Justifying Questions?

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In his recent keynote address to the 2018 ISSA, David Hitchcock argues for the claim that people sometimes argue for questions. I shall argue that his examples do not necessarily support that conclusion.

KEYWORDS: act-types, arguing, arguing for, argument expressions, arguments, justification, propositions, questions

1. INTRODUCTION

In his recent keynote address to the 2018 ISSA[1], David Hitchcock argues for the claim that "people sometimes argue for questions" (Hitchcock, forthcoming; Hitchcock, 2019a, p. 28). He gives examples such as:

> We justify questions, so how does that work?
>
> There are four kinds of drunk, so which are you?

to support his claim.

Assume that to argue for something is to present, or give, or make an argument with that thing as the conclusion of the argument. Hence, arguing for a question is to present an argument with a question as the conclusion. And if one can present an argument with a question as the conclusion, then there must *be* arguments with questions as conclusions. So, one might think the point of contention is obvious—I doubt that there are any arguments that have questions as conclusions. Hitchcock, on the other hand, holds that there are arguments that have questions as conclusions.

Unfortunately, Hitchcock and I have different notions of what constitutes an argument. I say (at least for the purposes of this paper) that arguments are composed of propositions and sets of propositions and since no proposition or set of propositions, one might say, is itself a

[1] And in a forthcoming follow-up paper.

question, arguments cannot contain questions as constituents. Hitchcock, on the other hand, takes arguments to be sets of speech act types (Hitchcock, 2018, 2019b) and since questions are a type of speech act, it is at least possible on Hitchcock's view that arguments contain questions as constituents. He then provides examples, such as, the ones given above, or:

> Your smart phone is making you stupid, antisocial, and unhealthy. So why can't you put it down?

that purport to show that it is not merely possible, but actual, that some instances of the relevant sort of sets of speech act types contain a question as the conclusion.

But if the point of contention is merely where to apply the label 'argument', then many might suspect that not much of significant import is going on here. Except that 'argument' is one of the key concepts of argumentation theory, and so what gets the label 'argument' has implications for what properties do and do not apply to arguments and the relationship of arguments to other things such as linguistic expressions of arguments or instances of someone making or presenting an argument. For example, if one holds that arguments are repeatable, i.e. that they can be instantiated multiple times such that, for example, we can ask our students to repeat Searle's Chinese Room Argument for us, then, since word tokens or particular acts are not repeatable, arguments cannot be composed of word tokens or particular acts. Indeed, Hitchcock's earlier work on defining argument (Hitchcock, 2006) tried to provide a recursive definition in terms of acts, but subsequently, after a very brief reversion to the content of speech acts (Hitchcock, 2009), he appeals to speech act types so as to respect the fact that "Someone can use the same argument on different occasions, and different people can use the same argument" (Hitchcock, 2019b, p 119).

So are there reasons to prefer labelling the sets of speech act types Hitchcock describes as 'arguments' rather than sets of a set of propositions and another proposition or vice versa? Indeed, there are. For example, I maintain, though have not thoroughly argued, that getting the correct 'typing' for a speech act type account of arguments will ultimately just appeal to the relevant sets of propositions in a propositional account such that all the real work is being done by propositions (Goddu, 2018). Hitchcock, on the other hand, might point to alleged examples in which the propositional content looks the same, but he maintains, there are different arguments (Hitchcock, 2019b, p. 119). I have no intention of trying to catalogue and weight the various reasons here. Instead, I shall focus on just one potential reason someone

might give in favor of speech act types—namely that the examples Hitchcock gives certainly look like arguings for questions and speech acts types, but not propositions, can accommodate questions as conclusions of arguments. I shall argue that the examples do not necessarily tell against the propositional account.

Just to be clear, my goal here is not to show that Hitchcock's examples are not examples of arguments with questions for conclusions, since showing that would require showing that Hitchcock's notion of argument is untenable and that the only tenable accounts of argument are such that none involve questions as conclusions, both of which are well beyond the scope of a single paper. Instead I am merely trying to show that it is possible for a propositional theory of arguments to account for Hitchcock's examples, in which case his examples do not necessarily support the claim that there are arguments with questions as conclusions.

