

Virtue Theories of Argument

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Abstract: Virtue-based approaches have attracted significant recent interest in argumentation, including a recent anthology of Chinese translations of important articles in the field. In this article, adapted from the introduction to that anthology, we discuss the origins of virtue argumentation and some of the challenges it has faced, as well as attempt to provide an overview of recent work on the virtues and vices relevant to argumentation. In the final section we discuss the articles that were selected and motivate their selection.

Keywords: virtue, argumentation, virtue theory, argumentative virtues, critical thinking virtues

It has been more than a decade since the phrase “virtue argumentation” was introduced.¹ And it has been almost a decade since we last attempted a retrospective assessment of the field (Aberdein and Cohen 2016). The online bibliography (Aberdein 2015–), now updated to more than 600 entries, is evidence that the momentum to sustain a vital programme has already been achieved. Perhaps the most distinctive contribution the virtue approach has made to informal logic is that it has opened our eyes to broader perspectives on argumentation. Arguments have been described, analyzed, and explained from a multitude of angles: logical, epistemological, sociological, ethical, aesthetic, psychological, etc. But because argumentation is so multi-faceted, even this wealth of approaches does not exhaust the field. What is so appealing about virtue theories of argument is how the seemingly innocuous shift in focus from arguments to arguers manages to shed so much new light on all the old theoretical questions while also revealing entirely new aspects of argumentation for us to appreciate, wonder about, and try to explain.

1. Why Virtue?

Suppose we take the goal of informal logic to be intelligent, critical assessment of arguments. There are many different aspects that could be offered in support of a positive (or negative) critical assessment of an argument, most notably that the inferences are strong, that the reasoning succeeds in persuading the opponents, or that the parties reach a satisfactory resolution. Notice that these three answers implicate different conceptions of what an argument is. The first treats arguments as propositions arrayed in an inferential structure; the second addresses the performative aspects; while the third focuses on the communicative exchange. In some ways, these approaches are comparable to plot summaries of novels that ignore the characters: descriptive reports of what happened rather than explanations of why. This changes in virtue theories, where the prime question is, “What kind of arguer do (and should) I want to be?” The answer, of course, is a good arguer, but that deflects the question with a vacuous truism. It deserves a more substantial answer, so the first thing to like about virtue theories is that they emphasize that arguing is an integral part of who we are as rational beings and epistemological agents. This recaptures an insight well known to some of the pioneers of the study of argument in communication theory (Ehninger 1968; Brockriede 1972; Hamble 2007), but too often neglected since.

If we want to reap the benefits of arguing, it cannot be at the expense of the others with whom we argue because we want them to continue to want to argue with us so that we will continue to have opportunities to argue. A good argument, traditionally conceived, is a discrete event (*pace* those theorists who think of arguments as timeless, abstract arrays of propositions): the narrow judgment that it was good tells us nothing about any effects it had on its participants nor does it have any predictive value on their future arguments. Its goodness might be merely fortuitous. In contrast, the judgment that an arguer is a good arguer requires a broader perspective. The virtues approach to argumentation embeds arguing in the larger context of what it is to be rational.

Another thing to like about approaching argumentation this way is that it forces us to confront another question, *viz.*, *why* do we argue? That is a teleological *why* with normative force (i.e., what should we want to get out of arguing?) not a *why* in search of a causal explanation. Epistemological and other cognitive considerations have to be prominent parts of an account of argumentation. Again, virtue approaches to argumentation embed arguing in a larger context: our cognitive lives.

A third attractive thing about thinking of arguments in terms of the virtues of arguers is that it also implicates our lives as rational, cognitive *agents* who are members of *communities* of similar agents. Indeed, group-deliberative virtues are a specific focus of research (Aikin and Clanton 2010; Amaya 2022).

