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Andrew Aberdein
Florida Institute of Technology - Melbourne

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ANDREW ABERDEIN
School of Arts and Communication
Florida Institute of Technology
150 West University Boulevard, Melbourne, Florida 32901-6975
U.S.A.
aberdein@fit.edu

Abstract: Is bias an obstacle to a virtue theory of argumentation? Virtue theories seem vulnerable to a situationist challenge, analogous to similar challenges in virtue ethics and epistemology, that behavioural dispositions are too situation-specific for virtues to be psychologically plausible. This paper argues that virtue argumentation may respond to this challenge by combining a defence of the virtue of humility with a demonstration of the role of attitude strength, as exhibited by deep-seated virtues.

1. Introduction

Virtue theories of argumentation (VTA) are a burgeoning programme (Aberdein and Cohen 2016). Bias is a familiar impediment to good argument, which has drawn renewed attention as a result of psychological research demonstrating the prevalence of cognitive biases and implicit associations. Despite some attempts to utilize the resources of VTA to address bias, there has been little acknowledgement of the obstacle that bias presents to VTA. Specifically, VTA seems vulnerable to a situationist challenge, analogous to similar challenges in virtue ethics and epistemology, that behavioural dispositions are too sensitive to specific situations for virtues to be psychologically plausible (Alfano 2012, 2014). This paper proposes a two-pronged response that VTA may make to this challenge, and to the problem of bias in argument in general: a defence of the virtue of humility (Kidd 2016) and a demonstration of the role of attitude strength, as exhibited by deep-seated virtues (Webber 2016).

2. Virtue theories of argumentation

Although it is possible to identify ancient antecedents of VTA, its modern incarnation is most directly inspired by recent work in virtue epistemology. As that field has matured, its proponents have drawn distinctions amongst the various means by which it has been advocated, some of which may usefully be transposed to VTA. One axis of distinction concerns the nature of the virtues which are considered relevant to epistemology. Reliabilists focus on non-motivational dispositions or processes that are likely to result in the formation of true beliefs, such as sharp senses or a good memory. Responsibilists emphasize virtues of a more familiar, Aristotelian nature: dispositions that motivate an agent to act in ways likely to produce more true beliefs, such as open-mindedness or perseverance. Mixed virtue approaches admit virtues of both types. Another axis separates the projects in which epistemologists are invested. Classical epistemology concentrates on traditional problems, such as the definition of knowledge. Inquiry epistemology opens up neglected areas, such as the definition of understanding, or the value of knowledge. Combined epistemology seeks to apply virtues to the solution of both sorts of question. This picture results in nine types of virtue epistemology: Classical/Inquiry/Combined epistemology ×

Reliabilist/Responsibilist/Mixed virtues (Alfano 2012, p. 224). Most, if not all, of these nine positions have had their defenders, although recent years have seen some degree of consolidation: 'reliabilists and responsibilists have been climbing different sides of the same mountain, and … as their theories develop, they are converging' (Alfano 2012, p. 229).

Advocacy of VTA need not entail endorsement of distinctly argumentational virtues. Many of the virtues that have been discussed in VTA are also familiar from virtue epistemology or virtue ethics. However, their application to arguers might induce a difference, at least of emphasis: just as epistemic courage is not necessarily identical to physical courage, argumentational courage need not be identical to either. As in virtue epistemology, both motivational and non-motivational dispositions can be seen as virtues of argument. Hence most advocates of VTA adopt a mixed virtues approach, although the interpersonal nature of argumentation lends ethical virtues a greater relevance in VTA than in virtue epistemology, perhaps tilting the mixture in a more responsibilist direction. The project distinction also applies to VTA, although it is here that the divergence from virtue epistemology becomes more conspicuous, since the projects of argumentation theory are not those of epistemology. Nonetheless, we can still usefully distinguish classical projects from less familiar ones. Chief amongst the former is the evaluation of arguments as artefacts: what makes an argument cogent? Projects of the latter sort address a range of questions often neglected in (non-virtue theoretic) argumentation theory, including what sort of roles can be played by arguers and how to maximize the value of arguing as an activity. Since the epistemological terminology is no longer wholly appropriate, we may term these two approaches Classical VTA and Activity VTA, respectively. As in epistemology, the two approaches may be combined.

