Claim: The best test of an argument is its ability to convince someone with an opposing viewpoint.  
Reason: Only by being forced to defend an idea against the doubts and contrasting views of others does one really discover the value of that idea.

Write a response in which you discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with the claim and the reason on which that claim is based.

As any evaluator of the GRE essay section may tell you, arguments are most strengthened when they consider possible counterpoints and then refute all of them. In the real world, however, people are not ‘grading’ arguments, but are shaping their own perceptions of things based on arguments made, and evidence shown to them. When an argument is made in an attempt to change someone’s mind, simply stating its case is not enough; the argument must also refute their preconceived notions of what they believe to be true, and why they were initially against the argument’s conclusion. In my opinion, I strongly agree with the claim made by the prompt. The power of an argument lies in its ability to convince; to evaluate an argument, one must consider not only the claims it makes, but also the way it takes into account the views of the opposing side. There are two aspects of this issue that must be considered and explored in further detail.

First, if an argument is not built with the intention of convincing someone with an opposing viewpoint, then it runs the risk of not addressing the other side. If an argument is purely made based on its own apparent pros, without any considerations of the opposition’s cons, then the argument’s power to persuade is weakened. To a neutral party, such an argument would prove rather unconvincing, compared to one that refutes the claims of the opposing side. Consider the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, when some groups of people were in staunch opposition to vaccinations, citing studies with no scientific consensus, calling themselves the ‘anti-vax’ movement. Before the pandemic, they were largely under the radar, and hence were never forced to get into debates on the topic. As the pandemic progressed, the number of people who were ‘anti-vax’ has gone down, as per multiple surveys. People who were worried that the vaccinations would have adverse effects on them, or those who were scared of it, would engage in debate on the topic, where both sides would present their evidence, and attempt to prove that the other side has a false opinion. A lot of these people, when presented with evidence of vaccination efficacy, and evidence that refuted their old beliefs of vaccine-caused autism, gradually changed their minds, and took the vaccine. This example shows how, when an argument is made, taking into account what statements the other side claims to be true, and the validity of those statements, it becomes significantly more convincing.

Second, a common misconception regarding this prompt is that after a debate, people immediately change their minds. Most people would be convinced of a position if they are presented with a series of arguments in its favour, which comprehensively breaks down the issue, with all possible lines of reasoning. Hasan Piker, a live-streamer on the video-streaming platform Twitch, is a political commentator and variety-streamer, who covers multiple topics, and interacts with his ‘chat’ about various topics, and the ongoing ‘hot topics’ at the time. Many of his viewers may not agree with him on his political views, but a lot of them have changed their minds gradually over a large span of time. Hasan often makes arguments in a logical manner, laying out all the parts of the conversation, and refuting claims that are against his position, by using substantiative evidence. He has had multiple debates with other streamers; although he may not be the right one in every argument, he still manages to present a thorough and well-thought-out case for himself. In fact, having to defend an idea against doubts and contrasting views may even cause the arguer to bring out more convincing points, in their attempts to make a well-rounded case.

In conclusion, the best test of an argument is its ability to convince those having opposing views. If the stated reason proves untrue, and the argument does not refute any counterpoints, the claim itself remains true: If a person having an opposing view is convinced otherwise, the argument is very well crafted.