2. Virtues, Argumentation, and Ethics

Communication is an interaction between agents, so ethical considerations apply—and the interactive and agential aspects are especially prominent in arguments. There is, accordingly, an ethics of argumentation (Garver 1998; Blair 2011; Correia 2012; Stevens 2019; Aikin and Alsip Vollbrecht 2020; Breakey 2023). It includes principles about how to argue but also principles about when and when not to argue. Argumentation theories cannot ignore the normative dimension, and we think virtue argumentation theories do better on this score than traditional theories: on the one hand, virtues connect good arguers and arguing well; on the other, they serve as the conceptual conduit from the ethics of argumentation to communications ethics more generally (Baker 2008; Borden 2010, 2016; Fritz 2017), and beyond that to ethics in the broadest sense.

In addition, because virtue theories focus on arguers as the agents of argumentation, they have important implications for pedagogy, and thus integrate the theory and practice of argumentation. We like to think that thinking about arguments this way has actually made us better arguers, if only because we now think about what it means to be a good arguer in these broader perspectives. It seems to have had the effect, at least in the short-term, of making us better at “losing” arguments, but it also means that we are generally more satisfied at the end of an argument regardless of the win/lose outcome. We hope, and believe, that the long-term result will be that we will also become better learners in all contexts.

What virtues should argumentation teachers try to inculcate in their students? It is relatively easy to identify some argumentative virtues—objectivity, civility, curiosity, open-mindedness, sincerity, fairness, and being knowledgeable all qualify—it is quite difficult to identify *specifically* argumentative virtues. Curiosity also counts as an epistemic virtue, fairness is also an ethical virtue, and open-mindedness is arguably argumentative, epistemic, and ethical. There are different kinds of arguments, different ways to argue, and different motivations, means and ends to argumentation. If the goal is rational persuasion, virtues pertinent to interpersonal relations move to the fore; others are more important in resolution-of-difference negotiations; the more epistemic ones are more relevant to problem-solving deliberations. This does not even take into account the different roles arguers might occupy in the course of an argument: proponent, critic, judge, spectator, or even kibitzer.

There is an additional complication. If argumentative virtues are standing traits of character that are conducive to success in arguments, then we need to specify not only what counts as an argument and what counts as success, but also whether we are talking about single arguments or a lifetime of arguments. A “killer instinct” might serve one very well in all the arguments one has, but if it is so off-putting that no one will argue with you a second time, then its contributions to success in (agonistic)

arguments in the short-term may, in the long, diminish opportunities for arguing. It might make someone an effective arguer, but not a *good* arguer.

The willingness to engage in argument, the ability to strategize creatively, and the ability to bring out the best in co-arguers are all possible examples of virtues that serve well in argumentation while being largely neutral when it comes to epistemic and ethical valuation. To provide an example of a very specifically argumentative virtue at work would require a very specific argument—including a list of all of the participants, along with their past, present, and likely future relationships to one another; each of those participants' motivations for entering into the argument and the goals they hope to achieve by arguing; as well as the context in which they are arguing.

3. Challenges

Some rather serious external challenges have been raised against virtue theories of argument. For example, David Godden and Geoff Goddu have each raised a question about the theoretical grounds for virtue-based approaches (Godden 2016; Goddu 2016). (Godden's paper is included in the Chinese anthology; see below for further discussion.) On the one hand, if the virtues are defined either by reference to an antecedent notion of what a good argument is or in terms of other goods resulting from arguing, then the virtues are dispensable; on the other hand, if the virtues are not tethered to an antecedent notion of argumentative goods, then there seems to be no answer as to why some designated set of virtues count as virtues in the first place, or second, what makes them specifically argumentative virtues, or third, why the products of the exercise of those virtues would likely be good arguments. The objection is a serious one, and this brief summary does not do it justice, but we feel that the virtue argumentation research programme is still at a stage of development when it should be driven by its own internal priorities. A serious challenge does not automatically become a top priority.

Conversely, some high priorities might not be serious challenges. One item that deserves prioritization is clarifying just what we mean by the terms *argument* and *argumentation*. The reason this is a priority is because several of the criticisms that have come our way are directed at the wrong targets. Some years ago, Jonathan Adler criticized the idea that a virtuous arguer is at all relevant to evaluating the strength of an argument because that is entirely a matter of how the premises relate to the conclusion (Adler 2007). That, of course, reduces arguments to nothing more than inferences, rather than cognitive and communicative events. Rejecting that reduction is a central tenet of the virtue approach and one of the ways it adds value to argumentation theory (Cicurria 2012). Similar clarifications would have deflected some of Tracy Howell and Justine Kingsbury's claim

that virtue argumentation rests entirely on *ad hominem* reasoning (Bowell and Kingsbury 2013). It might not be much of a challenge to get clear on what we mean—although it would be daunting to try to standardize our usage of those terms—but it is important that we do that in order to engage with the rest of the argumentation theory community.

