part is **genealogical**. A concept’s history bears on its authority when the concept seems necessary and its formation shows otherwise (Williams 2002; Srinivasan 2019). Genealogy avoids the genetic fallacy when its conclusion is limited. It does not show a concept to be false because of its origin. It shows that the concept’s claim to have been *discovered* rather than *made* is unwarranted, and so returns the burden of justification to the concept.

The second part is **ameliorative**. If “philosophy” is partly a concept that can be revised for good reasons, the question is what it should be, given its purposes (Haslanger 2000). This fits the metalinguistic character of the dispute: when parties negotiate how a normative term should be used, the right question is which usage serves the term’s role better. Section 8 offers a revised criterion and defends it comparatively, not as neutral.

Two clarifications. First, a *register* is a construal of what thinking is *for*. On the theoretical construal, thinking aims at correct representation. On the cultivational construal, it aims at forming a thinker able to live well. Most traditions combine both. Second, the two registers are not offered as a complete taxonomy. Ritual, narrative, and aesthetic registers also exist. The two here are chosen because they lie on the axis along which the historical demotion took place (section 7).

3. The Exclusionist Framework

In its serious form, exclusion is a thesis about a kind. Philosophy is the free exercise of reason, unconstrained by authority, so traditions that subordinate reasoning to scripture or salvation belong to another kind. Heidegger gave the most confident version. For him philosophy is Greek in its essence, and “Western-European philosophy” is a tautology (Heidegger 1958). The framing persists in milder forms, sometimes among sympathetic readers who withhold the word as a mark of respect for difference.

Two findings undermine the view. Historically, histories of philosophy into the eighteenth century often began in Asia or Africa. Restricting philosophy to a Greek lineage was a later construction, driven partly by a new racial ordering of the human sciences (Bernasconi 1997; Park 2013). Internally, South Asian thinkers built formal theories of inference and knowledge whose rigour is not in doubt (Matilal 1986; Ganeri 2011), and African philosophers have reconstructed indigenous thought argumentatively (Oruka 1990). The polemical case against exclusion has been made forcefully (Garfield and Van Norden 2016; Van Norden 2017). This paper takes it as established.

4. Arguing Across the Disagreement

4.1 What the inclusionists claim

The leading inclusionists hold generous views, and those views should be stated accurately. Van Norden does not define philosophy as argument. He defines it as dialogue about questions that are important but remain methodologically unresolved (Van Norden 2017, ch. 5). Garfield argues that taking Buddhism seriously as philosophy means taking seriously its claim that understanding transforms the person who has it (Garfield 2015). Ganeri's programme of "re:emergent" philosophy argues against treating any single tradition as the measure of the others (Ganeri 2016). Any account that has these writers equate philosophy with argument misrepresents them.

The target, then, is not anyone's definition. It is a **methodological default** in the *recognition argument*: the argument by which a tradition's standing is established for a sceptical audience.

4.2 The evidential asymmetry

Read as a move in a deep disagreement, the recognition argument has a revealing structure. Its audience is a sceptic who holds the theoretical criterion. Evidence persuades that audience only if it meets that criterion. A theory of inference or an analysis of the self will satisfy the sceptic. A contemplative regimen or a programme of self-formation will not, because by the sceptic's lights these are what make a tradition "religion". The inclusionist therefore leads with the theoretical register, whatever their considered definition. A tradition's theoretical components count *for* its standing. Its cultivational components count for nothing, or against it. Call this the **evidential asymmetry**.

The asymmetry is a form of argumentative injustice. When one party to a deep disagreement controls what counts as evidence, the other can win recognition only by conceding the disputed framework. In ordinary debate, conceding an opponent's premises in order to defeat them on their own ground is a legitimate and often powerful strategy. It becomes costly when the premise conceded is the very framework in dispute. Then winning on the opponent's terms ratifies those terms. The burden of proof falls on one side only: the tradition must show that it resembles the standard, while the standard never has to show that it is fit to judge the tradition. The injustice lies in this distribution of burdens, not in any party's bad faith. The inclusionist wins the argument and loses the disagreement. The texts that best serve the recognition argument become the texts that are translated and taught, while the cultivational dimension moves to religious studies. A broad definition cannot prevent this, because the recognition argument operates in a context set by the narrow one.

