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Pragma-Dialectics Meets Virtue

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ABSTRACT: There are already relevant discussions proposing that Virtue Argumentation Theory and Pragma-Dialectics are indeed complementary approaches to the argumentative practice. Virtue has once been introduced into the application of critical rules and other second-order conditions (Gascón 2017a). In a similar vein, this paper continues to find more places concerning the arguers' state of mind that can be supplemented by virtue approach. First, I will consider some other "inner" obstacles which could be better addressed with the requirement of virtue. Second, to some extent, we will try to make a new interpretation on the theoretical results of fallacies analyzed by rules from a fresh virtue perspective.

KEYWORDS: critical rules, fallacies, Pragma-Dialectics, Virtue Argumentation Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

The standards of assessing the argument strength have been constructed under the development of the logical, dialectical, and rhetorical approaches, in which argument has been viewed as a static product, a procedure of critical discussion, and a process of changing the viewpoints of the audience, respectively. Among them, the study of the argumentative procedure has been properly undertaken by pragma-dialectics, which is becoming the most successful and widely accepted dialectical theory. Unlike these three traditional approaches to the argumentation practice, however, a kind of agent-based approach has been developed in the last two decades: the virtue argumentation theory, which stressed the role of arguers' argumentative virtues. Since the paper will show us how could a virtue approach work when it comes to benefiting the dialectical approach to argumentation practice, I will first give a brief introduction to each theory, including the origins of pragma-dialectics and the development of virtue argumentation theory.

The pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation was initiated by van Eemeren and Grootendorst in the 1970s and developed over the next five decades. Based on the combination of Searle's theory of speech acts and Grice's cooperative principle, the analysis of argumentation in pragma-dialectics has integrated both a communicative insight and a critical insight, including some effective principles, so that to avoid the performance of speech acts that may be redundant, unnecessary, or meaningless (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004). Since argumentation is characteristically aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits by means of a critical exchange of argumentative moves between the protagonist and the antagonist, the theorists are supposed to systematically connect the descriptive pragmatic dimension and the

normative dialectical dimension of argumentation together.

In order to carry out a normative pragmatic research program, they successively proposed the ideal model of a critical discussion to provide vital guidance for the discussants' conduct, and presented a list of "ten commandments" as a practical code of conduct for people who want to resolve their differences of opinion in a reasonable way by means of argumentative discourse. In the ideal model, a critical discussion is divided into four stages including confrontation stage, opening stage, argumentation stage and concluding stage, and the discussants will be confronted with all of them. During the process, the speech acts of the discussants are specified in great detail according to the ten rules for critical discussion whose violation also amounted to the commission of a fallacy (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992).

For more than a decade, virtue argumentation theory has been developed as a new approach to the practice of argumentation by scholars like Cohen (2005) and Aberdein (2007). Specifically, based on the conception of "ideal arguer" and "cognitive achievement", they suggested to interpret the quality of argument through the virtue of arguer with theorizing it in a systematic way. In order to introduce virtue into argument analysis and evaluation successfully, scholars such as Cohen and Aberdein have critically rethought the argumentative interaction on the basis of a new dimension of the agent, and have provided a groundbreaking explanation of the specific relationship between virtue and argument strength: "A good argument is one that has been conducted virtuously", which means that we argue virtuously when we exhibit those acquired habits of mind that are conducive to one of argumentation's characteristic cognitive achievements (Cohen 2007).

Thus, argumentative virtue as a central concept in the virtue argumentation theory, begins to take its place in the discussion of argument norms. In order to clarify the definition, Aberdein (2010, 2016) further sorted out the virtues associated with argument, and developed preliminary list of their corresponding vices according to the thought of doctrine of the mean. Moreover, the traditional fallacy theory can be effectively analyzed in terms of vices. It can be seen that virtue argumentation theory breaks through the mainstream analytical framework in the field of argumentation theory and the discussion around it has increasingly become an emerging hot issue in the field of argumentation theory, providing a bold analytical approach for argumentation researchers and opening up a highly imaginative theoretical horizon.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

As for the idea that virtue could be introduced into the rules of Pragma-dialectics, there are already some theorists providing relevant researches to address it as a theoretical supplement by emphasizing the necessity, importance, and feasibility of this approach. They firstly agreed with that the pragma-dialectical rules are insufficient and the appropriate application of rules may require a suitably motivated and virtuous character, then they further pointed out that in several certain contexts it could be better addressed by the virtue approach with listing some other "inner" conditions in addition to applying the rules.