I shall ultimately consider three options for how a propositional theory can accommodate Hitchcock's examples, and argue that at least two of these options are viable accounts of Hitchcock's examples. I turn to a discussion of the first option next.

2. OPTION 1: DENY HITCHCOCK'S EXAMPLES ARE ARGUMENTS (IN EITHER SENSE)

No one should deny, and I certainly do not deny, that people utter or write expressions such as: "We justify questions, so how does that work?" or "There are four kinds of drunk, so which are you?" But one might deny that these expressions express arguments or are used to argue. But if these instances are not even instances of arguing, then the speech act type account cannot appeal to them as counterexamples to the propositional account of arguments and they are not evidence that we sometimes argue for questions.

Before giving reasons to be suspicious of Hitchcock's examples, however, I shall make the situation even worse for the defenders of propositional accounts. Firstly, there are plenty of other apparently non-propositional examples like Hitchcock's question examples—his examples are not just outliers, but rather part of a larger class of apparently non-fully-propositional arguments. Consider:

> Keeping the door open will let the bugs in, so close the door already!
>
> You got the job, so hooray!

If these examples are expressions of arguments just as Hitchcock alleges his examples are, then there are arguments with imperatives or exclamations as conclusions as well and the propositional account of arguments is incorrect.

Secondly, just as we can convert standard arguments into corresponding conditionals as in,

Socrates is human, so Socrates is mortal

converting to

If Socrates is human, then Socrates is mortal,

so it appears we can conditionalize all the examples above to

If we justify questions, then how does that work?

If there are four kinds of drunk, then which kind are you?

If your smart phone is making you stupid, antisocial, and unhealthy, then why can't you put it down?

If keeping the door open will let the bugs in, then close the door already!

If you got the job, then hooray!

If one takes the possibility of conditionalization as at least a necessary condition for an argument, then the fact that these non-propositional examples can be conditionalized is at least evidence that Hitchcock's examples are not automatically ruled out as arguments.

But there are two other properties that we standardly think are applicable to argument expressions. Firstly, the addition or removal of an illative, such as 'so' or 'hence' changes the communicative force of the expression. For example,

Socrates is human. Socrates is mortal.

is a mere list, but add the illative 'so' between them to get

Socrates is human, so Socrates is mortal

and the result is something stronger than a mere list. And if we start with the argument expression and remove the 'so', then absent other

contextual or tonal considerations, we weaken the communicative force of the expression from an arguing to a list giving. Put very roughly, in genuine argument expressions, something, usually an explicit word such as 'so', communicates illative force.

Secondly, argument expressions are reversible as in,

> Socrates is human, so Socrates is mortal

reverses to:

> Socrates is mortal, for the following reason—Socrates is human.

In other words, we can, again roughly, reverse the order of the presentation from reasons, and then conclusion to conclusion, and then reasons indiscriminately.

Hitchcock's examples, however, while conditionalizable, are not reversible and it is not clear that they have illative force. For example, we seem to be able to remove the 'so' with no loss in communicative import.

> We justify questions. How does that work?
>
> There are four kinds of drunk. Which are you?
>
> Keeping the door open will let the bugs in. Close the door already!

But if we accomplish the same communicative task without the 'so', then we might doubt that the 'so' is doing any work, let alone indicating that arguing is going on. But if the 'so' is extraneous in Hitchcock's examples, but not in the more standard argument examples, then this is at least some evidence that Hitchcock's examples are not necessarily expressing arguments or being used to argue for the question.

Secondly, reversing

> There are four kinds of drunk, so which are you?

into

> Which type of drunk are you, for the following reason—there are four types of drunk,

results in gibberish. Again, standard argument expressions are reversible, so the fact that Hitchcock's examples, when reversed, result

in gibberish is at least some evidence that Hitchcock's examples are not necessarily expressing arguments or being used to argue for the question.

