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Aller au sommaire du numéro

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Résumé de l'article

Je suis très reconnaissant aux éditeurs d'Informal Logic pour leur volonté de publier mon article absurdement long (Siegel 2023a) dans son intégralité et pour avoir organisé les quatre commentaires publiés avec lui. Je suis également reconnaissant à Bart Garssen, Andrew Aberdein, Paula Olmos et Christoph Lumer pour leurs discussions perspicaces et stimulantes. Dans ce qui suit, je réponds à leurs critiques et suggestions dans l'ordre dans lequel elles apparaissent dans la revue.

Arguing About Arguing With Arguments: Replies to My Critics

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Abstract: I am most grateful to the editors of *Informal Logic* for their willingness to publish my absurdly long paper "Arguing with Arguments: Argument Quality, Argumentative Norms, and the Strengths of the Epistemic Theory" in its entirety, and for organizing the four commentaries published along with it. I am grateful as well to Bart Garssen, Andrew Aberdein, Paula Olmos and Christoph Lumer for their insightful and challenging discussions. In what follows I respond to their criticisms and suggestions in the order in which they appear in the journal.

Résumé: Je suis très reconnaissant aux éditeurs d'Informal Logic pour leur volonté de publier mon article absurdement long "Discuter avec des Arguments: la Qualité des Arguments, les Normes Argumentatives et les Forces de la Théorie Épistémique" dans son intégralité et pour avoir organisé les quatre commentaires publiés avec lui. Je suis également reconnaissant à Bart Garssen, Andrew Aberdein, Paula Olmos et Christoph Lumer pour leurs discussions perspicaces et stimulantes. Dans ce qui suit, je réponds à leurs critiques et suggestions dans l'ordre dans lequel elles apparaissent dans la revue.

Bart Garssen

Bart Garssen (2023) defends the pragma-dialectical theory (henceforth PD) from my criticisms. Discussing my attempt to disambiguate "argument" by distinguishing between abstract propositional, speech-act and social/dialogical/communicative senses of the term, he chastises me for "fully concentrate[ing] on the term 'argument' rather than 'argumentation'" (Garssen 2023, p. 528, note 1)[1],

[1] All page references refer to the commentary under discussion unless otherwise noted.

apparently not noticing that the third sense just *is* what picks out the social/dialogical/communicative phenomenon of argumentation. This is one, but only one, important sense of the term 'argument'; moreover, it is dependent on the first, primary sense, in that argumentation, the activity, depends upon the advance, criticism, and consideration of arguments in that first sense, because, as I put it in a slogan in my paper, *arguments are what arguers traffic in when arguing*. If there is no argument (in the first sense) being advanced, criticized, considered, etc., there is no argumentation. Garssen is right, of course, that argumentation theory is the domain in which theories of argumentation are put forward and critically discussed. My claim is that argumentation, so understood, essentially consists in trafficking in arguments in the first, abstract propositional sense of the term, since, absent such, there is not any argumentation going on.

Garssen claims that my attempted disambiguation fails, in that "it is not clear what is meant by these 'senses'" (p. 529) of "argument". This is a surprise to me. As I think my paper makes clear, they are three main ways in which the term is used in English. He continues that "in no way does Siegel explain what the relation is between his attempt at disambiguation of the term 'argument' and the key term of our field: 'argumentation'" (p. 529). This is not only a surprise but a disappointment, since, as just noted, the third sense just is that in which the term 'argument' picks out instances of argumentation. He also complains about the term 'abstract' in the expression 'abstract propositional sense': "What", he asks, "is abstract about this sense?" (*ibid*.). His query betokens unfamiliarity with the basic metaphysical distinction between abstract and concrete objects: abstract objects such as numbers, sets, propositions, properties, relations and the like are abstract rather than "concrete". To answer Garssen's query directly: the abstract propositional sense of "argument" is that in which "argument" picks out sets of propositions organized in premise-conclusion or reason-conclusion complexes, the members of which are connected by logical/inferential or epistemological relations. Arguments in this sense are abstract in that they are not physical, so do not exist in space and time; they are *abstracta* rather than *concreta* such as trees, tables and chairs. Garssen further queries: "Is the speech act sense not abstract?" (*ibid*.). In so far as a speech act is an

act involving an utterance or the articulation of a sentence, it is not abstract but concrete, as it occurs at a particular time in a particular place and is explicable in physical terms involving sound waves, configurations of movements of jaw and tongue, air flow, etc. The uttered sentence, if meaningful, expresses the proposition; it is the proposition that is abstract. I am far from the first to recognize arguments in the abstract propositional sense, as reviews of the tables of contents of the leading journals in the field make clear. There is no problem for the abstract propositional sense of "argument" here. Garssen suggests that a "rather charitable interpretation of the 'abstract propositional sense' is that this expression refers to reasoning: deriving a conclusion from a set of premises" (p. 530). Not quite. Reasoning is concrete, not abstract, metaphysically speaking; it is not reasoning but the objects, i.e., propositions, that are the members of the premise/conclusion complex, and the relations obtaining among them, that are abstract. My deriving or inferring a conclusion from a set of premises is a concrete event. The relations <follows from> and <supports> and their negations are abstract. (Like most things in philosophy, the metaphysics here is complex and controversial; for recent further explication see Falguera, Martínez-Vidal and Rosen 2022.)

Garssen rightly notes that one of my criticisms of PD is that it "neglects the abstract propositional sense of argument [*sic*.][2] or does not prioritize it" (p. 529). He denies my charge of neglect: "as far as I understand what he means, all senses of argument mentioned by Siegel (including the abstract propositional sense) are taken into account in the pragma-dialectical argumentation theory in [a] systematic way"[3] (p. 530). I am heartened by PD's taking them into account. Garssen explains how that theory takes them into account in terms

[2] The term 'argument' is here being mentioned, not used, and so should be in quotation marks. This occurs several times in Garssen's discussion. I will not comment on further occurrences.

[3] Suppose Garssen is right that "all senses of argument mentioned… are taken into account in the pragma-dialectical argumentation theory" (p. 530). If so, the three senses of 'argument' distinguished in my paper are sufficiently clear that they can be identified in PD, contrary to Garssen's criticism (p. 529) that they are not.

of PD's familiar "meta-theoretical principles for theorizing about argumentation. These principles, which determine the methodological starting points of pragma-dialectics, are 'functionalization,' 'socialization,' 'externalization,' and 'dialectification'" (p. 530). He explains these starting points, and how the three senses of 'argument' are found within them (pp. 530-533). As is well known, they all presuppose that the purpose of argumentation is to manage disagreement and resolve differences of opinion, a presupposition that, as I argued in my paper, is unduly narrow, in that it ignores other legitimate purposes of argumentation, especially those of inquiry and discovery. Argumentation does not always have the purpose of resolving disagreement. PD's presupposition unduly limits the domain of argumentation theory (Siegel 2023a, pp. 483-486).

The principle of socialization dictates that "argumentation fundamentally involves an explicit or implicit dialogue between two or more people who have a difference of opinion and make a joint effort to resolve the difference" (p. 531). Garssen quotes Frans van Eemeren: "Socialization involves taking due account of the fact that argumentation is always part of a discourse in which a party responds methodically to the questions, doubts, objections, and counterclaims of another party, which are in their turn instigated by the standpoints and arguments put forward by the first party (van Eemeren 2018, p. 24)". (Garssen 2023, p. 531) Again, this is too narrow. Argumentation is not always thus.