A particular attention to the *ad hominem* fallacy is conspicuous in many accounts of the relation of the virtues to argumentation theory (Johnson 2009; Battaly 2010; Jason 2011; Howell and Kingsbury 2013; Aberdein 2014; Bondy 2015; Leibowitz 2016). Indeed it has been suggested that an undue focus on *ad hominem* may distract from virtue argumentation theory's strengths—and from some of its other problems (Paglieri 2015). The latter include the “incompleteness problem,” of explaining why virtues are worthwhile (MacPherson 2014; Niño and Marrero 2016); the question of whether there are virtues specific to argumentation (Goddu 2016); and the issue of how (or whether) the conflict of virtues may be resolved. One solution to the last issue is to subordinate all other virtues to one central virtue. Multiple candidates have been proposed, including intellectual flourishing (Aberdein 2020b); intellectual humility (Aberdein 2016b, 2020c; Agnew 2018; Scott 2014); metacognition (Lepock 2014; Maynes 2015, 2017; Green 2019); phronesis (De Caro et al. 2018; Ferkany 2020; Aberdein 2021b); skilful reflection (Mi and Ryan 2016, 2020); thoughtfulness (Schrag 1988); the willingness to inquire (Hamby 2015); and the willingness to be rationally persuaded (Baumtrog 2016). Determining the plausibility of this approach and adjudicating the competing merits of the candidate cardinal virtues (and how much they overlap rather than compete) remain open questions. Finally, several authors have addressed the limits of virtue argumentation: whether there are important aspects of the practice of arguing that virtue theories cannot capture (Cohen and Miller 2016; Howell 2021).

The intimate connection to pedagogy is one of virtue theories' great strengths, but the pedagogical implementation of virtue argumentation thinking comes with serious and high-priority challenges of its own. The insights of virtues-based theorizing should greatly affect how we go about teaching critical thinking and informal logic. The educational project becomes one of helping our students to become better arguers in the long-term, not simply helping them produce better arguments on specific occasions. This is more a matter of nurturing good argumentative habits rather than cultivating specific skills: habits endure while skills fade and may or may not be used once students leave the confines of the classroom. Virtue argumentation has a close relationship to critical thinking, which has long recognized the centrality of dispositions; since virtues are a type of disposition, this is at least a parallel development to virtue argumentation, as the similarities between lists of argumentational virtues and critical thinking virtues attest (Ennis 1996; Siegel 1999;

Facione 2000; Nieto and Valenzuela 2012). More explicit treatments of the connection between critical thinking and virtue epistemology also antedate the virtue argumentation programme (Conley 1991; Burbules 1992; Curren 1998; Paul 2000; Bailin 2003; Hyslop-Margison 2003), as do closely related projects, such as that of supplementing critical thinking with an ethics of care (Thayer-Bacon 1993 2000). Critical thinking also addresses an important question for any virtue theory: the nature of the difference between a virtue and a skill—indeed, whether there is a difference, or whether skills are not themselves virtues (Missimer 1990; Siegel 1993; Hample 2003). As Francis Schrag observed, “A person may be clever without being thoughtful and vice versa. In the first sense, we commend something skill-like. In the second we commend something more like a virtue or trait of character” (Schrag 1988: 8). In recent years, this debate has resurfaced in terms of the aims of education: ought the primary epistemic goal of education be the acquisition of intellectual virtues (Baehr 2013, 2019) or the inculcation of critical thinking skills and dispositions (Siegel 2016, 2017; Kotzee et al. 2021)?

