

# Ranking argumentative vices: towards a virtue argumentation approach based on dialectical rules

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# Overview

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- Argumentative virtues
- Derailments from dialectical rules

# Three constituents of argumentation

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...and its normative objects (Godden, 2016; Gascon, 2017)

- **Arguments** - products (informal logic)
- **Arguing** - activities-procedures (pragma-dialectics)
- **Arguers /audiences** - actors-agents (virtue argumentation)

# A tale of three theories

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- Informal logic (artefact) : validity, cogency, fallacies
- Pragma-dialectics (act): fallacies, derailments
- Virtue argumentation (agent): virtues, vices

Virtue Argumentation (VA) so far

- a responsibilist, expansionist, moderately autonomous theory

# VA: Ornamental vs Expansionist

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...it is entirely reasonable to speak of the 'virtues of an argument', and we could take these 'virtues' as primitive instead. In that case, we could still talk of virtuous arguers, by defining their virtues in terms of the virtues of their arguments, making the virtuous arguer one disposed to advance or accept virtuous arguments. However, the virtue talk in this approach would be merely ornamental, since the 'virtues of an argument' could presumably be cashed out in terms of more familiar forms of argument appraisal.

(Aberdein, 2010, p. 170).

# VA: Ornamental vs Expansionist

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“evaluate arguments on their own merits”

“evaluate arguments on the basis of who puts them forward”

these are two differently incomplete descriptions of the same strategy (Aberdein, 2018, p. 5).

# The priority thesis of VA not tenable

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- While argumentative virtues can prescribe the ways that we should go about working with reasons, neither the nature of a reason nor its goodness is explained virtuously (Godden, 2016, p. 11)
- ...in spite of the inadequacy of virtue argumentation theory as a theory of argument appraisal, it could be a valuable *theory of argumentative practice* (Gascon, 2016, p. 446, original)
- ..skip further elaboration on virtue-based accounts of cogency, ...and resume the really crucial work, tackling key problems such as ...what sort of structured set of argumentative virtues we should consider relevant (Paglieri, 2015, p. 84)

# 1

Let us focus on a non-expansionist  
virtue argumentation approach:

Let's first focus on virtues (vices), predispositions, ethos..



# Brockreide's three argumentative characters

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**The seducer** - operates through charm or deceit - using tricks and fallacies

**The rapist** - wants to maintain a position of superiority - conquer by the force of the argument

**The lover** - wants power parity, asks for free assent and criticism, willing to risk very self in the discussion

(Brockreide 1972, in Gascon, 2016)

# Cohen's specimens (Cohen, 2005)

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**Deaf Dogmatist** - brushes aside objections without giving them their due

**Eager Believer** - combines a healthy earnestness with an uncritical gullibility

**Concessionaire** - concedes too much and too readily

**Provocateur** - has an uncanny knack for drawing you into an argument. Even when you agree with an argument provocateur, you end up arguing.

# Cohen's specimens organized by Aberdein

(2016)

## (Un)Willingness...

**Argument Provocateur**

– to engage in argument –

**Quietist**

?

– to listen –

**Deaf Dogmatist**

**Concessionaire**

- to modify one's position -

**Agenda pusher**

**Eager Believer**

– to question –

**Unassuring Assurer**

# Argumentative Virtues (Aberdein, 2016)

## Willingness to engage in argumentation

- Being communicative
- Faith in reason
- Intellectual courage
- Sense of duty

## Willingness to listen to others

- Intellectual empathy
- Insight into persons/problems/theories
- Fairmindedness
  - Justice
  - Fairness in evaluating the arguments of others
  - Open-mindedness in appraising evidence
- Recognition of reliable authority
- Recognition of salient facts
  - Sensitivity to detail

## Willingness to modify one's own position

- Common sense
- Intellectual candour
- Intellectual humility
- Intellectual integrity
  - Honour
  - Responsibility
  - Sincerity

## Willingness to question the obvious

- Appropriate respect for public opinion
- Autonomy
- Intellectual perseverance
  - Diligence
  - Care
  - Thoroughness

# Argumentative vices

(Aberdeen, 2016)

Is failing to will a certain virtue in the right amount a vice?