Garssen suggests that the abstract propositional sense of 'argument' can be found in the PD principle of dialectification: "Because the 'argument in the abstract propositional sense' seems to be related to the evaluation of underlying reasoning, this sense of argument can, without any problem, be positioned within the principle of dialectification of argumentation" (p. 532). As we have seen, the abstract propositional sense does not concern concrete reasoning but rather the abstract relations obtaining among premises/reasons and conclusion in a given argument. Still, Garssen is right to hone in on "the evaluation of underlying reasoning", since that is where the normative status of a given bit of reasoning/argumentation is to be found. Expounding on the way in which PD views argumentative normativity, he emphasizes that the normative status of an argumentative contribution is a function of "its contribution to resolving a

difference of opinion on the merits" (p. 533, quoting from van Eemeren et al. 2014, p. 527), thus again limiting that normativity to dispute resolution. Conceiving of the quality of argumentation in strictly dispute-resolution terms is both too limiting and fails to capture the epistemic normativity of instances of argumentation.[4]

Garssen challenges this conclusion, suggesting that *critical rationalism* supplies the epistemic normativity wanted (pp. 533-537). He criticizes my complaint that critical rationalism is inconsistent with pro-argumentation, noting that it emphasizes the principle of non-contradiction: "a statement and its contradiction cannot both be true at the same time: one of these statements must be withdrawn" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1988, p. 282, quoted at p. 534). He also endorses critical rationalism's embrace of fallibility and critical testing: "If one adopts the viewpoint of a Popperian critical rationalist, one pursues the development of a reasonableness model that takes the fallibility of human reason explicitly into account and elevates the concept of systematic critical testing in all areas of human thought and action to the guiding principle of problem solving" (*ibid*., p. 279, quoted at p. 534).

Unfortunately, Garssen misses both the substance and the import of my criticism. Set aside fallibilism; we are all fallibilists here. Consider the principle of non-contradiction, which I also endorse. An arguer in an argumentative exchange, call him Willem, puts forward both *p* and not-*p* (or he endorses *p* but his dialogical partner Agnes asserts not-*p*). Critical rationalism says, on the basis of that principle, that "one of these statements must be withdrawn." Agreed. Let's suppose that Willem withdraws not-*p*. And let's suppose that he withdraws it on the basis of criticisms of not-*p* put forward by Agnes. What then can we say about *p*? Not that it's true, of course, but more importantly, also not that it enjoys any positive epistemic status at all. This is because there is no such thing as positive support according to critical rationalism. As Popper says, our conjectures "may survive these tests; but they can never be positively justified: they can neither be established as certainly true nor even as 'probable' (in the sense of the probability calculus)… None of [our theories] can be

[4] As argued in Siegel 2023a, pp. 477-478, "on the merits" does not help PD's cause here.

positively justified"; "there are no such things as good positive reasons".[5] So according to critical rationalism, even given Agnes' criticism of not-*p*, we have no good reason to believe or accept that *p*. Worse, we likewise have no good reason to think that Agnes' criticism of not-*p* shows that not-*p* is false or that we have good reason to reject it. Willem cannot have any good reason to withdraw it, because according to critical rationalism there is no such thing as a good positive reason. A criticism of not-*p* such as Agnes', however strong it may be, gives us no good reason to regard not-*p* as false or to reject or withdraw it, because critical rationalism denies that there are or can be good reasons – good reasons to regard not-*p* as true, but also to regard it as false. So Willem and Agnes take themselves to have a strong criticism of not-*p*, but this strong criticism in no way discredits it, even in principle, according to critical rationalism. Garssen writes: "A critical regimentation based on a critical rationalist philosophy of reasonableness involves critical testing aimed at checking whether the standpoint at issue should be rejected" (p. 534). But such testing cannot, in principle, determine that a standpoint should be rejected. It cannot provide good reason to reject, because according to critical rationalism there can be no such thing as a good reason to reject. Garssen is right that "the [PD] model for critical discussion is aimed at putting standpoints to a critical test" (p. 537). Unfortunately, he fails to realize that critical rationalism forbids a critical test to have any epistemic implications whatsoever. Even a critical test in which a standpoint is thoroughly trounced provides no good reason to reject that standpoint. Critical tests are powerless to provide good reasons for rejection, just as they are powerless to provide good reasons for acceptance. This point has been familiar for quite some time, as discussion of Popper's infamous need for 'a whiff of inductivism' has shown (Siegel and Biro 2008, pp. 195-199).

This is a deep problem that neither Garssen in particular nor PD theorists more generally have overcome. PD's recognition of pro-argumentation is no help here, because pro-argumentation affords no positive justification to the standpoints that it argues for. Nor does

[5] There are many more such Popper quotes; for references and further discussion see Siegel and Biro 2008, p. 196 and *passim*.

con-argumentation afford any positive reason to reject the standpoints it argues against. Criticism has no epistemic import if it doesn't offer positive reason to reject its target. According to critical rationalism, it cannot offer any such reason. Critical rationalism is thus a tempting but ultimately untenable theory, both of the epistemology of science (as philosophers of science have recognized for decades[6]) and of the epistemology of argumentation.[7]

Garssen acknowledges that PD does not have the resources to determine, and is not interested in determining, whether or not a given standpoint is justified by a critical discussion: "since the pragma-dialectical approach is aimed at critically testing the tenability of standpoints, it should be obvious that that this approach is by no means preoccupied with the justification of standpoints" (p. 538). But isn't that precisely what we want, epistemically speaking? We want to know whether or not an argument establishes or provides support for its conclusion. If it does, the argument is a good one, *ceteris paribus*; if not, not. Shouldn't this be a central concern for argumentation theory? It seems obvious to me that it should. Here we see in another way the limitations of the pragma-dialectical theory.

Moreover, what does "tenability" come to here? As Garssen explains in detail (pp. 537-542), a standpoint is tenable if and only if it survives the critical testing procedure. So consider *q*, a standpoint that has survived that procedure and so is tenable. Should the participants in the critical discussion then accept or believe *q*, or regard it

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[6] One bit of evidence is the description of a recent conference on Popper: "Karl Popper (1902-1994) is regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of science of the twentieth century… However, Popper's legacy on contemporary philosophy of science is surprisingly thin. Although his writings are still a must-read in any introductory philosophy of science course, there is no lively Popperian philosophy of science. His falsificationism is not viewed as a plausible account of scientific development. Nor is his solution to the problem of induction regarded as a successful or promising move." Karl Popper and 21st Century Philosophy of Science Conference, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, June 2024, https://huma-payment-1.hkust.edu.hk, accessed 28 February 2024.

[7] The argument just rehearsed is developed in Siegel and Biro 2008; Siegel and Biro 2010 develops it further and responds to Garssen and van Laar's 2010 response.

as having positive epistemic status? Not according to critical rationalism, since *q*'s tenability is not a good positive reason to embrace or even to lean toward embracing it. What then is the point of engaging in the procedure? The proponent of *q* can say "well, it's tenable", but has no good reason to accept or believe it; tenability affords no such positive reason. The opponent can say 'well, it's tenable, but so what? I'm still free to reject it, as far as reasons and justification are concerned, since its tenability affords no such positive reason.' Surviving the critical testing procedure does not force or even encourage acceptance. Neither does not surviving it force or encourage rejection. PD thinks it does, and that the parties should accept the results of the critical discussion. But as we have seen, this contravenes its embrace of critical rationalism, according to which *q*'s failing the critical testing procedure provides no good reason to reject it.[8]

As we have just seen, Garssen is clear that for PD, tenability does not amount to the justification of standpoints or conclusions. Why then should we care about a standpoint's tenability (or lack thereof)? Presumably, because it tells us something about the quality, believability, acceptability, or worthiness of the standpoint. But how can it, if the critical test affords no positive reason either to accept or reject? Taking the results of the critical test to show something about "the quality of argumentation as an inference process" (p. 538), as Garssen insists it does, requires taking the results of critical testing to provide positive reasons in one direction or the other. But it cannot do this, at least if critical rationalism is in play.

