ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Accepting Premises And Systems Of Belief

1. *Introduction*

Many informal logic texts inform their readers to test premise acceptability in order to determine whether or not support or justification for a conclusion in an argument is cogent or warranted (MacKinnon, 1985, Govier, 1985, for example). In some logic texts, premise acceptability is the first test which precedes and takes logical priority over tests of premise relevance and an adequate set of acceptably relevant premise to establish sufficient evidential grounds for a cogent argument. So, for example, Trudy Govier (Govier, 1985) argues for a priority ranking of the cogency test that she calls the A acceptance, R relevance, and finally in priority order the G or grounds test for argument cogency. One of the standard tests for premise acceptability is whether a premise satisfies the common knowledge condition. However, this test is considered potentially problematic because it is believed that common knowledge varies by context and situation. Some theorists, such as Bruno Snell in the *Greek Mind* and Julian Jaynes in the *Origin of Consciousness and the Bicameral Mind* (Harvard, 1986), argue for a psychological or in the latter case a psychophysical origin for historical variations in the common sense belief set. Common beliefs change over time, change by audience, and change due to varying knowledge conditions, as argued by N.R. Hanson in the *Patterns of Scientific Discovery* and Thomas Kuhn, in the *Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* (1972) his ironic contribution to the *Encyclopedia of the Unified Sciences*. So, according to these views, there is little 'common' about common knowledge.

At the same time, there seems to be the prevalent countervailing belief that common knowledge is universal; that is, there are some common beliefs that do not vary by time, context or situated knowledge base. There have been few thorough and systematic attempts to demonstrate the theoretical underpinnings of such claims to universal, common knowledge as the foundation for the presumptive acceptance of basic premises. James Freeman in his book *Acceptable Premises: An Epistemic Approach to an Informal Logic Problem* (2005) offers a

considered and sustained attempt to provide a critically argued philosophical foundation to test for the acceptability of universal common knowledge in order to provide the theoretical protocol for the common knowledge acceptability test. While generally supportive of Freeman's efforts (see my review of his text in *Choice*, November, 2005), I will (following his suggested approach) provide some critical challenges that could hopefully provide the means for useful changes to the text, both in terms of additions and re-thinking of some aspects of his common sense foundationalism in theory and practical application.

2. *Freeman's Foundationalism*

Freeman argues for an epistemic foundation for common beliefs. These beliefs ground what he calls *presumptively reliable premises* in an argument, premises if denied shift the burden of proof to the challenger since they have common sense epistemic and pragmatic theoretical warrant (Freeman, 2005, 21-72). The basic beliefs can be about experiential matters of perceptual fact, subjective introspective reports, the motive(s) of other minds which account for their successful behaviour and judgements and intuitively-based ethical values behind a sense of common conscience (Freeman, 2005, 369-371). Such beliefs, claims Freeman, are basic if they are immune to a plausible challengers' criticisms. In a dialogical context, when a proponent asserts a basic belief, which has pragmatic consequences for making successful judgements in an argument, the burden of proof to defend the basic claim moves to a challenger. The failure of a challenger to refute the fundamental premise establishes its contingent [subject to other possible challenges] presumptively reliable accountability. Freeman defends his analysis of common knowledge using Reid's notion of common sense. Freeman's trump on plausible objections to common sense conditions for universal claims about perception, introspection and ethical intuition is to theorize that each of us is equipped with a *life design plan,* (Freeman, 2005, 43-56) a natural (principle of our) human *constitution* (Freeman, 2005, 191, 212-213, 239, 242), or a moral *conscience* (Freeman, 2005, 274-275) which grounds common sense beliefs.

Freeman's account is detailed, and technically thorough, providing a needed theoretical foundation for presumptively reliable premises. However, following his own analysis, it will still be useful to present some critical challenges to his foundationalism. These challenges are intended to open up some further possibilities for enhancing his views. The challenges will be of two general kinds – theoretical and practical. The theoretical challenges should help to illuminate both inherent critical issues and some of the practical problems in applying his

views to arguments in the public domain. Arguments that occur in this domain occur in public debates about what policies or decisions should be made that involve the public good. These arguments have take place since the earliest discussions in the market place of Athens. Hence identification of theoretical challenges in this general context should help us to understand problems with the practical application of some of Freeman's claims about common or universal basic beliefs as they underpin arguments. This also follows Freeman's practical claim that we must consider the pragmatic consequences of accepting or rejecting any basic belief or premise.

