

## *The virtuous arguer as a virtuous sequencer\**

*Each of us touches one place  
and understands the whole in that way  
Rumi*

**Abstract:** In this paper we draw on the munāzara tradition to intervene in the debate on whether argument assessment should be agent- or act-based. We introduce and deploy the notion of *sequencing* – the ordering of the antagonist’s critical moves – to make explicit an ambiguity between the *agent* and the *act* of arguing. We show that sequencing is a component of argumentation that inextricably involves the procedure as well as the agent and, therefore, its assessment cannot be adequately undertaken if either agent- or act-based norms are ignored or demoted. We present our intervention through a challenge that virtue argumentation needs to address for it to be considered an alternative to existing theories of argument assessment (Section1). We then briefly introduce munāzara and focus on its notion of sequencing to explicate the interdependence between the agent and the procedure (Section2). Next, we address the challenge by offering an account of the virtuous arguer as a virtuous sequencer (Section3). In conclusion, we reflect on the implications of sequencing on virtue argumentation and the norms of argumentation.

**Keywords:** norms of argumentation, virtue approach to argumentation, munāzara, practical wisdom, act-based, and agent-based.

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### **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

Contemporary argumentation scholarship operates within a rather strict dichotomy between agent- and act-based norms of argument assessment (Godden 2016), and it is common practice to prioritize one type of norms over the other (Bowell and Kingsbury 2013; Aberdeen and Cohen 2015). In this paper, we draw on the munāzara tradition to intervene in the debate between agent- and act-based theories of argument assessment. Specifically, we introduce and deploy the notion of *sequencing* – the ordering of the antagonist’s critical moves to be precise – in order to make explicit an ambiguity between the *arguer* and the *act of arguing*. We show how sequencing inextricably involves the procedure as well as the agent. Therefore, the normative assessment of sequencing, as a component of argumentation, cannot be adequately undertaken if either agent- or act-based norms are ignored or demoted. Good or virtuous sequencing is a case in point that elucidates how prioritizing one type of norm over the other adversely limits the assessment of argumentation.

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Our intervention takes place against the backdrop of *perspectivism* and in light of the two pivotal normative turns in argumentation theory since its modern renaissance:<sup>2</sup> the *dialectical* and the *virtue* turns. In his seminal article, Joseph W. Wenzel explains how rhetoric, dialectic, and logic represent different perspectives on the phenomenon of argumentation. From the rhetorical perspective, we look at argumentation and see a *process* through which persuasion occurs. From the dialectical perspective, we see a *procedure* for critical decision-making. And, from the logical perspective, we see “*products* people create when they argue” (Wenzel 1990, 9, *emphasis added*). Each perspective is valid in its own right and has something to contribute to the study of argumentation. Wenzel’s perspectivism doesn’t only equip us to better understand argumentation as a singular phenomenon, it also offers a plurality of norms for evaluating it: process-, procedure-, and product-based norms. Accordingly, an argumentation is good if it is persuasive (rhetoric), or if it complies with the procedural rules of an idealized critical discussion (dialectic), or if it has valid or sound individual arguments as products (logic).

Contemporary argumentation theorists are on board with perspectivism’s recognition of multiple legitimate norms for the evaluation of argumentation. They disagree, however, on the relationships between these norms and on whether one type of norm should take priority over others (Oruç, *forthcoming*). With the dialectical turn, for instance, we have a rebellion against the dominance of formal logic’s measurement of the goodness of an argument on the basis of validity (form) and the incontrovertibility of premises (content) (van Eemeren 2009, 140; see also: Lewiński and Mohammed 2016). Pragma-dialectics, the representative of the dialectical turn, does not reject the legitimacy of product-based norms but undermines their sufficiency. Consider the case of fallacies. While some fallacies relate to an argument’s form and/or content, other fallacies relate to the process and procedure of argumentation (van Eemeren 2015, 4). Pragma-dialectics accounts for the product as well as procedure by employing process-based norms that evaluate argumentation against an ideal discussion procedure.

The dialectical turn undermined the priority of product-based norms in the evaluation of argumentation and shifted the focus of the study of argumentation from *arguments as products* to *arguments as processes*; a shift that led to a commendable and remarkable expansion in the intellectual scope of argumentation studies. More recently, argumentation theory witnessed a second normative turn that could potentially be equally enriching for the study of argumentation. The agential turn, represented by the rise of virtue argumentation (Aberdein & Cohen 2016),<sup>2</sup> prioritizes the *agent* doing the arguing over the *act* of arguing (Gascón, 2016). In contrast to the three perspectives discussed by Wenzel, all of which presuppose the priority of the act of arguing, virtue argumentation understands and evaluates arguments by reference to the agent. In giving the agent center state, the virtue argumentation calls for shifting the focus of argumentation studies from the act of arguing (be that in terms of product, process, or procedure) to the arguer.