To date the most detailed analysis of the varieties of VTA is that of Fabio Paglieri. He distinguishes moderates, for whom 'cogency is necessary but insufficient for argument quality' from radicals, for whom 'cogency is neither sufficient nor necessary for argument quality' (Paglieri 2015, p. 74). Moderates may be further subdivided: modest moderates hold that cogency 'is an aspect of quality that does not require considerations of character to be established' whereas for ambitious moderates cogency is 'determined by virtue theoretical considerations, like any other facet of quality' (Paglieri 2015, p. 77). We may now observe that modest moderates are proponents of a strict Activity VTA, whereas proponents of Classical or Combined VTA may be either ambitious moderates or radicals, depending on whether they maintain that VTA should be conservative of prior conceptions of argument evaluation, such as the RSA account of cogency.

Just as VTA inherits much of the internal structure of virtue epistemology, it must also address many of the same challenges and critiques. In the remainder of this paper, I turn to one of the most pressing: the situationist challenge.

3. The situationist challenge

The critics of virtue theories have almost as long a lineage as their proponents. What has come to be known as the situationist challenge has seldom been better expressed than by Michel de Montaigne in his essay 'Of the inconstancy of our actions':

> Our ordinary manner is to follow the inclination of our appetite this way and that
> way; on the left and on the right hand; upward and downe-ward, according as the
> winde of occasions doth transport us: we never thinke on what we would have,

but at the instant we would have it: and change as that beast that takes the colour of the place wherein it is laid. What we even now purposed we alter by and by, and presently returne to our former biase: all is but changing, motion and inconstancy (Montaigne 1965, pp. 8 f.).

What Montaigne supported by allusions to classical authors may now be grounded in the results of social psychology. Modern situationists read such studies as undermining any conception of a stable character, and thereby rendering virtues inexplanatory of ordinary human behaviour. In the ethical context, the best known proponents of the situationist challenge are John Doris and Gilbert Harman (Doris 1998; Harman 1999, 2000). Doris draws attention to such psychological results as that willingness to help a passerby is more strongly conditioned by whether the subject had recently found a coin in a public phone booth than by considerations of character (Doris 1998, p. 504). Heather Battaly distinguishes two conclusions that Doris draws from such studies as ""weak situationism": the view that trivial changes in one's environment can causally influence whether one performs appropriate actions" and ""strong situationism": the view that the studies show that most people lack global character traits" (Battaly 2014, p. 188). While weak situationism may be consistent with a virtue theory, strong situationism poses a serious challenge. Doris takes strong situationism to rule out any role for global character traits in ethics. Harman goes further, denying that character exists.

In a pair of recent papers Mark Alfano has argued that the situationist critique of virtue ethics generalizes to virtue epistemology (Alfano 2012, 2014). This is a straightforward proposition for responsibilist virtue epistemology. Its virtues are motivational, like those of virtue ethics, so their constancy can be challenged by similar studies. Alfano notes a substantial body of research that shows that subjects' creativity or intellectual flexibility is conditioned on their mood (Alfano 2012, pp. 235 ff.). He also suggests that classic studies of conformity and obedience challenge the existence of intellectual courage as a stable trait (Alfano 2012, pp. 242 ff.). Alfano's critique of reliabilist virtues is somewhat more limited in scope. He concedes that his situationist challenge makes little headway against non-inferential knowledge (Alfano 2014, p. 115). But he regards the well-known discoveries of the biases-and-heuristics programme in cognitive psychology (such as the many instance of the conjunction fallacy elicited by Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman 2004) as undercutting the role of inferential reliabilist virtue in the acquisition of true belief (Alfano 2014, pp. 110 ff.). This limitation to Alfano's challenge is no help at all to VTA, of course, since inferential reliabilist virtues are obviously far more relevant to argumentation than non-inferential reliabilist virtues.

Indeed, Alfano's critique seems to generalize very readily to an argumentational context. It may not even be necessary to change the examples. In particular, the cognitive biases he discusses are already familiar to most argumentation theorists. As Frank Zenker observes, 'With some simplification, what contemporary social psychologists have come to call "biases," philosophers and scholars of law, amongst others, have long known as "fallacies"' (Zenker 2014, p. 2). Since even responsibilist VTA is expressly concerned with inferential contexts, the cognitive biases which Alfano takes to challenge inferential reliabilist virtues may also extend to some responsibilist virtues. But, when it comes to biases, we are spoiled for choice. As Vasco Correia observes,

Psychologists distinguish between two kinds of judgemental and inferential illusions: *motivational* (or "hot") illusions, on the one hand, which stem from the

influence of emotions and interests upon cognitive processes, and *cognitive* (or "cold") illusions, on the other hand, which stem from inferential errors due to cognitive malfunctioning (Correia 2012, p. 224).