Here is, I suspect, another way to put the reversibility point. For any propositional conclusion X, it makes sense to enjoin the defender of X to argue for X or to ask the defender, what is your argument for X. For example, both the request to argue for 'Socrates is mortal' or the question "what is your argument for 'Socrates is mortal'?" are perfectly intelligible. But neither the request—argue for 'which type of drunk are you?' nor the question "what is your argument for 'Which type of drunk are you?'?" sounds intelligible[2] at least as a genuine request to argue for the question.

So are Hitchcock's examples arguings or not? The answer depends on to what degree conditionalization, illative force, and reversibility are bona fide indicators of the presence or absence of arguments. Conditionalization is at best a necessary condition for expressions to be expressions of arguments, so success tells us nothing. Illative force (and its potential sources) is hard enough to pin down and isolate that the apparent failure to have illative force is at best suggestive that Hitchcock's examples might not be arguments or arguings. The failure of the examples to be reversible, however, does strike me as problematic—we should be able to reverse the order of presentation of premises and conclusion, we should be able to articulate what we are arguing for before we give the reasons for it. In Hitchcock's cases we cannot do that—at least if we take them as purported examples of arguing for a question.

Of course, Hitchcock can stick to his guns and say not only were we wrong to think we could not argue for questions, but we were also wrong to think that all expressions of arguments are reversible. Fine, but recall that the goal was not to show that Hitchcock's examples are definitely not arguments or arguings, but rather that there was a principled way for a proposition theorist to account for the examples

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[2] I grant that, given our strong predilection to try to make sense of communicative acts that on their face seem problematic, we can come up with a situation in which one might utter—"Argue for 'which type of drunk are you?'". Here is such a situation. We are debating which questions to put on a survey. One of the possibilities put forth is "which type of drunk are you?" and someone says "Argue for 'which type of drunk are you?" Of course in this situation we are going to interpret the request as—argue for the proposition: "One of the questions on the survey ought to be: 'which type of drunk are you?'". Taken as a literal request to argue for the question itself, the request seems nonsensical.

and that I have provided—the examples are not reversible and genuine argument expressions are reversible, so they are not expressing arguments or arguings.

But perhaps Option 1 is too hard-line. After all, given the surrounding context, for at least some of Hitchcock's examples, it clearly seems like the utterer is arguing. Suppose we grant that there are cases in which people utter 'X, so Y?' as part of an act of arguing. I shall deny that a propositional account of arguments cannot account for these arguings.

3. OPTION 2: QUESTIONS CAN BE CAPTURED VIA PROPOSITIONS

One fairly standard, though not uncontroversial, way for dealing with imperatives is to treat them as some sort of obligation proposition. For example, 'Close the door, already!' would be something like "You ought to close the door now." Hence, the example:

> Keeping the door open will let the bugs in, so close the door already!

will just be the argument:

> Keeping the door open will let the bugs in, so you ought to close the door now,

about which the propositional account has no qualms. If something similar can be done with questions, then while Hitchcock may ultimately be right that we do sometimes argue for questions, that is only because questions are themselves captured via propositions, and so, once again, the speech act type account cannot appeal to the examples as counterexamples to the propositional account of arguments.

Take as the target the question—which kind of drunk are you? Here are some options for treating the question as a proposition.

(a) I hereby ask 'which type of drunk are you?' (David Lewis)
(b) I want to know which kind of drunk you are. (Bernard Bolzano)
(c) You ought to see to it that I know which type of drunk you are. (Lennart Aqvist, Jaako Hintikka)
(d) I want the indication of the true proposition in the set {You are a drunk of type1, You are a drunk of type2, You are a drunk of type3, You are a drunk of type4}. (Bernard Bolzano)[3]

[3] All four of these options are discussed in Künne 2003.