With perspectivism and the two normative turns in view, we can proceed to specify the locus of our intervention in this paper. We are on board with the pragma-dialectics’ understanding of argument as a sequence of events (argument2) rather than a mental object (argument1) (O’Keefe

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<sup>2</sup> With the publication of Toulmin’s *The Uses of Argument* and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s *La nouvelle Rhétorique*, the year 1958 marks the “Renaissance” of modern argumentation theories (Rigotti and Greco 2019, 131).

1977; Biro and Seigel 2006). We also appreciate the doubt virtue argumentation has cast on the presumed privilege of the act- over agent-based norms. Our intervention is concerned with argument assessment and is best presented through a challenge that virtue argumentation faces as an alternative to existing theories.

At the core of virtue argumentation is the claim that an argument is good only if it is the argument of a virtuous arguer (Aberdein 2018, 4). But what is “the argument of a virtuous arguer”? Virtue theorists have responded by establishing that the argument of a virtuous arguer is captured neither by the quality of individual arguments that the virtuous arguer makes (product-based norms), nor by her compliance with the procedural rules of an idealized critical discussion (procedure-based norms) (Aberdein 2010). While this is a valuable effort, it would not satisfy act-based theorists (Bowell & Kingsbury 2013) since it only indicates what the argument of a virtuous arguer *is not*. For virtue argumentation to be considered an alternative to existing theories it needs to offer a definition of what the argument of a virtuous arguer *is*. Andrew Aberdein provides a promising definition when he construes the argument of a virtuous arguer as the argument of the phronimos. We argue, however, that Aberdein’s definition will remain unsatisfactory to act-based theorists until it is supplemented with an element that (i) belongs to the act of arguing, (ii) contributes to the goodness of argument, (iii) cannot be captured by act-based norms, and (iv) is dependent on virtues the phronimos possesses.

This is the exact locus of our intervention to the debate between agent- and act-based theories for argument assessment. We suggest “sequencing” as precisely that supplement. With that said, a word of caution is due. It would be a misreading to interpret this suggestion as an intervention on behalf of theories that prioritize the arguer over the act of arguing. Through sequencing we make explicit the interdependence between the agent and the procedure. And, hence, privileging either one at the expense of the other would adversely limit the adequate evaluation of argumentation. A better way of interpreting our intervention is one that pushes virtue argumentation to revise its commitment to prioritize the arguer over the act of arguing – a point we return to in the conclusion.

We begin with the challenge virtue argumentation needs to address for it to be considered an alternative to existing theories of argument assessment (Section1). We then briefly introduce *munāzara* and focus on its notion of sequencing to explicate the interdependence between the agent and the procedure (Section2). Next, we address the challenge by offering an account of the virtuous arguer as a virtuous sequencer (Section3). In conclusion, we reflect on the implications of sequencing on virtue argumentation and the norms of argumentation. We propose a sequencing-empowered virtue argumentation as an approach that integrates the norms of argumentation into a single framework.

## **1. The challenge**

Guided by the footsteps of virtue ethics and virtue epistemology (Aberdein 2020, 98), Cohen (2007) and Aberdein (2010) kick-started a still growing discussion on virtue argumentation theory. Virtue ethics and virtue epistemology explain, respectively, the ethical features of actions and the epistemic performance in terms of properties of the agent. Similarly, virtue argumentation answers the cogency question, “What makes an argument good?”, in terms of

agential properties.<sup>3</sup> Virtue argumentation is agent-based in the specific sense that it prioritizes the agent over the act of arguing – the direction of analysis goes from the agent to the argument rather than the other way around.

Good arguments<sup>1</sup> should still have true premises and conclusions that follow from them with certainty or high likelihood; good arguments<sup>2</sup> should still be chiefly composed of good arguments<sup>1</sup>. But this will be *because* that is how a virtuous arguer is overwhelmingly likely to argue (Aberdein, 2018, 4; emphasis added)

Without prioritizing the agent, virtue argumentation gets reduced to already existing argumentation theories, it “would be merely ornamental” (Aberdein 2010, 170). When the virtuous arguer is explained in terms of the goodness of the argument, such that the virtuous arguer is an arguer who is disposed to conduct argumentation with good arguments, virtue argumentation becomes a derivative of, and at best a complement to, traditional accounts of the good argument. But, how can virtue argumentation meaningfully speak of the virtuous arguer without referring to the act of arguing? Paglieri (2015) distinguishes three projects that virtue theorists might take when it comes to argument assessment: radical, modest-moderate, and moderate.