This distinction corresponds quite closely to the responsibilist/reliabilist distinction amongst virtues: widespread motivational illusions pose a challenge for responsibilist virtues; widespread cognitive illusions pose a challenge for reliabilist virtues. The pernicious consequences of such biases are all too familiar: biases can "lead to irrational responses, such as risk mismanagement, wishful thinking, self-deception, prejudice, scapegoating, rationalization, … biases also seem to aggravate the phenomenon of "attitude polarization," … biases increase people's vulnerability to manipulative strategies of persuasion … biases seem to widen the gap between normative models of argumentation and real-life debates" (Correia 2012, p. 224). However, argumentation theorists are not without defences against such biases.

4. Responding to the challenge

A variety of possible responses to the situationist challenge have been debated by virtue theorists of various kinds and their critics. I shall briefly canvass some of the alternatives before proposing a strategy that seems especially applicable to VTA.

4.1. Deny the validity of the empirical studies

The situationist challenge in its modern form depends essentially upon empirical work, much of it drawn from social psychology. But social psychology is currently in the grip of a 'replication crisis' that has placed many high profile results in doubt. A systematic attempt to replicate a wide range of prominent psychological studies produced multiple non-replications, suggesting that the earlier results may have been merely accidental. Half the results coded as cognitive psychology failed to replicate; nearly three quarters of those coded as social psychology failed to replicate (Open Science Collaboration 2015 p. aac4716-3). Ironically, social psychology may be afflicted by a methodological bias of its own: the "file drawer effect", a tendency to publish ostensibly significant results and ignore others. Even replicated results have been undermined by meta-analyses that "found very strong signals of publication bias, along with an indication that the [purported] effect is actually no different from zero" (Carter and McCullough 2014, p. 1). Although the results appealed to by situationists do not appear to be amongst the most vulnerable, this may just be luck: many situationist studies are methodologically similar to studies that have failed to replicate and might eventually fall to a similar critique. Moreover, some social psychological results employed to support the existence of some varieties of bias have been directly challenged. For example, meta-analysis of studies using the Implicit Association Test, which is central to the discussion of implicit bias, suggests very minor effects at best (Oswald et al. 2015).

However, not all the studies on which situationists rely appear to be equally vulnerable. For example, the notorious "Linda the feminist bank teller" example has been replicated many times and persists even when presented as baldly as

Argument 1 Linda is more likely to be a bank teller than she is to be a feminist bank teller, because every feminist bank teller is a bank teller, but some women bank tellers are not feminists, and Linda could be one of them.

Argument 2 Linda is more likely to be a feminist bank teller than she is likely to be a bank teller, because she resembles an active feminist more than she resembles a bank teller.

Tversky and Kahneman report that nearly two thirds of their sample (65%, *n*=58) preferred Argument 2 (Tversky and Kahneman 2004, p. 230). In the light of such results, it seems unduly optimistic to expect all the empirical studies appealed to by situationists to disappear on their own.

4.2. Dispute the applicability of the empirical studies

However, even if the empirical studies are methodologically sound, it does not necessarily follow that they bear the interpretation that their authors suggest, let alone that attributed to them by philosophers. Many of these studies have been criticized as drawing misleading conclusions from highly contrived scenarios:

> Typically, situationists deliberately choose to focus on situations that are not only broad but also passive (the agent is a victim rather than a creator of the situation), extraordinary (the situations presents features that the agent has never experienced before and is never even likely to experience in real life) and/or involve strong social expectations of compliance (for instance, being subjected to orders from an authority-figure). After tilting evidence in their favour in this way, it is no surprise that situationist experiments yield the findings that they do (Kristjánsson 2013, p. 282).

Gerd Gigerenzer sardonically summarizes the experimental protocol behind the biases-and-heuristics programme as follows:

> **Syntax first** Start with a law of logic or probability.
> **Add semantics and pragmatics** Replace the logical terms (e.g., material conditional, mathematical probability) by English terms (e.g., if…then; probable), add content, and define the problem to be solved.
> **Content-blind norm** Use the syntax to define the "rational" answer to the problem. Ignore semantics and pragmatics.
> **Cognitive illusion** If people's judgments deviate from the "rational" answer, call the discrepancy a cognitive illusion. Attribute it to some deficit in the human mind (not to your norms) (Gigerenzer 2008 p. 11).

