

Argumentation Library

J. Anthony Blair

Introduction by Christopher W. Tindale

Groundwork in the Theory of Argumentation

Selected Papers of J. Anthony Blair

 Springer

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GROUNDWORK IN THE THEORY OF ARGUMENTATION

Selected Papers of J. Anthony Blair

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Introduction by Christopher W. Tindale

 Springer

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Preface

The chapters comprising this book are papers chosen to represent the span over time and the range over topics of my scholarly publications during the past 30 or so years. They vary in length from short to long, and in style from chatty to technical. All but the first have been previously published, but they are scattered among a variety of sources, some out of print, others difficult to access. So this book brings together in one place a fairly representative sample of my thinking over that period about informal logic, reasoning, critical thinking, argument, argumentation, dialectic and rhetoric.

The chapters are grouped into four parts by broad topic. The parts, and the chapters within them are, with several exceptions, in roughly chronological order. Each part begins with a brief Introduction explaining what motivated the chapters in it, and ends with a brief Postscript stating where I now stand on each one.

Windsor, ON, Canada

J. Anthony Blair

Acknowledgements

Several people have for some time suggested that I should publish a selection of my papers. The first was Robert Pinto, followed soon by Hans Hansen and then Frans van Eemeren. When Christopher Tindale moved to Windsor, he added his voice, as recently so did Frank Zenker. A year ago, Frank, Hans and Chris pressed me to act, with Chris committing to serving as my editorial advisor. Frans then suggested the project for Springer's Argumentation Library book series. I owe all these friends and colleagues my thanks for encouraging and supporting this venture. Special thanks to Chris for taking the time from his busy teaching, research and travel schedule to advise about the selection and organization, to read the entire contents, to write the Introduction, to copy edit and generally shepherd the book along.

These papers have been written over my academic career. My colleagues at the University of Windsor, first Ralph Johnson, Bob Pinto, and Kate Parr, later Hans Hansen and Chris Tindale, and most recently the resident and visiting Fellows of the Centre for Research in Reasoning, Argumentation and Rhetoric, have afforded through their conversation and constructive critical advice an ideal atmosphere in which to develop ideas. I am particularly grateful to Ralph, with whom for over 40 years I have had what has to be the best mutually supportive collaborative scholarly relationship that can be imagined. I also thank Frans van Eemeren, who involved me from the beginning in the International Society for the Study of Argumentation, the ISSA conferences, and other working visits to the University of Amsterdam, thereby affording me a privileged vantage point in the argumentation scholarly community from the earliest days of its 20th century renaissance.

I am grateful to my philosophy teachers at McGill and Michigan. There are many to thank for their influence among Canadian and American philosophers, but I would single out David Hitchcock, Trudy Govier, Leo Groarke, Michael Gilbert, Douglas Walton and John Woods in Canada, and Robert Ennis, Maurice Finocchiaro, James Freeman, Nicholas Rescher, Michael Scriven, and Harvey Siegel, in the U.S. Among speech communication scholars: Thomas Goodnight, Jean Goodwin, Sally Jackson, Scott Jacobs, the late Michael Leff, Barbara O'Keefe, Daniel O'Keefe, Joseph Wenzel, Charles Arthur Willard and David Zarefsky. Among European scholars: especially Frans van Eemeren and the late Rob Grootendorst, but also Alec Fisher, the late Peter Houtlosser, Erik Krabbe and Francisca Snoeck Henkemans.

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Although I cannot here name them, I am sensible of my debt to the administrative officers and support staff at the University of Windsor over my career there. They have been extremely helpful to me and supportive of my academic projects and activities.

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I have saved the expression of my deepest gratitude to the last. I thank my wife, June Blair, for her unfailing support, her loyalty, her encouragement, her sacrifices, and above all, her love. I dedicate this book to her.

Windsor, ON, Canada

J. Anthony Blair

Introduction

Philosopher of Argument

Few names command a stronger association with recent trends in argumentation theory and particularly informal logic than that of J. Anthony Blair. Since the early 1970s he has stood at the forefront of pedagogical and theoretical work in informal logic, and since the early 1980s has been an international figure in the growing field of argumentation studies. That such a reputation as a leader of considerable stature is well deserved will be borne out by the chapters collected here, covering 30 years of activity from 1981 to 2011. Blair's work is a mirror reflecting the ideas and issues that have occupied argumentation theorists over the last three decades, and the reader will detect an emerging complexity of thought as problems become identified, carefully explored, and then solutions offered.

The voice you will hear talking in these pages is that of a trained philosopher (from McGill University in Montreal and the University of Michigan) in conversation with a range of audiences, but most particularly concerned to persuade himself of the routes he takes and the conclusions he draws. In a style at once austere and intimate Blair starts many explorations from the ground up. We see this in the study of bias ([Chapter 3](#)), where he begins disentangling the various types of bias that may exist, and clarifying meanings for the reader before proceeding to offer his observations. And in a 1992 paper on premissary relevance ([Chapter 6](#)), he uses the opening pages to set down how someone would explore the very act of arguing. Thus as an introduction to not just the subject of argumentation but how to think about it intelligently, Blair's work is a handbook of insight and instruction. Throughout the chapters, we observe a dedicated scholar reasoning through some basic problems in argumentation theory, opening doors, and inviting reflection, comment and disagreement. The conclusions are often tentative and alert to the need for continuing work on a topic. But at the same time many of the observations are clearly prescient, anticipating questions that will come to form the research agendas of others or pointing to the importance of a topic (like argumentation schemes) that will later become a popular subject for the community to discuss.

There is also a measured attempt to deal with matters that have real applications to the world in which we live. From the early study of the notorious Keegstra case

in Canada (Chapter 2), to the various places in which images distract us in our daily lives (Chapter 16), these studies are engaged with the kinds of issues that have concerned us over the last few decades and which continue to involve us. The impetus that prompted the early work in informal logic—to “focus on the actual natural arguments used in public discourse” (Blair & Johnson, 1980, p. x)—remains throughout these studies. When the subject matter is distinctly theoretical, as when, for example, the author explores the possibility of integrating different approaches to argument, the reason for doing so has a practical pay-off.

One clear train of inquiry in the chapters concerns the nature and value of informal logic. Even when he moves onto other related fields and questions, the theory of informal logic is never far in the background. But as Blair is clear to remind the reader (See Chapter 8, note 2), while his pioneering work on informal logic was conducted in tandem with Ralph Johnson, when each of them writes under his own name the ideas and conclusions are those of that individual alone. So future historians of informal logic (as surely there will be) will find invaluable the studies here which, when matched against Johnson’s own papers (*The Rise of Informal Logic*, 1996a), reveal both the common threads of thought and the points on which they diverge. Indeed, the distinctiveness of the thoughts permeating the chapters is one of the attractive features of the collection.

Theoretical Threads

Some of these distinct features might be rehearsed here to give a preliminary picture of the general theoretical approach that Blair takes to the study of argument. Argument itself, for example, is for Blair a normative concept (Chapter 14). An argument at core consists of a proposition with a consideration (that can include more than one proposition) that supports it. Thus there cannot be an argument on his terms with no support. But stressing the normative nature of argument is not a break from the insistence on the importance of context, since the identification of an argument depends on an understanding of the situation in which it occurs. Moreover, argument needs to be understood by virtue of its *uses*. This is a central claim of several chapters (e.g., 13, 14). There are not different types, modes, or models of argument or argumentation, only different uses and different perspectives in light of which to interpret and assess them. It follows from this that no single use of argument can be its exemplary or primary one. Attempts in that direction are predicted to fail.

Other concepts beside argument take on important senses in Blair’s work, including those of dialectic, rhetoric and logic itself. In reviewing the relationships between the members of this triad (Chapter 18), he is careful to assign them particular argumentative functions such that none of them can be emphasized to the exclusion of the others if we want to develop a fully comprehensive model of argument. Looked at from the point of view of rhetoric, argumentation’s function is communicative. In fact, what argumentation best draws from the diverse

ideas and practices associated with rhetoric is rhetoric's study of norms for most effectively achieving the purposes and goals of argumentative discourse in a situation. From a different perspective—that of dialectic, the function of argumentation is to address conflict-resolution. And from the perspective of logic, the functions are epistemic and justificatory. In Blair's view, argumentation will always have all of these functions to some degree. Thus, none is given priority.

A further way in which an "integrationist" concern comes through in the chapters is with regard to the prospect of seeing connections between the different theoretical approaches to the treatment of argumentation. As he points out in [Chapter 15](#), incompatible theories cannot be assimilated. But his careful assessment of some of the major theories that have developed over the last three decades reveals greater degrees of compatibility than might be expected. What appear to be conflicting concepts turn out to be just different concepts, and disagreements are not so deep as first imagined. In other cases, what were taken to be real incompatibilities turn out to be compatible after all. Again, it is the trained philosopher who is able to make such a case for potential integration on the basis of a careful study of the concepts and theories involved.

A final distinction of Blair's approach, connected to the view of logic above, is his claim that the most fundamental argumentative dialogue is not the critical discussion, but the epistemic investigation. This will be a controversial conclusion, particularly for readers brought up on the principles of pragma-dialectics or versed in Walton's dialogue approach. But it is a thesis carefully defended through showing how the critical discussion model applies to epistemic investigations. And it is a thesis that invites further consideration, while at the same time capturing the logical and investigative thrust of Blair's own inquiries represented in this volume.

Master of the Field

The issues and ideas explored in these chapters are impressively comprehensive when one considers what has been important in the development of the field. Little passes Blair's notice or escapes his comment. The figures addressed in these pages constitute a Who's Who of important theorists. Readers will be able to rehearse the ideas of Toulmin, Scriven, Perelman, van Eemeren, Walton and Rescher, and perhaps gain their first acquaintance with those of Wisdom and Wellman. Given the deep entrenchment in the history and theory of Informal Logic, we would expect to meet Govier, Hitchcock and Johnson in these pages, but there is also a serious engagement with rhetoric and the ideas of rhetoricians who have shown an interest in argumentation theory, like Leff, Hauser and Wenzel.

Similarly, and as already noted, the inquiry into relevant ideas extends far beyond the interests of Informal Logic and its connections with argumentation theory to look seriously at the new rhetoric project and the strengths and weaknesses of pragma-dialectics. The latter, judged a version of pragma-dialectical theory in general ([Chapter 20](#)), and applauded for this, is examined in several of the later chapters, reflecting Blair's ongoing interest in dialectical reasoning.

It is, however, for insights into the theory and practice of Informal Logic that readers might most turn to Blair's writings. They will not be disappointed, finding here considerations of some of the central ideas that comprised his and Johnson's ground-breaking work, including an attempt to reconsider the highly influential RSA criteria of their approach to Informal Logic: Relevance, Sufficiency, and Acceptability ([Chapter 8](#)).

While Blair shows a keen interest in matters of critical thinking, and appreciation of some of the core ideas involved (See [Chapter 2](#)), Informal Logic is carefully distinguished from critical thinking ([Chapter 4](#)) and the logic of Informal Logic explored. In defining Informal Logic in distinction to critical thinking and what he calls argument management, Blair argues that it cannot be reduced to either. Argument management involves the interpretation, structural analysis, and evaluation of arguments, a set of practices that in combination represent argument assessment. Argument criticism then works with the evaluation. But argument management does not address the illative core (which is an important feature of Blair's approach to arguments), and so Informal Logic cannot be identified with argument management, since it is both argument management and the study of illative norms. It then follows that the relation of critical thinking to Informal Logic will be complex. Those who would identify the two must first show how critical thinking is identical with either argument management or the study of illative core cogency. Critical thinking, however, "is a skill and attitude of mind" and not a branch of any particular discipline in the way that Informal Logic is a branch of logic. So Informal Logic and critical thinking cannot be equated, and Blair offers an historical explanation for why people may have thought otherwise.

The question of what logic is involved remains. While the early war with formal deductive logic is long past ([Chapter 15](#)), a clear statement of the specific norms for logical evaluation of arguments has proved difficult to formulate. In two central chapters, Blair tackles this issue head-on. In [Chapter 9](#) he reviews several prominent theorists in investigating whether there is an agreed alternative to deductive validity and inductive strength, concluding that there is significant support for the legitimacy of reasoning non-conclusively from grounds that provide presumptive support, the key illative move that Blair endorses. In what might be seen as part two of this investigation ([Chapter 10](#)), he gives what he takes to be the "logic" of Informal Logic. Informal Logic is indeed a logic because it provides "the norms that warrant the inferences of arguments."

The criteria for evaluating arguments in Informal Logic receive some serious further attention in these chapters, particularly Sufficiency ([Chapters 5 and 8](#)) and Relevance ([Chapters 6 and 8](#)). [Chapter 5](#) sets out the problem of insufficiency as it affects evaluations and reviews various solutions. In the view expressed there, to be sufficient an argument must meet the burdens of proof in a field. In [Chapter 6](#) he argues that (premissary) relevance cannot be defined in terms of causing (or increasing or inclining one to) support because a premise can be relevant although it fails to cause someone to accept the conclusion. What is needed, it is argued, is to focus on the inference warrant that takes us from premises to conclusion, because it is this warrant that makes explicit how we take premises to link to the conclusion, and thus grounds our belief that the premises are relevant.

In the review of the RSA criteria provided in [Chapter 8](#), Blair takes on the objection that relevance is unnecessary as a criterion because its judgment is already contained in the judgment of sufficiency: if the premise set is sufficient to support the conclusion, then it is also relevant. Through a detailed investigation of the objections that have been raised against the relevance criterion, he argues that we still need it if only to interpret arguments (prior to evaluating them). This leads to a qualified “yes” to the central question of the chapter—and an important one for the development of Informal Logic—we do still need the three criteria. But the qualifications he attaches to retaining all three are nuanced and complex, and are sure to invite further consideration.

Prophetic Voice

As a frontline worker or pioneer in a field that has witnessed considerable advances over the last three decades, Blair has not only seen its major themes unfold but has also anticipated some of them, calling for their study before others awoke to such possibilities. Two such themes are currently receiving a lot of popular attention: visual arguments and argumentation themes.

Two chapters on visual arguments (16 and 19) find their origins 6 years apart, and between those years the subject advances from one that is plausible but has to be rigorously investigated, to a topic that has achieved a wide degree of acceptance but still needs to be assigned its appropriate place within the field. In asking whether there are such things as visual arguments, he first decides that nothing in principle would prevent them from existing. But that still leaves open the question of whether they, indeed, exist. They do, he decides; it’s just that they are not significantly different from verbal arguments ([Chapter 16](#)). Later, with the category established, Blair explores the rhetoric of visual arguments, excluding many cases before assigning them their place in the field of rhetoric ([Chapter 19](#)). Part of what should interest the reader here, however, is the way we are made privy to an important moment in the development of the field, as a controversial topic achieves a mark of legitimacy, but not without first being subjected to the demands of a full inquiry.

Argument (or argumentation) schemes have an even longer life under Blair’s microscope, from an earlier period that finds him advocating further study, to his own deep investigations of the fruits of others’ labors. As early as 1990 ([Chapter 5](#)) he points out that further work is needed on the concept of “argument types,” attracted as he was then by the early studies of van Eemeren and Kruiger (1987). The same call is found a few years later after he observes a “renewed interest” in argumentation schemes (that is, renewed from the interest shown by Aristotle in *topoi*) and makes a plea for more normative work on inference warrants with the formulation of acceptable argument schemes appearing as one way to do so.

Such further work is indeed engaged in by Blair and others, and [Chapter 10](#) provides an excellent discussion of several schemes and an additional recommendation of the approach. Subsequent work sees a careful critical review of Douglas Walton’s

argumentation schemes for presumptive reasoning (Chapter 11) and his own presentation of what he calls normative reasoning schemes (Chapter 12). In the review of Walton he asks some fundamental questions of argumentation schemes: from where do they come, and from where do they derive their probative force? The origins of the Walton list had not been clear, and their cogency had been taken for granted by a number of theorists. But not by Blair. In similar fashion, he challenges the critical questions that accompany the schemes. What motivates these questions, and how do we know when a list is complete?

Gatekeeper

In posing such probing questions of a tool that he so clearly admires, we see the full extent of the epistemic demands Blair continues to make of the theories and ideas that have emerged in argumentation theory. He has become not just a champion of the field but also one of its severest critics, a gatekeeper of sorts, keen to ensure that all that is passed down to future scholars is fully justified, coherent and tested. And this not the least of what deserves our gratitude.

Readers will meet in these developing chapters a scholar finding his voice, growing in confidence and in conviction, becoming firmer in drawing conclusions. But that same, keen philosophical methodology that was put to work 30 years ago serves him throughout. No matter what issue, theorist or theory is the subject of discussion, we always find him engaged in that most fundamental of dialogue types, the investigation. Readers should feel privileged to be partners in these inquiries, from which they will profit in so many ways.

The book itself needs no recommendation. The reputation that precedes it is endorsement enough. Many of these chapters would have been lost to the field if not collected here, and others that may be familiar will take on new meanings when juxtaposed against those around them. Most importantly, we are able to see the full range of a theorist who has been so central a part of the field for so long, and to judge the merits of what he has accomplished. This is one case where the whole will be found to be greater than the parts.

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Christopher W. Tindale

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Part I
Critical Thinking

Introduction

I became involved in thinking about reasoning, logic, and arguments in 1972–1973 when I was drafted to help teach a new course in “applied logic” that had been created by Ralph Johnson the previous year. My doctoral studies at the University of Michigan (1964–1967) had focused on philosophical ethics and political philosophy, and it was courses in these areas that I had primarily taught at the University of Windsor since being hired there in 1967. The aim of the applied logic course was to improve students’ abilities to appreciate, analyze and evaluate the arguments they encountered in the course of their lives, especially their everyday lives as citizens, workers and consumers. At the time, I regarded argumentation skills as more or less identical to skills in critical thinking.

The first chapter in this section, “Is There an Obligation to Reason Well?” exhibits the combination of my background in moral philosophy and this interest in critical thinking. I argue there that there is a *prima facie* moral obligation to try to reason well. Thus there is a moral justification for research in reasoning and argument, for if one ought to learn how to do these well, then those charged with teaching them ought to instruct to the best of their abilities, and that requires acquiring as sound an understanding of reasoning and argument as possible.

One of the issues that came up in early conferences about critical thinking in the 1980s was whether it could be taught across the curriculum, and if so, how it might be taught in different disciplines. The second chapter, “The Keegstra Affair: A Test Case for Critical Thinking,” is an attempt via a case study to explore at least some of what learning to think critically in history classes in high school might involve. Keegstra was a Holocaust denier who was also a high school history teacher in Alberta, and who was barred from teaching for allegedly inculcating his beliefs in his classroom.

As the concept of critical thinking was refined by various analyses during the 1980s, a distinction was made between teaching the skills of critical thinking and teaching the disposition to think critically. One feature of the latter was widely agreed to be the trait of being unbiased. I happened to come across two contradictory claims about the nature of bias—that everyone is unavoidably biased, and that bias is a defect—contradictory, at least, if one doesn’t want to embrace the doctrine of original sin. These contrasting views led me to explore the nature of the concept of bias, and resulted in the chapter, “What Is Bias?” which supplies an analysis.

Chapter 1

Is There an Obligation to Reason Well?

1.1 Introduction

This question first occurred to me in a philosophical context. I was reading a journal article by the Australian philosopher Thomas Richards about public attitudes about reasoning. He observes that it is pretty widely taken for granted that each of us is entitled to his or her own opinion. This is something most people believe, but Richards himself thinks this popular view is mistaken. To emphasize his distaste for this position—“that each of us has an equal right to hold and express a belief, not matter what that belief is”—Richards labels it “The Principle of Bastardized Liberalism” (Richards, 1979, p. 3). He argues that it is wrong on the ground that “you have a positive obligation to determine your opinions only by the light of reasoning and evidence” (ibid., p. 4). Now if this is right, it occurred to me, then you must also have an obligation to reason *well*. For, presumably Richards means that you have an obligation to determine your opinions only in the light of good reasoning, or at least in the light of the best reasoning you can muster. Moreover, if the best you can muster is not very good at all, presumably Richards would say you should learn how to reason better, indeed, how to reason well. There is no point in insisting that people have an obligation to make sure that their opinions stand up to critical scrutiny if the quality control mechanism is faulty. So the obligation to hold only those opinions that are carefully checked out “by the light of reasoning and evidence” implies the obligation to reason well.

The question has general and serious implications. If we do have this obligation, then philosophers ought to start figuring out what is involved in reasoning well, and psychologists ought to start figuring out how to teach it, if it can be taught. And if it can, schools at all levels ought to make sure it is covered somehow by the curriculum. Finally, everyone ought, as far as they are able, to acquire the ability to reason well, and to exercise this ability.

I take it that the kind of obligation in question is *moral* obligation. We might speak of a *logical* obligation to reason well, but such an obligation—if the concept

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of obligation is applicable here at all—is, I think, unproblematic. For, once you think of it for a moment, it is just obvious that if there can be logical obligation there is a logical obligation to reason well. To talk about a logical obligation would be to talk about what one is bound to do from the point of view of considerations of logic—what is right, from a logical point of view. “Logic” is the name for the field whose subject matter is the norms of good reasoning, so reasoning well is *by definition* reasoning logically. So there’s no point in questioning—from the logical point of view—whether one should reason well. One might as well ask whether there is any reason—from the point of view of hockey—to skate, pass, execute plays, and shoot well. So if the question is to make sense at all, it must be a question about our obligation from some other point of view than the logical point of view. And it is pretty clear that the point of view Richards himself has in mind, and an interesting point of view, is the moral.

1.2 Moral Obligation and Reasoning Well

Before trying to answer the question, “Is there a moral obligation to reason well?” we should pause to be sure we are clear about what is being talked about—about moral obligation and about reasoning well. I’ll say something about each, in turn. First, moral obligation. I’ve said this is obligation from the moral point of view. That is, if we have a moral obligation to do something, that means we have an obligation, based on reasons of a moral nature, reasons from the moral point of view, to do it. So to be clear about “moral obligation” we must be clear about two things, obligation, and the moral point of view or morality.

The concept of obligation has both a wide and a narrow extension. In its broad sense, talk about obligations is talk about things we ought to do, ways we ought to behave or conduct ourselves. Thus all the principles of morality, from “Do good and avoid evil” at the most general to “Keep your promises” in the middle range of generality, to “Give me back the book you borrowed” at the more specific end of the range of generality—all these are called principles, rules or injunctions *of obligation*. In this sense the general theory of right conduct is called the theory of obligation (see Frankena’s distinction between “theory of value” and “theory of obligation” in *Ethics* 1973).

There is also a narrow sense of ‘obligation,’ in terms of which we distinguish between obligations, on one hand, duties, on another, and things we morally ought to do but which we have neither a duty nor an obligation to do, on yet a third hand. Richard Brandt and David Gauthier have, independently, come up with similar accounts of obligation in this narrow sense (Gauthier, 1963, pp. 193–206; Brandt, 1964, pp. 374–393). They identify as obligations those things we ought to do as a result of having made some explicit commitment, having entered into some explicit undertaking, or else as a result of having received or accepted some favor. Obligations are thus to be distinguished from duties, which are things we ought to do by virtue of occupying some specific role (e.g., student, teacher, parent; or accountant, lawyer, physician; member of parliament, House Leader; and so on).

There may well be some specific role one might occupy in virtue of which one has a duty to reason well—perhaps as a teacher of reasoning, for instance. Perhaps Richards and others who speak of obligations here really are speaking loosely and should use the term ‘duty’ to be more precise. But I think their point is not that only people in special roles ought to reason well, but that everyone ought to. And for the same reason that we shouldn’t speak of duty in the strict sense here, neither should we take the issue to be about obligations in the strict or narrow sense. Certainly if we undertake or promise to reason well (perhaps a person in accepting a teaching job makes such a commitment), we have an obligation to do so. But Richards and the others who speak of obligations in this connection would hold, I take it, that everyone, not just those who have made a promise, ought to reason well.

So I conclude that the real issue is not tied up with the use of the word ‘obligation’ in any narrow sense. And since the word ‘obligation’ in the broader sense simply covers everything we ought to do, I prefer to put the issue in these terms. The question becomes, then, “Are there good reasons, from the moral point of view, why we ought to reason well?” I take it also that the question is not about whether we should, in cases of conflict, sacrifice every other moral claim to reasoning well, but about whether, at least in the absence of overriding moral reasons to the contrary, we ought to reason well. It is a question about what we ought, *prima facie*, to do, rather than about what we ought *simpliciter* to do.

So much for the concept of obligation. I am saying that what we are in effect asking about is what there are good moral reasons, other things being equal, for doing. Now I must say something about morality, or the moral point of view.

What perspective are we taking when we are looking at things from the moral point of view, from the view of moral considerations? (Think of this as contrasted with looking at things from, say, the legal point of view, or the aesthetic point of view, or the religious point of view, or the prudential point of view.) There is a great deal of controversy about what the correct answer to this question is (see Castañeda & Nakhnikian, 1965, esp. [chaps. 1–3, 8, 9](#)). It would be too much of a digression for me to review the issues there, so I shall simply state the position that I find plausible and ask you to treat it as a working assumption of this chapter.

My own position, then, is that considering what to do from the moral point of view means taking into account reasons of a certain sort. Specifically, they are reasons having to do with how the proposed conduct affects the happiness or well being and welfare of other people who will be directly affected by it; how the conduct affects the welfare of the society when that is considered looking both at how things actually stand and also at how it would be good if things stood; whether the conduct is fair; and finally how the conduct affects my own well being. In other words, I think that taking the moral point of view involves considering how the proposed rule or practice or act will affect the welfare and well being of oneself, of others, and what is good in and for one’s society. You can see that this is a complex undertaking, likely to be riddled with internal tensions. But I think that the moral life is like that, and clear-cut decisions and choices within it are not always possible. Whether you think this rather vague characterization of what is involved in taking the moral point of view is correct as it stands, I am hoping that you will agree that

deciding what one ought to do on moral grounds involves looking at something like these considerations.

I'd like to emphasize one implication of there being moral reasons for doing something. If you fail to do it, and you don't have a good reason for failing, then you are morally responsible for your failure. That means other people are justified in blaming or condemning or censuring or perhaps punishing you. What response from others is justified, and which others may justifiably respond, will depend on the specific nature of your failure and the specific circumstances surrounding it. The general point is that when you have a *moral* responsibility, you are answerable to others. It is no longer a matter of just what is for your own good, or what you may happen to feel like doing.

We can now, I hope, get a clearer fix on the big question. I would have it read: "Are there good reasons from the moral point of view, with what that implies, for reasoning well?" One last ground-clearing task remains: we should be clear about what is involved in reasoning well. I will now say a few things about that.

(a) Obviously reasoning well is at least a kind of skill or ability. One acquires the ability to reason by practicing reasoning just as one acquires any other skill: by practicing it. (b) There are many domains in which reasoning can be put to work. Think of formulating arguments, or criticizing arguments, or solving problems, or making rational decisions—to name some of the main ones. (c) A skill in reasoning of one sort does not necessarily carry with it a skill in all sorts of reasoning. Students can become very good at criticizing arguments at the same time they are not terribly good at formulating their own arguments. Academics, who presumably are good at arguing in both respects, can be notoriously poor planners and decision makers. Other examples abound. (d) Reasoning well, of whatever sort, in a particular field or subject matter seems to require knowledge of that field. If you are trying to solve a problem in a particular field, you need to know about the various sorts of considerations that should be brought to bear on that problem. Hence you must know something about that field—say the various theories that exist there (those generally accepted, those that are controversial), the factors involved in the issue about which you are reasoning, and the sorts of problem-solving move appropriate there.

So a really good reasoner will have acquired a complex trait. It includes: (1) the mastery of a wide range of specific techniques (e.g., distinguishing, defining, classifying, inferring, generalizing, relating, and so on); (2) the mastery of different kinds of reasoning operation (e.g., arguing, problem solving, and so on); (3) a wide general knowledge together with an understanding that enables one to tell when additional knowledge is needed. (4) One who reasons well has a further characteristic, I believe. Robert Binkley has called this "love of reason" (Binkley, 1980, pp. 83, 88). A good reasoner not only has a certain set of skills; but she or he also has a certain attitude toward reasoning. She or he must not only reason well, but also want to reason well, enjoy reasoning well, value reasoning well. Reasoning well must hold an important place in her or his life (*ibid.*, 83).

Love of reason is needed partly because without it a person will not undertake the constant practice needed to keep the skills of good reasoning honed, nor will one be inclined to keep increasing one's knowledge and understanding so as to be

better equipped to reason about domain-specific issues. Being good at reasoning is more like being good at tennis than being able to swim or ride a bike: your tennis skills can get rusty and even deteriorate quite markedly. And unless you love playing tennis, you are unlikely to keep it up.

I think love of reason is itself something that is acquired along with the ability to reason well. That is, as you get better and better at it, you enjoy it more. When you get really good at reasoning, you can get the same delight from constructing a good argument or working out a good solution of a difficult problem that you can get from playing a good game of tennis when you play well. But as with tennis, the learning itself might be tedious and onerous at times, so that the love of the activity may come at the end of the effort instead of at the beginning. This is an over-simplification, of course, because in both sorts of learning the enjoyment that comes with successful effort occurs in bits and snatches far in advance of complete mastery. In the end, usually someone who gets to be really good at something gets to like doing it—as Aristotle noted in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X.

1.3 Two Arguments for the Obligation to Reason Well

Where am I? I want to see if we have a moral obligation to reason well. In order to think clearly about this issue, I have paused to sort out what it is that I am actually asking. If what I have been saying is correct, then what my question comes to is this: do we have reasons of a moral sort for having the skills and possessing the attitudes that constitute reasoning well? Are we answerable to others for reasoning well? I think the answer is, “Yes”, and I shall now try to show why. I have two kinds of argument to offer. The first kind takes the line that reasoning well is a necessary means to some things that there are moral reasons we should do. The second kind takes the line that reasoning well is itself partly constitutive of some things there are moral reasons we should seek or preserve. I’ll call the first the “means-end” argument. I have already alluded to it, for I think Richards offers a form of it in what I gave you of his views at the beginning of the chapter. The argument goes like this:

- P1: If in general we have a moral obligation to do something, then we have a moral obligation to do whatever else is necessary in order to do the first thing. If we have moral reasons to realize the end, then we have moral reasons to realize the necessary means to that end.
- P2: We have a moral obligation to avoid false beliefs and to pursue true beliefs.
- P3: Being able to reason well is necessary as a means of ascertaining true and false beliefs.
- C: We have a moral obligation to reason well.

I’m going to assume that Premise 1—the general principle—is uncontroversial. Premise 2 may be thought to be controversial. Jack Stevenson has defended it (Stevenson, 1975, pp. 229–253), and Alex Michalos has defended a view very

much like it (Michalos, 1978, chap. XIII, pp. 204–218), and I find their arguments persuasive. Stevenson offers the following argument against false beliefs. We should avoid false beliefs because they are one of the major sources of evil in the world (op. cit., pp. 248–249). Beliefs can cause actions, other beliefs, and attitudes. These in turn can affect how we treat others in our community. Think of the horrors caused by false beliefs about blacks, Jews, Protestants, Catholics. In our own time and our own country, think of the great harm done through institutions and practices based on false beliefs about women, about French Canadians, about native peoples. Or think of the small harms we do others as a result of false beliefs about their motives, intentions, or beliefs.

Michalos, borrowing from the 19th century English philosopher W. K. Clifford (1845–1879), adds this argument. If you are not concerned about holding false beliefs, you will encourage others to become careless about the truth of what they tell you (op. cit., pp. 208–209). Thus you will accumulate false beliefs, and so be more likely to spread them to others in turn, thus spreading the harm that false beliefs cause. Perhaps this argument should read as a specific instance of Stevenson’s general argument: one way false beliefs cause harm is that if we hold them we may increase their number and distribution and so cause others to be harmed by them.

Stevenson’s second argument seems to be both against false beliefs and in favour of true beliefs. He argues that, “a community’s survival and welfare depends in part on the stock of beliefs . . . which it receives from past generations and which it transmits to future generations. . . . Much of it will be generated and preserved by the community at large. We all, then, have a stake in seeing that this communal heritage is not seriously corrupted” (op. cit., 249). Thus we should maximize the truth content and minimize the falsehood content of the stock of common beliefs that contributes to the survival and welfare of the community. So, presumably, we should check out things like the pros and cons of atomic power stations, of American and other foreign investment in Canada, of reductions in federal funding of the universities, of fee increases, of the Liberal government’s National Energy Policy, and so on and on.

To this argument, Michalos adds another in favor of holding true beliefs, this one from the American philosopher William James (1842–1910). If we have an obligation to speak the truth—the obligation of honesty—then we have an obligation to try to find the truth (Michalos, op. cit., p. 214). At least insofar as we want to speak to others at all, assuming an obligation of honesty, we should find out the truth. Of course we could be honest just by saying whatever we honestly believe, but as Michalos points out, if that were the only moral requirement, there would be no good reason for an obligation to speak the truth. There is no particular virtue or community gain if people always say what they believe when they also believe whatever they like, for whatever reasons they like.

So it looks like there are moral reasons for avoiding false beliefs and pursuing true beliefs, and that means that Premise 2 is acceptable.

What about Premise 3? Is reasoning well necessary for arriving at true beliefs and avoiding false ones? I am talking here about what the best practical strategy is.

It is hard for me to think of any plausible alternative to reasoning. By and large—though, of course, not necessarily—true beliefs are those best supported by reasons and false beliefs have errors in the reasoning that supports them. Certainly sometimes beliefs that seemed well grounded turn out to be false (for example, the belief, held in October 1979 that Mr. Trudeau would not be Prime Minister of Canada in October 1980), and poorly supported beliefs are true (the mother and father believe their child will be cured, though all the indicators suggest otherwise, and the child does pull through). This just shows that reasoning well is not sufficient for avoiding falsehood and determining truth. Reasoning well is no guarantee, but it seems to be our best bet. Guesses and superstitions, such as reliance on omens, have bad track records. Another possibility is relying on someone else's judgment instead of reasoning well yourself, and that will work out satisfactorily provided that the other person consistently reasons better than you could, and that you can determine this, and that he or she is always accessible. It is hard to know that someone else is a good reasoner without being able to reason well yourself and thereby know the standards. You could test him by checking his predictions, but that will apply only to one class of things about which we reason—beliefs about future events. Far from all our reasoning is of this sort, though I suppose good reasoning in this area would be some evidence of good reasoning in general. But it would not be decisive evidence: good horseplayers are not necessarily good moral reasoners, for example. Also, you would have to keep checking to make sure that your authority's reasoning powers stayed at a fairly high level. Such effort might as well be spent improving your own reasoning. Also, the accessibility factor is hard to satisfy. So I am inclined to think that reasoning well is a practical necessity for optimizing truth in one's beliefs. If so, then Premise 3 is acceptable and the "means-end" argument for the obligation to reason well is acceptable.

The second kind of argument I want to offer for the obligation to reason well I shall call the "constitutive" argument. In general form, it goes like this: it is necessary to have most people most of the time reasoning as well as they can in order to optimize certain social goods, for those goods include as a constitutive element the widespread activity of good reasoning. The social goods I have in mind (there may well be others) are (a) a politically open society with a responsible government, and (b) the growth of mind. I need to show how the general practice of reasoning well is a constitutive element of an open, politically responsible society, and the growth of mind.

(a) By an open society I have in mind one without secrecy, censorship, or elites with privileged access to information. Such openness is necessary for responsible government—government that is answerable to the citizenry. In such a society the reason for planned policies and government conduct must be publicly available; and there is little point in making this information available unless the citizenry is able to understand and assess it. The proposals and policies of parties and interest groups must be grounded on reasons, which must be presented and defended, and to give this exercise a meaning, the people must be capable of, and interested in, examining, testing, arguing about these reasons. Responsible democracy requires a competent,

participating citizenry. This is not the place to argue that this sort of political process is desirable. That is an assumption of my argument. My claim is that the flourishing of this sort of political society consists, in part, of the widespread exercise of good reasoning applied to public issues.

(b) I am also claiming that widespread reasoning is part of the growth of mind. Let me try to explain what I mean by this. I am assuming that the necessary part of the justification of beliefs is their scrutiny by other people. That scrutiny may not be needed for each individual belief, but it is needed at least to rule on the criteria we employ to justify our beliefs. Our standards of reasonableness, of justification, of plausibility, of credibility are in an important respect social. Certainly they cannot be in principle private. They are corrigible. Each of us is fallible, so we take it as a matter of sound strategy to grant to no one the privilege of being beyond review. Furthermore, the whole enterprise of seeking truth and expanding knowledge is in this sense dialectical—a back and forth of challenge and response. In this way the fund of knowledge and belief that constitutes our collective mind grows; and by joining this activity of building and tearing down, proposing and modifying and retracting and revising, our minds individually grow also. You can see how reasoning is a part of this enterprise.

The life of the mind is an individual good. I am not taking a Platonic or Aristotelian position that only the philosophical life is truly excellent. I think that living fully with our bodies, our senses, and our feelings are also important to living a full human life. So is acting, as well as contemplating. So too is making: building, creating. What I would insist, though, is that the exercise of our minds is the exercise of one of our distinctive capacities, and so is satisfying. To live well as an individual, then, is (among other things) to reason well. But, if I am right about the essentially dialectical nature of the growth of mind, then we cannot exercise our minds in isolation; we must join in a shared enterprise. So, we can achieve this excellence in our lives only if we can encounter others in interchange with whom we create the possibility for its exercise. The greater the extent of this practice of reasoning, the greater the opportunity for us to share in it and the higher the quality it is likely to achieve.

So I am arguing that we all need to reason as well as we can so that we may each realize the benefits of a life in which we exercise this important human capacity. The worthwhile life for humans, I believe, consists of exercising all their human capacities as fully as they can. This, then, is a further justification of the claim that we have an obligation to reason well.

1.4 Some Objections Considered

Against this position it might be objected that we all already want to reason well, so there is no point to urging that we ought to. Moral obligations make sense only as applied to actions we are not already naturally bound to do. (For example, it makes

no sense to propose that one ought, morally speaking, to breathe, or to sleep, or to eat, as a general moral prescription.) No one is tempted to reason badly. Of course, sometimes we do, but never intentionally; we always try to reason well, so it makes no sense to add that we ought to.

I would concede that when we reason we intend to reason well. Similarly, a non-swimmer who is thrown into a lake intends to swim well, at least well enough to make it to shore. Yet it makes sense to advise people that they ought to learn how to swim, and I think the moral injunction to reason well is partly of a similar sort. Reasoning well must not only be learned, since it is a skill, but it also takes effort from most of us. Most people who have the capacity to reason moderately competently still have to make an effort to put their brains in gear; also it is tiring to reason closely for very long. So the injunction to reason well turns out to be an injunction to do something that we are not, without training and practice, able to do well, and that we are not all that inclined to do conscientiously for very long or on a regular basis. I conclude, then, that it does make sense to talk of an obligation to reason well.

Another objection takes just the opposite tack. To insist that there is an obligation to reason well is simply too demanding. For one thing many people don't seem to be capable of reasoning very well. For another thing, we have other things to do with our time—including other moral obligations to satisfy, and also including taking it easy now and then. The proposal that there is a moral obligation to reason well is a piece of moral fanaticism combined with intellectual elitism.

This objection is mostly wrong-headed. Partly there is an empirical issue at stake. I remain to be convinced that most people aren't bright enough to reason moderately carefully and closely; it may even be a piece of intellectual elitism to think otherwise. But one way or the other this is an empirical question in the end. (What makes it hard to check out in practice is that we don't have settled ways to measure reasoning ability.) My guess is that if they worked at it a bit, most people could reason a lot better than they do. Partly the objection is based on a misconception of what is entailed by having a moral obligation of this sort. If you have a moral obligation to help the needy, that does not mean that you are morally bound to put everything aside and devote your life to helping the needy, and it doesn't mean you are neglecting your moral obligation if you spend a summer's day lying in the sun. Balancing all the legitimate claims on your time and resources, you give the moral obligation to help the needy its appropriate portion. The same sort of thing goes for an obligation to reason well. Yes, you should spend time learning how. Yes, you should keep in practice. But then the appropriate extent of your exercise of reasoning will be a function of the goods to be gained thereby on particular occasions, taking into account competing claims on your time and efforts.

Perhaps there are other objections to this idea that there are moral reasons why we ought to reason well. I have not been able to think of them. So, on the basis of the considerations I have discussed, I am inclined to think we do have such an obligation.

To end up, I return to the position that started me on this line of thought—Professor Richards's unhappiness with the Principle of Bastardized Liberalism: each

of us is entitled to his or her own opinions. If we ought to reason well, then all we are morally entitled to are opinions that we can support with reasons. It is, then, fair for others to ask us for our reasons for our opinions. While we may sometimes be justified in not taking the time to tell them, or in some circumstances, perhaps, in keeping our reasons secret or confidential, we have no moral basis for saying that we don't have to have any reasons at all. Moreover, if I offer arguments that appear to tell against your opinion, then you ought to consider my arguments, assess their logical merits, and change your opinion if my arguments show it to be mistaken. I don't mean you are morally bound to debate with me; I mean you are morally bound to think about my arguments, or to put a question mark against your opinion until you've had a chance to consider them. In short, the great liberty, freedom of thought, does not entail the license to be thought-less.

Chapter 2

The Keegstra Affair: A Test Case for Critical Thinking

2.1 Introduction

Critical thinking has long been an objective of elementary and secondary education in history and social science. For example, Edward d'Angelo's extensive bibliography in *The Teaching of Critical Thinking* contains well over 50 references to then-recent literature on critical thinking in these fields (d'Angelo, 1971). A look at the curriculum materials developed in many jurisdictions reveals explicit references to such critical thinking objectives as: "expressing ideas clearly," "making judgments," "reading and discriminating," "evaluating and interpreting evidence," "drawing conclusions based on evidence," "hypothesizing," "comparing similarities and differences," and "analyzing and evaluating" (Windsor Board of Education, 1982). And a reader of back issues of this journal¹ will be struck by the number of articles devoted to the ingredients of critical thinking—whether or not this particular label was used. Definitions of critical thinking vary in details, but they tend to be similar in broad outlines. Robert H. Ennis, a leading theorist and test designer, has proposed that we understand critical thinking as "reasonable reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do" (Ennis, 1985). Certainly this definition covers a major component of history and social science learning objectives.

Still, I worry that the results have not measured up to the good intentions or the efforts made. My evidence is unsystematic but compelling: my own students, observed over the past 17 years. (I might add that the critical thinking abilities of many university graduates are equally a source of worry about efforts in university programs to improve such thinking.)

What we are all after here is a complex of inclination and ability that will kick into gear spontaneously when our students are outside the classroom, not just when they are writing our selected-for-fit, often invented, tests and exercises. On that assumption, the most informative sort of test of our success in teaching our students

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¹ In 1986 called *The History and Social Science Teacher*; in 2011 called *Canadian Social Studies*.

to think critically will be a currently controversial issue outside the classroom, one that vexes the general public. And by this criterion, for today's students, there can be no better acid test of critical thinking than the so-called "Keegstra affair."

2.2 Background

James Keegstra, as everyone must now know, is a former Alberta high school teacher who is alleged to have believed and taught that there is a Zionist conspiracy to dominate the world, that Hitler's treatment of the Jews had some justification, and that the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated. He has been tried and convicted of having illegally disseminated these alleged beliefs. My use of "the Keegstra affair" as a critical thinking test, you will see, has nothing to do with whether Mr. Keegstra is guilty of violating any law. It has nothing to do with the currently live issue of whether he should have been prosecuted for his alleged actions. It is not even particularly concerned with whether Mr. Keegstra's alleged beliefs are true (mainly because I take it as beyond reasonable doubt that many of the beliefs that have been attributed in press reports to Mr. Keegstra are false).

