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Résumé de l'article

L'approche fondée sur la théorie de la vertu pour l'évaluation des arguments fait l'objet de deux critiques. Premièrement, elle est inadéquate, car la force de l'argument est conceptuellement indépendante des caractéristiques des argumentateurs (Bowell et Kingsbury 2013). Deuxièmement, elle est dénuée de motivation, car la viabilité de la théorie de l'argumentation fondée sur la vertu (AFV) ne nécessite pas une approche fondée sur la théorie de la vertu pour l'évaluation des arguments. Cela dévalorise la première critique en tant qu'évaluation de la AFV (Gascon 2016, Paglieri 2015). J'examine chacune de ces critiques et j'explique pourquoi elles sont erronées en soulignant le lien entre le concept général de bon argument et les critères de bonté qui lui sont associés, et le lien entre les bons arguments et la bonne argumentation.

On the Virtue-Theoretic Approach to Argument Appraisal

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Abstract: Two criticisms of the virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal are as follows. First, it is inadequate as argument cogency is conceptually independent of the characteristics of arguers (Bowell and Kingsbury 2013). Second, it is unmotivated since the viability of virtue argumentation theory (VAT) doesn't require a virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal. This deflates the first criticism as an evaluation of VAT (Gascon 2016, Paglieri 2015). I consider each and explain why it is misguided highlighting the connection between the general concept of *good argument* and associated criteria of goodness, and the connection between good arguments and good arguing.

Résumé: L'approche fondée sur la théorie de la vertu pour l'évaluation des arguments fait l'objet de deux critiques. Premièrement, elle est inadéquate, car la force de l'argument est conceptuellement indépendante des caractéristiques des argumentateurs (Bowell et Kingsbury 2013). Deuxièmement, elle est dénuée de motivation, car la viabilité de la théorie de l'argumentation fondée sur la vertu (AFV) ne nécessite pas une approche fondée sur la théorie de la vertu pour l'évaluation des arguments. Cela dévalorise la première critique en tant qu'évaluation de la AFV (Gascon 2016, Paglieri 2015). J'examine chacune de ces critiques et j'explique pourquoi elles sont erronées en soulignant le lien entre le concept général de bon argument et les critères de bonté qui lui sont associés, et le lien entre les bons arguments et la bonne argumentation.

1. Introduction

Two criticisms of the virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal are roughly as follows. First, it is inadequate as argument cogency is conceptually independent of the characteristics of arguers (Bowell and Kingsbury 2013, p. 23). Second, it is unmotivated since the viability of virtue argumentation theory (VAT) doesn't require a virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal. This deflates the import of the first criticism as an evaluation of VAT (Gascon 2016 p. 445; Paglieri 2015, p. 73).

In this paper, I consider each and explain why I think it is misguided with the aim of clarifying the connection between the general concept of *good argument* and associated criteria of goodness, and the connection between good arguments and good arguing. Towards this end, my response to the first criticism appeals to the idea that the thin concept *good argument* needs to be first thickened in order to yield criteria that measure the goodness of arguments. This highlights that any approach to argument appraisal presupposes a thickening or instantiation of *good argument.* My response to the second criticism appeals to what I take as a constraint on any adequate approach to the appraisal of arguing and of arguments which I label as the *arguing-argument value link*: (i) producing a good argument counts as an act of arguing well in a way and (ii) good arguing for the conclusion of an argument requires that the argument be good in a way. In order to introduce what follows, I now sketch how these appeals figure in my responses to the criticisms, starting with the first.

Appraisal of whether a given argument is good requires an instantiation of the general concept of *good argument*. Each such instantiation singles out more specific features of arguments in light of one or more evaluative dimensions for arguments of which there are many such as logical, dialectical, and rhetorical (Cohen 2001, p. 73-74; Cohen, Miller 2016, p. 451-452). The virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal instantiates *good argument* in terms of instantiating the thin concept of *arguing well for its conclusion*, which brings into play how virtuous arguers typically argue (Aberdein 2010, Cohen 2013, Thorson 2016). Roughly, your argument is good in this way because you argued virtuously for its conclusion.

According to the first criticism, the virtue-theoretic approach fails as an appraisal of good arguments, since the cogency of an argument is independent of whether the associated arguer(s) argued virtuously for the conclusion. This criticism presupposes an instantiation of *good argument* in terms of argument cogency, which differs from the instantiation presupposed by the virtue-theoretic approach in terms of an argument produced by virtuous arguing. This is a distinct and conceptually independent instantiation of *good argument* from that presupposed by the criticism. Accordingly, the first criticism amounts to a *non-sequitur*. This response differs from Aberdein's (2014) defense of VAT against Bowell and Kingsbury (2013), which attempts to directly rebut their criticism by arguing that the chacteristics of arguers may be determinative of argument cogency.

By the lights of the arguing-argument value link, a plausible approach to the appraisal of arguing must instantiate (ii) of the arguing-argument value link. Hence, the second criticism fails given that VAT essentially involves the appraisal of arguing in terms of virtuous characteristics of the arguer (e.g., Cohen 2013, p. 482; Thorson 2016, p. 359). Of course, the plausibility of the criticism turns on the claim that the arguing-argument value link has force as a constraint on adequate approaches to arguing well. My case for this claim is two-fold. First, it is intuitively plausible to think that your case for a claim is not well-argued absent your giving a good argument for it. Second, it seems that in so far as you have produced a good argument, you have argued well for its conclusion. Of course, your arguing might not be good in other respects. I enhance the intuitive plausibility of these thoughts in two ways. I first connect the notions of *arguing* and *reason-giving uses of argument*. I then apply the thick-thin distinction to the concepts of *good arguing* and *good argument*, drawing primarily on Tappolet (2004), Thomson (1997, 2008), and von Wright (1963), in a way that clarifies the force of the arguing-argument value link as a constraint on approaches to the appraisal of both arguing and arguments *qua* products of arguing. This will clarify in turn the import of a virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal to VAT.

I begin by motivating and elucidating the *arguing-argument value link* as a constraint on approaches to the appraisal of arguments and arguing. I then use the discussion to defend the virtue-theoretic

approach to argument appraisal against the above two criticisms of it. Finally, I conclude.