For example, in the discussion about limitation of Pragma-dialectics, Gerber focused on its moral quality and criticized that pragma-dialectical methodology potentially runs the risk of amorality since arguments are deemed 'good' as long as

they meet the goals of the speaker, regardless of what those goals or purposes might be (Gerber 2011). Pragma-dialecticians concentrate explicitly and exclusively on the argumentative quality of advocacy, which only means its “soundness”, not on other qualities “good” may refer to, which in turn may exactly be concerned by virtue argumentation theorists. Although Gerber clearly identified the ethical deficiencies of pragma-dialectical approach, he was not advocating the wholesale abandonment of the pragma-dialectical approach. Rather, he argued that a more philosophically robust theoretical foundation may offer critics a more useful, and indeed more ethical, method for interrogating argument. Now, I’d like to claim that the emergence of virtue approach to argumentation theory has indeed provided the possibility to remedy the ethical deficiencies of pragma-dialectics.

With more other recent works asserting explicitly the importance of an ethical approach in argumentation theory, Correia started to break the traditional assumption of the normative theories of argumentation, proposing that the mere acceptance of the rules of logic and dialectic does not suffice to ensure the reasonableness of arguments, nor does it suffice to fulfill the arguer’s obligations (Correia 2012). Specifically, he justified this claim from a theoretical point of view that the reasonableness of argumentative discussions can be unintentionally undermined by the arguers’ cognitive biases and such biases tend to be unconscious. Therefore, he argues for an approach that includes argumentative virtues in argumentation theory since the bias could be resolved by intentionally reinforcing the rationality of the arguers’ attitudes, including the acquisition of argumentational virtues.

Based on the discussion about unconscious bias by Correia, Gascón further pointed out that belief bias, confirmation bias and blind point are respectively considered to be the obstacles to the correct assessment of arguments in according to the experiments of psychological researches. In order to follow the pragma-dialectical rules, there is something more needed than honesty and effort (Gascón 2017a):

An approach to argumentation that deals with those kinds of biases should address the discussants’ dispositions and motivations, at least if such an approach is intended to have a relevant influence on practice and education. [...] It seems to me that a virtue approach to argumentation would be the most suitable theory for this purpose.

In fact, he agreed to use a virtue theory as a fruitful framework that would allow us to address the problem of bias, which provided us more possibility to regard these two theories as complementary approaches, instead of as opposite accounts of the same thing.

Based on these previous studies, I argue that, virtue argumentation theory could complement pragma-dialectics, and this paper is going to present more evidence from other two aspects besides the possibilities mentioned in the researches above. In a similar vein, my paper continues to find more conditions concerning the arguers’ state of mind that can be achieved by the virtue approach so that to supplement the rules. Also, to a certain extent, we could give a new explanation to the theoretical results of the fallacies in the analysis of pragma-dialectical rules in terms of virtue approach.

3. HOW COULD VIRTUE COMPLEMENT THE RULES?

According to the theorists, compliance with the pragma-dialectical rules, which constitute first-order conditions for conducting a critical discussion, cannot make sure that discussants will always be able to resolve their difference of opinion, it is just necessary but not sufficient (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004). Besides, there are definitely other higher-order conditions need to be fulfilled, among which the second-order conditions are related to the psychological state of the agents. However, the theorists themselves haven't clearly expressed what precisely the second-order conditions are for a reasonable discussion (Gascón 2017a). Therefore, with the situation that the rules are incomplete, the first aspect is to discuss that how could virtue complement the rules since the virtue approach would allow us to address the problem on the certain aspects concerning the psychological states of the arguers, which still affect their argumentative behaviors, especially bias. In addition to the three bias mentioned by Gascón, there are other factors that inadvertently undermine the rationality of argumentative discourse even if the discussants follow the rules prescriptively. As the bias listed before, the other two issues to be discussed here are identity prejudices and emotional effects, and these obstacles could be ameliorated by virtue requirements.