The general question is how well we are training our students to think critically in history and the other social sciences. I propose we find the answer by seeing if our students understand what is mistaken about the views and actions attributed to Mr. Keegstra insofar as these constitute:

- (1) a *historical* theory
- (2) a *methodology* of history, and
- (3) the *teaching* of history.

In what follows I shall put the test in terms of three questions corresponding to these three issues. For each in turn I shall explain what I think is the right answer and discuss how knowing the answer requires critical thinking ability. Finally, I will offer some general suggestions about how this ability might be taught more effectively. Throughout, I will be dealing with what have been *alleged* to be Mr. Keegstra's views and actions as reported in the media (*Globe and Mail*, 1984, 1985a, 1985b; Lee, 1985). I would emphasize that in the respects in which I shall be considering them, it would be no violation of any Canadian law.

2.3 What Is Wrong with Mr. Keegstra's Theory as a Historical Theory?

I do not mean to raise the question of the accuracy of the factual or theoretical claims about the past that Keegstra is reported to have taught. I am asking, instead, about the structure of his theory as *theory*. What is striking about it, at least as it has been described, is that no evidence is allowed to count against it. For instance, the scenes

of naked corpses of slain Jews in German concentration camps in Donald Brittain's film, *Memorandum*, and the photographs and accounts of the Holocaust in such books as *The Yellow Star*, are not treated as conflicting evidence which tells against the theory, but instead are cited as evidence that there is a conspiracy to create a myth that the Holocaust occurred (Lee, 1985). The discrediting of the so-called *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* by respected historians (see Cohn, 1981) is not allowed to reduce the credibility of that source of the conspiracy theory, but is taken as an indication that the Zionist conspiracy is so powerful and insinuating that it has infiltrated the ranks of academic historians. In short, the theory is *self-sealing*. No hostile evidence can puncture it, for the theory immediately closes around the alleged counter-evidence and turns it into additional support, or else blocks it out.

The theory masquerades as empirical. Apparently Mr. Keegstra invited his students to consider alternative theories. However, in its relation to the evidence, it is *a prioristic*. It is not historical—standing or falling on the evidence, open to testing, subject to continuous revision, refinement and perhaps eventually to rejection as it jostles with alternative interpretations, newly discovered evidence, and altered perspectives on old evidence. It is metaphysical, a conceptual framework which structures all experience and evidence, requiring it to fit the predetermined pattern, rigidly accepting, rejecting or reinterpreting all findings so as to reinforce that grid, or at least leave it unaltered.

Do our students understand the difference between these two kinds of theory? Are they aware that theories in history as well as in other areas of social science are supposed to be empirical, not metaphysical or self-sustaining? Unless they do, they have yet to acquire a critical mastery of these subjects. You may consider this a sophisticated kind of understanding, but I think by the intermediate grades (7–8), students can begin to acquire the concepts which are its ingredients: evidence, falsifiability, contradictory evidence, explanatory adequacy, empirical assertion, a priori thesis, theoretical revision, refutation, and so on.

2.4 What Is Wrong with Mr. Keegstra's Methodology of History?

According to newspaper and magazine reports, Keegstra based his theories partly on the Bible, partly on the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, partly on other works alleging a Jewish conspiracy, and partly on historical events that he interprets as evidence for the theory. There are several methodological objections to this evidence and to how Keegstra deals with it.

First, the Bible cannot serve as an authority for judgments about Judaism and about Zionism. Among the kinds of claims attributable to the Bible, it is pertinent here to distinguish at least the following three: (i) historical assertions, (ii) ethical prescriptions, and (iii) religious pronouncements. As a historical source, the Bible is one document among others—or rather, one vast collection of documents—the authenticity and reliability of which must meet standard historical tests. The authority of the Bible's ethical prescriptions will derive either from their inherent

reasonableness, or else from the faith of their readers that they are of Divine origin. In the former case, the Bible is merely the provenance of the prescription, but no authority. In the latter case, their ascribed Divinity may give these prescriptions authority for believers, but not for others. As a source of religious pronouncements and inspiration, once again the Bible's authority holds only for believers in virtue of the standing they ascribe to it. So one problem with appealing to the authority of the Bible is that the Bible has no authority for non-believers; and its "authority" for believers is a function of their special interest in it, which is, therefore, not a *general* belief-warranting credential. There is a second problem, which exists as much for believers as for non-believers. The Bible's pronouncements, whether historical, ethical or religious, tend to be expressed in extremely general or vague terms, so that any attempt to read them as implying particular action-guiding or testable assertions requires interpretation—interpretation which is notoriously open to controversy, and even more notoriously subject to the inspiration of prior doctrinal (or anti-doctrinal) convictions.

The second problem with Mr. Keegstra's methodology is that the other sources on which he apparently bases his beliefs are problematic. By that I mean they are open to dispute as reliable sources. For instance, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, supposedly the minutes of a secret meeting of Jews with a master plan to take over the world, held in 1902 or 1897, was in fact, according to excellent evidence, largely plagiarized from a suppressed anti-Napoleon III tract, *Dialogue aux Enfers entre Montesquieu et Machiavel*, by a French lawyer called Maurice Joly, published in 1864 (Cohn, 1981, chap. III). And other "Jewish conspiracy" literature has similarly been discounted. Now the point is not that what these sources state is false, though that conclusion is the most reasonable at this time. The point is that these sources have been discredited by reputable historians. Thus anyone who would use these works as sources of historically reliable evidence must undertake the burden of proving that the present consensus is mistaken and these works are in fact reliable. This is the essential methodological point. Certainly documents that have been discounted by the scholarly community at one point may conceivably subsequently be shown (on the basis of new evidence or reappraisals of old evidence) to be trustworthy. But the onus to make that case rests with the scholar who would resuscitate such documents. This crucial ingredient is what is absent from Mr. Keegstra's use of his sources.

Third, in basing his theories on historical events, Mr. Keegstra was, if reports are accurate, highly selective. For example, he has been quoted as having said:

Consider the atomic bomb, I told my students. Jewish scientists were involved in its creation. Why drop it on two cities in Japan that were basically Christian? Was it an accident, or was it deliberate? (Lee, 1985, p. 45)

This passage drips with innuendo. I shall take its intimation as actually implied. If the religion of those who were involved in the creation of the atomic bomb is to be taken as evidence of a conspiracy by members of that religion, then all Christians and those of other faiths involved in the project must be taken as evidence of a Christian, or inter-faith, conspiracy. Or, suppose it is true that in August 1945 the

citizens of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were predominantly Christian. That is not the only characteristic they shared. The point is that Keegstra fastens on just the data that is consistent with the truth of his theories.

A fourth, and related, problem with Mr. Keegstra's methodology is his failure to seek out contrary evidence—the apparent absence of any effort on his part to put his hypotheses to the test. Had he done so, he would have looked for other features of Hiroshima and Nagasaki besides the fact (if it is a fact) that their populations were predominantly Christian, which might have led the United States to select them as targets for the atomic bomb attacks. He would have tried to find evidence that the makers of the atomic bomb—even if all had been Jewish—had little influence on President Truman's decision on where to drop the bombs. In general he would have done his best to *refute* his own hypothesis, in order to be sure that it could stand up to such criticism. He did not do so.

These four methodological flaws—inappropriate appeals to authority, use of problematic sources, selective use of evidence and failure to test against possible disconfirming evidence—should be evident to a student of history or of any other social science. Can our students spot them? Are our students familiar with the standards of good methodology in the social sciences, and—as important—with the reasons for those standards? Are we teaching them the ingredients of such understanding, so that by their senior high school years they will be capable of an intelligent critique of such methodology as reports indicate Mr. Keegstra employed?

2.5 What Is Wrong with the Way Mr. Keegstra Taught History?

I am thinking here of the *attitude* towards history and the study of history that Keegstra exemplified and seemed to encourage.

It seems clear that Mr. Keegstra presented arguments in support of his theories to his students, and that he invited them to examine alternative theories as well as the one he presented (e.g. *Globe and Mail*, June 9, 1984, p. 11). An appreciation of the need to support a theory with evidence and an appreciation of the importance of considering competing interpretations are surely valuable attitudes. Yet it seems to me that Keegstra's actual teaching procedures, so far as these can be reconstructed from reports, must, in the end, have undermined these attitudes.

Consider the need for argued support. There are (at least) two quite different uses of argument. One is to convince or persuade. This is how the Crown attorney and the defense attorney use argument—to try to convince the court of the accused's guilt, or innocence. This is how we all use argument when we are convinced of a belief's truth or a policy's rightness, and we want to sway or win over others whose agreement matters to us and who are uncertain, skeptical or opposed. And this seems to be how Keegstra argued: to *persuade* his students of the truth of the conspiracy theory or of Jewish mischief in European history.

Another use of argument is to inquire or test or investigate. Someone who is genuinely puzzled about a doctrine or a proposal, or who wants to test a hypothesis,

can investigate it using arguments. One looks for reasons that might support it, then scrutinizes those arguments for flaws; one looks for arguments that seem to refute it, then checks them out in turn. This is how argument is used in history and in other social sciences. In these fields, arguments for and against a hypothesis will consist mostly of empirical evidence. The relevance and weight of the evidence will itself be subject to probing arguments on either side. The investigator may have her suspicions about what will be confirmed—after all, she formulated the hypothesis to be tested—and she may also have her hopes. However, she will, if the inquiry is honest, be prepared to be swayed by the force of the argumentation. This is how argument is supposed to be used in social science, and generally in academic inquiry. It does not appear to be the use or model of argument that Keegstra exemplified or taught directly to his students.

Argument used to convince, especially when employed by someone who is adept at it, will often be perceived by those untutored in its deployment as an instrument of coercion. The subtle message will then be: if you want to avoid being overwhelmed, avoid argument. This is why I suspect that Mr. Keegstra's use of argument to defend his theories before his students, and in face of their objections at times, would, perhaps paradoxically, have prevented their appreciation of the power of argument as the vehicle of dispassionate inquiry.

There are a couple of problems with Mr. Keegstra's invitations to his students to consider alternative theories and to weigh all the evidence before deciding to accept his theory. The first is that the self-sealing nature of the theory makes it impermeable to counter-evidence. At least one of his students recognized this problem, for he testified: "He said all books are censored. . . . There was no way you could beat him" (*Globe and Mail*, June 12, 1984). The second is that it appears that Mr. Keegstra did not teach his students how to look for and use historical evidence. It is difficult to appreciate the need to test hypotheses and to compare alternative hypotheses if one does not know concretely what is involved in doing so.

Moreover, the message conveyed by, "Here is my theory, now see if you can find a better one," is ever so different from what needs to be conveyed. We should be fostering open-mindedness. That means withholding judgment until one has thoroughly canvassed alternatives and seriously considered points of view other than one's own (Ennis, 1985).

In fact, we want our students' thinking about history and about social science in general to display self-critical habits of mind. Thus, when they find prejudices, stereotypes or biases confirmed by a particular analysis, that is precisely when they should be especially suspicious of it. When they encounter a theory that neatly divides the domain of inquiry into two black and white categories—the good and the evil, the guilty and the innocent, exploiters and exploited—they should immediately be wary of oversimplification. As far as one can tell from reports, Mr. Keegstra's teaching did not foster such critical dispositions.

Do we? Are our students able to use arguments in an investigative way—to test hypotheses not just by looking for evidence that might confirm them, but also by seeking out evidence that might disconfirm them, and further taking the necessary extra step of subjecting both the supporting and the disconfirming evidence to

critical scrutiny? Are we confident that if our students were to consider a social policy issue that invites strong commitments—such as affirmative action, native rights, censorship or abortion—they could approach it in an open-minded way, seek out and treat fairly the arguments on different sides, prevent themselves from misrepresenting the positions they find themselves hostile to, resist the temptation to oversimplify and to see the opposition as evil?

To put the point about “the Keegstra affair” in a nutshell, if by the time they graduate from high school our students can understand the empirical nature of theory in history and the social sciences, know how properly to use authorities and evidence, and be able to reason in a probing and open way about hypotheses and theories in these subjects, then they are thinking critically in the appropriate way. A test of whether they are indeed capable of thinking critically about history and social science would be to provide them with the reports of Mr. Keegstra’s theory and how he taught it, and see if they could provide an appropriate critique.

My guess is that they could not. Certainly few of the students I encounter could do so. I recently had the opportunity to teach a large class of university graduates in my university’s Faculty of Education, and not very many of *them* could have passed this test. If I am right about this, then despite the long history of interest in teaching our students to think critically, and despite the excellent critical thinking components in our curriculum write-ups, we need to be doing things differently.

2.6 What Can We Do?

This is the point at which I am supposed to introduce the solution. I wish I had one to offer. The best I can do is suggest some general proposals, along with their rationales.

(1) Teachers of history and social science owe it to their students to learn the outlines of critical theorizing in these fields themselves, if they are not familiar with them already. A good introduction is Cederblom and Paulsen’s *Critical Reasoning* (1982), Chapters 8, “Induction and Empirical Generalization,” 9, “Empirical Theories: How They Can Be Criticized,” and 10, “Conceptual Theories and Definitions.” Most teachers should be able to read these chapters without having worked through the earlier chapters of the text, and a familiarity with the contents of just these three chapters should have a lot of value at many points in the K-12 curriculum. For a more detailed and thorough introduction, Ronald N. Giere’s *Understanding Scientific Reasoning* (1979) is excellent. Both these texts are written for the general student; neither presupposes specialized mathematical, scientific or philosophical training.

(2) Starting early, at least by grade 5, students should begin to learn a precise critical vocabulary. Distinctions should be noted, and variations in terminology pointed out. So, for example, terms such as *argument* and *explanation*, *inference* and *cause*, *relevant*, *plausible*, *objection*, *criticism*, and *defense* will begin to introduce children to the concepts they will need to think critically. They need to learn that *argument*

sometimes means *dispute* and sometimes means *proof* and sometimes *reasons for believing*. They need to learn that *a reason* sometimes refers to an explanation and sometimes refers to an argument, and that *why* asks in some contexts for the former and in other contexts for the latter. They need to be taught that *theory* and *hypothesis* in some contexts have very specific meanings stipulated for their use—and what these are—and in other contexts may be used interchangeably. In other words, they need to learn when and why precision is important, and when vagueness is acceptable. So when I recommend teaching a critical vocabulary, I do not mean that this should be artificial or rigid. Flexibility will prepare the children for the real world, where it is often necessary to adjust to different speakers' and writers' terminological conventions, and it will also reduce the problem of transfer from class to class, grade to grade and school to school.

Vocabulary obviously *permits* critical judgment: one cannot describe or assess without descriptive or evaluative terminology. It also, perhaps less obviously, *fosters* critical judgment. Able to say more, one notices more to say—quite the way a beginning birdwatcher armed with a field-guide will actually see and hear many more birds in the woods than he did before, even before he can identify their species.

(3) We need to make the model of thinking we are teaching or using explicit. For example, when teaching a unit in Grade 7 history which has as its objective in the curriculum that the students will be able to “discuss the idea that there are two theories that explain the first appearance of human beings in North America; to draw conclusions; to make judgments” (Windsor Board of Education, 1982), we should, ideally, be explaining what a theory is, what an explanation is, how a theory explains, how theories can compete, how one rationally decides between competing theories. Actually, in the above example, the two theories mentioned in the curriculum guidelines were the “land-bridge” theory of anthropologists, and the genesis myth of an unnamed Indian culture. I wish this were an extremely sophisticated lesson, teaching the students to distinguish empirical theories from myths. These, after all, are two entirely different categories of “explanation,” not in fact competing theories. I fear, however, that the lesson designers took these to be competing empirical theories, since one of the objectives of the lesson is to, “indicate whether one theory is more plausible over [*sic*] the other theory when explaining the first appearance of human beings in North America” (Grade Seven History, Core Unit Number Two: An Introduction to: Immigration and Settlement, COP 2—Windsor Board of Education, 1982). The tacit message conveyed, unfortunately, would be that White European scientific thinking is superior to Native “unscientific” thinking, not that science and myth offer two different kinds of explanation. But if the example illustrates the risks of mis-education in the approach I am recommending, it also demonstrates the opportunity for education in thinking critically about history. Again I do not suppose such complex concepts can be taught all at once. People with the necessary experience need to work out either how their components can be taught piece-by-piece, in an appropriate order, so that by the senior grades they can be assembled; or, if that is better, how to formulate a series of increasingly complex and subtle versions of these concepts, to be taught in order over the K-12 years.

(4) If we want our students to be able to evaluate with good judgment a theory in history or any other social science, we must show them how to do it and we must give them practice at doing it. The same is true even if the most we may hope for is that our students begin to raise intelligent critical questions, without being able, at their age, to find the answers on their own.

I think this “showing how” will entail two components. First, we shall have to model the sorts of thoughtful criticism that we want the students to learn, and in doing so to make explicit to them the different sorts of critical moves or strategies we employ.

Second, we should provide some structures or critical frameworks in which the students can learn to build their critiques. Decision-procedure flow charts are useful. Also essential is the tool of argument and the structure of argumentation. By an argument, I mean a set of reasons adduced to support a claim. By the structure of argumentation, I mean the typology of distinct roles individual arguments may play in a fully argued inquiry.

Argument, in the sense of giving reasons, tends to be sloppy unless the students are provided with a rigorous model and made to follow it. Thus, individual arguments should be fully set out: *all* the reasons needed to make the claim strongly supported by the set should be made explicit, so that all the links, or “unexpressed premises,” are stated. And students need to learn that a single argument rarely settles an interesting question. Instead, there are often (a) several independent lines of support, together with (b) arguments aimed at countering objections to the thesis, and as well (c) arguments aimed at settling doubts about the evidence directly supporting it. The “case” for the thesis will then consist of *all* these arguments taken together.

It is not necessary to get involved in teaching the detailed logics of the different types of inference found in arguments—classically, deductive and inductive logics—although doing so cannot hurt. In a cogent (i.e., sound, logically good) argument, (a) the reasons will be relevant to the claim being supported; (b) the reasons themselves will not be open to challenge or question; and (c) there will be enough evidence to establish the claim. These are the three criteria an argument should meet, and students can be taught to check each in turn and to frame their critiques in terms of them. As well, having learned the elements of a more or less complete case for a thesis, students can use them, both to criticize cases that others put forward, and also to structure their own inquiries. With the models of cogent argument and fully developed case to work with, students can be expected to use and assess arguments with a measure of rigor. If there is time to teach some of the patterns of deductive entailment (e.g., “If p , then q ; and p ; so q ,” or “all As are Bs; all Bs are Cs; so all As are Cs”), and such things as how to test a hypothesis by deducing the implications of its denial and showing them to be false, then so much the better.

At an early stage the “showing how” should be supplemented by practice, practice, and more practice. Being able to think critically is in important respects a skill, and one gets good at doing something that calls for skill by doing it, as any successful musician, artist, writer or teacher will testify.

One natural and reasonable objection is that there is not enough time and there is no space in the curriculum to do all this. This objection is unanswerable as long as working to improve our students' critical thinking ability is thought of as an additional task—like adding weight-training to long-distance running. But I would conceive it, instead, as a change in the manner in which we teach the content that is already in the curriculum—more like throwing a few sprints into our daily run, or altering our route to include more hilly terrain. Whether, and how, this might be done is a question that lies in the domain of curriculum planning experts.

If it is not done, however, we shall continue to prepare our students less well than we should hope to. We shall also risk mis-education—the sort of thinking about history and the social sciences that already was illustrated and taught by Mr. Keegstra. What makes these fields so fascinating to *us* is, in significant measure, that we are able to think critically in them. I believe we should be trying to figure out how to convey that ingredient to our students.

Chapter 3

What Is Bias?

3.1 Introduction

“It is a truism that every author is biased in favor of the claim he is making. He wouldn’t be writing otherwise,” said Frederick Little in *Critical Thinking and Decision Making* (1980, p. 16). “It’s crucial to realize that bias and prejudice are forms of error,” replies Michael Scriven in *Reasoning* (1976, p. 208). If these writers are using the term “bias” in the same way, at least one of them must be wrong, because their claims are incompatible. Little would not agree that every author is in error, and Scriven would not hold that every author is biased. If they are using the term “bias” in two different senses, then they are not contradictory.

What are the two different senses, and why is one word used for both? Many people talk like Little: “Everyone is biased,” they say. Others are inclined to speak like Scriven: “It does not make sense to call everyone biased. Bias is a fault, and calling someone biased is an accusation, distinguishing that person from those who are not biased.”

The sorts of critical reaction that mark a person as a critical thinker seem to require certain habits of mind, prominent among which is—to put it controversially—a freedom from bias or—to put it non-controversially—an ability to overcome or transcend either bias or at least harmful or unjustified bias. If in some sense bias is a block to critical thinking, then there is good reason to understand what bias is and how it works. The need becomes the more urgent when we find people speaking in apparently contradictory ways about bias.

This essay looks at a number of examples of cases where people have said a bias is present (or where I would want to so classify it) and tries to generalize from them an accurate account of the concept of bias. The root idea of bias that emerges is that it is a slant, an angle, a leaning, or a limited perspective. This idea seems to appear in three types of cases: (1) bias that is bad and avoidable; (2) bias that is unavoidable, potentially dangerous, but for which one can compensate; and (3) bias that is

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contingent and good—or at least neutral. The term “bias” seems used most often in the first cases, but the other uses are significant too. A wide variety of things can be biased—people, actions or conduct, practices, judgments, terminology, choices, reports, presentations, and so forth. People can be blamed for their biased actions or choices particularly if they are self-conscious and deliberate or due to culpable ignorance. We can be more forgiving of bias due to self-deception or cultural prejudice, but since these can be guarded against, and to a degree overcome, culpability still exists. These points hold for the compensable effects of unavoidable bias as well as for bad and avoidable bias.

I do not think it useful to dwell on the motives of those who display bias, because the effects are no less pernicious if the bias is unintentional than if it is deliberate. However we can attend to our own motives and thereby try to reduce the extent and harm of our own avoidable bias.

3.2 Bad and Avoidable Bias

Bias that is regarded as a bad thing and that can be avoided seems the most common. Some examples detail this concept of bias.

Example 1. In the Canadian province of Ontario there are three significant political parties, the Conservatives (who had been in power for 42 years until 1985), the Liberals (the largest opposition party), and the New Democrats (who habitually get 20 percent to 30 percent of the popular vote). In the election in Spring 1985, the incumbent Conservatives failed to gain a majority of seats in the legislature, although they won a plurality. The Liberals and New Democrats agreed to form a loose coalition and to vote together to defeat the Conservative government after the election and before the legislature convened. In the Canadian political system, when such a situation occurs and the governing party is defeated in the legislature, the Lieutenant-Governor—who is an appointee with normally a purely ceremonial role as head of state, who is not the head of the governing party, and who is supposed to act, as the Queen’s representative, in a completely nonpartisan manner—must decide whether to ask the party with the second-largest number of seats to form the government or to call another election. In the Ontario situation it is doubtful that another election would have produced any change. But at the same time there was no precedent in provincial politics in Canada for a minority party’s being asked to form a government. The Lieutenant-Governor Lincoln Alexander’s decision would be precedent setting.

During the period prior to the convening of the legislature, there was much speculation in the press. A political scientist at the University of Windsor was asked in a radio interview, “Since the Lieutenant-Governor earlier in his career and prior to his appointment was an active supporter of the Liberal Party, isn’t he likely to be biased? Won’t he ask the Liberals to form the government just because he is biased in favor of the Liberal Party?”

The interviewer was anticipating bias in a bad sense. The question was whether the Lieutenant-Governor would, wrongly, act from partisan interests, or whether

he would or could act with the best interests of the province as a whole in mind. In general, in this sense you act (or choose) in a biased manner or with bias when you act to promote a narrow, private, sectarian, or partisan interest on an occasion when the ground or basis for that action ought to be wider, public, heterodoxical, or nonpartisan. A judge, a sports referee, a jury of a fine arts competition, or an arbitrator of a labor dispute are all supposed to be unbiased in this respect. Bias would be a violation of a norm of impartiality that applies in these cases.

(The Lieutenant-Governor made what almost universally was held to be the only reasonable decision in the circumstances. He asked the Liberals, the party with the second-largest number of seats and that had the promise of the New Democrats' support guaranteeing a majority, to form the government. No cry of "bias!" was raised, even by the outgoing Conservative government.)

Example 2. In 1983 a University of British Columbia professor made a formal complaint to the British Columbia Press Council (a voluntary-membership, self-disciplining body) alleging that *The Vancouver Sun* newspaper had shown "extraordinary bias" in its coverage of a rally by a coalition of unions and others, called Operation Solidarity, protesting the provincial government's wage and spending restraint legislation. The professor charged specifically that the newspaper had given the rally a "red smear" by publishing with the story about the rally a photograph of marchers carrying signs bearing the words "Communist Party of Canada." In charging bias, presumably his point was that the picture misrepresented the make-up and politics of the protesting groups by giving the false impression that they were Communists. (The B.C Press Council dismissed the professor's complaint, yet added that a picture more broadly representative of the rally could have been used.)

There are two components of bias in the sense alleged here. There must be a particular unfavorable (or favorable) impression conveyed, and the unfavorable (or favorable) impression conveyed is not warranted, justified, or accurate. The newspaper is supposed to report objectively, accurately, and without any built-in advocacy or judgment pro or con. The alleged bias would be a violation of those norms. In the example, the professor claimed that the newspaper conveyed an unfairly unfavorable image of the protesters (given that Communists in Canada were generally viewed with hostility, if not horror). Other examples could readily be found that have the same structure as this one, but in which the bias would be a failure of objectivity resulting in an unduly favorable impression. Some newspapers, for instance, seem to have biased coverage favoring the hometown professional sports teams.

Example 3. In April 1985, the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company ran a full-page ad in *Life* magazine under the heading, "The Second-Hand Smokescreen," in which Reynolds contended that the attack on second-hand smoke is really a disguised attack on smoking and said, "Many independent experts believe the scientific evidence on passive smoking is questionable." The copy of the ad continued:

But a zealous group of anti-smokers are using this issue in their campaign against tobacco as if the claims were established scientific fact. We deplore the actions of those who try to manipulate public opinion through scare tactics . . . We are not ignoring the fact that cigarette smoke can be bothersome to many non-smokers. But we believe this problem is

best solved not by governments but by individuals, not with more rhetoric but more common sense and courtesy . . . (Reynolds, 1985)

(This is an excerpt from a 400-word text, so the cautious reader should check to be sure that *I* have not distorted by selection.) Reynolds quotes Dr. H. Russell Fisher as a respected pathologist who has said that there is no proof of harm from “atmospheric tobacco smoke” and suggested that fear of second-hand smoke may be a “social problem” that itself might lead to medical problems.

I contend that there is bias in this ad. Notice that in the face of conflicting testimony, Russell’s opinion alone does not establish that there is nothing to the case against second-hand smoke, so Reynolds has not sufficiently supported its claim that the attack on second-hand smoke is a “scare tactic” being used to “manipulate” public opinion. Nor has it sufficient basis for describing the case against second-hand smoke as “rhetoric” or for contrasting it with “common sense and courtesy.” In using this terminology, however, Reynolds conveys an impression about those who attack second-hand smoke that tends to discredit them. After all, in everyday language, “zealotry” is excessive enthusiasm, “manipulation” is improper influence, “scare tactics” are substitutes for good reasons, and “rhetoric” is commonly understood as empty, unsubstantial persuasion. For these reasons I would argue that the language of the Reynolds ad is biased, and as a result the ad as a whole conveys a subtly biased message that the opposition to second-hand smoke is not responsible.

In the Reynolds example, the charge of bias implies that there is a misrepresentation of the opponent’s position (in an adversary relationship) aimed at discrediting it. In such cases there is a violation of a norm of fairness or honesty that is expected to be honored in carrying on a dispute.

Example 4. In the June 1985 Newsletter of the International Society for Animal Rights (ISAR), there is a report about an American curriculum package called “Project Wild”, sponsored by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Western Regional Environmental Education Council. It is not clear to me from the ISAR report just exactly what Project Wild is about, but it is clear that ISAR objects to it, and why. I quote from the newsletter:

While claiming to encourage students to make up their own decisions on such topics as hunting and wildlife management, the information presented is based and leads to pro-hunting and trapping attitudes.

Two themes . . . evidence the slant of the material. Man is placed in the position of control and given the “responsibility” of managing wildlife. This management takes the form of hunting and trapping. A second idea . . . is that wildlife, “a renewable resource,” has its value in the enjoyment it gives to man. According to the Project Wild literature all people have the right to pursue this pleasure in any way they choose, be it hunting or photography. (ISAR, 1985, p. 4)

I take ISAR’s point to be that the conceptualization used in the Project Wild material—what its way of thinking about wildlife and its terminology presupposes and entails—influences students to accept hunting and trapping as legitimate activities. If you speak in terms of “managing” wildlife, there have to be people who manage and acts of management: that is what “managing” implies. If wildlife is termed a “resource,” it must serve some population and some purpose, for that is

what we mean by a “resource.” This conceptualization would not be classifiable as “bias” unless it were controversial and yet put forward, without any defense, as value-neutral. ISAR contends that the Project Wild material claims to be neutral and to leave students free to make up their own minds, thus disarming critical attention.

Once again the charge of bias is an allegation of misrepresentation. In this case there seems to be a violation of the norm that might be termed “respect for independent judgment.” The Project Wild material is claimed not to advocate; ISAR contends that it in fact does—not directly, but by way of its built-in conceptual bias.

In each example there is alleged, as grounds for the charge of bias, a violation of some norm or expectation: respectively, of impartiality, fairness, neutrality, and non-advocacy. The alleged bias is conveyed, or anticipated, in the first case, through an action, in the second by the juxtaposition of a photograph with a news report, in the third by the use of value-judgment-laden terminology, and in the fourth by concept-laden terminology.

Notice that the agents’ intentions are really a minor consideration in these cases. Even if the Lieutenant-Governor were trying to remain neutral, if his sympathies for the Liberal Party unconsciously swayed his judgment, the results might have been harmful. (As it happened, in this case, his sympathies could have in fact motivated his judgment without damage. He still would have made the correct judgment, even if for the wrong reasons.) Whether or not *The Vancouver Sun* was trying to associate the whole antigovernment Solidarity Movement with the tiny Canadian Communist Party, if its photograph had that effect the bias occurred and the harm was done. The Reynolds Tobacco Company might have approved its ad copy in perfectly good faith, and the Project Wild sponsors might have been trying their hardest not to advocate any particular philosophy of wildlife treatment—the accusations of bias stand or fall independently. The only reason for considering motives is to pass judgment on the agents. Presumably deliberate bias in any of these four cases is more blameworthy, if no more harmful, than unintentional bias.

These four examples do not exhaust all the possible varieties of harmful bias, but they do, I hope, begin to fill in the picture. Before turning to some examples of unavoidable bias, I will comment briefly on a special type of bias in the bad sense, biased sampling and biased evaluation—what I call bias in the technical sense.

3.3 Technical Bias

When knowledgeable people speak of studies, statistics, surveys, or polls being biased, they are usually using ‘bias’ in a clearly defined technical sense, which if understood should cause no confusion. When a sample is selected in such a way that it systematically misrepresents the population it is supposed to reflect, it is a biased sample in this sense of ‘bias.’ It is bound to underemphasize or to overemphasize the characteristic of the population being studied (see Govier, 1985, p. 293). Similarly, an evaluation procedure is said to be biased if its design is slanted in a way that may lead to errors. If the evaluators of a program have some ego-involvement with it or stand to gain income or career development if it gets a high grade, then the design

of the evaluation procedure for that program is biased (Scriven, 1981, pp. 15–16). Such technical senses of ‘bias’ are straightforward and need not detain us. Bias in these ways is misrepresentation that can cause error and is therefore harmful and to be avoided.

3.4 Unavoidable and Potentially Dangerous Bias

Consider the feature of news reports, whether in newspapers or on TV, that every report must have a certain organization or structure, must highlight some features of the story and downplay others, must restrict itself to a selection of the available information of the event, must choose the words used and, in the case of TV, must select and edit film—in every case choices must be made that will affect the information and the impression about that information that the report conveys (see Epstein, 1973). It would be accurate to say that every news report has a slant or bias. Yet this observation should not be understood as an accusation, as a pejorative comment. If there is no way to avoid presenting the news without some angle or other, criticism of the phenomenon seems misplaced. To object is to imply that the news could, somehow, be presented without any angle or bias. However, for the sort of bias I am describing here—the unavoidable selection, ordering, and choice of information and of descriptive words and phrases of film segments and camera angles, which must of necessity preclude alternatives—there is no conceivable way to get around it. Here is a case of unavoidable, but not necessarily bad, bias.

This bias in news reporting is not necessarily bad. It can be the case that the particular angle taken by the reporter is exactly the right one, or at least not at all objectionable. It can meet all the criteria we have for good reporting: completeness, accuracy, balance, depth, and so on.

In fact, the reason for pointing out that there is this particular sort of bias or slant to news reports is not to lament reporters’ failure to produce reports that have no point of view whatever. On the contrary, it is to remind us that such reports will always have some point of view and that the ideal of a “neutral,” God’s-eye-view report of events is illusory and a myth, perhaps itself even an ideological prejudice (see Johnson & Blair, 1983, chap. 10). When we keep in mind the unavoidable bias or angle of news reports, we are then on our guard to assess critically the particular bias or angle the reporter or editor has employed. For what is unavoidable is only that news reports have *some* slant; there is no necessity that they exhibit or reflect one particular point of view rather than another. The recognition of the necessity of this kind of bias permits questions about alternative ways of describing the event reported, of weighing the relative significance of different elements of the story, and of judging the importance and implication of the event as a whole, independently of the judgments built into the point of view chosen by the reporter. Knowing that some bias must exist enables you to look at what was the actual bias and to decide whether it has any objectionable results or should be challenged in its application in any given case.

In contending that there is a sense in which the press may be biased unavoidably and unobjectionably, I am not at all saying or implying that the press cannot be biased in the sense in which bias is culpable. There are thus two senses of the word ‘bias’ that can apply to one and the same person and piece of discourse. This is confusing, and I personally prefer to try to avoid the confusion by restricting the word ‘bias’ to the first sense (bad and unavoidable) and using terms like ‘angle’ or ‘point of view’ for the second sense (unavoidable and potentially dangerous). However, many people use the word ‘bias’ in the second sense, and apart from pointing out the dangers of confusing it with the use of the word in the first sense, it seems there is no basis for saying that they are wrong.

Those who point out that everyone inhabits and reflects some worldview or other, and that this necessarily shapes our understanding of judgments about the world, are making a similar point. Having some cultural, historical, social (and so on) angle or slant of the world is an unavoidable feature of the human condition, and the mere having of a worldview cannot be regarded as objectionable. As in the case of the unavoidable bias in journalism, however, recognizing that some worldview is shaping a person’s discourse permits the critical observer to raise questions about the legitimacy of that particular worldview.

In my opinion, we can and may criticize worldviews. Most are enormous collections of quite varying kinds of beliefs, so that internal consistency is a major problem for them. Moreover, I believe that there are standards—internal consistency, for one—that are worldview neutral, that is, which hold for all worldviews. Even if that belief is mistaken, it is hard to conceive how anyone could proceed to think except as if it were true. So the realization that a particular claim emanates from a worldview permits you to wonder whether that worldview may be inconsistent or mistaken. For example, thinking of undomesticated animals as a “manageable resource” seems to imply that these animals exist for human purposes and that they may be killed or protected from hunger and predators by humans for human ends. These beliefs do not seem to square with the theory of evolution or with certain strands of Old Testament theology (see Passmore, 1974, p. 12). Yet the same people often embrace all of these beliefs. Those who do can be accused of inconsistency.

Not all who draw attention to the important influence of worldviews would agree with calling a worldview a bias, and I do not mean to saddle them with this position. My point is that it would not be incoherent to use the term ‘bias’ in this connection. In both this case and the journalism case, to speak of bias is to speak of a slant, an angle, or a perspective that is one of a range of possible alternatives, some of which it is necessary to occupy. This, then, would be unavoidable bias in a neutral sense.

Before leaving unavoidable bias, consider a distinct species that looks quite a lot like it but really is very different. On a great many issues of the day, nearly everyone has formed some opinion. Some people seem to have opinions about everything. In some cases, opinions are tentative, but often enough they are firm, strong, and even rigid. Perhaps on most well-publicized issues nearly everyone has some leaning—some initial inclination to be pro or con, to opt for this view over that one—though not necessarily anything even firm enough to be dubbed an opinion or a position.

When it is said that everyone has a bias, it may be meant that everyone has an opinion or is at least disposed toward one position on the issues of the day.

Some corrections and distinctions are in order. First, it is perfectly possible to have no opinion and no leaning on an issue, even when you understand fully what is at stake. You genuinely can be torn between opposing considerations. Second, although having a leaning toward or standing behind one position on an issue legitimately might be called a bias, this could not be avoidable bias in the bad sense. This must be the neutral sense of bias. The leaning might be right-minded, or the opinion may be based on sound reasons and be the most defensible stand to take. Third, having a strong conviction about an issue, although it might be called having a bias in the broad and neutral sense, should not be confused with being narrow-minded, close-minded, or biased in any bad sense. A person's strong conviction might be based on a careful, open-minded, and thorough consideration of the reasons for and against that position. The person might also be capable of giving up the conviction in question if faced with new evidence or arguments that refute it. Such a person might be said to "have a bias," but it does not follow that he or she must "be biased" in the sense that the commitment to the position blinds the person to evidence against it. Perhaps we confuse these reasonings because all-too-often those who "have a bias" in the sense that they have firm convictions are also people who "are biased" in the sense that they cannot be fair, impartial, or non-adversarial, and they distort and misrepresent in their reasoning. Such a combination is common; the crucial point is that it is not unavoidable.

3.5 Contingent but Neutral or Good Bias

So much for unavoidable bias in the neutral sense. It remains to be seen whether it can ever be either indifferent or positively good to have a bias or be biased in situations in which having a bias is a contingent matter.

The test is this: Are there any cases in which competent language users speak of someone's having a bias they could avoid or rid themselves of, and in speaking of such a bias mean either to convey no value judgment or else to praise or commend the person's bias?

If the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) may be regarded as authoritative, then we must admit at once that, at least historically, such uses of bias were quite acceptable. The following are some entries testifying to such uses:

1642 FULLER *Holy & Prof.State.* iv.iv.252 In his prime he [Wolsley] was the bias of the Christian world, drawing the bowl thereof to what side he pleased.

1660 W.SECKER *Nonsuch Prof.* 430 The love of God is the bias of a Volunteer. [In this use bias means an influence that sways someone or something.]

1829 SOUTHEY *Inscript.* xiv. My intellectual life received betimes the bias it had kept. [In this use bias means predilection, disposition, or inclination.]

1801 STRUTT *Sports & Past.* Introd. 4 Such exercises as . . . biased the mind to military pursuits.

1862 LYTTON *Str. Story*. I.216 Whether . . . it was the Latin Inscription . . . that had originally biased Sir Philip Derval's literary taste toward the mystic jargon. [In these uses, the verb to bias means "to incline to or toward, to cause to swerve."](Oxford English Dictionary, S.V. "bias," vol. 1, pp. 844–845.)

In all these uses, the noun or verb either conveys no evaluative connotations or else, as in the case of Wolsley being called the bias of the Christian world, or the love of God being the bias of every volunteer, is used in a context in which the bias in question is considered good.

None of these meanings of bias is cited as obsolete in the *Oxford English Dictionary* but contemporary examples of this sort are hard to find. They do exist, however. One example comes from the exchange between the radio interviewer and the political scientist about the possible bias of the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario in deciding whether to call on the provincial Liberal Party to form a minority government. The radio reporter had asked whether the Lieutenant-Governor would be biased (in the avoidable and bad sense) as a result of his own long association with the Liberal Party. To her question, the political scientist replied, "I hope the Lieutenant-Governor will be biased in favor of the best decision." The point is that, since the best decision is by definition good, it follows that a bias on the part of the Lieutenant-Governor in favor of the best decisions would be good. The bias spoken of here is contingent and good.

3.6 An Understanding of Bias

We are ready to summarize our findings. It seems that bias means a kind of leaning, or an inclination, or a predisposition. When this results in bad thinking—as when it consists of prejudice or pre-judgment, when it causes close-mindedness, or when it leads to distortion, misrepresentation, or unfairness—then it is bad. When it is an unavoidable feature of our thinking processes or of our methods of communication, then it is potentially dangerous but not necessarily harmful. When the influence of contingent bias is cause for neither praise nor condemnation, we regard it as innocent and value-neutral. And when it disposes us to right-mindedness, we regard it as good.

I would suggest that a lot of the confusion about bias and some of the contradictory assertions about it, such as those of Little and Scriven cited at the beginning of this chapter, are due to a failure to notice this range of senses or uses of the term or to a desire to raise one of them to a position of preeminence. Given the confusingly different uses of the word, someone committed to clarity might be tempted to bypass it altogether. Its value as a term of critical appraisal is certainly reduced by its variety of implications. We have seen that one cannot describe a person or an assertion as biased simply and without qualification and hope to have communicated a single clear critical judgment.

On the other hand, the word is hard at work in the critical vocabulary of today's not-necessarily critical citizenry. In fact, it seems to be one of those lazy

man's words that is called to bear much more of a load than it can carry comfortably. Together with everyday terms of critical appraisal such as 'subjective,' and 'prejudiced,' 'biased' is used as a bludgeon to convey a sort of vague disapproval. Knowledge of the different uses of 'bias' permits you to pick out different possible interpretations of a clumsy speaker's or writer's critique.

An understanding of the meaning of 'bias' seems necessary, in sum, to be able to fathom what a careless critic means and to permit the conscientious critic to supply the contextual elaboration needed to convey a precise sense of the word intended.

Postscript

Chapter 1. Today I would make minor changes to “Is There an Obligation to Reason Well?” but I find myself still in broad agreement with it. One detail is that I wrote of the obligation to reason well when I should more consistently have written of the obligation *to try* to reason well. It is morally too demanding to have obligations to succeed at things that are difficult, but not morally too onerous to have obligations to do one’s best to succeed at them. Another detail is that today one would say “*pro tanto*” instead of “*prima facie*,” since at least in current ethical theory literature the latter term seems to have taken on its meaning of “at first look” and lost its meaning of “in the absence of contrary considerations” that the term has in law, and that is captured by “*pro tanto*.” Lastly, I would make more of the point that moral obligations come in degrees, and some are weightier than others. If there is an obligation to try to reason well, I would think, for example, that it is far outweighed by the obligation to help others in need, but has more weight than the obligation not to offend others by using profanity. But I still think that college and university instructors teaching courses in reasoning and argumentation, as well as those who instruct *them* in these subjects in Ph.D. programs, have a moral obligation to keep on top of the research in the field. I worry that not many do so.

Chapter 2. I stand by most of what I wrote in “The Keegsta Affair: A Test Case for Critical Thinking.” The piece was written with a tone of confidence, even arrogance, that any history and social science teacher who read it must have found aggravating at the least, and I would try to inject a more appropriate degree of tentativeness were I to write it today. I would also be less confident about the centrality of argument to historical method. The article suffers from the sin of the philosopher’s overgeneralization of the importance of philosophical methodology (the use of argument) in other fields. Also, as the reader will discover in [Chapter 8](#), I am less confident today about the adequacy of the criteria of relevance, acceptability and sufficiency than I was in 1986. Most important of all, though, today I would need to reference the plethora of critical thinking tools that have been developed for primary and high school teaching since I wrote that article. The best example that I know of are the resources developed by *The Critical Thinking Consortium* (2011) and the work of Roland Case in British Columbia, Canada.

