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What Postmodern Opportunity?
By Daniel Howard-Snyder and Mark Walhout

In "The Postmodern Opportunity: Christians in the Academy," Harold Heie draws our attention to "two major contemporary tendencies." "The first," he says, "is the postmodern epistemological turn toward perspectivalism. . . . The second is a tendency "for persons from different interpretive communities to be unable to talk authentically to each other about their differing perspectives or knowledge claims." Heie goes on to argue that "a proper understanding of the legitimate insights of the first postmodern epistemological tendency toward perspectivalism"—what he calls "moderate postmodernism"—"can provide a window of opportunity for overcoming the second tendency toward non-conversation" (138).

By our lights, neither of the tendencies Heie mentions is unique to our own time. More importantly, however, what distinguishes Heie's "moderate" postmodernism from modern epistemological assumptions—namely, "perspectivalism"—is incompatible with other constituents of moderate postmodernism. Moreover, if perspectivalism is true, there could be no reason to believe it is true. Most important of all, however, we find no evidence in Heie's paper for his main thesis that moderate postmodernism promotes cross-perspectival conversation; indeed, Cartesian foundationalism does a better job on that score. In what follows, we shall defend these claims. But lest we be misunderstood, let us be clear from the outset: although we disagree with Heie on important matters, we applaud his commitment to cross-perspectival conversation and endorse his recommendations for restructuring the Christian academy.

I. On "perspectivalism"

Let us start with Heie's remarks about "perspectivalism." He initially glosses perspectivalism as "the view that our claims to knowledge unavoidably reflect our particular perspectives as members of different interpretive communities" (138). Later, he approvingly quotes Walter Bruegamm, who lays down three "postmodern epistemological assumptions" which Heie characterizes as follows:

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Here is another instance of this peculiar feature of Heise’s account of perspectivalism. Heise agrees with Bruggemann that “it is impossible to voice large truth. All one can do is to voice local truth and propose that it pertains elsewhere” (145). Perhaps by “large truth” Heise means “global” truths like 2+2=4, or water is composed of H₂O, or love at its best is a very good thing. If these are global truths, then by asserting them, have we not just “voiced” some global truths? Perhaps Heise will accept the conditional but deny that there are any global truths—every truth is a local truth—and that is why we cannot “voice” global truths. In that case, are we supposed to infer that while 2+2=4 at Seattle Pacific University, 2+2 does not equal 4 at, say, Gordon College? Are we to believe that love at its best is a very good thing in Seattle but not in Boston? If Heise proposes for our assent a view with implications like these, then we have surely found something a modern epistemologist would reject—but wouldn’t anybody else do the same?

Perhaps Heise means something else. Perhaps he means that even if there are global truths, it is impossible to know any of them; if it possible only to know local truths. If this is what Heise means, we should inquire after his theory of knowledge, a theory that allows us to know that our office walls are off-white but not that 2+2=4 or that water is composed of H₂O or that love at its best is a good thing. Suppose we become satisfied on this score and even come to share Heise’s conviction. But of course, many modern epistemologists, past and present, are skeptics about global truths. So once again we have a choice: either read Heise’s account of perspectivalism as asserting what is obviously false or read it as irrelevant to the distinction between modern and postmodern epistemology.

What about the claim that knowledge is “pluralistic”? Heise quotes Bruggemann’s assertion that “knowledge is . . . a cacophony of claims, each of which rings true to its own advocates . . . [but each] claim . . . is made in a pluralism where it has no formal privilege” (145). How should we understand this? If it implies that incompatible claims can each be known, then it implies we can know falsehoods—but we cannot know falsehoods. Of course, we might think we know a proposition when, unbeknownst to us, it is in fact false. But in that case we would just be mistaken. What we look for knowledge really would not be knowledge after all. So a charitable reading of Heise’s claim that knowledge is pluralistic will not have him implying that one can know falsehoods.