Fricker first discusses the notion of “epistemic injustice” and tends to focus on the practical harms caused by credibility deficits, including distorting the assessment of the arguer who is being prejudicially assessed and damaging the ability of the falsely stereotyped agent to engage in argumentation (Fricker 2007). Bondy continues to distinguish between argumentative injustice and epistemic injustice, arguing that the latter operates both in the form of deficiency and excess of credibility (Bondy 2010). In my opinion, there is no doubt that epistemic injustice and argumentative injustice are related to each other analytically. Given that the credibility problem is the basis of this kind of injustice, we can see that the arguments are particularly affected when the agent is faced with identity prejudices, which make the agent focuses unconsciously on the epistemically irrelevant factors such as race, gender, ability, and so on.

Here, let's consider the 1st commandment, as well as the 4th commandment, which require that we do not make the ad hominem argument, and the ad verecundiam argument which means we can't defend the standpoint irrelevantly (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004). However, identity prejudices can unintentionally cause the arguer to unjustly assign the credibility in others' opinions and reasons based on irrelevant factors, taking race and gender for example, thereby preventing the individual from complying with the rules without being aware of the biased association. Next we will specifically address race-based and gender-based biases as typical representatives of identity prejudice.

1. Discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from calling standpoints into question;
4. Standpoints may not be defended by non-argumentation or argumentation that is not relevant to the standpoint.

As for bias based on race, one of the more extreme forms comes from Johnson and Blair in early time, who regarded “ethnocentrism” as one of the causes that make people reason fallaciously. An ethnocentric attitude, as applied to culture, is one that assumes that our culture is somehow better than others' culture or else that what is

true of our culture is also true of others' culture (Johnson and Blair 2006). Of course, there are many other forms of racial prejudice that permeate our daily lives. It is not difficult to see that since we are all born with different nationalities and come from different ethnic groups, under the influence of culture and education, racial bias are easily rooted naturally in everyone's heart without realizing it. Actually, maybe no one could be immune from having unconscious thoughts and associations since racial bias are subconscious bias that inadvertently undermining the rationality of argumentative activities, but becoming aware of implicit racial bias creates an avenue for addressing the issue (Maryfield 2018), and virtue argumentation theory, emphasizing on education and training on arguers' state of mind, can certainly say something to that.

As for gender bias, we also have several evidence that gender bias may always be unconscious and do have an impact on the argumentative process. The feminist theorists have already criticized some traditional assumptions that involve ideas, norms, and ideals—including conceptions of the virtues—that have been erroneously taken as universal, while actually they were representative of males only (Gascón 2017b). According to the criticism, the philosophical concept of reason has always been constructed as a male ideal. In fact, the problem is not simply that women are always unreasonable, but that the ideal of reason itself is gender biased naturally. From the conception to discussion, gender bias is everywhere and inevitable since the gender as a natural attribute affect the agent subconsciously. In order to address the problem, we'd better turn to the virtue approach again. Furthermore, it can be seen that the commitments to argumentative virtues are even beginning to take gender into account, for example, when Phillips proposed patience as an argumentative virtue, she expressed a gendered concern that the patience of a woman in an abusive marriage cannot be regarded as a kind of virtue in any case, so that we are supposed to appeal to the nature of virtue (Phillips 2021).

Therefore, according to the list of a tentative typology of argumentational virtue (Aberdein 2010), the virtue of Intellectual empathy and Fairmindedness could help us to better counteract the bias above in addition to the rules. To eliminate racial and gender prejudices, the first step is to be aware of them, and the discussant must try to understand the situation of the other person emotionally, so as to maintain a rational attitude towards the objective opposition of race and gender, driving us not to look down on any country, or not to give special treatment to any one gender. Consciously understand and avoid racial and gender biases, and thus to achieve the fairness in argumentative discourse.

In order to justify that an ethical approach is paramount to ensure the rationality of people's reasonings in everyday debate in addition to the logical and dialectical rules which are insufficient, Correia suggested that arguers may reason correctly both from a logical and dialectical point of view, and nevertheless be biased or "unfair" at different levels (Correia 2012). Moreover, he agreed that people's emotional attachment to given standpoints significantly affects the way they reason and debate in many ways, which means that the unfair situation seems to happen all the more when the arguer's "emotional attachment" to the standpoint is particularly strong. The notion of "emotional attachment" was starting to get concerned since the discussion of Johnson and Blair, who argued that the act of reasoning is rarely carried on in a situation that lacks an emotional dimension, and any attempt to segment reason and emotion is ill-conceived (Johnson and Blair 2006). Particularly, they mentioned "egocentrism" which is considered to be a tendency to view the world

primarily from the perspective of one's own ego and to allow one's interests to define one's world as one of the emotional attachment, leading us to think more about the relationship between reason and emotion. By egocentric commitments, we understand more on the argumentative moves affected by specific and individuating interests and involvements that we have as individuals, as contrasted with the more universal features, like gender and nationality mentioned above.