2. Thickening the concepts of good arguing and good arguments

It is widely acknowledged that arguing is essentially a reason-giving activity, i.e., when one argues for *p*, one give reasons for *p* (e.g., Blair 2003, p. 172; Hample 2005, pp.18-19; Hitchcock 2007, pp. 448-449; Jacobs 2000, p. 264; among many others). Reason-giving so connected with arguing involves reason-giving uses of arguments. That is, when one argues for *p* one uses an argument in a reason-giving way. I take arguments to be abstract, understanding them to be premise-conclusion complexes of propositions. A given use of an argument can be good or bad. Here I appeal to the distinction between an abstract argument and an argument in use (e.g., Biro and Siegel 2006, p. 92; Goldman 1994, p. 27). For purposes of this paper, I take "that argument is bad" to be short for something like "that is a bad use of that argument."

To elaborate, one way to use an argument is to advance its premises as reasons for the conclusion.[1] A reason for the conclusion is a consideration in favor of adopting an attitude about the conclusion (believing it, doubting it, worrying that it is true, etc.), or doing what the conclusion prescribes (Blair 2004, p. 141). When you use an argument in a reason-giving way, you argue for its conclusion in the sense that you give reasons for it. Conversely, when you argue for the conclusion of an argument by advancing its premises as reasons for it, you use the argument in a reason-giving way. On this conception of arguing, it necessarily involves producing an argument that the arguer uses in a reason-giving way. Conversely, when one uses an argument in a reason-giving way one advances the premises as reasons for the conclusion. Accordingly, when one so uses an argument one argues for its conclusion.

These conceptions of *arguing for something* and *arguments as products of arguing for something* motivate what I'll label for convenience the *arguing-argument link*.

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[1]Abstract arguments used to study logical consequence and validity in formal logic are not used in reason-giving ways. For discussion, see my (2022).

> *arguing-argument link*: you argue for *p* if and only if (iff) you use an argument whose premises you advance as reasons for *p*.

Given the arguing-argument link, arguing well for something seems to require the goodness of the associated reason-giving use of argument. Intuitively, if you don't argue unless you use an argument in a reason-giving way, then you don't argue well unless your associated reason-giving use of argument is good in some way. Conversely, if your reason-giving use of an argument is good, then your arguing for the conclusion is good in some way. It is odd to think that your reason-giving use of an argument is good even though you don't argue well in any way for the conclusion.

Essentially, the arguing-argument link implies that arguing involves argument-making. If your argument-making is good, then the argument made is good in some way; and if the argument made is good, then your argument-making is good in a way. Compare: if your bread-making is good, then the bread produced is good in some way; and if the bread produced is good, then your bread-making is good in a way. In short, arguing well yields arguments that are good in some way and good arguments are outputs of arguing that is good in some way.

These considerations suggest that there is at least initial plausibility for what I called the *arguing-argument value link*, which I now put as follows so that it is in sync with the arguing-argument link.

> *arguing-argument value link*: (i) a good reason-giving use of an argument counts as an act of arguing well in a way and (ii) good arguing for the conclusion of an argument suffices for the associated reason-giving use of argument being good in a way.

If you use an argument in a reason-giving way, then you argue for the conclusion in the sense that you give reasons (the premises) for a proposition (the conclusion). Hence, (i): if your reason-giving use of the argument is good, then your arguing is good in some way. Also, arguing, understood as essentially reason-giving, necessarily involves using an argument to advance its premises as reasons for the conclusion. Hence, (ii): if your reason-giving use of argument

isn't good in some way, then you don't argue well for the conclusion. I take (i) and (ii) to be obviously true given the arguing-argument link.

The initial intuitive plausibility of the arguing-argument value link motivates developing its rationale. Towards this end, I now discuss the conceptual pairs *good arguing* and *arguing that is good in a way*, and *a good reason-giving use of an argument* and *a reason-giving use of an argument that is good in a way*. My aim is to characterize the concepts of *arguing being good in a way* and *reasons-giving uses of arguments being good in a way* so that they thicken the correlative concepts of *arguing well* and *good reason-giving use of argument*, respectively. As I explain below, I take such conceptual thickening to enable the specification of criteria by which to measure our arguing and our reason-giving uses of arguments. This will at least partially account for the force of the arguing-argument value link as a conceptual constraint on adequate approaches to the appraisal of arguing and of reason-giving uses of arguments.

A starting point in my explication of a rationale for the arguing-argument value link is that the evaluative criteria for arguments are rather diverse and so any plausible account of what makes arguments good has to be a broad church. To elaborate, I draw on Cohen.

> There are many ways to take the measure of an argument, many vocabularies and criteria available to help us answer the question: *Is the argument a good one?* There are many questions contained in this one. Ethics, politics, aesthetics, epistemology, psychology, jurisprudence, and many other disciplines, all have something to contribute. (Cohen 2001, p. 73)

This suggests that *good argument* is a general concept that can be instantiated in a variety of ways, each determining a measure for appraising arguments. Two questions arise. First, what determines which measure of argument should be in play? Second, how are the different criteria for taking measure of arguments connected? Drawing from Cohen, I'll sketch partial responses, starting with the first.

Cohen gestures towards a response to the first question when he remarks that, "[f]or the purpose of rational persuasion, however, the real core of argumentation theory rests on the tripod of logic, rhetoric, and dialectic" (2001, p.73; echoing Wenzel 1990),

acknowledging later in a footnote that, "[t]here can be other purposes to argument, necessitating other criteria" (2001, note 1 p.81). Accordingly, how an argument is being used determines a measure for appraising it. Specifically, the purpose of a given use of an argument is determinative of a criterion or criteria for assessing the goodness of the argument so used. Of course, this is compatible with thinking that a given use of an argument can bring into play more than one measure.

Cohen observes that although logical, rhetorical, and dialectic criteria for taking measure of arguments are not independent of one another, they are conceptually and practically separable.

> Neither logical validity nor dialectical success entails the other. Moreover, neither one entails, or is entailed by, rhetorical effectiveness. It is possible, therefore, for an argument to pass muster logically and rhetorically, say, but not dialectically: a cogent argument may succeed in convincing its audience despite their lingering questions. And it is equally possible to argue rhetorically and dialectically well, but not logically: logical flaws that escape both the arguer and the audience will not detract from its effectiveness as a tool for rational persuasion. Indeed, all the combinations are possible. (Cohen 2001, p.74)

This suggests that "arguers and their arguments can succeed or fail in three separate ways. Arguments can be cogent or not; they can be dialectically satisfactory or not; and they can be rhetorically—agonistically—successful or not" (Cohen 2001, p.75). I take the three-part evaluation scheme for arguments that Cohen goes on to give (2001, p. 76) to be plausible as an overview of how logical, dialectical, and rhetorical criteria for measuring arguments can be thought of as forming a three-dimensional coordinate system for evaluating arguments devoted to rational persuasion (2001, p. 74).