Chapter 3. Although “What Is Bias?” could be tidier and tighter, I think it brings out well the variety of senses of the term ‘bias,’ and contains some apt illustrations from actual usage. I am pleased to report that it has been referenced by Douglas Walton several times when he has discussed bias, but disappointed that it has not been more widely cited.

Part II

Informal Logic

Introduction

During the early and mid-1970s, Ralph Johnson and I refined a course we taught called “Applied Logic,” initially using Howard Kahane’s (1971) textbook, *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric*. Gradually we revised its chapters and eventually replaced them with our own. Partly we wanted to replace the American examples with Canadian ones, to make the illustrations of the material more accessible to our students. More substantially, we found Kahane’s treatments of fallacies too imprecise for our taste, and his theory of fallacies undermined by the actual examples from the media. Over several iterations, we developed the idea that a logically good argument will have premises that are relevant to its conclusion, worthy of acceptance, and sufficient to justify accepting the conclusion. We then took fallacies to be violations of one or more of these three criteria: relevance, acceptability and sufficiency. To our knowledge, we are the first to have packaged these criteria in this way. Our re-write of Kahane’s material became extensive, and eventually resulted in an independent textbook (in many ways indebted to Kahane), *Logical Self-Defense* (1st edition, 1977).

During these years we were gradually freeing ourselves from the orthodoxy of the day (at least in English-speaking philosophy) that, apart from some of those used in science, a logically good argument will be deductively valid and a good argument *simpliciter* will be deductively valid and have true premises. If *logic* stood for the standards of good reasoning or good argument, our subject was logic, yet it was not formal deductive logic. What was it? At the same time that we were working at developing tools aimed at helping our students improve their ability to recognize, analyze, evaluate and critique the arguments of everyday life, we were also trying to figure out where our enterprise fit in the standard catalogue of philosophical topics. Some of the other new textbooks that came out during the 1970s suggested to us that others were going through the same struggle, so we organized a symposium at the University of Windsor in 1978, and called it a symposium on “informal logic.” For better and for worse, the name stuck. One of the outcomes of this conference was the outline of a research program into the problematic of informal logic (see Blair & Johnson (Eds.), *Informal Logic, The First International Symposium*, 1980, chap. 1).

The seven chapters of this Part are chapters that reflect this dual interest. Some address the nature of informal logic and its relation to logic in general and to formal logic in particular, and also to critical thinking, which we initially regarded as another rubric under which our work belonged. Others take up topics in the research program, specifically, the need to provide theoretical underpinning to the three criteria we had proposed for a logically good argument.

Chapter 4, “Argument Management,” is an early attempt to locate informal logic in relation to logic and to critical thinking. The next three chapters—**Chapter 5**, “What Is the Right Amount of Support for a Conclusion?” **Chapter 6**, “Premissary Relevance” and **Chapter 7**, “Premise Adequacy”—are attempts to clarify the concepts of argument sufficiency, relevance and acceptability, respectively.

Chapter 8, “Relevance, Acceptability and Sufficiency Today,” is a much more recent reflection of these three supposed criteria of a logically good argument, and represents my latest thinking on their roles in argument evaluation.

Chapter 9 is an attempt to show that a wide variety of authors, over the last half-century or so, have, in common with informal logicians, argued, or assumed, that there can be logically good inferences in reasoning and in arguments that are neither deductively valid nor quantitatively inductively strong.

Chapter 10 reviews some of the informal tools that have been offered to assess the illative step—the inference from premise(s) to conclusion—in arguments that might be cogent even though deductively invalid (and to which probability theory does not apply). Most of the chapter spells out a way of understanding how argument scheme theory can perform this function.

Chapter 4

Argument Management, Informal Logic and Critical Thinking

4.1 Introduction

This chapter maps the three concepts named in its title. Some have characterized *informal logic* as the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of arguments (Blair & Johnson, 1980, chap. 1; Johnson & Blair, 1994b, chap. 1). Some have characterized *critical thinking* as largely including the interpretation, analysis and evaluation of arguments (Weddle, 1978; Hoaglund, 1984). Moreover, there are areas of rhetoric, speech, communication studies and pragmatics that have focused on the study of argumentation. Hence there is reason to try to locate informal logic, critical thinking and argumentation studies in relation to one another.

In general, such mapping of related concepts shares the feature of normative lexicography that it is quasi-normative, quasi-empirical. The aim is to suggest how the concepts in question ought to be seen to relate to one another, but any normative proposals should also be in touch with actual usage

I begin with a description of something here called *argument management*, which is one way of understanding informal logic. There follows an account of the logical heart of argumentation, which identifies another way of understanding informal logic. Then critical thinking is related to those possible mappings of informal logic.

4.2 Argument Management

The business of critically evaluating arguments is quite complicated, as is the business of formulating them. This will be clear from the following descriptions of some of the complications involved. Consider first the perspective of the critic of a complex of arguments produced in support of a point of view. The critic faces the initial task of interpreting and analyzing the discourse. There has to be the prior determination that a viewpoint was asserted and defended. Those facts are not always clear.

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To complicate matters, arguments, like other complex learned activities governed by tacit conventions, may not always be found along the continuum between good ones and bad ones, but may instead fall into the category of the ill-formed or “quasi-argument” (see Johnson & Blair, 1993, 1994a). Even when a text clearly contains argumentation, it normally contains other, non-argumentative components. So usually the interpreter must decide what parts of the text belong to the argumentation and what parts are extraneous to it. In order to make these decisions, and to understand the argumentation fully for purposes of analysis and evaluation, the critic needs to determine the meanings and functions of the sentences as they are used in the discourse, and to identify the propositions that are being asserted, as precisely as possible. In the process, the critic must apply, implicitly or explicitly, a variety of linguistic assumptions or theories (syntactic, semantic and pragmatic) and rhetorical assumptions and theories. Speech-act theory is relevant, because arguments are, after all, speech acts (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984). Gricean maxims of conversation apply (Grice, 1989, chap. 2), since much discourse containing arguments is conversational or interactional in character. There may be subject-matter-specific communication conventions that pertain as well, such as burden of proof practices. These are all interpretation problems.

Related to the interpretation problems are what might be termed the analytical problems, which are those associated with formulating a precise account of the structure of the argumentation, including the probative and communicative functions of its elements. “Argumentation” here refers not just to the component arguments, but also to discourse having functions related to asserting the argument, such as explaining the context, defining terms, negotiating the burden of proof, or handling social-interaction matters such as avoiding threatening the “face” of the interlocutor.

The structure of an argument has both pragmatic and logical aspects. Pragmatic matters address whether the basic or underlying structure of the argument is dialogical or monological. An example of the complexity here is Walton’s (1992a, p. 95) differentiation of twelve types of dialogue, which he thinks reduce to six basic types (pp. 111–112). Walton’s “persuasion dialogue” starts with a difference of opinion and, with the parties sharing the goal of resolving the disagreement, then proceeds by each participant attempting to persuade the other. Such an argumentative dialogue is clearly different from what Walton terms “negotiation dialogue,” which starts from a conflict of interest and proceeds, with each party trying to maximize gains, toward some sort of settlement (p. 95). The identification of the dialogue type of argument (assuming the discourse is dialogical) in turn clarifies the functions of its different parts: here stands a reply to an objection, there a strategic concession, and so on. If, as Davis (1991, p. 11) has proposed, pragmatics has as its proper domain speakers’ communicative intentions, then the theory of the structure of arguers’ interactions and of the related communicative functions of their argumentative moves clearly belongs to pragmatics.

The logical aspect of an argument’s structure centers on the organization of the propositions that are put forward in support of the conclusion. Whether the pragmatic structure is monological or dialogical, whether the dialogue is a quarrel or an

inquiry, some claims will be adduced as support for others. These supporting claims will be clustered and brought to bear in various ways on the intermediate and overall conclusions. For example, the deterrence and retributive arguments for capital punishment are advanced as independently self-standing lines of support for that policy, either of which is claimed by its proponents to be sufficient; whereas the means, motive and opportunity of an accused murderer are presented by the prosecution as the interwoven strands of a narrative which has the accused's guilt as its inevitable climax. There is no consensus on the theoretical possibilities of argument structure; indeed, there is a lively ongoing debate in the literature (Snoeck Henkemans, 1992). These issues may be classified as "logical" because logic is the theory of implication (Harman, 1986, p. 10), and they concern the intended implications of the arguer's reasoning.

Clearly the analyses of pragmatic and logical structure will depend on the theories of the possible structures of each type available to the critic. For example, when monological proof or demonstration was considered the only rational kind of argument, arguments encountered in discourse were interpreted, and structured, as monological proofs. Today it is widely agreed among argumentation theorists (though not among all philosophical logicians) that such an interpretation distorts many kinds of argumentative discourse. A clear case in point is balance-of-considerations arguments, in which pros and cons are listed and weighed, and a final "all things considered" conclusion is drawn. Such arguments cannot be scanned as deductive proofs.

In general, the task of argument interpretation and analysis becomes more complex as our theory of argument becomes richer, and as the variety of interpretive categories increases.

After achieving an interpretation and a structural analysis of the argumentation found in the discourse under examination, the critic turns next to the moment of evaluation. Evaluation too is a complex process. Reference must be made to the purpose or purposes of the discourse, and of the argumentation in it, as well as to the point of the evaluation. A good move in negotiation dialogue, such as withholding evidence, may not be a good move in an inquiry. If the evaluator's aim is to discredit the arguer, he may be looking for different kinds of mistakes (such as slips that can be used to embarrass) than he would seek if his aim were to strengthen the case (such as weak spots that must be shored up).

Moreover, evaluation cannot be neatly separated from interpretation and analysis. For example, given two interpretations of a piece of discourse which are equally consistent with the textual evidence, if according to one the text is analyzed as a clever bit of irony and according to the other as a stupid argument, in the absence of contrary contextual evidence one assigns the more charitable interpretation. Thus there is necessarily interplay between interpretation analysis and evaluation.

What we do with the evaluation of the argument, or what might be termed "argument criticism," is yet another part of the business of dealing with arguments. The comments of an instructor on a student's essay will be different from those of a fellow symposiast at a scholarly meeting. A journal referee requested to cull an oversupply of manuscripts will comment differently from a referee asked to

recommend improvements that will bring a submission up to publishable standards. There are differences of opinion about what the role of the critic in a given situation should be, and there is quite a variety of types of critical contexts (such as different kinds of copy editors, different kinds of teachers, thesis supervisor, movie reviewer for a newspaper or a magazine or a television show, parliamentary opposition—the list could go on and on). Clearly criticism is different from evaluation, and is complicated in its own way.

These, then, are some of the complexities involved in dealing with the arguments that other people have formulated and used: interpretation of discourse, analysis of argument structure, evaluation and criticism. Let these be called the tasks of “argument assessment.” Different from these are the tasks confronting the proponent of a point of view who wants to formulate supporting arguments, and such “argument construction” involves its own complexities.

Making arguments intelligently calls for answers to the following questions (among others, no doubt) and for the rhetorical, semantic and pragmatic decisions required as a consequence of those answers. What goal is to be achieved by making the argument? What restrictions on possible objectives do the particular circumstances impose? Who is the audience or the interlocutor(s)? What do its members know or believe, and what are their expectations? What are one’s argumentative obligations (such as burden of proof) in the circumstances? In addition to the logico-pragmatic decisions, the argument builder faces the gamut of rhetorical opportunities and limitations provided by the context of the audience, the medium, and the occasion. As well, since arguing is an action no less than any other, the arguer cannot escape the prudential and moral norms applicable to actions in general. Even without a detailed illustration of how these questions apply, it should be clear that the person who manufactures and delivers an argument is burdened with no less complicated a task than the person who assesses it.

A person who is knowledgeable of all the theories applicable to argument assessment and construction, who has good judgment about their applications in all aspects of the argumentation enterprise, and who, given the knowledge base needed for argumentation on a given subject, exercises this knowledge and judgment well in practice, is in possession of considerable knowledge and skill. Let us call this a proficiency in “argument management.”

We can now ask whether competence in argument management is what constitutes competence in informal logic, and whether, accordingly, the range of theories which argument management presupposes constitutes the theoretical domain of informal logic. Clearly some people construe informal logic in this way. Competent argument management, or at least competent argument assessment, seems to be the goal of many so-called “informal logic” courses, and of the textbooks written for them.

The hypothesis that informal logic is argument management suggests a few noteworthy implications. One is that the scores of informal logic textbooks and their associate courses in (Anglophone) North America are theoretically undernourished. They seek to survive on an unbalanced diet of spoonfuls of different aspects of logical theory. Fogelin (1978) aside, the observer looks in vain for speech-act theory

or conversation analysis. Apart from Woods and Walton (1982) or Walton's more recent work (e.g., 1989, 1992a), dialogue theory cannot be found. Rhetoric is virtually absent, Fahnestock and Secor (1982) being the exception. A second implication of this conception of informal logic is that a richly theoretical monograph on argumentation management, such as van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1984), must then be classified as a work in the theory of informal logic. This hypothesis will be explored below.

4.3 Illative Core Analysis and Evaluation

As we have seen, argument management calls upon the insights of a variety of theoretical fields. Communication theory is the umbrella under which most of these belong. It encompasses rhetoric; linguistics, with its subareas of syntax, semantics and pragmatics; and within pragmatics, speech act theory, conversation analysis and dialogue theory. However, at the heart of the activity of argumentation is the argument that has been made. In its smallest possible form, this unit of argument is a single integrated set of one or more propositions adduced as grounding or evidence in support of a claim: "This, therefore that," which we will dub the "illative unit." In the absence of this illative core, the probative heart of argumentation, the institution of argumentation has no anchor.

To be sure, there will be occasions when the probative function of an argument is inessential to its social dynamic, as in those quarrels in which the expressed topic of the argument is only incidentally related, or completely unrelated, to the real issue between the protagonists. Logicians and epistemologists have tended to underestimate the importance of argumentation's non-probative aspects and functions. However, all these non-probative social practices involving argumentation are unimaginable in the absence of its probative function and the corresponding illative core.

The point that illation is essential for argumentation does not imply that arguments are adequately modeled by a simple "this, therefore that" truth demonstrating structure. In any one argument, illative units can support main premises, subordinate premises, inferential steps; they can block criticisms of premises, inferences or conclusions; they can refute alternative positions, shift the burden of proof, and back up a source's credibility and more. Moreover, some will be claimed to establish truth, others probability, others plausibility. Some conclusions will be said to be established definitively, others with the standing of a default. "Illative unit" does not denote an argument type or function, just the basic simplest premise-conclusion component from which any argument is built.

As we have seen, argument management is guided by norms. The norms applicable to the illative units of the argumentation differ from those which apply to the layers of argumentative activity that surround and sustain that illative core. Someone does not get into the activity of argumentation without playing the speech-act game appropriately, and failures to live up to the rules of efficient and decorous argumentative conversation can undercut any argumentative interaction. Such

extra-illative normative aspects of the argumentative enterprise tend to be unknown to, or under-valued by, most North American philosophical circles. However, none of these norms applies to the illative core.

The norms that govern the illative core of argumentation are the norms of logic. Stated conversely, the illative core of argumentation is the aspect of argumentation to which the norms of logic apply. But the application of logic to argumentation is not straightforward.

It is essential to distinguish between two references of the word ‘logic.’ One is the name for the academic discipline and its subject matter studied in philosophy, mathematics and computer science departments. I shall designate it as “logic_{f/d}” (formal or deductive logic). The other is the non-technical use of ‘logic’ by educated people, when they say such things as, “You are being illogical,” “He is committed by the logic of his position to agree with us” and “Her arguments are always very logical.” I shall use the word ‘logic’ without qualification when it has this second reference.

Logic_{f/d}, is the study of the implication relations between sentences (or propositions, if you prefer). Logicians_{f/d} refer to the sets of sentences that are related by such a logical_{f/d} implication as “arguments.” Arguments in that sense will be labeled “SS-arguments,” to indicate that they consist merely of sentence sets. An SS-argument, for the logician_{f/d}, is a set of sentences of which one is entailed, or is logically_{f/d} implied, by the others. (A sentence is entailed or logically_{f/d} implied by others if it is impossible for it to be false if they are true.) In this sense, a logical_{f/d} implication is a relationship between sentences that exists whether or not anyone notices or asserts it.¹

An SS-argument is not at all the same as an argument in the sense in which I have been using the term up to this point.² The logician_{f/d}’s SS-argument requires no arguer, no communication, no audience. No inference is invited or encouraged. Even if someone draws an inference from an implication, the inference could go in either direction, as Strawson (1952), Jeffrey (1981) and Harman (1986) have pointed out. (Discovering that one’s belief logically_{f/d} implies some propositions, *p*, might, depending on the content of *p*, be a good reason for changing one’s belief instead of a good reason for accepting *p*.) An argument, in contrast, is a complicated kind of speech act, or else the product or raw material of such a speech act (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984). Although, clearly, logic_{f/d} is necessarily connected to SS-arguments, is logic_{f/d} connected at all to arguments? If so, how?

¹ There are different (but related) senses of ‘imply,’ and ‘implication,’ according to which the terms refer to a communicative act—the act of inducing an audience to make an inference. An example, “The advertisement implied that use of the moisturizer would make people appear to be younger than they otherwise were.”

² By ‘argument’ I have been meaning, and will continue to mean, nothing esoteric or technical. I use the word to refer to such things as one or more sets of reasons considered or offered in support of a proposition; or a verbal exchange in which two or more people trade such reasons, in order to convince one another of a point of view; or a dispute in which two or more people try to refute the viewpoint of others, or to attack their credibility or authority.

One possible answer is that $\text{logic}_{f/d}$ is necessary for argument evaluation, for the following reasons. The illative core of an argument is the compound proposition of the form, “This, therefore that.” The only way to tell whether “this” supports “that” is to see whether “This, therefore that” constitutes a valid SS-argument. In other words, the only legitimate kind of support is one in which the premises logically $_{f/d}$, imply the conclusion. And that is exactly what $\text{logic}_{f/d}$ can tell us. Hence, $\text{logic}_{f/d}$ certainly does have a use in the evaluation of arguments: it is necessary to invoke $\text{logic}_{f/d}$, in order to assess whether the inferences made or invited in arguments are valid.

So one theory of argument evaluation holds that the only kind of acceptable inference in an argument is deductive entailment. If that theory is correct, then not only is $\text{logic}_{f/d}$ of possible use in argument evaluation, it is the one and only tool for the evaluation of the inferences of arguments. This theory is a version of what has been called “deductive chauvinism” (Salmon, 1988).

Deductive chauvinism has come under criticism. Many have argued that an inference made or offered in an argument can be acceptable in some cases if, although logically $_{f/d}$ invalid, it is inductively strong (Skrirms, 1966). Many apparently good arguments in science seem to have this feature (Salmon, 1988; Suppe, 1988). Others have held that an argument’s inference can be acceptable if it satisfies the conditions for reasonable inferences of certain special sorts. For example, Govier (1992) and Johnson and Blair (1993, 1994a) think that the pattern or schema of the argument from a priori analogy (for example “My essay is as good as hers, So it should get an A grade too”) characterizes a class of arguments that can be entirely reasonable, although not deductively valid or inductively strong in any standard sense.³ Scriven (1986) has argued that what he calls “probative” inferences are not deductively valid (for example, the inferences in product evaluation found in such places as Consumer Reports, which make all-things-considered evaluations based on the scores registered on a variety of criteria).⁴ Others think that we can make

³ An argument from a priori analogy is one in which it is concluded that a property should be attributed to something, on the ground that this thing is similar to some other thing to which that property is attributed, in precisely the respect(s) in virtue of which the property is correctly attributed to the other thing. It has the following schema:

X is A by virtue of X being/having R (S,T, . . .).
 Y is like X in the respect that Y is/has R (S,T, . . .).
 Hence, Y is (or should be) A.

To expand the example, “Her essay received an A grade because of the quality of her research and the organization of the essay, and my research and organization are as good as hers, so my essay should get an A grade too.”

⁴ Scriven does not offer a precise definition of probative logic. The following comments may help explain what he has in mind: “. . . probative logic focusses on particular types of practical argument—most notably sets of reasons that cannot be sensibly supplemented to make up a classical demonstration The patterns which are important to probative inferences are ones often dismissed or crudely misrepresented by formal logics; they are far from the exceptionless exactitude of the universally quantified statement. Indeed, they are often not expressible at all; but one

reasonable inferences from the testimony of authorities.⁵ In cases like these the premise-conclusion relationships are logically_{if/d} invalid because it is possible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false; yet it seems reasonable to draw the conclusions in question, and indeed, in those cases in which the grounds are overwhelming, irrational not to do so. There is, for such arguments, no mechanical decision procedure for deciding which inferences are plausible or probable.

Let ‘logic’ be the name for the normative science of implication relationships in general. The study of deductively valid implication relationships is called “formal logic” and its norms govern inferences taken to be deductive. It would be natural, then, to call the study of the norms of non-deductive inferences, “non-formal logic.” But we already have the term ‘informal logic,’ to refer at least to the study of the norms of non-deductive inferences used in arguments. It might seem simplest, then, to keep the latter label, and extend it to the study of the norms of the inferences that are not taken to be deductive, whether used in arguments or elsewhere.

This characterization of informal logic is too narrow in two important respects. First, for those interested in argument assessment, the adequacy of the premises is no less important than the adequacy of the inferential link between premises and conclusion. A logically “cogent” argument has acceptable premises as well as an acceptable premise-conclusion link. This conception mirrors the old deductivist doctrine of a “sound” argument as one that is deductively valid and has true premises, but does so without presuming that deductive validity is the only norm for adequate inferences, or that truth is the only norm for acceptable premises (see Pinto, 1995). Second, argument assessment as envisaged by informal logicians is not restricted to the illative cores of compound arguments, but to the whole assembly of such cores to be found in a fully developed case for a claim. Moreover, the logical virtues and vices of such argument webs are not reducible to those of their component parts. For example, Scriven’s (1994) criticisms of the ways weight-and-sum methods are sometimes applied in reasoning to overall product or program evaluations can have no parallel in the component illative core arguments whose conclusions are just what are weighted and summed. So if our conceptual mapping is to heed actual practice, ‘informal logic’ cannot be taken to refer exclusively to the study of non-deductive inference patterns found in the illative core of argumentation.

of the clues to the presence of probative inference is the use of terms like ‘typically,’ ‘ideally,’ ‘essentially,’ ‘naturally,’ ‘most’ or ‘mostly’” (Scriven, 1986, pp. 8, 9).

⁵ Example: “Dental research has found that brushing teeth with toothpaste containing fluoride helps reduce the incidence of tooth decay, so it’s a good idea to use a brand of toothpaste that has a fluoride additive.” See Govier (1992) for a thorough defense of reliance on testimony.

4.4 What Is Informal Logic?

If “informal logic” is to be the name for the normative study of the conditions of premise-acceptability and of the non-deductive patterns of reasonable inference at both the atomic and the compound levels, then it cannot be identified with argument management. The former is just one component or aspect of the latter. What then is informal logic? Is it argument management or the study of illative norms? If the question is asked descriptively, the answer has to be “both,” because the term has been understood and used in both ways. However, since the things signified in the two references are different, using the same term for both invites confusion.

It seems preferable to restrict the term “informal logic” to the study of the norms for reasonable non-deductive inference patterns, as well as the norms for premise acceptability. If it can be shown that there are no reasonable non-deductive norms of inferences in arguments, then aside from the study of premise acceptability there is no subject matter of informal logic. Of course, the study and the skills of argumentation management would still remain.

Consequently, in informal logic courses the different aspects of argument management should be made explicit. Informal logic would then be but one among several components of such a course, along with rhetoric and linguistics, for example. Reducing informal logic’s boundaries in this way has the benefit of making it clearer that interpreting arguments relies on the insights of those other fields.

4.5 Other Senses of ‘Informal Logic’

In *Dilemmas*, Gilbert Ryle (1954, chap. VIII) used the term ‘informal logic’ to refer to the “logic” of the concepts which he saw as central to philosophy, such as the concept of pleasure, seeing and chance. He was referring to the implications of such concepts (or, strictly speaking, of the sentences in which such words occur), and his use has little connection with the way ‘informal logic’ is used today.

For many, informal logic consists of the study of the so-called “informal fallacies,” analyzing the essential features of individual informal fallacies and/or producing a meta-theory of the fallacies as such, and identifying fallacies in situ. Such studies of fallacies and their applications constitute a branch of informal logic insofar as fallacy analysis and identification relate directly to argument assessment. But since these studies do not exhaust the subject matter of argument assessment, the two are not identical.

Yet others understand informal logic to be simply the non-formal treatment of elementary deductive logic ($\text{logic}_{f/d}$)—that is, its treatment without the use of any formal or symbolic apparatus (for example, as in Copi & Cohen, 1990). But if informal logic is simply non-formal elementary deductive $\text{logic}_{f/d}$, then it has no theoretical interest. If this were to become the generally accepted denotation of ‘informal logic,’ then it would simply be necessary to find a different name for the theory and practice of argument assessment and construction.

Finally, some equate informal logic with critical thinking, perhaps because applied informal logic is frequently used in courses teaching critical thinking skills. This identification is unfortunate, because it obscures more than it clarifies. Let us see how that is so.

4.6 How Is Critical Thinking Related to Informal Logic?

It should be clear that if informal logic is understood in either of the two senses proposed above—whether broadly as co-extensive with argument management, or narrowly as illation assessment—then the question of the relation of critical thinking to informal logic is complex. Those who think informal logic and critical thinking are identical have to explain whether they mean that argument management and critical thinking are identical or that the study of illative core cogency and critical thinking are identical.

‘Critical thinking,’ as a term of art, traces back to the idea captured by John Dewey (1910) in what he called “reflective thought,” and identified as

[a]ctive, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conclusions to which it tends
(Dewey, 1910, p. 6)

“Critical thinking” was the label employed in subsequent educational reform themes that developed by the 1970s into a movement in the United States that had (and has) as its objective the development of a reflective, critical attitude of mind, together with the skills to carry it out effectively, as the centerpiece of the primary school, high school and post-secondary educational curricula. In contrast to informal logic, which is a branch of a particular discipline (logic), and is partly defined by a particular subject matter (argumentation), critical thinking is a skill and attitude of mind whose application has no disciplinary or subject-matter home territory or boundaries. Any topic that engages the intellect or the imagination may be examined through ‘critical thinking.’ Thus, rather than denoting a theory or a discipline, ‘critical thinking’ denotes a practice.

There is a straightforward explanation for the tendency to equate critical thinking with informal logic. In the early 1970s a “new” logic course was launched based on several new textbooks (teaching manuals, in effect) that introduced a novel syllabus for the standard university-level introductory logic course in the United States and Canada. Most of these texts shared the following three features: (1) they aimed to foster critical thinking, (2) they did so by teaching the analysis and critique of arguments, (3) they taught methods of argument analysis and evaluation other than formal logic (see Kahane, 1995; Thomas, 1986; Scriven, 1976; Johnson & Blair, 1993, 1994a; Weddle, 1978; Fogelin, 1978). Informal logic, it should now be clear, focuses on the last two features. So, since the educational goal—critical thinking—was taught using the perspective and methods of informal logic as the means, and

since this combination continues to this day, it is perhaps understandable that many instructors and scholars equate informal logic with critical thinking.⁶

But we should be aware of important differences. Govier (1987, chap. 11) argues that critical thinking and informal logic should be distinguished, because thinking can be critical without arguments being involved. One can think critically about things other than arguments (art or music, or any non-argumentative discourse, for example), and one can use tools other than arguments in thinking critically (demonstrating alternative ways of doing something, for example). An implication of this distinction is that critical thinking has a wider scope than informal logic. In order to engage in critical thinking, one will have to be able to appraise many different kinds of intellectual product, whereas informal logic is particularly focused on the realm of argumentation. To assess this wide range of intellectual products, the critical thinker will profit from training in informal logic, but from much else besides. To appraise deductive inferences, at least some elementary deductive logic is needed; to appraise or estimate probabilities, elements of probability theory will be useful. Moreover, subject matter knowledge is necessary to most if not all critical thinking. For example, knowledge of music or art history and appreciation are needed to appraise works of music or of art.⁷ So informal logic is just one of many tools that the critical thinker will need to have mastered.

4.7 Conclusion

On the basis of the distinctions set out above, we are now ready to locate argument management, informal logic and critical thinking in relation to one another.

Being a critical thinker is having an intellectual virtue, a disposition issuing in the skilled activity of rational, reflective reasoning about what to believe or do (Ennis, 1996; Siegel, 1988). Such thinking must, among other things, critically interpret and evaluate argumentation, and construct pro and con arguments to test the cogency of a position or the soundness of a decision. Hence the exercise of critical thinking includes skill in argument management as one of its components. Argument

⁶ Other factors invite confusion as well. There exists an organization called the Association for Informal Logic and critical thinking (AILACT), which suggests something natural and acceptable in their juxtaposition. Each term has its origins in a program of educational reform, with overlapping, albeit different, focuses. Further, in the early years especially, but continuing to the present, many of the important theorists had feet in both camps, and some of these people have tended to use the terms as if they were interchangeable. Finally, since the market for textbooks in these areas is considerable, and since it is in the financial interests of textbook publishers (and their authors) to broaden rather than to narrow the market, there has been a tendency in textbook marketing to blur rather than to distinguish the two concepts. Since many people working in these areas fail to distinguish them, newcomers may be forgiven for identifying the two.

⁷ To be sure, background knowledge is also crucial for the application of informal logic, since it is required both for the evaluation of premises and also, by virtue of its role as the source of inference-testing counter-examples, for the assessment of inferences.

management entails bringing to bear insights about the complex social communicative practice that is argumentation. Among much else, this practice includes at its center the interpretation and evaluation of arguments—sets of reasons adduced in support of claims. Informal logic is the name for the theory of the norms that apply to the interpretation and evaluation of arguments' illative core complexes, and the application of that theory to actual arguments is applied informal logic. Hence informal logic is one aspect of the theory and practice of argument management; and argument management is one element of critical thinking.

Chapter 5

What Is the Right Amount of Support for a Conclusion?

5.1 Introduction: The Problem

The criticism of hasty generalization presupposes that generalizations can be well founded. In practice the defense of a point of view must rest: further questions and objections reveal stupidity, not grounds for doubt. Examples like these motivate the question to be explored in this paper. In asking when an argument's support is sufficient or complete, what is intended by the question, how is it to be understood?

What is at issue in arguing are attitudes towards propositions—taking “attitude” broadly to refer to the range of cognitive attitudes (from belief to be false, through doubt and non-belief, on up to conviction) and of affective attitudes (such as approval. . .disapproval, and like. . .dislike). The question of when enough grounds have been provided is the question when someone is justified by the grounds supplied in taking the attitude they do take towards the proposition at issue. Whether the evidence is supplied in one long extended text (such as a speech, an article or even a book), or in a collection of short texts (such as a set of one or more of the proponent's replies to the opponent's questions in a structured dialogue) does not matter. Nor does it matter whether the evidence consists of a single simple proposition or of many propositions.

So the question, “when is the support sufficient?” is the question, “when do the premises available to a particular person, *S*, suffice to justify *S* in taking given attitude, *a*, towards a particular proposition, *p*?” (A token of a type of positional attitude will be a particular person's attitude towards a particular proposition. So *S*'s being skeptical of *p* is a token of the propositional attitude type, “belief”—or perhaps “disbelief.” Hereafter I shall use “propositional attitude” to denote a token of a propositional attitude type, e.g., *S*'s conviction that not-*p*.)

The question can be expressed more precisely by distinguishing the sufficiency of a set of grounds from their acceptability and their relevance.

Reprinted, with permission, from F. H. van Eemeren, R. Grootendorst, J. A. Blair & C. A. Willard. (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Argumentation* (pp. 330–337). Amsterdam, SicSat, 1991.

For any given (non-contradictory) propositional attitude, ap , there is a set of grounds, $\{G1-Gn\}$, such that if $G1-Gn$ are *acceptable* to S , then S is justified in taking ap . (A set of grounds is “acceptable to S ” just when both (a) S accepts the grounds and (b) the grounds are worthy of being accepted by S .) Thus its acceptability to S is a necessary condition of a ground’s belonging to a set that actually justifies S in taking ap . Now S can consider whether any member, Gx , of $\{G1-Gn\}$ is acceptable, but then S ’s appropriate propositional attitude towards Gx becomes the issue and a distinguishable process of arguing (and its product) can be identified for Gx . Hence the question of the sufficiency for S of the grounds for aGx can be distinguished from the question of the sufficiency for S of the grounds for ap . The former is “subordinate” to the latter, in the terminology of van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, pp. 92–93).

The acceptability to S of the evidentiary relevance of a proposition to p is also a necessary condition of the proposition’s belonging to any $\{G1-Gn\}$ which justifies S in adopting ap : if a proposition is irrelevant for S to whether to adopt ap , then it can hardly count as a ground justifying S in taking ap . (Grounds are evidentially relevant to S just when both (a) the grounds are worthy of being taken by S as evidence for p , and (b) S does so take them.) Evidentiary relevance can be a property of sets of two or more propositions, not of separate propositions (Blair, 1989, p. 72). Sets of grounds which meet the condition that if their members are acceptable to, S , then S is justified in taking the propositional attitude in question, will be complete or fully expressed in the sense that all members necessary for the relevance of subsets (for S) will be expressed. So we can take it that any $\{G1-Gn\}$ that is sufficient for S will contain all and only those grounds which are relevant for, S to S ’s adopting ap .

Our question then is Q: “Assuming that $G1-Gn$ are acceptable to S and are evidentially relevant for, S to adopt ap , when is $\{G1-Gn\}$ sufficient to support S ’s adopting ap ?”

Q immediately spawns another question, namely, Q1: “Is there a general answer to Q?” Let us begin by considering some candidates for general answers to Q.

5.2 One Solution: Deductivism

It might be thought that a general answer to Q is the answer that an acceptable and relevant (for S) $\{G1-Gn\}$ provide S with sufficient support for taking ap just when S knows it is logically impossible for $\{G1-Gn\}$ to be true and p to be false—when S knows that p is (logically) implied by $\{G1-Gn\}$.¹ This seems to be the position of those who identify argument with logic and logic with deduction.²

¹ It is impossible for irrelevant premises to imply a conclusion, so when it is a question of premises implying a conclusion, then relevance must be presupposed and need not be explicitly mentioned.

² Corcoran, for instance, holds that logic is the study of proofs and non-proofs, which are conclusive argumentations and inconclusive argumentations, and so logic is the study of argumentations

When someone knows (or is justified in believing) that an acceptable and relevant premise set implies a proposition, then that person is justified in taking the same propositional attitude of acceptance towards the conclusion. Implication justifies transitivity of propositional attitude. If *S* knows that premises which *S* knows to be true imply *p*, then *S* is justified in being *convinced that P*; if *S* finds a set of premises plausible, and knows it implies *p*, then *S* is justified in *finding p plausible*. In general, when *S* is justified in *a{G1-Gn}*, and *S* is justified in believing {*G1-Gn*} implies *P*, then *S* is justified in *ap*.

What happens, however, in cases in which the relationship between the premises and the proposition in question is not one of implication? What if the truth of the premises supports only the probability of the conclusion, as happens in many inductive arguments? What if the premises support only some *ceteris paribus* property of the conclusion, as happens in balance-of-consideration arguments (Blair, 1989, p. 73), in case-by-case and conductive arguments (Govier, 1987, chap. 4)?

In arguments of these types, the premises do not imply the proposition in question. In some cases the grounds would imply the proposition in question only if they comprised all the possible evidence for it, but one cannot be sure they do, or one knows they do not. In some cases that implication is impossible because both the proposition in question and its denial are strongly supported by the available grounds, as happens with policy deliberations where there are good reasons favoring a policy but also good reasons against adopting it. In many contexts of practical reasoning—e.g., morality, law, business, politics, engineering, medicine, the skilled trades, crafts—there are arguments the premises of which do not imply the proposition in question, yet which do lend to that proposition support which justifies adopting some propositional attitude towards it. Since the logical implication of a proposition by true premises is not the only type of relationship in which grounds support a proposition, and hence a propositional attitude, it follows that implication is not a general criterion of sufficient support. It cannot be the basis of a general answer to *Q*.

5.3 Another Solution: Pragma-Dialectical Theory

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) hold that someone asserting a thesis—the protagonist of a point of view—has sufficiently defended it just when that person has *successfully* defended (a) the inference from the grounds or premises to the point of view and (b) the premises (see Rules 11 and 12, pp. 169–171). Such successful defenses consist of successfully meeting the challenges of any critical interlocutor—the antagonist; and meeting such challenges amounts to securing the agreement of the antagonist (pp. 164–165). Successful defense of (a), the inference, occurs when either (i) the antagonist accepts appropriately formulated missing premise(s) (see

(pp. 41–42). For Corcoran, a proof is the deduction of a conclusion from premises known to be true (Corcoran, 1989, p. 22).

Ch. 6) that render(s) the argument deductively valid (p. 145), or (ii) the antagonist agrees that the inference satisfies the rules of inference validity (of whatever sort) that the two parties had agreed in advance would govern their arguments (p. 169). Successful defense of (b), a premise, occurs when either (i) the antagonist grants that the premise is equivalent to one of the propositions both parties accepted as their initial shared commitment store (pp. 165–166), or (ii) the antagonist accepts the premise as validated by one of the proposition-testing methods both parties agreed at the outset to regard as authoritative (pp. 167–168), or (iii) the premise is itself sufficiently defended by a further argument (p. 170, see Rule 11).

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst's theory is designed as a model for argumentative discussions aimed at the rational resolution of disagreements. From the point of view of that goal, the agreement of the disputants to all the procedures and criteria as well as to premises and inference steps in the arguments used will be vital. Does this "pragma-dialectical" model supply a general answer to our question, "When are the grounds offered for *S* adopting *ap* sufficient?"

According to the pragma-dialectical theory, sufficiency is a function of appropriately meeting the critics' challenges to premises and inferences. The sole constraint on securing agreement, however, is that it follow agreed-upon procedures. In other words, substantive sufficiency is a function of procedural propriety (with one exception).

Consider the sufficiency of inferences. Inferences must either be deductively valid once made explicit (that's the exception), or else must meet other agreed-upon rules of inference validity. I have just argued that deductive validity (implication) alone applies only to a subset of arguments. There will be many arguments which it will not be useful to reconstruct by adding unexpressed premises which secure deductive validity, for there is no question of their premise implying their conclusions. Thus the first pragma-dialectical criterion of inference sufficiency is not general in scope.

As for the appeal to agreed-upon rules of inference validity, it is too open-ended. It places no constraints on what rules of inference the discussants may agree to. Nothing in it prevents disputants from agreeing to abide by rules of reasoning that are demonstrably inappropriate. Admittedly, as long as the disputants both accept the inappropriate rules, they might be able to resolve their disagreement. But there is no guarantee that their resolution would be rational except in a purely procedural sense.

Consider next the rule for the sufficiency of premises. The rule requires that premises must either ultimately belong to agreed-upon joint commitment stores or else be validated by agreed-upon authorities. Again, these conditions are too open-ended. Nothing prevents the disputants' initial body of jointly accepted propositions from containing demonstrably problematic propositions. And nothing prevents the disputants, when settling on procedures for validating new information, from agreeing to rely on demonstrably unreliable authorities.

Moreover, just as disputants might agree too readily to rules of inference, propositional commitments or authorities, so too they might unreasonably withhold their agreement. When dealing with the resolution of disagreements modeled

on two-party disputes, the agreement of the interlocutors is vital. But in other contexts, such as with arguments directed to numbers of interlocutors, we can envisage situations in which there are stupid or dogmatic holdouts who simply fail to appreciate the genuine force of the argument.

In sum, by making the sufficiency of the argumentation dependent in the end on the relatively unconstrained agreement of the participants, the pragma-dialectical model as it stands tolerates resolution of disagreements by the use of arguments that are demonstrably insufficient, and it tolerates the failure to resolve disagreements when the argumentation of one side is demonstrably sufficient. For these reasons, the criterion of interlocutor agreement cannot serve, without qualification, as a general answer to our question: “When is the support provided for taking a propositional attitude sufficient to justify it?”

5.4 The Solution? The Dialectical Community

Up to this point the paper has been largely negative, rejecting two general solutions to the problem of sufficiency. Hereafter it becomes more positive, but also speculative and programmatic. I think that the pragma-dialectical model is on the right track, but I also think that any general criterion of sufficiency can at best serve only as a guideline, and that specific operational norms must be sought in particular contexts and with reference to particular argument types.

Historically, philosophical controversy has pitted objectivity-standards independent of human judgment against subjectivity-standards relative to human judgment. The dialectical point of view inspires a third alternative, namely (to greatly oversimplify) one in which standards are independent of particular individual judgment (in that sense objective), but relative to collective human judgment (in that sense subjective). Moreover, this third alternative describes actual human practice. In broad terms, the standards in any field or practice, including the standards for what grounds are sufficient to justify adopting propositional attitudes in it, are a function of the agreement of its practitioners. Here the dialectical conception of argument embraces the field- or subject- dependent relativity of concrete standards. But a third ingredient—the ontological independence of the physical and social worlds—constrains the standards that communities may formulate.

In general dialectical terms, an argument’s support for its conclusion will be sufficient when it meets its burdens of proof, relying in the final analysis on what may be presumed or accepted without further question. However, what grounds constitute meeting the burden of proof, and what presumptions are available, will vary from field to field, and within each field over history.

It must also be acknowledged that not every topic of argumentation belongs to a subject in which there are more or less settled norms for argument sufficiency. Not surprisingly, there is also available for general use—whether in non-specialized argumentation, or in interdisciplinary argumentation, or indeed in argumentation within specialized fields—a range of types of argument, with norms associated with each of those types.

By an argument “type,” I mean a pattern of argument that can be abstracted from any particular content. An example is what Govier (1989) calls a “model” of the a priori argument from analogy:

1. A has [properties] x, y, z,
2. B has [properties] x, y, z.
3. A is [i.e., may be classified as] W.
4. It is in virtue of x, y, z that A is W
5. Therefore, B is W.

Examples of types of argument are inductive arguments from analogy, appeals to authority, generalizations of many kinds, causal arguments of various kinds, arguments from rules and principles, and arguments from implications, from consequences, and from precedent.³

Issues or questions can be classified in various ways, and this is where the notion of fields and disciplines comes into play. A question can be legal, moral, religious; historical, psychological, sociological, political; empirical, conceptual; and so on—or more than one of these at once. Certain types of argument tend to be found with greater frequency in argumentation about certain sorts of issue or question. Thus appeals to implications, consequences, and precedents are common in legal argumentation, less so in discussions of empirical questions in the social and natural sciences; appeals to prescriptive rules and principles abound in moral argumentation but not in scientific argumentation.