In addition to the emotional attachments discussed before, there is another emotional reaction that is to be emphasized here. The emotion of the arguers' fear, including of the unknown or uncertainty, could also unconsciously cause their unwillingness to continue arguing. Imagine if you've ever been in a situation where you're afraid to answer questions or even participate in discussions to avoid interaction because you're unsure or unclear about the answer. This is more likely to happen in people who are not confident or even restrained in expressing their ideas, and if you have been engaged in some Chinese education environment in early years, you will be more familiar with this situation. Taken this inevitable emotional effects into consideration, we are supposed to use virtue to complement the rules. In a similar vein, the theory of coalescent argumentation proposed by Gilbert also paid attention to the emotional dimension. In addition to the logical analysis of arguments, it gives three additional modes to take other components that have traditionally been studied by informal logic into consideration: emotional, visceral, and kisceral, so that to really enrich the conception of argument. The theory accounts for those aspects of the argument that are not logical and help people make sense of what happens in argumentative interaction, which is properly in line with the key ideas of the virtue approach.

The virtue of self-control has been shown to help address the effects of emotional attachment on argumentation. In argumentative discourse, the attitudes of arguers are responsible for the rationality of their reasoning, insofar as they can deal with, even counteract their emotional attachment discussed above by adopting the argumentative virtue of self-control, which seems to be defined as the ability to counteract one's own propensity to be biased for the sake of ensuring the rationality of arguments (Correia 2012). Consequently, based on virtues discussed in argumentation (Cohen 2005, Aberdein 2010), the attempt to more generally reflect on argumentative self-control as an arguer's virtue in argumentation theory in order to prevent our genuine efforts to argue in fair terms from often being undermined by emotional attachment, undoubtedly provides a promising framework to address it.

4. A NEW INTERPRETATION ON "FALLACIES"

The second aspect is that virtue approach could provide a new interpretation for the fallacy theory results analyzed by pragma-dialectical rules. According to the pragma-dialectical approach, the fallacies are identified as the violations of critical rules which represent the standards or general soundness norms for critical discussion, since the rationale for calling an argumentative move a fallacy is then that this move obstructs or hinders the resolution of a difference of opinion on the merits (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992). However, from the virtue perspective, the theorists argue that traditional fallacy theory is only part of a complete account of argumentational vice (Aberdein 2010). He analyzed every traditional fallacy in "Gang of Eighteen" effectively in terms of argumentational vice, so the fallacies could be

regarded as the lack of argumentative virtues. It should be noted that the agent considered in critical rules is only the protagonist or the antagonist, but in virtue analysis it refers to both the proponent and the respondent at the same time. So then, I will reinterpret the fallacies in pragma-dialectical view by the virtue theory, including both a traditional fallacy and a new fallacy.

Let's first focus on the analysis of a traditional fallacy. In pragma-dialectics, the fallacy of *ad baculum* is identified as the violation of the Freedom Rule 1 at the confrontation stage, specifically the protagonist or the antagonist restricting the other party's freedom of action (or putting the other party under pressure) by threatening opponents with sanctions (van Eemeren et al. 2004). However, when the theory of fallacy is connected with a virtue perspective, the failure of virtue is not always solely that of the arguer, but the respondent also has responsibilities which may not be adequately discharged. So that referring to the virtue argumentation theory, the fallacy of *ad baculum* has been received a new virtue theoretic treatment analytically, then we could see that illegitimate *ad baculum* arguments represent unjust and dishonourable behaviour by the arguer but also, should the argument succeed, a failure of intellectual courage by the respondent (Aberdein 2010).