I now make three, related observations towards extrapolating a general approach to argument appraisal from Cohen (2001), which focuses on metrics for evaluating arguments considered as instruments of persuasion. First, the appraisal of an argument is ultimately devoted to answering the question, *is the argument a good one?* Second, *good argument* is a general concept with various specifications each generating in some way evaluative criteria by which to measure arguments in use. Third, the specification(s) brought into play in

measuring an argument are, at least in part, a matter of how it is being used. Specifically, the intended purpose(s). For example, if you use an argument intending to rationally persuade your audience, then according to Cohen the goodness of your argument needs to be assessed at least logically, rhetorically, and dialectically.

I take this general approach to argument appraisal to parallel a general approach to the appraisal of arguing. Specifically, I take the appraisal of your arguing to be ultimately devoted to answering the question, *is your arguing good?* Also, *good arguing* or *arguing well* is a general concept with various specifications each generating in some way evaluative criteria by which to measure arguing. Third, the specification(s) brought into play in measuring arguing are, at least in part, a matter of (i) what arguing is good for and (ii) what arguing may exemplify that makes it praiseworthy.

Regarding (i), arguing is useful for, among other things, rationally resolving disagreements, rational belief management (e.g., gaining justified beliefs in deciding what to believe, pruning one's unjusti-fied beliefs), and rational persuasion. Accordingly, if one's way of arguing realizes its aim then it is good in at least one way. That is, if your aim in arguing is realized in part because of the way you argued, then your arguing is good in so far as it realized your aim. This sug-gests a pathway to determining criteria for taking measure of argu-ing. For example, if you argue for your conclusion in order to ration-ally persuade your interlocuter, then the goodness of your arguing needs to be assessed logically, rhetorically, and dialectically.

However, an arguer's manner of arguing may exemplify some of her praiseworthy features, which doesn't necessarily depend on the realization of her aims in arguing in the first place. This suggests that (ii) is conceptually independent from (i). For example, one's arguing may be sophisticated or thoughtful to the degree that it exemplifies what Aikin and Talisse call *cognitive command* of the relevant topics or issues (2019, p. 21). Even though your arguing doesn't realize your aim of persuading your interlocuter of your conclusion, your case for it may be well argued in so far as it displays your under-standing of the complexity of the relevant topics or issues, your ca-pacity to explain why the conclusion is true, and your cognizance of objections and countersuggestions (Aikin and Talisse 2019, p. 34). Accordingly, your arguing is good in the respect that it evinces your

cognitive command of your believing the conclusion. Of course, a central claim of VAT is that one argues well in so far as one's arguing exemplifies intellectual or argumentative virtues of the arguer such as intellectual courage, open-mindedness, and honesty (e.g., Aberdein 2010, Cohen 2013). While virtuous arguing may be conducive to realizing the aims of arguing, that arguing is virtuous doesn't turn on its intended aims being realized.

In sum, the appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments and of arguing involves deploying criteria that measure their goodness. However, the concepts *good arguing* and *good reason-giving use of argument* are too general to yield usable criteria by which to judge the goodness of both arguing and reason-giving uses of arguments. Accordingly, any appraisal of arguing and reason-giving uses of arguments presupposes an instantiation of *good arguing* and *good reason-giving use of argument* to the degree that it yields criteria necessary for the appraisal of the former.

Drawing from von Wright (1963, p.9), we speak of good arguments considered as instruments used for various purposes, like we speak of a good knife, watch, hammer, razor, and bed. These uses of *good* are grouped by von Wright under the heading that he calls *instrumental goodness.* Associated with this sense of goodness is a good way of doing something, e.g., making one's bed, making an argument (1963, p. 9). As von Wright notes, "we further talk of a good chess player, runner, ..., scientist, and artist. A common characteristic of such men is that they are *good* at something…I shall coin for this excellence the name *technical goodness*" (1963, p.9). Using this idiom, the goodness of an arguer is *technical goodness*. On this picture, the excellence of arguing is a function of the arguing exemplifying characteristic of arguers good in this way.

This line of thinking accords with the idea that the concept of *good* lacks content to the extent that it fails to convey any information other than a positive evaluation and is, therefore, a thin concept in William's (1985) sense. Similarly, that an act of arguing and a reason-giving use of argument are good conveys a positive evaluation of them but lacks sufficient descriptive content to permit ordinary users to deploy criteria to pick out typical instances in their day-to-day lives. The relevant thickening of *good arguing* and *good reason-giving use of argument* will enrich their content so that their use

to convey a positive evaluation of a given act of arguing or reason-giving use of argument will also indicate a way they are good that triggers criteria to measure their goodness in this respect. In other words, the appraisal of arguing and associated reason-giving uses of arguments deploys a positive thick concept of *good arguing* and *good reason-giving use of argument* by means of which to judge whether arguing and associated reason-giving uses of arguments are good in the correlative way or respect. I now elaborate, drawing heavily on Tappolet (2004) who thickens *good* in terms of the concepts of *good pro tanto* and *good in toto*.

Taking the expression *good pro tanto* to refer to something's being good in some respect, Tappolet articulates the generality principle and what I'll call the instantiation principle as follows.

> *The Generality Principle* (GP): (1) If *x* falls under a positive thick concept, *x* is good *pro tanto* (2004, p. 210).
> *The Instantiation Principle* (IP): If *x* is good *pro tanto*, some positive thick concept applies to it (2004, p. 211).

If *x*'s arguing is, say, courageous, then *x*'s arguing is good in at least one respect. That is, *x*'s arguing is good *pro tanto*. If *x*'s reason-giving use of an argument is, say, an intelligent use of an argument, then it is good *pro tanto*. Regarding the plausibility of (IP), Tappolet asks, "[d]oes something's being good *pro tanto* entail that it falls under some thick concept? Is it always possible to specify the concept *good pro tanto* (2004, p.211)? And responds in the affirmative. "It certainly seems so. Consider a person whom you believe to be good *pro tanto*. She will have some desirable quality – she will be courageous or generous or intelligent, and so forth" (2004, p. 211). I agree that (IP) is intuitively plausible. Intuitively, if I take your arguing to be good *pro tanto*, then I am committed to thinking that your arguing possesses some desirable quality and thereby falls under a positive thick concept.

Recall that I take the appraisal of an instance of arguing and of a given reason-giving use of argument to be devoted to answering the following questions. *Is it good arguing? Is it a good reason-giving use of argument?* Obviously, to understand what, exactly is being asked here we need to understand the predicate "good." Towards this end, I again draw on Tappolet.