Arguments of a given type will be sufficient when acceptable premises representing all of the elements needed to complete an argument of that type have been supplied. All the lines in the formulation of the argument type must be acceptably instantiated. In arguments from a priori analogy, to give an example of how this condition works, it is common to find it argued that since one of two things that share a set of properties also may be classified in a certain way, so can the other. (“My essay was on the same topic as hers, was just as long, contained as many references, and came to the same conclusion; hers received an A grade; so should mine.”) Yet it is not claimed or shown, what is key to the argument, that the classification in question is justified only by the possession of those properties. (“Her essay received the A grade because of its topic, length, number of references and conclusion.”) In other words, the arguer omits any explicit statement of line 4 of Govier’s representation. Yet usually that statement is the most problematic step in the argument. Unless the

³ Work is needed on the concept of argument types. Van Eemeren and Kruijer (1987) distinguish “schemes” and “types” of argumentation: “Which argumentation scheme is present in any given case depends on the argumentation type” (p. 75); and they say an arguer must know which type of argument he or she is using, but need not be aware of the scheme to which the argument belongs (p. 75). An example of an argument scheme is argument “based on a causal relationship”; and examples of types of argument which are instances of this scheme are “pointing to the consequence of a certain course of action,” “introducing a pragmatic argument” and “allowing the goal to justify the means” (p. 75). Although they use many other illustrations, van Eemeren and Kruijer offer no definitions, and I confess to having trouble grasping these concepts.

arguer can supply an acceptable line 4, the argument is incomplete and the support for its conclusion insufficient.

Clearly, both conceptual clarification and empirical research are needed to identify various argument types. One point of doing so, if my analysis is correct, is to supply guidelines for sufficiency in argumentation.

The criteria for an acceptable line in any argument type vary from field to field, discipline to discipline, and topic to topic, as well as over time, purpose and context. Good illustrations are provided by the rules of evidence in law. For example, in Canadian law there is a rule derived from an English case called “Hodge’s case” in which the judge directed the jury that,

before they could find the prisoner guilty, they must be satisfied, not only that [the] circumstances were consistent with his having committed the act, but they must also be satisfied that the facts were such as to be inconsistent with any other rational conclusion than that the prisoner was the guilty person. [*Hodge’s Case* (1838), 168 E.R. 1136] (Delisle, 1989, p. 114)

No doubt this “rule in Hodge’s case” or its equivalent applies in other jurisdictions, but the point is that in Canada at the present time it is required by a legal rule that there are at least two lines in any complete argument from circumstantial evidence: (a) the evidence is consistent with the accused’s guilt, and (b) the evidence is inconsistent with any reasonable alternative to the accused’s guilt; and no purely circumstantial evidence is sufficient to convict which fails to satisfy the both conditions of the Hodge’s case rule. What gives this rule its authority is its affirmation in Canadian case law.

A normative study of sufficiency should start with descriptions of the various actually operative norms of sufficiency. We are not here inventing something, but rather in the first instance examining a thriving family of practices and trying to describe the norms by which they operate. The methodological assumption is that there are prescriptive norms at work which have emerged from the history of the practices, out of their purposes, informed by the concrete exigencies of subject matter and procedures. The norms are thus in some sense pragmatically justified, and they are prescriptive in the respect that they have authority over practice—up to a point. Such norms are always subject to revision as the practices change and also as the critique of their use reveals shortcomings and points towards improvements. Argumentation theory should aim to describe the working norms of an argumentative practice for at least two reasons. First, the study of operating norms will tell us more about argumentation; and second, the extracted norms can be critically analyzed with a view to improving the argumentative practices in which they are used.

Norms do not exist in isolation from their formulators, users and critics. Among the defining features of fields and disciplines is that for each there is a group (or groups) of practitioners whose expectations of excellence establish both the membership requirements for admission to their ranks and also the qualifications for elevation up the rungs in their internal hierarchies. Members of these groups achieved their prominence by meeting the expectations of previous generations.

The hierarchies of authority prescribe, among other things, the standards of evidentiary sufficiency expected of arguments in the field.

An analogy with a multi-party elected political system applies here. Just as there are contending political parties, so there can be contending views of what the standards should be. Just as when one party forms the government and its policies are made into positive law, so for a time the proponents of one view will dominate, and their standards dominate graduate schools and journals, judicial systems, public debate, and so on. Just as there are political mavericks whose views become respectable, and others whose views are widely ignored and soon forgotten, so there will be maverick theorists whose views in time become influential or even dominant, and other maverick theorists whose eccentric views will be ridiculed, and attract no adherents.

So it is that what sort of experimental design, what information gathering instruments, what statistical criteria are used to test an hypothesis in a science will be a function of the latest dominant thinking about sufficiency in that field. Think of the improvements in the wording of questionnaires in survey research over the past 25 years. In other fields, such as medical ethics, for example, settled methodologies do not exist, but there will be known presumptions for or against a thesis that must be overturned by its antagonist or its protagonist. And as the technology changes and new possibilities for treatment are developed, new presumptions and arguments will come into play. In general, when it comes to issues that have been much discussed, there will be known positions that have been taken, known arguments for and against them, and known objections to those arguments. The issues in a field will always be of at least two kinds, on two different levels. At the “object” level will be the disputes about hypotheses, theories, norms and principles and their applications, explanations and arguments, and so on. At the “meta” level will occur the disputes about, among other things, methodologies and standards of proof and of support. Thus there must be standards of sufficiency for arguments about standards of sufficiency. The “philosophy” of any field consists in part of theories about what these meta-standards should be. Obviously, although it looms as a theoretical possibility, there is no infinite regress in practice. People succeed in making meta-level judgments that stand up to the test of their applications. Theories that test out using certain methodologies produce successful predictions, those that do not meet those standards do not. It is the difference between psychology and astrology, neurology and phrenology. The ultimate test of the dialectical requirement that known objections must be refuted is that the propositions so defended will be confirmed by experience or events.

The standards of sufficiency are to be, found, *prima facie*, in the established practices of the various intellectual communities, practices which themselves are always subject to review and revision. I want to try to state the general criterion I am after, and which I have admitted can at best serve only as a guideline. What I propose, for the scrutiny of the community of argumentation scholars, is the following: “grounds {*G1-Gn*} are sufficient to support *S*’s adopting *ap* when *S* has good reason to believe that they meet the criteria for supporting *ap* revealed in the argumentative practices which pass the dialectical testing of the hierarchy of the

intellectual community of the field or subject to which p belongs for arguments of the type $\{G1-Gn\}$ exemplifies.”

Although these standards can be enforced to a degree by interlocutorial pressure, in the end the obligation to master and to practice them rests with each participant in argumentation. Even if a proponent’s interlocutor in debate or the audience addressed can be reliably predicted to be persuaded by grounds which are insufficient according to these standards, the responsible proponent will make every effort to know and comply with them. And if an inquirer is investigating the truth of a proposition, the responsible inquirer can do no more, but must do no less, than try to meet these standards. Eternal vigilance is the price of . . . getting as close as we ever can to truth.

Chapter 6

Premissary Relevance

6.1 Introduction

When a proponent makes an argument in order to convince another—that is, to persuade an interlocutor, using reasons—that a certain target proposition, which the proponent deems worthy of her assent, deserves his as well, here is part of what the proponent may do. She assembles a set of other propositions which she believes has the following five features. (1) Its members are worthy of both her own and the interlocutor’s assent. (2) They lend support to the target proposition—that is, they provide grounds for the proponent’s and the interlocutor’s assenting to it. (3) The set includes sufficient grounds to show that the target proposition merits both their assent. (4) The proponent can convince the interlocutor of the first three properties of the set (by using similar sets), should anyone initially dissent from any of them. (5) She can do so in a manageable number of iterations; that is, disagreement will be finite. In other words, the proponent tries to construct an argument with premises that she believes, and which she thinks her interlocutor will or can be convinced to agree are acceptable, relevant and sufficient to establish the proposition in question.¹

The proponent’s assemblage will be sufficient only if its propositions are relevant (in other words, sufficiency entails relevance), but should she fail in her attempt, her defective argument may contain relevant propositions which, taken together, are not sufficient (that is, insufficiency does not entail irrelevance). Hence relevance is an independent consideration from sufficiency in making an argument and in assessing it once it has been made.

The topic of this chapter is the relation of relevance between the premises and the conclusion of such an argument. A premise’s property of being relevant to its conclusion, here called “premissary relevance,” is what Walton has called

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¹ It is an assumption of the chapter that this is a description of a practice with fairly wide currency, and so these are the norms defining an activity that is actually engaged in.

“local probative” relevance (1989). I doubt that such relevance can be analyzed—shown to be derived from or reducible to other concepts—and in any case I shall not try to do so here. However, an assumption of this chapter is that premissary relevance can be explicated, that is, described in ways that enrich our understanding of it.

6.2 Premissary Relevance and Other Kinds of Relevance

The term “premissary relevance” marks a distinction between this kind of relevance and several others not discussed in this chapter. One of these, what might be called “logical relevance” may be defined as the relationship of entailment or logical implication holding between a set of propositions and another proposition. Walton (1982) has identified “global relevance” (“the overall direction and trend of a participant’s arguments as they move towards establishing his thesis in a long chain . . . of . . . arguments”) and “subject-matter relevance” (two propositions connected by sharing a common subject matter). Relevance of another kind would be the relevance determined by rules for the good conduct of discursive practices of various sorts. One class of such rules, to give an example, would be those prescribing the conduct of discussions aimed at resolving disagreements rationally of the sort recommended by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984). (One rule of such discussions could be that premissary relevance shall obtain.) Another class of such rules would be those regulating conversations of various sorts, and so specifying such things as when a turn in a given sort of conversation is relevant. If premissary relevance is different from all of these, what are its distinguishing features?

6.3 The Property of Premissary Relevance

Premissary relevance is a property of arguments, and arguments are (inter alia) speech act complexes (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984) or transcriptions or constructions of such complexes. Thus premissary relevance is not a property of sets of sentences or propositions per se, considered apart from the contexts of their assertion in history (that is, by particular individuals in real time for specific purposes), but a property of human actions and their products. In other words, premissary relevance is a pragmatic and semantic concept or property, not a purely syntactic one.

Argumentation, we are increasingly aware, is a complicated, multi-faceted practice. Whatever the details of its complete characterization may be, one element at the heart of arguments that are made (see O’Keefe, 1982) is the giving of reasons or evidence (grounds) in support of, or against, one or more contention or viewpoint. In arguments so made, the grounds, called “arguments” in some terminologies, called “premises” or “premise sets” in others, are supposed to lend support to the viewpoints or conclusion on behalf of which they are invoked. It is this property

of an argument's or premise sets's lending support to its conclusion to which the "premissary relevance" of this chapter is intended to refer.

Premissary relevance so understood can be provisionally defined for present purposes as follows:

A proposition $p1$ is a relevant premise in a well-ordered argument by P to O for another proposition, q , if and only if:

- (a) $p1$ belongs to a constellation of propositions asserted by P ($p1, p2, \dots, pn$), which P accepts and believes support q , and which P believes O will accept and will believe support q (q being a proposition P believes O does not accept), and P does this as an attempt to convince O of the acceptability of q ; and
- (b) $p1$ lends support to the acceptability of q .

An explanation of these conditions is in order.

6.3.1 *The Argument Condition*

The first condition is intended to combine van Eemeren and Grootendorst's definitions of the four conditions (propositional content, essential, preparatory and sincerity) required for the complete or "happy" performance of the speech act complex of presenting an argument to someone in support of a proposition (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, pp. 43–44). A premise in an argument is typically a proposition which the arguer is alleging to be true or otherwise acceptable (for example, by virtue of prior agreement), and for which she accepts the burden of proof; which the arguer believes the audience will accept; which she believes supports the proposition in question, and which she believes the audience will regard as supporting that proposition.

The exception is any premise that is introduced as a supposition: it is not asserted and the "arguer" does not take responsibility for its acceptability, and may in fact believe it to be false (for example, see Fisher, 1988, chap. 6). Yet a supposition is made or introduced in an argument in the context of, and with a view to, supporting another proposition. So although the arguer does not assert a supposed or postulated premise, such a premise is relevant in the argument only if it plays a role in supporting another proposition which the arguer does assert. There is at least that indirect connection with the standard speech act complex of argumentation.

To be sure, someone's alleging the relevance of a proposition as support for another does not make their relevance attribution true. The sincere assertion of a support relationship between propositions is not sufficient for premissary relevance. But the attribution of relevance is necessary for the speech act and its vehicle to be an argument.

6.3.2 The “Actual Support” Condition

The definition is meant to capture the conditions of actual premissary relevance, not just attributed relevance, so any relevant premise must actually lend support to its conclusion. The key phrase in the second condition is “lends support to,” and so it requires an explication. Indeed, that explication will occupy the bulk of the remainder of this chapter. First, though, further comment on the “actual support” condition.

The arguer must claim a supporting role for a proposition if it is to qualify as a relevant premise, and the proposition must actually play a supporting role if it is to be relevant. But the arguer need not allege that the proposition all by itself suffices to establish the assent-worthiness of the conclusion, nor does the arguer need to make any reference to whatever other propositions must hold as well for the conclusion to be adequately supported by the entire set. All that is required to establish condition (b) is that the arguer, or anyone defending the relevance of the premise, could if questioned show that the premise lends support to the conclusion.

The concept of “support” is different from entailment for two reasons. One proposition can entail another but fail to support it (the classic example being “ p entails p ”). And non-deductive arguments can have relevant premises: relevant premises of inductive arguments support their conclusions. Supporting a conclusion is also different from “establishing” a conclusion: relevant premises of “balance of considerations” arguments can make a strong *prima facie* case for a conclusion, and thus be relevant to it, even if they are overridden by even stronger contrary considerations and so fail to establish the conclusion.

Premises that support a conclusion will, for some kinds of arguments, increase its probability, though they do not necessarily make it probable. However, a general explication of relevance in terms of probability enhancement faces the following objection. Probability is a concept that naturally fits empirical propositions and arguments in which the premises constitute empirical evidence, but it does not suit such non-empirical types of proposition as normative and conceptual ones or arguments which deploy non-empirical propositions as premises. For instance, although it is possible to characterize A’s having promised B to do X in a metaphorical way as “increasing the probability” that A ought to do X, the metaphor carries the risk of obscuring the difference between probability-enhancing grounds and *prima facie* grounds. A’s promise to do X is not evidence that A ought to do X. So it seems that an acceptable general analysis of relevance in terms of probability is not possible, although any general account must have a place for probability enhancement as one of its special cases.

6.4 The Property of “Lending Support to”

With these preliminary observations behind us, we can now turn to the explication of the key idea in the above definition of premissary relevance, the idea of a proposition’s “lending support to” a conclusion. What is such lending of support?

I once suggested that to assert that a premise is relevant is to hold that it “either alone or in conjunction with other accepted propositions, should cause one to be . . . more inclined . . . to accept the conclusion than one would otherwise be” (Blair, 1989, p. 68). The point brings out the causal connection between one’s recognition of a proposition’s premissary relevance and one’s disposition to accept the proposition it supports, but it applies to any attribution of relevance, incorrect ones as well as correct ones, so it does not account for actual relevance. We know that one’s relevance identifications and attributions can be mistaken, for we have noted such mistakes made by others, if not by ourselves; moreover, people correct their relevance attributions, either because they notice their own mistakes or because they accept the objections to them made by others. So, premissary relevance must be a property that is independent of its causal influence on the alteration of cognitive attitudes. A premise can be relevant though it fails to cause some person to accept the conclusion, and a premise that causes some person to accept a conclusion can be irrelevant. Still, an interlocutor’s belief that a premise is relevant will tend, *ceteris paribus*, to increase his acceptance of the proposition expressed by the conclusion.

As a way of working toward an account of what it is for a premise to lend support to a conclusion, consider the conditions that obtain when we allege that a set of propositions lends support to another proposition.

When we assert that a set of one or more claims is support for another, we are thereby committed to assent to some proposition which in our opinion serves to justify or warrant anyone in inferring that conclusion from that set of premises *in those circumstances, other things being equal*. If I assert that her computer literacy supports the proposition that our firm should hire her, then I am committed to assent to some such proposition as, “Other things being equal, from ‘She is computer-literate’ it is reasonable for people in our situation to infer, ‘We should hire her.’ ” What stands behind our conviction that the premises “lend support to” the conclusion is that additional, inference licensing, proposition. A metaphor that comes to mind is the pry and a fulcrum needed to lift a heavy object. The premises are the pry, and the inference-warranting proposition is the fulcrum. As the fulcrum enables the pry to be used to raise the object, so the warranting proposition “enables” the other premises to support the conclusion. If the inference warrant were shown to be false, the relevance of the premises would be put in doubt. Working with an example will serve to make the point more clearly. Consider the following:

Looking across the street at a neighbor’s house one night you say to your companion: “The Bakers are at home.” When your companion replies, “What makes you think so?” you respond, “Their lights are on,” to which your companion rejoins, “That doesn’t show the Bakers are at home.”

If you insist that the Bakers’ lights being on lends support to the proposition that they are at home, the onus is on you, in the face of your companion’s doubt, to explain why, to justify your claim. Your justification will consist of spelling out the connection (as you see it) between the Bakers’ lights being on and their being at home, making explicit how (in your opinion) their lights being on warrants one in believing that they are at home. Suppose that standing behind the connection, in your mind, is your belief that the Bakers’ lights are on at night normally only when

they are at home. Your justification will then make reference to that belief. Your full claim will then be that such a belief warrants drawing your conclusion. Made fully explicit, given your belief, your defense could be expressed as follows:

(a) The Bakers' lights are on at night normally only when they are at home, and that is what authorizes me (or anyone) to conclude from the fact that their lights are on that they are at home.

This relevance-bestowing belief has the same general form as Toulmin's warrants (1958), and we shall call such beliefs inference warrants.

An inference warrant is a proposition that a person takes to authorize drawing a given conclusion from a given set of premises.

An inference warrant is always specific to a particular inference, but any specific inference warrant will be an instance of a more general formula in which the particulars are replaced by place holders. Accordingly, there corresponds to (a) the general formula:

(b) From "X normally only when Y" and "Y" one may infer "X."

Neither the above inference warrant (a) nor its corresponding general formula (b) states or implies that the conclusion is entailed by the premises. Inferring a proposition is not necessarily deducing it. Still, an inference warrant will be either true or false (though in some cases it will be difficult to decide which), for either the conclusion may be drawn in the circumstances, given the premises, or not. However, the general formula corresponding to an inference warrant does not have this feature: it need not be simply true or false. For in the case of non-deductive formulae, some instantiations will be true and others will be false. Accordingly, one may speak of general inference-warrant formulae in a qualified way, as true for the most part, for example.

(b) is strong authorization for your inference. If the only time the Bakers' lights are on at night, normally, is when they are at home, then if the Bakers' lights are on one may with some confidence conclude that they are at home.

A person's inference warrant does not necessarily authorize their inference, although that person will believe it does. Suppose I offered the following inference warrant for concluding that the Bakers are at home:

(c) Sometimes when the Bakers are not at home, their lights are off, and that is what authorizes one to conclude from the fact that their lights are on tonight that they are home.

Consistent with (c) would be the possibility that sometimes when the Bakers are not at home their lights are on, and with nothing to rule out that possibility, we have no reason for thinking tonight is not one of those times. Hence (c) supplies no reason whatever for concluding that the Bakers are at home from the fact that their lights are on. I thought it did, but I was mistaken.

So a first attempt to answer the question with which we began this section, "What is it for a proposition to 'lend support to' another proposition?" might go as follows:

S1: A proposition lends support to another just when it belongs to a set for which there is an inference warrant which authorizes drawing the conclusion, given those premises.

Two kinds of consideration raise difficulties for S1. The first emerges from such qualifiers as the term “normally” that occurs in (a) and (b). (a) is strong warrant for the conclusion because usually conditions are normal (in the descriptive sense). But (a) is a weaker warrant for the conclusion than is (d):

(d) The Bakers’ lights are on at night normally only when they are at home, plus there is nothing out of the ordinary happening at their house tonight; and that is what authorizes one to conclude from the fact that their lights are on that they are at home.

For (d) asserts that the qualification stated in the warrant—what corresponds to Toulmin’s “condition of rebuttal” (Toulmin, 1958, p. 101)—does not apply in the present case, whereas (a) fails to offer that assurance. What does the difference between (a) and (d) make to the relevance of the Bakers’ lights being on to their being at home tonight?

The answer seems to be that whether or not the conditions of rebuttal can definitely be ruled out (as in the case of (d)) or can only be presumed not to apply (as in the case of (a)) makes no difference to the relevance assurance supplied by the warrant. The function of such conditions appears rather to be that of disqualifiers. The premise in question will be relevant unless the conditions of rebuttal apply. In the case of (a) it is presumed that the conditions of rebuttal do not apply, whereas in the case of (d) we are assured they do not; but in neither case do they apply, so the difference between (a) and (d) does not affect the authority of their inference warrant.

The second question for S1 gets raised by a different sort of contrast with (a). Suppose I took the Bakers’ lights being on to lend support to the proposition that they are at home because I believe that the Bakers are usually at home at night, and usually when they are their lights are on. Thus, if challenged, I would supply the following warrant as support for my inference:

(e) The Bakers are usually at home at night, and when they are, their lights are usually on; and their lights are on tonight. That is what authorizes one to conclude from the fact that their lights are on tonight that they are at home.

Or in more general terms:

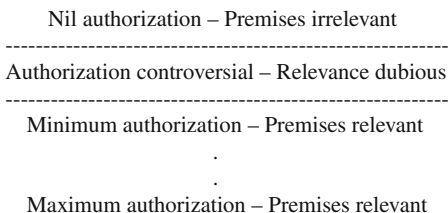
(f) From “Usually X,” “Usually when X, then Y” and “Y” one may infer “X”.

The difference between (e) or (f) and (a) or (b) is that the former are weaker warrants than the latter. (e) is weak authorization for the inference from the premise to the conclusion because there are many possible situations which, if they occurred, would make (e) false. For instance, if the Bakers happen to be out tonight but they left their lights on, or someone is visiting their house, or brazen robbers are emptying it, then one is not authorized to conclude that they are at home from the fact that their lights are on.

At the same time, (e) and (f), unlike (c), do supply some warrant for drawing the conclusion from those premises, in the sense that, given (e) or (f), the Bakers’ lights being on counts as some evidence, albeit not strong evidence, that they are at home. (f) says that X and Y are found together most of the time that X occurs, and X is usually the case. In that case, the presence of Y indicates a more than 50 percent chance that X is present too.

In cases in which only weak warrants like (e) or (f) obtain, do they make the premises relevant? And if so, are the premises less relevant than they would be if a stronger warrant were available? Does S1 require modification in the light of such considerations?

The correct answer seems to be that either someone’s warrant authorizes their inference to some extent greater than nil or it does not. When the extent of authorization reduces to near zero, there will be a legitimate question whether the premise set is relevant. No doubt there will be occasions when it will be impossible to be sure whether there is any authorization at all, and in those cases the result will be uncertainty about the relevance of the premise set. But the fact that there will be degrees of strength of authorization does not show that relevance comes in degrees. The degree of strength of authorization refers instead to the degree of confidence one may have in the conclusion, given the premises, and that is a matter of their sufficiency to establish the conclusion, not of their relevance. The following chart illustrates:



It would seem advisable to modify S1 slightly so that it will explicitly acknowledge these points:

S2: A proposition lends support to another just when it belongs to a set for which there is an inference warrant with greater than nil authority for drawing the conclusion, given those premises.

If S2 offers an answer to the question, “What is it for a premise to ‘lend support’ to a conclusion?” it also leads to the further question: “What bestows authority on an inference warrant?” Our quarry is actual relevance, not ascribed relevance, so we need to know in general the conditions under which a used warrant’s authority is greater than nil. In other words, what justifies a used warrant?

A used inference warrant makes reference to the particulars of its own argument. When we invoke a warrant, one way to conceptualize what we are doing is to see it as claiming that the epistemic or dialectical status of the premises (their believability or acceptability) will transfer to the conclusion. If these premises may be taken as true (probable, plausible, etc.) or acceptable, we are saying, then you may regard this conclusion as true (probable, plausible, etc.) or acceptable. So the question of how warrants are justified may be conceived as the question of what justifies such epistemic or dialectical status transferring claims.

A used warrant is a particular prescription. It cannot, without vicious circularity, receive its authority from any appeal to the epistemic or dialectical status transfer of the particular argument to which it refers. So it must receive its authority somehow from other cases. Now, as we have seen, it is always possible to generalize from

any particular warrant, abstracting from the specifics of the argument on behalf of which it is invoked. The generalized warrant can be thought of as the principle of the inference. Recall the generalized forms of the two warrants we used as examples:

- (b) From “X normally only when Y” and “Y” one may infer “X.”
- (f) From “Usually X,” “Usually when X, then Y” and “Y” one may infer “X.”

These generalizations will hold to the extent that in particular instances when the general conditions are satisfied the particular X in question does obtain. Hence, to the degree that the general conditional corresponding to the warrant is true, the generalized warrant is true.² In the case of (b) that means to the extent that “If (X normally only when Y, and Y), then X” is true, (b) is true. In the case of (f) it means that (f) is true to the extent that “If (Usually X, usually when X then Y, and Y), then X” is true.

The truth of a generalized conditional corresponding to any generalized warrant will depend on particulars. In some cases the generalized conditionals will be empirical generalizations, and in such cases the degree of their truth will be a function of the empirical evidence—the relative frequency of cases in which the consequent obtains when the antecedent conditions are satisfied. In other cases the generalized conditionals will be normative. In a normative case, the acceptability of the conditional will be a function of its ability to withstand counter-examples.

The story about the authority of an inference warrant, then, may be summed up as follows. The inference warrant appealed to in order to show the relevance of any given premise will always be a particular prescription referring to the argument in question. It will always be generalizable, which is to say that a general warrant of which it is an instance can always be formulated. Corresponding to any generalized warrant will be a general conditional, with the variables representing the premises of the argument as its antecedent and the variable representing the conclusion as its consequent. The truth of this generalized conditional will be a function of the extent to which particular instances of cases support it.³ If its probability is greater than 0.5, or its plausibility is greater than nil, (and so on), then it supplies the principle of the inference—the generalized warrant, and accordingly the used inference warrant that is an instance of it—with a greater than nil degree of authority. In turn, the inference in question has some warrant, and the conclusion may be said to receive some support from the premise set. Consequently, the proposition in question, a member of that set, is premissarily relevant to the conclusion.

It seems plausible that any particular warrant will get its authority from its connection with its principle of inference. The generalized warrant affirms that in other arguments with premises of a given sort, one may infer a conclusion of the given

² I take the point from Freeman (1991).

³ I don’t believe there is disqualifying circularity in this reference to “support for” a generalized conditional, used in the process of giving an account of a relevant premise’s “support for” its conclusion. There will be a reflective equilibrium between clear cases and their generalized conditionals.

sort. Given that the particular argument in question has premises and a conclusion of those sorts, one is authorized in drawing that conclusion from those premises.

Most obviously and un-illuminatingly, it is the truth of a warrant that bestows its authority on it. Doubts about the degree of authorization of a warrant are doubts about whether it is true. When it is indeed the case that one may, given the premises, infer the conclusion, then the inference warrant that authorizes that inference is authoritative.

How will this story work in practice? Let us consider an example. Consider the following historical re-creation:

Prime Minister: Canadians should spend their holidays at home so as not to exacerbate the country's balance of payments problem by exporting Canadian dollars.

Critic: That's a laugh. The PM just got back from a nice two-week vacation in the warm and sunny Caribbean, away from the frigid Canadian winter.

Observer: What's that got to do with it?

We can recreate the Critic's argument as follows:

Premise: The PM doesn't practice what he preaches about avoiding foreign holidays to help the balance of payments problem.

Conclusion: The PM's advice to avoid foreign holidays so as not to exacerbate the country's balance of payment problems shouldn't be followed (taken seriously, respected).

The Observer has questioned the relevance of the Critic's premise. Let us think of the most plausible inference warrant we can and imagine the Critic supplying it in response to the Observer's question.

W: When a political leader acts contrary to his or her advice, then the advice needn't be followed (taken seriously, respected); the PM acted contrary to his advice about avoiding foreign holidays to help the balance of payments problem; so one may infer that this advice shouldn't be followed (taken seriously, respected).

Suppose that *W* is the Critic's inference warrant, the one he is willing to defend. Notice that *W* explains why the Critic thought his premise is relevant. So a person's warrant for their inference may be said to explain why they hold their premise to be relevant, and to describe how they see their premise as relevant. However from the facts that *W* is the Critic's inference warrant, and that it explains how he *thinks* *P* is relevant to *C*, it does not follow that *W* is authoritative or that *P* is in fact relevant to *C*. The question about *P*'s actual relevance can be answered only by determining the truth of *W*. How is that determined?

Notice that the truth of *W*, and in general of any inference warrant, will depend on the truth of the general conditional statement embedded in it or corresponding to it. This is a point I take from Freeman's discussion of relevance (1992). In the case of *W*, the associated general conditional is:

GC: When a political leader acts contrary to his or her advice, then the advice needn't be followed (taken seriously, respected).

Thinking about whether *GC* is true indicates the need for some qualifications in our account as it has been stated so far. One wants to say that *GC* is an overstatement. There can be lots of reasons why a political leader acts contrary to his or her advice

on a particular occasion which in no way imply that the advice isn't good advice or that the political leader does not genuinely believe it or take it seriously. As Freeman has argued (1992), what Toulmin (1958) called "conditions of rebuttal" have to be ruled out before any GC will become plausible.

On the other hand, a political leader's constant and unexplained disregard for his or her own advice seems to be another matter. Surely in that case the political leader's advice need not be taken seriously? But that doesn't follow. Perhaps the advice is good, but the political leader is insincere in giving it, or is morally weak and cannot follow it. And yet, it seems that a political leader's acting contrary to his or her own advice, when no rebutting conditions are present, does throw some question on how seriously that advice should be taken. The theoretical point is that an assessment of a GC, even when no rebutting conditions are present, will often yield no simple "true" or "false" verdict. The correct conclusion will often have to be qualified and tentative.

Where does that leave the question about a premise's relevance? In the above example, is P relevant, or isn't it? If a question about a premise's relevance must be answered decisively, and if any theory that fails to deliver a decisive answer is unacceptable, then the explication of the relevance offered here will not be acceptable. For I think it follows from an account of relevance that explicates it in terms of inference warrants and the truth of the general conditional statements associated with them, that frequently a relevance judgment will have to be indecisive, highly qualified, or tentative.

Some might take that result as grounds for allowing that there can be degrees of relevance. In cases in which no definite verdict about the truth of the general conditional, and so of the inference warrant, is available, the premise might be thought to be somewhat relevant. I don't see this as showing that relevance comes in degrees. If the inference warrant is probably true, then the premise in question is probably relevant, not partially relevant.

6.5 Some Implications of the Account

Some *ad-hominem* type arguments seem clearly fallacious; others seem clearly sound. The same goes for guilt-by-association-type arguments, two-wrongs-type arguments, and perhaps all of the types of arguments with which fallacies of relevance have been identified (see Johnson & Blair, 1983). Our account of relevance can make these discriminations. Clearly, in the case of fallacious arguments of these types, the inference warrant and its associated general conditional are false, whereas in the case of non-fallacious arguments of these types, the inference warrant used must be different, so its associated conditional will not be the same, and is in fact true.

If there are argument-types which without exception are instantiated by fallacies of relevance, and red herring or *ignoratio elenchi* and straw person arguments come to mind as possible cases, that will be so because in no arguments of such types can a true inference warrant be available to the arguments.

The proponent is permitted to try to answer allegations of irrelevance, and often does so successfully. Our account of premissary relevance explains how this is done. Typically, the proponent supplies a satisfactory inference warrant, one whose associated general conditional is unexceptionable.

6.6 Argument Schemes or Topoi

There is a renewed interest in argument schemes or topics by argumentation scholars (see van Eemeren & Kruiger, 1987; Kienpointner, 1987, 1992a, 1992b; van Eemeren, Grootendorst, & Kruiger, 1984; Schellens, 1985, 1987). In Aristotle's *Rhetoric* there can be found explanations of inferences in terms of *topoi* (often translated "commonplaces") which are exact parallels of the inference warrants we have been examining. A typical example:

Another [commonplace] is the *a fortiori*. Thus it may be argued that if even the gods are not omniscient, certainly human beings are not. The principle here is that, if a quality does not in fact exist where it is more likely to exist, it clearly does not exist where it is less likely to exist. (*Rhetoric* II.23, 1397^b, pp. 13–15.)

Aristotle's "principle" is nothing other than the associated general conditional of the argument scheme he calls "the *a fortiori*." Many of the inference warrants Aristotle mentions we would not regard as having true generalized conditionals nor would he have either, though he presented them as explaining the inferences people did tend to make. Contemporary interest in *topoi*, or, as they are nowadays more often called, argument "schemes" or "schemata," is similarly as much descriptive as normative in its focus. In Kienpointner's (1992a) contemporary treatment of the *a fortiori* scheme, Aristotle's principle has been replaced by the inference pattern of such arguments:

If even X does not have property P and it is less probable that Y has property P, then Y does not have P.
(Even) X does not have P
 Y does not have P.

To the extent that the study of argument schemes takes a normative turn, and that attempts are made to try to classify types of defensible or true inference warrants, that work can be tapped by those who are working on relevance. A descriptive study of argument schemes can also prove useful for an understanding of relevance. The argument schemes people actually use should tell us what inference warrants they regard as acceptable, and so what kinds of considerations they deem relevant in different types of arguments.

What is needed, and I join Freeman (1992) in making this plea, is more normative work on inference warrants and on their associated general conditionals. The attempt to formulate acceptable argument schemes seems to be one way of carrying out this work.

6.7 Summary

I have argued that the property of premissary relevance needs to be tied to arguments understood as speech act complexes, with the pragmatic, social, and communicative implications this connection implies. But premises must not only be formulated to communicate support for their conclusion to the interlocutor, they must also actually lend it support, and their relevance is a function of their doing so.

Explicating premissary relevance then becomes a matter of explicating the idea of a premise's lending support to a conclusion. What is involved in this idea is a kind of gestalt: a premise set or pattern in relation to a conclusion simply is perceived as supporting it. We can in any case express our sense of that gestalt by formulating in propositional form what can be termed the warrant for the inference from the premises to the conclusion. This inference warrant makes explicit, or is the ground of, our belief that our premises are relevant, by making explicit how we take them to link up with the conclusion. There is a distinction to be drawn between the operative inference-warrants in our arguments (those which describe why we believe our premises are relevant) and their justificatory inference warrants (those which in fact authorize inferences from premises to conclusions).

Premissary relevance, then, is a function of premises belonging to a set that authoritatively warrants an inference to a conclusion. An authoritative inference warrant will have associated with it a conditional proposition that is true, that is to say, which can be justified.

If this explication is correct, then the task that remains to be done is to classify inference warrants and their associated conditionals by type, and draw up the general conditions that their justification needs to satisfy. It may be that parallel scholarship studying the Aristotelian doctrine of *topoi* or argument schemes will contribute to this task.

Chapter 7

Premise Adequacy

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I argue that some of the norms of premise adequacy vary with the context of argumentation. To begin, I set out some of the assumptions the discussion will take for granted, stipulate the senses I give to some of the terms of art which, although common, have different meanings in the hands of different authors, and explain what I mean by ‘premise adequacy.’

Argumentation scholars have shown how complex, how multi-layered and how multi-dimensional argumentation can be. However, whatever else is going on, an event cannot be identified as argumentation unless at some point or on some level in it there is an attitude that is thought to be in question. When that attitude is a propositional attitude, and it is defended or challenged on some ground or another, then there will be at least one claim that is supposed to be supported in some-sense and degree by at least one other claim. Those kernels of “This, therefore that,” and “That, because this,” are what I call the “illative cores” of argumentation. They are the units of “argument₁” in D.J. O’Keefe’s sense (1977). The “this” is the argument (the reason or evidence) adduced in support of the “that.” I will borrow from logic’s terminology and call each proposition of an argument (of the “this”) a premise, and the proposition that is the “that,” the conclusion.

Argumentation is a practice in MacIntyre’s sense (1984, p. 187):

a coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of the activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, . . .

Hence argumentation is characterized by standards of excellence and norms for licit participation. Among the norms that may be applied to argumentation in its many aspects, one class governs the unsupported premises of the argumentation’s illative

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core(s). Although often an arguer will supply chains of argument (“P because Q, and Q because R, and R because S”), in any argument made at a given time, at least some premises must be used or offered as adequate without support; otherwise there would have had to have been an infinite regress of support, so that no argument could have been presented. It is the standards for when such unsupported premises are adequate (that is, when they require no support) and when they are inadequate (that is, when they require support) that I mean by the norms of premise adequacy. The norms of premise adequacy serve to identify when a premise ought itself to be (or to have been) supported.

I deliberately use the terms ‘adequate’ and ‘adequacy’ instead of the terms ‘acceptable’ and ‘acceptability,’ which are often used in this connection, in an attempt to avoid begging questions about the normative conditions for unsupported premises.

It may seem that an unsupported premise is either inadequate or adequate. That is, either it should be (or should have been) supported, or not. But I think there is a third possibility, namely a premise that has not been supported but is (or on examination proves to be) unsupported. Premises that are self-contradictory, or that are inconsistent with adequate premises, or that are demonstrably false are not even potentially supportable. True, the arguer will in many cases not be aware that a premise he uses has one of these fatal defects, and in argumentation carried out in a dialogical fashion its character may only become manifest in the courses of the argumentative interaction. But by whatever process their unsupportedness is revealed, such premises are non-starters and will have to be abandoned. In what follows I set aside unsupported premises. Of the unsupported premises that are not unsupported, we may ask, “Under what conditions should such a premise be (or have been) supported?”

Can anything general be said about when a premise of an argument should be supported? To answer this question we need to reflect on the evaluation of arguments in general. Argumentation being a human construct, I take it that the norms for the evaluation of any argument will be a function of the purposes for which it is carried out. So to answer the question we need to know why and in what circumstances we assess arguments. It is to be expected that our purposes in evaluating arguments will vary as the purposes of argumentation vary, and it therefore seems likely that the criteria for premise adequacy will vary accordingly. Consider the following types of argumentation.

7.2 Argumentative Quarrels

We are all familiar with contexts in which it is a feature of the governing ideology that “reason” should prevail in making decisions. Universities are institutions with such a governing ideology; so are many government and corporate bureaucracies. In such contexts, when two people who dislike each other, or don’t respect one another’s “reasonableness,” or have conflicting interests, come into conflict about a proposed course of action or policy, each is disinclined to be open to

the other's "rational persuasion." The ideology requires that they go through the motions of reasoning together and appear to resolve their disagreement rationally, and it requires each to acknowledge the legitimate claims that the other one advances during their "rational discussion," but neither is genuinely open to being persuaded by the other. The two may have conflicting interests or agendas, and if so that reinforces their intransigence. So they go about arguing over which act or policy to take, A trying to show B that B is mistaken and that A is right, and B doing the reverse.

Consider what happens when their discussion is carried on privately. In such situations there is no external evaluative point of view. Each person evaluates his own and the other's arguments with a view to supporting his own and discrediting the other's. The goal of each party is to "win," and winning in such arguments consists of making less major or fewer concessions than the opponent. (A concession is more or less major depending on how much it weakens a party's position or argumentation. The number of concessions does not matter if one side makes a more major concession than the other; but when the level of the theses retained by both sides is the same after the argumentation has ended, then the side with the fewest minor concessions wins.) I will refer to situations like this as "argumentative quarrels."

In the light of these evaluative goals, what can be said about when premises should be supported in these contexts of argumentative quarrel? It might seem that there is no need to support any premise unless it is challenged by the other person; and it might seem that the other person's challenge is enough to require supplying support. But this judgment involves a conflation of a reply to a challenge with support for a premise.

Assuredly, the fact that the other side has challenged a premise is enough to require a reply (for otherwise the facade of reasonableness would break down); but the reply need not take the form of support for the premise. I take support for a premise to be an argument, with the premise as its conclusion. It is an attempt to show that the premise is true or believable. That is one form that a reply to an objection to the premise might take. However, a reply could take other forms. It could consist of pointing out that the truth of the premise is not being claimed (that the premise is merely a supposition used for the sake of argument); it could consist of pointing out that the challenger is himself committed to the premise (he himself has asserted it, or it is implied by things he has asserted); it could consist of a reference to supporting arguments to be found elsewhere; or it could be a request to be allowed to postpone supplying support for the time being. In short, although a challenge to a premise requires some reply, it does not require that the reply take the form of supplying support for the challenged premise.

The rule that would seem to follow, based on this distinction and restricting ourselves to argumentative quarrels, is that a challenged premise must be supported unless some other reply, which precludes the need to supply support, is accepted. An unchallenged premise, in such contexts, requires no reply, and hence no support, regardless of whether the party using it believes it, or whether either of them has any business believing it. In other words, any premise you use that your adversary allows to pass is adequate in an argumentative quarrel. Whatever you can and are willing to slip by him is permissible.

7.3 Argumentative Persuasion

Someone writes a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine, or a columnist writes an “opinion” piece, or a guest speaker addresses a service club, or a political candidate gives a speech to a body of voters. In all these cases there usually is an attempt to persuade the audience to share the writer’s or speaker’s viewpoint. The audience typically does not participate in the argumentation as a group of active interlocutors. The arguer usually cannot know fully what the audience knows and believes, or what its attitudes are towards the tendered viewpoint. Some arguers aim to persuade by whatever means they think might succeed; others seek to persuade only on rational grounds (which is to say, using only arguments of whose cogency they themselves are convinced); but there is always at least lip-service to rationality, that is, to the presumption that reasons or evidence are being offered in support of the viewpoint.

Such argumentation can be evaluated from at least three vantage points: (1) that of the arguer, who asks, “What arguments will be likely to succeed with this audience in causing some measure of belief change towards my viewpoint?” (2) that of the members of the audience, who ask, “Are those good and sufficient reasons for me to consider, or to adopt, or to continue to share, the speaker’s viewpoint?” and (3) that of an onlooker, perhaps from another time or culture, who asks, “could the arguer have used better arguments?” and “should the audience have responded differently to the arguments?”

Consider how each of these vantage points bears on the question of when a premise should be (or should have been) supported. (1) in order to persuade the audience, the arguer must anticipate its doubts or questions. So the arguer should support those premises that, as far as he or she can tell, significant numbers or sub-groups of the audience are likely to find problematic (that is that seem to them not obviously true, or dubious, or even false). (2) From the vantage point of a member of the audience, arguments relying on premises that seem questionable or false will not be persuasive, so any such premises will themselves have to be shown to be at least plausible. The requirements of premise adequacy for persuasive argumentation are thus similar from both the arguer’s and the audience’s vantage points: for the arguer, premises the arguer thinks the audience will find problematic should be supported; and for the audience, premises the audience does find problematic should be supported. (3) The onlooker’s perspective is slightly different. The onlooker is at liberty to make judgments about what the arguer should have known and about what the audience should or shouldn’t have accepted. From the onlooker’s vantage point, both the arguer’s ignorance of the audience’s beliefs and the audience’s beliefs themselves might be culpable. The onlooker can try to make the case that the arguer should have known that the audience would not accept a premise that was used without defense, and that the audience should not have accepted certain of the unsupported premises of the argumentation. At issue here are judgments about what it would have been reasonable for people in those roles at that time to have believed.

Notice that whether the premises are true is beside the point. What is at issue is whether they are believed by the audience, whether the arguer believes they are believed by the audience, and whether either belief was in fact reasonable at the time.

7.4 Hostile Advocacy

Think of such adversarial contexts as argumentation in deliberative bodies made up of parties with conflicting interests (for instance legislative bodies), or debates between members of opposing parties in electoral campaigns. When we are in argumentative exchanges in such contexts, we are advocating our own point of view and attacking the other side's point of view. These points of view are for or against policies, programs, or injunctions. We want to show why our opponent's position is mistaken, or what is wrong with their arguments in support of it or with their attempts at rebutting our criticisms of their position; and we want to show why our viewpoint should be adopted, or what is wrong with our opponent's arguments against it or against the arguments we have used to support it. Let me call all of these, contexts of "hostile advocacy."

