

May 22nd, 9:00 AM - May 25th, 5:00 PM

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The epistemic relevance of social considerations in ordinary day-to-day presumptions

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ABSTRACT: The involvement of social considerations in our ordinary conception of presumption and corresponding plain practice of presuming things raises doubts as to whether they afford epistemically satisfying bases for rational argumentation. To some (e.g., Nicholas Rescher) this involvement illuminates important modes of discursive inquiry; to others (e.g., Douglas Walton and David Godden) it points to the need for theoretically based reform or regulation of our ordinary practices. This paper attempts to clarify and defend the epistemic value of ordinary presumptions.

KEYWORDS: defeasible, epistemic value, Godden, presumption, risk of resentment, social considerations, Walton

1. INTRODUCTION

Nicholas Rescher perceptively observes, “Presumption is a versatile cognitive instrumentality that serves us well in a wide spectrum of epistemic applications,” including “everyday life” (2006, p. 168). Study of presumptions, he maintains is particularly important because it directs attention to the *epistemically* significant involvement of *social considerations* in defeasible inferences (1977, pp. xii-xii, 2-3). Douglas Walton and David Godden seem not to share Rescher’s confidence in the dependence of ordinary presumptions on social considerations. Relying on a misinterpretation of my analysis of our day-to-day practice of presuming things, they maintain that the dependence of ordinary presumptions on social considerations renders them unfit to serve as basis for empirically-oriented defeasible inferences, because it makes them impervious to direct refutation (Godden, 2011; Godden & Walton, 2007; Walton, 2010). Accordingly, they offer a theoretically motivated corrective to our ordinary practice.

This essay defends the epistemic integrity of ordinary day-to-day presumptions in response to Godden and Walton’s charge that the social involvement of ordinary presumption renders them unsuitable as bases for defeasible inferences. I begin with a brief rehearsal of my account of ordinary presuming and presumption, followed by an overview of Godden and Walton’s critique, and concluding with my response.

2. PRESUMPTION AS SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF KAUFFELD'S NORMATIVE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS

We should begin by reviewing my analysis of our concept of and corresponding practice of ordinary day-to-day presuming and presumption. At the outset, it should be noted that I do not claim that my account is complete; there are I suppose kinds and aspects of presumption which remain to be explicated. But I do claim that my account stands as a putative analysis of the conceptual and pragmatic core of our ordinary practice of presuming. As Godden and Walton present no reason to suppose that my account does not adequately represent that practice, I will proceed on the supposition that we are discussing, not just Kauffeld's account, but the ordinary conception of and act of presuming things. It follows that if Godden and Walton's critique is correct, then we have strong reason to suppose that our ordinary practice of presuming things does not afford an epistemically satisfactory (coherent) basis for defeasible inferences of great interest to many students of argumentation and, so, would stand in need of reform—a prospect which has practical, theoretical and meta-theoretical ramifications.

Elsewhere I have argued at some length that ordinary presumptions are inferences based on suppositions regarding the risk of resentment persons face should they fail to live up to (often openly incurred) commitments. The presumption of veracity is a good example. In saying that *p* (speaking seriously) a speaker openly incurs responsibility for the truthfulness of what she says. Accordingly, she manifestly risks criticism and resentment for mendacity should it turn out that she is not expressing beliefs she holds on the basis of some responsible effort to ascertain their truth and rational adequacy. Her addressee is, thereupon, warranted in supposing that the speaker would not run this risk of resentment, had she not actually made a responsible effort to ascertain the truth the beliefs expressed. The addressee may, thereupon, trust that the speaker is speaking truthfully and by this route come to accept *p* (2003, pp. 140-143). Following Richard Moran, this analysis may be referred to as an “assurance” account of the efficacy of serious utterances (2006). Here we have an example of special, strategically engaged presumptions; there are also standing presumptions, e.g., that a mature person gives due thought and attention to her concerns.¹

This understanding of ordinary presuming and presumption clarifies and corrects some matters which are left obscure by inherited accounts of what Rescher calls “natural presumptions,” i.e., presumptions engaged outside institutionally established conventions and rules (Rescher, 1977, 2006). Inherited accounts of natural presumptions typically take presumptions at work in legal contexts as their starting point. Legal presumptions, e.g., the presumption of innocence, are (with few exceptions) defined as inferences which stand good unless and until an opposing party accepts and discharges the burden of proof, i.e., the burden of providing reason and evidence sufficient to overturn the presumed conclusion. This conception of presumption has, at least since Richard Whately, strongly influenced

¹ The presumption of veracity is often treated as a standing presumption by scholars, but this is surely a mistake which ignores the variability which is to be seen in the act of saying something.

scholarly thinking about so-called natural presumptions. It is reflected in our time in the broadly accepted equation of presumptions with default inferences, i.e., inferences which are acceptable, unless and until they are shown to be defective (Adler, 2002, pp. 154-55).