Perhaps Heise means that differing claims to knowledge—even incompatible claims—can be equally justified. Heise accepts the claim that “the proposition that slavery is evil is true” (146). And he also accepts Jeffrey Stout’s contention that “what we’re justified in believing about the evil of slavery varies according to the evidence and reasoning available to us in our place in culture and history” (146). Historically, modern epistemologists have held something like the following: Someone is justified in believing p if she is not flouting any of her duties as a truth-seeker in believing p. Of course, one might do his best to discover whether slavery is evil—think long and hard about it, consider all the arguments for and against it, consult all the available sources—and still believe that slavery is not evil. And someone else in another culture might do the same and end up believing that slavery is evil. According to the historically dominant view about justification amongst modern epistemologists, one person would justifiably believe slavery is wrong and the other would justifiably believe that slavery is not wrong. So this understanding of Heise’s claim that knowledge is pluralistic does not draw a line between modern and postmodern epistemological assumptions.

Let us try a different tack. We need an account of “formal privilege” according to which the assertion that no claim has a formal privilege in a pluralistic society is neither obviously false nor useless for distinguishing modern from postmodern epistemological assumptions. Suppose we look to Descartes for it. He is often vilified by postmodernists. Perhaps he said something that Heise means to deny when he (Heise) affirms that no claim has a formal privilege in a pluralism.

Descartes famously thought that certain beliefs about himself—notably, that he exists—counted as knowledge because they could not possibly be false whilst he was thinking. Indeed, Descartes thought his belief that he existed was privileged on that account. And surely it is an impressive feature of any belief that has it. (Wouldn’t it be nice if more of our beliefs were true just in virtue of our thinking?) More germane for our present purposes, however, was Descartes’s view that the privileged status of his belief that he existed was not some odd quirks or fortunate coincidence about him as an upper-class white male situated in the French academy in the seventeenth century; rather, this fact about him was an instance of a perfectly general or universal (you might say “transversalial”) fact, namely, that For any person S, S is thinking only if S exists.

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Reflecting on what it was about this line of reasoning that made it so ineludible, Descartes notices that it possessed a “clarity and distinctness” that most of his other beliefs lacked. With this in mind, he affirmed what students of Descartes call “the truth rule”: any proposition that one clearly and distinctly grasps is true. Clarity and distinctness were, accordingly, designated by Descartes as the marks of the foundational beliefs in the edifice of knowledge. Whether Descartes thought that beliefs other than the belief that one exists were fit foundations for a person’s belief structure is a matter of dispute. But we can be sure of this: he thought that For any proposition p and for any person S, S knows that p if and only if S believes that p, and p is clearly and distinctly grasped by S or S (correctly and in full awareness) deduces p from other propositions she believes and which she clearly and distinctly grasps.
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This is Descartes’s fundamental epistemological thesis. We shall call it Cartesian foundationalism.

Now let us consider two “modern” epistemological assumptions that lie at the heart of Cartesian foundationalism.

First, Descartes claimed that only some propositions were fit for the foundations of one’s belief structure (those that were clearly and distinctly grasped), and only some propositions were fit to constitute its superstructure (those deduced from the first sort). In other words, he held that certain beliefs or claims are privileged. His particular concern was with what it takes for a belief to count as knowledge. Modern epistemologists, however, have distinguished that exalted epistemic status from other good-making features of beliefs—e.g., rationality, justifiability and so on—and as you might expect, they wrangle over different accounts of these matters. But there is surprising consensus on this much: if one believes a proposition \( p \), it is a good thing if what one goes on in believing \( p \) makes \( p \) at least highly likely to be true. (The phrase “what one goes on” is meant to cover whatever might figure in belief formation and sustenance, e.g., arguments, experience of various sorts, testimony, memory, sensory processes and so on.) Of course, the modern epistemologist does not think that the only good thing about one’s belief is that what one goes on makes it at least highly likely to be true. She may well hold, for example, that it is also a good thing that one’s system of beliefs is coherent, or that one’s beliefs are undefeated, or that one’s beliefs are the result of belief-forming processes that are functioning properly in an environment for which they were designed, and so on. The modern epistemologist is even permitted to hold that one particularly splendid feature of a belief is that it does not prevent one from gaining tenure—let us, however, focus on the idea that it is a good thing if what one goes on in believing a proposition makes it at least highly likely that the proposition is true. Descartes had a certain view about what sorts of things one was permitted to go on in believing a proposition, as we’ve seen. But we can abstract from the details of his account and focus on the general point. Let us say then, that if what one goes on in believing a proposition makes it at least very likely to be true, then one’s belief is epistemically privileged, and we shall understand this to imply that it is a good feature of beliefs that have it. Descartes held that some of his beliefs were epistemically privileged in this sense while others were not.