In situations of hostile advocacy, our evaluative objective in assessing the arguments of the opposing camp is to find fault: to identify the flaws or weaknesses of the argumentation that we can exploit against the other side. We evaluate our own arguments, or those of our allies, with a view to their vulnerability to the other side's attacks, and to their effectiveness. But whom do we persuade, in such situations? Both sides are dug in and not about to be budged, at least not by the other side's arguments directly. What is up for grabs is the loyalty of those on one's own side who are uncertain, or the support of those who are uncertain on the other side, or of those who are undecided who belong to no camp, or maybe victory in future disputes when the record set down today can be invoked. There is thus a way our argumentation can influence the other side indirectly. If we can persuade a significant powerful segment of onlookers (for example, members of the voting public), then our opponents may be forced to make concessions, not because they have been persuaded by our arguments, but because they need the support of others who have been persuaded by our arguments.

So the situation is not straightforward. We argue against the opposing interlocutor A, but with a view to persuading the audience B, either in the belief that our persuading B will influence A, or in the belief that our persuading B will cause B to prove beneficial to us in the future.

Thus argumentation in contexts of hostile advocacy is complex. It has features of both an argumentative quarrel and argumentative persuasion addressed to an imperfectly defined audience. How does this complexity affect the norms that apply?

On the one hand, hostile advocacy requires that premises be supported if, but only if, they are challenged by the interlocutor. So advice to the arguer is, "Don't support a premise unless forced to." On the other hand, argumentative persuasion

requires that premises be supported if they are open to question by the audience. Then the advice to the arguer is, “support any premise that significant members of your audience might question.” What is reasonable for the hostile advocate to do? Since even the appearance of defeat by the opponent threatens the credibility of the arguer, it would follow that at least the arguer must reply to challenges by the interlocutor. And since the larger purpose is to persuade the on-looking audience, it would follow that premises the audience is likely to find problematic should be supported. From these considerations we can derive the following two rules governing when to support premises in hostile advocacy argumentation: (1) Support any premises which might be questioned by the audience, (2) support any premises challenged by the interlocutor when the best way to be seen reasonably to rebut a challenge is to support the premise.

It might be thought that our interlocutor, having a stake in refuting our position and arguments, will be a more demanding critic than the audience, and so all we have to worry about is getting unsupported premises past our opponent. However, in contexts of public policy debate in most contemporary societies, the audience consists of the press and well-informed interest groups as well as the uncommitted and often uninformed citizenry. The press often tries to adopt the role of opposition or hostile advocacy towards the positions of any and all political groups; while interest groups can be skeptical and demanding interlocutors.

Combine the time factor, which is the opportunity for rumination over time and the opportunity to “revisit” our arguments critically in the future, with the presence of a potentially hostile press and skeptical interest groups as components of the on-looking audience, and it becomes apparent that what we can get away with in the way of unsupported premises is considerably more constrained than what an advocate might slip by his hostile opponent in the heat of a private debate.

Perhaps it goes without saying, but note that the truth or falsehood of undefended premises is immaterial in such hostile advocacy contexts. The standard of premise adequacy here is a combination of what it is reasonable to expect people to believe, and what is not in fact challenged.

7.5 Neutral Curiosity

Think of such contexts as reading a magazine article or a book in which the author defends a thesis that you hadn’t thought about before. When we are presented with an argument-supported viewpoint that we have no predisposition either to oppose or to accept, but about which, in the absence of support, we would have chosen to reserve judgment, we may want to decide whether the arguments supporting the viewpoint show that it deserves our assent.

In such a situation of “neutral curiosity,” our evaluative objective in examining others’ arguments is to test the argumentation for both its strengths and its weaknesses.

In situations of neutral curiosity, our own argumentation is not at issue, or not initially. But presently we ourselves become arguers as well as evaluators. For when

we are testing viewpoints or arguments on which we are undecided in order to judge whether they merit our adherence, we do so by seeing what arguments we can make for them and against them. We then evaluate our own arguments with the objective of identifying their strengths and weaknesses. First, look at the case in which the initial arguer is someone else. From your point of view as the recipient of such argumentation, any undefended premise that you dispute, or question, or feel uncertain about (in short, that you find problematic) requires support, with one exception. The exception is when the viewpoint is over-defended, and you find it cogently supported by arguments from other premises that you do and should accept. In that case, while you cannot accept the argument with the problematic premises, that argument is surplus to requirements. It would be pedantic to demand support for its premises. But leaving that case aside, and assuming we are dealing with a viewpoint whose support depends crucially, for you, on an argument with at least one premise you find problematic, clearly you must satisfy yourself of the adequacy of each such premise, or refrain from accepting the viewpoint pending further information or new arguments.

For you, the premise needs support; but should the arguer have supplied that support? Raising that question takes us out of the context of neutral curiosity and into that of the referee or appraiser, which I take up below. The issue of what the arguer should or shouldn't have done does not come up from the point of view of deciding what to believe. However, the issue of what should be your response to the problematicity definitely is pertinent. If you are trying to decide whether to believe what the arguer is proposing (and assuming epistemic responsibility), then if you want to accept that argument, you have an epistemic responsibility to remove for yourself the problematic standing of its undefended premises. If the argument's conclusion is a prescription whose acceptance commits you to action, then you also have an independent moral obligation to investigate those of its premises that are problematic for you.

In the related situation when we are formulating arguments for ourselves, and we find ourselves wanting (or needing) to use a premise that is problematic to us, we have exactly the same kinds of obligation to investigate further and to remove any doubt or question about the premise.

What is the standard of premise adequacy for contexts of neutral curiosity? Must the premise be true? As Hamblin pointed out (1970, pp. 234 ff.), the truth of the premise is no good to anyone unless it is known, but certainly if the premise were known to the investigator to be true, then that would suffice for its adequacy. Is knowledge, then, the correct criterion?

If the investigator were to want nothing short of knowledge of the viewpoint in question, then he must know first that the premises of the supporting arguments are true. One need not be a deductivist to hold that known conclusions cannot be derived from unknown premises. In my opinion knowledge is possible, but it is not possible for us to have knowledge of many of the propositions on whose truth we must rely in daily life. I think, therefore, that if we are not to be paralyzed by uncertainty we have to be satisfied most of the time with reasonable belief. But in everyday life, the right standard of adequacy will be, like Aristotle's virtuous action,

something that depends on the circumstances. If one's child's life depends on a claim's being true, and time and resources allow, then one wants to know that the undefended premises supporting that claim are true. If all that is at issue is finding one's way to the sea from Amsterdam on a lazy afternoon, then an undefended premise in an argument supporting the recommendation of one particular route need be no more than plausible for it to be adequate. Of course, it will be necessary to qualify the conclusion accordingly, and therein lies a meta-rule for the standards of adequacy for undefended premises in arguments in contexts of neutral curiosity: the standards of premise adequacy must be sufficient to enable the argument to support the conclusion at the desired level of qualification.

7.6 Refereeing

In some roles we have a duty to assess whether someone arguing for a point of view has satisfied their particular argumentative obligations. This is one of the roles occupied by referees and editors of scholarly work, as well as by editorial page editors of newspapers and by the graders of student essays.

In such refereeing roles, our evaluative objective is to decide whether arguments of the appropriate quantity, quality and kinds have been used. We don't have to be convinced by them, and our personal attitude towards their conclusions is not decisive. When we are in the role of submitter rather than referee, we can make the same kind of judgment about our own arguments, in order to decide whether we think our arguments meet the requirements.

When we are acting as referees we are supposed to be impartial. The practices of blind refereeing of journal articles and blind grading of students' essays and tests has been adopted to reduce the opportunity for partiality. The referee is making normative judgments about how well arguers have discharged their obligations with respect to supplying support for their premises. I don't think this is a moral obligation. There are occasions when an arguer has a moral or a legal obligation to verify a claim before using it, and when a referee also has a moral (or legal) responsibility to ensure that this obligation has been discharged. But the obligation that the referee standardly judges is the burden of proof obligation for argumentation. The burden of proof obligation is not moral, but instrumental, deriving from the purposes and goals of communication, including argumentation.

Our question, "When should a premise of an argument be supported?" is thus, for the referee of argumentation, the question, "What does the burden of proof require with respect to the premises of arguments?" I don't think there is one answer to this question.

In the case of scholarly argumentation there may well be clear conventions in some fields. If there are, then the referee's role is reduced to enforcing the rules. In my opinion, arguments in scholarly writing may use, as premises without support, any propositions about matters that are generally accepted in the domain to which they belong. For technical claims, these will meet the condition that

they have not been challenged in the accessible technical literature by doubts or objections themselves backed by arguments, and as well that they have not been challenged (with support) by the referees. Behind this suggestion is partly the idea that knowledge is generated by a community of scholars or researchers building on one another's results or findings. At the same time, no part of the edifice is sacrosanct, since the integrity of the whole requires the integrity of the components. In order that criticism backed by argument cannot be silenced by being ignored, it is necessary to insist that propositions, once challenged, lose their status of having a free pass without defense. The requirement that challenges be backed by arguments is intended to rule out the frivolous or idle objection. The referees' objections need to be addressed as well because referees are supposed to represent the current state of knowledge in, and about, the field. Their defended opinions, therefore, arguably have the status of publications so far as the item they are refereeing goes.

The burden of proof obligations for students will be different, and will themselves vary according to the stage of advancement of the student. The doctoral dissertation faces the same rules as the scholarly article, but the undergraduate essay does not. Students will be expected to know what is problematic in a circumscribed body of literature, not the whole subfield. Or to take another example, students are ill advised to use rhetorical questions in the arguments they make in their assignments, for a rhetorical question is a means of shifting the burden of proof, and it is the student's role to show that she can defend problematic claims. So she should not use a rhetorical question to shift that task back onto the instructor.

What about the burden of proof obligations that a magazine editor or a newspaper editor enforces? We are speaking here just of argumentation rules, not all burden of proof obligations for reportorial content. So much information and argumentation is transmitted in each day's newspaper that an onerous burden of proof requirement would be impossible to sustain. It would also produce argument-heavy copy. The newspaper writer is usually left to take his chances with the readership, who are given an opportunity to challenge the problematic premises of his arguments. That seems in the main to be a workable solution. On the other hand, my own view is that the communities of most newspapers and magazines would be better served by more rigorous burden of proof obligations than are now typically enforced. For one thing, there would not be so much misinformation and falsehood to clear away.

I have stated my opinions about burden of proof obligations in three kinds of context where referees must make judgments about which undefended premises require support. The burden of proof rules for any type of argumentative situation are in their nature contestable, but generally speaking they appeal to the standards of some practice (in MacIntyre's sense of the term). The burden of proof obligations of any forum of argumentation will be a function of its ideals or goals. As ideas about what these ought to be vary and change, so will the associated burden of proof obligations. And consequently, so too will the answer to our question about when the premises of an argument require support. In general, and other things being equal, what is controversial requires defense and what is accepted does not.

7.7 Negotiation

Yet another context of argumentation is negotiation. In labor-management negotiations, for example, the aim is to maximize the concessions gained from the other side and to minimize the concessions granted to the other side. There may be other agendas as well. One side or the other might be trying to avoid a strike, or to precipitate a strike. The tenor of the negotiations can also have an impact on labor relations after they have been completed and during the life of the ensuing collective agreement, since usually the same people who negotiate the agreement also enforce it.

In negotiations, there are at least two objectives of argument evaluation. One is to identify weaknesses in the other side's arguments and strengths in one's own, in order to have credibility when attacking their arguments and when defending one's own. The other is to identify the intentions of the other side: their other agendas besides the ostensible agenda of hammering out an agreement.

The unsupported premises of one side's argument will be adequate, then, if the other side cannot find reasonable grounds to challenge them. By the same token, one's own argument's premises may be undefended just when it is considered unlikely that the other side can reasonably challenge them. To the extent that a settlement and smooth labor relations are mutual goals, both sides will make an effort to support the premises that they expect their opponents would otherwise challenge, and so try to leave unsupported only those claims which they expect their opponents will find reasonable to believe, or at least will not find insulting. One way to upset the other side and precipitate a crisis in negotiations is to use without defense in one's arguments premises that are wildly problematic, or that one knows the other side will regard as wildly problematic, or that one expects the other side will think one knows to be wildly problematic. In other words, a concern for the opponent's "face" and for the appearance of reasonableness, are also determinants of premise adequacy in arguments used in negotiations.

7.8 Rational Disagreement Resolution

Let me turn, finally, to the argumentation that occurs in discussions aimed at the rational resolution of disagreements (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984). Such argumentation occurs in dialogues carried on by people who at least initially are argumentative opponents, since it is their initial disagreement that gives rise to the argumentation in the first place. The shared objective, however, is not to refute the opponent at whatever cost, but to reach agreement with the other side, without giving up one's own beliefs unless convinced by good arguments to do so.

The objective of argument evaluation in such discussions is to decide whether one's interlocutor has presented an argument that one should accept, and whether one's own arguments are such as to have some likelihood of convincing the interlocutor.

Clearly, then, claims that belong to the shared commitments of the parties may be used as premises without defense. So too may be claims that either party would be willing, without challenge, to add to its commitment store. Presumably logical truths and self-evidence propositions would meet this condition. As well, claims whose source is accepted as authoritative by both parties would be adequate. And suppositions introduced for the purpose of argument would have to be accepted by both sides provided they were not question-begging (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984; Govier, 1992; Fisher, 1988). These conditions constrain both interlocutors, proponent and questioner, and set adequacy limits on premises. Any undefended premise not meeting one of these conditions would be inadequate in an argumentative discussion aimed at resolving disagreements.

Under the rules of dispute-resolution arguments, truth or reasonable belief is not a relevant condition of premise adequacy. The constraint of reasonableness imposes a sincerity requirement, so the parties must work with and appeal to their genuine, honestly-held beliefs, but they are under no obligation to restrict themselves to beliefs that pass some independent test of reasonableness, assuming such a test to exist or be possible.

7.9 Conclusion

What conclusions may we draw about premise adequacy from this limited and sketchy survey of a variety of the contexts in which we want to evaluate arguments?

I don't think the cases discussed above show that there can be no useful general standards of premise adequacy. For example, consider those items of Govier's that apply to unsupported premises (1992: p. 129):

A premise in an argument is acceptable if any one of the following conditions is satisfied:

...

3. It is known a priori to be true.

4. It is a matter of common knowledge.

...

7. It is not known to be unacceptable, and as such can serve provisionally . . .

I think these conditions will work for premise adequacy in each of the contexts examined above. But Govier's list, and others like it (see Johnson & Blair, 1994a, pp. 75–78), do not exhaust the conditions of premise adequacy.

What the review of these various contexts for evaluating arguments does show, I think, is that the question about when a premise may be undefended can have radically different motivations. To put the point another way: if adequate premises are considered a necessary condition of a "good" argument, there will then be many different kinds of "good argument." The classic philosophical notion that truth is a sufficient condition of premise adequacy for all argumentation does not stand up to the test of these different contexts of evaluation.

It might be objected that some of these contexts are essentially irrational, so to call unsupported premises satisfying their requirements “adequate” and their arguments in that respect “good” is to play word games, like talking about a “good” (i.e., efficient) murderer. My reply is that the contexts I have canvassed are ones in which most of us (good and rational people) find ourselves at one time or another. These are not deviant argumentative situations, engaged in only by the unscrupulous or the sophistic. They cannot be avoided by anyone who enters into a moderately wide range of social roles and relations. And they are governed by norms. But even if some contexts have to be set aside, this review still shows that it is a mistake to think there are just arguments, undifferentiated, and correspondingly a single set of criteria for argument cogency. Yes, a good argument must have adequate premises, but when are an argument’s premises adequate? It all depends.

Chapter 8

Relevance, Acceptability and Sufficiency Today

8.1 Introduction

What makes an argument a good one? This innocent-looking question harbours two problematic concepts. One is the concept of argument. The other is the concept of argument merit. They are slippery concepts because each is understood in many ways and from several perspectives. I will try to be clear about what I mean by each in what follows, and the reader is warned that it is only to the concepts specified that the comments of this chapter are meant to apply.

By ‘argument’ I mean not a dispute or debate, nor a discussion aimed at resolving a difference of opinion, but a claim and a reason or reasons that support it. Such a claim and reasons might be offered as an attack or a defence in a dispute or as a turn in a debate or in such a discussion. It might equally constitute the case that a lawyer makes in court on behalf of his or her client. Indeed, arguments so understood can be and are used for many purposes—to convince or persuade someone, to inquire into or investigate the merits of a contention, in the process of negotiating an agreement, or indeed to maintain a disagreement, among others.

About 30 years ago, in a textbook or teaching manual called *Logical Self-Defense* (Johnson & Blair, 1977; see also: 1983, 1993, 1994a, 2006), Ralph Johnson and I sought means of improving our students’ understanding of and skills in the analysis and evaluation of the sorts of uses of such arguments in the public media (such as in the daily press, weekly magazines, or television) and in everyday conversation with family and friends, when some party tries to use reasons to persuade or convince them to modify their beliefs and attitudes (e.g., approve of some cause) or incline to some action (e.g., select a product, or vote a certain way). In doing so, we contended that such an argument is a good one if its grounds or premises are singly or in combination *relevant* as support for the claim in question, individually *acceptable*, and together (if relevant and acceptable) *sufficient* to support the claim on behalf of which they were offered. We thus said that relevance, acceptability, and sufficiency

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(RAS) are appropriate criteria for evaluating such arguments.¹ If such arguments are “good,” in what sense or in what respect are they good? At the time, speaking for myself, I did not appreciate the complexity of this question. In retrospect, I think what we had in mind is that a “good” argument on these terms is one that is worthy of serious consideration. That is, one should seriously consider modifying one’s belief or attitude (or be inclined to act) as proposed, on the basis of an argument meeting these criteria.

We had the RAS criteria in mind as replacements for the then-dominant (in analytic philosophy circles) logico-epistemological criterion of “soundness.” According to that view, a “good” argument is a “sound” argument, that is, one with true premises and a (deductively) valid inference from the premises to the conclusion. A modification of “soundness” was the view that an invalid argument with true premises could still count as “good” as long as it was inductively strong instead. Now, an argument of the form, “ p , therefore p ,” is by this definition sound if “ p ” represents a true proposition, but it is not a good argument taken as a reason supporting a claim, since it begs the question. It does not meet the RAS criteria, since its premise would not count as acceptable. But question-begging arguments aside, sound arguments or inductively strong arguments with true premises meet the RAS criteria. Besides ruling out question-begging arguments the RAS criteria have the virtue of counting strong defeasible, plausible or presumptive arguments as good arguments. These are arguments that are deductively invalid and also not inductively strong, yet that can still be good arguments. For instance, arguments about moral issues can count as good arguments on RAS grounds even if they are not entailments and not of the sort to have inductive strength. The RAS criteria thus have the merit of being useful for the evaluation of the sorts of arguments that are their target—arguments that are not on the face of it (nor are plausibly interpreted as) intended to be deductively valid or inductively strong.

Although the RAS criteria were adopted by others, found their way into several other textbooks published in the 1980s (Damer, 2005; Freeman, 1988; Govier, 2001; Seech, 1993) and were even regarded by some as “the” defining characteristic of the informal logic approach to argumentation, they have over the years come under criticism, including criticism by their originators, Johnson and myself (see also Govier, 1999a, chap. 7). Furthermore, the background assumption, that it is sufficient to evaluate the arguments found in the contexts we had in mind from a logical point of view (for we regarded the RAS as criteria of the logic of arguments), ignoring their dialectical and rhetorical properties, has over the ensuing years been very much called into question. In the light of these criticisms, and with the hindsight of 30 years of scholarly research in argumentation and exposure to a variety of perspectives and approaches over that time (with which we had no familiarity when we wrote *Logical Self-Defense*), I will in this chapter revisit these three criteria and consider whether they should be retained and, if so, in what form.

¹ In *Logical Self-Defense* we put the letters in the order, “R-S-A.” Nothing here depends on the order in which the terms or letters are placed.

In what follows I examine relevance, acceptability and sufficiency one by one and in that order, first mentioning the significant criticisms and then responding to them.²

8.2 Relevance

One objection to the relevance criterion is that it is not a separate, independent criterion of argument merit. Given the sufficiency criterion, relevance is superfluous in the following sense. The question whether enough evidence or reasons have been supplied to justify the listener or reader in accepting the arguer's conclusion cannot even be raised if the premises are irrelevant. Sufficiency *presupposes* relevance, so relevance is not an independent criterion.³

A second criticism of the relevance criterion is that it is ambiguous, and so relevance does not select a unique virtue, nor does irrelevance identify one particular flaw, in an argument. In assessing an argumentative discussion, to say that an assertion is relevant might mean that it has probative bearing on the immediate conclusion the interlocutor is arguing for (call this "local" relevance) or it might mean that the assertion has some bearing on the issue under discussion, although it is not probative for the particular claim at issue (call this "global" relevance). And there are other kinds of relevance, for example, conversational relevance or topic overlap. If relevance is a criterion of a good argument, which kind of relevance is the criterion? And if, as seems tempting, one opts for local relevance, doing so would seem to risk dismissing assertions that might indirectly play a probative role in the discussion and so contribute to good arguments.

A third criticism of relevance as a criterion of good arguments is that the concept of relevance is vague and resists analysis. The literature on relevance in argumentation (see, e.g., Blair, 1989; Wenzel, 1989; van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992c; and the articles in van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992b) has failed to produce an understanding of the concept that has met with widespread agreement. But, so the argument goes, if one cannot give an account of relevance, then it surely cannot serve as a criterion of good argument. It must be possible to describe what virtue the criterion identifies in order to require that virtue as a necessary feature of good argument.

I will respond to these criticisms of relevance in reverse order.

First of all, keep in mind that the concept in question is *probative* relevance, relevance as support or against a claim. Even if it is not possible to provide an *analysis* of

² I need to warn the reader who might be under the mistaken impression that Johnson and Blair are a tag-team, either of whom can be a stand-in for the other, and each of whom speaks for the other. Although we agree about a great deal, have co-authored frequently and continue to do so, and often convince one another in conversation, we are in fact independent scholars who do not agree about everything. When either of us writes under his own name alone, the responsibility for what is written belongs exclusively to that author.

³ This objection was first brought to my attention by Harvey Siegel.

probative relevance—a set of individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for the truth of the proposition, “ p is probatively relevant to c ” or “ p_1 , in combination with p_2 – p_n , is probatively relevant to c ” (where p is a variable ranging over premises and c a variable ranging over conclusions of the kind of argument I am discussing)—it is always open to an interlocutor to produce arguments to support the claim that p is *not* relevant to c . When someone advances an argument, there is a presumption in favour of the relevance of the premises adduced. The activity of producing arguments presupposes the intention to supply reasons that support the conclusion advanced, just as the activity of engaging in conversation often presupposes the intention to speak honestly (with such exceptions as bargaining granted). And of course, people can take advantage of such presumptions, just as people can lie and thereby take advantage of the presumption of honesty. But the intention to produce probatively relevant premises does not guarantee success. So it is always in principle possible to challenge the relevance of a premise. Given the presumption of relevance, the critic has the burden of proof in such challenges. I suspect that each such challenge is situational. That is, it takes the form of asserting that in the circumstances, and for reasons relative to those circumstances, the allegedly relevant premise is not relevant.

It helps to test such abstract claims on concrete, un-invented cases, and here is one. According to a news item, the McDonald’s fast-food chain in the United Kingdom is apparently challenging the *Oxford English Dictionary* to change its definition of the word “McJob.” The word “McJob” was popularized by Douglas Coupland’s 1991 novel, *Generation X*. According to the news report, McDonald’s U.K. branch is protesting against Oxford’s definition of “McJob” as “an unstimulating, low-paid job with few prospects, especially one created by the expansion of the fast-food industry” (Smithers, 2007). A McDonald’s officer is quoted as arguing that this definition “is [1] out of date, [2] out of touch with reality, and most importantly, [3] is insulting to those talented, committed, hardworking people who serve the public every day in the U.K.” (numbers added). Now, if one accepts that the function of a lexical definition is to capture how a word is used by speakers and writers in the language in question, it is pertinent to the rejection of a dictionary definition that it is “out of date” or “out of touch with reality.” If people no longer use a word in the way it was defined in an earlier edition, the definition should be changed. However, it is not the function of a lexical definition of a word to spare people described by it from being insulted. Being called a liar or a cheat, especially if it is not true, is insulting, but that is not a reason for a dictionary to change the definitions of “liar” or “cheat” so that if one is called a lying cheat in the future one will not be insulted. So the third premise is just irrelevant to the claim that the *OED* should change its definition of “McJob.”

I can imagine the following response to my charge of irrelevance. “Your interpretation of what is going on in this discourse is uncharitable and naïve. It’s implausible to suppose that McDonald’s thinks it can get the *OED* to change a definition. What the company is doing is engaging in a public relations exercise, trying to change the image of jobs at McDonald’s—for any number of reasons: to maintain staff morale, reduce staff turnover, attract qualified staff. The attack on the *OED* is just a

pretext and an opportunity for publicity. When you take the rhetorical context into account, you come up with quite a different, and deeper, understanding of what is going on. To simply reject the third McDonald's premise as irrelevant is to miss all of this."

My reply to this response is to embrace it, without giving up my original point. I think this richer analysis of the context is extremely plausible, and one wants students learn how to make this kind of sophisticated move. However, the premise is still irrelevant. In fact, the irrelevance of the premise might be what motivates the more sophisticated analysis. Given that McDonald's third reason is just irrelevant to the conclusion for which it is explicitly offered as support, the listener or reader invokes the Principle of Charity and looks for some other, non-irrelevant, function of the discourse. Cleverly, while McDonald's is ostensibly arguing about a definition, taking on the *OED* with a silly claim serves to get the company lots of attention. McDonald's thus uses its argument as a screen behind which to accomplish its real objective, namely to improve the image of jobs at McDonald's. The irrelevance of the third premise is neither here nor there—that clause expressed the key point that McDonald's is trying to get across. But the third premise is still irrelevant as support for the claim that the definition of "McJob" should be changed.

The last three paragraphs illustrate how a charge of irrelevance might go. There is no appeal to some general conditions of irrelevance. Instead, for each argument with relevant premises it will be possible to enunciate a general proposition that warrants the inference to that conclusion on the basis of those premises. Thus an irrelevance allegation is made in the context of a particular argument, requiring an argument that no defensible warrant can be found linking the suspect premise to the conclusion. And any response in defence of the relevance of a premise will take the form of making its warrant explicit, and if need be defending it. When someone advances an argument, there is a presumption that the premises adduced are relevant, for otherwise there is no argument. But the presumption of relevance can be contested, as can a charge of irrelevance.

So it is false, and incompatible with everyday rational activity, to hold that a challenge of "irrelevance" is impossible without a philosophical analysis of the term "relevant" or of the concept of relevance. Thus the third criticism does not require the abandonment of relevance as a criterion of a good argument.

In reply to the second criticism, that relevance is ambiguous between local and global relevance so there is no single criterion, I want to agree with the distinction but argue that the ambiguity is not fatal. For example, to point out that some McDonald's employees are insulted by having their employment referred to as a "McJob" given the negative connotation the term carries, is surely relevant to a discussion of the legitimacy of the "McJob" label. If a label is insulting *and* it is inappropriate, its offensiveness is an added reason to stop using it. So we can see how the claim can belong in a discussion of the definition of "McJob": it has "global" relevance—it is on topic. However, as we have seen, this claim was not probative in this case when it comes to the claim that the definition should be changed. The way the McDonald's spokesman expressed the argument, "most importantly" its being insulting to McDonald's employees is given as a reason to change the

definition—thus a reason that stands even if the other reasons are discounted. So the “insulting” reason is alleged to be probative of the conclusion that the definition should be changed. It is thus contended to be locally relevant. The key point here is that *the relevance criterion applies only to probative or local relevance*, so the useful distinction between local and global relevance does not disqualify the relevance criterion as a way of assessing the probative merits of arguments.

So far, the criticisms of relevance as a criterion have not, as far as I can see, shown that it should be abandoned. However, the first criticism, that relevance is redundant, being presupposed by sufficiency, has led me to think we should shift the way we conceive of relevance functioning as a criterion in the evaluation of arguments.

To begin, it has to be conceded that sufficiency presupposes relevance. The question whether offered premises supply enough evidence or grounds to justify one in accepting the conclusion on the basis of them cannot even arise if the premises have no probative bearing on the conclusion in question. So, in questioning the sufficiency of premises one has already assumed their relevance. Consequently, it seems that a theoretically economical list of criteria of good argument would include just acceptability and sufficiency, and not relevance.

However, what happens when we are provided with an argument by someone and invited to accept its conclusion on the basis of its premises—and one of the premises is irrelevant? Take the McDonald’s spokesman’s argument as an instance. I have contended that the first two premises are relevant and the third is irrelevant. If I am right, then in judging the sufficiency of the argument, the third premise must simply be ignored. Yet how do we know to ignore irrelevant premises apart from identifying their irrelevance? The truth is that sufficiency has two components. An argument’s premises are sufficient if (a) those among them that are probatively relevant to the conclusion (b) provide reasons that, if true, justify the recipient of the argument in accepting the conclusion on their basis. So the “sufficiency implies relevance” criticism doesn’t get rid of the criterion of relevance; it simply relocates it within the criterion of sufficiency.

That said, there is a deeper point to the criticism. There is a sense in which an irrelevant premise is no premise at all, since it provides zero support for the conclusion in question. To be clearer about this point, we need to distinguish between what someone presents as an argument and any argument to be found in what they present. As the McJob example demonstrates, it is possible to present a proposition as support for a claim although that proposition is probatively irrelevant to that claim. By dropping the third, irrelevant, premise, we can extract from the McDonald’s spokesman’s argument an argument consisting of just the first two offered premises, since they are both relevant.

The criterion of relevance actually first comes into play in the interpretation of discourse that might contain arguments. One does not, *ceteris paribus*, attribute to the author of such discourse an argument with irrelevant premises, for that would be inconsistent. In attributing an argument, one attributes some propositions that are intended to count as reasons for (i.e., as probatively relevant to) a claim—since that

is just what an argument (in the present sense) is. Such an attribution is inconsistent with a simultaneous judgment that all the so-called premises are not intended to be relevant. Unless there is clear evidence that the author *intended* an irrelevant proposition to be probatively relevant, it cannot reasonably be attributed to the author as part of his or her argument. It follows that the only time that the criterion of relevance is violated in an attributed argument is when the author or context clearly signals that the irrelevant premise was thought to be relevant and *wanted* it to be counted as part of his or her argument. This is what happened in the McDonald's spokesman's case. He mentioned two reasons for changing the definition, and then continued, in the same sentence, to add: "and most importantly, [the *OED*'s definition of "McJob"] is insulting to those talented, committed, hardworking people who serve the public every day in the U.K." He thus made it clear that he intended the irrelevant proposition to serve as a reason for his conclusion, that the *OED* should change the definition. Had he expressed himself differently, the interpretation would have been different. Had he said, "This definition is insulting to McDonald's employees, but quite apart from that, it is out of date and out of touch with reality and that's why it should be changed," then the first clause could not plausibly have been attributed to him as part of his argument (given its irrelevance to the conclusion). Unfortunately, given what he did in fact say, it is necessary to attribute to him an argument with an irrelevant premise.

So my current view is that the relevance "criterion" is in the first place a criterion of inclusion in the analysis and reconstruction of arguments from discourse. Only probatively relevant propositions may (*ceteris paribus*) be counted as premises in arguments. And the criterion then plays a role in evaluating arguments only when the discourse and context make it clear that the author intended a proposition to serve as a reason for his or her claim, even though that proposition has no probative bearing on the claim.

8.3 Acceptability

It seems clear that for an argument to be a good one in the sense of justifying a member of its audience in seriously considering modifying, or reaffirming, his or her beliefs or other attitudes on the basis of it, the premises must be acceptable to that recipient. But 'acceptable' is a normative term, meaning "worthy of acceptance" or "reasonable to accept." So the question is, what should constitute worthiness of acceptance by the recipient of an argument? That is where the controversy begins.

Some hold that only its truth makes a proposition worthy of acceptance. Hamblin (1970) argued that truth is both too strong and too weak. Too weak, because practically what would be required is not just that the proposition be true, but in addition, that the recipient *knows* it to be true. Too strong, because we can be justified on the basis of all available and substantial evidence in believing that a proposition is true, and so be justified in accepting it as a premise in an argument, even though (unbeknownst to everyone at the time) it is false.

Against Hamblin, Johnson defends what he calls “the truth requirement,” on three grounds. Theorists who reject truth as a criterion of premises still use the concept of truth, for instance in tests of relevance, as when they propose such accounts as, “A is probabatively relevant to B just when the truth of A makes a difference to the truth of B.” Truth is at work in various theoretical terms, for instance inconsistency, as in “two propositions are inconsistent if they cannot both be true at the same time.” And the truth requirement figures in metatheory. (See Johnson, 2000a, pp. 197–199.) But Johnson never says what exactly “the truth requirement” is. If he means there is a need to use the concept of truth in argument evaluation and in theorizing about it, he makes a strong case. But it follows from none of his arguments that for an argument to count as a good one, its premises must be true.

Hamblin opted for “acceptance” instead of truth—that is, a premise is acceptable if the recipient of the argument accepts it. As I read the Pragma-Dialectical theory (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004), it endorses a modification of Hamblin’s view, namely, that if both the arguer and the recipient of the argument accept the premise, then it is acceptable for their argument. Against the acceptance criterion it has been argued that it makes the virtue of premises in any argument relative to the particular arguers, so that patently false propositions can in principle count as good premises if the arguers are ill informed enough to accept them.

What seems to me to be at issue in the conflict between “truth” and “acceptance” is a disagreement over the proper use of arguments. One use is as a tool of dialogue partners one (or both) of whom is (or are) attempting, using reason, to get the other to change his or her mind. The other is as a means of justifying a belief or (other) attitude or a choice or decision. These have been called the “dialectical” and “epistemological” uses of argument, respectively, but those labels are misleading, since both are dialectical in that objections and replies play roles in both, and the latter is the use of argument not only to justify knowledge claims or belief claims, but attitudes and choices as well. I will call them, respectively, the use of argument to persuade and the use of argument to justify.

I do not see the necessity of choosing between these two uses of argument, for we use them for both purposes and each in its place seems perfectly legitimate. In the case of persuasion, the norms of acceptance are of course relative to and determined by the participants. In the case of justification, the point of the argument is not to establish what follows from the audience’s commitments, but what follows from what the audience is justified in accepting.

Popperians contend that justification reduces to persuasion, since, in their view, justification requires the impossible assumption of a foundation for knowledge, belief, attitude or choice and deductively valid inferences from it. Absent the possibility of grounding arguments independently, we are left with the beliefs or commitments of interlocutors as the only starting points of argument. However, this epistemology was framed for scientific theories, and, quite apart from its controversial standing in that theatre, its application to all kinds of claims is problematic. Popperianism also presupposes, in its Humean skepticism about induction, that the only legitimate norm of inference adequacy is deductive validity, which also

is problematic—given, for instance, the wide use and acceptance of defeasible arguments.

On the other hand, the insistence that “mere persuasion” is irrational, an abuse of the rational ideal of argumentation, seems equally dubious. Showing someone that, given his other commitments, he is bound by norms of reasoning he accepts to accept a claim in dispute seems, on the face of it, eminently reasonable, even in cases when those other anchoring commitments are implausible, or even demonstrably false. Perhaps one ought not to take advantage of another’s stupidity, and use it to persuade him to accept claims against his interests, but that is a moral judgment, not an edict of rationality. Moreover, in many contexts, such as in the realms of politics and social policy, arguably a doctrine of *caveat emptor* is preferable to one of paternalism.

There are two orientations from which to judge a premise’s acceptability. One is the perspective of the person presenting the argument. In using arguments to persuade, the arguer must decide what it is reasonable to expect the audience to accept. In using arguments to justify, the arguer must decide what grounds for the claim it is reasonable to for him or her to accept and then which of those grounds the audience can be brought to recognize as worthy of acceptance. The other orientation is that of the person to whom the argument is addressed. From the recipient’s vantage point, in both cases the question is the same. We ideally want the premises we accept to be true, or to have analogous standing for premises that don’t have a truth value, but in practice that means we want premises that it seems to us in the circumstances reasonable to believe (think to be true), reasonable for us to accept. Here all the considerations discussed in the literature come into play. If the arguer presents a premise as a matter of his or another’s testimony, is that testimony reliable? If the premise is based on someone’s authority, are there any reasons to question that authority? If the premise is a value judgment, were the appropriate criteria and standards employed in arriving at it? And so on.⁴

The standards to which premises are held in fact vary with the circumstances of the argument, and that is appropriate. For example, if the conclusion is “meteorological conditions are excellent,” and the premise is, “Meteorologists say so,” we scrutinize the authority much more carefully if our purpose in knowing the conclusion is to launch a satellite rocket than if it is to proceed with an informal family picnic.

In sum, acceptability as the criterion that each premise of an argument must satisfy if the argument is to count as a good one has some content, but the concept is largely a place holder. Depending on the type of premise and the circumstances of the argument, from the recipient’s vantage point the norms of acceptability will vary. From the arguer’s orientation, the same will be true for the use of arguments to justify, but for the use of arguments to persuade, an acceptable premise is a premise the audience will accept.

⁴ The most thorough and careful treatment of acceptability from an epistemological perspective is Freeman’s recent *Acceptable Premises* (2005).

8.4 Sufficiency

It has been argued that, like relevance, sufficiency is ambiguous between the sufficiency of the immediate argument—the argument whose premises directly support the conclusion—and dialectical sufficiency, a property of the argument in relation to objections that have been or might be leveled against it. But there is a problem in specifying the conditions of dialectical sufficiency, since an infinite regress threatens if every possible objection must be answered, yet avoiding it seems to require placing an arbitrary limit to the amount of support required.

If there is a question whether enough support for the conclusion is provided, there are various ways to beef up the argument to try to remove it. One is to supply more evidence of the kind already presented. (Example: She comes from a huge family. She has ten brothers and sisters. Need more? She has fifteen aunts and uncles including both her mother's and father's sisters and brothers, and not counting their spouses. Need more? She has twenty-one nieces and nephews and forty-seven first cousins.) Another is to supply other kinds of evidence. (Example: We should hire her. Her academic credentials are outstanding. Need more? Her academic credentials are significantly better than those of any other applicant. Need more? She has several years of experience doing this kind of work successfully. Need more? She comes highly recommended by people whose judgment we respect. Need more? She would bring to the firm kinds of experience that we are lacking and need. Need more? She would probably stay with the firm and not want to move elsewhere after a few years. Need more? Several of our people have worked with her and found her cooperative and efficient, a really pleasant person to deal with.)

But the sufficiency of the amount of evidence provided will be determined differently for persuasive arguments than for arguments used to justify. In justificatory arguments it might be very important to be as confident as possible that the added evidence is true, and if so, strengthening the argument can require, besides the additional premises, also in each case the reasons for thinking them to be true. In persuasive arguments with a non-interacting audience, the arguer must try to judge how much evidence the audience will need to be convinced. With an interacting audience, it will be enough to ask the audience whether it has been convinced. Also, the hesitations or doubts of an interacting audience can be dealt with when and as they arise, and the arguer can stop replying to objections when there are no more objections to answer. The case is more complicated for justificatory arguments. The objective then is to produce grounds that would justify anyone—or, at least anyone with the knowledge to understand the relevant issues and the difficulties that face the claim being defended, indexed as appropriate for the claim in question.⁵

Johnson has sought to produce a general account of the extent to which an arguer producing justification ought to respond to objections or challenges (see 2000b,

⁵ For instance, arguments for a claim that consists of a revolutionary new scientific theory will have to be indexed for scientists and scientific knowledge and beliefs in that field around that historical moment, but not for scientists of earlier eras and not for non-scientists or scientists in completely different fields.

2002, 2003). My own view is that where there are fields of knowledge or expertise, each one will have its own expectations and these might well differ from field to field. For example, such fields as psychology, with a history of different theoretical approaches being carried forward independently of one another, the proponent of a claim within one perspective would not be expected to respond to all the objections that might be raised from contending approaches. An experimental psychologist doesn't have to refute the psychoanalytic approach each time he or she justifies an hypothesis. Also, it is to be expected that the bar will get raised the more that hangs on the claim in question. Defending a conjecture requires answering doubts about its plausibility, whereas defending a new theory requires answering doubts about its truth. So I am skeptical that a general account of dialectical obligation for justificatory arguments can be provided.

In sum, as with acceptability as a criterion, the criterion of sufficiency, for justificatory arguments, is best seen as a placeholder for whatever version and standards of sufficiency are appropriate for the particular situation in question.

8.5 Other Objections

Some argue that the entire logical perspective is misconceived, and should be replaced by a dialectical one. Their contention is that argumentation is dialectical in the respect that it is essentially, or best conceived to be, an exchange between role-bearers—the proponent and opponent of a claim. Arguments are derivative of, conceptually dependent upon, argumentation. They are abstractions from it. Consequently, the normative question is what constitutes good argumentation, and arguments are “good” just when they contribute to good or well-ordered argumentation. The criteria for good premises or good inferences in arguments will be thus based on what norms for premises and for inferences are required if argumentation is to function well or appropriately. Something like this, I take it, is implied by the Pragma-Dialectical theory. According to the rules for the ideal model of a Critical Discussion in that theory, a premise is acceptable if it meets the test that the interlocutors agree premises should meet, and similarly an inference is acceptable if it meets the test the interlocutors agree inferences should meet. And such tests are justified if they lead to argumentation reaching its goal—the well-ordered resolution of a difference of opinion.

However, it is possible to agree that argumentation is dialectical without conceding that the norms for all uses of arguments derive from argumentation. Not every understanding of argumentation in dialectical terms implies the Pragma-Dialectical theory. It is possible to take the opposite position from the one it takes, and to hold that argumentation is well ordered, at least in part, when the arguments used in it are logically good ones. The Pragma-Dialectical theory is a model for persuasive arguments, and I have endorsed a similar if not identical account of premise acceptability and sufficiency in spelling out how I now think these criteria should be understood for the use of arguments to persuade. But for arguments used to justify there are norms that are independent of the preferences of those participating.

I do think that the dialectical perspective requires a reconceptualization of the concept of a good argument, and that is implied by the revision of the sufficiency criterion that I propose above. An argument might be a single unit of premises supporting a claim, but it might equally be several such units independently supporting that claim. On one way of counting, there would be several arguments, however they all have the same conclusion. But such a single argument or group of arguments with the same conclusion would be inadequate if there were objections offered or known or easy to anticipate that were not answered. Nor would it be adequate if there were arguments for the denial of the conclusion that were not rebutted. So, sufficiency in the sense of enough evidence or reasons to justify the recipient in seriously considering being influenced by the argument might well require not a single argument but a phalanx of them—an entire case in support of the claim in question. The notion of “a” single argument being a good one all by itself has to be modified. Occasionally, a nice tight little one-argument proof will be all that is required, but more typically there will be the need for a case for the claim.