Radicals argue that virtue argumentation should not even deal with argument assessment. Pagliery notes that the radical project’s dismissal of act-based argument evaluation, is driven by the claim that cogency is not even an adequate measure of the goodness of argument. He mentions several instances of arguments that are cogent yet not good arguments – instances of “bogency” (Paglieri 2015, 70) – indicating that act-based norms are not only insufficient but sometimes even irrelevant for the assessment of good argument. Modest-moderates, on the other hand, call for a division of labor according to which, argument evaluation is removed outside the scope of virtue argumentation altogether and is delegated to existing conventional theories (Gascón 2017, 179). For modest-moderates virtue argumentation is a “valuable theory of an *argumentative practice*” (Gascón 2017b, 39; *emphasis added*). Gascón further notes that even if virtue theory were to be adventurous and engage in argument evaluation, it would not do any better than conventional theories – in fact, it would be “less accurate and less informative” (Gascón 2016, 444). Finally, moderates differ from radicals in that they recognize the importance of cogency for the goodness of argument. And, unlike modest-moderates, they insist on the need for virtue argumentation to develop a framework for argument evaluation (Aberdein 2010, 173).

All three virtue projects are committed to the priority of the agent over the act. They differ in what they consider to be the implications of that commitment on the need for, and features of, an argument assessment framework. The modest-moderate project relieves itself from the task of assessing argument and delegates it to act-based theories. For this reason, we do not consider it to present a genuine alternative to existing theories of argument assessment. The radical project, on the other hand, is committed to argument assessment but seeks a purely agent-based

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<sup>3</sup> Virtue epistemologists are divided into reliabilists and responsibilists. Reliabilists claim that knowledge is the outcome of reliable processes exemplified, for example, in sight, hearing, and memory. Responsibilists claim that knowledge is not derived from innate skills but the outcome of excellences developed over time and that are subjected to human will and accountability (Turri et al. 1999); that is, virtue requires the agent to desire a specific act and be responsible for it. Although some proponents of virtue argumentation made use of this division (Gascón 2018), others call for a rapprochement and their consolidation (Aberdein 2010, 167).

framework. We do not find this project to present a viable alternative since its dismissal of cogency disregards the normative relevance of act-based theories – in our view, as we argue in the following section, procedural and agential norms are interdependent. In any case, for the purposes of this paper, we are particularly interested in probing the promise of the moderate project as an agent-based alternative to argument assessment. Moderates take up the task of developing an agent-based assessment framework while acknowledging that act-based norms are necessary (though insufficient) for good argument.

Andrew Aberdein, the main defender of the moderate project, draws on Aristotle to give a positive definition of the argument of a virtuous arguer as the argument of the phronimos. Since the phronimos is the person who does the right action, at the right time and for the right reasons, this definition refers to character traits (explicitly) as well as to actions (implicitly). The good argument is then the argument of the person who manifests practical wisdom and related relevant dispositions in argumentative engagements (Aberdein 2021, 215; see also: Aberdein 2016). And, when we examine the phronimos' acts of arguing we identify the good argument. Virtue argumentation theorists have further developed (Cohen 2005) and refined (Aberdein 2010; 2014) a taxonomy of the virtues and vices (Aberdein 2016) of the virtuous arguer. What we now have, then, is an answer to the cogency question that goes as follows: what makes an argument good is the virtuous arguer. And, the virtuous arguer is basically the phronimos when engaged in argumentation, the kind of engagement that manifests argumentative virtues and does not manifest argumentative vices. It is crucial to keep in mind that Aberdein's position does not dismiss or ignore act-based norms when evaluating arguments. His point rather is that the assessment of the acts of arguing should not be severed from, or carried out independently of, the arguer who is doing the acts of arguing. He writes:

So we are not presented with two evaluative strategies—evaluate arguments on their own merits; evaluate arguments on the basis of who puts them forward—nor am I proposing that we should abandon the former and embrace the latter. Rather, when properly understood, these are *two differently incomplete descriptions of the same strategy*: evaluate arguments on their own merits as manifest in the actions of the arguers who put them forward (and are otherwise engaged in them) (Aberdein 2018, 5 *emphasis added*).

Although our own views are very much in line with the idea of “differently incomplete descriptions of the same strategy”, we do not expect act-based theorists to be satisfied with this definition. Act-based theorists might object that reference to the phronimos along with a list of argumentative virtues and vices, and an acknowledgement of the importance of evaluating arguments on their own merits, is not enough. They could insist on interpreting Aberdein's definition as at best supporting a view where the phronimos serves as a mere indicant of, a sign-post for, “evaluate *this* argument.” But, act-based theorists will add, whatever “goodness” such evaluation might reveal will be due to features pertaining to the act of arguing without any reference to the agent. Act-based theorists then conclude that the priority of act-based norms is neither threatened nor diminished by this moderate virtue project for argument assessment. What might justify their insistence is that there is no indication in the positive understanding of “the argument of a virtuous arguer” under consideration, for thinking that the goodness of the argument of a virtuous arguer is not reducible to logical properties, procedural rules of an

idealized critical discussion, or rhetorical processes. The implicit demand being made here is for an element that belongs to the act of arguing but is not reducible to act-based norms, and that is dependent on virtues the phronimos possesses, i.e. on dispositions that when at work in argumentative engagements are “overwhelmingly likely” (Aberdein, 2018, 4) to manifest in good argument.