For Garssen, we should care about tenability not because it tells us something about the worthiness of the standpoint, but rather because it tells us something about the quality of the discussion/process that led to its embrace or rejection by the discussants if resolution has been achieved. But that quality won't reflect upon the quality of the standpoint itself, as we have seen. Why care about it, then? Presumably, because it will facilitate dispute resolution: if the parties agree on that tenability, they will presumably resolve their dispute

[8] As explained in Biro and Siegel 2008, pp. 196-199, Popper's rejection of induction leads straightforwardly to the impossibility of positive support. As Popper's many critics have pointed out, this entails that critical tests and refutations likewise fail to provide positive support: they provide no reason to accept, but equally no reason to reject.

accordingly. That is fine, if resolution is what we're after. But it still won't tell us the quality of the standpoint itself. It may be that Garssen views that as positive, since PD isn't intended to do that. But if the quality of a bit of argumentation is a function of the quality of the arguments employed, as I think, the focus on dispute resolution is misplaced; certainly it is over-valued. Moreover, the quality of the discussion/process that led to the participants' resolution of the dispute tells us nothing about the quality of the resolution itself; the discussion may have followed the PD rules impeccably, yet the resolution may nevertheless be weak, or worse, epistemically speaking. Is this really the best that argumentation theory can do?

Garssen suggests that I misunderstand several aspects of the PD theory; I won't respond to each charge, because they all presuppose that the aim of argumentation is that of resolving a difference of opinion (pp. 539 ff). One way of resolving a difference of opinion – arguably the way we typically have in mind – is for the parties to come to agree that one or the other is right. But critical rationalism and thus PD cannot say this. As argued above and elsewhere, this is an overly narrow view of the aims and purposes of argumentation. Moreover, problem validity continues to be understood in intersubjective terms, which makes sense given PD's dialectical focus but which focus is itself too narrow (Siegel 2023a, pp. 483-486). Garssen's concluding remarks on quasi-resolutions (p. 541) make clear that problem-validity, understood intersubjectively, is insufficient for genuine, epistemically respectable resolution. I conclude that despite Garssen's objections, my critique of PD stands.

Andrew Aberdein

Andrew Aberdein (2023) defends virtue theory from my complaint that it cannot determine argument quality. He argues, to the contrary, that "virtues suffice for argument evaluation" (p. 543). His discussion is welcome, though I think in the end it does not succeed.

Aberdein labels the three main senses of "argument" distinguished in my (2023a) "a-arguments", "b-arguments" and "c-arguments" respectively; I will use his labels here. He reiterates his view that arguments are "intrinsically dialectical", and therefore he "take[s] c-argument to be the primary sense of 'argument' and the other senses, including a-argument, to be derivative" (p. 545). I

won't take up the brief case he makes for this view of the priority relations here, as it does not address my reason for thinking that it is a-argument, rather than c-argument, that is primary, namely that c-arguments are arguments only because they traffic in a-arguments. This trafficking is a necessary condition of a bit of dialogue's constituting an argument. He sides with Catarina Dutilh Novaes, who urges that a-arguments "may nonetheless be understood as proversceptic dialogues, but dialogues in which the sceptic role has been 'internalized'" (pp. 545-6, quoting Dutilh Novaes 2021, p. 70). Grant that a-arguments may be understood in this way. It remains nevertheless that a dialogue, so understood, constitutes a c-argument only insofar as it contains an a-argument at its heart. Understand an a-argument as this sort of dialogue. What results is a "dialogized" a-argument, that is, a c-argument: sequences of speech acts or other events putting forward a-arguments. Since it is a dialogue it is concrete, while the a-argument it advances is abstract. It is the latter that is the locus of argument quality, epistemically speaking.

The priority dispute just rehearsed is not the focus of Aberdein's discussion, and he notes that his main claim, "that virtues are sufficient to evaluate arguments", is "intended to be independent" (p. 546) of it (although, as we'll see below, his proposed solutions depend upon his view that c-arguments have priority). His case for that claim is constructed in response to three arguments to the contrary that he finds in my (2023a): the *alignment* problem, the *relevance* problem, and the *Euthyphro* problem (pp. 546-548). The alignment problem is that "the virtues or vices of arguers do not seem to reliably coincide with the quality of their arguments", in that vicious arguers can and do put forward excellent arguments, while virtuous arguers can and do put forward terrible ones. The relevance problem is that an arguer's character seemingly has nothing to do with the epistemic quality of their argument. The Euthyphro problem involves the priority relation between the epistemic quality of arguments and the character of the arguer who puts them forward: "Are arguments virtuous because of epistemic merits or epistemically meritorious because of virtues" (p. 548)? If Aberdein's responses to the three problems are successful, they will help to establish that virtues suffice for argument evaluation.

His responses rest on prior work in virtue ethics, specifically Rosalind Hursthouse's reply to the *application* problem: how can virtue ethics guide action? 'Do what the virtuous agent would do in your situation' doesn't seem to offer much help to an agent trying to figure out what to do in a morally charged situation. In reply to this problem, Hursthouse developed *v-rules*, which rest on the biconditional "An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would, characteristically, (i.e. acting in character) do in the circumstances" (Hursthouse 2006, p. 106, quoted at p. 549). Aberdein offers his preferred virtuosic account of argument quality, developed analogously to Hursthouse's appeal to v-rules, to address the three problems described above, in accordance with his view that "the practical measure of argument quality available to the virtue theorist is whether an arguer is arguing as a virtuous arguer would characteristically argue" (p. 549). The associated biconditional, as articulated by David Godden, intended as a definition of *good argument*, is: "**Good Argument (arguer)**: An argument is a good argument if and only if it is one that a virtuous arguer arguing virtuously would use" (Godden 2016, p. 349, quoted at p. 549; Aberdein notes that it is slightly paraphrased). Aberdein then restates Godden's definition in terms of v-rules: "**Good Argument (rules)**: An argument is a good argument if and only if it is in accordance with appropriate argumentative v-rules" (p. 550). What should we say about this biconditional?

The most obvious thing to say, I think, is that even granting it, it doesn't help to secure Aberdein's thesis. What makes an argument good is not that a virtuous arguer arguing virtuously would use it, or that is in accordance with appropriate argumentative v-rules. Rather, what makes it good is the ability of its premises to confer some measure of justification to its conclusion. If virtuous arguers arguing virtuously, in accordance with appropriate v-rules, advance only epistemically good arguments, let us praise them. Their virtue is nevertheless not what makes their arguments good. The relevance problem remains; v-rules don't help.[9]

[9] A virtuous arguer arguing virtuously would presumably use an argument *because* she thought it a good one. This is trivially true and has nothing to do with what makes the argument good, if it is. Thanks here to John Biro.

A further worry concerns the character of the argumentative virtues, namely that they do not have directly epistemic ramifications. Consider some of them, e.g., open-mindedness, intellectual humility, and taking unfamiliar perspectives seriously and considering them fairly. Let me be as open-minded, fair-minded and intellectually humble as you like; these virtues do not of themselves render my argument good. Can't I argue open-mindedly but badly, epistemically speaking? It seems obvious that I can – that is, that arguing virtuously but badly is possible. If so, the virtuousness of my arguing is no guarantee of argument quality. If this is right, the biconditional should be rejected. The right-to-left conditional is simply false: 'if S is a virtuous arguer arguing virtuously, in accordance with appropriate argumentative v-rules, their argument is good' is mistaken, as is 'S is a virtuous arguer arguing virtuously, therefore their argument is good.' This may happen, of course; S might indeed argue virtuously and their argument be good. But for the biconditional to work, it must happen always and necessarily, and it doesn't: a virtuous arguer can argue as virtuously as you like, yet his argument be flawed, epistemically speaking. Virtuosity in argumentation, however praiseworthy, is one thing; epistemic quality is another, different thing.