Here is another option derived from Hitchcock's own discussion of Andrzej Wisniewski's inferential erotetic logic. According to Hitchcock, Wisniewski "represents an interrogative sentence as a set of its direct answers" (Hitchcock, 2019a, p. 30). Hence, Wisniewski would represent 'which kind of drunk are you' with something like:

> ?{type1(you), type2(you), type3(you), type4(you)} (Hitchcock, 2019a, p. 31)

which itself is not a proposition. But since each direct answer to a question can be represented as a proposition as, for example, in (d) above, we could also represent Wisniewski's formula as:

(e) You are a drunk of type1 or you are a drunk of type2 or you are a drunk of type3 or you are a drunk of type4,

which is a proposition and truth evaluable.

Option (e) has an advantage over the other four in that it does not as obviously change the object of discussion, i.e. what property of drunkenness you possess. Option (a), on the other hand, makes the topic about the questioner's performance, options (b) and (d) about the questioner's wants, and option (c) about the receiver's obligations. The problem with changing the object of discussion is that the premises still need to be properly related to the conclusion if the expression is to be interpreted as an even somewhat plausible argument. For example, given option (a), our argument:

> There are four kinds of drunk, so which are you?

becomes

> There are four kinds of drunk, so I hereby ask 'which type of drunk are you?'.

Similarly, option (b) becomes:

> There are four kinds of drunk, so I want to know which kind of drunk you are.

But in both of these cases, the mere fact that there are four types of drunk hardly justifies either the performative of the question or the fact that the arguer has certain wants. Indeed, in most cases, the performative is going to be automatically true merely by uttering the

interrogative sentence, quite independently of any reasons offered, so the reasons do not themselves justify the question.

Granted, the fact that treating the questions as any of options (a)-(d) does not make the result a very plausible argument does not show that a propositional account cannot accommodate the example. But if the chosen analysis of questions as propositions generally dictates that Hitchcock's examples, while arguments, are all quite bad arguments, we are right to be suspicious of the analysis.

Still, the case is not perfectly clear cut, since the reason given and the background against which the reason is given and the question asked might together more plausibly support one of the offered conclusions, at least for options (b) through (d), than the reason alone. Hitchcock cannot object to this appeal to background since most of his informal requirements for a valid inference to a question appeal to context: For example, one of his criteria, at least for certain sorts of questions, is "the premises and context entail that the 'thing' for which an explanation is requested is a reality" (Hitchcock 2019a, p. 33).

I will not pursue the possibility of using appeal to background to make the arguments resulting from a propositional analysis questions more plausible than they first seem, but merely point out that such an appeal would, given the disparity between the explicitly offered reason and what options (a)-(d) are offering as the conclusion, make the plausibility of the argument rest almost entirely on the background. Given the proposed propositional analyses of questions on offer, the "what kind of drunk are you?" example is not a special case—all of Hitchcock's examples would involve a topical mismatch between the reasons given and what the conclusion is really about according to options (a) – (d). But if the background is really doing all the work, one might wonder whether the proffered reasons really are reasons at all, and might once again question whether any real arguing is going on.

What of option (e)? While option (e) avoids the issue of a topical mismatch between the offered reasons and proposed analysis of the question, (e) does appear to face a different sort of problem. Consider:

> You are a drunk of type 4, so which type of drunk are you?

Given the proposed analysis of the question as a disjunction of the possible answers, the stated reason is a good reason for the conclusion and yet the case is trivial at best and inappropriate at worst.

No propositional account of arguments is going to deny that there are acts of arguing or making an argument or presenting an argument. Hence, propositional accounts are very likely to distinguish the goodness conditions of arguments (the sets of propositions) from the appropriateness conditions of engaging in the act of arguing. Hence,

the fact that uttering "you are drunk of type 4, so which type of drunk are you?" to argue for "you are a drunk of type 1 or you are a drunk of type 2 or you are a drunk of type 3 or you are a drunk of type 4" might be pointless or inappropriate does not tell against the expression actually expressing the argument:

> You are a drunk of type 4, so you are a drunk of type 1 or you are a drunk of type 2 or you are a drunk of type 3 or you are a drunk of type 4.

Similarly, arguments, with a true premise p, of the form 'p, so p' are definitely sound arguments, but that does not mean that it is ever appropriate to use such arguments to argue for p.