Always?  
When?

**Table 2** A tentative typology of argumentational vice

|  |   |
|--|---|
| (1 <sup>-</sup> ) Unwillingness to engage in argumentation (quietism)<br>(a) Being uncommunicative<br>(b) Mistrust of reason<br>(c) Intellectual cowardice<br>(i) Dereliction of duty  | (1 <sup>+</sup> ) Undue willingness to engage in argumentation (the 'argument provocateur')<br>(a) Being too communicative<br>(b) Over-reliance on reason<br>(c) Intellectual rashness<br>(i) Misplaced zeal  |
| (2 <sup>-</sup> ) Unwillingness to listen to others (the 'deaf dogmatist')<br>(a) Intellectual callousness<br>(i) Indifference to persons<br>(ii) Indifference to problems<br>(iii) Indifference to theories<br>(b) Narrow-mindedness<br>(i) Injustice to others<br>(ii) Unfairness to others in evaluating their arguments<br>(iii) Closed-mindedness in collecting and appraising evidence<br>(c) Indifference to reliable authority<br>(d) Indifference to salient facts<br>(i) Insensitivity to detail | (2 <sup>+</sup> ) Undue willingness to listen to others<br>(a) Intellectual sentimentality<br>(i) Indulgence of persons<br>(ii) Indulgence of problems<br>(iii) Indulgence of theories<br>(b) Undue generosity<br>(i) Injustice to oneself<br>(ii) Partiality to others in evaluating their arguments<br>(iii) Impressionability in collecting and appraising evidence<br>(c) Misidentification of authority as reliable<br>(d) Misidentification of salient facts<br>(i) Obsession with detail |
| (3 <sup>-</sup> ) Unwillingness to modify one's own position (the 'agenda pusher')<br>(a) Over-reliance on common sense<br>(b) Intellectual dishonesty<br>(c) Intellectual arrogance<br>(d) Intellectual intransigence<br>(i) Dishonour<br>(ii) Stolidity<br>(iii) Insincerity   | (3 <sup>+</sup> ) Undue willingness to modify one's own position (the 'concessionaire')<br>(a) Lack of common sense<br>(b) Intellectual naivety<br>(c) Lack of intellectual confidence<br>(d) Intellectual acquiescence<br>(i) Sycophancy<br>(ii) Irresponsibility<br>(iii) Unsophistication  |
| (4 <sup>-</sup> ) Unwillingness to question the obvious (the 'eager believer')<br>(a) Undue or misplaced respect for public opinion<br>(b) Gullibility<br>(c) Lack of intellectual perseverance<br>(i) Inanition<br>(ii) Carelessness<br>(ii) Superficiality   | (4 <sup>+</sup> ) Undue willingness to question the obvious (the 'unassuring assurer')<br>(a) Contempt for public opinion<br>(b) Eccentricity<br>(c) Intellectual single-mindedness<br>(i) Pertinacity<br>(ii) Pedantry<br>(iii) Obsessiveness  |

# Cohen's injunctions derived from specimens

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“More specific and more helpful injunctions can also be drawn, such as”:  
(Cohen, 2005, p. 62)

- **Do not ignore questions and objections.**
- **Do not miss the point of your own arguments.**
- **Abandon or alter your conclusion if your own logic leads you elsewhere.**
- **Do not misjudge the audience.**

**Always? When?**

## 2

Let's focus on the constructive links  
to more established approaches  
rather than an autonomous (independent, solitary)  
virtue argumentation approach

# Are fallacies vices?

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- Virtuous argument — made by a virtuous arguer
- Instances of fallacies are instances of vicious intellectual behavior (Ball, 2016)
  - — Intellectual virtues — — epistemic — reliabilist orientation
- Fallacies can be accounted for as vices (Aberdein, 2016)
  - — Gang of eighteen



# VA's link with fallacies ?

...it would seem that all the members of Woods's 'Gang of Eighteen' *can be accounted for* in terms of argumentational vice. (...) their tractability demonstrates the wide applicability of a virtue approach and suggests that fallacy theory can be subsumed within a theory of argumentational vice (Aberdein, 2016, p. 420, our emphasis).