To see this, consider an example: John is a virtuous arguer who routinely argues virtuously. On a visit to the casino, he plays the roulette wheel, at which red has improbably come up ten times in a row. He reasons to himself: 'red has come up ten times in a row; it is exceedingly unlikely that it will come up red again, so I should bet on black.' In considering the case, he displays all the usual argumentative virtues: he has been open-minded, intellectually humble, and so on. That is, he has been a virtuous arguer arguing virtuously. Nevertheless, his argument is bad, epistemically speaking; it is an instance of the gambler's fallacy. The argument provides no good reason to bet on black, despite John's argumentative virtues. Why think that because his argument is bad he must, necessarily, have argued viciously?[10] By similar reasoning the left-to-right conditional is also dubious. An argument can be good, epistemically speaking, even though it is not in accordance with relevant v-rules:

[10] For further discussion see Siegel 2023b.

a vicious arguer's argument can be good despite his character flaws and their manifestation in his argument.

Do Aberdein's arguments avoid this conclusion, and establish that virtues suffice for argument evaluation? Notice first that in addressing this question, we needn't and shouldn't examine his arguments for signs of virtuous arguing.[11] Rather, we should examine whether those arguments establish his main claim – are his reasons in support of his thesis good ones; do they establish, or constitute good reason to embrace, that thesis? This by itself should give us pause when considering his arguments' ability to secure his conclusion: to evaluate the argument, we look to the argument, not the virtuosity of the argumentative moves made or of the person making them. So, let us examine those reasons. Do they establish that conclusion?

As we have seen, his argument relies upon *virtue-argumentative v-rules*, conceived on analogy with Hursthouse's virtue-ethical v-rules. Hursthouse's innovation is to create v-rules on the basis of the virtues: the virtuous agent "does, and would do, what is virtuous, not vicious; that is, she does what is courageous, just, honest, charitable, loyal, kind, generous – and does not do what is cowardly or reckless, unjust, dishonest, uncharitable, malevolent, disloyal, unkind, stingy. So each virtue generates a prescription – 'Do what is courageous, just, etc.' – and every vice a prohibition – 'Do not do what is cowardly or reckless, unjust, etc.' – and in order to do what the virtuous agent would do in the circumstances, one acts in accordance with these, which I have called 'v-rules'" (Hursthouse 2006, p. 106, quoted at p. 550). What are these v-rules for argumentation? Aberdein proposes two "very general dialectical v-rules, from which more specific v-rules could be derived" (p. 554), on the assumption that $p_1, \ldots, p_n$ entails q, or that the argument "is valid, or informally cogent, or otherwise meets the appropriate standard" (p. 554):

> **Intellectual flourishing (proponent)**: If opponent has granted $p_1, \ldots, p_n$, then proponent should put forward q (and require opponent to grant it) only if doing so does not hinder intellectual flourishing.

[11] Though his arguments are indeed put forth virtuously: fairly, sympathetically, and generously. But as noted, these virtues do not secure their success epistemically; they do not establish his main thesis.

> **Intellectual flourishing (opponent)**: If opponent has granted p_1, …, p_n, and proponent puts forward q, then opponent should either grant q or retract his endorsement of at least one of p_1, …, p_n, depending on which hinders intellectual flourishing the least (p. 554, taken from Aberdein 2020, p. 103).

What should we say of these rules? First, it should be noted that they presuppose "the assumption that arguments are essentially dialectical" (p. 553); indeed he labels them *dialectical* v-rules, which, as noted above, I find dubious, since a c-argument requires an a-argument simply to be an argument. Next, we should note that it presupposes the biconditional that I challenged above. Finally, we should note that these v-rules presuppose a virtue account of argumentation, resting as they do on the Aristotelian notion of flourishing. Now this last point is not an objection, since Aberdein is developing just that sort of account. Here he is attempting to show that the account can answer the three objections he is endeavoring to overcome. Does it?

Aberdein argues that his suggested approach solves both the alignment problem and the relevance problem. With respect to the latter, after introducing Hursthouse's virtue-ethical v-rules and his own epistemic/argumentative analogues, he writes that "all that remains to answer the relevance problem is to state what the appropriate argumentative v-rules comprise" (p. 550). He offers a third v-rule for flourishing involving reasons:

> **Intellectual flourishing (reasons):** You should treat p as a reason for accepting q only if treating p as a reason for accepting q does not hinder intellectual flourishing (Aberdein 2020, p. 103, quoted at p. 553).

Aberdein holds that "This may be understood as a very general v-rule for the logical perspective" (*ibid.*). This is fine, so long as intellectual flourishing with respect to reasons involves the epistemic quality of the reasons considered. This has to be determined in advance; otherwise there is no reason to think that accepting q on their basis constitutes flourishing – I don't flourish intellectually if I accept q on the basis of p even though p provides no support to q. If this is right, the three v-rules offered do not answer the relevance problem: the virtues exercised in following them do not secure epistemic quality (or intellectual flourishing) unless it is assumed that

following them necessarily results in such quality. This is what has to be shown, not assumed, for Aberdein's general thesis to be established. These v-rules establish no such thing.

They also fail to solve the alignment problem: given that it is possible for virtuous arguers arguing virtuously and following all appropriate v-rules to argue badly, epistemically speaking[12], it remains possible for vicious arguers to argue well, epistemically speaking, and for virtuous arguers to argue badly. Aberdein suggests that adding "characteristically" to the definition fixes the problem: "Good arguments are not just what virtuous arguers do, but what virtuous arguers do *characteristically* when they are acting as virtuous arguers. That qualification is sufficient to fix the alignment problem" (p. 556, italics Aberdein's). It is hard to see how this fixes the problem. Let *V*, our virtuous arguer, characteristically argue as a virtuous arguer would. This addresses the alignment problem only if characteristically arguing as a virtuous arguer would suffices to ensure epistemic propriety. But as we've seen, it does no such thing: *V*'s arguing characteristically as a virtuous arguer would leaves the door open to their arguing virtuously but nevertheless badly, epistemically speaking. The problem remains: an argument's quality is a function of the ability of its premises to support its conclusion. That quality is not a function of how virtuously or otherwise its user argues for it.

Aberdein argues that his account also solves the Euthyphro problem, again by drawing on work in virtue ethics, this time by Jason Kawall, who attempts to resolve the analogous Euthyphro problem for virtue ethics: "Intuitively, either the actions (or approvals and disapprovals) of virtuous agents follow some set of independent standards of rightness or goodness (in which case these are fundamental, not the attitudes of virtuous agents), or else the actions and approvals of the virtuous are simply arbitrary (which, in turn, makes such an ethics arbitrary and not worthy of our concern)" (Kawall 2009, p. 17, quoted at p. 555). It should be noted first that the analogy is not quite right: whereas the problem for virtue ethics involves independent standards of rightness or goodness versus the absence of such, which results in arbitrariness, the problem for virtue argumentation concerns the priority relation between argumentative virtue

[12] Like the virtuous arguer who commits the gambler's fallacy above.

and epistemic merit. Aberdein has to show that the former secures the latter – that if I argue virtuously, my argument necessarily has epistemic punch in that my premises provide support to my conclusion. He has not shown this. Even characteristically virtuous arguing is no guarantee of epistemic probity. Neither does Kawall's proposed solution help Aberdein's cause, both because consistency doesn't secure moral rightness (one can act consistently badly) and because it requires an appeal to reflective equilibrium which is problematic in both ethics and epistemology (Siegel 1992).

What Aberdein needs to secure his main thesis – that virtues suffice for argument quality – is to show that virtuous arguing guarantees epistemic propriety. This he has not shown; moreover, it seems obvious that it does not. He says that "Soundness, cogency, inductive strength, and similar properties are good answers to the question 'Why is this argument good?' in what Kawall calls the instantiation sense, but unsatisfactory answers to the same question understood normatively. To answer that question, we need a normative theory. The normative theory I have proposed is expressed in terms of virtues" (p. 556). Why are "it is inductively strong" and "it is cogent" unsatisfactory answers to the normative question? Aberdein does not say. I think, on the contrary, that they are perfectly satisfactory answers to the normative question: if the argument is cogent or inductively strong, it is normatively good – its premises provide suitable support to its conclusion, and has for that reason some measure of positive epistemic quality.