4.3 Two programmes

Two influential programmes show the default operating openly. Neither is presented as a mistake. Both are rational responses to the asymmetry.

Bimal Krishna Matilal argued against the image of Indian thought as mystical, and showed that its epistemologists could be read alongside analytic philosophers of perception and hold their own (Matilal 1986). The strategy succeeded. By design, it also treated the soteriological framing of classical epistemology as setting rather than content.

Mark Siderits is the more instructive case because he is more careful. He does not bracket soteriology. He treats liberation as Buddhism's central concern and notes that Buddhists counted reasoning as part of the path. What he sets aside are appeals to the Buddha's authority, superseded science, and institutional and ritual life. Meditation, which he acknowledges to be necessary, receives little attention because the focus is texts and arguments (Siderits 2007, ch. 1). Each decision is reasonable and openly stated. Look, though, at where the line falls. Liberation is kept as a *topic*: the inquiry asks whether Buddhist claims are true. The *practice* through which liberation is pursued, and through which the tradition claims its insights are verified, falls outside the philosophical reading. The cultivational register survives as an object of theory and drops out as a mode of philosophy.

4.4 Admission by conformity

The *wisdom residue* is the cultivational dimension of a tradition that is relocated outside philosophy as a condition of admitting the tradition. *Admission by conformity* is the pattern that produces it: standing granted in proportion to resemblance to the theoretical register.

Bhabha's account of colonial mimicry, which produces a subject "almost the same, but not quite", offers a precise parallel in one respect (Bhabha 1994). Admission by conformity tends to produce a *marked category*. The admitted tradition rarely becomes simply philosophy. It becomes "Indian philosophy", a specialism that a general philosopher may ignore in a way that Kant may not. It is close enough to be included and different enough to stay marked, and its most visible difference is the cultivational dimension left out at admission.

5. A Worked Case: Nyāya

The *Nyāya-sūtra* opens with sixteen topics of inquiry. The list begins with the means and objects of knowledge (*pramāṇa*, *prameya*) and runs through doubt, argument, debate, and fallacy. The sūtra then says that true knowledge of these topics leads to the highest good (*niḥśreyasa*) (*Nyāya-sūtra* 1.1.1). The next sūtra gives the mechanism. Liberation (*apavarga*) comes about as false cognition is removed, with each removal bringing about the removal of what depends on it: defects, activity, birth, and suffering (*Nyāya-sūtra* 1.1.2). The list of objects of knowledge begins with the self and ends with suffering and liberation (*Nyāya-sūtra* 1.1.9). The founding text does not give a theory of knowledge in a religious frame. It defines its epistemology as serving liberation.

The tradition did not leave this relation fixed. Vātsyāyana's commentary on the opening sūtra cites the description, also found in the *Arthaśāstra*, of critical inquiry (*ānvīkṣikī*) as a lamp for all the sciences (Kauṭilya, *Arthaśāstra* 1.2.12; Olivelle 2013). It distinguishes Nyāya from a purely spiritual science of the

self by its method, while keeping liberation as the goal (Vātsyāyana, *Nyāya-bhāṣya* on 1.1.1, in Gautama 1984). In the new logic (*navya-nyāya*) of Gaṅgeśa and his successors, technical work on inference, negation, and the analysis of cognition developed to the point where the soteriological framing became largely formal (Ganeri 2011). The opening of a technical treatise could still name liberation as the goal while the treatise itself proceeded as autonomous theory.