He suggests that many of the studies on which claims of cognitive bias rest are attributable to 'an environmental structure plus an unbiased mind' (Gigerenzer 2008, p. 14). For example, conjunction fallacy experiments, such as the Linda case, turn on the essential use of words such as "likely" or "probable," which have more than one meaning in English, but are here treated as though their only possible meaning was that they bear in mathematical probability theory.

Gigerenzer notes that the conjunction fallacy does not replicate where expressly quantitative language such as "how many" is used instead of "likely" or "probable" (Gigerenzer 2008, p. 72). In an argumentational context, this rejection of the identity of the ordinary use of "probably" with its use in mathematical probability has been defended by Stephen Toulmin and Bob Ennis (Ennis 2006, p. 146).

Bryan Garsten attributes a similar stance to Aristotle, responding to what might be read as an ancient analogue of the situationist challenge, the success of unprincipled sophists in winning over juries that had so exercised Plato:

> The problem lay in the fact that the judicial setting asked people to judge without reference to the only sort of criteria that they had experience using: the complex, differentiated and ordered set of goals and standards that they had developed throughout their lives as deliberative actors. Only experience could create the intricate structures of belief and emotion that gave rise to mature judgments (Garsten 2006, p. 128).

I shall return to this insight below, after addressing some less promising responses to the situationist challenge.

4.3. Strict activity VTA

As we saw in Sec. 2, the modest moderate is committed to a Strict activity VTA, that is to the application of virtues only to the aspects of argumentation neglected by traditional accounts, and not to argument evaluation. This may leave the modest moderate better positioned to respond to the situationist challenge. For, in so far as the primary application of reliabilist virtues in VTA is in argument evaluation, a project the modest moderate has renounced, then the modest moderate may only need to defend responsibilist virtues. Moreover, the motivational illusions the situationist deploys against responsibilist virtues may have less empirical support than the cognitive illusions deployed against reliabilist virtues. Nonetheless, I shall maintain that a more robust defence is available to (all varieties of) VTA.

4.4. Elite virtues

As Doris observes, if "virtue theory is reformed as a normative theory concerned with regulative ideals more than empirically-constrained psychology, the empirical critique is disarmed, but virtue theory no longer has the selling point of a compelling descriptive psychology" (Doris 1998, p. 520). In principle, VTA might bite this bullet: since the studies appealed to by situationists are only a challenge to the descriptive adequacy of virtue theories, VTA could retreat to a purely normative position. That is, its proponents could concede that the virtues only describe what an ideal agent would do, a model to which the rest of us may aspire, despite—as empirical evidence abundantly attests—routinely falling short. However, as Alfano argues, this entails widespread scepticism about the epistemic (or argumentational) accomplishments of non-elite agents (Alfano 2014, p. 115).

4.5. Local virtues

Doris's own response to the situationist challenge was to drop the "global" from "global character trait": he "allows the possibility of temporally stable, situation-particular, "local" traits that may reflect dispositional differences among persons" (Doris 1998, p. 507). A similar response would be available to VTA. Indeed, in so far as VTA proposes argumentation-specific virtues, it has already begun down this path. However, its proponents may not wish to go as far as Doris, who responds to the study discussed in Sec. 3 by suggesting that people are not compassionate but, for example, "dime-finding, dropped-paper compassionate" (Doris 1998, p. 514). As Quassim Cassam remarks, we need to find a "sweet spot … somewhere between the mythical global traits which demand absolute consistency and ultra-fine-grained, situation-specific local traits which carry no implications for a person's conduct other than in a single case" (Cassam 2016, p. 174). Montaigne, for one, would be sceptical about the prospects of success in this quest: "For, whatsoever some say, valour is all alike, and not one in the street or towne, and another in the campe or field. As couragiously should a man beare a sicknesse in his bed, as a hurt in the field, and feare death no more at home in his house, than abroad in an assault" (Montaigne 1965, p. 12).