> The claim that 'good *pro tanto*' is a general concept raises the question of its relation to the ordinary predicate 'good'. I think that the view that is the most plausible is that 'good' as we usually use it is ambiguous between 'good *pro tanto*' and 'good all things considered', or, as we might call it, 'good *in toto*', that is, good with respect to all aspects of the thing under consideration. It is worth noting that this should not be interpreted as meaning good in all respects, for a thing that is good *in toto* can well have some negative features. What counts is the overall evaluation, given all positive and negative features of what is evaluated. Moreover, something that is good *pro tanto* is not necessarily good *in toto*. But something's being good *in toto* is at least normally also good *pro tanto*. This will be the case unless the presence of different negative features can result in something being good *in toto*, a possibility I shall not consider further here. (2004, pp. 211-212)

The appraisal of a reason-giving use of argument involves measuring it in terms of whether it satisfies criteria that help answer the question, "is it good?". This presupposes that satisfying such criteria suffices to make *good* the use of the argument. Accordingly, both the adequacy and import of the appraisal turns on the operative instantiation of the general concept associated with the blanket predicate expression *good.* For example, the appraisal question may be "is the use of the argument good *pro tanto*?". Or it may be, "is it good *in toto*?".

Plausibly, the criteria needed to measure goodness *in toto* needs to be more robust than what is needed to measure goodness *pro tanto*. If your reason-giving use of argument is good *in toto*, then is it possesses enough good *pro tanto*-making-features to warrant a positive evaluation *all things considered*. If your reason-giving use of argument is good *pro tanto*, then it is good in so far as it possesses some feature F.

I am unable to develop a full-blooded account of these varieties of goodness here. However, I think that enough has been sketched to see how the good *pro tanto*/good *in toto* conceptual framework may accommodate various understandings of good argumentation. That your argument is cogent doesn't suffice to make your reason-giving use of it good *in toto* if it must also be good in other ways, e.g., it must be ethical. I take these different instantiations of *pro tanto*

goodness to bring into play distinct criteria for measuring the (*pro tanto*) goodness of argument.

The arguing-argument value link may be articulated appealing to the concepts *goodness in toto* and *goodness pro tanto* as follows.

> *arguing-argument value link*: (i') a good *in toto* reason-giving use of an argument counts as an act of arguing that is good *pro tanto* and (ii') arguing for the conclusion of an argument that is good *in toto* suffices for the associated reason-giving use of argument being good *pro tanto*.

A rationale for the *arguing-argument value link* so construed makes use of the following two claims.

> (iii) If your arguing or a reason-giving use of argument is good *in toto*, then it is good *pro tanto*.
> (iv) Your arguing is good *pro tanto* iff your reason-giving use of argument is good *pro tanto.*

Both (i') and (ii') are easy consequences of (iii) and (iv). For example, suppose your reason-giving use of argument is good *in toto.* Then, with (iii), it follows that it is good *pro tanto*. Hence, with (iv), your associated arguing is good *pro tanto*. This proves (i'). Proof of (ii') is similar. I take (iii) and (iv) to be straightforwardly true. For example, regarding (iv), if you argue intelligently for your conclusion, your reason-giving use of the argument is intelligent. And if your reason-giving use of the argument is intelligent, then your arguing for the conclusion is intelligent.

In sum, the appraisal of arguing and reason-giving uses of arguments requires thickening the concepts of *good arguing* and *good reason-giving uses of argument*. Drawing on Tappolet (2004), I have proposed thickening each in term of the general concepts, *good in toto* and *good pro tanto*. I take an appraisal of arguing and argument to be an appraisal of their *pro tanto* goodness. Therefore, the assessment of their *goodness in toto* brings multiple appraisals into play.

Crystalizing an approach to the appraisal of arguing and of reason-giving uses of arguments requires identifying the criteria for measuring their worth. Given that there are different ways that arguing and reason-giving uses of arguments may be good, an appraisal of either requires a specification of the goodness being measured that

yields criteria by which to measure arguing and reason-giving uses of arguments. The specification of the goodness being measured amounts to a specification of their *pro tanto* goodness. Essentially, an approach to argument appraisal amounts to an approach to the *pro tanto* goodness of arguing and reason-giving uses of arguments. Validating such a specification requires a plausible response to the question, why should satisfying such criteria make a reason-giving use of an argument good in a way? That is, why does this make it *pro tanto* good? We may distinguish two approaches to appraising reason-giving uses of arguments distinguished by their responses to this question: argument-centric and agent-centric.

On an argument-centric approach, a reason-giving use of argument is *pro tanto* good because the argument as used possesses a *pro tanto* good-making feature F. For example, following Biro and Siegel (1992), on an epistemological approach to the appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments, a reason-giving use of argument is *pro tanto* good in that it is epistemically good just in case the argument's premises justify believing the conclusion. It follows by (iv) that your arguing for the conclusion is *pro tanto* good given that your reason-giving use of an argument is good epistemically. This obtains because that your argument's premises justify believing the conclusion makes your arguing for the conclusion epistemically good. Accordingly, on the epistemic approach, your arguing for *p* is made *pro tanto* good because the argument you use is *pro tanto* good. Hence, the epistemic approach so construed is an argument-centric approach to the appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments.

On an agent-centric approach, a reason-giving use of argument is *pro tanto* good because the associated arguing for the conclusion is *pro tanto* good by virtue of the arguer displaying excellence. The arguer's display of excellence is a *pro tanto* good-making feature of reason-giving uses of arguments since the arguer's display of excellence is praiseworthy. Also, it is normally expected that such demonstration of argumentative excellence makes it more probable than not that the argument used possesses any needed *pro tanto* good-making features necessary for the arguer's reason-giving use of it to realize

her epistemic, pragmatic, or rhetorical aim(s).[2] Finally, the argumentative excellence of arguers triggers the potential of their reason-giving uses of arguments to realize a wide variety of cognitive achievements not necessarily connected with accomplishing their intended aims.

For example, Cohen illustrates with the following list.

> A deepened understanding of one's own position; the improvement of one's position; the abandonment of a standpoint for a better one – other than the opponent's; a deepened understanding of the opponent's position; a deepened appreciation of the opponent's position; acknowledgement of (the reasonableness of) another's position; greater attention to previously overlooked or undervalued details; a better grasp of connections and how things might be fit together in a big picture. And, notably, entitlement to one's own position. Each of these represents a cognitive advance. Only some of them can be explained in terms of the addition and subtraction of discreet beliefs; but all of them can result from argument. (2007, p. 6-7)

On a *virtue-theoretic approach* to the appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments, your reason-giving use of argument is *pro tanto* good in that it is virtuous just in case your associated arguing for the conclusion is virtuous. The virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal is an agent-centered approach. To elaborate, drawing loosely from Cohen (2013),[3] your reason-giving use of argument is virtuous and so *pro tanto* good because your arguing for the conclusion is virtuous, which is a function of it displaying your attitudes, skills, or facilities associated with your possession of the correlative virtues. For example, that your reason-giving use of an argument

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[2] This point reflects a common view among intellectual virtue theorists which, in effect, is that among the argumentation skills needed to successfully use an argument in a reason-giving way are those associated with intellectual virtues (e.g., with respect to reason-giving uses of argument for the purpose of justification, see Thorson (2016 p. 363) and Battaly (2010, pp.362-363)).