Modern interpreters divided along the same line. Potter read classical Indian systems as philosophies of liberation (Potter 1963). Mohanty argued that the soteriological framing was often external to the philosophical work, and that the "spiritual" reading had served to deny Indian thought rational standing (Mohanty 1992). Matilal's programme sided with Mohanty.

Three lessons follow. The line between registers runs *inside* Nyāya: the tradition drew it, debated it, and redrew it. The Potter-Mohanty debate is not about whether Nyāya is philosophy, since both say it is, but about which register is central. And when the theoretical criterion admits Nyāya, it *settles an internal dispute from outside*, in favour of the later technical phase. Under the matching strategy, the opening sūtras of the founding text become its least philosophical part.

6. The Greek Interior

If the threshold runs inside traditions, it should run inside the Greek one. It does, starting with the word. Pythagoras is said to have refused the title "wise", since wisdom belongs to the gods, and claimed only to love it (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 5.3.8-9; Diogenes Laertius 1.12). Plato places philosophy between divine wisdom and ignorance (*Symposium* 203e-204b), and calls "wise" too much for a mortal (*Phaedrus* 278d). Aristotle separates theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) from practical wisdom (*phronēsis*), each with its own excellence (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI.5, VI.7). The philosophy/wisdom distinction began as a set of distinctions *inside* Greek thought.

Hadot gives the point its strongest form, reconstructing the ancient schools as ways of life whose doctrines served as spiritual exercises (Hadot 1995). He also distinguished philosophical discourse from philosophy itself, the way of life that the discourse served (Hadot 2002). That distinction anticipates the one drawn here between wisdom as an object of theory and wisdom as a register. His reading is contested, and the argument here does not need its strongest version. Cooper argues against Hadot that reasoned argument, not non-rational exercise, directed the ancient ways of life (Cooper 2012). Nehamas treats the art of living as one genre of ancient philosophy, not the whole (Nehamas 1998). Nussbaum shows Hellenistic ethics combining therapy and argument (Nussbaum 1994). All of them grant the modest premise needed: the cultivational register had full standing *as philosophy*, and theory was not taken to be the whole of it. Cooper is the most useful ally, because he shows argument and transformation integrated, and that integration is exactly what matching breaks apart.

Foucault adds a chronology. On the ancient principle of care of the self, access to truth required a prior transformation of the subject. A later "Cartesian moment" made knowledge available to a subject whose

formation did not matter (Foucault 2005). His dating can be disputed, but he names the event this argument needs: the separation of the registers *within* European philosophy.

This bears on the recent work on practical wisdom in this journal. Contemporary virtue theory treats *phronēsis* as a demanding object of theory, analysing its component skills and arguing that it cannot be eliminated (De Caro, Navarini, and Vaccarezza 2024). In the present terms, that work restores wisdom as an *object* of the theoretical register. The Greek material points to a further possibility that such work leaves open: wisdom as a *register*, a way of doing philosophy whose success consists partly in a transformed life.

7. Revaluation, Not Invention

An overstated version of the historical claim would say that Europe invented "oriental wisdom" to compensate for an inner loss. That is false. The trope is older, and Enlightenment writers often admired Chinese moral thought. The claim here is narrower. Between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, the same features of non-European thought changed from *credentials* for philosophical standing into *disqualifications*, at the same time as the cultivational register lost standing within European philosophy.

At the start of the period, Leibniz judged Europe superior in theoretical science and China superior in practical philosophy, and suggested that Chinese missionaries might teach Europe natural theology (Leibniz 1994). In 1721 Christian Wolff praised Confucian ethics at Halle as a *practical philosophy* attaining virtue by reason alone, a lecture that contributed to his expulsion from Prussia two years later (Wolff 1985). Kant still distinguished a scholastic concept of philosophy from a "worldly" one concerned with the ends of reason and the philosopher as teacher of wisdom (Kant 1998, A838-839/B866-867), and recalled the ancient view of philosophy as a doctrine of the highest good (Kant 1997, 5:108).