Secondly, according to Descartes, a belief is epistemically privileged not in virtue of its specific content but rather in virtue of the fact that what is believed is either clearly and distinctly grasped or deduced from propositions that are clearly and distinctly grasped. One interesting fact about these two features is that they cut across gender, race, class, creed, worldview, life-world—in a word, “particularities.” Each of us is such that she knows that she exists whilst she is thinking since each of us, upon reflection, clearly and distinctly grasps that proposition. Each of us is such that she knows those propositions she correctly deduces from those propositions she clearly and distinctly grasps. And therefore, according to Descartes, certain epistemic standards—most notably the one we have called Cartesian foundationalism—apply to one’s thinking thing, never mind whether one is male or female, white or black, gay or straight, French or English, divorced or happily married, a resident of Constantinople in 389 or Germany in 1944, Jewish or Buddhist. Everyone is invited to the Big Tent of Cartesian foundationalism. Everyone can be a knower, whatever her particularities. Again, Descartes was concerned with knowledge, but his egalitarianism can be generalized to cover any other epistemic modality. So generalized, we shall call this feature of Cartesian foundationalism epistemic egalitarianism.

So, the Cartesian foundationalist is fundamentally committed to (1) the idea that certain beliefs of a person are epistemically privileged, in the sense defined above, and (2) the ideal of epistemic egalitarianism, the idea that some epistemic standards apply to a person regardless of his particularities.

Now back to Heie. As we have seen, he agrees with Brueggemann that each claim “is made in a pluralism where it has no formal privilege” (145). He also asserts “that standards for the evaluation of knowledge claims are ‘historical products’ embedded in the ‘practices’ engaged in by persons involved in specific areas of discourse” (147). Whether Heie means to imply that no claim made in a pluralistic society is epistemically privileged in our sense or that the only epistemic standards there are to apply to a claim in virtue of the claimant’s particularities, we do not know. But this is certainly the sort of thing we hear postmodernists say; moreover, it would be awfully strange if a postmodernist distinguished postmodern and modern epistemological assumptions but left two of the rock-bottom assumptions of Cartesian foundationalism on the postmodern side of the line. We shall assume, therefore, that whatever Heie means, he means something that precludes Descarte’s thesis of epistemic privilege and his commitment to epistemic egalitarianism. We have, then, found something in Heie’s account of perspectivism that can be made to look both distinctively postmodern and not obviously false.

Let us take stock. Heie claims that perspectivism provides a window of opportunity for cross-perspectival conversation We began by trying to understand that was meant by “perspectivism.” We have now arrived at the following thesis: Perspectivism: No claim is epistemically privileged in a pluralistic society, and no epistemic standard applies to persons regardless of their particularities.

II. On “moderate postmodernism”

Heie speaks not only of perspectivism but “moderate postmodernism.” Clearly he means moderate postmodernism to include perspectivism, but what else does it include? According to Heie, “moderate postmodernism” is to be contrasted with “strong postmodernism.” While both endorse perspectivism, strong postmodernism holds that “there exist no universal truths that transcend our differing perspectives” while moderate postmodernism denies this.

Three matters of clarification arise immediately. First, what is it for a truth to transcend our differing perspectives? We shall understand this as follows: a true proposition \( p \) transcends our differing perspectives if and only if \( p \) would be true even if there were a completely different set of human perspectives or none at
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all. Second, what does Heie mean by “universal truths”? He could mean truths expressed by propositions like all water is composed of H₂O and all slavery is evil as opposed to “local” truths like the water in Puget Sound is composed of H₂O and American slavery is evil. Since all of these propositions are true independently of our differing perspectives, however, we shall assume that by “universal truths” Heie means simply “truths that transcend our differing perspectives.” Third, how is it possible for there to be truths that transcend our differing perspectives unless there is a way the world is independently of those perspectives? How is it possible for water is composed of H₂O to be a truth that transcends our differing perspectives unless water is composed of H₂O, and water’s being composed of H₂O does not depend in any way on anybody’s perspective? How is it possible for slavery is evil to be a universal truth that transcends our differing perspectives unless slavery is evil, and slavery’s being evil does not depend in any way on anybody’s perspective? We either find obviously false or fall to understand any answer to these questions which does not entail that there is a way things are that is independent of all perspectives.

We shall therefore take it that Heie’s moderate postmodernism rejects the idea that what there is completely depends on human conceptual schemes.