[3] I draw on what Cohen calls bumpers-sticker slogans: *for a good argument, argue well*; *arguing well requires good arguers* (2013, p. 482). Of course, I am reading *good* and *well* here in terms of *pro tanto* goodness and *pro tanto* wellness.

displays your possession of the virtues of intellectual honesty, humility, and carefulness makes it *pro tanto* good to this extent.

Again, the arguer's display of virtue is a *pro tanto* good-making feature of reason-giving uses of arguments in so far as the arguer's possession of the demonstrated virtues is praiseworthy. Additionally, the demonstration of the argumentative excellence of the arguer makes it more likely than not that the argument used possesses any needed *pro tanto* good-making features necessary for the arguer's reason-giving use of it to realize her aim(s). Accordingly, if you argue virtuously for your conclusion in order to rationally persuade your interlocuter, then, drawing from the above discussion of Cohen, it is normally expected that your arguing passes logical, rhetorical, and dialectical muster. Furthermore, argumentative excellence increases the likelihood of reaping cognitive benefits unrelated to argumentative aims.

In short, on an argument-centric approach, your arguing is good *pro tanto* because the argument you use in a reason-giving way is good *pro tanto*. An argument centered approach directly assesses the *pro tanto* goodness of your arguing in terms of the whether the associated argument you use in a reason-giving way possesses the relevant *pro tanto* good-making feature. On an agent-centric approach, your reason-giving use of argument is good *pro tanto* because your arguing is *pro tanto* good. An agent-centered approach directly assesses the *pro tanto* goodness of a reason-giving uses of arguments in terms of whether the arguer possesses the relevant *pro tanto* good-making features that make her arguing praiseworthy. Obviously, to assess the *in toto* goodness of a reason-giving use of an argument brings into play multiple approaches to argument appraisal. An account of *in toto* good argumentation is beyond the scope of this paper.

3. In defense of a virtue-theoretic approach to the appraisal of arguments.

In this penultimate section of the paper, I respond to criticism of the virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal advanced by Bowell and Kingsbury (2013) and Gascon (2016). In my view, what the criticisms overlook is the criterial inertness of blanket expressions such

as *good arguing* and *good argument*. Because of this criterial inertness, any approach to the appraisal of arguing and arguments presupposes some instantiation of the relevant thin concepts that yield criteria by which to measure arguing and arguments. However, it is misguided to argue that one instantiation is good above all others as arguing and arguments can be good in a variety of ways.

I start with the criticism advanced by Bowell and Kingsbury. They articulate their stance as follows.

> [V]irtue argumentation theory hopes to define good argument partly in terms of the exercise of argumentational virtues by the arguer. We conclude that although there is much to be gained by identifying the virtues of the good arguer and those of the good evaluator of arguments, and by considering the ways in which these virtues can be developed in ourselves and in others, virtue argumentation theory does not offer a plausible alternative to a more standard agent-neutral account of good argument. (2013, p. 23)

How are we to understand the expressions *good arguer* and *good argument*? Specifically, *good* in what respect? How exactly is the exercise of argumentational virtues *partly* definitive of *good argument*? For example, does it leave room for an argument's possession of agent-neutral features also being partly definitive of *good argument*? I see don't answers in Bowell and Kingsbury's (2013). To help see why answers matter to the cogency of their criticism, I now sketch mine.

When someone says 'that's a good argument' or "she is a good arguer" the speaker typically means that what is talked about is good in a way. In other words, *being good* functions as a semantically incomplete predicate.[4]

> People do say the words "That's good," but what they mean is always something more particular: what they mean is always that the thing in question is good in a way, a way the context of utterance, or the speaker, has to supply on pain of our simply not knowing what he or she does mean. (Thomson 1996, p. 128; see also 1997, p. 271; and 2008, p. 9)

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[4] For good critical discussions of the semantic incompleteness of *being good* see Piller (2001) and Mankowitz (2023).

The semantic incompleteness of *being good* as applied to arguers and their arguments accords with the aforementioned starting point of my account of the arguing-argument value link. Recall Cohen's observation that, "there are many ways to take the measure of an argument, many vocabularies, and criteria available to help us answer the question: is the argument a good one? There are many questions contained in this one" (2001, p. 73).

The exercise of argumentational virtues may be *partly* definitive of *good argument* in the sense that it specifies how it is *pro tanto* good. This is compatible with an argument's possession of agent-neutral features also being partly definitive of *good argument* in the sense that it is a complementary specification of the *pro tanto* goodness of arguments (in use). It seems to me that this deflates the import of Bowell and Kingsbury's thesis that virtue argumentation theory does not offer a plausible alternative to a more standard agent-neutral account of good argument since it incorrectly presupposes that two characterizations of *good argument* are mutually exclusive. Of course, Bowell and Kingsbury may have a different story to tell about what they mean by *good argument* and *good arguer* in support of their criticism of VAT. What I am pointing to here is that the cogency of their criticism of VAT turns on the plausibility of their story.

Bowell and Kingsbury summarize their understanding of *good argument* as follows.

> When we put forward an argument, we seek to rationally persuade others to accept our conclusion. Given this, it seems natural for an account of *good* argument to center on the ability of an argument to provide its intended audience with good reasons to accept its conclusion. A good argument is an argument that provides, via its premises, sufficient justification for believing its conclusion to be true or highly probable, or for accepting that the course of action it advises is one that certainly or highly probably should be taken. This account of good argument has both logical and epistemic elements. (2013, p.23; italics are the authors')

Clearly, they favor an argument-centered approach to argument appraisal. I take the focus of their approach to be reason-giving uses of argument that aim to rationally persuade others to accept the conclusion. Such reasons are good only to the degree that they constitute

sufficient justification for believing that the conclusion is true or for accepting that the course of action it advises is one that certainly or highly probably should be taken. Plausibly, if the premises are good reasons for the conclusion so understood, then the argument that is used is epistemically good and the associated arguing is thereby epistemically good.