Thus, if the moderate project is to keep with Aberdein’s recourse to the phronimos, the challenge lies in articulating a conception of the virtuous arguer such that there is at least one element that belongs to the act of arguing but is not reducible to act-based norms, and that simultaneously corresponds to the arguer’s dispositions and contributes to the goodness of argument. To meet this challenge, the positive definition of the good argument as “the argument of the virtuous arguer who is the phronimos when engaged in argumentation,” needs to be supplemented with an element that (i) belongs to the act of arguing, (ii) contributes to the goodness of argument, (iii) cannot be captured by act-based norms, and (iv) is dependent on virtues the phronimos possesses. Until such a supplement is provided, act-based theorists have a legitimate case for denying the alleged shift from the act- to agent-based norms. At best, act-based theorists might recognize the relevance of agent-based norms while only giving them indirect, secondary, or marginal importance.

Evidently, this is a difficult demand to satisfy. We think, however, that by drawing on the *Ādāb al-Baḥṭh wa al-Munāzara* literature and its notion of sequencing, this demand can be met. Having said that, do not forget our cautionary note from above. It would be a mistake to interpret our offering the needed supplement as an unqualified intervention on behalf of virtue argumentation. Although we shall meet the demand in question, we do so with a tool that simultaneously shows that by giving priority to agent- over act-based norms (or the other way around for that matter), we adversely limit the evaluation of argumentation.

## **2. Munāzara and sequencing the antagonist’s critical moves**

*Ādāb al-Baḥṭh wa al-Munāzara* is an argumentation theory and practice that first emerged in the Muslim world at the end of the 13th century (Belhaj 2016; El-Rouayheb 2015). Literally, it means “the manners of inquiry and argumentation.” A more technical translation would be “virtuous conduct for monological and dialogical argumentation” (Oruç 2022) In the context of argumentation, “*ādāb*” stands for epistemic and practical virtues (*faḍā’il*) (al-Qarsī 2018, 35), “*baḥṭh*” means justifying claims through arguments, and “*munāzara*” refers to dialogical interaction where individual arguments are defended or rejected (Gelenbevī 1934, 34). That said, it is worth noting that translating *munāzara* as argumentation is somewhat misleading since in the literature, *munāzara* equivocally refers to the canons of argumentation and to the dispositions of an arguer (al-Āmidī 1900, 8).

The overarching goal of *munāzara* is the manifestation of truth/justice (*iẓhār al-ḥaqq*) (Gelenbevī 1934, 37), which is not to be interpreted in strictly epistemic terms. While *munāzara* scholars acknowledged the fundamental role product-based norms play in argumentation, they were fully aware that logic is neither the only nor the most important consideration for the manifestation of truth/justice. Most significantly for our purposes in this paper, *munāzara* scholars relied on a strict regulatory procedure that determines the respective moves of opposing parties at different junctures of an argumentative engagement (Ṭāṣkubrīzāde 2012, 7; see also: Taiai and Oruç

2021). This is a fairly rigid and stringent turn-taking procedure intended and designed to ensure that arguers approach and enact argumentation as a joint performance for the achievement of a common goal. Munāzara scholars considered derailments from procedural rules to be vices (see, Āmidī 1900, p. 58; Cevdet Paşā 1998, p. 112), and were mindful that implementing them required virtues. Other than an exchange of logical products, munāzara is an ethical procedure associated with the dispositions (malaka) of the good arguer.

Munāzara begins when it becomes clear that there is a difference of opinion between two parties. The protagonist proposes a claim and offers an argument the conclusion of which is, or entails, that claim. The antagonist then responds. Munāzara scholars discussed three legitimate *critical moves* that the antagonist can deploy: objection (man‘), refutation (naqd), and counter-argument (mu‘ārāḍa). Each of these moves depicts a *type* of response. They are “critical” in the sense that each puts in question the merits of a different aspect of the protagonist’s position. In brief: (i) Objection doubts a premise in the protagonist’s argument, and its illocutionary force requires a defense of the acceptability of that premise. (ii) Refutation points to a deficiency in the protagonist’s argument as a whole. For instance, showing that the claim does not follow from the argument (al-Samarqandī 1934, 127), or that the argument is otherwise fallacious (cf. van Laar and Krabbe 2013, 204). The illocutionary force of refutation is requiring the protagonist to either show that the levied charge is benign, or provide another argument to support her claim. Finally, (iii) counter-argument addresses the protagonist’s claim or conclusion. Here the antagonist offers an argument whose conclusion contradicts the protagonist’s claim, thereby demanding that she retracts it. The illocutionary force of counter-argument is requiring the protagonist to become an antagonist that would either object or refute the counter-argument. While munāzara scholars agree that these moves are exhaustive, they disagree on how the antagonist *ought* to order them for virtuous conduct. The literature discusses three prescribed sequences:

1. Objection→ Refutation→ Counter-argument, prescribed by Jurjānī (d. 1413) (al-Jaupūrī 2006, 76-77)
2. Refutation→ Objection→ Counter-argument, prescribed by Mullā Ḥanaḥī (d.1496) (2014, 40-41)
3. Objection→ Counter-argument→ Refutation, prescribed by Sāḥaqlizāde (d. 1732) (al-Āmidī 1900, 60)

In the rest of this section, and for consideration of space, we shall focus our discussion on Sequence1 to show how sequencing, which belongs to the procedure in a straightforward way, expresses argumentation values and requires virtues.<sup>4</sup>

Each of the above-mentioned sequences is a recommendation for how the antagonist ought to order her critical moves, and is designed to achieve the common goal of manifesting truth/justice. In this sense, cooperation is the overarching value of argumentation that normatively grounds these recommended sequences (see Stevens and Cohen 2019). What sets the recommendations apart is *how* they promote cooperation. We get to this “how” when we examine the justifications scholars provided for preferring one sequence over another. Let us illustrate.

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis of the three sequences, see Oruç et al. 2023. For more information on sequencing and its historical trajectory, see Belhaj 2010; Miller 2020; Young 2017; Young 2018.

Sequence1 (objection→ refutation→ counter-argument) is proposed by Samarqandī (d. 1303), the founder of the theory, and is defended by Jurjānī.<sup>5</sup> Samarqandī's prescription served as the backdrop against which later scholars articulated their respective proposals. Commenting on Jurjānī's support for opening with objection, al-Jaupūrī makes two points: First, objection can be raised before the protagonist's argument is completed, and has the weakest illocutionary force in the sense that it neither threatens the argument nor the claim since it merely asks for the defense of the premise. Second, objection does not shift the burden of proof (al-Jaupūrī 2006, 76). Al-Jaupūrī goes on to note that according to Jurjānī, the initial duty of the antagonist is to question and seek information, rather than defeat her opponent's argument (al-Jaupūrī 2006, 76). Only when the protagonist has dealt with the objections, the antagonist may attend to the argument as a whole and deploy refutation. This is a stronger critical move since it requires the protagonist to show either that the levied charge is superficial or offer another argument for the same claim. It is not, however, the strongest move since its success does not entail that the protagonist must abandon her claim. Only after the protagonist manages to show that her argument has acceptable premises and is deficiency-free, can the antagonist deploy counter-argument. Counter-argument is the strongest move because, Jurjānī explains, it constitutes an attack not only on the protagonist's claim but also an attack on her argument as a whole (al-Jaupūrī 2006, 77). The idea here is that while a counter-argument directly negates the claim, it simultaneously though indirectly attacks the argument since a good argument should withstand counter-arguments. Faced with a counter-argument, the protagonist becomes the antagonist and attempts to show that the counter-argument contains unacceptable premises (objection) or suffers from some deficiency (refutation). Failure to do so entails that the argument she originally provided is insufficient for her to continue holding on to her claim. Accordingly, we can represent Sequence1 as: *weakest move*→ *stronger move*→ *strongest move*.

How does such unfolding of critical moves promote cooperation? Starting with objection, the antagonist attempts to ensure that the building blocks, i.e. premises, of the argument under consideration are acceptable. In this way, she gives the protagonist the opportunity to reflect on and identify weaknesses in her premises. With refutation, the antagonist probes the protagonist to defend the reasoning that underlies her argument. In this way, she gives the protagonist the opportunity to reflect and identify mistakes in her own reasoning process. This first pair of critical moves (objection→ refutation) alerts the protagonist over the acceptability of her premises and deficiencies in her argument. Had the antagonist begun with counter-argument, the protagonist's opportunity for unraveling weaknesses and mistakes is by-passed. It is only after the back and forth dictated by this first pair of moves has culminated, that the antagonist may deploy her strongest move to show that despite acceptable premises and a deficiency-free argument, the protagonist hasn't yet established that her claim is sufficiently credible.

The progressive ordering from weakest to strongest move opens a communicative space of disagreement within which the protagonist is permitted and assisted by the antagonist to reflect

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<sup>5</sup> Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Samarqandī's *Ādāb al-Baḥṭh wa-l-munāzara* (end of the 13th c.) is considered the founding text in that tradition. In this work, Samarqandī builds on the procedures and norms of *jadal*, an argumentation theory in which the content of arguments are primarily divinely transmitted report (*naqlī*), to develop *munāzara* as a field-independent argumentation model for the study of rational issues (*aqlī*) (Pehlivan and Ceylan 2015; see also Belhaj 2015). *Munāzara* spread quickly and almost completely replaced *jadal*, even in debates about divinely transmitted reports (Pehlivan and Ceylan 2015).



on the acceptability of her premises and the deficiencies in her reasoning. Throughout this process, the antagonist engages the protagonist critically by respectively questioning the merits of different aspects of her position. The antagonist is working *with*, not *against*, the protagonist. Sequence1 joins the protagonist and the antagonist in a collaborative endeavor to assess the worth of the premises, the reliability of the reasoning, and the dialogical tenability of the claim. Accordingly, when the antagonist chooses to order her critical moves in accordance with Sequence1, she promotes *coalescent-cooperation* and realizes the value of *coalescence*.