Aberdein disagrees with the previous sentence: "I can agree with Siegel that arguments are good because of their epistemic merits as a practical matter, and I expect that we would go about the evaluation of individual a-arguments in very similar ways; where we differ is on the normative question of why our shared method of evaluation should be used" (p. 557). So we agree, "as a practical matter", that in determining argument quality we should investigate the degree to which an argument's premises support its conclusion. Why should we do that? Why evaluate in that way? My answer is: because the support provided (or not) by premises to conclusion is what determines the quality of the argument. Aberdein's answer, apparently, is: we should investigate the degree to which an argument's premises support its conclusion ("our shared method of evaluation"),

because… what? Because it will tell us whether the arguer, in advancing the argument, argued, characteristically, as a virtuous argue would? That is clearly a separate question which does not affect the degree of support discovered, so does not affect the quality of the argument. Because the degree of support discovered in our investigation of its quality will be underwritten by such characteristically virtuous arguing? Why think this, especially in light of the continuing relevance of the relevance and alignment problems?

Aberdein's theory is indeed a normative theory of argument quality expressed in terms of virtues. But in addition to the fact that the three problems he addresses remain unsolved, he offers no reason to think that his proposed normative theory is in any way preferable to the more familiar theory according to which an argument's strength is strictly a function of the ability of its premises to support its conclusion. If the aim is to show that a virtue theory of argumentation is possible, I can grant that, so long as the three problems are satisfactorily resolved. But even if they are – a big if; I have argued that they are not – I see no reason to think it preferable to the standard view.

I speculate that Aberdein thinks that the support offered by reasons/premises to conclusions is not normative in the relevant sense. I disagree; on my view reasons are indeed normative. Aberdein frequently discusses John MacFarlane's 'bridge principles' that bridge the gap between facts about logic and normative claims about belief (pp. 553-4; see also Aberdein 2020, p. 103). Whether and if so how logic is normative for thought is a long-standing philosophical issue the discussion of which would take us too far afield. Happily, that is not necessary, so long as reasons and the support they offer are rightly thought of as normative. Aberdein thinks that logic is not normative – what follows from what is a matter of fact – so some other source of argumentative normativity is needed. He offers virtue argumentation theory, and more specifically his argumentative v-rules, to fill the gap. But while there may be a gap between facts about logic and normative claims about belief, there is no such gap between reasons for belief and such normative claims about it. Rather, the relation is straightforward: you should believe what your reasons support. What your reasons support is a factual matter; that you should believe what they support is a normative claim. If this is right, there is no need to find a new, virtuosic theory of the normativity of

arguments. Virtues not only do not suffice for argument evaluation, they are irrelevant to a-argument quality. I conclude that despite his efforts, my critique of virtue argumentation theory stands.

Paula Olmos

Paula Olmos (2023) engagingly suggests that philosophy's desire for propositions is obscure. Since I argued that the central sense of "argument" is the abstract propositional one, I suppose I am guilty of harboring that obscure desire. But in my defense, I did not base my claim about the abstract propositional sense being the primary one on that desire. Rather, I offered the reason that the other senses in play – the speech act and social/dialogical/communicative senses – depend upon the abstract propositional sense because without that sort of argument being present in the speech acts or dialogues, the latter do not constitute arguing at all (Siegel 2023a, pp. 471-2 and *passim*).

Olmos rightly chastises me for repeating my slogan "arguments are what arguers traffic in when arguing" seven times (p. 562); I should indeed have reduced those repetitions. She is right as well that people arguing do many things other than traffic in arguments, including exchanging considerations, modifying their initial commitments and their initial understandings of the points at issue, evaluating and re-evaluating reasons offered, and many other things (p. 563). I happily grant all this, but note that it all depends on arguments having been trafficked. The "*basic fabric of argumentative interchanges*" (p. 564, emphasis Olmos'), even if not arguments in the abstract propositional sense, depends upon, indeed requires, arguments in that sense. Otherwise that basic fabric does not constitute arguing at all. I happily grant that "argumentation *is not* a collection of arguments (in their abstract propositional sense) but something much more entangled and web-like than that" (p. 565, emphasis Olmos'). Still, for it to count as argumentation at all, arguments in the abstract propositional sense must be in play.

Olmos surprisingly chides me for leaving out of my account of the ambiguity of "argument" the sense in which "argument" refers "to considerations offered in favor of or against a specific (but also qualifiable) viewpoint, that is, roughly referring to the reasons, premises or data part of the logical-philosophical construct of

argument as a premises-plus-conclusion complex" (p. 562). This is surprising because that sense is ubiquitous in my discussion, which emphasizes the support reasons offer to the viewpoints under consideration (pp. 471-2, 481-2, 519 and *passim*). If the sense of "argument" I allegedly did not mention picks out just such considerations, it is practically synonymous with both "premises" and "reasons", which are usually understood to be proper parts of arguments rather than their entirety. In that sense the conclusion or viewpoint under consideration is not part of the argument, which is hard to understand: if the conclusion is not part of the argument, what are the reasons reasons for? To what might they offer support? Olmos is certainly my superior when it comes to knowledge of European languages; if she is right that that is how the word is commonly used in those languages, I yield to her expertise. Though if so, it seems charitable to interpret that usage as implicitly including the conclusion, as in "I see your point, now give me your arguments [*for that conclusion*]" (p. 562, bracketed expression mine). Otherwise 'argument' would problematically refer to both the entire reason-conclusion complex and the reason component of that complex alone, which is a recipe for equivocation.

I should also note that I do not think and did not suggest that the abstract propositional sense of 'argument' "should unquestionably be the privileged focus of argumentation theory" (p. 560); nor did I instruct theorists "about how argumentation theory should and shouldn't be conducted" (p. 262). As I urged throughout the paper, there are several legitimate axes along which arguments can be evaluated, and several aspects of arguments that are legitimate subjects of scholarly study, including their rhetorical and dialogical features. 'Partners, not rivals' has been the Biro/Siegel mantra (Biro and Siegel 2006).

Olmos is also right to point out that I probably focused on the wrong Tindale text.[13] In doing so, I missed, she claims, Tindale's

[13] For what it's worth: I had a lot of time to work on my 2023 because the ECA conference at which it was to be presented was delayed due to the Covid pandemic. The text that articulated my complaint that both PD and VAT unduly undervalued the abstract propositional sense of 'argument' was mainly drafted when Tindale 2021 appeared; the conference delay gave me time to incorporate his discussion, which afforded me the opportunity to extend the 'undervalued'

important claims about the sources of argumentative normativity. Olmos sides with Tindale in rejecting a God's eye view from which we can evaluate reasons and arguments. As she puts it, "there is no space for rational grounding beyond argumentative practice itself" (p. 571, quoting Olmos 2018, pp. 181-2).

I agree with both Olmos and Tindale that there is no God's eye view from which to judge; as Quine famously put it, there is "no such cosmic exile" that would afford the theorist "a vantage point outside the conceptual scheme that he takes in charge" from which ordinary mortals might judge the quality of particular arguments (Quine 1960, p. 275, quoted and discussed in Siegel 1995a, 2004). The claim is that one cannot entirely escape one's perspective or conceptual scheme and judge from an entirely scheme-free perspective. This is correct. But it is unclear what follows from it. While we cannot escape our conceptual scheme entirely and judge from a "perspectiveless perspective", we can nevertheless *improve* our schemes and perspectives, because from within our scheme we can identify problems with it and address those problems. We cannot transcend all schemes, but we *can* transcend any particular scheme and evaluate and improve it. Any such change will be judged from the perspective of another, to be sure; we can't transcend them all at once. Nevertheless, we can and regularly do justify our judgment that a given change constitutes an improvement. To say that such a justification is from some other scheme is not to belittle it, so long as we justifiably think that the latter scheme is an improvement on the first. The latter judgment is of course also made from some scheme or other, since, as we're agreed, we can't escape them all and judge as God might. Nevertheless (Siegel 1995b, 1999a, 1999b, 2004).