We are now prepared to undertake the main task of this section. Moderate postmodernism, as we understand it, affirms three theses:

**P1.** No claim is epistemically privileged in a pluralism; that is, in a society where lots of incommensurable claims are made, no claim is such that what one goes on in making it renders it at least highly likely to be true.

**P2.** No epistemic standards apply to persons regardless of their particularities.

**P3.** Some truths transcend our differing perspectives; that is, some truths would still be true even if there were a completely different set of human perspectives or none at all.

We shall now argue that moderate postmodernism is internally inconsistent and epistemologically self-defeating.

**Argument 1.** Suppose that P3 is true. Now consider: one of those truths that transcend our differing perspectives, say p. If you were to believe p, and if your belief that p was either based on truth-conducive grounds or was the product of a reliable belief-forming disposition, then your believing p would be a good thing. For your belief would be true, and moreover, what you went on in believing p would make it at least highly likely to be true. This is just to say that you would meet the following epistemic standard: One is doing well in believing p if what one goes on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true. But notice: there is no reference to anyone’s particularities in this standard, nor need there be. So, P2 is false. Therefore, it some truths transcend our differing perspectives, then some epistemic standards apply to claims regardless of the claimant’s particularities.

One might object that this argument assumes that P1 is false since it assumes that what you go on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true. But this objection confuses the assertion of a conditional with the assertion of its antecedent. We neither said nor implied that what you go on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true. Rather, we said that if what you go on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true, then you would be doing well in believing p. And
all. Second, what does Heie mean by “universal truths”? He could mean truths expressed by propositions like all water is composed of H₂O and all slavery is evil as opposed to “local” truths like the water in Puget Sound is composed of H₂O and American slavery is evil. Since all of these propositions are true independently of our differing perspectives, however, we shall assume that by “universal truths” Heie means simply “truths that transcend our differing perspectives.” Third, how is it possible for there to be truths that transcend our differing perspectives unless there is a way the world is independently of those perspectives? How is it possible for water is composed of H₂O to be a truth that transcends our differing perspectives unless water is composed of H₂O and water’s being composed of H₂O does not depend in any way on anybody’s perspective? How is it possible for slavery is evil to be a universal truth that transcends our differing perspectives unless slavery is evil, and slavery’s being evil does not depend in any way on anybody’s perspective? We either find obviously false or fall to understand any answer to these questions which does not entail that there is a way things are that is independent of all perspectives. We shall therefore take it that Heie’s moderate postmodernism rejects the idea that what there is completely depends on human conceptual schemes.

We are now prepared to undertake the main task of this section. Moderate postmodernism, as we understand it, affirms three theses:

P₁. No claim is epistemically privileged in a pluralism; that is, in a society where lots of incompatible claims are made, no claim is such that what one goes on in making it renders it at least highly likely to be true.

P₂. No epistemic standards apply to persons regardless of their particularities.

P₃. Some truths transcend our differing perspectives; that is, some truths would still be true even if there were a completely different set of human perspectives or none at all.

We shall now argue that moderate postmodernism is internally inconsistent and epistemologically self-defeating.

**Argument 1.** Suppose that P₃ is true. Now consider one of those truths that transcend our differing perspectives, say p. If you were to believe p, and if your belief that p was either based on truth-conducive grounds or was the product of a reliable belief-forming disposition, then your believing p would be a good thing. For your belief would be true, and moreover, what you went on in believing p would make it at least highly likely to be true. This is just to say that you would meet the following epistemic standard: One is doing well in believing p if what one goes on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true. But notice: there is no reference to anyone’s particularities in this standard, nor need there be. So, P₂ is false. Therefore, it some truths transcend our differing perspectives, then some epistemic standards apply to claims regardless of the claimant’s particularities.

One might object that this argument assumes that P₁ is false since it assumes that what you go on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true. But this objection confuses the assertion of a conditional with the assertion of its antecedent. We neither said nor implied that what you go on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true. Rather, we said that if what you go on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true, then you would be doing well in believing p. And

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that conditional is true, given P₃, even if it is absolutely impossible for you to go on anything in believing p that would make p at least highly likely to be true. (Here’s an analogy: One writes well if one writes in such a way that one’s audience always understands exactly what one has in mind. This is a standard of good writing, even if no one ever meets it.)