At the end of the period, histories of philosophy began with Greece. Park traces the shift from Brucker's mid-eighteenth-century history, which still surveyed "barbarian" philosophy at length, to the histories of the 1790s onward, which moved Asian and African thought into a prehistory or dropped it (Park 2013). Hegel granted that Confucius taught morality but called it practical worldly wisdom with nothing speculative in it, and treated Indian thought as remaining within religion (Hegel 1892; Halbfass 1988). The features Wolff praised were now evidence of absence. The Chinese sources had not changed. The European scale had.

The causal claim is limited. Park establishes that racial theory and colonial power were central to the exclusion (Park 2013). The register story adds to that account by identifying the conceptual means. Racial hierarchy needed a respectable criterion, and the newly elevated theoretical register supplied one. The evidence is a close temporal fit between datable texts, with a mechanism explaining it. That is stronger than a plausible conjecture and deliberately weaker than a monocausal history. It also explains a pattern noted in critiques of "epistemicide", the marginalisation of whole ways of knowing (Santos

2014). Knowledge whose authority rested on transformation, practice, and lived exemplification was especially exposed once philosophy had redefined itself so that those features no longer counted.

8. A Way Through: Standpoint-Stability

If the dispute is a deep disagreement, pessimism threatens. No neutral criterion exists, and each side can defend its framework only by using it (Lynch 2010). The argument so far might seem only to swap one parochial criterion for another. This section offers a qualified optimism.

Consider two counterfactual worlds. In the first, the nineteenth-century discipline does not demote the cultivational register, and Wolff's view becomes its starting point. There, the features the actual recognition argument downplays become those most likely to win recognition. The opening sūtras of the *Nyāya-sūtra* are read as the tradition's statement of what its philosophy is for, not as its religious frame, and no wisdom residue arises. In the second, a tradition that takes the transformation of the knower to be the point of knowing becomes the global template. A scholar there might ask whether the modern seminar, its argument detached from any practice of living, is philosophy or a refined intellectual sport. From inside each world, its own criterion would feel obvious.

The counterfactuals supply a test that does not need a neutral standpoint. Frameworks cannot be compared by a shared first-order criterion, but they can be compared by how their verdicts behave when the standpoint changes. A criterion whose verdicts reverse when the global template reverses tracks the evaluator's position. A criterion whose verdicts hold tracks something about the practices judged.

The test is not a further framework imposed from outside, and this is what lets it avoid the circularity that threatens deep disagreements. Neither party to the philosophy/wisdom dispute claims that its criterion records local preference. Each claims that its criterion tracks what philosophy *is*. That claim has a consequence that each party is committed to by its own lights: a criterion that tracks the nature of philosophy, rather than the position of the judge, should give the same verdicts whoever applies it. Standpoint-stability is therefore a condition that both frameworks already accept, because it follows from what each says about itself. The test does not ask either side to abandon its framework. It asks each to meet a standard implied by its own claim to objectivity. Where one framework meets that standard and the other does not, the dispute has a rational resolution that does not presuppose either framework.

The inherited criterion fails this test. The proposal here is an **answerability criterion**. A practice of thought is philosophical when it holds itself answerable for its claims and its ends, exposing them to examination, correction, and challenge, whether by argument, by practice, or by the life the thought is meant to shape. It remains demanding: unexamined maxims and doctrines held on authority alone fail it. But answerability is not exclusive to either register. Take the *Nyāya-sūtra*'s programme and an analytic seminar on conditionals. The inherited criterion admits the seminar and admits Nyāya only after discounting its opening sūtras, and the second counterfactual world reverses both verdicts. Under the answerability criterion both pass in every world. The seminar exposes its claims to counterexample. The

Nyāya programme does the same, and also stakes them on a transformation whose occurrence or failure is itself open to examination.