Critical thinking has found a place in the core curriculum of a great diversity of programmes. For example, it is a key component in many nursing degrees. This in turn has given rise to a growing body of research, including work relevant to virtue argumentation (Sellman 2003; Adam and Juergensen 2019). There have also been many attempts to link critical thinking to older intellectual traditions. For instance, many scholars have investigated the relationship between Confucianism and critical thinking pedagogy (Tominaga 1993; Kim 2003; Lam 2014; Chen et al. 2017; Tan 2017, 2020; Niu and Zheng 2020). Much of this work makes explicit appeal to argumentative virtues.

Theory and practice in argumentation studies can seem remote from each other, particularly from the theory side, where virtue argumentation originates. Nonetheless, some people do successfully straddle the divide (Bailin and Battersby 2016; Byerly 2019; Hanscomb 2019). It is also a welcome development that there are now textbooks in introductory logic and critical thinking that showcase intellectual virtues (Byerly 2017; Symons 2017), even if there is not yet a true virtue argumentation textbook. If we want theorizing to be of more than merely theoretical interest, this has to be a priority. And if the programme is to be more than just a theory, it has to face this challenge.

4. Defining and Contextualizing Virtues

Virtue theories of argumentation arose from the confluence of several developments in philosophy. Their most immediate and salient predecessor is virtue epistemology, which emphasizes the role of intellectual character in the production of beliefs as relevant for the justification of beliefs. In

order to take the same “Aretaic Turn” in argumentation theory, the insight that an agent-based approach provides had to be transplanted into the soil of argumentation theory (Cohen 2007; Aberdein 2010). The result has been far more fruitful than was foreseen. The seed took root because the conceptual environment of argumentation theory proved especially hospitable. Argumentation theory is actually more congenial to a virtues approach than epistemology in significant ways. For a start, arguments’ status as dynamic events contrasts with the comparatively static state of beliefs, so reference to character traits as dispositions is meet. In addition, the shadow of voluntarism, the dubious idea that we choose our beliefs, is much less of a problem when dealing with arguments because of the manifest agency of arguers. And since arguing typically includes multiple agents, the Aristotelian model of the virtues for ethics has a natural application to argumentation. Arguments are dynamic, multi-agent events; beliefs are not.

Virtue approaches to argumentation have inherited a number of features from virtue epistemology. For example, the distinction between reliabilist (broadly externalist) and responsibilist (broadly internalist) conceptions of virtue has been found a ready application (Gascón 2018b). Some epistemologists have recently proposed a shift of focus from virtues to vices; vice epistemology also has a counterpart in the study of argument (Aberdein 2016a; Kidd 2017, 2020; Tanesini 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). More esoteric developments in virtue epistemology have also found application in treatments of argument, including the role of exemplars (Amaya 2013; Sato 2015; Terrill 2016; Casey and Cohen 2020) and human flourishing, or eudaimonia, as a grounding for intellectual virtues (Aberdein 2020b). Although many of the key themes of virtue epistemology are ultimately derived from virtue ethics, virtue argumentation is also directly indebted to virtue ethics. One example of this influence is the application to the study of argument of the ideas of Alasdair MacIntyre, perhaps the most influential of contemporary virtue ethicists, and especially his account of a practice (Herrick 1992; Kvernbekk 2008; Borden 2010; Gascón 2017b).

Virtue theories of argumentation have more distant precursors in argumentation theory itself. Indeed, Aristotle’s focus on virtue permeated much of his work, including his work on argumentation. One of us has explored the degree to which Aristotle may be claimed as not just a pioneer in virtue theory and in argumentation but also in the virtue theory of argumentation (Aberdein 2021b). (Not all that much, but his treatment of the virtues in the *Rhetoric* (Aristotle 1991) still has lessons for the modern virtue theorist of argumentation.) Much modern work on rhetoric and the virtues is still grounded in the exegesis of Aristotle (Johnstone 1980; Rowland and Womack 1985; Brinton 1986), or other ancient authorities, including Confucius (Ding 2007; Xiong 2014; Yan