**Table 3** The 'Gang of Eighteen' and some distinctive corresponding vices in proponent and respondent

| Fallacy          | Proponent  | Respondent   |
|------------------|--|--|
| Ad baculum       | Injustice to others, (2 <sup>-</sup> )(b)(i); dishonour, (3 <sup>-</sup> )(d)(i)               | Intellectual cowardice, (1 <sup>-</sup> )(c)                             |
| Ad hominem       | Unfairness to others in evaluating their arguments, (2 <sup>-</sup> )(b)(ii)                   | Indifference to persons, (2 <sup>-</sup> )(a)(i)                         |
| Ad misericordiam | Sentimentality, (2 <sup>+</sup> )(a); insincerity, (3 <sup>-</sup> )(d)(iii)                   | Sentimentality, (2 <sup>+</sup> )(a); inanition, (4 <sup>-</sup> )(c)(i) |
| Ad populum       | Undue respect for public opinion, (4 <sup>-</sup> )(a); insincerity, (3 <sup>-</sup> )(d)(iii) | Undue respect for public opinion, (4 <sup>-</sup> )(a)                   |

# 3

Why not focus on arg activity (precise acts in procedures)

instead of products

to ground a virtue (vice) argumentation approach

# Under a Standard Goal and Procedure (SGP)

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- Arguments (artefact) : validity, cogency, fallacies
- Arguing (act): fallacies, derailments
- VA (agent): virtues, vices



Interdependence between the procedure-based and agent-based norms  
(Oruç, Üzelgün, & Sadek, 2023)

Spotting *liabilities* – Especially (at least) for pedagogical purposes

# Manners of inquiry and argumentation

(*Ādāb al-baḥth wa-l-munāzara*)

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*Mukābara* (**Arrogance**) - Rejecting an established premise without offering a supporting argument

*Taḥakkum* (**Subjugation**) - Maintaining a claim without offering a supporting argument

*Ġaṣb* (**Usurpation**) - Counter arguing a not-yet-defended position

*'Ucūl* (**Hastiness**) - Counter arguing a protagonist's claim immediately

(Āmidī 1900, p. 58; Cevdet Paşa 1998, p. 112; Oruç, 2022)

# PD critical discussion rules and beyond

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The rules cannot offer any guarantee that discussants who abide by these rules will always be able to resolve their differences of opinion (vEG, 2004, p. 134)

Arguing well involves much more than putting forward good arguments (Cohen, 2005) (and obeying rules)

**First- order conditions** - critical discussion rules

Problem validity – Conventional validity (Intersubjective acceptance)

Pragmatic rationale – Ethical rationale (**Subjective acceptance**)

**Second-order conditions** - relate to the psychological state of speakers

**Third-order conditions** - relate to the discussion's social circumstances (p. 188)

# PD critical discussion rules and beyond

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Together, the internal second-order conditions and the external third-order conditions for conducting a critical discussion in the ideal sense are higher order conditions for resolving differences of opinion. Only if these higher order conditions are satisfied can critical reasonableness be fully realized in practice. Compliance with second-order conditions can to some extent be stimulated by *education that is methodically directed at reflection* on the first-order rules and understanding their rationale. (vEG, 2004, p. 189)

*“education that is methodically directed at reflection”*

*practice that is methodically directed at **acquisition***

# PD and VA: Brothers in Arms (Gascon, 2017)

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- The appropriate application of pragma-dialectical rules may require a suitably motivated and virtuous character
- Contributing to the fulfilment of the second-order conditions, VA could complement the PD model for practical (educational) purposes
- VA could provide a theoretical foundation for the pragma-dialectical rules. “Rules would be, then, grounded in social practices, from which their normative strength stems” (p. 719)
- On the other hand, what pragma-dialectics provides —and a virtue approach to argumentation cannot— are *detailed rules that make explicit* what is only implicit in our conception of what arguing reasonably (virtuously) is.