3. *Theoretical Challenges to Freeman's Common Sense Foundationalism*

The first theoretical challenge to Freeman's foundational account is his claim that presumptively reliable beliefs have their authority in the theoretical construct of a natural human constitution, plan of life, or conscience (Freeman, 2005, 242-250). At worst, this may be an incidence of begging the question about the plausible authority for presumptively reliable beliefs. For example, it begs the question to claim that in the case of the sadist and the masochist that "the mechanism to feel satisfaction has been warped" since the theoretically imagined mechanism is supposed to provide the foundation for a normative account that cannot presume it exists (Freeman, 2005, 238). At best, this may be a place holder for a subsequent reduction to a Rylean inspired behavioural account in the *Concept of Mind* that eliminates the need for "mind talk" (similar to Freud's suggestion in *Civilization and its Discontents* that his tripartite psyche account will be replaced by a subsequent neurobiological account)

The second theoretical challenge, following Reid's common sense view, is that common sense is not uniform (Freeman, 2005, 126-135, 367). It is not illogical to have two common sense claims about the same subject or area in conflict with each other (Fearn, 2001, 91) So, it is logically possible for two presumptively reliable beliefs asserting opposing claims. For example, a common belief which is assumed to be presumptively reliable is that taking a human life is murder and wrong. At the same time, there is a presumptively reliable belief that taking the human life of a fetus is *not* murder. These are not binary opposites but they are conflicting common sense beliefs. The challenge is to identify how we can reasonably decide that one is more presumptively reliable than another. It is not clear if Freeman meets the challenge. It is Freeman's failure to recognize this challenge that contributes to his faulty presumption in favour of a universal, common sense foundation as the source of all basic beliefs.

The third challenge is a version of the *'ought-is'* confusion. Freeman's analysis seems more about what we ought to do than what we, in fact, do when we argue. This presents a gap that needs to be filled. Under ideal conditions, presumptive reliability can be established for basic beliefs and basic premises but much argumentation occurs in less than ideal conditions. It won't do, even on the basis of some ascetic observer scenario, to assume the presumptive reliability of a belief and then condemn a challenger for not satisfying the conditions of the burden of proof. The real world does not operate in this way. This game of argumentation is played under less than ideal rules by people using less than optimal knowledge of how to argue well. Freeman argues that plausible belief-generating mechanisms can generally be assumed to generate reliable beliefs. However, these ideal theoretical mechanisms may not be in play for both proponent and challenger. Indeed, traditionally philosophy has been open to the challenge posed by different belief-generating mechanisms. For example, existentialists such as Nietzsche challenge the belief-generating mechanisms of Hegel's rationalism and Lutheran dogmatism to establish the acceptable basis for beliefs.

The fourth theoretical challenge involves Freeman's consistent use of the perceptual analogy to account for shared intuitions, shared sympathies and universal moral sense (Freeman, 2005, 191-192, 238). Just as we have a perception of 'yellowness', we equally have a sense of empathetic sympathy, rightness and duty. However, Mill's classic example of comparing natural auditory sensations to equally natural, pleasurable sensations is a dis-analogy because, in the latter case, inclination, disposition, deliberation, and attention are required but not in the former. Pleasurable sensations are not significantly like auditory perceptions. For example, I don't intend to see or hear in the same way that I experience pleasure. As well, I don't correct mistaken judgements in the first case the same way I do in the second one. However, Freeman suggests that in terms of the basic beliefs inherent in common sense, perception, intuition and introspection provide a sound foundation or source for similar basic beliefs. This seems to be parallel to Mill's dis-analogy, especially since intuition and introspection are not analogous to perception.