Others argue that both logic and dialectic are the wrong starting points, and instead the basic perspective should be rhetorical. As I understand it, this critique does not deny that there are logical criteria of good arguments, nor does it reject the value of the dialectical perspective, but it holds that the logical criteria and dialectical norms are usually less illuminating than rhetorical considerations in identifying the merits of arguments. Here is how Tindale expresses this view:

While they [logic or product, dialectic or procedure and rhetoric or process] can be discussed and studied in isolation, in actual argumentative contexts we might expect each to be present, and a complete theory of argument will accommodate the relationships among the three. Still, it is the rhetorical that must provide the foundations for that theory, and it will influence how we understand and deal with the logical and the dialectical in any particular case. (2004, p. 7)

I am sympathetic with this view if it is applied to the interpretation of discourse. When seeking to appreciate what is occurring in an episode of communication, we need to consider factors such as the author’s purposes, the author’s analysis of his or her audience, the occasion on which the communication occurs, various elements of the situation such as the forum, practical limits on time or length, and so on—all of which are rhetorical features of the communication. I tried to do this in spelling out my expanded interpretation of the McDonald’s argument about changing the *OED* definition of “McJob.” I claimed, you will recall, that it was unlikely that McDonald’s objective was to persuade the *OED* to change its definition, and that its (flawed) argument to that effect was probably a smokescreen to hide other objectives. This was a rhetorical analysis of the McDonald’s communication.

However, granting the importance of a rhetorical analysis to an understanding of discourse, the person who is the target of argumentative communication has in the end to decide whether to be influenced by its arguments. Do they provide him or her with good and sufficient reason to alter or reinforce his or her beliefs or attitudes? To answer that question, the recipient of the argumentation must assess the logical and dialectical merits of the case made. Do the grounds offered really have any probative bearing on the claim(s) in question? Are the relevant grounds offered acceptable?

Do the offered reasons provide sufficient probative force? Are the plausible reasons for hesitation or doubt about the claim and the arguments offered for it adequately answered? None of these is a question about the rhetoric of the argumentation.

There is one respect in which an appreciation of rhetoric can enhance these critical questions testing the logical and dialectical adequacy of arguments. The recipient wants to judge the case on its merits, and not be impaired by irrelevant attitudes that might cloud his or her judgment and that might be due to rhetorical effects. “Am I being unduly influenced by sympathy for the fate of the people involved? Is my identification with this point of view causing me to be too critical of its challengers or too uncritical of its defenders? Am I being unduly impressed by the ethos of the arguer, or of the authorities he cites, or is the lack of ethos of the proponent causing me to undervalue her arguments?” The recipient needs to be aware of the various ways the rhetorical features of the situation and the presentation might prevent or impair an assessment of the merits of the case advanced in the argumentation. So sensitivity to rhetoric can come into play not in determining the probative merits of the arguments but in ensuring that those merits are appropriately appreciated.

8.6 Conclusion

To conclude, I turn to the question with which I began: should relevance, acceptability and sufficiency be retained as the criteria of good arguments, and if so, in what form? The considerations reviewed above seem to me to warrant a “yes” to the first question, but a much-qualified “yes.”

First, the primary role of relevance is in the interpretation of discourse and judgments of probative relevance are used to identify the components of arguments to be found therein. A secondary role for relevance judgments is to identify parts of the discourse that the author clearly intends to contribute probatively to an argument but that in fact fail to do so. Both sorts of judgment are contestable and since there is a presumption in favour of alleged relevance, the onus rests with the critic to back up the allegation of irrelevance with arguments. The critic will argue that any warrant that might be proposed to support the probative value of the premise(s) in question is indefensible; the person who endorses the argument will argue that the inference has a defensible warrant. The point is not so much that a logically good argument will have relevant premises as that an argument will have relevant premises, and an argument with purportedly relevant premises that are in fact not probative is, in that respect, not a bad argument but no argument at all (like an unfunny joke).

Second, both acceptability and sufficiency are best understood as placeholders. In the case of acceptability, the use to which the argument is being put makes a difference. With arguments used to persuade, the premises the parties accept will thereby be acceptable. With arguments used to justify, the general test is that the premise be reasonable to accept. Premises known to be true clearly meet that test, but so will premises that are probable or plausible under certain conditions. But what makes a proposition probable or plausible will vary according to the subject matter. Moreover, how high the standard should be will also vary with the circumstances of

the argument. Hence, although it is true that for an argument to be a good one its premises must be acceptable, that is the beginning of the story, not the end.

Similarly for sufficiency. There can be no quarrel with the position that a good argument will provide enough evidence to make it reasonable to take the conclusion seriously on the basis of it, because that formula leaves unspecified how to decide what counts as enough. Special fields such as the various sciences or professions will have standards peculiar to them for arguments about their subject matters. General guidelines for such things as the credibility of testimony or the trustworthiness of one's own experience can be and have been formulated. As with acceptability, the standards will also vary with the circumstances: the more it matters to be right, the higher the quality and quantity of evidence is needed. Thorough arguments will have a dialectical dimension as well, with objections to the thesis or to the arguments for it acknowledged and answers to them provided.

Third, a complication that I have only alluded to is that the merits of an argument can be assessed from any of three vantage points. The person advancing the argument will try to judge what a good argument for his or her purposes would be. What will persuade, or what will justify? The person considering accepting the argument needs to decide whether it makes a good case for the conclusion. And third parties can find themselves wanting or needing to judge the merits of arguments others offer some audience. For example, a student's grades or a job-applicant's prospects can depend on the quality of the arguments found in his or her work but not directed at the assessor.

Finally, I have contended that bringing into play the dialectical and rhetorical perspectives enriches the ways relevance, acceptability and sufficiency are interpreted and applied, but does not supplant them or imply their rejection. Besides bringing to bear considerations of presumption and burden of proof that bear on the application of all three criteria, the dialectical perspective is essential in judging sufficiency. The rhetorical perspective is essential for the hermeneutics of argumentative discourse, and for monitoring the independence of one's own argument assessments.

In a nutshell, the three "criteria" remain useful as ways of organizing our thinking about the qualities of a good argument, but in the light of 30 years of research and reflection, they must be hedged with qualifications and supplemented by an appreciation of the complexities of arguments and their uses.

Chapter 9

The “Logic” of Informal Logic

9.1 Introduction

So-called “informal logic” developed in the 1970s as a result of dissensus. Its proponents disagreed with the conventional wisdom of the day in philosophy departments in the United States and Canada that the appropriate way to teach undergraduates how to analyse and evaluate arguments is to teach them some elementary formal logic. It was argued that, instead, learning non-formal techniques is truer to the phenomena and more effective in acquiring the desired skills and dispositions. (The use of the term ‘informal,’ by the way, was thus a rhetorical device intended to “dissociate” the proposed new methods from the conventional method; nothing more.)

As the attention of those interested in informal logic turned to theory in the course of the late 1970s and early 1980s, one of the assumptions of the day that came under challenge was the distinction between deductive and inductive arguments (see Weddle, 1979, 1980; Fohr, 1980a, 1980b; Govier, 1980a, 1980c; Hitchcock, 1980, 1981; F. Johnson, 1980). The issue first arose as a problem for argument identification and reconstruction. Since few arguments in public discourse are valid as they are expressed, are they really deductive arguments, but with unexpressed premises, or are they fallacious arguments, or are they inductive arguments? But the exhaustiveness of the deductive-inductive dichotomy was soon questioned as well. Govier drew attention to the “case by case reasoning” discussed by John Wisdom in the then-still-unpublished Virginia Lectures (Wisdom, 1991), and to the concept of “conductive reasoning,” introduced by Carl Wellman in *Challenge and Response* (1971), both of which presupposed that the deductive-inductive dichotomy was not

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exhaustive (Govier, 1980b; see also Hitchcock, 1981). There thus arose the question of what such an alternative or alternatives might be. For some, this has continued to be a central question for informal logic theory.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore some historically-offered possible answers to this question of what alternatives there might be to deduction and induction, but before doing so it is useful to clarify the question being considered and to remove some possible misunderstandings about the terms on which I am approaching it.

First, for present purposes the distinction between reasoning and argument is not germane. I need to explain this point.

Reasoning is a cognitive process, or various kinds of cognitive process. Harman opens *Change in View* with a description of an episode of reasoning:

Intending to have Cheerios for breakfast, Mary goes to the cupboard. But she can't find any Cheerios. She decides that Elizabeth must have finished off the Cheerios the day before. So she settles for Rice Krispies. (1986, p. 1.)

Notice that, while Mary reasons here, she presents no argument to anyone, herself included.

The word ‘argument’ is used in many different (often incompatible) ways. Some use ‘argument’ to denote the record of an episode of reasoning. On such a usage, some might ascribe the following argument to Mary’s reasoning as described by Harman.

There are no Cheerios in the cupboard. The only explanation of why there are no Cheerios in the cupboard is that Elizabeth finished them off yesterday. So Elizabeth must have finished off the Cheerios yesterday.

Another sense of ‘argument’ is the reasoning presented to an interlocutor to try to persuade or convince that interlocutor of something. Mary produced no such argument in Harman’s description of the situation, but we can imagine Mary responding to Arthur when he asks why Elizabeth finished off the Cheerios yesterday by saying:

Yesterday there were only enough Cheerios left for one serving after I had some for breakfast, and Elizabeth, who likes Cheerios for breakfast, was the last person to have breakfast yesterday, right after I did, so Elizabeth must have finished off the Cheerios then.

Yet another sense of ‘argument’ corresponds to what is called a “case” in legal argumentation—that is, an interconnected vector of arguments, some leading directly (sometimes in chains) to the final standpoint being defended or maintained, others supporting it indirectly by anticipating and answering objections of various kinds (to the standpoint or to the arguments leading directly to it, either to the reasons or to the inferences). So we can imagine Mary’s conversation with Arthur continuing, with Arthur challenging Mary’s reasoning and her conclusion by suggesting that Elizabeth likes Shredded Wheat for breakfast as much as Cheerios, and also asking why the Cheerios couldn’t instead have been finished off by Peter last

night, who likes to have a bowl of Cheerios as a snack before going to bed. Mary could answer the first objection by pointing out that they were out of Shredded Wheat yesterday, and the second by reminding Arthur of Peter's earlier declared intention to stop having snacks before bed in order to lose some weight. Mary's argument in the sense of her "case" would then consist of her original reasons for thinking Elizabeth finished off the Cheerios yesterday plus her counters to Arthur's challenges to that original argument. Exchanges like Mary's and Arthur's, or the products of them, are often called "argumentation."

Now, in all these examples, there is an illative move or a series of illative moves: from the basis or starting point of the reasoning or argument to the upshot that is inferred or alleged to follow from that basis. Some call this move an inference, others call it an implication, others call it a premise-conclusion link, and others call it a consequence relation. It is a key element in the reasoner's cognitive processing, and it is a key element in the arguer's attempt to persuade, convince, justify, show, establish, prove—call it what you will. What the present chapter is investigating pertains to this illative move regardless of where it occurs, whether in reasoning, or in an argument in any sense, or in argumentation.

A second preliminary clarification needed is that what is at issue is not best conceived as types of reasoning or kinds of argument. I am persuaded by the arguments of those (e.g., Skyrms, 1975; Hitchcock, 1980) who contend that 'deductive' and 'inductive' are most fruitfully construed as modifying types of evaluative criteria, not types of argument or types of reasoning. Thus it may be asked of a piece of reasoning or of an argument whether the basis deductively implies the conclusion drawn from it or urged on for that reason, or equivalently, whether that relationship (the "illative move") is deductively valid. If it is determined that it is not deductively valid, it may be asked whether the relationship is instead inductively strong. Although some of the material I investigate speaks of types of argument or types of reasoning, I will take the authors in question to be alluding to types of criteria for the evaluation of the illative move in an instance of argument or reasoning.

An illative move is a good one if the upshot is entailed by the basis (i.e., the former cannot be false if the latter is true) and the basis is different from the upshot (so the reasoning is not circular, the argument not question-begging). An illative move is also a good one, even if it is not an entailment, to the quantifiable degree that the basis makes it probable that the upshot is true or worthy of acceptance. The question motivating this chapter can now be made clearer. Are those the only two ways that an illative move can be a good one? Is there some criterion or several criteria of merit of illative moves in reasoning or argument other than deductive validity and quantifiable inductive strength? The strategy of the chapter is to examine a number of what appear to be such alternative criteria of illative merit that have appeared in the last 50 years or so and raise the following questions about them. Are they indeed distinct criteria from deductive validity and inductive strength? If so, are they all variations of the same criterion—are they equivalent or is one basic and the others reducible to it—or are they (or some of them) different from each other, so that there is not just a third criterion, but several others? The investigation in the chapter will be programmatic rather than exhaustive.

9.2 Review of the Accounts

In the following subsections I briefly describe and characterize six accounts that seem on the face of it to portray some third type of assessment of an illative move, independent of deductive validity and of inductive strength. These authors were selected for their presence in the informal logic tradition, or for the prominence of their accounts. I do not always present the respective authors’ arguments in support of their contentions, or judge them myself.

9.2.1 *Wisdom’s Reasoning by Parallels or Case-by-Case Reasoning*

John Wisdom’s “Virginia Lectures,” edited and in 1991 published by Stephen Barker as *Proof and Explanation*, were delivered and tape-recorded in the spring semester of 1957. They are wide-ranging in philosophical subject matter, but what I want to extract from them, following Govier’s (1980a) long-ago lead, is what Wisdom called reasoning or arguing by parallels or case-by-case. Wisdom contended, against the view that an argument used to prove a point is good only if it is valid, that a justification can equally be based on an argument relying on parallel cases. Wisdom had in mind reasoning or arguments supporting claims of fact that are not going to be settled by finding additional evidence, but are instead what might be called matters of judgment. Among the many examples he gave is “This man is extremely religious” (1991, p. 39). The reasons people have for such claims cannot, he contended, be presented “in the form of demonstrations . . . as a step-by-step process” (p. 39). He seems to have had in mind, to pursue this example, something like pointing to so-and-so, who all would agree is a religious person, and noting similarities between this exemplar and the man in question. As well, one could think of what would make anyone count as a religious person, a paradigm, such as conscientiously living by the precepts of his religion, praying for divine guidance before making important choices, observing the rituals of his religion without fail—and then reminding the doubter that so-and-so does all of those things. Wisdom’s point seems to be that understanding a concept entails recognizing clear cases of when and how its properties pertain and when and how they don’t, and therefore, in virtue of recognizing that the case in question is like the clear cases in relevant respects, one is entitled to infer that the case in question has the property in dispute.

Such reasoning or arguing, Wisdom said, is like, but not identical to, reasoning or arguing from analogy. In Wisdom’s usage, an argument from analogy must be based on actual cases, and it must be in principle possible to carry out further investigations to determine whether what is claimed on the basis of the analogy really is so. An argument from parallel cases, in contrast, may be based wholly on imaginary but conceivable instances (pp. 111–112). Wisdom said it might be called argument from a priori analogy (p. 111). He explained this idea, consistently, by describing possible examples. At one point, for instance, he said that he had in mind “typical sorts of procedure adopted by counsel in courts of law when they refer to past cases in

justification of such a conclusion as ‘Here there was negligence,’ ‘Here there was not negligence’ ” (p. 139).

Is case-by-case reasoning a “third way,” to be assessed independently of deductive and inductive norms? Wisdom’s own position was that, “all deductive argument, absolutely all deductive argument, comes in the end to a case-by-case procedure; that deduction is a way of presenting arguments which might also have been presented through case-by-case reasoning” (p. 154). He thought this is so because he thought that a deduction can function as a proof only to the extent that its premises are unproblematic, and they can be shown to be acceptable, if challenged, ultimately, only on the basis of case-by-case reasoning. So Wisdom would have conceded that one might identify a set of necessary and sufficient conditions of someone’s being a religious person, note that so-and-so possesses those properties, and then validly infer that so-and-so is a religious person. But if anyone doubts so-and-so’s religiosity, it will be because either he doesn’t accept those properties as the necessary and sufficient criteria or he doubts that so-and-so really is like that. The latter might be a factual matter to be settled empirically, but the former can only be settled by appeal to cases.

9.2.2 Toulmin’s Warrants

In *The Uses of Argument* (1958), Stephen Toulmin laid out a now-famous “pattern for analyzing arguments” (p. 99). According to it any smallest unit of argument will exhibit the following pattern: a claim is inferred (with a qualifier and often subject to specified exceptions) from some particular data on the basis of a warrant that licenses the inference—a warrant that can be justified if challenged by reference to backing related to the subject-matter of the data and claim. The “Toulmin model,” as it is widely termed, does not require that a good inference be deductively valid or inductively strong: the criterion of a good illative move is a justified warrant, and although such a warrant can be a law of deductive logic or a rule of induction, it doesn’t have to be. So it might be thought that the Toulmin model represents a third type of norm of reasoning or argument beyond these two; but it doesn’t. The model is open to the possibility of other types of such norms, and in that way it is not hostile to the view that these two might not exhaust the logical criteria of good reasoning or good argument, however by itself it supplies no such alternatives.

Toulmin needs, and in fact offered, an independent argument to show that there can be warrants that are “valid” although they are not entailments or inductively strong. The tack Toulmin took was to argue that the issue is actually not to distinguish between “induction and deduction, . . . proof and evidence, . . . demonstrative and non-demonstrative arguments, . . . necessary and probable inference, or . . . conclusive and inconclusive reasoning,” but instead to distinguish “between analytic and substantive arguments” (p. 234). “Analytic criteria,” he wrote, “are beside the point when we are dealing with substantial arguments” (p. 234). And the key point is that “substantial arguments often involved type-transitions in the passage from the

data and backing to the conclusion,” which “means that we must judge each field of substantial arguments by its own relevant standards” (p. 234). So, for example, the kinds of warrants used in arguments about criminal guilt are likely to be different from the kinds of warrants used in arguments about the merits of an artist, and both will be different from the warrants used in arguments about predictions of performance in tennis (see pp. 13–14).

Toulmin’s particular interest in *The Uses of Argument* was in arguments used to justify belief claims. According to his account, there is no third standard of legitimacy for illative moves, but rather any number of them—as many as there are fields or subject matters of argument. (Although the book focuses on argument, it seems that the reasoning–argument distinction plays no role in his account.)

9.2.3 Wellman’s “Conductive” Reasoning

In *Challenge and Response* (1971), an inquiry into the nature of justification in ethics, Carl Wellman argued that in addition to deduction (“that form of reasoning in which the claim is made that the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises” (p. 4)) and what he called “induction” (“that sort of reasoning by which a hypothesis is confirmed or disconfirmed by establishing the truth or falsity of its implications” (p. 32)), there is also a third kind of justification appropriate in ethics, which he called “conduction.”

Conduction can best be defined as that sort of reasoning in which 1) a conclusion about some individual case 2) is drawn nonconclusively 3) from one or more premises about the same case 4) without appeal to other cases. (p. 52)

Among the examples that Wellman offered are: “you ought not to have spoken so harshly because your words hurt her deeply” and “Martin Luther King is a fine man because, in spite of occasional arrogance, he is an unselfish and courageous worker for his fellowman” (p. 52).

Such reasoning or argument is not deductively valid, Wellman said, because “even a perfect fit of premises to individual case is no guarantee of the truth of the conclusion because additional information may be uncovered to outweigh the given premises” (p. 53). It is also to be distinguished from reasoning by analogy, which Wellman took to be another way of drawing a conclusion about a particular case from one or more premises about that same case (p. 53). Wellman did not take reasoning by analogy to be deductively valid: it is an appeal to analogous instances, and the conclusion is “not [linked to the premises] by a universal generalization” (p. 53). However, in the case of conduction there is no appeal to analogous cases; the link between premises and conclusion “is entirely a priori” (p. 53).

Wellman did not think that conduction is a uniquely ethical mode of reasoning: “Wherever some descriptive predicate is ascribed on the basis of a family resemblance conductive reasoning takes place” (p. 54).

For example . . . Bees have a language because they can communicate information about the location of flowers to one another. . . . In such examples factual conclusions about some individual case are drawn from information about the case. (p. 54)

Wellman identified three “patterns of conduction” (p. 55). In the first, “a single reason is given for the conclusion” (p. 55); in the second, “several reasons are given for the conclusion” (p. 56); and in the third, “some conclusion is drawn from both positive and negative considerations” (p. 57). In the latter case, the way the conclusion is arrived at can be suggested by the model of a sort of qualitative weighing of the pros and cons, though this model “is not always helpful” (pp. 58–60).

Wellman thought it desirable that there be a logic of conduction, but after reviewing the conditions required for any such logic he reluctantly concluded that “to determine the validity of conductive arguments one would need a rule of inference for each set of predicates” and as a result, “[t]he appeal to logical rules seems pointless here, for one can just as well weigh the reasons in the original argument” (p. 69). The only way to test the validity of a conductive argument is to “think it through” (see pp. 78–83). However, Wellman did not think that such arguments are beyond criticism. “To argue,” he contended, “is to make a claim to validity on behalf of the argument one is using” and such claims are contestable, for “the process of thinking and discussing . . . sustains or destroys the persuasiveness of argument” (p. 99).

To say that an argument is valid is to claim that when subjected to an indefinite amount of criticism it is persuasive for everyone who thinks in the normal way; to say that an argument is invalid is to claim that when subjected to an indefinite amount of criticism it is unpersuasive for everyone who thinks in the normal way. (p. 99)

The upshot is that the conductive illative move is a fallible judgment of a direct evidentiary connection between claims based on an understanding of their meaning in the context. Such a move is made in reasoning (the product of which is an argument) and is asserted in presenting arguments to others. Such moves are standard in reasoning and arguing about particular ethical claims, but they are found anywhere that there is reasoning from some feature(s) of a case to another feature of the same case.

9.2.4 Rescher’s Provisoed Assertion and Probative Reasoning

Nicholas Rescher’s *Dialectics* (1977) is subtitled, *A Controversy-Oriented Approach to the Theory of Knowledge*. Rescher’s principal topic was thus epistemology, not argumentation per se. However, Rescher held that “the process of disputation . . . offers . . . a vivid view of the structure and workings of the validating mechanisms which support our claims to knowledge” (p. 3) and so he undertook its study from that point of view.

Among the fundamental dialectical moves Rescher claimed occur in disputation is what he dubbed “provisoed assertion.” This is the move, symbolized as “*P/Q*,” that can be described in general terms as:

“*P* generally (or *usually* or *ordinarily*) obtains provided that *Q*” or “*P* obtains, other things being equal, when *Q* does” or “when *Q*, so *ceteris paribus* does *P*” or “*P* obtains in all (or *most*) ordinary circumstances (or possible worlds) when *Q* does” or “*Q* constitutes *prima facie* evidence for *P*.” (p. 6)

As a move in disputation, a provisoed assertion of such a form must always be accompanied by either a categorical assertion of *Q* (“*Q* is the case”) or a cautious assertion of *Q* (that is, “*Q*, for all you have shown” or “*Q* is compatible with your expressed commitments”) (6). Although Rescher did not say so, it seems clear that the pair of assertions thus forms an argument for *P*. Rescher is quick to note that the *P/Q* relation is not an logical implication: *Q* does not entail, imply or assure that *P*; the connection is merely “normal, natural, and only to be expected” (7). Nor is the connection “a matter of mere probabilities—or how things go *mostly* or *usually*—rather, it is a matter of how things go *normally* or *as a rule*” (p. 7). “The linkage,” Rescher said, “is *presumptive* rather than deductively airtight” (p. 8), and it has the implication that “in *dialectical* (as opposed to *deductive*) reasoning an assessment of the cognitive standing of a thesis can never leave its probative origins behind altogether” (p. 8).

Rescher thus has identified an illative move that must be subject to a third kind of evaluative criterion besides deductive and inductive validity. What initiates and maintains such reasoning and argument is the correlative pair, presumption and burden of proof. How things stand “as a rule”—“the usual, normal, customary course of things” has a standing presumption in its favour (pp. 30–31), but presumptions are “usually tentative and provisional”—they are defeasible, (i.e., “subject to defeat in being overthrown by sufficiently weighty countervailing considerations” (p. 31)). The proponent of a claim in a dispute situation has the burden of proof, and may rely on presumptions to support his claim. The critic in turn faces the burden of overturning those presumptions.

Reasoning and argument that proceeds by means of provisoed assertions is termed probative reasoning and argument. It is justified, Rescher argued, because it is rational to abide by warranted presumptions and established inferential ground rules. His defense of the latter contention took up three of the book’s eight chapters, and will not be reviewed here.

9.2.5 *Defeasible Reasoning*

Before Walton drew attention to it (1996b), the literature explicitly devoted to defeasible reasoning and related logics was not much taken account of by those identifying themselves as informal logicians. This work was carried out in the fields of computer science, cognitive psychology (artificial intelligence), linguistics and, within philosophy, by some in logic and epistemology. The outsider to this topic who thinks of acquainting himself or herself with defeasible reasoning faces the prospect of a 40-year accumulation of literature, highly technical, in several fields, and containing a number of overlapping controversies. In his *Stanford Encyclopedia*

of *Philosophy* article on the topic, Robert Koons (2009) identified defeasible reasoning with Aristotle's dialectical reasoning discussed in the *Topics*, but also notes that in the recent past it has been studied from the perspective of the semantics and pragmatics of communication (interpretations of texts and utterances are defeasible), of epistemology (evidence for beliefs, such as sensory experiences, are defeasible), of ethics (duties are defeasible), of philosophy of science (some argue that scientific laws are defeasible), and of artificial intelligence (which developed formal languages to represent defeasible reasoning, for instance in modeling expert systems such as idealized physicians' diagnostic reasoning). Koons defined *defeasible reasoning* as follows:

Reasoning is *defeasible* when the corresponding argument is rationally compelling but not deductively valid. The truth of the premises of a good defeasible argument provide support for the conclusion, even though it is possible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false. In other words, the relationship of support between premises and conclusion is a tentative one, potentially defeated by additional information.

John Pollock (1992), a prominent theorist, explained defeasible reasoning in a similar way:

Conclusive reasons logically entail their conclusions. Defeasibility arises from the fact that not all reasons are conclusive. Those that are not are *prima facie reasons*. *Prima facie* reasons create a presumption in favor of their conclusion, but it is defeasible. (p. 2)

Pollock (1992, pp. 2–3) distinguished two kinds of defeaters of arguments corresponding to defeasible reasoning. A *rebutting* defeater is an argument whose conclusion is the negation of the conclusion of the argument it aims to defeat. An *undercutting* defeater is an argument whose conclusion is the negation of the inference from the evidence to the conclusion of the argument it aims to defeat.

Pollock's "rebutting defeaters" and "undercutting defeaters" correspond more or less to the two kinds of logical objections standardly identified in theories of dialectical argumentation: objections (consisting of challenges or arguments) against the conclusion or standpoint, and objections (consisting of challenges or arguments) against the argumentation advanced as supporting the conclusion or standpoint. However Pollock's concept of an undercutting defeater does not make the further distinction found in dialectics between objections (i.e., arguments) against the premises, and objections (i.e., arguments) against the connection between the premises and the conclusion.

Pollock (1992, p. 8) distinguished his argument-theoretic theory of defeasible reasoning from Raymond Reiter's semantical default logic (see Reiter, 1980), on two grounds. Pollock's system is "skeptical" (if we can neither refute nor confirm a thesis, we must withhold belief) whereas Reiter's is "credulous" (if we cannot refute a thesis, it should be accepted). In addition, Pollock's *prima facie* reasons "are supposed to be logical relations between concepts" (1992, p. 8), whereas Reiter's defaults "often represent contingent generalizations" (p. 8). A standard example of defeasible reasoning for Pollock is your reasoning that because an object looks red to you it is red. It is a conceptual truth, not an empirical generalization, that normally objects that look red are red. The classical example of default logic is:

Tweety is a bird, and most birds fly (an empirical generalization), so (in the absence of evidence that Tweety is an exception) infer that Tweety flies. Notice that the distinction between a conceptually grounded and an empirically grounded inference parallels Wisdom’s distinction between reasoning by a priori analogy and reasoning by inductive analogy.

Koons (2009, p. 4) suggested that there is a general difference between epistemological approaches to defeasible reasoning, more common in philosophy (of which Pollock’s is one of several) and logical approaches, more common in computer science (of which Reiter’s is one among many). Epistemological approaches study the inferences whereby we modify our justified belief store. Logical approaches examine “a relation between propositions or possible bodies of information” (p. 4), though unlike the deductive consequence of monotonic logic, the relation studied in the logical approach to defeasible reasoning is the non-monotonic relation of defeasible consequence. (A logic is monotonic if all sentences or propositions that can be validly inferred according to its rules from a given information or premise set, *S*, will also be validly inferred from any larger set of which *S* is a subset; a logic is non-monotonic if what can be validly inferred from *S* according to its rules can be altered if more premises or information are added to *S*.)

The distinction between reasoning and argument plays no role in the notion of defeasible reasoning, since, at least on Pollock’s account, defeasible *reasoning* is defined in terms of the *argument* that corresponds to the reasoning. And given that the investigation of defeasible reasoning has been motivated by issues in a range of subject matters, the particular topic on which the reasoning occurs would have to be taken as immaterial. Defeasibility seems to be a property in play in reasoning and arguing for a variety of justificatory purposes, including belief claims, property attributions, interpretations, predictions and explanations. And insofar as one can persuade another by convincing him or her that a belief or attitude or course of action is justified, defeasible reasoning would seem to apply to (at least that type of) persuasion as well.

The legitimacy of the illative move in defeasible reasoning is not analyzed in detail in the literature I have seen. It is taken as unproblematic that such reasoning and such arguments occur and can be reasonable. Pollock describes defeasible reasons as *prima facie*, and notes that they create a presumption. But both of these concepts are presented as basic.

9.2.6 Walton’s Presumptive Reasoning and Presumptive Arguments

Douglas Walton opened his chapter on presumptive reasoning in *Argument Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996b, p. 17) with the following example of presumptive reasoning:

Case 2.1: John’s hat is not on the peg.
Therefore, John has left the house.

According to Walton, the presumption at work in this reasoning is an unexpressed assumption, a major premise to the effect that “If John’s hat is not on the peg, then (we can normally expect), he has left the house” (p. 17). A presumption is thus, on this account, a proposition that serves as a kind of inference licence. Walton characterized it as a *prima facie* case or a plausible assumption that is generally accepted but cannot be definitively proved (p. 19). The proponent of an assumption that functions as a presumption does not carry the burden of proof for it (in a dialogue in which he asserts or relies on it), although he does have the burden of disproving contrary evidence. Presumptive reasoning will thus be reasoning in which plausible assumptions function to licence inferences, and presumptive arguments will be arguments in which the conclusion is alleged to be supported by such presumptions, and in which, should the presumption be challenged, the arguer is obliged to either refute the challenge or to withdraw the conclusion. According to Walton:

... presumptive reasoning is neither deductive nor inductive in nature, but represents a third distinct type of reasoning of the kind classified by Rescher (1976) as plausible reasoning, an inherently tentative kind of reasoning subject to defeat by special circumstances (not defined inductively or statistically) or a particular case. (pp. 42–43)

Walton regarded presumptive reasoning as a kind of defeasible reasoning, citing Pollock (1991, p. 18), as non-monotonic reasoning (p. 21), and he quoted examples from Reiter’s (1987) paper on non-monotonic reasoning as examples of presumptive arguments (p. 22). Clearly he was interested in the general commonalities of Pollock’s and Reiter’s views, not the specifics, noted above, that distinguish those two theorists’ approaches.

Walton took presumptive reasoning to be essentially practical—to be the way we reason about what to do; and he distinguished it from “theoretical or discursive” reasoning, which “has a cognitive orientation, weighing reasons for and against the truth or falsity of a proposition” (p. 11). In this respect his view was different from Pollock’s, and more modest about the domain of presumptive reasoning, since Pollock regarded defeasible reasoning as essential in reasoning about what to believe. Also, Walton’s view was more oriented towards the interactive process of argumentation than is that of people like Pollock who theorized defeasible reasoning from the point of view of rational knowledge acquisition and belief change. Walton wanted to work out how presumptions, and their correlatives, burdens of proof, are to be assigned and can shift during the course of argumentative exchanges, and in particular, how the flouting of the rules governing those shifts can result in fallacies.

9.3 Similarities and Differences

There are a variety of points of comparison among the positions (or in the case of defeasible reasoning, families of positions) that have been sketched above. I will comment on nine of these, without pretending to be exhaustive. These are summed up in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1 Features of accounts of third-type illation

	Not valid deduct. or induct.	Reason vs. Arg distinct, not imptnt	Has its own logic	Application restricted	Legitim. of illative move defended assumed	Concept of defeasibility present	Concept of presumption explicit	Explicitly dialectical	Test of a good Illative move
Wisdom	Unclear	Yes	-	Yes	Defended	Tacit	No	No	See it
Toulmin	Unclear	Yes	Yes	No	Defended	Yes	Yes	No	Defensible warrant
Wellman	Yes	Yes	Can't	No	Defended	Yes	Tacit	Yes	Withstands criticism
Rescher	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Assumed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Withstands criticism
Defeas.	Yes/no	Yes	Yes	No	Assumed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Withstands criticism
Walton	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Defended	Yes	Yes	Yes	Withstands criticism

9.3.1 “Validity” of the Illative Move Explicitly not Deductive or Inductive

Most of the authors identified the illative move as distinctive, and in particular, as subject to neither deductive nor inductive norms. To put the point another way, they took it that an illative move can be in principle reasonable *even though* it is deductively invalid and (noted by some) not subject to standard inductive norms. Wisdom was perhaps an exception, since although he distinguished case-by-case reasoning from deductive reasoning, he thought the two are compatible in that he thought deductive reasoning reduces to case-by-case reasoning. Toulmin explicitly distinguished the reasoning of the type of argument he modeled from “the formal analysis of theoretical logic” (1958, p. 7), but he did not distinguish it from inductive reasoning. Moreover, arguably the warrants that justify the inferences in his model could conceivably be laws of deductive logic (or of inductive logic, if such there be); his main point was that they don’t *have* to be. So Toulmin’s view allows for illative moves to count as legitimate although they are neither deductively valid nor inductively strong. As for the others, Wellman, Rescher and Walton explicitly argued, or asserted, that they had in mind reasoning or arguments that are neither deductive nor inductive, which is to say, that may be reasonable or legitimate although they fail according to deductive and inductive norms. The authors I have lumped under the heading, “Defeasible Reasoning,” were too many and varied to be classified on this point. Suffice it to note that Pollock was explicitly modeling reasoning that is not deductively valid but a priori, not empirical, whereas Reiter explicitly modeled reasoning that can employ empirical premises exclusively.

9.3.2 Reasoning vs. Argument

While the distinction between reasoning and argument was not noted in every case, each author mentioned moved back and forth between describing the illative move in question as found in reasoning and as exhibited in argument. It seems that whether the inference in question is made by the reasoner or is used or invited by the arguer has no bearing on the nature of the standards that may be applied to it.

9.3.3 Distinctive Logic?

If we take a logic to be constituted by, among other features, a set of inference rules specifying the kinds of legitimate inference or argument that can be made within its domain, our authors were divided on the question of whether the kind of illation they had identified has or can have a logic of its own. Although Wisdom did not broach this question, pretty clearly he would have thought not, since reasoning by parallels or case-by-case is in each case unique. Toulmin didn’t address this question either. However, if a warrant is an inference rule (as it seems to be), and if each

field has its own field-dependent warrants that apply to the reasoning within that domain, then it would seem to follow that each field will have its own logic, and so Toulmin would have answered a “qualified yes” to the question of whether there can be non-deductive, non-inductive logics, for there are logics for every field. Wellman explicitly addressed this question and concluded, reluctantly, that conductive reasoning cannot have its own logic since such a logic “would need a rule of inference for each set of predicates” (p. 69). Rescher and the most defeasible reasoning theorists, in contrast, did think there can be a logic (or logics) of defeasible reasoning, and various such logics have been proposed (default logic, non-monotonic logic, autoepistemic logic, circumscription, preferential logics—see Koons (2009) for a discussion of these). In his discussion of presumptive reasoning in (1996b) Walton didn’t address the question.

9.3.4 Restrictions on the Domain of Application of the Illative Move

Can illation that is deductively and inductively invalid be legitimate when used when reasoning and arguing about any kind of subject matter? Wisdom thought it is to be restricted to non-empirical issues, matters that are to be settled on an a priori basis. Walton seemed to think it applies, at least paradigmatically, in practical reasoning and arguing, that is, reasoning or arguing about what actions to perform or policies to adopt. The other authors reviewed didn’t regard it as restricted by subject matter. Although Wellman discussed its application to justification in ethics, he explicitly averred that it may be used wherever a descriptive predicate is ascribed on the basis of a family resemblance (p. 54). Toulmin, Rescher and the defeasible reasoning theorists all considered this manner of reasoning as applying to any topic in any field.

9.3.5 Legitimacy Defended

It struck me as interesting that the legitimacy of an illative move that is at the least deductively invalid and also uncertified by the norms of inductive reasoning or argument was defended by some of the authors reviewed (Wisdom, Toulmin, Wellman, Walton) and yet was taken as an obvious fact in no need of defence by others (Rescher, all the defeasible reasoning theorists). To explain this difference one might hypothesize that such a move was problematic at an earlier time, but the arguments in support of it prevailed and so later it ceased to be problematic. However there is no evidence that Rescher or the defeasible reasoning theorists were influenced by the arguments of Wisdom, Toulmin and Wellman; moreover Walton’s work is more recent, yet he felt obliged to defend presumptive reasoning as legitimate. Another hypothesis is that the philosophers considered themselves constrained to respond to the powerful influence of deductivism in philosophy—the

view that the only appropriate norm for illation in reasoning and argument is deductive validity. Consistent with that suggestion is the fact that much of the defeasible reasoning literature arose in the study of artificial intelligence by computer scientists, not philosophers. However, Rescher is a philosopher, and one of the pioneers of the idea of defeasible reasoning, Roderick Chisholm (*Perceiving*, 1957), was also a philosopher.

9.3.6 Concept of Defeasibility Present

Although the term “defeasible reasoning” was not treated prominently in the informal logic literature before Walton (1996b), the concept of defeasibility is explicit in all the authors surveyed save Wisdom, and it is tacitly there as well. In Wisdom’s “case-by-case reasoning” there is always the possibility of conflicting cases, and so of the reasoning to a conclusion based on some cases being overturned by the notice of more compelling cases against that conclusion. The concept of a “rebuttal” in Toulmin’s model acknowledges defeating considerations; Wellman considers the response to challenges essential to establishing the validity of reasoning; Rescher notes explicitly that presumptions will be defeasible (1977, p. 31); and of course for the “defeasible reasoning” theorists and for Walton, following them, the concept is central.

9.3.7 Concept of Presumption Explicit

The idea that the reasoning under consideration is presumptive, or that the illative move is presumptive, would seem to go hand-in-hand with the concept of defeasibility: the concepts seem to be correlates. And, indeed, the notion of presumption is explicitly mentioned and used in most of these accounts, being absent only in Wisdom. Wellman did not use the term, but he was explicit about conductive reasoning being *prima facie*, and arguably the concept of a *prima facie* reason entails the concept of presumption.

9.3.8 Illative Move Seen Explicitly as Dialectical

The concepts of defeasibility and presumption are dialectical concepts. By that I mean they presuppose the roles of proponent and critic and the interaction of pro and con argumentation. It is thus unsurprising that most of the authors reviewed explicitly referred to the reasoning and argument they are discussing as dialectical. The only exceptions are Wisdom and Toulmin, and their accounts are certainly implicitly dialectical.

9.3.9 Test of a “Good” Illative Move

If the illative move in question is deductively invalid and not inductively strong on standard quantitative grounds, then how is it to be evaluated? What marks the difference between a “valid” and an “invalid” inference in such reasoning and arguing? How these authors would answer this question was not always clear, so some interpretation is required. Their answers also varied to some extent. As far as I can tell, Wisdom held that one simply “gets it” (my phrase, not his). The idea seems to be that as one is presented with a series of parallel cases that make the point, one eventually just recognizes that the property ascribed does indeed belong where it is predicated. Presumably, if the parallels offered do not show the connection, one will just see that too. In the case of Toulmin, a valid inference is one that is justified by a warrant that can be backed up. Ultimately, it follows, a valid inference is one whose justifying warrant can withstand criticism. This property—the ability to withstand criticism—seems to be the test that all the other theorists reviewed would endorse. Wellman, as noted above, explicitly defined “validity” in terms of the ability to withstand challenges. Rescher argued that probative rationality is a function of what is found convincing in general through dialectical disputation (see 1977, chap. 3). Defeasibility theorists like Pollock saw belief claims as justified for a person (i.e., reasonable for that person at the time) if he or she can refute proposed defeaters, and propositions as warranted (i.e., reasonable for anyone) if they would be justified for an ideal reasoner, one unconstrained by time or resource limitations (see 1992). And Walton (1996b) regarded plausible reasoning as valid if the arguer can successfully respond to the critical questions associated with the particular argument scheme he or she is using.

9.4 Conclusion

The above survey omits several important theorists from this review. As I read their work, Michael Scriven (probative reasoning, 1986), Trudy Govier (reasoning with pros and cons, in 1999b), Mark Weinstein (e.g., in 2003), David Hitchcock (justified warrant, in 2005) and Robert Pinto (material inference rules, in 2006) all seem to endorse the legitimacy of the sort of illative move in question here. The concept of a material inference is found also in the work of Robert Brandom (1994) and before him, Wilfrid Sellars (1953). If these theorists are added, there seems to be a significant support for the legitimacy of reasoning non-conclusively from grounds that provide presumptive support, and from using or inviting such reasoning in arguments designed to justify or persuade.

Even this partial survey is suggestive in a couple of respects. For one thing, the parallel and largely independent development of theories of defeasible reasoning and informal approaches to argument interpretation and appraisal seem to put beyond doubt the empirical fact of such reasoning and argument and to argue for its *bona fides*. The proposition that such reasoning and arguments are legitimate, one of

the founding hypotheses of the informal logic movement, seems to have found fairly widespread confirmation. If so, informal logicians may well have something to learn from the variety of non-monotonic logics that have been developed for defeasible reasoning and argument. A second point is that if informal logic is identified, at least in part, by the endorsement of this sort of reasoning, then its proponents would seem to be committed to its dialectical character and its related social dimension. And that suggest an affinity between informal logic theory and other dialectical, socially oriented theories, such as Pragma-Dialectics (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). Many informal logicians have refrained from endorsing Pragma-Dialectics, so characterizing just how the two perspectives differ seems a project of mutual interest.

Finally, I should note that it has required some verbal gymnastics on my part to try consistently to refer to the standards or norms of reasoning as the salient topic instead of referring to types of reasoning or argument, as do several of the authors reviewed. Wisdom, Wellman and Walton in particular all use the “type” terminology, referring to case-by-case reasoning, conductive reasoning, defeasible reasoning, nonmonotonic reasoning and presumptive reasoning and arguments, often contrasting this with deductive and inductive reasoning and arguments. It is best to take such ways of talking as elliptical, for then all the difficulties of identifying particular types of reasoning and argument in practice can be avoided. The point is that when people reason and argue, in some cases they are being reasonable and their arguments are cogent even though the reasoning and arguments are deductively invalid and not quantifiably inductively strong. So the research task is not to formulate the identity conditions of some special type of inference or argument, but to formulate other-than-deductive or inductive criteria for valid reasoning and argument and the conditions under which it is appropriate to apply them.