Hitchcock himself acknowledges the distinction between pragmatic constraints on making an inference and requirements for the validity of an inference (Hitchcock, 2019a, p. 34). The fact that the current example fails to satisfy the pragmatic constraints on making an inference to "so which type of drunk are you?" would tell us nothing about whether the inference in question actually is what option (e) says it is. Granted, if one thinks the arguments *are* the act types, then the goodness conditions of arguments and the appropriateness conditions of instantiations of act types might look more plausibly to be about the same thing (and so easy to conflate). Even if an act type theorist does make the distinction, as Hitchcock does, it is perfectly possible that a propositional theorist and Hitchcock could agree on the set of 'argument goodness conditions' and 'arguing appropriateness conditions' even if they disagreed about which condition went into which category. In other words, they could agree on what it would take to have a good, appropriately argued, argument, even while disagreeing about what would make the argument good or the arguing appropriate. But then the propositional theorist and the act type theorist are not really disagreeing about the goodness-appropriateness of the "you are a drunk of type 4, …" example.

A more significant challenge to option (e) are examples of what Hitchcock calls open-ended questions, i.e. questions without a complete finite list of direct answers. Hitchcock points to examples such as:

> We justify questions, so how does that work

or

> There's no room for bigotry in sport, so why is harassment still rife?

as cases in which the conclusion question does not have a finite list of direct answers. If there is no finite list of direct answers, then one might say there is no corresponding disjunction and so option (e) will fail in cases involving open-ended questions.

One might wonder whether 'finite' is really a necessary condition for adequate disjunctive analysis or whether there really isn't a finite list of answers to the relevant questions—it is just that we are not sure what that finite list is. For example, while certain facts about human psychology or sociology or economics may be in the list of options for "why harassment is still rife in sport", facts about poetry, the formation of solar systems, or the flowering properties of certain plants will not. So an advocate of option (e) might not yet be convinced that Hitchcock's examples do not have an adequate disjunctive analysis.

But if we assume that arguers in general know or are at least able to roughly articulate what it is they are arguing for, then the problem with open-ended questions is not that such questions might not have a finite list of direct answers, but that even if they, do, the list is unknown to the arguer, such that the arguer cannot even roughly articulate what the list is. Hence, option (e) would commit arguers, in certain situations, to arguing for propositions they were not aware of and could not articulate. Indeed, the inability to articulate what the arguer was arguing for, was, in the case of the first option, used to suggest that Hitchcock's examples might not even be arguings. Options (b) or (c), which deal with the arguer's wants or the receiver's obligations, would avoid this problem, but we have already seen that such options have a different problem-viz., making the proffered reasons irrelevant.

Hence, the challenge for defenders of Option 2 is to give a propositional analysis of questions that both makes the reasons given, at least sometimes, actually reasons for that proposition and allows the arguer to be able to articulate what the proposition is that is being argued for. So far, no given option for analyzing questions as propositions satisfies both conditions simultaneously. I turn then to another option for dealing with Hitchcock's examples.

4. OPTION 3: SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE QUESTIONS IS THE CONCLUSION

Consider the following quite devious example:

> There are arguments with just two premises, so there are arguments with just one premise.

On first read, you might think that Devious is not a very good argument, but I say, on the basis of Devious, you ought to believe the conclusion—after all, Devious itself is an example of an argument with just one premise. Hence, I can use Devious to argue for the conclusion. But notice that it is a mistake to think that the apparent reason given in Devious, viz. that there are arguments with just two premises, is actually the reason I am giving to justify the conclusion, rather the fact that Devious itself is a single premise argument is the reason you should believe the conclusion. Hence, Devious can be used to argue for the conclusion, without its explicitly given reason being the reason for the conclusion. More precisely, I can utter Devious to argue for Devious' conclusion, but in doing so, the actual argument I am making is:

> Devious is an argument with a single premise, so there are arguments with just one premise.[4]

In other words, even if we have what looks like a genuine argument expression, there is no guarantee that the argument actually being made involves the reasons given in the argument expression.