In short, I take their approach to the appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments as an argument-centered approach to the appraisal of the *pro tanto* goodness of such uses of arguments. A reason-giving use of an argument is *pro tanto* good *because* it satisfies criteria satisfied by arguments so used independently of considerations pertaining to arguers. Bowell and Kingsbury think that their argument-centric approach to argument appraisal is incompatible with a virtue-centric approach.

> Of course, this is not an account of good argument that a virtue argumentation theorist would accept. The virtue theorist thinks that what makes an argument good is that the person presenting it has argued well, whereas we think that what makes it the case that an arguer has argued well is that they have presented an argument that is good in the sense described in the previous paragraph [i.e., as described just above]. (2023, p. 23)

A presupposition here is that there is just one way that an argument used to advance its premises as reasons for the conclusion can be good. This makes argument-centric and agent-centric approaches to argument appraisal competing since they are construed as advancing incompatible criteria for measuring the one way that reason-giving uses of arguments are good. I question the presupposition. Again, there are varieties of goodness in argumentation, each associated with criteria for measuring whether reason-giving uses of arguments are up to snuff. A virtue theorist thinks that what makes a reason-giving use of argument *pro tanto* good is that the arguer has argued *pro tanto* well for the conclusion. This is not incompatible with her thinking that an arguer has argued *pro tanto* well because she has used an argument that is *pro tanto* good.

Granting that the acceptability of one's premises may be contextual and agent dependent, Bowell and Kingsbury maintain that the

logical link between one's premises and conclusion is not so dependent.

> What about the "valid or inductively forceful" part? Is it ever the case that facts about the arguer legitimately influence our evaluation of the *structure* of an argument? On the face of it, no. If the conclusion logically follows from the premises, or if given the premises, the conclusion is almost certain to be true, no fact about the arguer can change that. Likewise, an argument which is structurally weak is not redeemed by any facts about the epistemic virtues of the arguer. (2023, p. 27)

I extract the following case against the virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal.

> (1) An argument used in a reason-giving way to rationally persuade others of the conclusion is good only if the argument as used is formally valid or inductively forceful.
> (2) That an argument is formally valid or inductively forceful are agent-independent features of arguments.
> So, any agent-centric approach to the appraisal of the goodness of reason-giving uses of arguments is untenable. That is, (3) it is false that your reason-giving use of argument is good *because* of your display of epistemic (i.e., intellectual, or argumentative) virtues.

In short, my response is three-fold.[5] First, whether (3) is true depends on how we understand *good*. Second, the appraisal of a reason-giving use of argument is the appraisal of its *pro tanto* goodness. Third, taking *good* in (3) to be *pro tanto good*, (3) does not follow from (1) and (2). Obviously, accepting that your reason-giving use of argument is *pro tanto* good *because* of your display of epistemic virtues is compatible with accepting (1) and (2).

To elaborate, I focus on two readings of (1) with a specification of *pro tanto* goodness substituted for the more abstract expression *good*.

> Argument-centric (1): an argument used in a reason-giving way to rationally persuade others of the conclusion is

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[5]Aberdein's (2014) response to Bowell and Kingsbury questions premise (2).

epistemically good only if the argument as used is formally valid or inductively forceful.

Agent-centric (1): an argument used in a reason-giving way to rationally persuade others of the conclusion is virtuously good only if the argument as used is formally valid or inductively forceful.

Accepting both is compatible with a virtue-theoretical approach to argument appraisal. Accepting agent-centric (1) doesn't invoke a commitment to the claim that an argument used in a reason-giving way to rationally persuade others of the conclusion is virtuously good *because*, in part, the argument as used is formally valid or inductively forceful. Rather, an argument being formally valid or inductively forceful may be indicative of the virtuosity of a reason-giving use argument in so far as formal validity and inductive forcefulness are expressions of the successful exercise of correlative epistemic virtues.

In short, argument-centric and arguer-centric appraisals of reason-giving uses of arguments are two compatible ways of grounding the *pro tanto* goodness of such uses of arguments. The former does so in terms of features of arguments independent of considerations pertaining to arguers. The latter in terms of characteristics of the arguer associated with criteria that is independent of considerations pertaining to arguments.

I now turn to the second criticism of the virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal. I draw heavily on Gascon (2016) to formulate it. Gascon articulates the import of his negative assessment of the virtue-theoretic approach as follows.

> Is a virtue approach in argumentation possible without committing the ad hominem fallacy? My answer is affirmative, provided that the object study of our theory is well delimited. My proposal is that a theory of argumentative virtue should not focus on argument appraisal, as has been assumed, but on those traits that make an individual achieve excellence in argumentative practices. An agent-based approach in argumentation should be developed, not in order to find better grounds for argument appraisal, but to gain insight into argumentative habits and excellence. This way we can benefit from what a virtue argumentation theory really has to offer. (2016, p. 441)

What is proposed seems to presuppose that a theory of argumentative virtue that focuses on those traits that make an individual achieve excellence in argumentative practices does not necessarily involve a focus on argument appraisal. I don't find this plausible. Intuitively, we should expect that the achievement of excellence in arguing results in the associated reason-giving use of argument being good in some way. This is reflected by the arguing-argument value link. I agree that an aim of an agent-based approach is to gain insight into argumentative excellence. But gaining such insight yields insight into an evaluative dimension of reason-giving uses of arguments distinct from, not necessarily better than, what is provided by an argument-centered approach. This is the epistemological import of the arguing-argument value link.

I now turn to details of Gascon's critical assessment of the virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal. Gascon starts from the obvious point that in order for an approach to argument appraisal to qualify as virtue-theoretic the approach must make the arguer's exercise of possessed virtues bear on the evaluation of the arguer's arguments. According to Gascon, there are two options: "either the goodness of the argument is explained by the virtues of the arguer, or the virtues of the arguer are independent of (not definable by) the goodness of the argument" (2016, p. 444).

The first option reflects what Gascon calls the conceptual priority thesis, which in general says that qualities of the arguer are conceptually prior to the good-making features of the argument in that the former in some way explain the latter (2016, p. 443). Putting this loosely in terms of the terminology of this paper, I formulate the conceptual priority thesis as follows.

> (CP): reason-giving uses of argument are made good because of the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by the arguer.