Chapter 10

Informal Logic and Logic

10.1 Introduction

This chapter examines, in an unsystematic way, some of the features of the relation between informal logic and logic. Informal logic originated with the rejection of the use of formal logic for the purpose of the analysis and the evaluation of natural language discursive arguments. While not at all a rejection of formal logic, this declaration of independence required those who identified theoretically with the informal logic critique of formal logic's usefulness for this purpose to look elsewhere for analytic and normative tools. One of these was the theory of the informal fallacies. While the development of theory for informal fallacies has occupied considerable intellectual energy of the past three decades, it is merely mentioned here. Another approach, one that has been adopted in a number of textbooks, is to regard the acceptability of premises and the relevance and sufficiency of the premise-conclusion link as the informal criteria of a logically good argument. A third approach, and the one developed at some length in this chapter, is the use of argument scheme theory. An argument scheme is an abstract pattern that an argument exemplifies. A large number of such patterns that have been found to be used again and again in the arguments occurring in natural language discourse have been described and named. These schemes rely on the presumption that reasoning from the kinds of grounds and via the kinds of inferences that are identified by such a scheme is justified. They presume that such inferences are warranted, to use the concept introduced by Toulmin (1958). The premises, warrant, and other assumptions of any instance of a scheme may be tested by a set of what are termed the "critical questions" that pertain to that scheme. Argument scheme analysis and critique, while informal, has been used in Artificial Intelligence to develop computer programs to analyze, assess and even construct arguments in natural language. Since computer programs require necessary relations between premises and conclusions, that is, the deductive validity that characterizes formal logic, we find that at present informal and formal logic have come together.

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10.2 The Origins of Informal Logic

So-called “informal logic” began in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Canada and the United States in university philosophy classrooms in which students had signed up for a “logic” course that they expected to improve their reasoning and their ability to understand and criticize the public policy arguments of the day, particularly those published in the media, which at that time consisted of newspapers and magazines (see Kahane, 1971, p. vii). The people teaching those courses were mostly junior philosophy faculty members who had some training in formal logic.

Often the course was an elementary formal logic course and the logic was *not* applied by the instructor to the arguments the students were interested in analyzing. In such cases, the students became frustrated. The rationale sometimes given for studying formal logic without any application to the kinds of texts and arguments the students wanted to be better at critiquing was that training in formal logic improves one’s reasoning ability, and thus indirectly helps one better to analyze and evaluate arguments. But the transfer of knowledge and skill alleged in this claim was never empirically demonstrated (nor has it yet been, to my knowledge), and anecdotally seemed minimal.

However, in other cases the instructors *did* try to teach the students to analyze and evaluate examples of such arguments using the tools of elementary formal logic. In those cases, both students and instructors became frustrated. There were several difficulties.

First, the text of discourse had to be translated into standard form so that its formal structure could be extracted. That turned out to be a nightmare, since often the text included other kinds of sentences besides present tense declarative sentences (such as interrogatives, imperatives, and others not readily classified), they were in past or future tenses of various kinds, or in the subjunctive mood, the expressions were vague, and so on. Efforts to force the text to fit the standard form required for formal appraisal tended to result in oversimplification or other distortion of the original meaning. None of the logic textbooks that were available at the time provided help, because their examples were designed to illustrate the logical principles, not the other way around, and so they were (quite appropriately) simplified and tailored to suit that purpose. As a consequence, they were highly oversimplified as compared to the language of public discourse.

Second, the logical structure of the texts was more complicated than the textbook material was able to handle. For instance, the arguments included—besides straightforward arguments directly supporting a thesis—anticipations of objections and replies to those objections, consideration of arguments against the thesis as well as those in its favour, several arguments for the same thesis, sometimes combined with contrary considerations, and so on.

Third, almost always the arguments seemed to rely on unstated assumptions. To render those assumptions explicit by turning the resultant translation into a valid argument seemed to beg the question, since the point of the reconstruction was to decide the validity of the argument, not prejudge it. But then the decision as to how to formulate the assumptions could not be determined using logic.

Fourth, even in cases in which some sort of translation of the argument into standard form that would permit it to be assessed was achieved, that assessment ran into a couple of further difficulties. For one thing, if the problematic feature was not the validity of the argument, then the truth of the premises was the issue. The standard line of the day was that the determination of premise truth lies outside the province of logic, and in epistemology or in science. But then the logic course had nothing to say about a key component of argument evaluation. For another thing, when the argument as reformulated proved deductively invalid, in many cases it remained a cogent argument: its premises supplied obviously good reasons for accepting its conclusion. But if that was so, then deductive validity was not the only criterion of argument merit, and the logic course had nothing to say about any other criterion to be used in argument evaluation. Finally, an argument with a premise that was equivalent to the conclusion would be deductively valid, since any proposition implies itself, but it would be question-begging as an argument. These last two points showed that deductive validity is neither a necessary nor a sufficient criterion of a logically good argument.

As a result of these experiences, many of these philosophy instructors concluded that formal logic is not well-suited as the model for the analysis and interpretation of such argumentation, and that it does not provide an adequate basis for the evaluation of such argumentation. New tools for the analysis of arguments were needed, and new criteria for the assessment of arguments were needed. Since it was assumed that logic is the study of the norms distinguishing good from bad arguments, it was assumed that these new tools and criteria belong within logic, and since the term “informal logic” had been used in some quarters, it was adopted as the label for these departures from formal logic. (See Scriven, 1976, 1980; Blair & Johnson, 1980, for formulations of these points.)

In my view it is significant that “informal logic” was adopted as the name of a *critique* of certain applications of formal logic. It was *not* the name of a new theory or approach to the analysis and assessment of arguments except insofar as it identified such a theory or approach negatively—in terms of what it was not. As a result, a variety of tools and criteria have clustered under the rubric of “informal logic” that are not necessarily consistent and are often redundant (that is, they performed the same role in different ways).

It perhaps remains necessary to emphasize that in rejecting formal logic as the tool to be used for the analysis and the basis for the evaluation of natural language discursive argumentation, informal logicians did not and do not reject formal logic.

10.3 Is “Informal Logic” Logic?

Meanwhile, critics of the attempts to develop non-formal analytic tools and criteria of evaluation raised a variety of objections. One line of attack (Hintikka, 1985; Woods, 2000) holds that logic is by definition a formal enterprise, and so the idea of an informal logic is a contradiction in terms. Something that complicates this line of

objection is that 'formal' can be understood in a variety of senses, and in at least one sense of 'formal,' namely "involving reference to abstract patterns," informal logic is in some of its manifestations and in spite of the name, a formal enterprise, since most theorists focus on patterns of argument or argumentation schemes as tools to be used in the analysis and evaluation of arguments.

It remains true, however, that there is envisaged no calculus for the informal analysis and evaluation of arguments, and so in this respect informal logic is not formal. Is it therefore not logic? There is some precedent for calling the norms that warrant the inferences of arguments their "logic." Here is Daniel Bonevac in the article on the philosophy of logic in the *Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (1995, p. 592): "Logic judges inferences good or bad and tries to justify those that are good." And here is Wilfred Hodges in the article on modern logic in the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (1995, p. 500): "Logic, whether modern or traditional, is about sound reasoning and the rules which govern it." If these very general formulations are accepted, then the identification of logic with deductive logic is best regarded not as a matter of definition, but rather as a contingent assertion. And it is an assertion that requires support in the face of the now widely held view that there can be arguments with sound reasoning or good inferences that are not deductively valid. It should be added that this view is shared by argumentation theorists, including, besides those in the speech communication community, informal logicians, and for several decades now, also scholars working in Artificial Intelligence modeling reasoning and argument, and many epistemologists among philosophers. Even so, here we enter the fray of *der Streit der Fakultäten*. Who owns the word 'logic'? Different camps can claim different historical precedents for their preferred terminology, but this is an un-illuminating controversy. What is of possible interest is the question whether there is any possible connection or overlap between formal logic in the narrow sense and informal logic in any of its manifestations.

For each smallest unit of argument—at a minimum one proposition supporting another or alleged to support another—at least two distinct features are open to evaluation from the point of view of whether the premises justify the conclusion: the supporting proposition, and the relationship of support.

The adequacy of the supporting proposition for the purpose of the argument seems appropriately to be determined according to the use to which the argument is being put, and as a result, in different ways. For instance, if the argument is supposed to establish the truth of the supported proposition, then the truth of the supporting proposition(s) would be the issue. However, if it is supposed to establish that an interlocutor is obliged to accept the supported proposition(s), then the interlocutor's acceptance of (or commitment to) the supporting proposition(s) would be the issue. And if it is supposed to establish that it would be reasonable for the interlocutor to accept the supported proposition(s), then the acceptability to the interlocutor of the supporting proposition(s) (its or their worthiness to be accepted by the interlocutor) would be the issue. These all seem to be either epistemological or else dialectical matters, and whether they belong to logic in a broad sense, they do not evidently belong to formal logic in the narrow sense.

What about the adequacy of the relationship of support between the supporting proposition(s) (the premise[s]) and the supported proposition (the conclusion) in an argument when the former does [or do] not deductively imply the latter? To those for whom logic is concerned only with “what follows *necessarily* from what” (see Harman & Kulkarni, 2006) this question is by definition ruled to be outside the domain of logic. To the extent that anyone bothers to classify it, this is counted as an epistemological issue (see, e.g., Goldman, 1999, chap. 5). To those for whom logic is concerned with the norms of good reasoning or (what is not the same thing) of good arguments, this question belongs to logic, although to informal rather than to formal logic (see, e.g., Johnson, 2000a).

10.4 Defeasible Arguments as the Subject Matter of Informal Logic

Whether or not they are entitled to use the term ‘logic’ to name their enterprise, it is with supporting relationships that are deductively invalid that informal logicians have been chiefly concerned. Moreover, they have focused on a sub-set of such relationships, setting aside those that can be quantified, that is, assigned a numerical statistical probability.

Such arguments are now recognized and classed as “defeasible” arguments. That is, their premises supply good reasons for accepting their conclusions if they constitute the only salient information or grounds available on which to decide the conclusion. However, challenges from critics or simply the discovery of additional information can “defeat” such arguments—that is, can reduce or removed the force of any justification that the original premises supplied for their conclusions.

Here are some examples of such defeasible arguments. The arguments outside the parenthesis in each case have grounds that supply good reasons for accepting their conclusions in ordinary circumstances, other things being equal. However, if such further information as that supplied or alluded to in the parenthesis were to obtain, the arguments would be weakened or lose any probative force completely. (In each case the reader is asked to imagine a situation in which such an argument might be made.)

1. Presumably she is a Canadian citizen, for she was born in Ottawa, Canada’s capital city. (But she is Princess Margriet of the Netherlands, and when she was born, during WWII, while the Dutch royal family was living in exile in Ottawa, the hospital room in which she was born was temporarily declared Dutch territory so that she would have Dutch citizenship. [This circumstance happens to be true; the author was born in the same hospital a couple of years earlier.]
2. You ought to take your daughter to the circus because you promised her you would. (But the circus has been cancelled due to a fire; or, your daughter has influenza; or,)

3. My physician has just advised me that I should lose weight and take up some sort of exercise régime, so I'd better change my diet and exercise habits. (But my weight is in the normal range for my height and age, and I walk two kilometers to and from work every day; also my physician is a self-admitted health extremist.)
4. Given that you want to buy a kitchen knife with about a 7"-long single-edge blade about an inch wide and about 1/8" thick at the back tapering convexly to the cutting edge, you should ask at the store for a "chef's" knife. (But that store has its knives classified in an idiosyncratic way: they call a chef's knife an "all-purpose kitchen knife" and what *they* call a "chef's knife" is quite different.)
5. A good explanation of the kitten's death is that a dog mauled it, so probably the kitten was killed by a dog. (But the injuries are consistent also with an attack by a large cat, and there are no dogs living in the neighbourhood, only several cats.)
6. The witness has a track record of lying and deception, so his testimony should be taken with a grain of salt. (But since his incarceration the witness has converted to Islam and is a conscientious believer.)

The informal logicians' question has been, What norms are appropriate for assessing such inferences?

10.5 Informal Fallacies as a Normative Theory for Informal Logic

One normative basis for "informal" argument evaluation that was suggested early on was the use of the informal fallacies, which have a tradition tracing back to *Sophistical Refutations*. For many who identify with informal logic, the informal fallacies are a prominent tool for the analysis and assessment of discursive argumentation. Accordingly, a logically good argument would be a non-fallacious argument. However, it soon emerged that what constitutes an informal fallacy was far from theoretically clear (see Hamblin, 1970), so while fallacy theory might in principle supply the norms sought by an informal logic, that prospect remained a promise rather than delivered goods. Great strides have been made since that time in developing clear and consistent theories of the informal fallacies (see, for instance, the work of Walton, 1995, or of van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992a), however the emphasis must be placed on the plural—theories—for there is no consensus in the literature supporting just one conception of fallacy (see Hansen & Pinto, 1995).

Moreover, there are a couple of reasons to leave the informal fallacies out of the present picture. One is that the informal fallacies must not be identified with informal logic; they do not constitute its defining subject matter. Such prominent informal logicians as Scriven (1976) and Hitchcock (1995) regard fallacy analysis as problematic, and certainly not central to the informal logic enterprise. Furthermore, the most fully developed analysis by an informal logician is due to Walton, and on his analysis argument scheme theory is essential to an understanding of the informal fallacies. Below, I will outline argument scheme theory in some detail.

10.6 Relevance and Sufficiency as Criteria of Inference Cogency in Arguments

In the 1970s, Johnson and Blair (1977) introduced what seem to be generic norms that apply to the support relationship. In any logically good argument the premises would have to be *acceptable*, *relevant* and *sufficient*. That is, they would have to be worthy of belief or acceptance for the purpose of the argument, and they would have to have probative bearing on the truth of the conclusion (thus, by the way, ruling out question-begging premises), and the evidence or other kinds of grounds they supplied would have to include enough information of the appropriate kind(s) to justify accepting the conclusion on that basis. These are generic norms, since any cogent argument must and would satisfy them. Deductively valid arguments that are not question-begging will have both relevant and sufficient premises. And arguments whose premises supply a high numerical degree of probability to their conclusions will satisfy these conditions too. Moreover, arguments whose premises supply good reasons for accepting their conclusions (albeit with qualifications)—even though such arguments are deductively invalid and their evidence assigns no quantitative probability to their conclusions—also satisfy these norms.

It has been argued against these criteria (Biro & Siegel, 1992, pp. 97–98), that the criterion of relevance is redundant, given the criterion of sufficiency, since sufficiency presupposes relevance: premises cannot supply sufficient evidence for a conclusion if they are irrelevant. The premise of this objection is true, but it is not so clear that the conclusion follows from it. It is possible for an argument that someone has advanced to contain (some) premises that supply sufficient support to the conclusion and also (other) premises that are irrelevant to that conclusion. Without the criterion of relevance, such an argument would have to be judged logically good when in fact its logical merit is mixed. As we might say, the arguer should have stopped when he was ahead with just the sufficient—and therefore relevant—premises; but he didn't, and went on to include some irrelevant premises. (To be sure, the irrelevant premises might have been offered first, or mixed among the relevant ones, and not just added at the end.) In order to identify such irrelevant offerings as “premises” it must be clear that the arguer intended them to serve as support for his conclusion. He (mistakenly) thought they were relevant. Otherwise, in interpreting his discourse, the listener or reader would be justified in discarding them as not belonging to the argument, on the ground that they are irrelevant to the conclusion. Thus we see that relevance also functions as a criterion of argument identification. In identifying arguments in texts of discourse in the absence of clues as to the intentions of the speaker or writer, we set aside assertions that have no probative bearing on a conclusion as not part of any argument, and assign to them some other function in the discourse. The parts of the text that we identify as belonging to an argument will then consist of one assertion whose contents function as a conclusion and other assertions whose contents all function as relevant premises adduced in support of that conclusion. For an argument so identified, the assessment of the cogency of the support the premises provide for the conclusion will thus focus exclusively on whether they supply sufficient support, given that they have already been judged

relevant by virtue of their inclusion in the argument. So it seems that the critics who would exclude relevance as a criterion of argument evaluation are right for texts from which information or other speech act contents with no probative bearing on a conclusion have already been weeded out, whereas those who regard relevance as a needed criterion of argument evaluation are right for texts of what a speaker or writer intended to constitute an argument.

Although the *acceptability*, *relevance* and *sufficiency* criteria are intuitively plausible, the theoretical difficulty lies in specifying how to identify when they have been satisfied, and as a result, in operationalizing them so as to be able to use them to judge in particular cases whether grounds adduced as probative really are relevant and whether grounds admitted as relevant really do suffice to justify accepting the conclusion. Attempts have been made to characterize relevance and sufficiency (e.g., Blair, 1989, 1991; van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992b), but no results have found widespread endorsement.

10.7 Argument (or Argumentation) Schemes as Criteria for Argument Cogency

An alternative approach has been to use argument schemes as the basis for assessing defeasible arguments. It is an approach whose provenance is murky and probably mixed. One can find elements in it of Toulmin's model of an argument found in *The Uses of Argument* (1958) and in theories of argument schemes found in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's *Traité sur L'Argumentation* (1958) and especially in Hastings's dissertation, *A Reformulation of the Modes of Reasoning in Argumentation* (1962). It contains elements that seem clearly to have been influenced by the modeling of argumentation as a dialogue, popularized in van Eemeren and Grootendorst's "Pragma-Dialectical" theory (1984, 1992a, 2004). Its fullest expression is found in the combination of a dialogue-modeling approach to argument scheme theory developed by Walton in, for example, *Argumentation Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996b) and *Argumentation Schemes* (with Reed & Macagno, 2008).

Many arguments provide *prima facie* support for their conclusions. Toulmin (1958) notes both that the grounds adduced in such arguments provide qualified, but not unconditional, support, and also that the support will dissolve if unexpected but possible conditions of rebuttal turn out to obtain. Such arguments are thus defeasible (although Toulmin did not use that term). According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958), it is possible to identify in texts of all sorts arguments that exhibit recognizable patterns or schemata (here called "schemes"). For Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca arguments—unlike demonstrations (such as the proofs of mathematics or logic)—are always in principle open to challenge or reconsideration. In fact this seems to be a definitional property of their concept of argument. Consequently, they took instances of the argument schemes they identified to be in principle open to question (and thus, again, defeasible). Hastings (1962) added

the idea that to each argument scheme there can be associated a set of “critical questions,” which are questions that are a means of testing any particular argument that is an instantiation of a scheme in order to decide whether in that case it establishes its conclusion or instead should be considered to be defeated.

To illustrate these ideas, I will use the example of the argument scheme for “Argument from Expert Opinion” quoted from Walton et al. (2008, p. 310):

Argument from Expert Opinion

Major Premise: Source *E* is an expert in subject domain *S* containing proposition *A*.

Minor Premise: *E* asserts that proposition *A* is true (or false).

Conclusion: *A* is true (or false).

Following Toulmin (1958), any argument relies on a “warrant” or inference license. That is, the inference from the grounds offered in support of the conclusion to the conclusion presupposes that inferences from *such* grounds to *such* conclusions are legitimate or justified (thus: warranted, or licensed). Hitchcock (1995, 2003) has convincingly argued that Toulmin’s concept of a warrant should be understood as a generalization of the associated conditional of the argument. The “associated conditional” of an argument is defined as the conditional proposition consisting of the conjunction of the premises of the argument as its antecedent and the conclusion of the argument as its consequent. The associated conditional of an argument cannot be a premise, for to so designate it entails a vicious regress. By the same reasoning, a generalization of an argument’s associated conditional cannot be a premise either. So an argument’s warrant is not a premise, but instead is an assumption of the argument. Whether or not it is expressed is immaterial; in some cases it is, but frequently it is not.

Arguments fitting the scheme Argument from Expert Opinion seem to rely on some such warrant or inference license as:

Argument from Expert Opinion Warrant: If a proposition is asserted to be true (or false) by someone who is an expert in the domain to which it belongs, one may [i.e., one is justified or entitled to] presume that it is true (or false), other things being equal.

For some theorists, an argument (or argumentation) scheme is very like a warrant. For instance van Eemeren and Grootendorst write that in arguing, a person “relies on a ready-made *argumentation scheme*: a more or less conventionalized way of representing the relation between what is stated in the argument [= the grounds or, roughly, the premises] and what is stated in the standpoint [= the opinion argued for or, roughly, the conclusion]” (1992a, p. 96; my emphasis). To rely on such a relation in arguing is precisely to rely on a warrant; it is to assume that inferences from arguments or grounds of such a kind to standpoints or opinions of such a kind are licensed or justified. Similarly, van Eemeren and Grootendorst identify *modus ponens* as an example of a justificatory argumentation schema (“scheme” in my terminology) (1984, p. 66). *Modus ponens* can be expressed as follows (where *p* and *q* are variables ranging over propositions):

Modus ponens: If *p*, and *p* implies *q*, then *q*.

But such a proposition may also be expressed as a warrant—in the case of *modus ponens*, as follows:

Modus Ponens as a warrant: If a proposition is true and it logically implies a proposition, then one is entitled to infer that the latter is true.

Setting aside the problem that *modus ponens* is problematic as a warrant in some cases since it can warrant question-begging arguments (i.e., when $p = q$), it is easy to see why warrants and schemes can be identified. Unpack the antecedent of a warrant expressed as a conditional as the group of schemata representing premises and its consequent as the schema for a conclusion and, presto, there is an argument scheme.

Besides presuming that the argument's warrant is justified, an argument's proponent typically makes certain other assumptions. For instance, an Argument from Expert Opinion, it is assumed that S is a domain of *factual knowledge*. If A were the proposition, "Beer tastes better than bourbon," or the proposition, "Abortion is *prima facie* immoral," no appeal to expert opinion would be appropriate because these claims are not factual claims, but rather, respectively, an expression of personal preference and a moral value judgment, neither of which is the kind of claim that can be settled by appeal to expert opinion. One way to explain why not is to point out that the appeal to expert opinion, as Walton notes, is a special case of a more general argument scheme, namely, the Argument from Position to Know. Here is Walton et al.'s depiction of that scheme (2008, p. 309):

Argument from Position to Know

Major Premise: Source a is in a position to know about things in a certain subject domain S containing proposition A .

Minor Premise: a asserts that A is true (or false).

Conclusion: A is true (or false).

What justifies our reliance on experts, when it is justified, is, among other things, that their claims have the status of knowledge and the subject domains to which the claims belong and to which their expertise pertains are fields of knowledge. Thus experts can be in a position to know what they are talking about and so can, in principle, convey that knowledge to others. Judgments of taste and of moral value do not belong to fields of knowledge (or so I contend), so appeals to expert opinion about matters of taste or moral value are inappropriate because such judgments lie outside the scope of *anyone's* epistemic authority. The use of the Argument from Expert Opinion scheme relies on the assumption that the scheme is applicable to the question at issue in the argument. In general, then, it is assumed that the use of an argument instantiating a given scheme is an appropriate use of that scheme.

Often, when arguments are made that employ such schemes, not only will such assumptions be left unexpressed, but also parts of the argument itself will be left unexpressed. When someone argues, "I should be cutting down on the salt in my diet, because my doctor said I'm getting too much salt," he (or she) leaves unexpressed the premise that the doctor has knowledge of the domain of what constitutes

a healthy diet, to which belongs the amount of salt a person should ingest. For when we accept what someone said merely on the ground that he (or she) said so, it is because we believe or assume or presuppose that he is in a position to know about what he is talking about.

To be sure, a scheme can be any pattern whatsoever, since there is no requirement that argument schemes exhibit established logical principles. However, many schemes are used over and over, and their patterns are identified and named. Walton et al. (2008) describe and name sixty schemes, as well as one or more subtypes for several of them. These names and patterns of argument are familiar. Besides argument from authority, among others they include, for example: *ad populum*, argument from example, argument from analogy, composition, division, argument from waste, argument from cause to effect, argument from correlation to cause, argument from sign, *ad hominem*, slippery slope, argument from precedent.

What makes these schemes well known and often instantiated? I suggest it is that they are schemes with a prima facie plausibility. Arguments instantiating these schemes are, on the face of it, plausible arguments. What this amounts to is that their warrants—the generalizations of their associated conditionals that license the inference from their premises to their conclusions—are defensible. That is, it can be shown that when these warrants are relied on in arguments, under appropriate conditions, the premises of the arguments serve to justify the conclusions.

Walton, following van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992a), following Hastings (1962), associate with each argumentation scheme a set of critical questions. The function of such questions is to test whether a particular instance of a scheme is actually a plausible argument. Here are the critical questions that Walton et al. (2008, p. 310) list for the Argument from Expert Opinion.

Critical Questions for Argument from Expert Opinion

CQ1: *Expertise Question*: How credible is *E* as an expert source?

CQ2: *Field Question*: Is *E* an expert in the field [S] that *A* is in?

CQ3: *Opinion Question*: What did *E* assert that implies *A*?

CQ4: *Trustworthiness Question*: Is *E* personally reliable as a source?

CQ5: *Consistency Question*: Is *A* consistent with what other experts say?

CQ6: *Backup Evidence Question*: Is *E*'s assertion based on evidence?

The critical questions function to test whether other things are in fact equal in the case of the argument in question. Some of them (namely, CQ1, CQ4, CQ5 and CQ6) ask whether there exist in the case at hand any factors that *undercut* the inference from the premises to the conclusion, and thus block the justificatory force of the warrant (see Pollock, 2008, p. 453, for his most recent account of his concept of defeaters: “. . . rebutting defeaters attack the conclusion of a defeasible inference, while undercutting defeaters attack the defeasible inference itself, without doing so by giving us a reason for thinking it has a false conclusion.”). If the alleged expert's qualifications are weak, or the expert might be strongly motivated to lie or exaggerate, or if the expert is relying on someone else's say so and not on acquaintance

with the evidence for the claim, then the inference is undercut and the argument is defeated.

One of the critical questions on the list (CQ5) tests whether there is an independent reason to question the conclusion. If other experts, especially if they are equally or better qualified, disagree with *E* about *A*, then there exists a *rebutting* defeater of the argument. That is, there is a reason for thinking that it has a false conclusion.

The remaining critical questions on the list test whether the premises are true in the particular case (namely CQ2 and CQ3). If the person relied upon as an expert is not an expert, or if what the person actually said is different from, and does not imply, the claim he or she is cited as attesting to, then those premises are false and the argument has nothing to go on.

Although Walton et al.'s (2008) list of critical questions for Argument from Expert Opinion do not include one, it seems advisable to add a critical question to their list to test for the appropriateness of the use of this scheme for the topic at issue. Some such critical question as the following might suit:

CQ7: *Appropriateness Question*: Is domain *S* to which *A* belongs a field of knowledge?

In the case of other kinds of argument—arguments using other schemes—the use of the scheme might be inappropriate for other kinds of reasons, for example a *straw man* argument might be inappropriate because its conclusion is not a denial of the claim in dispute, and a case of *poisoning the well* might be inappropriate because it functions illegitimately to exclude some party from engaging in the argument.

Finally, since any argument relies on the warrant that allegedly licenses the inference from the grounds adduced to the claim in question, it seems advisable to add a critical question to test for the prima facie legitimacy of the warrant of the argument. This critical question gets overlooked when the focus is on well-known and often employed argument schemes whose prima facie force is well established. Also, except in cases of deliberate deception, when someone offers an argument to another or others, the arguer *thinks* the warrant is justified; and even in cases of deliberate deception, the arguer expects that *the audience* will think the warrant is justified. However, as we know, people are capable of completely irrelevant reasoning, so in principle it would seem legitimate to include a critical question to test whether an argument scheme is a *non sequitur*. Some such question as the following might apply to the Argument from Expert Opinion:

CQ8: *Warrant-testing question*: Is it plausible that if a proposition is asserted to be true (or false) by someone who is an expert in the domain to which it belongs, one may [i.e., one is justified or entitled to] presume that it is true (or false), other things being equal?

Whether any particular argument instantiating an argument scheme is actually plausible will depend, then, on whether all the critical questions associated with that scheme—questions that function to test for the various ways that scheme can go wrong in a particular case—can be answered satisfactorily. I have suggested that critical questions serve several different functions, namely, to test (1) whether the given premises are true or otherwise acceptable, (2) whether that *type* of reasoning is prima facie plausible, (3) whether the inference from the premises to the conclusion

in the given case is actually warranted, (4) whether there are independent reasons for rejecting the conclusion, and (5) whether the argument employed is appropriate in the situation in question.

The preceding contention glosses over some complexities that need not concern us for present purposes. For one, plausibility is relative to persons, because it is a function of consistency with other beliefs and other attitudes. For another, the account so far ignores complexities related to questions of burden of proof. Walton and others model all arguments as dialogues, which is a convenient fiction that permits assigning dialogue roles (proponent, opponent) and associated burdens of proof (often differing with different kinds of argument situations, such as in law vs. in science, and with different stages of the argument process, such as at the initiation of the argument vs. during argumentative exchanges).

10.8 Argument Scheme Theory and Formal Logic

It might seem that there is nothing of interest to the formal logician in such a method of informal analysis and appraisal of arguments. Clearly the testing of any particular argument will require its examination in the particular circumstances of its use. The situatedness of the argument scheme approach seems to preclude the possibility of useful formal analysis. Moreover, only the answers to the critical questions about the type of reasoning in general and the inference from the premises to the conclusion in the particular case seem to be related to what might be thought of as the “logic” of such arguments. The truth or acceptability of the premise is a factual or a procedural matter, and the appropriateness of the use of the argument scheme on the occasion in question is also a procedural matter.

However, the fact is that theorists working in Artificial Intelligence have turned to argument scheme theory to help develop programs to enable computers to recognize, analyze and construct arguments in natural language. Obviously, if such a project is to succeed, the schemes must somehow be formalized so they can be expressed with deductively valid inference structures, and the fact that such programs have been developed shows that such formalizations are indeed possible (see, for example, *Araucaria* by Reed & Rowe, 1995; *ArguMed* by Verheij, 1998; *Reason!Able* by van Gelder, 2002; *Rationale* by Austhink, 2008). One approach is in effect to express each scheme to sort of a defeasible *modus ponens*-like form, with its warrant used as the conditional premise, its antecedent as the grounds or data and its consequent as the conclusion. Provided there are no defeaters and the assumptions are not challenged, then the inference from the grounds to the conclusion is an entailment. A similar (logically equivalent?) approach is to treat the answers to all the critical questions as premises, and the warrant as a conditional with the conjunction of all those premises as the antecedent and the conclusion as the consequent. In that case, if all the premises are true, then the conclusion follows necessarily. (Both approaches are discussed in Walton et al., 2008, chaps. 11 and 12.) The resultant approximations to actual contexts of argument are close enough for the practical purposes for which

these computer programs are designed. Moreover, as the various argument scheme descriptions are refined and made more complete, their formalizations get closer and closer to modeling ordinary language informal argumentation.

10.9 Concluding Remarks

It seems that there has been a sort of Hegelian dialectical process at work. What began in the early days of the informal logic movement as a rejection of formal logic as the tool for analyzing and evaluating arguments has evolved to the point that there have successfully developed formalizations of the schemes introduced to provide a framework for the informal analysis and evaluation of arguments. However, the new synthesis correctly puts the priority on natural language discourse. Those old enough to recall the heyday of Logical Empiricism will remember that natural language was criticized for its imprecision, its vagueness, its ambiguity—its resistance to ready formalization! Inferences that were not deductively valid were considered defective (see Grünbaum & Salmon, 1988, for critiques of this view). Today it is appreciated that probably most natural language arguments that are cogent are not deductively valid, and that the task of anyone wishing to formalize such arguments for one or another practical purpose needs to accommodate that reality.

In this chapter I have been focusing on the relation of informal logic to standard formal logic. It needs to be mentioned that in doing so I have left out or only lurking in the background any mention of the dialectical and rhetorical properties of arguments which, in addition to their logical properties, most informal logicians today want to account for. Only a partial picture of the contemporary theoretical interests of informal logicians is conveyed here.

This chapter has addressed some remarks to the relation between informal logic and logic. Informal logic originated with a rejection of formal logic as an adequate basis for the analysis and evaluation of natural language discursive arguments. Various alternatives were considered. One that has just been mentioned here is the use of informal fallacies as an analytic and evaluative tool. Another that has received some attention is the triple of acceptability (of premises) and relevance and sufficiency (of the premise-conclusion link). A third, and the one given most attention, is argument scheme theory. On my analysis of it, this is a combination of the Toulmin notion of warrant as inference license, the Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca emphasis on argument schemes, and Hastings idea that critical questions can be associated with argument schemes and serve as the basis for evaluating arguments that instantiate them—all developed most fully by Walton. Argument scheme analysis and critique is decidedly informal, and yet, perhaps paradoxically, it has seemed to some computer scientists to be the best approach to use in developing programs to permit the use of computers in analyzing, evaluating and even in constructing arguments in natural language. To this end, the tools of formal and informal logic have recently been joined.

Postscript

Chapter 4. I did not develop the concept of argument management any further after writing “Argument Management, Informal Logic and Critical Thinking,” although this topic has been of abiding interest to me as a teacher and it has relevance to anyone interested in the critical evaluation of arguments and argumentation. As for the distinction between informal logic and critical thinking, I continue to believe that two are importantly different. Gerald Nosich (2010) makes an excellent case for this proposition. I think the widespread practice in North America, which continues into the second decade of the 21st century, of teaching methods of argument analysis and evaluation as if that constitutes teaching critical thinking, is intellectually irresponsible, and philosophers, who are the principal culprits, ought to know better.

Chapter 5. I am still partial to something like the account of probative relevance given in “Premissary Relevance.” I wish I had noted in that chapter that ‘premissary relevance’ has two senses that are often confused. In one sense, such relevance is an on/off concept: a premise is either probatively relevant or it isn’t. That is, it either has a bearing on the conclusion or it hasn’t; it lends support to the conclusion or it doesn’t. In the other sense, such relevance comes in degrees: a premise can lie on a continuum from weak to strong relevance; it will lend more or less forceful support to the conclusion. I think *salience* is a better word than *relevance* for the second concept, but in any case, by premissary relevance in this chapter I meant ‘relevance’ in the former, on/off sense.

Chapter 6. Although I would write “What Is the Right Amount of Support for a Conclusion?” differently today, and devote some attention to the “dialectical tier” theory of my colleague Ralph Johnson (2000a), which is addressing the same question about the right amount of support for a conclusion (although without reference to this chapter), I continue to believe that there is no general answer to the question, and something like the account in this chapter is on the right track.

Chapter 7. “Premise Adequacy,” is really about burden of proof. The unstated and un-argued assumption of the chapter is that a premise needs to be defended just when the burden of proof in the argumentative situation in which it is used calls for a defense. The thesis of the chapter is that the burden of proof varies considerably from one argumentative situation to another, so no general burden of proof rules are available. I still think that view is correct, and for the kinds of reasons given

in the chapter. Were I to rewrite the chapter today I would make explicit and try to defend its here unstated assumption. But for the reader interested in this topic, required reading is James B. Freeman's monograph, *Acceptable Premises* (2005). Also, in light of Tone Kvernbekk's (2008) persuasive criticism of the claim that argumentation is a practice in MacIntyre's (1984) sense I would have to revise and make explicit in what sense I think argumentation is a practice.

[Chapter 8](#), "Relevance, Acceptability and Sufficiency Today," [Chapter 9](#), "The 'Logic' of Informal Logic" and [Chapter 10](#), "Informal Logic and Logic" are quite recent chapters, and my thinking about those topics has not developed further along those lines since writing them. Relevance, acceptability and sufficiency ([Chapter 8](#)) are useful pedagogically and as rough and ready rules of thumb for argument evaluation. However, I am persuaded by Christopher Tindale (2007) that they constitute a pretty unstable framework for a theory of fallacy—a point not acknowledged in [Chapter 8](#). And neither do they get at the question of [Chapter 10](#), which is "How is it that, in the absence of the reliable rules of deductive inference or probability theory, we are entitled to draw conclusions that we regularly and reliably do from evidence, reasons, grounds—support—of various indecisive kinds?" Argument scheme theory combined with Toulmin warrant theory strikes me as a plausible answer. I should acknowledge that not everyone follows David Hitchcock (2003, 2007), as I do, in holding that Toulmin warrants are not to be understood as premises. Lilian Bermejo-Luque (2004) is a dissenter, among others. [Chapter 9](#), by the way, shows—although I did not make a point of this—that the much-impugned early informal logic advocates struggling against deductivism can with hindsight be seen to belong in respectable company.

Part III
Argumentation Theory

Introduction

My interest in argumentation theory has a variety of theoretical motivations.

One question is, “What justifies the inferences that are not deductive entailments or probabilities, yet on which we legitimately rely all the time in reasoning and arguing about matters ranging from the trivial to life and death?” For me, this has always been a central question, perhaps *the* central question, of informal logic. [Chapter 11](#), “Walton’s Argument Schemes. . .” and [Chapter 12](#), “A Theory of Normative Reasoning Schemes” see argument schemes theory as a source of the answer to this question.

Another question is, “What is an argument?” It has seemed to me that the plethora of different senses of ‘argument’ found in textbooks and throughout the argumentation theory literature makes this a natural question. Since I understand part of philosophy’s task to be the clarification of concepts, answering this question seemed part of the philosophy of argument: [Chapter 13](#). That chapter also attempts to sketch the principal elements of an overall philosophical account of argument.

My conceptual housekeeping predilections find it tidier to understand argument as having a variety of uses ([Chapter 14](#), “Argument and Its Uses”) rather than as having a variety of kinds, each doing a different task. As part of that inclination, I find myself opposed to the reduction of all argumentation to fit a single model or purpose. (This chapter was a keynote address at a conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation on the uses of argument.)

Another of my enduring interests in argumentation theory is the desire to chart all the theories occupying this theoretical space and relate them to one another. [Chapter 15](#), “A Time for Argument Theory Integration” was a stab at such a map. On reflection I was struck that what seemed to be competing territorial land-grabs were in fact non-competing claims to adjacent parts of the continent.

Wondering about what constitutes argument naturally relates to questions about what kinds of argument there are, or what sorts of things can express or convey arguments. Hence considering the possibility of visual arguments, and their nature if they actually exist, was an obvious topic for me when asked to write a chapter on visual argument ([Chapter 16](#)).

Chapter 11

Walton's Argumentation Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning: A Critique and Development

11.1 Introduction: Walton's Account

In this chapter I first sketch Douglas Walton's account of argument schemes for presumptive reasoning (Walton, 1996b). Then I outline some of what is missing from the account as presented by Walton. Last, I propose ways of filling in some of the missing pieces. The sketch of Walton's account will occupy the rest of this introductory section. I should make it clear at the outset that what inspires this chapter is admiration for Walton's project. Although I think his account is incomplete, and I disagree with some details, I believe it is important, and on the right track.

Walton restricts his discussion to argument schemes found in presumptive reasoning. He takes presumptive reasoning to be typified by the pragmatic, "rough and ready generalizations," of practical reasoning (reasoning about what to do); it is the "plausible reasoning" for which Rescher provided a calculus in his *Plausible Reasoning* (1976). A model for presumptive reasoning is default or non-monotonic reasoning discussed in computer science.

Central to Walton's account is his analysis of presumption. Presumption is related to, but distinct from, burden of proof. It is that move in a dialogue that lies between assertion (which incurs the burden of proof) and assumption (which carries no burden whatever). A presumption has practical value by way of advancing the argumentation, and, in accepting something as a presumption, the interlocutor assumes the burden of rebutting it. Thus a presumption shifts the burden of proof. Presumptions come into play in the absence of firm evidence or knowledge, which is why they are typically found in practical reasoning. Presumptive reasoning, in sum, "is neither deductive nor inductive in nature, but represents a third distinct type . . . , an inherently tentative kind of reasoning subject to defeat by the special circumstances (not defined inductively or statistically) of a particular case" (Walton, 1996b, p. 43).

For Walton, argument schemes are structures or "forms" of argument which are "normatively binding kinds of reasoning" and are "best seen as moves, or speech acts" in dialogues (Walton, 1996b, p. 28). They are normatively binding in the sense

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that in accepting premises organized in a “genuine” scheme “appropriate” to the type of dialogue in process, one is bound (in some way) to accept the conclusion drawn from them, provided the “critical questions” that are “appropriate to” that scheme are answered satisfactorily (Walton, 1996b, p. 10).

Walton postulates that the validity of an argument scheme is contextual: a function of the context of dialogue in which it is used in a given case. Remember that the aim of argument in presumptive or plausible reasoning is to shift the burden of proof in a dialogue (not to prove a proposition with a given degree of probability or plausibility). Whether a scheme succeeds in shifting the burden of proof depends on whether the scheme is valid (for the occasion of its use) and on whether the members of a set of critical questions associated with it either have been answered affirmatively earlier in the dialogue or can be later if they are raised.

To this distinction between an argument scheme and its associated critical questions corresponds a distinction between two (of three) levels of argument criticism. At the “local” level the scheme itself may be invalid, or the argument may fail to conform to its scheme’s requirements, or its premises may lack needed support. The critical questions associated with an argument scheme normally lead to further arguments, when and as their answers are provided and supported, so that the occurrence of a scheme in a dialogue effectively introduces a sequence of exchanges, which Walton labels an “argumentation theme.” These argumentation themes form the backdrop for the second level of argument criticism: questioning the relevance of an argument at a given point in a dialogical exchange. The idea seems to be that what makes an argument relevant is the appropriateness of its placement in the sequences of questions and answers that constitute the argumentation theme of the dialogue at that point. (The third level of criticism is to question the appropriateness of the dialogue type being used.)

So a presumptive argument scheme is the pattern of a unit of local reasoning that is a move in an argumentative dialogue aiming to provide sufficient grounds to shift the burden of proof with respect to the assertion that is its conclusion.

In *Argument Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996b), Walton describes and discusses about thirty such schemes. For each scheme he supplies a description; a formulation; a set of critical questions associated with it; at least one and often several “cases,” which are actual or invented examples of the scheme in use; and a discussion of the scheme in which he typically draws attention to its salient properties, relates it to other schemes, discusses the fallacies associated with it, comments on its presumptive force, and mentions typical contexts of its use.

An example of one of the argument schemes Walton discusses will illustrate. Here is the scheme of the “argument from sign” (Walton, 1996b, p. 49):

- (1) A is true in this situation.
- B is generally indicated as true when its sign, A, is true, in this kind of situation.
- Therefore, B is true in this situation.

Walton gives, among others, the following examples of arguments that instantiate the argument from sign scheme (Walton, 1996b, pp. 47, 49):

- (2) 3.1 There are some bear tracks in the snow.
Therefore, a bear passed this way.
- 3.4 Bob is covered with red spots
Therefore, Bob has the measles.
- 3.5 The barometer just dropped.
Therefore, we will have a storm.
- 3.6 Bob is biting his nails.
Therefore, Bob is worried about something.

Following Hastings (1962) Walton identifies the following two “critical questions” as associated with the scheme of the argument from sign (Walton, 1996b, p. 48):

- (3) 1. What is the strength of the correlation of the sign with the event signified?
- 2. Are there other events that would more reliably account for the sign?

Although Walton's account is rich in detail, it leaves many theoretical questions and issues unanswered and unaddressed. I will list and discuss these *lacunae* in the next section.

11.2 What Is Missing from Walton's Account?

A natural first question to ask is, “Where do argument schemes come from?” Are they in the first instance descriptions of patterns to be found in (or, that can be abstracted from) actual argumentation as social events and products? If so, then their normative force requires an explanation. Or, are they in the first instance a priori prescriptions for cogent argumentation—patterns whose instantiations will be cogent arguments if they are used appropriately? In that case, on what principles are they formed? And where do they get their probative force? Walton does not address these questions.