4.6. Virtuous heuristics

The biases-and-heuristics programme is often taken to show that people err in using unreliable heuristics. But many heuristics are highly successful. Perhaps their use should be seen as virtuous. Indeed, John Woods and Dov Gabbay maintain that many so-called fallacies are "cognitively virtuous scant-resource compensation strategies" (Gabbay and Woods 2009, p. 83). Gigerenzer agrees with this account of virtue, stating that "Cognitive virtue is, in my view, a relation between a mind and its environment, very much like the notion of ecological rationality" (Gigerenzer 2008, p. 18). Alfano rejects this approach as "empirically inadequate", on the grounds that "that's not how (most) people deploy" heuristics (Alfano 2014, p. 116). That is, people use heuristics not only in cases where they are reliable, but also in cases where they are not. But Alfano, whose discussion of inferential knowledge is largely focussed on deductive inference, where an exceptionally high level of reliability is clearly required, may be prejudging the case against defeasible inference, where heuristics come into their own. Moreover, the considerations raised above in Sec. 4.2 reinforce this point: once the artificiality of the cases taken to demonstrate the unreliability of heuristics is taken into account, contra Alfano, "heuristics may not be so bad after all" (Alfano 2014, p. 116).

4.7. Virtues ≠ behaviourist traits

The most fundamental response to the situationist challenge may be that it misunderstands the concept of virtue. As Jonathan Webber notes, "Aristotle makes it abundantly clear that the kinds of traits that he recommends as virtuous are certainly not dispositions to behave in a certain kind of way whenever or almost whenever a certain kind of situational feature is present" (Webber 2006). Indeed, for Aristotle such perfectly consistent dispositions would be *vices*: a disposition to expose yourself to every source of danger you encounter is not courage, it is recklessness. Webber summarizes Aristotle's definition of virtue as "that each trait leads one to be inclined with a certain degree of strength towards certain kinds of actions in certain kinds of situations,

and that such traits are virtues only if these inclinations are tempered by other inclinations that constrain the range of occasions on which they will result in action" (Webber 2006). As he demonstrates, this definition of virtue has greater explanatory and predictive power than the simpler version implicit in the situationist challenge, so there are reasons for preferring it independent of its resilience against that challenge. Although Webber is primarily concerned with virtue ethics, his argument naturally generalizes to VTA. Indeed, Garsten draws similar conclusions with respect to Aristotle's discussion of defeasible argument in the *Rhetoric*: "When we engage in situated judgment, we make decisions drawn from our own perspectives—from our experiences, our emotions, and even our prejudices. … Aristotle aimed to turn rhetoric into a skill of engaging this sort of judgment" (Garsten 2006, p. 129). In the next section, I will demonstrate how VTA may capitalize on this insight.

5. A VTA response to bias

Let us take stock. We have seen two strategies for rescuing the two varieties of virtue relevant to VTA from their respective situationist challenges: if heuristics are themselves reliabilist virtues, the challenge to these virtues fails (Sec. 4.6); and if the situatedness of judgment is an essential part of virtues, the challenge to responsibilist virtues fails too (Sec. 4.7). This suggests that VTA survives the situationist challenge that biases present, but does not specifically address how it may be used to tackle the problem of bias in argumentation. In this section I will sketch how such a project might be accomplished.

5.1. The virtue of humility

We saw in Sec. 4.7 that, at least from an Aristotelian perspective, traits only qualify as virtues if they are tempered by higher-order, regulatory virtues. Indeed, unifying proposals of this sort have been made with respect not just to responsibilist, ethical virtues, but also reliabilist, intellectual virtues (Lepock 2011). What sort of virtues might play such a higher-order role for VTA? A number of argumentational virtues, such as willingness to inquire (Hamby 2015), might be proposed. But one that appears particularly relevant to our present concern, the avoidance of bias, is humility.

      Intellectual humility has been defined in several different, incompatible ways, but some degree of consensus may be emerging. Dennis Whitcomb and colleagues make a strong case that intellectual humility "consists in proper attentiveness to, and owning of, one's intellectual limitations" (Whitcomb et al. 2016, p. 12). This is akin to Boudewijn de Bruin's view that "the virtue of epistemic humility would lead the person to be aware of his own fallibility, that is, to realise that his beliefs may be wrong after all" (de Bruin 2013, p. 588). And, more intriguingly, it closely matches Jonathan Adler's account of open-mindedness, as "an appreciation of our fallibility" as "a second-order (or "meta") attitude toward one's beliefs as believed, and not just toward the specific proposition believed, just as fallibilism is a second-order doubt about the perfection of one's believing, not a doubt about the truth of any specific belief" (Adler 2004, p. 130). But, as James Spiegel argues, Adler's account is more plausible as a definition of humility than of open-mindedness (Spiegel 2012, p. 34). It is this second-order character of humility that is critical to its regulative role in the mitigation of bias. Ian James Kidd identifies three features of humility relevant to argumentation that may explicate how it discharges that role. Firstly, "it is an active process rather than a one-off act of rainy-day cognitive housekeeping": as new information is received, the proper level of confidence to be taken

towards it must be determined, and the effects on existing beliefs assessed (Kidd 2016, p. 4). Secondly, it is itself fallible. Thirdly, it is interpersonal—it depends on interactions with others.