On the second option, the relevance of the arguer's exercise of possessed virtues to the evaluation of the arguer's arguments at best amounts to taking "argumentative virtues and vices as [merely sufficient] indications that the argument [isn't or is] probably wrong" (Gascon 2016, p. 444). Here the import of the assessment of arguing in terms of an arguer's exercise of possessed virtues to the evaluation

of her associated reason-giving use of argument is understood epistemically. The epistemic import of argumentative virtues and vices as indicators of good reason-giving uses of arguments demands the infrequency of non-virtuous arguing being associated with good arguments. For example, if most good reason-giving uses of arguments are associated with non-virtuous arguing, then it is hard to see the value of bothering to figure out whether someone's arguing is virtuous in order to determine that her reason-giving use of argument is good. After all, it isn't straightforward to determine that someone's arguing is virtuous, e.g., it seems a lot harder than figuring out, say, whether the argument produced is cogent, which is itself rather involved. I'll associate Gascon's second option with an epistemological thesis put as follows.

> (E): the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by an arguer is a useful indicator of the goodness of the associated reason-giving use of argument.

Any plausible defense of (E) must acknowledge that all too frequently good arguments are produced by bad intellectual characters. So, what makes their arguments good cannot be their possession of virtuous characteristics. Thus, an agent-based appraisal of argument seems to be far less useful than methods of argument appraisal that measure arguments in terms of criteria directly associated with what makes them good. This motivates skepticism of (CP). After all, (CP) rules out non-virtuous arguing being associated with good arguments. Accordingly, if (CP) were true, then the determination of the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by an arguer would be a useful indicator of the goodness of her reason-giving use of argument. However, since it isn't (i.e., since (E) is problematic) this is grounds for rejecting (CP). This motivates Gascon's claim that "it is hard to see how the qualities of the arguer could explain or define the qualities of the argument" (2016). Gascon, concludes as follows.

> I cannot see how an agent-based appraisal of arguments can be generalised—rather than used in particular, special cases. The good news, however, is that we do not need to actually do that. Virtue argumentation theory does not need to be a theory of argument appraisal (2016, p. 445).

My response is two-fold. First, an agent-based appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments can be generalized. Second, virtue argumentation theory *does* need to include a method of the appraisal of reason-giving uses of argument. I now elaborate, starting with the first claim.

Note that the plausibility of both (CP) and (E) turns on the operative sense of the blanket expressions *good* and *goodness*. On my view, both are plausible if read as follows.

> (CP′): reason-giving uses of argument are made good *pro tanto* because of the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by the arguer.
> (E′): the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by the arguer is a useful indicator of the goodness *pro tanto* of the associated reason-giving use of argument.

They are implausible if read something like as follows.

> (CP″): reason-giving uses of argument are made good *in toto* because of the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by the arguer.
> (E″): the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by the arguer is a useful indicator of the goodness *in toto* of the associated reason-giving use of argument.

Cleary (E″) is stronger than (E′). I think (E″) is false. However, how does the implausibility of (E″) motivate a criticism of an agent-centric approach to argument appraisal such as the virtue-theoretic approach? Perhaps in the following way.

> [1] An agent-based appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments can be generalized only if (CP″) is true. [2] (CP″) is dubious (since (E″) is). Therefore, it is doubtful that an agent-based appraisal of arguments can be generalized.

But what are the grounds for [1]? Grant that the criteria for argument cogency is agent-independent. I don't believe it automatically follows that an agent-centered approach to argument appraisal is implausible. This is because, on my view, we are not appraising a reason-giving use of argument on a virtue-theoretic approach in

terms of whether the argument used is cogent, but rather in terms of whether the arguer exercised virtue in so using the cogent argument (this echoes Thorson 2016, p. 360). I take the cogency of the argument to be conceptually independent of an arguer's exercise of virtue.

However, the *pro tanto* goodness of argument cogency on a virtue theoretic approach is not conceptually independent of an arguer's exercise of virtue. For example, whether an argument being formally valid on a given use of it is praiseworthy ultimately turns on characteristics of the arguer. That it is formally valid turns on proof-theoretic or model-theoretic features of the argument, not on characteristics of the arguer. An agent-based appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments may be generalized in terms of (CP′): any reason-giving use of argument is made *pro-tanto* good because of the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by the arguer.

My standpoint here contrasts with the standpoint Gascon favors which he labels *Modest moderate VAT*, according to which, "cogency is necessary, albeit not sufficient, for argument quality, and moreover it is an aspect of quality that does not require considerations of character to be established" (2016, p. 445). As a proponent of a virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal I say that cogency is sufficient for the quality of arguments used in reason-giving ways in that it suffices for making such uses of arguments good in the respect that they are epistemically good. In contrast, the focus of a virtue-theoretic approach is on their goodness in a different respect, i.e., the successful exercise of intellectual virtues possessed by the arguer. The crucial difference between my standpoint and Gascon's is the operative qualitive aspect of arguments in play.

My second claim in response to Gascon's skepticism of the virtue-theoretic approach to argument appraisal is that virtue argumentation theory *does* need to include a method of the appraisal of reason-giving uses of argument. My rationale is two-fold. First, the less substantive rationale is that any approach to the appraisal of arguing must involve the appraisal of reason-giving uses of argument, given the *arguing-argument value link*.

The more substantive rationale is that intuitively the argumentative excellence of an arguer requires that when she uses an argument in a reason-giving way, she regularly succeeds in satisfying her aim

whether it be to justify her believing the conclusion, to persuade interlocuters of the conclusion, or to accomplish something else consistent with her being virtuous. Accordingly, if a virtue-theoretic appraisal of a reason-giving use of argument is two thumbs up, then it typically is so on an argument-centered appraisal of it. This motivates a virtue argumentation theorist's focus on argument-centric approaches to the appraisal of reason-giving uses arguments (as reflected in Thorson 2017).

On my view, this focus highlights a constraint on the adequacy of VAT. Specifically, it constrains adequate accounts of the structure of an intellectual virtue. For example, a first-step characterization of virtues in terms of dispositions (e.g., Aberdein 2010, p. 175; Cohen 2005, p. 264; Cohen 2007, p. 10) is probably the wrong starting place for an account of the structure of intellectual virtue. For example, argumentative excellence requires more than a mere willingness to engage in argumentation (e.g., see Siegel 2016). It is hard to see how further dispositions alone secure argumentative excellence. This accords with the widely accepted view of the possession of virtue as involving the possession of correlative skills (e.g., Annas 1995, Baehr 2016, Zagzebski 1996, p. 137, *et al*) or faculties (Sosa 1991, p. 271) the successful deployment of which is necessary for the display of argumentative excellence.