Could the same sort of thing happen with what looks like the conclusion in a given expression? Could someone use an argument expression to argue for something other than what looks like the explicitly given conclusion? Absolutely. Just consider being asked to convince someone that there are single premise arguments and replying with:

> There are arguments with a single premise, so Aristotle is a centipede.

Should you now be convinced that there are arguments with a single premise? Yes, because that example is itself a single premise argument. Hence, I use the example to argue for the claim that there are single premise arguments and not the explicitly given conclusion that Aristotle is a centipede. [Note that here too, the explicitly uttered reason is not the reason for the target conclusion either.]

If Hitchcock's examples are such cases, then one could grant that people use expressions such as 'X, so Y?' to argue, but deny that they are using those expressions to argue for 'Y?'. What might they be arguing for instead? Some sort of suitability condition on the asking of the question. In general terms, the current proposal is that expressions of the form 'X, so Y?' are shorthand for something like:

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[4] See Goddu, 2012 and Sorensen, 1991 for discussion of more examples like Devious.

'X +[context of utterance], so it is Z to ask Y. Y?'

Options for Z would be words such as 'appropriate', 'permissible', 'obligatory', 'optimal', and so on. Perhaps one of these options would work for all cases of 'X, so Y?' or perhaps what the suitability condition is for asking Y would itself depend on contextual features. Regardless, the conclusion of the argument being made using instances of 'X, so Y?' is not 'Y?', but rather, 'it is Z to ask Y', which is unproblematic for a propositional account of arguments.

Here is the application of the proposal to some of Hitchcock's examples using 'appropriateness' as the suitability condition. A precondition of appropriately asking *how* something does x is that the something does x. Hence, a precondition of it being appropriate to ask, how does justifying questions work, is that we actually justify questions. So what an arguer might do is try to get the audience to accept that the appropriateness condition holds, i.e. assert that we justify questions and now that the situation has been framed to allow the question, the arguer asks the question. But if we were to express what was going on more explicitly we might say:

> We justify questions. [That is puzzling and not at all obvious how that might happen.] Hence, it is appropriate to ask how that works. How does that work?

Similarly, in a context of ubiquitous smart phone use, the fact that your smart phone is making you stupid, antisocial, and unhealthy is puzzling—there is an apparent mismatch between the prevalent use and the negative consequences. Hence, it is appropriate to wonder why we cannot seem to stop using our phones and perhaps even to request an explanation for why we cannot put our phones down.

Given that the arguer is, on this option, really just providing reasons for the appropriateness of asking the question, rather than the asking of the question itself, we can explain why the illative removal from Hitchcock's examples does not diminish the communicative force—we were never justifying the question to begin with. The utterance of "We justify questions" (with no objection) in a context in which that is puzzling and not at all obvious how that might happen (at least to the speaker) is enough for the audience to infer that asking "how does that work" is appropriate. Hence, there is no surprise when the speaker actually goes on to ask the question.

This option is also consistent with our intuitions about how the apparent force of Hitchcock's examples can change when used in different contexts. If one utters "There are four kinds of drunk, so which

are you?" at a meeting of the American Temperance Society, one might respond that no one here drinks or is a drunk, so even if there are four types of drunk, asking the question is not appropriate. But if uttered at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, the fact there are four types of drunk does contribute to the appropriateness of asking "which type are you?"[5]

I finish by considering a potential objection to Option 3. Hitchcock himself acknowledges the possibility of reconstructing his examples "as being really arguments for something else. For example, what looks like an argument for a question could be construed as an argument that the question is worth investigating" (Hitchcock, 2019a, p. 36). As an example, he points to Christoph Lumer's 2014 "Practical arguments for prudential justifications of actions" in which Lumer attempts to accommodate 'justifying actions' into his epistemological approach to argument, which is definitely propositional.