and Xiong 2020; Mi and Ryan 2020), Quintilian (Brinton 1983; Terrill 2016; Wiese 2016), and others (Cohen 2013; Keating 2022). But other contemporary writers on rhetoric have found new applications of virtue to argument (Herrick 1992; Gage 2005; Duffy 2014, 2019). Virtue-based accounts have also been defended in several other fields that are closely related to, or intersecting with, argumentation theory. These include analyses of the virtues of deliberation (Tiberius 2002; Weiss and Shanteau 2003; Floyd 2007; Aikin and Clanton 2010; Carr 2020; De Brasi 2020; Amaya 2022); of debate (Strait and Wallace 2008; Zarefsky 2014; Tanesini 2019, 2021; Mastroianni 2021); and, within the broader context of virtue jurisprudence (Duff 2003; Amaya 2011), of advocates (Clark 2003, 2019; Scharffs 2004, 2020; Kanemoto 2005; Brewer 2020), or of judges (Solum 2003; Ralli 2013; Amaya 2013; Maroney 2020). More broadly, the avoidance of bias and the mitigation of existing biases, or 'de-biasing,' are significant goals for any practical account of reasoning. This reflects a wider interest in recognizing and responding to argumentative injustice, or the role of epistemic privilege within argument (Bondy 2010; Kotzee 2010; Linker 2011, 2014; Yap 2013, 2015; Bianchi 2021). A virtue approach has been applied to these questions, too (Correia 2012; Samuelson and Church 2015).

Determining which virtues are salient and how they are related are important issues for any virtue theory, hence virtue argumentation theory can benefit from earlier studies of the structure of the intellectual virtues (McCloskey 1998; Morin 2014; Howell and Kingsbury 2015). In particular, most virtue argumentation theorists recognize open-mindedness as an important virtue (Cohen 2009), thereby building on a substantial body of recent work in virtue epistemology (Riggs 2010; Baehr 2011; Tiberius 2012; Spiegel 2019), the philosophy of education (Hare 1985, 2003, 2009; Hare and McLaughlin 1998; Higgins 2009; Siegel 2009), and elsewhere (Song 2018). Other relevant virtues have been the focus of sustained research in other areas of philosophy. In particular, civility has lately seen a dramatic revival of interest in moral and political philosophy, notably inspired by the work of Cheshire Calhoun (Calhoun 2000). This literature includes defences of civility as a critical prerequisite for effective argumentation (Lillehammer 2014; Bejan 2017; Edyvane 2017; Cagle 2018; McGregor 2020; Bonotti and Zech 2021; Love 2021; Vaccarezza and Croce 2021) but also sceptical critiques that represent civility as a device for inhibiting participation in debate (Whyman 2019; Itagaki 2021; Talisse 2021; Rossini 2022). A similarly lively literature addresses the closely related virtue of tolerance (Vainio 2011; Vainio and Visala 2016; Bejan 2016, 2018; Cattani 2016; Duffy 2018; Breakey 2021; Balg 2022).

Virtue theories of argument have been applied to several ongoing debates in argumentation theory and beyond. For example, deep disagreements, characteristically resistant to rational resolution, present a practical

problem for arguers of how to proceed in the face of such “resolution-resistant” discourse. This has recently attracted considerable attention in argumentation theory, not least within virtue approaches (Karimov 2018; Campolo 2019). More specifically, the vice of arrogance and the virtue of courage have been proposed as relevant to deep disagreement (Aberdein 2020a, 2021a). Other virtues and vices have also been discussed in this context, for example, toleration (Knoll 2020) and patience (Phillips 2021). Another persistent debate concerns the status of adversariality: is it essential to argumentation and is it pernicious? This debate has also been addressed from a virtue perspective (Cohen 2015; Stevens and Cohen 2019, 2021). Other applications include online argumentation, and specifically trolling (Cohen 2017); visual arguments (Aberdein 2018); and religious and political disagreement (Vainio 2017; Aberdein 2022).

Two important events helped to attract attention to virtue argumentation. In 2013, it was the theme for the 10th International Conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation, the major North American argumentation conference (Mohammed and Lewiński 2014). That meeting led to an invitation to the present authors to edit a special issue of the journal *Topoi*, which appeared in 2016. Several papers from that special issue are discussed in greater detail below (Aberdein 2016a; Godden 2016; Stevens 2016). Another nine papers were included in the issue (Aikin and Casey 2016; Bailin and Battersby 2016; Ball 2016; Cohen and Miller 2016; Drehe 2016; Gascón 2016; Kidd 2016; Kwong 2016; Thorson 2016), in addition to an introduction (Aberdein and Cohen 2016).