Examining the justifications in support of the other two sequences also reveals their respective values and types of cooperation. When the antagonist chooses to order her critical moves in accordance with Sequence2, she expresses and promotes *reliable-cooperation* and realizes the value of *reliability*. And, when she chooses Sequence3, she expresses and promotes *adversarial-cooperation* and realizes the value of *efficacy* (see, Oruç et al. 2023). The specific arrangement of the antagonist's critical moves in a recommended sequence is normatively grounded on an argumentation value. At the same time, each of these argumentation values gets concretized in the sequencing of critical moves prescribed by its respective sequence. Thus, values are *embodied* in sequencing, and sequences *express* values.

Furthermore, in order for the antagonist to implement a recommended sequence, certain *virtues* are required. Going back to Sequence1, for the antagonist to be able to open the communicative space that permits and leads the protagonist to reflect on her own premises and reasoning, the antagonist must exhibit some degree of *patience* and *humility*. Consider an antagonist equipped with, and eager to deliver, a knock-down counter-argument. Without patience and humility they may not succeed in sticking to weakest→ stronger→ strongest progressive unfolding. As for the remaining sequences, we associate the virtues of *diligence* and *open-mindedness* with Sequence2, and of *agonism* and *strategy* with Sequence3 (see, Oruç et al. 2023).

Antagonists who possess the relevant virtues are capable of implementing the recommended sequences and realize their respective argumentation values. If a protagonist wants to realize coalescence, she needs to arrange her moves in the order stipulated by Sequence1. And for her to succeed in doing so, she needs patience and humility. Further, it is through the recurrent practice of Sequence1 that the antagonist gets to learn how to exhibit patience and humility in her argumentative engagements. The point of recommending Sequence1 is precisely to restrict the antagonist's choices of available critical moves in a specific way. The antagonist in training, hence, struggles as he learns how to restrain herself so that she can stick with objection→ refutation→ counter-argument. Over time and with repetition, she develops the virtues of patience and humility which are required for implementing Sequence1. This antagonist also and simultaneously comes to internalize coalescence as the argumentation value embodied in Sequence1. Coalescence justifies Sequence1 and guides the antagonist's choices by serving as a normative source for the restrictions that the antagonist is required to observe. And, as the antagonist struggles and observes these restrictions, she develops and exhibits the virtues of patience and humility which are required for implementing the sequence that embodies coalescence.

### **3. Meeting the challenge**

In Section1 we presented a challenge for a virtue argumentation definition of the good argument. In Section2 we introduced the tool for meeting that challenge, sequencing. In this section, we put that tool into use. To show that sequencing can supplement the positive definition of the good argument as “the argument of the virtuous arguer as the phronimos when engaged in argumentation,” we need to show that it (i) belongs to the act of arguing, (ii) contributes to the goodness of argument, (iii) cannot be captured by act-based norms, and (iv) is dependent on virtues the phronimos possesses.

Sequencing is a procedural element in argumentation, and it thus straightforwardly belongs to the act of arguing. Now, whether an antagonist’s ordering of critical moves complies with a recommended sequence or not, can add or detract from the normative quality of argument<sup>2</sup> (as a process). So, sequencing contributes to the goodness of argumentation. Further, sequencing requires/teaches virtues (and expresses/embodies argumentation values), and thus stands in a two-way relationship with the virtues, the dispositions that the phronimos possesses. What remains to be shown is that sequencing is not reducible to act-based norms. The key for this is that *agential choices* are an essential and ineliminable component of a *virtuous sequencer*, which implies that act-based norms on their own are incapable of capturing all the components of sequencing that are relevant for its contribution to the goodness of argument. Let us explain.

The virtuous arguer is the person who is capable of virtuous conduct in argumentative engagements. We have introduced sequencing as a component of argumentation that has a contribution to make to the goodness of argument. Virtuous conduct in argumentative engagements thus subsumes the virtuous sequencer. But, what does being a virtuous sequencer involve?

The munāzara tradition discussed three recommended sequences. Each sequence restricts the choices of arguers in a specific way that realizes an argumentation value. When an arguer restricts her critical moves in accordance with a sequence she expresses the argumentation value embodied in that sequence. And, an arguer’s commitment to an argumentation value informs her choices such that *when* she deploys *which* critical move fits the sequence that expresses that value. Being a virtuous sequencer thus involves a commitment to argumentation values, making choices at different junctures of argumentative engagements, as well as possessing the virtues required for, and developed through, implementing sequences. Being a virtuous sequencer is, thus, not mere rule-following.<sup>6</sup> In order for an antagonist’s behavior to count as virtuous, she should arrange her critical moves in accordance with the order stipulated by recommended sequences, her behavior should be the result of the relevant dispositions rather than, say, luck or duplicity, and she should be behaving out of an awareness of, or commitment to, the argumentation value embodied in the sequence and that the sequence expresses. This is one ineliminable agential choice component of being a virtuous sequencer that makes it not reducible to following procedural rules.