Hitchcock himself does not object to this possibility, so I do not include Hitchcock as one who might try to point to his justifying questions examples as a means to refute propositional accounts of arguments. Regardless, one might still take Lumer's repeated talk of arguments justifying and motivating the performance of an action, as the basis for two potential objections. First, while the reasons might indeed be used to argue for the appropriateness or worthiness of the question, they are *also* being used to argue for the asking of the question itself. Second, though we sometimes say that an argument justifies some further claim, what we really mean is that the conclusion of that argument justifies some further claim. Hence, the objector might be asking Option 3 to deal with the following sort of example:

> We justify questions, so it is appropriate to ask how justifying questions works, so how does justifying questions work?

But on either objection there are still arguings that the propositional account cannot accommodate.

I begin with the second objection, though the response to both is ultimately the same—we do not really justify actions of any kind, so we do not justify the asking of questions. So what should an Option 3 advocate say about:

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[5] Note that this is not to say that Hitchcock cannot also account for these differences across context. In this particular case, he would just say that the inference to the question fails in the first context because the fact that there are four types of drunk, along with the context, does not entail that the question has a true direct answer, whereas in the second context it does. But again, I am not trying to show that Hitchcock's account is wrong—merely that a propositional theory of arguments can account for Hitchcock's examples.

> it is appropriate to ask how justifying questions works, so how does justifying questions work?

They should be Option 1 advocates in this case and deny that this instantiates or expresses an argument. Unlike the first 'so', the second 'so' is removable without loss of communicative force. Additionally, "We justify questions, so it is appropriate to ask how justifying questions works" is reversible while "it is appropriate to ask how justifying questions works, so how does justifying questions work?" is not.

More generally, we should deny, despite the ubiquity of locutions such as "justify your actions" or "justification of actions" as in Lumer's title, that we, in fact, justify actions at all. We may justify the appropriateness or goodness or worthiness or optimality or correctness of actions, but we do not justify the actions themselves.

Fully arguing for this claim is well beyond the scope of this paper, but I will at least gesture at some support for it. Firstly, while reasons can necessitate a proposition, reasons cannot necessitate an action. I could give you all the reasons in the world and you could accept those reasons, but with no *desire* to act in accord with those reasons you could still fail to perform the action. Of course, those very reasons might necessitate the truth of 'you ought to perform that action' , but even recognizing the obligation is not enough to actually perform the action. One potential way to explain why reasons cannot necessitate actions is that actions just are not the sort of thing that can be justified, so of course they cannot be necessitated by reasons.

Secondly, imagine a computer that has certain programmed goals. Imagine also that it has a mechanism for getting input from its environment that allows it to generate various potential courses of action for achieving its goals. Suppose also that it has a program for evaluating the various possible courses of action open to it and determine which one or ones of those, according to its given parameters, would be 'appropriate' or perhaps even 'best' at least relative to its goals. Now suppose that having reached this judgement it has the following sort of mechanism in place: If in situation x, and action y is the best action, then do action y. Suppose the computer is in situation x and has gone through the possible actions evaluation process and the result is that action y is the best action. Unsurprisingly, the computer performs action y.

Now suppose we wanted to challenge the programmer of the computer on the grounds that we thought the resulting action was the 'wrong' action—it is not what the computer ought to have done in situation x given its goals. Where is our challenge to be directed? We might criticize the mechanism for generating options from its environment, especially if it misses some relevant options. We might

worry that the mechanism for recognizing which situation it is in is faulty. Suppose we fix those issues and yet the computer still performs what we take to be a 'suboptimal' action. The only place left to criticize is the program for evaluating options. Something has gone wrong in the process of determining what is the best action. Perhaps we will argue that the calculation needs a better mechanism for weighting the consequences of certain options, or the probability of success of certain options, or how options are to be compared with each other or whatever. What we will not criticize is the part of the program that actually generates the action, viz. the "if all these conditions are met, then perform action y" link. Why not? Because that link is not a part of the justification of the action—at best it is part of the explanation for the action because that link, given the input (i) from the evaluation mechanism about the best action and (ii) from the perception mechanism about being in a certain situation *causes* the action.