There is much to be said for inherited views of presumption; however, as I have argued in some detail elsewhere, they face a general problem. Inherited conceptions, like legal conceptions, define presumption primarily in terms of features of the presumed conclusion (Kauffeld, 2003, pp. 134-140). This may not raise intolerable difficulties in legal and other institutional settings where rules and conventions can establish the grounds for presumptive conclusions, but it raises serious and long recognized difficulty for the analysis of natural presumptions operating outside of the context of institutionally established regulation (Kauffeld, 2003; Sidgwick, 1884).

In natural, ordinary day-to-day contexts, legal models do not identify features of presumption which are necessary or sufficient to our conception of presumptive inference or to its practice, and they impair the capacity of inherited positions to address the variety of ordinary presumptions. Recognizing that presumptions are inferences based on the risk of resentment, I have argued, remedies this situation. Godden and Walton do not find the remedy acceptable, at least as regards epistemically important defeasible inferences. By implication, they reject the possibility that ordinary presumption afford a rationally coherent basis for substantive presumptive inferences.

3. GODDEN AND WALTON'S CRITIQUE OF OUR ORDINARY CONCEPTION AND PRACTICE OF PRESUMING

Godden and Walton find a conundrum in the structure of many ordinary presumptions. Where a presumption rests on social basis and issues in a prediction, they maintain, it may be the case that the social basis which warrants the presumption remains intact, while the corresponding prediction can be seen on empirical grounds to be false. This claim is based on a misinterpretation of my analysis which attributes two components to ordinary presumptions. "Kauffeld's presumptions," they write, "have both a normative (or social) and an epistemic (or predictive) component." On this model, they maintain, ". . . our entitlement to presume that *p* is grounded in another person's obligation to bring it about that *p*. Further, the justification of a presumption is rooted in—indeed it is a consequence of—this entitlement" (Godden & Walton, 2007, p. 323). The difficulty they attribute to ordinary presumption, so conceived, is that an inference may retain its presumptive status on social grounds, even though empirical evidence shows that the corresponding prediction is likely to be false. Godden and Walton summarize their view as follows.

. . . (I)t is this epistemic sense of presumption that is most important to a theory of argument. After all, we want to know whether the presumption is justified. Yet, on Kauffeld's model, unjustified presumptions retain their presumptive status. The fact that a person is not likely to do something, does not change the fact that he ought to.

And since it is these obligations that underwrite Kauffled's presumptions, they do not disappear in the face of empirical evidence against their being fulfilled—indeed, they do not even seem to be responsive to contrary evidence of this sort. Because they are based primarily in social obligations, expectation-based presumptions are not defeasible in the right sorts of ways. (2007, p. 324)

In support of this critique, Godden and Walton offer the case of the lazy soldier.

Consider the case where it is a soldier's duty to raise the flag at dawn, but he is very unreliable and tends to sleep in. Consider now our presumption (as Kauffeld would have us talk of it) that *p*: the soldier will raise the flag at dawn. In one sense, the presumption that *p* does not disappear in the face of evidence that the social bonds obliging the soldier to bring it about that *p* will not be met. We are still entitled to presume (in the normative sense) that *p*, even though it is not likely to happen. In such a circumstance, it is quite sensible to say that while I still presume that *p*, I do not take it to be so. (In a similar way, I could say that I still expect something of the soldier, even though I do not have any expectation about the state of the flag at dawn.) So, while we might be *entitled* to presume, we would no longer be *justified* in doing so. (2007, p. 323)

From this case Godden and Walton conclude that since the obligations which underwrite ordinary presumptions do not disappear when faced with empirical evidence that they will not be fulfilled, predictions issuing from the presumption are not defeasible in the right way. If this conclusion is sound, then our ordinary practice of basing expectations on presumptions is fundamentally unsound.