A full account of the regulatory effect of humility on the virtues of the arguer would require much greater detail. But hopefully some sense can be gleaned as to how humble arguers, properly aware of their own limitations, may be well placed to avoid bias. Nonetheless, it might reasonably be asked how successful this strategy can be if humility itself is inconstant. The response to this worry is that, to function effectively, humility must be a deep-seated virtue.

5.2. Deep-seated virtues

There are several overlapping and potentially mutually reinforcing ways in which virtues might be deep. For example, Philip Rose proposes a phylogenetic account: "By a deep virtue I mean a virtue whose evolutionary history is both old and extensive. It is old in the sense that its function has a long and stable evolutionary history, and it is extensive in the sense that the same function can be found within a wide range of peoples and places" (Rose 2014, p. 9). However, here I shall concentrate on an account of depth as a feature of attitude strength, that is "the degree to which an attitude is resistant to change and influences cognition and behavior" (Krosnick and Smith 1994, p. 279). This should be distinguished from other measures of attitudes, such as extremity: one person may have deeply held moderate political views; another may flirt irresponsibly with political extremism. The political attitude of the former would be strong but not extreme; that of the latter extreme, but not strong. Webber finds in this research a remedy for bias and susceptibility to situational manipulation in ethics: one must "ensure that one holds the right moral attitudes sufficiently strongly that one's judgments and actions will express them consistently" (Webber 2016, p. 12). Webber distinguishes between positive and negative programmes of moral improvement by which this goal may be realized: the aim of the negative programme is "to identify the features of situations that lead one to judge and act in morally problematic ways, then undertake strategies to prevent these features from having this malign influence" whereas "the aim of th[e positive] programme would be to identify and embed in one's cognition the attitudes that tend one towards the right behaviour" (Webber 2016, p. 12).

While Webber's concern is with ethical virtues, his approach naturally generalizes to argumentation. In particular, it provides a response to the seemingly intractable problems of debiasing. As Tim Kenyon and Guillaume Beaulac observe,

> there is a seeming dilemma for those who wish to teach debiasing as part of critical thinking. The things that are most easily teachable and open to long-term retention by learners—what biases are and how they work; and that their distortive influences are to be avoided—are not in themselves very effective at debiasing people's judgments; while the things that are rather effective at debiasing judgments—counterfactual or opposite-scenario consideration—are not very teachable as individual skills to be recalled and applied when needed, nor to be implemented easily even when attempted (Kenyon and Beaulac 2014, pp. 347 f.).

In the light of Webber's distinction, this may be read as an account of the limitations of debiasing as a negative programme. But Kenyon and Beaulac's own recommendation to reduce the risks of bias by altering the environment, "shaping … situational factors and reasoning

infrastructure" (Kenyon and Beaulac 2014, p. 341), remains within this negative programme. VTA provides the resources for alternative approaches to debiasing which follow a positive programme, such as Tracy Bowell and Justine Kingsbury's proposal that "a focus on developing motivational and regulatory virtues might increase the likelihood that students will deploy their reasoning skills outside the classroom" (Bowell and Kingsbury 2015, p. 241). Webber maintains that "the positive programme … is less susceptible to being derailed by situational pressures, cognitive biases, and everyday life" since "these have their greatest influence on the rapid cognition underlying everyday decision-making" rather than "slower, more careful, and only occasional deliberative reflection required by the positive programme" (Webber 2016, pp. 16 f.). If Webber is right about this, Bowell and Kingsbury's approach should hold greater promise than Kenyon and Beaulac's.

6. Conclusion

The situationist challenge suggests that empirical evidence for the prevalence of biases undermines any appeal to character. This poses a significant problem for virtue theories of all types. We have seen that VTA is no different from other virtue theories in this respect: an argumentation-specific situationist challenge can be readily assembled. However, VTA has the resources to respond to the challenge. Properly understood, its virtues are consistent with the empirical evidence that might be taken to show their nonexistence. Moreover, once we have properly understood the virtues of argument, we may see that they appear better placed to facilitate the avoidance of bias than other, non-virtue theoretic accounts of argumentation.

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