The fifth theoretical challenge involves Freeman's use of testimony, personal and expert, as the content of basic premises in an argument (Freeman, 2005, 292-308). There is an ambiguity inherent in personal testimony, which he fails to acknowledge. My personal testimony may be a report of my feelings, personal preferences, subjective desires or likes, etc., whose authority is authenticated by

me in a belief generating process called *opinionation* (for a more extensive discussion of the differences between opinionation and argumentation (Gough, 2001). There is an ambiguity here about whether it is my personal feelings about x that give it authority or my asserting testimony about independent events that actually took place. Freeman seems unaware of this ambiguity (Freeman, 2005, 290-291) in his discussion of the acceptability of expert testimony. As well, there is a personal testimonial about what took place in a particular time at a particular location. The authority for this testimony is clearly different from that of an opinion. To further confuse the situation, I may be self-deceived about the source and nature of my own personal testimony. The challenge is to integrate these qualifications into the reliability test of presumptive acceptability of personal testimony.

There is a similar possible confusion in the case of expert testimony. To trust such testimony, personal interpretation needs to be incorporated into qualifications of what constitutes presumptively reliable expert testimony. For example, there was a failed attempt by the U.S. government to find experts to testify on the nature of religion in its efforts to establish that scientology was *not* a religion; this was due to the fact that no definition of religion was exempt from differing and conflicting interpretations. There were no interpretation free facts to appeal to in this case. Expert testimony is not exempt from personal and institutional interpretation especially since expertise is parceled off in very limited and constrained departments. An expert in psychoanalysis is not an expert in behaviourism or even some behaviourist school or theory.

These five theoretical challenges suggest that there may be critical problems with Freeman's foundational basis for deciding on presumptively reliable premises. Ideologically-based foundational beliefs may be an important part of our psychological belief-generating mechanisms and independent of the basic beliefs of others. So, it isn't that a challenger shares but challenges a basic belief of the proponent. The situation is not so accommodating. It is rather that the basic belief of the proponent may not be shared by the challenger and no amount of pragmatic hand wringing or shifting burden of proof can accommodate or rectify this fundamental difference. Any appeal to shared basic conceptual beliefs falls short of Freeman's shared common sense mechanisms and warrants.

These theoretical issues or problems with Freeman's account point to the critical issue that his own epistemological view is not neutral. Instead his epistemology is itself grounded in an ideology, an ideology found in a psychological or conceptual

system of beliefs. This underlies the practical problems with Freeman's approach to premise acceptability based on a universal common knowledge base.

4. *Conflicting Belief Systems*

There is a rhetorical tradition for understanding arguments based on the notion of conflicting systems of belief. On this view, beliefs are not independent of each other but make sense only within a system or a set. What one belief is connected to provides its plausibility (or acceptability) within the set. Systems of belief are relative to different individuals in different groups in different contexts. Any universal common beliefs are inter-subjectively or cross-culturally related on the basis of some kind of translation manual. The importance of belief systems in understanding the dialogical context of arguments has been identified by several people in the area [e.g. Gough, 1985, Groarke and Tindale, 2001, Rescher, 2001]. The systems of belief are conceptual and provide us with a way of coherently approaching the world and critically confronting the views of others. They provide security in one's individual identity within a system of beliefs and a sense of stability in one's world view. Within these systems, there are core, fundamental, or what Freeman would call, *basic* beliefs and there are (Quine, 1978) *peripheral* beliefs that are tempered by both empirical experience and the conceptual core content of the system of beliefs. Both kinds of beliefs may change over time or their location can change from periphery to core or core to periphery. This is a kind of hermeneutical to-and-fro movement from external limits to internal constraints and from external bombardments to internal amendments. Peripheral beliefs are subject to critical bombardment from outside the system and critical challenges from the core set within the system. The system is not based on correspondence relative relations but coherence relative relationships, in order to provide a meaningful base of the system's value or integrity. System integrity is more important to the system and its set of basic beliefs than any so-called "empirical reality check", since no such check is made outside or independent of the interpreted set of beliefs.