**Argument 2.** Suppose moderate postmodernism is true. Then P₁ is true: in a society where lots of incompatible claims are made, no claim is such that what one goes on in making it renders it at least highly likely to be true. But our society is a society where lots of incompatible beliefs are held. In that case, moderate postmodernism itself is a claim made in a pluralistic society, and hence, even if it is true, it has no epistemic privilege; that is, even if it is true, then it is impossible for anyone to believe it in a way that makes it at least highly likely to be true. No argument, no experience, no belief-forming disposition, absolutely nothing could possibly make it at least highly likely to be true. This is a disappointing set of epistemic credentials postmodernism has to offer.

III. On “cross-perspectival conversation”

We now turn to Heie’s main thesis. Why does Heie suppose that cross-perspectival conversation would be promoted if everyone were to accept moderate postmodernism? Perhaps it is because he detects a causal connection between the postmodern turn toward perspectivalism and another contemporary tendency, namely the tendency toward pluralism in the academy. Heie endorses Nicholas Wolterstorff’s contention that the “once-regnant self-image of the academy . . . has been shattered over the past quarter century” (145). No longer, Wolterstorff observes, does the academy require us “to strip off all our particularities,” making use “only of such belief-forming dispositions as are shared among all human beings” (145). Instead, we are invited to remain clothed in our particularities, employing belief-forming dispositions we may not share with all human beings. “This postmodern epistemology,” Heie concludes, “inevitably leads to what Wolterstorff calls the ‘pluralization of the academy’” (145). No doubt that is why many academic pluralists have embraced it.

We will stipulate that the postmodern turn toward perspectivalism is one cause of the pluralization of the academy (though other, less ratified causes are surely at work too). We would simply note that Cartesian foundationalism, as defined in section I above, is compatible with academic pluralism. One can accept Descartes’s particular foundationalism and still recommend that we employ belief-forming dispositions we do not share with all human beings and even that the pluralization of the academy is a very good thing. It is true, of course, that Descartes’s method of acquiring clear and distinct beliefs—the “method of doubt”—led him to abstract himself from his particularities as an upper-class white male situated in the French academy in the seventeenth century. It may even be true, for all we know, that Cartesian foundationalists oppose the pluralization of the academy. (We say “for all we know” because, alas, we don’t actually know any
understands what one is accepting in endorsing moderate postmodernism, one cannot consistently engage in Heie's postmodern conversation project.

We know of no reason to think that acceptance of moderate postmodernism promotes cross-perspectival conversation, and we think we can see reasons to believe that it does not promote it. Perhaps Heie should look elsewhere for an "epistemological foundation for his laudable aims. As we saw in section I, Cartesian foundationalism implies the ideal of epistemic egalitarianism, that at least some epistemic standards apply to every person regardless of her particularities. We identified one such standard in section II: One is doing well in believing p if what one goes on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true. Suppose we accept this egalitarian epistemic standard. In that case, if we aim to do well in our beliefings—"to seek after truth," as Heie puts it—then we will have good reason to engage in Heie's cross-perspectival conversation. For by entering into such conversations and deploying Heie's conversational ideals we may well come to believe truths of which we had been ignorant and to believe them in a truth-conducive fashion. Moreover, we may well come to see that some of our beliefs are false and hence that they should be given up, or we may come to see what we are going on in believing some things does not make it likely that they are true and hence that we should find alternative grounds for continuing to hold them. Finally, we may well discover that our beliefs can withstand critical scrutiny and that, to that extent, what we are doing on is making our beliefs at least highly likely to be true. For these reasons, we are tempted to offer the following advice to anyone who wishes to promote cross-perspectival conversation: become a Cartesian foundationalist.

IV. A call to conversation

We have tried to understand Heie's perspectivalism and moderate postmodernism. But despite our efforts, we may well have misunderstood his views. We close, therefore, with a call to further conversation with those sympathetic with Heie's arguments. If we have failed to understand what is meant by "perspectivalism" and "moderate postmodernism," please clearly describe these views in such a way that your description meets these three conditions: (1) it is not obviously false; (2) it draws a line between modern and postmodern epistemological assumptions; and (3) if it is accepted, then it is significantly more likely that cross-perspectival conversation will occur than if Cartesian foundationalism is accepted. Nothing less can bear the load of Heie's main thesis; nothing less will meet our contention that postmodernism has nothing distinctive to offer in the way of promoting Heie's "postmodern" conversation project and his aim to restructure the Christian academy.1