But the same is true for human beings—when asked to justify our actions we are not interested in what caused them (except insofar as appealing to the cause might eliminate the appropriateness of the request to justify them.) We are interested in what decision making process generated the candidate action as the 'best' or the 'one to put into the engagement queue.' Once the chosen option is in the engagement queue, assuming goals and desires and other beliefs do not change, we expect, given no external impediment, the action to be performed. Hence, the only sense in which we truly justify our actions is via justifying the appropriateness of the action.

Finally, a puzzle for those who would claim we justify actions and adopt some sort of act type theory of arguments. Suppose Hitchcock insists that in his examples we really are arguing for or justifying the act of asking the question. But what then to make of allegedly non-controversial standard cases such as:

> Socrates is human, so Socrates is mortal.

The conclusion is an instantiation of an act type—presumably some sort of asserting that Socrates is mortal. If, in the case of question conclusions, the reasons are meant to support the act of asking the question, then by parallel in the case of standard arguments the reasons should be justifying the act of asserting the fact that Socrates is mortal. But the claim that Socrates is human, does not justify the act of asserting that Socrates is mortal, nor would the act of claiming that Socrates is human. What would, assuming justifying actions makes sense, justify asserting that Socrates is mortal? Things like believing that it is true and desiring to share the truth with others, etc. But those things are radically different than the reason actually given, viz. that Socrates is

human or even the claiming that Socrates is human. But then it looks like in most, if not all, standard cases, if we interpret the conclusion being justified as the act of asserting the conclusion, then the offered reasons will just not be the reasons for that act—in which case, according to the act type theory all arguments are bad arguments. Oops!

Hitchcock might try to get around this problem by allowing that we have justificatory relations both supporting propositions and supporting actions. Call these p-justification and a-justification respectively. Assume the advocate for a propositional account of arguments accepts both kinds of justification (though given the arguments above they might not.) Now the question becomes which sort of justification is relevant to 'arguing for'? The Option 3 advocate says just p-justification. Hence, we do not, contra Hitchcock, argue for questions (or the act of asking questions), since a-justification, whatever it is, is not arguing. Of course, Hitchcock might claim that both p-justification and a-justification are types of arguing. But recall, I have repeatedly said I am not trying to show that Hitchcock's claim that we do not argue for questions is false, even if I have given some indications that it might be. Instead, I am merely interested in showing how a propositional account of arguments can accommodate Hitchcock's examples and Option 3 advocates can do that—either by denying that we justify actions at all or by denying that a-justification is arguing.

5. CONCLUSION

There may be other ways than the options I have explored here for resisting Hitchcock's examples, ways not necessarily tied to a propositional account of argument. For example, some theorists have suggested, at least in conversation, that the speaker is not arguing for the question, but rather engaged in a sort of burden of proof shifting. These other ways have not been my concern here.

I also grant that ultimately the difference between Hitchcock and myself might be merely terminological—what he affirms when he says we argue for or justify questions might be different than what I deny when I suggest that we do not. But I hope that my attempt to sort through what options are available and the consequences of those options might still provide some groundwork for clarifying further potential disputes between propositional accounts of arguments and act-type accounts.

Regardless, my ultimate concern has not been with the question of whether we argue for questions, but whether a propositional account of argument can account for Hitchcock's examples that appear to be

arguings for questions. Such an account could, but need not, deny that there are arguings that involve interrogative speech acts, any more than it need deny that there are arguings that involve imperatives or exclamations or pictures or judo flips. In general, propositional accounts can accommodate non-linguistic argument expressions and arguings, just so long as there is a way to articulate what propositional argument the expression expresses or the arguing enacts. Hence, if all Hitchcock is claiming is that there are arguings that involve interrogatives, then we do not disagree. But unless a viable option of reinterpreting questions as propositions is forthcoming, the most viable path for the propositional account is to deny that we are either arguing for the question or arguing for (or justifying) the act that is the asking of the question—we are, at best, arguing for the appropriateness of asking the question.

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