A particularly gratifying development, and one that bodes especially well for the future of a virtue approach to argument, is the appearance of multiple Ph.D. (and M.A.) theses dedicated in whole or part to the topic. The earliest of these, and the only one to appear before our last survey, is Ben Hamby’s work on critical thinking virtues (Hamby 2014). Russell McPhee adopts a similar approach (McPhee 2016), as does Edward Taylor’s masters thesis, although with a specific focus on humility (Taylor 2016). Khameiel Al Tamimi develops an account of narrative argument in which the concept of a virtuous audience plays a key role (Al Tamimi 2017). José Gascón has grown into one of the more prolific authors on virtue theories of argument; his Ph.D. thesis was the initial context of some of this work (Gascón 2017b). Jonathan Caravello emphasizes open-mindedness as a virtue of argument and applies the resultant account to debates over disagreement (Caravello 2018). Gerry Dunne defends a neo-Aristotelian approach to critical thinking (Dunne 2019).

Most of the work published on virtue theories of argument has been published in English. However, there is also a thriving body of work in Spanish (Ramírez Figueroa 2014; Gensollen 2015, 2017; Gascón 2018a). Much of this fascinating parallel tradition originates in Latin America; it

perhaps reflects some of the “critical-thinking virtues that can promote, and vices that can hinder, the development of philosophy as a discipline and of individual philosophers as professionals” in that geographical context (Nuccetelli 2016: 133). There has also been recent work in the field with roots in the *Munāzara* tradition (Oruç et al. 2023). And, of course, the Chinese anthology (Xiong et al. 2023).

5. Surveying the Field

Current work in virtue theories of argumentation extends into such traditional areas as the nature of argumentation and its role in human flourishing, the epistemology of argumentation, fallacy theory, and argumentative ethics. There is also comparative work on how well virtue-based approaches to argumentation stack up against other theories in addressing the traditional problems of argumentation—as well as inquiries into the extent to which virtue theories change that traditional agenda. Three prominent and fruitful avenues of research with their roots in philosophical theorizing about virtue deserve special mention:

1. The idea of an argumentative virtue provides impetus for research programmes on such questions as what a virtue is, what the virtues are, and how they relate to one another as well as to moral, intellectual, and other families of virtues.
2. How are argumentative virtues, as standing dispositional character traits of arguers, related to the sequences of propositions or speech acts that constitute individual arguments? Why and how are properties of arguers relevant to the project of evaluating their arguments?
3. More generally, how is the theory of argumentation informed by practice? What does that tell us about how what we learn about arguments can be used to form or reform how we argue? The practice and pedagogy of logic and critical thinking are intertwined with its theory in ways that distinguish it from other academic endeavours. The *Aretaic Turn* has opened whole new vistas.

Because the Chinese anthology was intended to serve some of its readers as their first exposure to the field, we included a mixture of historically influential papers in the development of the theory as well as current research, papers raising important objections to virtue theories along with some replies, and topical papers clearing paths for future development. Here’s what we chose and why.

5.1

Part I, “Background and Context,” includes two of the early papers defining the approach, and a third paper that reveals ancient precedents, answering the question as to why we thought an anthology of Chinese translations of work in virtue argumentation theory was called for.

Andrew Aberdein’s “Virtue in Argument” (Aberdein 2010) is the complete version of the conference paper that introduced the term “virtue argumentation” to the world (Aberdein 2007). Virtue theories had long since become influential in ethics and epistemology, and this paper argues for a similar approach to argumentation. Several potential obstacles to virtue theories in general, and to this new application in particular, are considered and rejected. A first attempt is made at a survey of argumentational virtues, and finally it is argued that the dialectical nature of argumentation makes it particularly suited for virtue theoretic analysis.