5. *Practical Challenges to Freeman's Common Sense Foundationalism*

To illustrate the role played by basic beliefs in conceptual systems, I will provide some examples of arguments from public debates both historical and current. It is my view that in these debates there is a conflict between basic fundamental beliefs and what different belief systems accept as presumptively reliable premises. So the need is only partially epistemic since there needs to be some

kind of conceptual, psychological, negotiation between belief systems in order to identify [a] what are in fact cross-system basic beliefs and presumptively reliable basic premises, and [b] ways of critically evaluating what are mistakenly taken to be basic beliefs and presumptively reliable premises. Following my earlier critical response to Reid's common sense epistemology, there may be conflicting common-sense beliefs which authorize different presumptively reliable basic premises. There is some confusion over border crossings and what mediation should take place to alleviate conflicts. Freeman may be correct in his view that we should argue from a universal common sense foundation, but it remains doubtful that we do argue from such a foundation.

There is an argument that has a long history in the ideas about the relationship of women to society that I call the Fit-by-Nature argument. Here are some common features in this argument:

6. *Basic Presumptions of the Fit by Nature Argument*
1. There is a natural condition of women, which separates them from men.[authorities for this source are religion + politics]
2. This condition which is common to all women is not something that any woman deliberated about or chose but rather something *she (and every other woman) discovered about herself and more significantly men discovered about her (and every other woman)*. [the authorities for this source are religion + science]
3. It is a FACT that women have this common condition or set of features. Such *facts cannot be contested, are non-controversial*, and so by force of logic must be accepted. [the authority for this source is primarily science]
4. This common, *natural condition is taken to be an acceptable discriminating feature to identify women* and separate them from men because no society or individual or group gave this feature to women. It occurred without the interference or intention of any human being, which is good.[the authority for this source can primarily be found in the history of views in philosophy]
5. There is a common belief that that which is natural is good. So, by analogous or parallel reasoning, what is natural to women must be good (following 4. above) and an uncontested or uncontroversial or factual good (following 3. above).
6. What is natural is found in the natural world, the world of nature. The way that we find things in the natural world is through observation. *Observation identifies for us physical (by definition, observable) features* of the natural world. [the authority for this source is primarily science + politics]

7. In the natural world, the value(s) of things or entities is often identified and categorized in terms of their natural function(s). *Purpose follows natural function.* If we discover something's purpose, then we discover its value or goal or aim or reason for existing. [the authority for this source is in science + philosophy]
8. The world of civilization or society should be governed by the natural world, in the sense that what is natural is what should be promoted in our society or civilization through its customs, traditions and regulatory laws or edicts. *Society should be the mirror of the situation in the natural world.* If something occurs in the natural world, then it should be valued in society. [see Assumption 9]
9. Sometimes the argument has the following nuance. What is natural is identified as what is approved by God. Since God created the natural world and everything in it, then the laws and features of the natural world which serve to continue its existence must be good and since all good comes from God, that which is natural must come from God. This view *links God with the natural world* so that the two cannot be separated. This view has a separate set of supporters and objectors. [Natural Law; see Assumption 10]
10. That which is natural has come about by some kind of design, either evolutionary or God-given design, and is not the result of any random or accidental set of occurrences. Accidental occurrences are generally not valued as much as deliberate or deterministically decided and not open to alteration on the basis of free will. [see Assumption 9]
11. That which is natural describes the role and function of women in society (and men). [see Assumptions 9 & 10]

There may be more assumptions at work in the ensuing argument, but these will be sufficient to demonstrate some of the presumptions and questionable assumptions at work in this argument, that seem to function as basic premises.

7. *The Argument built on the Basic Assumptions of the Fit by Nature Argument*
From the set of Assumptions above, the following support is offered in the argument.
1. Women are fit, by nature, to bear children. Men are, by nature, *not* fit to bear children. [or, another way of putting this same claim: There are identifiable physical biological differences between women and men. These are factually determined and not a matter of anyone's subjective values.]
2. Human beings are composed of a physical and a psychological nature, which is linked by our understanding of the causal relationship between the physical

nature and the psychological nature. [This is a version of a view known as dualism; we are all composed of a physical and non-physical nature.] Or, (alternative reading of this claim) a human being's physical nature is a replica or mirror of that human's psychological nature, making the two identical. [This is a version of a view known as monism, or physicalism or materialism]. One's nature includes tendencies, talents, dispositions, capacities and abilities, which may be unique according to one's gender.