The criterion is still a thesis, and it has borderline cases, such as theologies and therapeutic schools. Every demarcation criterion has a penumbra. The inherited criterion's apparent sharpness came from excluding one register wholesale. The claim is comparative: stability under a change of standpoint makes a criterion less parochial. That suggests a general lesson for the theory of deep disagreement, between Fogelin's pessimism and the more optimistic views that followed it. Where framework commitments conflict, argument need not run out. It can move to the level at which frameworks are compared by commitments they share about themselves, and the claim to objectivity is one such commitment.

An exclusionist might resist. Reason is universal, the reply runs, so the judges of the second world are simply wrong, and a criterion need not survive being applied by people who misapply it. But this reply needs an independent ground for calling those judges wrong, and every ground available to the exclusionist is framework-relative. A judge in the second world can say the same of the actual world's judges, with the same confidence and the same circularity. Faced with this symmetry, each party can either declare its own standpoint privileged, which begs the question, or look for a feature that breaks the symmetry without presupposing either framework. Stability under a change of standpoint is such a feature, and so far as can be seen it is the only one available. The exclusionist's appeal to universal reason is in fact an appeal to standpoint-stability, made while declining the test that would confirm it.

The lesson is limited. It applies only where each framework claims to track something independent of the judge, and only where counterfactual standpoints can be described concretely. Many deep disagreements meet both conditions, and the philosophy/wisdom dispute is one of them.

9. Objections and Replies

9.1 "This romanticises the non-West."

Objection. Describing other traditions as cultivational revives the stereotype of the mystical East.

Reply. The argument denies that the cultivational register belongs to the non-West. It is as present in Greece as in India, and the theoretical register is fully present in Nyāya. The thesis is that every tradition contains both registers, and that the inherited criterion objects only when a tradition refuses to reduce itself to theory. The stereotype is what section 7 identifies as a product of the revaluation. Diagnosing a stereotype is not endorsing it, and the argument's demand is the opposite of romantic: that cultivational claims be examined as candidates for truth, which romanticism never asks of them.

9.2 "The paper is an argument, so it commits the error it diagnoses."

Reply. The target is the theoretical register's *monopoly*, not the register. Arguing in that register that it should not be the only criterion is no more contradictory than arguing in English that English should not be the only language of scholarship.

9.3 "Stability is cheap."

Objection. A criterion that counts everything as philosophy is perfectly stable under any change of standpoint. If stability is the test, the emptiest criterion wins.

Reply. Stability is necessary for a less parochial criterion, not sufficient. A criterion must also discriminate, sorting practices in a way that both parties would recognise as non-trivial. The empty criterion fails that condition, and the answerability criterion meets it. It excludes unexamined maxims, doctrines held on authority alone, and slogans that never risk refutation, and it does so in every world. The test is therefore stability *together with* discriminating power. The inherited criterion discriminates but is unstable. The empty criterion is stable but does not discriminate. The answerability criterion does both.

9.4 "Imagined judges prove nothing."

Objection. The second counterfactual world is an invention. A criterion cannot be faulted for its verdicts in the hands of judges who do not exist.

Reply. The second world globalises a standpoint that has actually existed. The founding text of Nyāya, the Hellenistic schools, and the sage philosophers Oruka records each held that a philosophy which leaves its practitioner unchanged has failed. The counterfactual asks only what would follow if that actual standpoint had held the institutional position the theoretical standpoint now holds. The judges are not imaginary. Their dominance is.

9.5 "Dotson has already said this."

Objection. Dotson argues that philosophy runs a "culture of justification" that treats its own norms of legitimation as neutral, so that some work cannot be heard as philosophy (Dotson 2012).

Reply. The debt is real. The difference is in the object. Dotson's object is the *profession*: whose work counts within the academy. The present object is the *criterion applied across traditions*, and the cost that falls on the admitted traditions themselves. The paper also adds a textual case, a dated revaluation, and a test for comparing rival criteria. The analyses are complementary.

9.6 "Insiders demanded the theoretical criterion."