There is another such component. We saw that in the munāzara literature, there are three different recommended sequences for the antagonist’s virtuous conduct, and that scholars disagreed and debated which sequence is better for virtuous conduct. It might be that some

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<sup>6</sup> We thank José Ángel Gascón for raising this point in his expert opinion for the “ADAB: Developing Argumentative Virtues in a Divided World” project.

scholars thought of their preferred sequence as the best recommendation for all contexts. We are not committed to that. We acknowledge, instead, that virtuous conduct in different argumentative situations might require implementing different recommended sequences. Therefore, an arguer's ability to discern which recommended sequence fits better a particular argumentation situation is another aspect of virtuous conduct in argumentative engagements. This aspect concerns *which sequence* the arguer follows in *what context*; i.e., which of the different recommended sequences does the arguer chooses to stick with given a particular argumentative situation. Here is an illustration.

Start by considering the following justification for Sequence2: the antagonist should open with refutation rather than objection because this is the “faster” route (al-Ṣabbān 2014, p. 131). Faster in the sense that the antagonist is not to dwell on doubting premises (acceptability-checking) before first making sure that the argument they are to engage with is reasonable (deficiency-checking). Only after the antagonist ensures that the protagonist's argument as a whole is not fallacious or perniciously flawed do they turn to checking the acceptability of premises. Here refutation functions as a filtering move that expresses the importance one might place on inferential reliability (see Mullā Ḥanafī 2014). One might ask, which is better, Sequence1 or Sequence2? Well, Sequence2's opening with a filtering move distorts Sequence1's progressive unfolding from weakest to strongest move and, as a result, diminishes coalescence as an argumentation value. This is done in the name of the value of reliability and exhibited in the gatekeeping role of the filtering move. Depending on which value can/can't, or should/shouldn't, be promoted in a given argumentation context determines which is the better sequence in that context. For instance, when disagreeing parties share a considerable common ground, expressing coalescence and promoting coalescent-cooperation might be better. But, the deeper the disagreement, the greater the significance of opening with a filtering move and postponing acceptability-checking, and the more appropriate it is to achieve reliability and seek reliable-cooperation. It is through her discernment of the argumentative situation that the arguer is to determine whether the context calls for the value of coalescence or of reliability.

We can then say that virtuous conduct requires discernment in argumentative situations. Such discernment, or practical wisdom, allows the agent to determine which argumentation value is most pertinent here and now. Next, the agent picks the sequence that expresses and embodies that value. Finally, the agent is to implement the sequence she picked, which concerns the sequencing of her critical moves. Two points are worth emphasizing here. The first point is that there are two kinds of choices involved in virtuous sequencing: choosing the appropriate sequence in a given argumentative situation, and choosing the appropriate critical move for different junctures of an argumentative engagement. The second point is that argumentation values are at the core of both kinds of choices. The virtuous arguer chooses the appropriate sequence on the basis of which argumentation value is most pertinent given the argumentative situation, and she is motivated to choose her critical moves at different junctures by her commitment to realize the argumentation value that is embodied in that sequence. While sequencing pertains to the act of arguing, it cannot be fully captured by the act of arguing because act-based norms are insufficient for accounting for the ineliminable agential choices that are essential for the virtuous sequencer.

Consider first the procedural rules of pragma-dialectics. While pragma-dialectics acknowledges the role of the agent as a second-order condition for critical reasonableness, its commitment to the externalization principle reduces that role to the agent's externalized acts. Effectively, this implies that the arguer's states of mind (intentions, motivations, aspirations) are noumenal and the study of argumentation is not to deal with them. The externalization principle "means that we target the public commitments entailed by the performance of certain language activities" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, 53). It calls on argumentation theorists to refrain from dealing with the arguer's states of mind since these are not readily accessible to others. Accordingly, argumentation theory's sole focus should be on externalized acts (speech act) rather than assumptions about the arguer's state of mind. Consequently, the agent can no longer serve as an eligible basis for a theory of argumentation. The contribution of sequencing to the goodness of argument, however, is not sufficiently captured in terms of externalized commitments. Recommended sequences are inextricable from their corresponding virtues. Sequencing expresses/embodies argumentation values and requires and teaches virtues. An adequate evaluation of sequencing involves values and must have a place for virtues. While sequencing has an external manifestation, it is not reducible to it. In the case of Sequence1, for instance, the antagonist must stick with objection→ refutation→ counter-argument precisely because they want to realize the value of coalescence as a way of achieving cooperation that leads to the manifestation of truth/justice. If an antagonist follows Sequence1, say, by coincidence or to impress their partners, they would be merely acting in accordance to virtue but they wouldn't be exhibiting virtuous sequencing. Without states of mind like intentions, aspirations, and motivations we cannot adequately capture the virtuous sequencer.