Daniel Cohen’s “Virtue Epistemology and Argumentation Theory” (Cohen 2007) explicitly models virtue theories of argumentation on virtue epistemology (VE), which was itself modeled on virtue ethics theories in order to transfer their ethical insights to epistemology. VE has had great success: broadening our perspective, providing new answers to traditional questions, and raising exciting new questions. This paper contains a new argument for VE based on the concept of cognitive achievements, a broader notion than purely epistemic achievements. The argument is then extended to cognitive transformations, especially the cognitive transformations brought about by argumentation.

Minghui Xiong’s “The Reasonable and Logical Foundation of Confucian Philosophical Argumentation” (2021) reconstructs the elements of Confucian argumentation theory (*pace* Becker 1986) from elements that are either explicit in content of the *Analects*, implicit in its form as a dialogue that is meant to persuade, or manifest in the argumentative practice of Confucius and Mencius. It is such evidence for Confucian argumentation theory, along with the continued prominence for Chinese philosophy of the concepts of skills and virtues, that motivate these translations.

5.2

Aberdein’s and Cohen’s papers introducing virtue theories elicited both enthusiastic endorsements in the form of further elaborations and extensions of the approach as well as some equally enthusiastic objections. In Part II, “Objections and Challenges,” we include two papers calling the entire virtue argumentation project into question, and a third paper providing a sophisticated response.

In their 2013 paper, “Virtue and Argument: Taking Character into Account,” Tracy Bowell and Justine Kingsbury are pessimistic about the

prospects for any theory of good argument that takes the character of the arguer into consideration. They conclude that although there is much to be gained by identifying the virtues of the good arguer 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 definition of good argument.

David Godden's "On the Priority of Agent-Based Argumentative Norms" (Godden 2016) raises two serious foundational problems for virtue theories: "pure" virtue theories, he concludes, have no ground to stand on, so they cannot even get started! Virtue theories, he argues, are unable to sort out questions of conceptual priority and cannot deliver on the promise of using virtues to build a sufficient basis for defining the full array of evaluative concepts that argumentation theory needs. In sum, his archeological search for the conceptual foundations of virtues-based approaches to argumentation concludes that it is a castle built on shifting sands.

Fabio Paglieri takes up the challenges in his clever "Bogency and Goodacies" (Paglieri 2015). Instead of defending virtue argumentation theory (VAT) from the charge of being incomplete, given its alleged inability to account for argument validity in virtue-theoretical terms, Paglieri argues that the charge is misplaced. It is based on a premise VAT does not endorse, and raises an issue that most versions of VAT need not consider problematic. This in turn allows distinguishing several varieties of VAT, and clarifying what really matters for them.

5.3

The third section, Part III, "Extending virtue theories," includes papers elaborating the virtues approach by exploring its theoretical possibilities and finding valuable insights.

In "The Virtuous Arguer: One Person, Four Roles" (Stevens 2016), Katharina Stevens raises questions about how the various virtues co-exist: What insures that when the virtues are brought together, the chorus does not create cacophony? How is it that arguers can be genuinely open to opposing viewpoints while both aggressively criticizing those views and tenaciously defending their own views? Stevens argues that the apparent conflicts between argumentative virtues can be explained by reference to the different roles that arguers have in arguments. Stevens' explanation emphasizes the dynamic dimension to argumentation, the plurality of roles that arguers have to fill, the different virtues and skill sets appropriate for those different roles, and the need for arguers to move into different roles in different stages of an argument—all brought together under the single overarching telos of argumentation: bettering our belief systems.

Since a virtue-based approach to argumentation focuses on arguers' characters rather than on the content of arguments, it has to explain how good arguments relate to virtuous arguers. José Gascón does just that in "Arguing as a Virtuous Arguer Would Argue" (Gascón 2015). He argues (as indeed a virtuous arguer would!) that, besides the usual logical, dialectical, and rhetorical standards, a virtuously produced good argument must meet two additional requirements: the arguer must be in a specific state of mind, and the argument must be broadly conceived of as an argumentative intervention and thus excel from every perspective.