To emphasize, accepting that virtuous arguers regularly succeed in satisfying their epistemic aims in using arguments in reason-giving ways does not involve a commitment to a virtue approach to argumentation giving us cogency. To elaborate, suppose that we accept that when a virtuous arguer uses an argument in a reason-giving way to justify her believing the conclusion, it is regularly the case that her argument is cogent. Further suppose that the cogency of the argument suffices to make her reason-giving use of the argument epistemically good and thereby a *pro tanto* good use of the argument. To think that this requires a virtue-theoretic account of cogency is confused. Our suppositions do not involve supposing that your arguing is epistemically good *because* it is virtuous. Such a claim raises the specter of an *ad hominem*. Rather they amount to supposing that when you argue to justify a claim, then if your arguing is *pro tanto* good because it is virtuous, then it is usually the case that it is *pro tanto* good because it is epistemically successful. VAT's

endorsement of this does not saddle it with a need to produce a virtue-theoretic account of cogency.

Before concluding, it is worth clarifying how my responses to the criticisms in defense of VAT are sustainable within a VAT perspective. Towards this end, I highlight two claims made earlier. First, (1) on a *virtue approach* to the *pro tanto* goodness of arguing and arguments*,* your arguing for *p* is good in that it is virtuous if your associated reason-giving use of argument is virtuous. Second, (2) a virtue-theoretic appraisal of a reason-giving use of argument appraises it in terms of its *pro tanto* goodness, i.e., its virtuosity. A VAT perspective is sustained, given (1) and (2), by encapsulating the priority of virtues in argumentation as follows. [Virtue]: *arguing that is pro tanto good because it is virtuous typically suffices for the associated reason-giving use of argument to be good in toto.*

And additionally maintaining that arguing that is *pro tanto* good merely in any other one way (epistemically, dialectically, or ethically, or …) does not typically suffice for the associated reason-giving use of argument being good *in toto*. [Virtue] reflects (1) and is compatible with (2). The priority of virtues in argumentation is not conceived in terms of reason-giving uses of argument being made good in toto *because* of the (successful) exercise of virtues possessed by the arguer.

To briefly elaborate, the truth of [Virtue] does not require, as just argued above, that argumentative virtue is constitutive of cogency, or of any other argumentation norms. Like cogency, other norms are conceptually independent of an arguer's exercise of virtue. Being virtuous in arguing is normatively advantageous in light of the truth of [Virtue]. In short, VAT theorists have a different means at their disposal of responding to criticisms that VAT argument appraisal is *ad hominem* than either Aberdein's response that argumentative virtue may be constitutive of cogency, or Gascon's position that VAT doesn't require an account of argument appraisal. Of course, [Virtue] is a substantial claim that requires empirical support and clarification of the *in toto* goodness of reason-giving uses of arguments. What I am pointing to here is that my responses to the criticisms in defense of VAT are sustainable within a VAT perspective in so far as they are compatible with [Virtue].

4. Conclusion

Reason-uses of arguments is a good-making kind like *tennis players*, *tigers*, and *knives*, and unlike *pebbles*, *smudges*, and perhaps *abstract arguments*.[6] For example, knives have a variety of uses, each grounding criteria for measuring whether a given knife is good. Consider a use of a knife to cut a food item. It may be judged good in so far as the knife used was good. That is, in so far as it is suitable for the intended cut (e.g., small dice, julienne, paysanne, etc.). Another way that it may be judged good is that the actual cutting demonstrates virtuosity in so far as it is a skillful display of cutting. Arguments also have a variety of uses. I have focused on reason-giving uses of them. A reason-giving use of argument may be judged good in so far as the argument as used is good. That is, in so far as the argument is suitable for realizing the intended aim of the given reason-giving use it. Another way that it may be judged good is that it demonstrates argumentative excellence in so far as it is a virtuous display of reason-giving. Of course, we ordinary expect a virtuoso in culinary cutting techniques to regularly use knives appropriate for making the intended cuts. Likewise, we ordinarily expect a virtuous arguer to regularly use arguments suitable for realizing her aim(s) such as justifying believing the conclusion or rationally persuading interlocuters.

A knife isn't good for an intended cut because it was chosen by the expert. In typical circumstances it was chosen by the expert because, in part, it is good for the intended cut. Similarly, an argument isn't good for realizing its intended aim because it was used by a virtuous arguer. Rather, we ordinary expect that an arguer we deem virtuous chooses her argument because, in part, it is suitable for realizing her intended aim(s).

I have advanced an understanding of the appraisal of reason-giving uses of arguments and associated arguing that accommodates both agent-centered and argument-centered approaches. Each approach is associated with unique criteria for measuring the *goodness* of reason-giving uses of arguments. What such criteria fix is *pro tanto* goodness. Accordingly, the appraisal of a reason-giving use of

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[6] For discussion of good-making kinds, see Thomson (2008, Ch. 2).

argument is a determination that it is good in a certain way or respect. However, such uses of arguments can be good in more than one way, some agent-centered and others argument-centered. This is why taking agent-centered and argument-centered approaches to be competing is unmotivated (echoing Thorson 2016, p. 360).

I take the virtue-theoretic appraisal of a reason-giving use of argument to involve a determination of the display of argumentative virtues possessed by the arguer. What counts as such a display is dependent on argumentative context. What is required to possess a virtue turns on the operative account of the virtue. The viability of the virtue-theoretic appraisal of a reason-giving use of argument requires the adequacy of using virtue concepts to thicken the *goodness* of *reason-giving uses of arguments* so as to fix criteria by which to determine their *pro tanto* goodness. In effect, such criteria should be action-guiding.

Thorson (2016) understands their action-guidingness in terms of associated do's-and-don'ts directives, which she labels as v-rules. For example, "[a]rgumentative charity might result in the v-rule: ''Don't off-handedly minimize others' arguments" (2016, p. 361), and "[d]on't play fast and loose with the truth might be a v-rule generated from the virtue of fidelity to the truth" (2016, p.360-361; for more examples see, p. 364). The degree to which such v-rules are action-guiding reflects the degree to which associated criteria suffice for measuring the *pro tanto* goodness of arguing and associated reason-giving uses of arguments. One might wonder whether Thorson's v-rules are sufficiently action guiding. For example, what counts as playing fast and loose with the truth? Shouldn't arguments that are so divorced from reality be off-handedly minimized? Of course, there is a lot more to say here.

To conclude, the arguing-argument value link discourages approaches to the appraisal of uses of arguments that is disconnected from an appraisal of arguers and their associated arguing. This is motivated by understanding arguments-in-use as "of the nature of gestures and illustrative of arguers"[7] which suggests that "the nature

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[7]*Arguments to me are only fascinating when they are of the nature of gestures and illustrate the people who produce them*. E.M. Forster (Furbank 1977, p. 77; by way of van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, p.12)

of the people who argue, in all their humanness, is itself an inherent variable in understanding, evaluating, and predicting the processes and outcomes of an argument" (Brockreide 1972, p.1).

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