Consider Olmos' claim that "there is no space for rational grounding beyond argumentative practice itself" (p. 571). Within our argumentative practice, we judge some arguments to be good and others to be less so. Are those judgments themselves justified? Can they be? Neither Tindale nor Olmos suggests that they cannot be. That is, within our argumentative practice we make judgments that we take to be justified, and we offer justifications for those judgments.

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charge to a third argumentation theory, thus generalizing the complaint. Lucky timing for me!

Olmos is right that our judgments of argument quality take place within our argumentative practice. (Where else, as she might ask, could they take place?) Nevertheless, that practice has all the resources it needs to justify such judgments. Moreover, the practice itself improves over time; for example, arguments that committed the gambler's fallacy were thought to be good in the early days of probability theory but are now judged fallacious (Siegel 1992). Is that not a genuine improvement? Do the facts that that judgment is made from within our argumentative practices and that it is not made from a God's eye perspective in any way discredit it?

What then should we say about normative judgments of argument quality? That they occur within argumentative practice does not say much; after all, some bad, unjustified judgments also occur within that practice, as when someone is taken in by a fallacious argument and takes its conclusion to be justified by its premises even though it is not. Within the practice, we judge specific arguments, and we also formulate and evaluate the criteria with which we license those judgments. This is the usual way that disciplines develop, and argumentation theory is no exception. We operate within our schemes, but we are not, as Popper said, imprisoned by them: "I do admit that at any moment we are prisoners caught in the framework of our theories; our expectations; our past experiences; our language. But we are prisoners in a Pickwickian sense: if we try, we can break out of our frameworks at any time. Admittedly, we shall find ourselves again in a framework, but it will be a better and roomier one; and we can at any moment break out of it again. The central point is that a critical discussion and a comparison of the various frameworks is always possible" (Popper 1970, p. 56). Rather, we exercise critical leverage over them. Our normative judgments concerning arguments are of course ours; we judge from the scheme we find ourselves in. Those judgments are made from within our argumentative practice. But they can and sometimes do have force beyond them; they are, as Hilary Putnam famously put it, both immanent *and* transcendent.[14]

[14] "We don't have an Archimedean point; we always speak the language of a time and place; but the rightness and wrongness of what we say is not *just* for a time and place" (Putnam 1982, p. 21, emphasis Putnam's). For discussion see Siegel 1995b.

Olmos suggests that arguments in the abstract propositional sense are "*elusive*" (p. 569, emphasis Olmos') in actual argumentative exchanges, especially among epistemologists; this is not as obvious to me as it is to her. They are routinely identified and examined in both classrooms and the scholarly literature. She is right that the exchanges are complex and messy and that attempts at justification are also often attempts at persuasion: If I'm trying to justify my claim that *p*, I'm often also trying to persuade you that my attempt is successful. This does not obviate the distinction between persuasion and justification. She emphasizes the inherent fallibility of all such judgments, which, as admitted by all sides, "might be wrong" (p. 569). But that a judgment might be wrong obviously does not mean that it is in fact wrong. As I understand it, her main thesis is that there is no escaping the community of practitioners; 'no God's eye view' entails 'no rising above argumentative practice'. We are agreed about the first, and I'm happy to grant the entailment, as long as we recognize that the practice itself admits of fair evaluation, critique and improvement. It does so "from within", but its reach goes beyond itself, as from within it can recognize its own weaknesses and strive to improve them.

What follows from Olmos' and Tindale's claim that our judgments of argument quality are made from within our argumentative practices? Happily, not much that upends the main claims of the paper to which Olmos here responds. That argumentative evaluations are conducted from within argumentative practice does not entail that there are no arguments in the abstract propositional sense. Neither does it entail that those evaluations are routinely or necessarily biased in an epistemically pernicious way. Nor does it entail that we are trapped within that practice and cannot improve it. Nor does it mean that such improvements are not "objective" or that the reasons for thinking them genuine improvements have no probative force. Nor does it suggest that arguers, in arguing, don't traffic in arguments in the abstract propositional sense. Despite the several good points Olmos makes, I conclude that my critique of Tindale's rhetorical theory, as presented in his (2021), stands.

Christoph Lumer

Christoph Lumer (2023) defends the epistemic theory (which he prefers to call the "epistemological" theory; I adopt this way of talking in what follows); we are brothers in arms, fellow travelers on the epistemological road. His response pays me several compliments, for which I am grateful. Our broad agreement makes his critique the hardest to which to respond, since our disagreements pale in comparison to the many points on which we agree. The disagreements involve (1) my allegedly misplaced conciliationism, according to which my granting legitimacy to rhetorical and dispute-resolution theories is *too* conciliatory, since epistemological theories are on his view better, even with respect to persuasion and dispute resolution (pp. 578 ff.); (2) the justification of the epistemological theory (585 ff.); and (3) the function of arguments (593 ff). In what follows I address them in turn.

Conciliationism: Lumer chastises me for being too nice to argumentation theories that are rivals to the epistemological one. I urged that there are several legitimate criteria by which arguments and argumentative events can be evaluated: epistemologically, in terms of the degree to which the premises or reasons in play support the thesis in question, but also in terms of persuasive effect, dispute resolution, the virtues employed by arguers, the "satisfyingness" of the argument to those engaged, and so on. Lumer, in contrast, urges that even if we're concerned about such things as persuasive effect or dispute resolution, the epistemological theory reigns supreme; the epistemological theory is better than its rivals even in matters rhetorical and dialectical.

As Lumer points out (p. 582), I conceded his point (Siegel 2023a, p. 510, note 43). My contrary point is simply that we can evaluate argumentative exchanges in terms other than the epistemological, and that it is perfectly respectable to do so. If it turns out that epistemological theories like Lumer's do better at analyzing argumentation in its rhetorical, dialectical, and other dimensions, so be it. Argumentative exchanges can be evaluated along multiple dimensions: epistemological, consensualist, virtuosic, etc. Lumer is right that some of these approaches may in fact not be argument-theoretical at all, since they lose sight of the case-making quality of "arguments" altogether (p. 584; I agree, *ibid.*). Nevertheless, non-epistemological

evaluation of genuine arguments is both possible and legitimate. Conciliationism seems the more modest and generous stance.

Lumer objects to the Biro/Siegel "partners, not rivals" mantra because the epistemological theory concerns not just what he calls 'arguments1' but also arguments2 (argumentative discussions) and arguments5 (argumentative actions).[15] His claim is that the epistemological theory outdoes rival theories, not just with respect to arguments in the abstract propositional sense (arguments1), but with respect to argumentative actions (arguments5) and argumentative discussions (arguments2) as well. The epistemological theory does this by offering accounts of rational persuasion (arguments5) and cooperative truth-seeking (arguments2), both of which, he claims, do better than the rival theories' accounts (pp. 578 ff). I have no problem with these claims, although they seem to presuppose an epistemological vantage point which rival theorists may well reject. After all, can't persuasive power be investigated independently of the rational status of the object of persuasion? Can't dispute resolution be studied independently of the truth or justifiability of the resolution? I accept Lumer's point: rational persuasion is better than persuasion *simpliciter*, and a dispute that results in a true resolution is better than one that settles on a falsehood. But why can't argumentation theorists study persuasive power and effect independently of the rationality of the thesis of which one might have been persuaded? Why can't they study mechanisms of resolution independently of the epistemological status of that which has been resolved? If theorists can legitimately study both these things, which they can and do, it seems to me that 'partners, not rivals' is the right stance: we can investigate all this from an epistemological perspective, but also from non-epistemological perspectives. We shouldn't grant the epistemological theory hegemonic status. It is one approach to the study of argumentation, and the one that both Lumer and I favor. But it is not the only one.[16]

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[15] I didn't use Lumer's 1-2-5 labels, but rather the abstract propositional, speech act, and social communicative senses of 'argument'. I hope there is no confusion arising from these different nomenclatures.