According to the tentative typology of argumentational vice, the vices of the arguer in the fallacy of *ad baculum* belong to the narrow-mindedness of unwillingness to listen to others and the intellectual intransigence of unwillingness to modify one's own position respectively, while the vice of the respondent falls in the intellectual cowardice of unwillingness to engage in argumentation. As we can see, a new development in the virtue approach that needs to be emphasized here is that in the analysis of fallacies, we attribute not only to the arguer's lack of virtue in the course of the argument, but also to the vices exhibited by the audience, so that both of them should have virtue requirements as well. Therefore, when we combine the perspective of virtue to supplement interpretation on the fallacies in pragma-dialectics, we pay attention both to the two agents of the argumentation process, including the protagonist and the antagonist, which is also in line with pragma-dialectical emphasis on the dynamic dimension of argumentative interaction.

In the analysis of fallacies by pragma-dialectical approach, there are some other obstacles distinguished to resolving a difference of opinion on the merits that were earlier not recognized, and were therefore unnamed, so these violations of different rules are registered as "new" fallacies, including declaring a standpoint sacrosanct, denying an unexpressed premise, falsely presenting something as a common starting point and so on. In order to make the interpretation more complete, the analysis of a 'new' fallacy by virtue approach is necessary here, and this paper will take the fallacy of evading the burden of proof, which is one of the 'new' fallacies developed by pragma-dialectics, as an example to be discussed. It is regarded as the violation of the Defend Rule 2 at the opening stage, in which case the protagonist attempts to create the impression that there is no point in calling the standpoint into question, and no need to defend it to evade the burden of proof, specifically by immunizing the standpoint against criticism (van Eemeren et al. 2014). According to Aberdein, the analysis by argumentative virtue to the fallacies was restricted to the members of 'Gang of Eighteen', and does not include the "new" fallacies. Now, in addition to the traditional group, how could virtue approach interpret to it, that is, what are the corresponding vices to this 'new' fallacy?

Let's examine the specific way in which the Rule 2 is violated in more detail, for example, the protagonist may formulate the standpoint in a way that excludes

falsification: "Real men are leaders", which could be immunized against criticism. Combining with the requirement of Rule 2 (Discussants who advance a standpoint may not refuse to defend this standpoint when requested to do so) and referring to the preliminary list proposed by Aberdein, it could be transferred into the argumentational vices both of the proponent and the respondent. On the one hand, this kind of fallacy represents the protagonist's injustice to others because the proponent does not fulfill the corresponding obligation in the burden of proof, and it is no doubt a dishonest act that the protagonist consciously evades his own responsibility based on self-interest, which presents his intellectual dishonesty. On the other hand, the antagonist should also be criticized by his over-reliance on reason and intellectual acquiescence, because if he had adjusted his attitude to reason and proof and critically considered the protagonist's behavior in the argumentative discourse, perhaps the fallacy would not have been occurred.

As a brief summary, the virtue approach offers a comprehensive understanding since it can not only provide a new explanation for the traditional fallacy analyzed by pragma-dialectics, but also can make a new analysis of the "new" fallacy concerned by its rules. This new perspective falls on the virtue of the two agents including the protagonist and the antagonist in the argumentation at the same time, therefore emphasizes more on the dynamic dimension of the dialectical interaction.

5. CONCLUSION

So, the conclusion of my paper is that Pragma-dialectics and virtue argumentation theory are indeed complementary approaches to the argumentative practice. Firstly, argumentative virtue could complement the pragma-dialectical rules since they are not sufficient conditions. In addition to the bias discussed by Gascón, identity prejudices and emotional effects provide us more possibility to introduce virtue into the compliance of rules. Therefore when applying the rules, virtue is supposed to play an important role in it. Secondly, virtue could give pragma-dialectics a more dialectical interpretation on the fallacy theory, including the traditional fallacies and the new fallacies analyzed by its rules. Because in pragma-dialectics, the fallacy is identified as the violation of a certain rule of one person, which means the protagonist or the antagonist. But actually from the perspective of virtue, there are exactly two people (the arguer and the audience) lack of some virtues.

And finally, we could then make a promising view to the theory. It is likely that there will also be such a consideration of virtue approach in Strategic Maneuvering, which takes on a tendency from the analytic level of abstract idealization exemplified in the model of a critical discussion to the concrete level of the manifold practices of argumentative discourse. It has always been aimed at reconciling the reasonableness and the effectiveness. So far the research is still promoted to the process of making choices between argumentative strategies, not to the arguers' virtues. But it is not difficult to say that the exploration about the role of virtue in the three aspects of Strategic Maneuvering, including the selection from the topical potential, the adaptation to audience demand and the exploitation of presentational devices, would definitely be valuable to the promotion of both theories.

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