Response to José Ángel Gascón
Competitive debates and argumentative virtues

In your response to our questions, you discuss if the debates foster reliabilist or responsibilist values. You suggest that debates foster reliabilist virtues (if they are conducted well), but when it comes to responsibilist values the empirical evidence is inconclusive, the competitive debates may even lead to argumentative (responsibilist) vices.

Does your position also extend to argument evaluation? You seem to be very careful not to state it this way. But in our discussion of your answers some of our team members understood from you that you also side with act based theories when it comes to argument evaluation. It seems in your response essay you preferred to focus on whether those two kinds of values are really cultivated in university debate practice. So can you make your point more clear with respect to argument evaluation?

In the symposium we planned a session where we place you next to A. Aberdien. We thought it would provide an opportunity to closely engage with his arguments. That is as you also stated in your essay that defining argumentative "virtue" on the basis of qualities of the acts only would not provide us insights about the role of virtues in argumentation. You also mentioned Aberdein's (2010, p. 170) point that "the virtue talk in this approach would be wholly ornamental." We think that a debate with Aberdien on this issue would serve best for our efforts to formulate philosophical grounds for our procedure that highlight agential values in argumentation.

I want to ask some further questions and make some comments related to this issue. Although it is not possible to come up with a way to account for responsibilist virtues without entering into subjective evaluations, would it be still possible to think of ways to involve agential considerations in argument evaluation? That is, can we still think of agent-based ways within which they may help us to evaluate arguments? What is your position on this issue?

We know that the minute a subjective criterion enters into the picture, some scholars are annoyed with it. For instance, "who will define acceptability?" kind of charge is put forward. Given the fact that especially on the instances of practical argumentation context matters, shouldn't we seek some ways to involve subjective insights to account for argument evaluation? Isn't the search for a set of universal criteria in such a context-dependent phenomenon futile from the get go?

How does distinguishing reliabilist and responsibilist values really help us? As you nicely put, the former is "akin to skills and, when applied to the production and evaluation of arguments, they 'make the arguer reliable in grasping cogency'" (p.1 in your answers). But what about the other skills such as arguer attentiveness about length of their speeches, their decision to stop speaking, or wouldn't those externalized moves or expressions account for another set of values that can partially be captured by responsibilist values? Lets call it "appropriateness". I may define it as person's ability to assess her own moves if they conform

to the requirements of the context, and her ability to assess when and how to make them in particular circumstances. This may require one's constant questioning of her own moves if they are properly placed in particular contexts and circumstances. If we are to asses the winning arguments only by looking at the Johnson and Blair's criteria of reasonableness (reliabilist virtues), or only by "Principle of Inferential Adequacy" (Jacobs, 2020, 6) one is in danger of not paying attention to circumstantial variables. Think for instance about cogent arguments but misplaced. Likewise we can also question the strength of arguments. What if those arguments are improper and inappropriate? What would you think about these kinds of considerations?

Our assessment of appropriateness may resemble to a rabbi view of Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, 12), but this rabbi is not the rabbi of the pragma-dialectics that makes the reasonable critique of the moves, and pay attention to the acceptability of the arguments from rationalist perspective. But I mean a human eye that can assess the appropriateness of arguments. An eye that can sense not just cogency of arguments but can also pay attention to context dependent long term consequences. Let's say a cogent argument can be a winning argument but it may be harmful in a longer term.

Following this line of argument Rahmi says "calibrating the length of a speech according to requirements of a certain move is both a reliabilist skill, also a responsibilist virtue: Speaking succinctly, according to the requirements of the occasion (Ījāz). It is also the most important component of public speaking from a balagha/rhetoric standpoint. Moreover, Ījāz and its contradictories are linguistic behaviors. They are externalized- therefore a pathway to access some mental states both related to reliabilist skills/failures (such as focus) and responsibilist virtues (such as patience) in the form of practical wisdom" (Oruç, his reflections on alternative Munazara procedures).

I also want to raise a few issues about the goals of the debate**:** In your response, you seem to be concerned about the aims of debates and their subsequent results. Referring to Tanesini you say "current research has shown that the motivations of the arguers influence the outcomes of deliberation, and when the motivation to win is higher than the epistemic motivation, the outcomes tend to be poor (Tanesini, 2021b, p. 330). Thus, competitive motivations, such as those that characterize debates, do not seem to be the kind of motivations that should be fostered.

Do you think the problem emanates from the mere fact that the debates are geared towards winning (competitive goals)? Or do the problems arise due to the particular definition of winning? The competitive goals in debates result in arguers remaining steadfast in their views, and it is unlikely to produce good results, you say. What if we change the winning act as those acts that are geared towards learning and resolving disagreements, or changing of minds? What do you think about this issue?

References

Van Eemeren, F. H., & Grootendorst, R. (2004). *A systematic theory of argumentation: The pragma-dialectical approach*. Cambridge University Press

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