Now consider product-based norms. These norms concern argument1. Sequencing, however, concerns argument2 not argument1. The merit of a sequence hinges on the positioning of the different critical moves with respect to one another. That is, whether the placement of a critical move within a sequence is appropriate, prudent, skilful, virtuous or not, depends on the sequential relationships between the illocutionary force of that critical move, on the one hand, and the illocutionary force of the critical moves that come before and/or after it, on the other hand. Thus, the justification for preferring one sequence over another is independent from whatever criteria one uses in order to determine whether a specific individual move counts as a strong or a weak objection, refutation, or counter-argument. In short, product-based norms are important for argument1, but the merit of sequencing is independent from argument1.

## **Conclusion**

Sequencing concerns the way in which an arguer arranges or orders the different legitimate moves available to her. The *munāzara* tradition has extensively discussed sequencing as a component of argumentation. And although in any argumentative exchange some ordering of moves will occur, be it intentional or not, contemporary argumentation theory has not paid sufficient attention to how such ordering *should* be done.<sup>7</sup> The promise of sequencing for argumentation theory remains, for the most part, unexplored.

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<sup>7</sup> Lumer (1988) mentions sequencing but is rather dismissive of the regulation of a "definite sequencing of moves" (p. 461). Another exception is Krabbe and van Laar's four parameters for cataloging and analyzing critical reactions in argumentation (Krabbe and van Laar 2011; van Laar and Krabbe 2013; van Laar 2004).

In this paper we have argued that sequencing has a contribution to make in the debate of whether argument assessment should be agent- or act-based. Supplementing the moderate project of virtue argumentation with sequencing permits for an understanding of the virtuous arguer that is grounded in the act of arguing without being reducible to act-based norms. Accordingly, the virtuous arguer is the person who is capable of virtuous conduct in argumentative engagements and thus a virtuous sequencer. And, the virtuous sequencer is the arguer who is committed to, and capable of, identifying and implementing sequences that embody pertinent argumentation values in a given context. By construing the virtuous arguer as a virtuous sequencer we have supplemented Aberdein's definition of the virtuous arguer as the *phronimos* with sequencing as the element that pertains to the act of arguing and is indicative of dispositions that when at work in argumentative engagements are most likely to manifest in good argument. It is important to note here that although sequencing has, in some sense, empowered the moderate project in virtue argumentation, it has at the same time and in a different sense, weakened the standard understanding of virtue argumentation. To see this, consider the more general contribution sequencing has to make.

One lesson we can learn from this paper's discussion is to view sequencing as a node in the complex phenomenon of argumentation that exhibits the interconnections between agent-based and act-based norms. A proper appreciation of these interconnections indicates that the evaluation of sequencing calls for norms that accept no neat division between the act of arguing and the agent who is arguing. We suggest that argumentation values, such as coalescence, can serve as *sequencing-based norms* that are at the same time act-based and agent-based. Another, and more general, contribution sequencing makes is, then, opening a conceptual space, and offering a practical tool, for developing a framework for the assessment of argumentation that integrates different kinds of norms rather than pitting one against the other. An argumentation theory that, like *munāzara*, takes sequencing seriously cannot be properly understood if one insists on categorizing it as either an agent- or an act-based theory. Such a theory can very well recognize a distinction between the agent and the act, but will not infer from that distinction that agent and act are separate and that one can be properly understood independently of the other.

For this reason, if the moderate project were to adopt sequencing as a supplement, it would also have to reconsider its commitment to being an agent-based theory. We saw that it is essential for virtue argumentation to prioritize the agent over the act of arguing. Without such priority it becomes derivative of, and at best a complement to, act-based theories. This way of thinking makes sense against the widely held and rather strict dichotomy between agent- and act-based norms of argument assessment. With the ambiguity between the agent and the act that sequencing creates, however, we do not think that virtue argumentation should keep holding on to the priority of the agent over the act. The question then is, how could virtue approach still present itself as a stand alone and different argumentation theory if it gives up its commitment to the priority of the agent?

Our proposal is that a *munāzara*-inspired, sequencing-empowered, virtue argumentation would not present itself as an additional perspective on argumentation along with the logical, dialectical and rhetorical perspectives. Instead, it would present itself as an approach that integrates the norms of argumentation into a single framework. A *munāzara*-inspired virtue argumentation would be *driven by* the recognition that argumentative norms are interdependent and intertwined

in subtle and complex ways. It would *approach* argumentation as a singular and unified phenomenon in order to avoid the sort of evaluative blindness that results from falling into the trap of “each of us touches one place and understands the whole in that way” to put it in Rumi’s (n.d.) words of wisdom. This is not to say that such an approach would seek some sort of “universals” of argumentation. Instead, it would *seek* to spell out the connections and interrelations between the different norms by accounting for their interactions and investigating how, when and under which conditions one norm trumps another and why.

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