3. Women are by nature [not by choice or anyone's deliberate actions (see Presumptions 3 & 6)] weaker than men. This is simply a matter of fact, which can be tested by any number of observations.

4. If women are by nature physically weaker than men (as in #3 above) then it follows that they must be psychologically weaker than men as well. [innate or determined by God: see Presumption 9]

5. Certain roles, positions, jobs or situations in society require strong (both physically and psychologically: see #2 above) individuals who naturally are able to take control and rule, rather than be ruled by events. These are positions of socio-political power or authority in any state or government.

6. In the natural world, outside civilization and society, the stronger naturally rules the weaker. [This situation is good and should be followed in any society or civilization, which hopes to be good by functioning well according to the natural order of the world: see Presumptions 2-5 and 8-10]

7. So, in society the male should naturally assume a position of rule over the female to preserve the natural order of the world of nature and society. Any political organization, which preserves the natural organization of the genders in the natural world, is good in the sense that it is more efficient and it preserves the well-being of everyone.

8. The discrimination against women in any political state is acceptable because it is not the result of any deliberate actions of one gender over the other but rather a natural discrimination [as such both deterministic-inevitable] defined by features beyond any individual's deliberate decision or control.

9. Men are fit by nature to assume various roles in society, which involve leadership, ruling, management and authority over women.

10. Society should direct, through the use of customs, practices, codes and enforced laws, men into certain roles and women into other roles, according to their respectively different natures.

11. The education of children should be based on their subsequent natural roles in society. (Mahowald, 1994)

8. *Basic Differences between Challengers and Proponents*

This fit-by-nature argument is an example of a set of beliefs which are connected and supported by an ideological worldview. From the first presentation of the argument by Glaucon, to Socrates in *The Republic of Plato* (Mahowald, 1994, 1-32), the argument is based on the fundamental belief that physical gender differences are significant for psychological, intellectual and political distinctions separating the two genders. Males are fit to rule and females are fit to be ruled. Mary Wollstoncraft, (Gough, 2005, Mahowald, 1994, 112-128) John Stuart Mill, Harriet Taylor, (Mahowald, 1994, 151-185) Simone de Bouvoir (Mahowald, 1994, 201-221), and others see the faults in this historically enduring argument (in all of its variations and nuances) finding that there is no epistemic research to support any of the claims. These claims are more ideological, part of an ideologically based system of beliefs rather than a consideration of empirical reality. Wollstonecraft finds the view so irrational as to be absurd (Gough, 2005) and Mill finds it completely lacking in any empirical comparisons to other "natural" possibilities (Mahowald, 1994, 152).

Freeman is correct to claim *there is a need for presumptively reliable beliefs common to a universal audience*; this is what ought to be the case, according to Mill, Wollestonecroft and others (Mahowald, 1994), yet he appears mistaken that there is such an audience that shares this same presumptively reliable belief about the nature of women. In spite of the extensive experience of both men and women, the fit-by-nature beliefs have survived for centuries, however impractical, perceptually unreliable or intuitively implausible they appear to be (according to Freeman). So, there is something missing from Freeman's foundation account of common knowledge and its reliable presumptions.

In case this fit-by-nature argument may appear to be an example of an historical anomaly, it will be useful to consider another argument currently prominent in the public domain. Despite extensive scientific evidence collected by proponents of the Kyoto Accord's restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions, conservative challengers claim that the evidence is not presumptively reliable. The reason for this conflict is fundamental to the differences between proponents and challengers in this public debate; the fundamental challenge, current to Kyoto, is similar to the earlier creationists' challenges to evolutionary theory and current intelligent design challenges to the theory of evolution.