4. THE EPISTEMIC INTEGRITY OF ORDINARY PRESUMPTIONS: GODDEN AND WALTON'S CRITIQUE RECONSIDERED

This important critique of plain presuming requires a thorough response. In an earlier essay I attempted to answer to their criticism by clarifying the status assigned to commitments in my analysis, as contrasted with Godden and Walton's characterization of my account as an "expectation based model." I also tried to show that ordinary presumptions are thoroughly defeasible (2009). However, in that response I failed to recognize the extent to which their interpretation of my analysis relies on theoretically oriented categories which obscure the finer structure of ordinary presumptive inference and cloud their understanding of our ordinary practice. Here I want reconsider their critique and identify the ways it distorts the structure and epistemic potential of day-to-day presuming.

Their critique, I maintain, involves three errors. First, Walton and Godden underestimate the complexity of the social considerations involved in ordinary presumptive inferences, neglecting the roles which a risk of resentment plays in such inferences and missing, thereby, the basis for epistemic confidence in and evaluation of ordinary presumptions. Second, their argument conflates two distinct kinds of presumption: those which conclude in the supposition some agent *is to* (ought to) make it the case that *p* and those which purport to warrant the supposition that so and so *will* make it the case that *p*. Thirdly, Godden and Walton underestimate the robust power and richness of natural presumptions.

According to Godden and Walton, my analysis attributes two components to the structure of presumption, a social/normative component and a predictive component; whereas, my analysis recognizes three components. Their division of the inferential structure ordinary presumption into two distinct, vaguely identified, components fails to bring into view the considerations most distinctive of presumptive inference, i.e., suppositions about the relevant agent's response to the risk of the resentment which she would incur were she to fail to live up to her apparent commitments. In their summary of my analysis they seem to recognize that in my account such suppositions play a central role in presumptive inference. Indeed, Godden accurately quotes me as writing:

To presume that *p*, in the ordinary sense of the term is to infer that *p* on the supposition some agent has made, is making, or will make it the case that *p*, rather than risk criticism, retribution, etc. for failing to do so. Such inferences are founded on the commitments persons undertake, often openly and explicitly, and on the (corresponding) entitlements due others. The practical calculation animating presumptive inference supposes that A will be vulnerable to criticism should she fail to do *x*. (Godden, 2011, p. 6; also see: Godden & Walton, 2007, p. 322)

In this passage and elsewhere I represent the minimal structure of presumptive inference as having three components: (1) the supposition that some agent (Ag) has obligation or other commitment owing to some other agent(s) and/or to herself that Ag is to do *x*; (2) the supposition that, Ag has made, is making, or will make it the case that Ag has done *x*, *rather than risk resentment, retribution, etc. for failing to do x*; and (3) the inferred conclusion that Ag has done, is doing, or will do *x*. However, Godden and Walton's interpretation of my analysis buries the key second supposition, together with the first supposition in the component they identify as "social dimension." In Kauffeld's account, they suggest,

... (T)he *presumptive* nature of presumptions is not based on any epistemic feature of the claim, so much as in the normative aspects of its situational features. That is, our entitlement to make a presumption is not explained in terms of the probability of the truth of the claim, or in terms of its widespread acceptance. Rather, it is explained in terms of another person's responsibility to bring about what is presumed, or suffer some social or punitive consequence. (Godden & Walton, 2007, p. 322)

This passage mentions the possibility of Ag suffering "some social or punitive consequence" in connection with Ag's "responsibility to bring about what is presumed," but it fails to notice the substantive second component regarding Ag's response to the prospect that Ag will incur resentment etc. should Ag not fulfill Ag's responsibility. Following this blunt reconstruction of my analysis, Godden holds that in my analysis and, by implication, in ordinary presumptive inference.

The inferential and predictive role of presumptions is derivative from this social dimension. That someone is *obliged* to make something the case *entitles* us to presume that they will do so, and this, in turn, *justifies* us in inferring that, presumably, it will be the case. (2011, p. 5)

Missing from this reconstruction of my analysis is any reference to the risk of resentment facing Ag (the presumed agent) should she fail to act as it is presumed she will.

Once we bring into view suppositions regarding the presumed agent's willingness to risk resentment, punishment, etc. we can see that in our plain practice presumptive inferences are not, as Godden and Walton would have it, immune to counter evidence regarding what Ag has done, is doing, or will do regarding her commitments. Such suppositions have substantive empirical content linked to relevant social content. The supposition that an agent will do x rather than risk resentment for failing to discharge her commitments has empirical content, as well as social content. Such suppositions may be empirically true or false, and we give a good deal of empirically oriented attention to just how reliable our fellows are in managing their calculations regarding that risk. Godden and Walton rightly maintain that we cannot directly infer what an agent will do *simply and directly* from what we suppose that agent is to do, but ordinary practice does not require that we try. Suppositions about an agent's willingness to risk resentment provide a substantial link between social considerations and conclusions which have empirical content regarding that agent's conduct (Stampe, 1967, pp. 25-27).