Felipe Oliveira de Sousa finds promise but incompleteness in the virtue approach. In "Other-Regarding Virtues and Their Place in Virtue Argumentation Theory" (Oliveira de Sousa 2020), he argues that, despite the progress made in recent years, virtue argumentation theory lacks a systematic acknowledgment of other-regarding virtues. A fuller recognition of such virtues not only enriches the field of research of virtue argumentation theory in significant ways, but also allows for a richer and more intuitive view of a virtuous arguer. Fully virtuous arguers should care to develop both self-regarding and other-regarding virtues. They should be concerned both with their own development as arguers but also with helping other arguers in that regard.

José Gascón's "Brothers in Arms" (Gascón 2017a) situates virtue theories in the discourse of argumentation theory by showing how to reconcile the new virtue argumentation theories with the established Pragma-dialectical approach. Virtue theories focus on arguers' character, whereas pragma-dialectics focuses on argumentation as a procedure. In this paper, Gascón argues that these are not opposite or even incompatible approaches to argumentation. Instead, with the help of some non-fundamental changes in pragma-dialectics and some restrictions in virtue argumentation theory, it is possible to regard these theories as complementary approaches to the argumentative practice.

5.4

The three papers in the final section, Part IV, "Applications," offer some ways in which virtue theories can be put to use.

Andrew Aberdein makes the first foray into fallacy theory from the perspective of virtue argumentation theory in "Vices of Argument" (Aberdein 2016a). His painstaking attention to specifics might mask how ambitious this project really is: he begins with a blueprint for a programmatic account of arguments' failings in terms of vices; he follows that up by laying down a foundation for building such a theoretical edifice; and then he puts the first beams into place by putting it all to the test in a case study of *ad misericordiam* argumentation. This paper opens the door to an entire research programme.

During a period in which there is much tumult around the world and in the United States especially, it might be surprising to encounter a paper about patience and argumentation, but Kathryn Phillips gives us such a paper in “Deep Disagreement and Patience as an Argumentative Virtue” (Phillips 2021). She delves deeply into the notion of deep disagreement, with particular attention to moral and political contexts, in order to motivate the idea that patience is an argumentative virtue that we ought to cultivate. This is particularly so because of the extended nature of argumentation and the slow rate at which we change our minds. She raises concerns about how calls for patience have been misused in the past to argue that if we accept patience as an argumentative virtue, it becomes incumbent on us to hold people in positions of power to account.

Daniel Cohen’s eclectic article, “Skepticism and Argumentative Virtues” (Cohen 2013) argues that if arguing is a game that philosophers play, then it’s a rigged game. Although many theories of argumentation explicitly connect argumentation with reason, rationality, and knowledge, it contains certain built-in biases against knowledge and towards skepticism. Argumentation’s skeptical biases can be put into three categories: biases built into the rules of play, biases embedded in the skills for playing, and biases connected to the decision to play. Three ancient philosophers from different traditions serve as exemplifying case studies: the Middle Way Buddhist Nagarjuna, the Greek Pyrrhonian Sextus Empiricus, and the Chinese Taoist Zhuangzi. They have very different argumentation styles and they reach very different kinds of skepticism, but in each case, there is an organic connection between their argumentation and their skepticism: Nagarjuna produced arguments for the Truth of No Truth; Sextus generated strategies for counter-argumentation; while Zhuangzi deftly avoided all direct argumentation—in an implicit argument against arguing. Cohen concludes that Virtue Argumentation Theory, with its focus on arguers and their skills, provides the best lens for understanding the lessons to be learned about argumentation and skepticism from this idiosyncratic trio.

The three papers in this section are a very small sample of the range of possible applications for virtue theories of argumentation. There are many other papers that could have been included (e.g., Aikin and Clanton 2010; Kidd 2016; Norlock 2014; Hamby 2015). The same can also be said of the other sections! They are equally deserving of being introduced to the Chinese-language argumentation community, so we hope to be able to continue this project with them.

Tradition bids us ask: Where do we go from here? The authors have certainly done sterling work in providing directions for future scholarship, questions to answer, and, of course, provocative theses with which to argue. But we can also ask a different question: What can go right in virtue argumentation theory? On the basis of the papers here, we are confident that all the requisite virtues are in place for some very productive arguments.

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Note

1. Aberdein replying to (Cohen 2005) at OSSA, and then in print as Aberdein 2007, 2010.

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