A fundamental presumptively reliable belief of the challengers is that the

measurements or tests used to either make predictions or retrodictions (in the case of the effects of greenhouse emissions), are grossly inadequate. So it is not necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, given any amount of accumulated evidence which is based on an unreliable source. This basic belief is in conflict with the empirical scientists' belief that computational models and other measurement mechanisms are as accurate as necessary to give us good reasons to reduce greenhouse emission.

The conflict in this case is based on two conflicting basic conceptual beliefs, both presumed to be reliable. First there is the belief that a computational model is the best way to change the information content of systems to accurately predict inter-system relations and extra-system consequences within constant changes to the system. The challengers literally cannot see that this basic belief (and the mechanisms that support it) is reliable. Such inability to see can only be based on environmental factors, according to Freeman [since there is only minimal conceptual content to his "being appeared to" phenomenal account]. Instead, they believe that science is only as good as the stable unchanging evidential base of its predictions. It is difficult to imagine how an appeal to a shared set of presumptively reliable basic premises could occur and be used to attempt to resolve this conflict. However, that is precisely what we might hope an argument could accomplish. Again, Freeman appears right in his analysis of what is needed in such cases but it remains questionable whether there are ideological neutral, presumptively reliable beliefs of the kind he requires in such cases.

The following representative argument for global warming should give us some ground for making this criticism.

9. *Arguments For and Against Global Warming*

Background: According to ecologists, the earth is a closed system of interconnected species and organisms that is subject to internal change and attempts to retain, renew, and continue to exist as a dynamic entity.

Basic Assumption 1: The earth as a dynamic system continues to change but always following patterns that are internally predictable, with suitable computer modeling, over protracted periods of time.

Basic Assumption 2: The earth is a throughput system with energy coming into the system from without and waste from the use of energy remaining inside the earth (system) trapped in sinks.

Basic Assumption 3: The earth is a closed system (an economic system by

comparison is an open system) and strategies for responding to a closed system are not identical in efficiency or acceptability to an open system. Examples of closed systems are a biotic system or the system proposed by the Giaa proposal.
Basic Assumption 4: Although it is not necessarily formally logical, there is a widespread belief that the future in many relevant respects resembles the past, a regularity which is assumed in induction.
Basic Assumption 5: A system is coherent when all parts relate or connect to each other, given that the set of possibilities is finite.

Sub-Conclusion: Changes to the earth's atmosphere at the level of the biosphere can be best accounted for by considering the elevated levels of CO2, methane and hydrocarbon emissions (Desjardins, 1999, 259-286, 394-343)

10. *The Argument from Kyoto Opponents*
The arguments against the Kyoto Accord often have the following (or similar) components:
Presumption 1: All measurements of global warming fail to be adequate. All climate projections are merely computer models, through which scientists try to take into account as many variables as they can, with whatever mathematical formulas they believe apply. More sophisticated models take into account literally hundreds of factors but, by necessity, contain thousands of best-guesses, or are simply silent on certain subjects. No model is better than the assumptions that went into its designing. By definition, models are nothing more than a collection of scientific theories, prejudices and guesses. So, using computers to predict the future is simply a high tech veneer over the plain fact that climate modeling is sheer guesswork.

Presumption 2: The increased levels of carbon monoxide will either (a) not produce the ecologist's predicted outcomes, or (b) other more serious problems need to be remedied. This supports an argument against signing an international accord to limit greenhouse gas emissions.

11. *Conclusion*
On Freeman's account, a basic presumption in an argument can be undercut by relevant factors against its acceptance. However, the challenger to the proponent of the Kyoto Accord has a different set of presumptions, equally basic and in conflict to the proponent's basic presumptions. In this situation, science is of no help in forging a set of presumptively basic beliefs because the belief-generating

mechanisms of science are in doubt. The differences in basic beliefs between proponent and opponent of Kyoto restrictions are *ideological* which doesn't necessarily make them biased or distorted. Instead, these differences need to be addressed by a negotiated process of mediation, by which a shared set of presumptively reliable beliefs can be determined. This is a negotiated starting point not a presumptively reliable epistemic foundation.