[16] Lumer is clear: he favors "*epistemological persuasion*" and "*epistemically oriented argumentative discussions*" (p. 579, italics Lumer's). I favor them too. But they are not the only way to study persuasion and dispute resolution. Lumer

Lumer insists that "the quality of an argument" is measured in part by "its persuasive effect" (p. 579): A given argument *A* is better if it is persuasive; if it fails to persuade it is a worse argument, *ceteris paribus*. Well, sure: persuasion is one measure of argument quality. But it is not the only measure. More to the point, failure to persuade may say more about the argument's audience than the quality of the argument, epistemologically speaking. If I present you with excellent reasons to embrace *p* but you do not, my reasons don't become less excellent. Persuasive power is one dimension along which argument quality may be measured; epistemological strength another. The latter is the primary dimension – at least, so I argued in the paper to which Lumer is responding. Building persuasion into the epistemological evaluation of arguments under the guise of '*rational* persuasion' is I think more confounding than helpful. Lumer is after "epistemically good persuasion" (p. 579), which combines epistemic goodness with persuasive effect. I grant that epistemically good persuasion is to be preferred to epistemically bad persuasion. Still, epistemic quality is one thing; persuasive power another. Lumer wants both; I salute him for this ambition. It nevertheless remains that the two are distinct: an argument can be epistemically good but unpersuasive to a given audience; likewise, an argument can be persuasive although not rationally so since it is not epistemically good. His thesis that argument quality is a function of both epistemological strength and persuasive power conflates two independent measures of argument quality – two different ways in which arguments can be good.

Lumer insists that good arguments "should also be convincing in most cases"; "Good arguments must be able to convince ourselves and others of the truth of acceptability of the thesis" (p. 580). But whether my argument actually convinces you is a function not just of my argument, but of *you*: On Lumer's view, if you're (for example) too tired or hungry or dense to consider or evaluate it fairly, your failure to be convinced counts against the quality of my argument. This seems clearly mistaken. Lumer builds "various pragmatic elements" into the "conditions for good arguments" (*ibid*.);

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agrees that theorists can study 'arguments' in these non-epistemological ways (p. 587) but worries that their targets aren't actually arguments. I share his concern.

these too conflate the persuasive and epistemic dimensions of good arguments. His theory attempts to avoid this objection by distinguishing between arguments1 and "their use in argumentation acts (arguments5) for persuasive purposes" (p. 579); he insists that "argumentatively valid arguments are also designed with the persuasive function in mind" (p. 580). This still seems to me to conflate epistemological quality and persuasive power. In his (2005, pp. 235-6), Lumer spells out his distinction between 'valid argument' and 'adequate argument for rationally convincing', and urges that this distinction prevents the conflation about which I am here complaining. I am not yet convinced.

Like his treatment of persuasion, Lumer urges that epistemically oriented discussion rules "are designed in such a way that following them leads to an 'improvement in epistemic quality' or more precisely, that epistemic cooperation leads to more true and better substantiated as well as more certain beliefs, and… this is precisely the task of the epistemological discourse theory. Such rules of discourse must of course refer to epistemic rules of argumentation and cognition" (p. 581). More generally, he urges that "Epistemically orientated rules for acts of argumentation (arguments5) and for argumentative discussions (arguments2) do not in fact say anything about the argumentative validity of an argument1; rather, they presuppose criteria for epistemically good arguments1." (*ibid.*). Here we are agreed: it is the epistemology that determines the quality of arguments1, and epistemic criteria can be utilized in the formulation of discussion rules designed to foster epistemic improvement. Lumer's point, which I accept, is that discussion rules can be and in fact have been formulated with the aim of fostering such improvement. My conciliatory counter-point – with which Lumer may well agree – is simply that discussion rules needn't have that epistemic focus, and that such rules are not necessarily defective simply because they don't.

Lumer complains, finally, that my view is too conciliatory because the various norms involved in alternative approaches to argument evaluation are incompatible. In discussing my claim that there are multiple legitimate avenues of argument evaluation – in terms of logical validity, epistemic strength/probative support, dialectical appropriateness, rhetorical effectiveness, virtuousness, etc. – he writes:

"In fact, however, these norms are not compatible. One of the dialogue norms of pragma-dialectics, for example, is that the dialogue partners are free to agree on the rules for the argumentative defence of theses….From an epistemological point of view, this is of course not permissible: Arguments must adhere to criteria for epistemologically good arguments" (p. 583). Lumer here points to a problem with my account that I had not seen before; I am grateful to him for pointing it out and providing me the opportunity to clarify. I wrote that "All the sorts of norms considered thus far – epistemic, dialectical, rhetorical, virtue-theoretic, etc. norms – are compatible. All can be utilized and appealed to depending on the type of evaluation in play." (Siegel 2023a, p. 516, quoted by Lumer, p. 583) Lumer is right that the norms themselves are sometimes incompatible; his example of the incompatibility of the PD norm involving freedom to choose the rules of the discussion and the epistemological theory's rejection of such freedom is correct. My mistake was to put the point in terms of norm compatibility, rather than evaluation-type compatibility. As I said in the passage Lumer quotes, "All of these are legitimate avenues of argument evaluation." (*ibid*.). That is, we can evaluate arguments along the several dimensions mentioned, and no doubt along others as well. I argued for the conceptual priority of epistemic norms (pp. 517-18) but the legitimacy of the others. This still seems right to me. Does Lumer think that we cannot or should not evaluate arguments and argumentative exchanges in terms other than the epistemological? Does he think that evaluating argumentative exchanges in terms of rhetorical effectiveness, dialectical probity, the virtuousness of the participants, etc., is somehow illegitimate? I don't see on what grounds such illegitimacy could be established. So I continue to maintain my conciliatory stance.

Semantic, Instrumental and Categorical Justification: Lumer prefers an *instrumental* justification of the epistemological theory. The justification is that "[e]pistemologically good arguments are vehicles for epistemic improvement; namely, they lead to more true beliefs than arguments conceived according to alternative theories of argumentation or cognitive practice without argumentation and to an improvement in the status of justification" (p. 575). Despite what Lumer says, and as the title of the paper in question (Siegel 2019) indicates, I'm perfectly fine with instrumental justification, and I'm

happy that the epistemological theory can be justified on instrumental grounds. My criticism of instrumentality in epistemology – that is, my claim that epistemic rationality cannot be strictly a matter of instrumental relations – is that claims that some means M is an efficacious way to achieve some goal G, and that it is therefore instrumentally rational to utilize M in order to achieve G, depend upon a non-instrumental relation between the claim C that M is indeed so efficacious and the evidence E for that claim. That is, if it is indeed instrumentally rational to utilize M in order to achieve G, it is because E supports that claim of instrumental efficacy, and that support is not itself instrumental but rather epistemic or "categorical". To illustrate with an example: It is instrumentally rational to use double-blind methodology M in order to test the safety and efficacy of a new drug, because evidence E shows that M does everything that single-blind methodology does, and in addition controls for the placebo effect. The relation between double-blind methodology M and the goal G of determining the safety and efficacy of the drug is instrumental: if you want to achieve G, use M, because using M is the most efficacious way to achieve G. That is, if you want to establish the safety and efficacy of the drug, use double-blind methodology. But it is rational to do so not because of any instrumental relation, but because evidence E supports (justifies belief in, renders worthy of belief, fallibly indicates the truth of) that claim C concerning efficacy. The relation between M and G is instrumental, but the relation between E and C is not. Rather, it is an epistemic, probative, evidential, or 'categorical' relation, and that is what makes it rational to utilize M in order to achieve G. That is, instrumental rationality rests upon, and requires, categorical rationality (Siegel 1996, 2019).