# A Code of Conduct for Reasonable Discussants

## “Characteristics of reasonable discussants”

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1- *Discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from calling standpoints into question.*

*(Freedom)*

(Deaf) dogmatism

2- *Discussants who advance a standpoint may not refuse to defend this standpoint when requested to do so (Obligation to defend)*

Subjugation  
(*Tahakkum*)

3- *Attacks on standpoints may not bear on a standpoint that has not actually been put forward by the other party.*

*(Standpoint)*

Usurpation  
(*Gasb*)



# A Code of Conduct for Reasonable Discussants

## “Characteristics of reasonable discussants”

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4- *Standpoints may not be defended by non-argumentation or argumentation that is not relevant to the standpoint.*  
(Relevance)

?? 4.1 distraction ?  
?? 4.2 Intrusion ?

5- *Discussants may not falsely attribute unexpressed premises to the other party, nor disown responsibility for their own unexpressed premises.* (Unexpressed premise)

5.1 Provocateur  
5.2 Subjugation

6- *Discussants may not falsely present something as an accepted starting point or falsely deny that something is an accepted starting point.* (Starting point)

6.1 Subjugation  
6.2 Arrogance  
(Mukabere)

# A Code of Conduct for Reasonable Discussants

## “Characteristics of reasonable discussants”

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- 7- Reasoning that in an argumentation is presented as formally conclusive may not be invalid in a logical sense. (Validity)      ?? 7.1 distraction ?  
?? 7.2 ?
- 8- Standpoints may not be regarded as conclusively defended by argumentation that is not presented as based on formally conclusive reasoning if the defense does not take place by means of appropriate argument schemes that are applied correctly. (Argument scheme)      8.1 ?  
8.2 Connoisseur ?
- 9- Inconclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintaining these standpoints, and conclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintaining expressions of doubt concerning these standpoints. (Concluding)      9.1. ?  
9.2 Agenda Pusher?

# Conclusion

Interdependence between  
procedure-based and  
agent-based norms

*“virtuous arguer arguing virtuously”*

# Virtuous arguer arguing *virtuously*

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- Properly speaking, the central concept [to VA] is neither virtuous actions nor virtuous agents but agents-acting-virtuously, complete with its oblique reference to standing properties of character. (Cohen, 2008, p.3)
- “...for VA the central and basic normative concept of argumentation theory is the *virtuous arguer arguing virtuously*.” (Godden, 2016, p.5)
- **The link between procedure-based norms and virtues/vices is fruitful for both, first for the latter, and as it develops, for the former too.**

# Under a Standard Goal and Procedure (SGP)

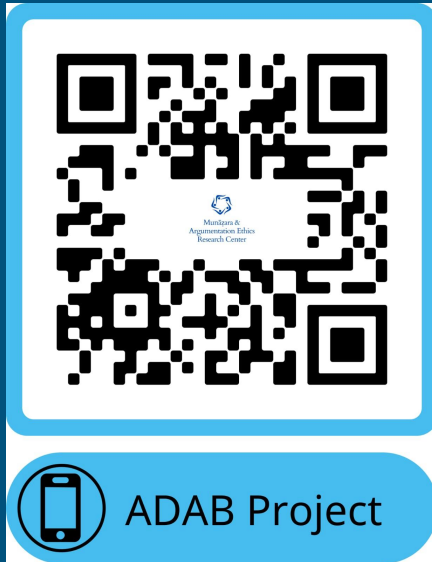
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## Ranking argumentative vices and dispositions?

Deaf dogmatist >> Subjugator >> Usurper >> Arrogant >> Provocateur >>  
Connoisseur >> Agenda Pusher

- **Pedagogical purposes: Acquisition of argumentative virtues~ Empirical work on (the interaction between) second-order and third-order conditions, and their relevance for the first order conditions**
- **Only three may just be enough? (Kock, 2013)**

Thanks!



# Arguing well - in both directions

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- Reliabilist
- Responsibilist