If Freeman can accommodate this kind of psychological/ideological component to the epistemologically grounded/presumptively reliable basic set of beliefs, then his foundation will become fluid yet more psychologically and epistemologically reliable. Human beings have a sense of self-identity, satisfaction and community within a shared system of beliefs. If we understand this belief system and the confusions created by ambiguities in personal and expert testimony, then we can understand the tendency to try to preserve the integrity of the system's coherence rather than to respond to outside, peripheral challenges.

Shared intuitions, common value beliefs, and interpretations, in fact, need to be negotiated through considered argumentation, not presumed on the basis of "some aspect of our human constitution" or the need to "avoid some hypothetically unacceptable bad consequences" questioning our ability to make good judgements. It is not belief-generating mechanisms that are at fault but the ideological commitments behind the use of these mechanisms that create the conflicts in public debates and need to be mediated through considered argumentation. As one proponent of the rhetorical model of argument suggests, "the challenge is to try to see the problem *from the perspective* of the author, despite the vast distance between us. To imagine what the world looked like for Plato, is to think in terms of the assumptions and traditions that to a certain extent constrained his thinking. Then one can begin to assess his reasoning on its own terms, not on ours." (Tindale 1999, p. 76)

Following this suggestion, there is at least one possible example of such a mediation. The system of beliefs known as free-market environmentalism is fundamentally at odds with the system of beliefs of deep ecologists. In the first case, there is a basic belief in growth of self-created wealth. In the second set of beliefs there is a fundamental or basic belief in growth. Unlike the first system, the ecologist believes that growth is subject to the natural evolutionary conditions of the life system and as such should be in accord with maintaining the overall health, well-being or integrity of the ecosystem. These two sets of beliefs are in conflict over the basic beliefs at the core of each system. Growth is interpreted

differently according to each system (Gough, 2003).

There is nothing prima facie in common between these two basic beliefs about growth. However, the use of the idea of sustainable growth has been moderately successful in finding a negotiated mediation point between the two basic beliefs about growth. Economic growth is constrained by the limits of the ecosystem to maintain both the integrity of the economist's basic belief in growth and for the ecologist there are possible non-ecological uses of the natural world that are marginally potentially acceptable. This is tenuous mediation subject to rejections, compromises and constant revisions – it is a fluid not a fixed foundational base (Fisher, 1981).

REFERENCES

Desjardins, Joseph (1999) *Environmental Ethics: Concepts, Policy, Theory,* NJ. Mayfield Press

Fearn, Nicholas, (2001) Zeno and the Tortoise: How to Think like a Philosopher, *Grove Press*, US, 88-95.

Fisher, Roger and William Ury, (1981) *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement*, New York: Penguin Books.

Freeman, James (2005) *Acceptable Premises: An Epistemic Approach to an Informal Logic Problems,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gough, Jim (1985) The Psychological Parameters of Argumentation, *Past and Present*, 10, 25-29.

Gough, Jim (2001) Differences between Opinions and Argumentation, *Proceedings of the Argumentation and Its Applications Conference*, C.D. Rom.

Gough, Jim (2003) Economic Reasoning and the Environment: What is wrong with Free-Market Environmentalism? *Professional Ethics*, 11, 4. 221-238.

Gough, Jim (2005) Mary Wollestonecraft's Rhetorical Strategy: Overturning the Arguments, *Post Scriptum*, 2, 5.

Govier, Trudy (1985) A Practical Study of Argument, California: Wadsworth.

Groarke,Leo and Tindale, Christopher, *Good Reasoning Matters: A Constructive Approach to Critical Thinking*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 250-272.

MacKinnon, Edward (1985) *Basic Reasoning*, Prentice-Hall, NJ.102-109.

Mahowald, Mary Briody (1994) *Philosophy of Woman: An Anthology of Classic to Current Readings*, Third Edition, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.

Quine, Willard Van Orman and J. Ullian(1978) *The Web of Belief*, New York: Random House, 125-138.

Rescher, Nicholas (2001) *Philosophical Reasoning: A Study in the Methodology of*

Philosophizing, USA: Blackwell Publishers.
Tindale, Christopher (1999) *Acts of Arguing: A Rhetorical Model of Argument*, New York: State University of New York Press.