The importance of that link can be seen in reconsideration of Godden and Walton's case of the lazy soldier. Godden and Walton hold the supposition that lazy soldier is prone to sleep in directly refutes the presumption that he will raise the flag. Whether that is so depends on how one reasons in this connection: (1) One might argue, on the basis of repeated observation, that the soldier is probably going to sleep in and not get the flag up, but (2) one could, also, reason that soldier's lazy behavior and inclination to sleep in show that he has little regard for the punishment and resentment he will incur, if he fails to get the flag up on time. The first line would (directly) defeat or substantially weaken the presumed conclusion on the basis of an empirically based generalization regarding the lazy soldier's past conduct; the second route would defeat or substantially weaken the presumed conclusion by casting (empirically based) doubt on the substantial supposition that lazy soldier will do his duty rather than risk punishment for failing to do so. Either way the presumption that he will raise the flag is substantially weakened and, perhaps, defeated. Indeed, it might well be a mistake to regard these inferential routes as alternatives. As Jonathan Adler persuasively argues, inferences involving presumptions are commonly checked against and reinforced or weakened by auxiliary evidence and reasoning (Adler, 2002, pp. 148-154). In short, when one takes into account the complexity of ordinary presumptive inference to substantive predictions, they do not appear to be impervious to defeat on empirical grounds.

Recognizing that presumptive inferences to empirically oriented conclusions are vulnerable to defeat on empirical grounds brings us to the other leg of the conundrum with which Godden and Walton confront ordinary presumption. They hold that while one would not be justified in presuming that, e.g., the lazy soldier will raise the flag, his commanding officer (and others) still may be warranted in presuming that he is to raise the flag. This observation is accurate, but its paradoxical appearance arises from Godden and Walton's overly simplified interpretation of the structure of presumptive inferences. If one supposes that

inferences to a presumed empirically oriented conclusion rest simply and directly on relevant normative grounds, it may seem paradoxical that a presumed conclusion can be defeated on empirical grounds, while its normative basis remains intact. But this puzzle is resolved when one recognizes that, e.g., the commanding officer's presumption that the lazy soldier *is to* raise the flag is distinct from the presumption that the lazy soldier *will* raise the flag.

The presumption that he is to raise the flag arises from a different inferential basis than the presumption that he will raise the flag. The presumption that the lazy soldier is to raise the flag would arise from suppositions regarding the commanding officer's proper exercise of his authority to issue orders regarding this and other soldiers and suppositions to the effect that the commanding officer would not risk rebuke for abuse of his authority. That presumption can remain intact in the face of the empirical facts regarding the soldier's sloth, though questions may arise as to whether the commanding officer has been diligent in exercising his authority. The presumption that soldier will raise the flag rests on suppositions about his duty and suppositions about his willingness to risk punishment for failing to do so. These later suppositions may be rendered doubtful by empirical data regarding the soldier's sloth without impact on the suppositions which underwrite the presumption that he is to raise the flag. Reflection on the fine structure of ordinary presumptive inference dispels the puzzle posed by Godden and Walton.

I have been arguing that Godden and Walton's blunt interpretation of my account of ordinary presuming results in a mistaken critique of our day-to-day practice. They hold that on my account natural presumptions have two components, a normative/social component and an empirically oriented predictive component. This theoretically oriented interpretation masks the distinctive component of presumptive inference, *viz.*, supposition regarding the presumed subject's (Ag's) calculations regarding resentment, etc. which Ag would incur were Ag to not live up to his presumed commitments. When this crucially important component of presumptive inference is brought into account, I have argued, empirically oriented presumptions can, contrary to Godden and Walton, be seen to be vulnerable to disconfirming evidence, and this vulnerability can be seen to be compatible with normatively based presumptions to the effect that the presumed subject is to fulfill Ag's presumed obligations.

We should now take up several larger questions raised by Golden and Walton's critiques. They claim (a) that if presumptions based on social considerations are defeasible, they are defeasible in the wrong way, (b) that the "social oughts" warranting ordinary presumptions are not the right sort of grounds to warrant inferential and argumentative moves, and (3) consequently, that it is doubtful that the argumentative norms that we do use in daily presuming are the norms we ought to use. These claims require direct response.