That said, Lumer's instrumental justification of the epistemological theory is fine, and if the theory can be justified on instrumental as well as semantic grounds, all the better. Lumer is content with my semantic justification (p. 586), but nevertheless thinks it susceptible to the charge of question-begging. Here I think Lumer goes astray. He is right that the rhetorician might respond to my claim that the basic phenomena of arguments and arguing involve *making cases* by noting that, in Lumer's words, "the presentation of reasons is a (not necessarily epistemic) persuasive matter: if we have presented good arguments, the addressee is convinced; a good argument is one that

convinces or persuades", and similarly for the consensualist, etc. (p. 586). His point is that the non-epistemological theorists can assign alternative meanings to 'argument': while the epistemological theorist takes the term to involve making cases, the rhetorician takes it to involve persuasion, the consensualist to achieve consensus, and so on.

However, this response is uncompelling, for the rhetorician is herself, in making this claim, engaged in case-making; she is surreptitiously presupposing the epistemological view of argument that she seems to be challenging. That is, she is urging that her rhetorical view of argument and argumentation should hold sway, but she can urge this only by making the case that her rhetorical view is better than and to be preferred to the epistemologically oriented case-making alternative. Parallel points apply to consensualist and other non-epistemological approaches. This is familiar territory to those familiar with the rationality/relativism battles in the Kuhnian and post-Kuhnian epistemology and philosophy of science of the second half of the twentieth century (Siegel 2004). We needn't relitigate those battles here. The decisive point is that the rhetorician can establish her view as correct only by making the case for it, and she can do that only by honoring, in deed if not in word, the case-making view of arguments and argumentation urged by the epistemological theory.

Lumer sketches the instrumental justification of the epistemological theory that he has developed more fully elsewhere (pp. 589-593). As already indicated, I am happy with this instrumental justification, although I continue to hold that, if successful, it must be underwritten by a non-instrumental, 'categorical' justification, and that the semantic, case-making account of 'argument', arguments and argumentation is a central component of the latter. He suggests that he is skeptical of the very idea of epistemic rationality: "Does this kind of rationality exist" (p. 593)? It does. And it better, if his instrumental justification is to succeed, because, as we have seen, all such instrumental justifications depend on it.

The function of arguments: Lumer says that I "reject the notion that persuasion is a basic function of argumentation" (p. 576). I do not reject the idea that arguers, when arguing, often seek to persuade their audience. They often do other things as well: they seek to

amuse, to embarrass their opponents, to obfuscate, to win, to impress, and so on. These are all things that arguers sometimes seek to accomplish with their arguing. Does this mean that they are all 'basic functions of argumentation'? Clearly not. We should distinguish 'the function of argumentation' from the reasons that people argue. The latter are many and varied. It does not follow that the former is.

Acts of arguing do not have a univocal function. But arguments do. Why people argue is one thing, what the arguments they use in arguing are for is another. John Biro and I have urged that it is a conceptual truth about the arguments people use in arguing that they are ways of establishing that a conclusion is supported (follows from or is inductively justified) by reasons/evidence. It follows that when one gives an argument, one's object is to provide support to one's conclusion or thesis, whatever further objectives one may have. While the functions of argumentation are multiple and varied, the function of an argument is to offer such support.

Lumer finds this alleged function[17] of support obscure. He quotes several of my attempts to characterize it and finds them "by no means clear" (p. 593), "quite incomprehensible" (p. 594), and "like magic" (p. 596). He prefers to think of such support in terms of *implication* and *inferential relations*, although he grants that that notion is less well understood in the case of non-deductive arguments (p. 593).[18] But his own explanation of his approach requires that a subject "justifiedly" (p. 594) considers the premises to be true and to imply the conclusion, which suggests that he too needs the allegedly obscure and incomprehensible *justificatory support*. Moreover, his

[17] I am here acceding to Lumer's formulation of the issue in terms of 'function'. This has never been my way of framing the issue.

[18] Lumer interprets me as understanding the relation of premise/reason and conclusion in terms of doxastic states because I used the phrase "in the hands of an arguer" in my suggestion that "the most important strength of the epistemic theory is that it captures and explains the most fundamental sense of 'argument': that an argument, in the hands of an arguer, attempts and purports to offer justificatory support to a conclusion" (Siegel 2023a, p. 519, quoted and discussed by Lumer p. 594). This is a mistake. The phrase "in the hands of an arguer" is meant only to acknowledge that arguments, the abstract objects, by themselves don't attempt or purport anything. He similarly misinterprets another of my claims in terms of doxastic states, when the relation between reasons and the attitude they support is not doxastic but logical/epistemic (p. 594).

case for his theory is constituted by a plethora of arguments, all of which are composed of premises/reasons intended to justify or provide support for their target claims/conclusions. Are the notions of support and justificatory support really so obscure, as Lumer alleges?

The short answer is no. In contemporary epistemology these notions are ubiquitous. One way to approach them is in terms of *reasons*. A reason, as T. M. Scanlon suggests, is "a consideration that counts in favor of" its target, the thing for which it is a reason. (Scanlon 1998, p. 17; for discussion see Siegel 2019) 'Counting in favor of' we may treat here as roughly equivalent to 'supporting': If reason *R* counts in favor of conclusion *C*, it supports it. So, for example, 'the ground is wet' is a reason for, counts in favor of, and supports 'it has rained recently'. It is not a conclusive reason, and it is defeasible – the kids may have been playing with the garden hose, for example – but, *ceteris paribus*, it is a reason for thinking that it has rained recently. Is this really obscure?

Surprisingly, after chastising my formulations' unclarity, incomprehensibility, and magical character, Lumer quotes a string of them and opines: "All this is correct" (p. 597). It turns out that his complaint is not only that they are unclear or obscure – after all, by his own admission they are correct, and furthermore required by his own account – but that they "cannot be used to judge whether a given argument fulfils this function. No operationalisable, directly applicable criteria for good arguments can be obtained from the unspecified descriptions, that is criteria that can be used to determine whether the epistemic relations described are fulfilled in an argument (presented in a particular situation)" (p. 597). However, help is on the way: "One can fill all these gaps in the way I have already indicated here… namely on the basis of an analysis of the functioning of arguments as a guide to recognizing the thesis in the form of a verification of the fulfilment of the conditions of an epistemological principle (Lumer 2005, pp. 219-231)" (*ibid.*). That is, all the problems he identifies with my formulations' alleged obscurity, unclarity and incomprehensibility turn out also to be problems of lack of operationalizability, problems which his own theory resolves.

I regret that I cannot here launch into an evaluation of Lumer's own theory, although I should say that I find it detailed, complex,

and challenging. It is a major achievement, one that argumentation theorists of every persuasion should study carefully. That said, I don't think his complaints about obscurity and operationalizability are too worrisome. My view, and I think Lumer's as well, is that it is epistemology, and attendant areas such as logic and probability theory, that provide the relevant criteria. There are many different kinds of reasons, and a wide range of criteria by which they can be evaluated. Lumer's complaint about unclarity and incomprehensibility is belied both by his own theory's need for the allegedly unclear and incomprehensible notions and by the obviousness of the sense in which reasons provide support briefly rehearsed two paragraphs above. I happily grant that the account of argument and argumentation offered in the target paper is not 'operationalizable' – that is, it does not by itself provide criteria by which to assess candidate reasons and arguments. For that we need epistemology. This seems to me exactly what an epistemological argumentation theorist should say. I have great respect for Lumer and his theory. Still, for the reasons given above, his criticisms of my view fail.

Conclusion

I will not try to summarize my replies to my commentators and critics; they are as varied as the critical commentaries themselves. It is worth noting, though, that they all, in one way or another, take the fundamental subject of argumentation theory to be argument*ation*. As I argued in the target paper, while this seems intuitively obvious, it is problematic, because argumentation fundamentally involves using *arguments* – that is, arguments in the abstract propositional sense. They are, or should be, a central concern of argumentation theory.[19]

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