Objection. Hountondji rejected the reduction of African philosophy to collective worldview and required explicit, individual criticism (Hountondji 1983). Mohanty rejected the spiritual reading of Indian thought (Mohanty 1992).

Reply. This confirms the thesis rather than undermining it. Each was intervening in a specific polemical situation, resisting a stereotype (communal sentiment in one case, world-denying spirituality in the other) that had been used to deny their traditions rational standing. Section 7 traces that stereotype to the revaluation. Their insistence on theory was principled, and in context it was right. Their positions show the criterion contested *within* traditions, as the Nyāya case predicts. Oruka's sage philosophy is revealing: its distinction between the merely wise elder and the philosophic sage negotiates the registers on African terms, and it credits reflective, lived wisdom as philosophy (Oruka 1990).

9.7 "Two registers are too few."

Reply. As section 2 says, thought has ritual, narrative, and aesthetic registers as well. The two discussed here are chosen because the threshold was historically drawn along their axis: section 7's revaluation concerned practical wisdom and speculative system specifically. The structure generalises. Any register that a criterion treats as disqualifying without argument will leave its own residue, and the answerability criterion can be extended to such cases.

9.8 "This is diagnosis without consequence."

Reply. Three consequences follow. Comparative method loses matching as its default, so that a tradition is read in light of its own balance of registers and its cultivational texts are treated as possible primary sources of philosophy. In the Nyāya case, this changes which sūtras count as central. The case for curricular inclusion changes its basis: other traditions belong not because they did Western philosophy too, but because philosophy is broader than its theoretical register. And the discipline's account of itself reopens the cultivational register as a legitimate mode of philosophy in general.

9.9 "Ethics remains central to Western philosophy, so nothing was demoted."

Reply. Modern ethics is mostly theory *about* how to live. Its success is measured as theory is measured. A brilliant theory of virtue by someone with no interest in becoming virtuous is still brilliant philosophy. That indifference marks the demotion. For the ancient schools and for Nyāya, a philosophy that left its practitioner unchanged had failed *as philosophy*. Contemporary ethics keeps the practical as a *subject matter* and has dropped cultivation as a *criterion of success*. The revival of virtue theory, including the work on *phronēsis* in this journal, illustrates the thesis: wisdom has returned as an object of theory, while philosophy as a practice of becoming wise remains outside the discipline's measures.

9.10 "Specialists preserve the residue."

Reply. They do, outside philosophy. Religious studies asks what a practice meant to its practitioners. It rarely asks whether its claims about the transformation of the knower are *true*. That question belongs to philosophy, and relocation leaves it unasked. The residue is preserved, but away from the setting where it would have authority, a disciplinary analogue of hermeneutical marginalisation (Fricker 2007).

10. Conclusion

The philosophy/wisdom question is a deep disagreement, and the usual corrective to exclusion argued across it by conceding the opponent's framework. The disputed line runs inside traditions, between a theoretical and a cultivational register. Nyāya drew and redrew it, Greek thought marked it in the word *philosophia*, and European thought between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries reversed its evaluative charge. Matching reproduced that demotion at the level of interpretation and left the wisdom residue outside philosophy.

The case also teaches something about deep disagreement. The dispute looked interminable because each side could defend its criterion only by applying it. It becomes tractable once each criterion is held to the standard implied by its own claim to objectivity, namely stability under a change of standpoint. The remedy is to redraw the threshold with different content. An answerability criterion recognises disciplined, self-correcting thought in either register, and it can be defended without a neutral standpoint because its verdicts survive a change of standpoint. The heaviest cost of the inherited criterion may fall on the tradition that applied it. In assigning the cultivational register to others, modern philosophy lost sight of what its founders took philosophy to be. Recognising other traditions on terms that respect their cultivational dimension, rather than removing it, may therefore be the same act as recovering a conception of philosophy that once existed and could exist again.

Declarations

Author Contribution

S.K.R. conceived the study, conducted the research, wrote the main manuscript text, and reviewed the final manuscript.

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