I have argued that presumptions regarding Ag's conduct are defeasible. Godden and Walton argue that, if they are, then they are defeasible in the wrong way. In this I think they are mistaken. Presumptions and predictions regarding the conduct of persons are inherently defeasible, *i.e.*, they characteristically rely upon background suppositions which may be subject to reasonable doubt and objection.

The relevant doubt and objections for these two lines of reasoning can be closely parallel. Consider a case of defeasibility involving an empirical based prediction.

Visitor A: I'm looking forward to tomorrow's sunrise flag-raising.

Companion B: What makes you think there will be a flag-raising here tomorrow.

Visitor A: My father was an army officer. I have witnessed many sunrise ceremonies on army bases, and they invariably involve a flag-raising.

Companion B: Don't be so hasty. I think you are supposing that this is a typical base in which proper order is maintained, but it is not so here. The base commander does not maintain discipline, and I happen to know that the soldier responsible for raising the flag tomorrow is lazy and prone to sleep in.

Here the prediction is defeasible in ways that closely parallel the ways in which counteracting considerations would figure into a corresponding explicitly presumptive inference.

Visitor A: I'm looking forward to tomorrow's sunrise flag-raising.

Companion B: What makes you think there will be a flag-raising here tomorrow?

Visitor A: This is an army base. The rules and regulation require that they ceremonially raise the flag at sunrise. No base would fail to observe this important ceremony in a timely fashion and risk all-but-certain opprobrium and eventual censor.

Companion B: Don't be so hasty. I think you are supposing that this is a well-run base in which proper order is maintained, but that is not so here. The base commander does not maintain discipline, and I happen to know the soldier responsible for the flag raising tomorrow is lazy and prone to sleep in.

On the face of the matter, presumptive predictions and empirically based predications seem to be defeasible in closely parallel ways.

In his thoughtful critique of my initial reply to Godden and Walton, Godden writes.

There is one important question about argumentative norms which Kauffeld's reply does not seem to address. How is the status of argumentative norms as norms to be justified? What is it about the source or foundation of our argumentative norms that shows that they are the norms that we ought to use? That we do, in fact, use these norms to govern our argumentative behavior does not show that we ought to. For Kauffeld, it would seem, the source of the ought is social. Yet, social oughts do not seem to be of the right kind to ground inferential (and argumentative) oughts, and thereby to warrant inferential (and argumentative) moves. (2011, p. 10)

This challenge has two parts: (1) How do we know that the argumentative norms that we do use in daily presuming are the norms we ought to use? (2) Are "social oughts" proper grounds for inferential (and argumentative) moves? These two objections are closely related. If the second challenge stands, then we would have reason to abandon the presumption that our plain practice of presuming issues in the norms we ought use. Let us first consider the second part of Godden's challenge and, then, take up the first.

The second part of this challenge ultimately involves deep issues in epistemology which ramify well beyond the present discussion; however for

present purposes, we can ask whether Godden has given us reason to suppose that ordinary presumptions rely social considerations which are not relevant to epistemic considerations. In his concluding remarks Godden gives some good idea of what his position would accept as epistemically relevant considerations.

... I suggest ... that presumptive inferences are warranted only in cases where their antecedent conditions have something more than *mere* social force. They must have (perhaps in addition to social force) at least some probative weight, or positive relevance to their conclusions.

Indeed, without probative weight, the social force alone fails to warrant presumptive inferences. That I *ought* to do something is only a good reason for thinking that I *will* do it if it is known that I generally do as I ought to (*or, perhaps, that I will do so if the stakes are sufficiently high*). Without this (or these) last claim(s) the normative ground of social obligation fails entirely to have any predictive or probative import. (2011, pp.12-13 my emphasis)

Here Godden acknowledges that social considerations which provide reason for supposing that an agent (Ag) will do x if the stakes are sufficiently high are relevant to presuming that Ag will do x. Above and elsewhere I argue that, ordinary presumptions rest on suppositions regarding Ag's reluctance to risk resentment for failing to fulfill Ag's commitments; it seems that Godden's failure to recognize the role which such suppositions play in ordinary presumptions may lie at the root of his skepticism regarding the epistemic merit of social considerations in day-to-day presuming. However, question may still remain as to whether the considerations I have broadly characterized as the "risk of resentment" involve stakes which are "sufficiently high."