1For comments on earlier drafts of this essay, we are grateful to Phil Goggin, Francois Howard-Snyder and Steve Layman.
Cartesian foundationalists.) But these two facts are beside the point. For Descartes's foundationalism is logically distinct from his method of doubt. In principle, there is no reason why beliefs we have formed as a result of our particularities cannot pass Descartes's test of clarity and distinctness. Indeed, certain particularities may well put one who has them in a better position to grasp clearly and distinctly certain propositions. The slave, not the slaveholder, is in a better position to grasp clearly and distinctly that slavery is evil; the abused wife, not the abusing husband, is in a better position to grasp clearly and distinctly that spousal abuse is harmful. And one's natural cognitive endowments may contribute to one's ability to grasp clearly and distinctly propositions that most people could never understand. So if there are Cartesian foundationalists who oppose the pluralization of the academy, their reasons are not rooted in their distinctive epistemology.

But Heie's question is not whether the academy should be pluralized; he accepts academic pluralism as a given. His question, rather, is how to promote cross-perspectival conversation in the midst of this pluralism, and his answer is to accept "the legitimate insights" of "the postmodern epistemological tendency toward perspectivalism," which is just his moderate postmodernism. But exactly how would accepting P1, P2, and P3 promote cross-perspectival conversation? Heie never explains. Instead, he proposes a "postmodern conversation process" (summarized on page 147), spells out ideals for conducting that conversation (section III) and sketches how a Christian college can be a "community of Conversation" (section IV). Strikingly absent from all this is anything that a Cartesian foundationalist would reject and anything that would be promoted by the academy's accepting P1, P2 and P3. Indeed, accepting these three propositions seems to us to undermine the conversation project Heie proposes. We have space to sketch two reasons.

1. The goal of the project is to seek after truth, Heie says. This requires that those holding radically different perspectives be willing to be corrected. How is such correction to take place? Following Wolterstorff, Heie suggests that "it is possible for two persons from different particularities to correct each other by seeking commonalities in epistemic practices and results" (148). But moderate postmodernism denies that there are any epistemic standards that apply to persons regardless of their particularities (P2). And here lies the worry. The greater the particular differences between the conversants, the more they must rely on epistemic standards that are so stripped of particularities that there is no difference between them and universal standards. Conversely, if radically differing conversants see that their differences imply that they must accept universal epistemic standards in order to converse, then if they accept P2 they won't talk.

2. Heie's picture of cross-perspectival conversation is basically this: Conversants from radically differing perspectives aim to find common ground—certain shared epistemic practices and the results of using those practices—from which they can discuss their differences and thereby discover the truth about the topic upon which they disagree. This picture presupposes that it is at least possible for the conversants to come up with something that will constitute grounds for believing that certain things are true. But this is precisely what P1 rules out. Hence if one understands what one is accepting in endorsing moderate postmodernism, one cannot consistently engage in Heie's postmodern conversation project.

We know of no reason to think that acceptance of moderate postmodernism promotes cross-perspectival conversation, and we think we can see reasons to believe that it does not promote it. Perhaps Heie should look elsewhere for an epistemological foundation for his laudable aims. As we saw in section I, Cartesian foundationalism implies the ideal of epistemic egalitarianism, that at least some epistemic standards apply to every person regardless of her particularities. We identified one such standard in section II: One is doing well in believing p if what one goes on in believing p makes p at least highly likely to be true. Suppose we accept this egalitarian epistemic standard. In that case, if we aim to do well in our beliefs—"to seek after truth," as Heie puts it—then we will have good reason to engage in Heie's cross-perspectival conversation. For by entering into such conversations and deploying Heie's conversational ideals we may well come to believe truths of which we had been ignorant and to believe them in a truth-conducive fashion. Moreover, we may well come to see that some of our beliefs are false and hence that they should be given up, or we may come to see that what we go on in believing some things does not make it likely that they are true and hence that we should find alternative grounds for continuing to hold them. Finally, we may well discover that our beliefs can withstand critical scrutiny and that, to that extent, what we are going on does make our beliefs at least highly likely to be true. For these reasons, we are tempted to offer the following advice to anyone who wishes to promote cross-perspectival conversation: become a Cartesian foundationalist.

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