In my initial response to Godden and Walton's critique, I tried to allay this sort of concern by reference to T. M. Scanlon's account of "moral motivation." Scanlon posits, it may be recalled, that "the reason that the wrongness of an action seems to supply not to do it" typically involves more than "just being moved to avoid certain actions because 'they would be wrong,' but also being moved by" consideration of avoiding actions which cannot be justified to others (Scanlon, 1998, pp. 155-156).

There I observed that the practical calculations which, according to Scanlon, provide an agent with moral motivation also figure into the calculations of others who may be in some co-dependent relationship with that agent. On the supposition that a morally motivated agent would not act in a way that would provide others with reasonable (and perhaps unanswerable) basis for objection, criticism, resentment, reprobation, etc., those others may reasonably infer that in this particular case the agent is acting responsibly, truthfully, dutifully, and so on, i.e., we presume the agent is acting responsibly, etc

This idea that presumptions originate in one agent's (Ag₁) estimate of another's (Ag₂) willingness to risk resentment for failing to live up to the responsibilities and obligation came to me initially in connection with P. F. Strawson's seminal discussion of the importance which we place on the regard of others and the consequent importance which practical calculations regarding the

resentment our acts may engender play in our lives. As we attempt to briefly estimate the gravity of calculations regarding the risk of resentment, it may be helpful to recall Strawson's observations regarding what he describes as our "reactive attitudes" (Strawson, 1968). His essay on "Freedom and Resentment" directs our attention to ". . . the non-detached attitudes and reactions of people directly involved in transactions with each other; of the attitudes and reactions of offended parties and beneficiaries; of such things as gratitude, resentment, forgiveness, love, and hurt feelings" (pp. 77-78) Strawson's observations about this complex domain are aptly advanced as "commonplaces."

The central commonplace that I want to insist upon is the very great importance that we attach to the attitudes and intentions toward us of other human beings, and the great extent to which our personal feelings and reactions depend upon, or involve, our beliefs about these attitudes and intentions. (p. 75)

He continues to emphasize:

. . . how much we actually mind, how much it matters to us, whether the actions of other people—and particularly of *some* other people—reflect attitudes toward us of good will, affection, or esteem on the one hand or contempt, indifference, or malevolence on the other. (p. 75)

These, of course, are substantive, empirical observations, which Strawson attests by pointing to examples of our common reactions to various offenses and appreciations. His account is persuasive because we do, for the most part, share common reactions to the situations he describes.

Just as across a wide range of relationships with other people—"as sharers of a common; interest; as members of the same family; as colleagues; as friends; as lovers; as chance parties to an enormous range of transactions and encounters"—we expect and demand some measure of good will or regard of our counterparts (Strawson, p.76), so, too, we expect that our counterparts will bear us a corresponding measure of good will and proper regards. Given those commonplace mutual expectations, we may reasonably infer that our counterparts will live up to their various duties and obligations rather than risk our resentment, disapprobation, demands for reparation, etc. Likewise, our counterparts may similarly infer that we will fulfill our several duties. These inferences are what I call "standing presumption".

In addition to the interpersonal bonds to which Strawson directs attention, standing presumptions may arise in connection with more formal professional and institutional relationships. Moreover, in addition to standing presumptions, as I have argued elsewhere at some length, we can also strategically engage special presumptions calibrated to assure that the stakes involved in risk of resentment facing Ag are high enough to warrant the supposition that Ag will live up to Ag's corresponding commitments (2003, pp. 142-143). We may, I think, provisionally presume our complex resources for securing presumptions are rich enough to commonly secure appropriate motivation—recognizing, of course that all too often our suppositions about the pragmatic force of moral motivation are disappointed.

Turning now to Godden's concern with how we might know "that the argumentative norms that we do use in daily presuming are the norms we ought to use?" (2011, p. 10). Again, this question raises complex considerations which ramify into how best to approach study of defeasible inferences and arguments. One legitimate and productive approach argues that no answer to this question is possible which does not start from some ideal model of rationality or rationally motivated discourse. I am not inclined to dismiss that claim. I am, however, inclined suppose that the question of how we might *know* that we are proceeding rightly in a domain where reasoning is inherently defeasible might be asking for a certainty that is beyond the powers of reason. However that may be, I think it fair to say that the ways in which we do handle presumptive inference enjoy a certain presumption, which should stand good until they are shown to be incoherent or otherwise seriously flawed. I submit that Godden and Walton have not shown this to be the case.

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