Other questions concern the classification and the generality of the schemes. Walton's argument from sign scheme looks like a scheme for causal reasoning, yet he also includes as a distinct scheme what he calls “the argument from cause to effect.” Is the argument from sign the “argument from effect to cause,” so that these are two species of causal arguments? Or are they different types of reasoning? In any case, how is the matter to be decided? Notice also that Walton has grouped somewhat different types of reasoning together under the label of argument from sign. The paw of a bear is necessary to make a bear track, but worry is not necessary in order to cause nail biting, nor is a storm necessary for the barometer to drop; and the connection between worry and nail biting is psychological, whereas that between a brewing storm and a falling barometer is physical. I am not disagreeing with Walton's grouping, but it is fair to ask for an explanation of why these somewhat different contents of reasoning end up being classified as exhibiting the same argument scheme.

It is also easy to imagine schemes of different generality for one and the same example of argumentation. For example, if I am fussing about my knee aching, and June says, “Stop complaining. If your arthritis is bothering you, take some

ibuprofen—its what your doctor prescribed,” which of the following is the correct, or the better, scheme for her argument?

- (4) D prescribed treatment T for patient P's medical condition C.
 D is an authority with respect to treatments for C-type conditions and about P's condition.
 So, it is presumptively reasonable for P to take T when in C.
- (5) D prescribed action A to deal with situation S.
 D is an authority with respect to dealing with situation S.
 So, it is presumptively reasonable to do A in S.

Clearly scheme (4) is less general or abstract than scheme (5), yet both seem exemplified in June's argument. What is the correct, or best, level of abstraction, and why? This issue is discussed in Kienpointner's *Alltagslogik* (1992b), but Walton supplies no answers in his book.

Another topic that is not discussed by Walton is the connection between an argument scheme and its “associated” critical questions. He simply lists a set of critical questions for each scheme, but what motivates these questions? How is it to be decided which are the correct questions, and when a list of critical questions is complete?

I have glossed over the fact that Walton talks sometimes of schemes exhibited in arguments and sometimes of schemes exhibited in reasoning. One wants to know how these are related. I have also followed Walton's convention of focusing on schemes in presumptive reasoning/argumentation. Are there other types of schemes as well? If so, a general theory of argument schemes is needed to account for them all. Finally, are all the details of Walton's analyses of presumption and of argument schemes correct? In particular I question whether presumptive reasoning is “inherently tentative,” “inconclusive” and “provisional” (Walton, 1996b, pp. 42, ix, xi), and whether a context of dialogue is essential to the function of argument schemes.

To sum up, among the tasks which a more complete theory of argument schemes than is provided by Walton would have to take on are the following:

1. The relation between argumentation and reasoning as it relates to schemes explained.
2. The problems of classification of schemes within broad types addressed.
3. The distinction drawn between descriptive and prescriptive schemes.
4. The prescriptive force of prescriptive schemes accounted for.
5. The identification of schemes and the “degree of abstraction” problems addressed.

In the next section I will address the first four of these tasks, some in more detail than others. The fifth one has been discussed in detail by Kienpointner (1992b), and it would take me beyond the focus on Walton's account to examine that of Kienpointner.

11.3 Further Developments

11.3.1 Argumentation and Reasoning

There is by now, thanks particularly to the work of van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 1992a), among others, general agreement among argumentation scholars that argumentation is a complex social, speech activity involving more than one party, with practical goals and subject to norms related to those goals. Reasoning, whatever its social origins and functions, is a mental activity of individuals. Argumentation requires that its participants reason, so reasoning is necessary to argumentation; but one can reason without engaging in argumentation, so argumentation is not necessary to reasoning.

One type of reasoning is inferring: making the judgment that one proposition is implied by another or others (I use ‘implied’ broadly, to include “supported.”). When Walton speaks of “presumptive reasoning,” he is speaking of drawing presumptive inferences, or inferring presumptively. A person can infer without arguing, but inferring is necessary to arguing, in several respects. Inferences are being made constantly by interlocutors engaged in argumentation in order to ascertain the nature of their activity and to sustain it. (“Do we disagree?” “Which moves are permitted and appropriate (at this point)?” “Which is the best move for me at this turn?” The interlocutors must draw inferences to answer such questions.) At the heart of the activity of argumentation is the offering of and response to arguments in the more narrow sense of reasons offered in support of or against claims: the illative core of argumentation. Here the interlocutors draw inferences about what propositions imply other propositions and about what propositions the other person or the audience will likely deem to be implied by given propositions, and the arguments they offer to one another are in effect invitations to draw inferences (Pinto, 1995, p. 276; Beardsley, 1976, p. 5). So we have the following distinctions:

- (6) Proposition p implies proposition q . (Implication)
- Person A judges that p implies q . (Reasoning)
- A judges that interlocutor B accepts p and will accept that p implies q . (Reasoning.)
- A invites B to accept q on the grounds that p , and that p implies q . (Argument)
- B accepts p , but also accepts r , and judges that p and r imply $not-q$. (Argument and Reasoning.)
- B invites A to accept $not-q$ on the ground that r , and that p and r imply $not-q$. (Argument)
- A does not accept t , or that t implies $not-r$, but believes that B accepts both. (Reasoning)
- A invites B to accept $not-r$ on the ground that t , and that t implies $not-r$. (Argument)

Clearly, reasoning (that is, inferring) is integral to the use of arguments in argumentation, although as the last two moves listed above indicate, one can, in offering an argument, invite one’s interlocutor to employ reasoning that one rejects oneself. So what are the schemes to which Walton refers schemes of? Are they schemes of reasoning or of arguments?

I think the answer must be: both, but inference is more basic. Whether or not the arguer draws the inference that he or she invites the interlocutor to draw, he or she recognizes the possibility of drawing that inference. Thus the presentation

of an argument presupposes a possible inference, and hence the instantiation of some possible pattern of inference. Thus an inference scheme is logically prior to its use in any argument. Moreover, schemes that are prescriptive function to license inferences, so that is another reason for identifying them with inferences. On the other hand, in uttering an argument that invites the interlocutor to draw an inference, the arguer makes use of a pattern of argument, and so might be said to be employing an instance of an argument scheme. There is often no harm in shifting without notice from talk of inferences to talk of arguments, given the central role of inference in argument; but the two should not be conflated.

11.3.2 Walton's Classification of Schemes

Classifications are made with ends in view, and since there can be many compatible purposes for a classification, there are numerous possible compatible classifications. Walton is at pains to distinguish the schemes of presumptive reasoning from those of deductive logic and inductive reasoning. His principle of classification seems to be the strength of commitment to which the reasoner is entitled, given the premises, for each type of inference. When the premises deductively entail the conclusion, one is entitled to absolute confidence in the conclusion, given the premises. In contrast, Walton thinks, when the premises presumptively support the conclusion, one is entitled to have little confidence in the conclusion, given the premises—just enough confidence to shift the onus of refutation over to anyone who would still deny the conclusion. Walton has little to say about inductive reasoning.

I think Walton is on the right track, but I think he overstates the tentative character of presumptive reasoning. To be sure, some presumptions are supported only very weakly; but others are supported so strongly that it would be no less irrational to lack confidence in their conclusions than it would be to lack confidence in conclusions strongly supported by inductive reasoning. For example, if my doctor prescribes ibuprofen for mild arthritic pain, and he knows the condition of my knee, having examined it arthroscopically, and he is an expert on the deterioration of, and onset of arthritis in, knee joints with damaged cartilage, and there's no reason to distrust his judgment in this case, and his prescription conforms with the standard medical judgment for such cases, and none of the contra-indicators against taking ibuprofen apply at the moment, then his prescription generates an extremely strong presumption in favor of taking ibuprofen. There is nothing tentative or weak about it.

So I would suggest a slightly different principle than degree of confidence for distinguishing these types of inference. I think the salient difference is whether the conclusion is in principle defeasible, given the premises. In the case of deductive entailments, given the premises, the conclusion is not defeasible, in principle. In the case of inductive and presumptive reasoning, it is. The difficulty then lies in distinguishing the latter two kinds of reasoning, and I do not have a solution for that problem, nor would I be inclined to worry if they cannot be sharply distinguished.

11.3.3 The Origin of Schemes

Kienpointner (1992b, p. 241) distinguishes between descriptive and normative schemata, but he is distinguishing between, respectively, schemes for arguments with descriptive premises and conclusions, and schemes for arguments with descriptive and normative premises and normative conclusions. That is not the distinction I mean to denote by the labels “descriptive” and “prescriptive.” Instead, I mean the distinction between, on the one hand, a scheme that conveys the pattern of reasoning that someone actually used in a particular instance of reasoning or argument, which entails no endorsement of that reasoning or argument, and, on the other hand, a scheme that portrays a supposedly valid or cogent pattern of inference or argument.

But where do schemes—descriptive or prescriptive—come from? Where do Walton and others get them? And where should they come from?

In the literature on schemes many schemes seems to originate from discussion of schemes in the literature! Thus, Kienpointner (1992b) cites many mediaeval and classical sources for the schemes he describes. Walton does not explain the genesis of his list. He cites examples of actual argumentation for some, and provides invented examples for others. The assumption seems to be that the reader will find his invented examples plausible because they illustrate familiar patterns of reasoning or argument. But Walton also appears to take himself to be citing schemes well-known to his readers from the logical literature. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) find in non-philosophical writing many of the schemes they describe.

To the extent that these authors provide descriptions of schemes in use, they are giving empirical reports of patterns of actual or possible argumentation. To the extent that they are intended to be offering prescriptions for cogent reasoning or argument, their schemes must meet additional requirements than simply to have been used. The issue of whether there can be an a priori theory of all possible cogent inference or argument schemes is too large to be broached here. It will have to be enough to note that any such theory will have to accommodate our logical intuitions about particular cases, so unless and until such a comprehensive theory is produced, there is no shame in generating normative schemes from particular arguments or types of arguments in actual use that seem to us to be probatively compelling.

11.3.4 The Source of the Probative Force of Prescriptive Schemes in General

Describing the schemes that have been used, and assessing their cogency, are obviously different actions. Similarly, a catalogue of the schemes that have been used, and a list of cogent schemes available for use, will have only some, but not all, schemes in common. The philosophical interest in schemes relates to the grounds or source of their cogency. What is the source of the probative force of a “valid” inference or argument scheme? The short explanation, I take it, lies in the irrationality of accepting the premises but rejecting the conclusion of an inference or argument

instantiating a valid scheme. Consider the three broad classes of arguments or reasoning that Walton mentions.

In the case of a deductively valid scheme, the scheme derives its normative force or cogency from the fact that to accept the premises, and yet refuse to accept the conclusion, is irrational by virtue of being strongly inconsistent. What makes a scheme deductively valid is just that if its premises are true, its conclusion must be true. In acknowledging that the scheme is deductively valid, one is committed to accepting the conclusion if one grants the premises, so in granting the premises and refusing to accept the conclusion, one contradicts oneself.

In the case of an inductively strong scheme, the scheme derives its normative force or cogency from the fact that to accept the premises and grant the inductive strength of the scheme, yet deny the probability of the conclusion, is irrational by virtue of a somewhat different kind of inconsistency. For inductively strong schemes, given the evidence, the conclusion is more probable than any alternative; to acknowledge the inductive strength of the scheme is to admit as much, yet to deny the conclusion is to hold out for some less probable alternative. There is no self-contradiction here, since it is possible that the conclusion is false, given the evidence, for even the strongest inductive scheme. But unless the skeptic has some possible rebuttal in mind, he is holding that the less probable is the more probable.

In the case of a presumptively cogent scheme, the scheme derives its normative force or cogency from the fact that to accept the premises and grant the validity of the scheme, yet deny the plausibility of the conclusion—without suggesting that any conditions of rebuttal exist—is analogously inconsistent. Given a strong presumption, to refuse to accept the conclusion without denying the evidence or finding a rebutting condition, implies believing that there is some rebutting condition or circumstance for which there is no evidence. The skeptic in such a case is holding that the less plausible is the more plausible.

In all three cases, the probative force of the scheme derives from one or another type of inconsistency involved, given the scheme, in accepting the premises, yet refusing to accept the conclusion. The cogency of the scheme derives from the irrationality of reasoning according to it, and accepting the premises, yet denying the conclusion.

11.3.5 The Motivation and Justification of the “Critical Questions” of Presumptive Schemes

In this connection, by the way, we can understand what motivates the critical questions that Walton and others take to be associated with presumptively cogent inference or argument schemes, and how they play the normative role they do. Given that a presumptive scheme is in principle defeasible, someone who reasons according to such a scheme wants to know how likely it is that the inference will be defeated in the given case. The so-called “critical questions” are simply information-seeking questions that inquire about the conditions or circumstances that tend to

rebut inferences using that scheme. The presumption is strengthened to the extent that the answers to these questions indicate the absence of defeating or overriding conditions. That is why presumptive schemes have critical questions associated with them, and it is the reason that the probative force of a presumptive scheme is partly a function the answers to the critical questions associated with the scheme.

The role of the critical questions also explains why in some cases presumptively supported claims are so plausible that to doubt them would be completely unwarranted. If answering all the critical questions associated with a cogent scheme reveals that none of the rebutting conditions applies in a given case, then there is simply no reason whatever to deny the conclusion.

11.3.6 The Source of the Probative Force of Particular Schemes

But whence do particular prescriptive argumentation schemes derive their authority? What, for instance, is the justification of the argument from authority, or the argument from analogy, or the argument from consequences? Why do we accept appeals to expertise, or to similar cases, or to good or bad outcomes, as cogent? The general account of the rationality of presumptive reasoning sketched above does not explain the cogency of these particular schemes, although it indicates what to look for—namely, some source of inconsistency in accepting the scheme and the evidence but denying the conclusion.

Take the argument from authority, one form of which is the argument from expert opinion. Why may we rely on the authority of others? The answer lies in an analysis of authority or expertise. A necessary condition of authority is knowledge. If someone has knowledge in an area, then among other things they know a number of propositions belonging to it. But a proposition cannot be known unless it is true. So there is a connection between the expertise of an authority and the truth of at least some of the propositions for which the expert vouches. Although this oversimplifies the appeal to authority, I think it is *au fond* this connection that authorizes inferences from what authorities or experts claim to be the case to the truth of those claims.

Consider another scheme, one of the many forms of the argument from analogy: the argument from a priori analogy (Govier, 1987). This is an argument for a normative claim based on the similarity of two cases and the treatment already afforded one of them. An example? “Officer, you should not give me a speeding ticket, because although I was speeding, you did not give those other drivers speeding tickets, and they were going a lot faster than I was.” Why may we appeal to such analogies? The answer lies in the norm of justice or fairness. Fairness requires treating similar cases similarly. To the extent that fairness is a good, similar cases ought to be treated similarly. The argument from a priori analogy appeals to the similarity of other cases, presupposing the norm of fairness. (Thus a complete justification of the scheme for a priori analogy would require a justification of fairness.) Unfortunately for the speeding driver, fairness is not the only value, nor always the highest ranking value, which is why the police officer is able validly to rebut this

particular argument: "There is a relevant difference between you and those other speeders," he will say, "You're the one I caught."

In general, I take it that for each prescriptive scheme we must be able to provide, either a general account of why schemes of that type are valid, as in the case of deductively valid schemes, or else an account of why that particular scheme is valid, as in the case of the schemes of presumptive reasoning, many groups of which are *sui generis*. In the latter kind of case, there must be some particular connection between the premise set of the scheme and the conclusion that makes it in some way unreasonable to deny the conclusion while granting the premises, other things being equal.

11.4 Conclusion

It has been the aim of this chapter to advance the theoretical discussion of the concept of argument or inference schemes, using the unsystematic approach of trying to fill in some of the gaps in Walton's account of argument schemes in his book, *Argumentation Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996b). Walton there focuses particularly on the schemes of presumptive reasoning and argument, but even within the narrower scope of his treatment, he seems to me to have left a number of vexing questions unanswered. I have tried to clarify the relation between argument and reasoning, in order to explain how it is possible to shift from talk of schemes for reasoning and argumentation schemes. I proposed a revision to Walton's way of distinguishing deductive from presumptive schemes, in order to account for the fact that reasoning and arguments using presumptive schemes can be strongly compelling. Given that Walton's list of schemes seems to drop from out of the blue, and that he seems to take their cogency for granted, I sought to account for both the origin of schemes and their probative force, both in general and in particular cases. In the process, I explained the motivation and justification for the critical questions that Walton associates with presumptive schemes but without explanation of their connection. Needless to say, I think that a philosophically complete and satisfying theory of argument and inference schemes remains to be written, although I think Walton's book is an important step in that direction.

Chapter 12

A Theory of Normative Reasoning Schemes

12.1 Introduction

This is an essay on what Michael Scriven termed “probative logic” in a keynote address at the first ISSA conference in Amsterdam 13 years ago. Probative logic is, for Scriven, the logic of probative inference, and these are inferences “of a kind that is neither deductive nor quantitatively probabilistic, but, thoughtful people normally believe, properly thought of as strongly persuasive to the rational faculty” (1986, p. 9). One is reminded of J.S. Mill’s characterization, in [Chapter 1](#) of *Utilitarianism*, of his proof of the principle of utility, which, he said “cannot be proof in the ordinary and popular meaning of the term.” Instead, what he proposed to provide are, “Considerations . . . capable of determining the intellect either to give or withhold its assent to the doctrine;” and, Mill added: “this is equivalent to proof” (Mill, 1979, pp. 4–5).

This topic is central to informal logic—one might even say definitive of it. That there are good arguments that use reasoning which is neither deductive nor scientifically inductive has been a guiding conviction of many who work in this field. It underlies the search for other criteria of good arguments that produced the Acceptability, Relevance and Sufficiency criteria Johnson and Blair introduced (1977). Trudy Govier recognized its significance when she drew attention to conductive inference and case-by-case reasoning in the early 1980s (1980a, 1980b, 1987). Much more recently, Douglas Walton, is taking up this topic under a different name in his study of presumptive reasoning (1996b). There are probably many others who should be mentioned, but the reference to Govier’s and Walton’s work will provide a sense for the project of the present essay.

The chapter is divided into two parts. Section 12.2 introduces a number of terminological conventions, and explains what motivates the chapter. Section 12.3 contains the main business of the chapter: the analysis of the concept of a reasoning scheme and the sketch of a theory of normative reasoning schemes.

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12.2 Preliminaries

12.2.1 Terminology

12.2.1.1 “Reasons”

It will avoid some possible confusion to talk about “reasons” instead of “premises” or “arguments.” A reason is here taken to be a unit of support for a position, taking a “position” to be an attitude towards a proposition, understanding ‘proposition’ broadly, to include action or policy recommendations or evaluations as well as what is expressed by (strictly true or false) declarative sentences. For example, with respect to the proposition, <The Lewinsky affair weakened the American presidency> any number of positions is possible: “The Lewinsky affair weakened the American presidency,” “The Lewinsky affair probably weakened the American presidency,” “It is doubtful that the Lewinsky affair weakened the American presidency,” “It is a shame that the Lewinsky affair weakened the American presidency,” and so on. (The chevrons “< >” bracket a proposition that is mentioned but not asserted; the quotation marks bracket an assertion or possible assertion). A person’s *reason* for a position is *a consideration that the person takes to support it*. A person’s reason is a proposition, or a set of propositions, that the person takes to be true (or otherwise acceptable) and to lend support to a position.

A reason may *support* (or be purported to support) a position, by doing (or being purported to do) any of the following: demonstrate or prove the position (that is, establish that it must be true); show that the position is probable to some degree; or show that the position is plausible to some degree (that there is a presumption of some degree in its favor).

A person may have more than one reason for a position. In the case of reasons that logically entail positions (in the sense that, if the reason is true the position cannot be false), more than one would be redundant; but people can and do have redundant support for positions. In the case of reasons that constitute empirical evidence or that supply presumptive support, it is often appropriate to have more than one reason for a position, since in that case more reasons can mean stronger support.

Still, a single reason provides at least some measure of support for a position. A “single” reason may include more than one proposition. What is the difference between a single, multi-propositional reason and two or more reasons? A single reason is the smallest amount of information that by itself lends some measure of credence to a position.

Here are some examples of possible reasons supporting positions:

- (1) S’s reason: The rules prevent the game from ending in a draw.
S’s position: If the game ends, one side in the game must lose.
- (2) S’s reason: 90 of the 100 balls in the urn are black, ten are white, and the balls in the urn have been thoroughly mixed.
S’s position: If anyone reaches into the urn and without looking takes out a ball, it is highly probable that this ball will be black, not white.

- (3) S's reason: Sheila told Ed she would treat him to dinner.
S's position: Sheila should treat Ed to dinner.
- (4) S's reason: If the city council gives special recognition of a "day" for Immigrants from Iceland, it will have to do the same for virtually any group that applies, and it is likely that hundreds of other groups would then apply. The result would be a special recognition "day" every day, and even special recognition "days" shared by more than one group, which would defeat the purpose of special recognition.
S's position: The city council shouldn't give special recognition of a "day" for Immigrants From Iceland.

12.2.1.2 "Argument" and "Reasoning"

In the informal logic and argumentation literature the terms "argument" and "reason" (and their cognates) are used loosely. Walton is a typical example. He titles the book discussed in this paper, *Argumentation Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996b), suggesting a connection, and throughout that book he slips back and forth between referring to "argumentation" schemes and "reasoning" schemes, as if argumentation and reasoning were identical. Clearly, they are not (and to be fair, Walton does not claim they are, though he does not address their connection). Scriven is another example: he calls one of his books *Reasoning* (1976), and the book is about analyzing and evaluating arguments. Yet another is Feldman, whose textbook, *Reasons and Argument*, begins with the sentence, "This book presents a method for understanding and evaluating arguments" (1999, p. 1). Or again, see Groarke, Tindale, and Fisher, who write in their introduction to *Good Reasoning Matters!*: "This book is designed to help you [the student] to improve your reasoning skills. . . . It is our hope that you will become proficient not only at assessing the arguments you encounter, but also at constructing arguments of your own" (1997, pp. xiii–xiv). For these authors, none of whom address the connection, the relation between reasoning and argument is close and unproblematic. However, reasoning is not arguing; moreover there are at least two significantly different senses of "argument" in play in these works.

When a person reasons, she infers or draws inferences. She may, like Harman's "Mary" (1986, p. 1), change her view in the process, but not necessarily, for she may, by reasoning, confirm an already-held view. In either case she draws a conclusion, that is, takes (or reaffirms) a position, on the basis of certain grounds that she accepts and takes to support it. The set of reasons that in her judgment supports a position is, in philosophical literature, standardly called her "argument" for that position, although she has not argued at all. Thus, for example, if Mary reasons that since she is out of eggs and plans to make a soufflé tonight, she should buy eggs today, philosophers will describe her reasoning as consisting of the following "argument": "Premise 1: 'I am out of eggs'; Premise 2: 'I plan to make a soufflé tonight'; Premises 3 and 4 (unexpressed): 'Eggs are needed to make a soufflé and the best way for me to get eggs is to buy them'; Conclusion: 'I should buy eggs today.'" Let us call this the Philosophers' (or the Propositional) sense of argument, a P-argument,

and emphasize that its use does not entail the occurrence of any action or activity that could be called arguing. One has to imagine eccentric scenarios to come up with a context in which Mary, in her circumstances, might argue that she should buy eggs today. When Mary proposes reasons to others as grounds that support a position, inviting them to accept it on those grounds or trying to persuade or convince them to accept it on those grounds, then she is engaged in the activity of arguing (see Pinto, 1995). In order to argue, one must communicate with others. Let us call the grounds that Mary proposes to others for accepting a position her Speech-act argument, or an SA-argument. Notice that Mary's SA-argument for a position might be different from her P-argument for it. The reasons she offers to others might or might not be *her* reasons, but they will be reasons she thinks others will embrace as their own—reasons they will take to support the position she is putting forward. In what follows I will use 'argument' exclusively to denote SA-arguments, and 'reasons' or 'reasoning' to denote P-arguments.

Thus an *argument* (an SA-argument) consists of one or more reasons for endorsing a position offered by an arguer, normally to one or more other people (an "audience"), but sometimes also to herself. The word 'endorsing' is a placeholder for any of a variety of specifics, including believing, assuming, accepting, recommending, and acting on; and, as indicated above, the word 'position' is the placeholder for any point of view taken towards a proposition, understanding 'proposition' broadly. So a position may be: that a proposition is true or plausible or probable, and so on; or that an action should be taken, a policy pursued or endorsed, and so on; or that an attitude is appropriate or justified, and so on.

I think van Eemeren and Grootendorst are right to extend the Searlean concept of an *assertive* beyond the expression of commitment to the truth or falsity of a proposition to include, more broadly, the expression of *any* attitude of positive or negative commitment towards a sentence, understanding sentence to embrace not only factual sentences that are true or false, but also normative sentences whose truth-value status may be problematic (1984, pp. 95–96). It might be fruitful to extend the concept of a proposition along similar lines, and I use the word 'proposition' in such an extended way in this chapter. (They use the word 'statement' where I have written 'sentence,' but I take 'statement' to denote an asserted proposition, which is just what is at issue.) This view has implications for Walton's analysis of the speech act of presumption, discussed below.

As the word is used here, an argument is always *someone's* argument, just as a reason is someone's reason. Sets of propositions that *might* serve as reasons for endorsing a claim but that no one has proposed or accepted as such are, in my terminology, only *possible* arguments. Thus the reasons offered in arguments are *asserted* propositions, or "statements." There is not a parallel terminology for propositions that have been accepted or believed in reasoning, but not expressed, but we might call them *endorsed* or *asserted-to* propositions. This is *not* the way Harman and others use 'argument,' to denote exclusively a proof or implication relation (1986, pp. 3–4), although proofs can be used as, or found in, arguments.

An argument can consist of more than one reason for accepting the position. Why should someone ever offer more than one reason to support a position? Here are some reasons:

The arguer believes that the reason provides only weak support for the position, and that the audience will agree, and he wishes to supply additional support so that the total support provided by all the reasons he offers adds up to strong support for the position.

The arguer believes the audience might not accept the reason and he wishes to supply another one as an alternative reason that the audience may use if it does not accept the first one.

The arguer believes the audience might not accept some part of the reason and he wishes to supply a supplementary reason to persuade the audience to accept that part of the initial reason.

The arguer believes that although the audience might accept his reason, it might also believe there is at least one detracting or refuting reason that overrides his, and he wishes to supply a reason why the audience should discount or reject the detracting or refuting reason, or else should reject its status as overriding the initial reason.

12.2.2 Assumptions

It is widely held that not all arguments are intended to be, nor (even with premises added) are they plausibly reconstructed as, deductive or valid arguments, that is, arguments in which the premises entail the conclusion in the sense that it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false (although that view is not universally endorsed: see Groarke, 1999). But it is not so widely held that all arguments are either deductive or inductive. However, Govier has made a decisive case against the exhaustiveness of that dichotomy.

Govier points out that if ‘inductive’ is defined as “non-deductive,” “[t]oo many different types of argument will fall into the class, the result being that saying an argument is in the broad sense *inductive* tells us essentially nothing about it. It says only what the argument is not—not what it is” (1999a, chap. 10). If induction is associated with empirical or scientific reasoning, as it has been, then, Govier points out, even within that category there are several quite different types of reasoning that need to be distinguished: inductive analogy, inductive generalization (enumerative induction), non-disconfirmation, experimental data to causal hypothesis, and abductive reasoning (ibid.). And quite apart from failing to distinguish types of reasoning or argument used in empirical or scientific thinking, this dichotomy leaves out both a priori analogical reasoning or arguments and also conductive reasoning or arguments, each of which Govier persuasively defends as *sui generis*, and not reducible to deductive reasoning or arguments (see 1999a, chaps. 9 and 10, respectively).

Govier is not alone in holding that the categories of deductive and inductive reasoning or argument are not exhaustive. We have seen that Scriven and Walton

would agree. In his discussion of presumptive reasoning, after reviewing some examples of reasoning offered by Reiter (1987), Walton notes: “The conclusion to be drawn from these cases then is that the understanding of non-monotonic reasoning is not to be sought in deductive or inductive formal systems of inference, but in a more broadly pragmatic account . . .” (1996b, p. 23). Walton’s *Argument Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* is devoted to the analysis of a number of patterns of inference or argument that fall outside the deductive-inductive dichotomy (see Walton, 1996b, *passim*).

12.2.3 Motivation

What motivates the present chapter is a question that arises on the assumption that Scriven, Govier, Walton and others who share their position here are right. That question is simply this: What grounds such reasoning or arguments? When the reasons don’t entail the position, or provide strong quantitative inductive support for it, then how is one to be justified in accepting it? What makes for “valid” or cogent reasoning or arguments belonging to this Third Category? (By the way, we should not assume that this Third Category is homogeneous. It may well be that there are major differences between types of reasoning and arguments that are neither deductive nor inductive.)

A way to see the gist of this question is to contrast deductive and inductive reasoning and arguments with those of this Third Category. When the reasons deployed in an episode of reasoning or in an argument *entail* the position, we can see that on the assumption of those reasons it is rational to accept the position because otherwise we face self-contradiction. The norm of strict, logical consistency justifies reasoning and arguments of this sort. When an accepted body of evidence provides *strong inductive support* for an empirical position then, in very general terms, there is an analogous constraint of consistency on our reasoning. A world in which the many and varied evidential propositions that supply inductive support for an empirical position are true (including the premise that conflicting evidence or hypotheses are unlikely), yet the position is false, is a world in which (some of) our current empirical beliefs or theories are incorrect. It is not an impossible world, but it is either implausible or else less plausible than the world as we *now* know it. In that sense, accepting the conclusion of such reasoning or such an argument is being consistent with our other beliefs, and rejecting it is being inconsistent with them. To be sure, the situation with particular instances of “inductive reasoning” or “inductive argument” is more complex, but the assumption is that as a general picture this account is roughly right. Now, the question being posed here may be put this way. Is there some analogous kind of inconsistency in accepting the reasons but rejecting the position allegedly supported by them in reasoning or arguments belonging to the Third Category? If so, what is it, and if not, then on what grounds is it rational to accept the positions in Third Category reasoning or arguments? Anyone who agrees that there are legitimate kinds of reasoning and argument that are not, directly or indirectly, deductive or inductive, faces this question.

12.2.4 Link to Reasoning/Argument Schemes

In *Argumentation Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996b), Walton examines what he calls schemes for presumptive arguments or reasoning, which he takes to be “normatively binding” in the sense that:

If the hearer accepts the premises of the speaker’s argument, and the argument is an instance of a genuine and appropriate argument scheme (for the type of dialogue they are engaged in), then the hearer must or should (in some binding way) accept the conclusion. This does not appear to be “validity” in the same sense in which the word is familiarly used in deductive (or perhaps even inductive) logic. But it does appear to express a normative or broadly logical sense of validity, bindingness, conditional acceptability, or whatever you want to call it. (p. 10)

Clearly Walton is here on the track of an answer to the question of this essay. If we can get an understanding of what is a “genuine and appropriate” argument scheme and of how such schemes constrain or bind their hearers (or users) to accept their conclusions—having accepted their premises—then we have the answer (or one answer) to our question. Thus it is that the question motivating this inquiry leads to an examination of reasoning schemes.

12.3 Reasoning Schemes

To start, we need to decide whether we should be speaking of *reasoning* (or inference) schemes, or of *argument* (or argumentation) schemes. Kienpointner (1992a) refers to them as argumentation schemata. Walton (1996b) switches back and forth between calling them argument (also argumentation) schemes and inference schemes (or schemes for reasoning). Van Eemeren and Grootendorst call them argumentation schemes. Following the terminological conventions introduced above, the schemes are reasoning schemes, for they are representations of reasons, whether those reasons function in a person’s own reasoning (inferences), or whether they are used in an argument that the person presents to an audience.

Perhaps another clarification is needed. What is the difference between argumentation and argument? These terms are widely used interchangeably, but also differently. Notice that Kienpointner uses the German word ‘*Argument*,’ where English-speaking philosophers might use the words ‘premise,’ ‘reason’ or ‘evidence.’ Walton writes of listing “argumentation” schemes (e.g.: “In this chapter, 25 different argumentation schemes are described and analyzed” (Walton 1996b, p. 46)), but he labels the schemes “argument from” this or that: “Argument from Sign,” “Argument from Example,” and so on. At one point, he writes, “Hastings (1962) identified argument from sign as a distinctive argumentation scheme . . .” (p. 47). Perhaps Walton is conceiving arguments as units or components of argumentation, but there seems to be no consistent usage. Consequently, we may conclude that the occurrences of ‘argument’ and ‘argumentation’ in the literature indicate no settled and widely-accepted technical conventions distinguishing their meanings, although I don’t claim that no author differentiates them systematically.

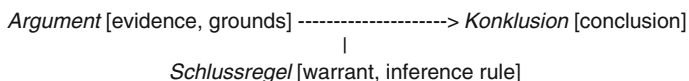
12.3.1 What Is a Reasoning Scheme?

What is a reasoning scheme? It seems that everyone is expected to know already, for although examples abound in the literature, clearcut analyses of the concept are hard to come by. Walton (1996b), Kienpointner (1992b) and van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992a) each draws attention to what is either a slightly different conception or to a different property of reasoning schemes. However, from the three accounts, a single comprehensive conception can be constructed.

12.3.1.1 Three General Accounts of Reasoning Schemes

Walton quotes Hastings as calling argument schemes “modes of reasoning” (1996b, p. ix), and goes on to describe an “argumentation” scheme as “a structure of inference” (ibid.). He says that argumentation schemes are “certain common forms of argument” (ibid., p. 1) and more precisely are “a formal, pragmatic structure of arguments that is the counterpart to logical forms of inference in semantics” (ibid., p. x).

Kienpointner (1992b) says that by making a broad abstraction, all simple normative or descriptive arguments can be reduced to a context-independent basic scheme, which is a “prototype” in terms of which the context-specific argumentation schemes of every argumentation can be distinguished (ibid., p. 19). That prototype is:



(Kienpointner acknowledges that he has borrowed the Toulmin model of argument.)

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst say an argumentation scheme is “a more or less conventionalized way of representing the relation between what is stated in the argument [the “reason”] and what is stated in the standpoint [the “position”]” (1992a, p. 96).

Both Walton and van Eemeren and Grootendorst emphasize that associated with any reasoning scheme is a set of “critical questions.” These are questions that must be answered appropriately if any substitution instance of a reasoning scheme is to be cogent. On neither account, though, is the motivation of the questions associated with reasoning scheme given a general explanation.

What all these authors clearly have in mind is some general pattern of argument or reasoning that has either been abstracted from particular cases or can find instantiation in different particular cases, or both. In the terminology of this essay, it is the pattern of the reason taken to support a position. It is an abstract representation of an actual or a possible reason. What makes a scheme an “abstraction” is that particular terms or phrases or propositions in the statement of an actual reason are expressed by variables in the scheme’s statement of it. What makes such a scheme normative is that there is some justification for reasoning along its lines.

12.3.1.2 One Example: Inferring from Someone's Sayso

All of this is suggestive, but it skirts the heart of the matter. In order to bring out the essential nature of a reasoning scheme, it is instructive to use an example as illustrative. Consider the reasoning involved in *an appeal to some source of information as the reason for accepting a position*. The “appeal to authority” and the “appeal to expert opinion” are variants of this reasoning. One way to characterize this reasoning scheme is as follows, where “*S*” represents a person or persons (not always identified, as when “*S*” denotes the authors of a dictionary entry) and where “*P*” represents a position:

The “Appeal to a Source” reasoning scheme

S asserts *P*.

Normally, when *S* asserts *P*, *P*.

So *P* (probably, plausibly).

Can such reasoning ever be any good—or, more precisely, can substitution instances of this reasoning scheme ever be any good? Certainly. Without exaggeration, billions of examples of good reasoning that exhibits this pattern are available. One will suffice. You ask your partner what time it is, and he/she tells you that it’s around nine o’clock. His or her telling you that it is around nine o’clock in answer to your question is an excellent reason to believe that it is indeed around nine o’clock, other things being equal. Thus your reasoning, “It is probably around nine o’clock because my partner tells me it is around nine o’clock (and there is no reason to doubt him)” is excellent reasoning.

A more interesting question than whether this reasoning is any good is the question *why* it is reasonable for a reasoner *R* to believe *P* in circumstances *C* because *S* says it is so. The answer seems to run along the following lines. It is reasonable for *R* to believe *P* on *S*’s sayso in *C* just to the extent that there exists in *C* a practice of truthfulness, at least between *R* and *S*. In many societies there is a fairly widely practiced convention that you don’t *assert* a proposition (that is, express it in a way that represents it as true), without qualification, unless you believe it to be true and think you have good grounds for your belief. It is that convention, insofar as *R* is justified in believing that it applies to *R* and *S* in *C*, that makes it reasonable for *R* to accept *P* if *S* asserts that *P*, other things being equal. It is *against that background* that someone’s saying that *P* is generally a good reason for accepting *P*.

To be sure, like any social practice, truthfulness is complicated. For instance, we make distinctions between fact and fiction: not all cases of saying that *P* are cases of asserting that *P*. We also distinguish between facts (as in observation reports) and opinions (as in judgment calls). Moreover, we recognize that while such contrast pairs are useful, they are idealizations. We teach our children the difference between inventions or “stories” and descriptions or facts, and we wait until they are older to introduce them to the unclear borderline cases, for example such questions as whether Farley Mowat’s (1951) fictionalized account of the Barren-Land Inuit was in some sense true, or whether a baseball umpire’s call expresses a description or a judgment. In addition, we understand that there are special contexts in

which truth-telling is highly qualified, as in certain kinds of commercial marketplace bargaining, or in diplomatic exchanges (affairs of state). And so on.

There are two related reasons for a *ceteris paribus* qualification in the “Appeal to a Source” reasoning scheme. First, *S*’s telling *R* that *P* is, in some conditions, *not* a good reason for *R* to accept *P*, and second, it is impossible to specify in any useful way (if at all) all those conditions. In general, there is an exception to the scheme in circumstances when *S* might not be following the truth-telling convention, or when *S* might be wrong about *P*.

Notice that it is impossible to specify all the types of circumstances in which these exceptions occur. There is an indefinite number of kinds of situation in which a person might be less than truthful, or might be mistaken. So there can be no algorithm for good “Appeal to a Source” reasoning. Nevertheless, since, in spite of its capacity for infinite variation, human conduct and motivation tend to follow a limited number of well-defined paths, it is possible to outline in a general way for any scheme the principal classes of exceptions to it, and so to provide useful general, if not universal, guidelines for the employment of that scheme. And that is the role of the so-called “critical questions” associated with each reasoning scheme. They remind us of types of circumstances that derail reasoning of the pattern represented by the scheme. As Walton (1996b) points out, the *ceteris paribus* feature of reasoning schemes has the effect of placing reasoning according to them in the role of the “default” in circumstances in which reasoning in that way is appropriate. The critical questions function as a checklist to help determine whether any of the standard types of excepting conditions that should cancel the default is present in the given case.

This last point can be illustrated using our example of the “Appeal to a Source” scheme, as the following paragraphs illustrate in some detail.

One general type of reason for cancelling the default in such reasoning is that there are grounds for thinking that *S* might not be following the truth-telling convention in the given case. That possibility motivates the general critical question, “Is there any reason not to trust *S* to be truthful on this occasion?” And if it is useful to specify some of the circumstances that would justify questioning *S*’s truthfulness, then more particular critical questions can be formulated, for example: “Does *S* have any interest in not being truthful in this case?” And conditions for such special circumstances can also be checked, for example: “Will *S* gain monetarily by asserting *P* in this case although he does not believe *P* is true?”

Another general type of reason for cancelling the default in “*P* is true because *S* says so” reasoning is that there are grounds for thinking that *S* might be wrong about *P* in this case. That possibility motivates the general critical question, “Is *S* in a position to know that *P* on this occasion?” And as with the previous general critical question, this one can also spawn more particular questions that delve into ways in which *S* might fail to be in a position to know that *P* on this occasion, such as, “Does *S* have the requisite qualifications to know whether *P* is true?” and “Has *S* investigated whether *P* is true?”

Moreover, we can distinguish different types of *S* and *P*, according to whether there is some reason to assign some of them a special status. In our culture we have

the role of “expert” and the status of “specialized knowledge.” Specialized knowledge is information that is not capable of being known or understood by anyone lacking expertise, and an expert is someone who has the training and knowledge required to understand these otherwise inaccessible matters. We assign epistemic privilege or authority to the expert in matters of specialized knowledge within her purview. So if P belongs to a specialized knowledge field (F), then “ S says that P ” is a reason to believe P only if S is an expert in F , *ceteris paribus*. Accordingly, we can formulate specialized critical questions to check whether a given P falls within a domain of specialized knowledge, and if so whether a given S is an expert with respect to that field. As fields of specialized knowledge have become more complex and specializations of necessity have become narrower, we have altered our critical questions to check for such factors: for example, “Is S an expert not only in F in general, but more particularly in F' , the part of F to which S belongs?” We also recognize that expertise or epistemic authority comes in degrees: we assign greater authority about cancer diagnoses to oncologists than to family medicine physicians, for example.

We know that experts no less than others can violate the trust put in them, and can claim to know things that they have no better access to than anyone else (as when physicians give advice in moral matters, for example) or claim certainty when there are grounds for doubt (as when a physician presents a diagnosis to the patient categorically, when she should know that it is controversial and so her diagnosis should be qualified). Accordingly, we formulate additional critical questions to check out such possibilities, to see whether an expert appealed to undermines her authority in these ways, thus weakening the support of “ S says that P ” for P in F .

We do not surrender our epistemic authority to experts completely. If an expert makes a pronouncement, P , that strikes us as goofy (utterly implausible), we are inclined to reject P , no matter what the expert’s qualifications. If your dentist tells you he sees tiny people cavorting among your molars, you don’t ask for a mirror so you can see them too. So we formulate critical questions to remind ourselves to check the plausibility of P independently of any credibility it receives by virtue of S ’s having asserted it in C . Moreover, nothing in principle prevents the plausibility of the position in question from conflicting with the credibility of the source who asserts it, requiring a balance-of-considerations judgment about the relative acceptability of P .

As noted above, we can’t make perfect lists of critical questions, because situations differ in unpredictable ways (so no exhaustive list of all the possibilities is possible), but also because different situations may call up factors that don’t apply universally. If P is accessible only to those with advanced scientific engineering training (e.g., “Will the weight of the new engines increase metal fatigue dangerously?”), then S has to have properties that pertain—have the advanced scientific engineering training, have done or studied the research bearing on P , and so on. But if P is accessible only to those with personal experience (e.g., “What’s it like to give birth?”), then S has to have had personal experience of P , which may require no training whatever. Disagreements among experts will raise questions about some P s, as when physicians consulted for a diagnosis of the cause(s) of a set of symptoms

disagree. But in other cases, disagreements among those who are knowledgeable is irrelevant, as when movie critics disagree about whether a certain movie is good, but the particular critic whose taste and values you have found invariably to coincide with your own makes an unequivocal thumbs up or thumbs down judgment.

Another reason we can't make perfect lists is that the degree to which a condition is met or not met can be significant. So, perhaps the experts disagree, but most of those with big reputations line up behind *P* and for present purposes that's good enough for you to go with *P*. Or perhaps there is some general reason to question *S*'s reliability (e.g., *S* is getting paid for her opinion), yet on this occasion there is also reason to think that *S*'s integrity with respect to *P* is not in any doubt. It's a judgment call, and no set of conditions specifying all the factors and how to weight them that applies in all cases can usefully be set out.

Yet another variable that prevents formulating complete checklists is that the degree of confidence in the position that is needed will vary. When life-or-death information is needed, then confidence approaching certainty is desirable in a source. When convenience is important, and it doesn't matter much whether the position is slightly wrong, then it might be perfectly adequate to accept a *P* in an area of specialized knowledge on the advice of an *S* who is only slightly more knowledgeable than oneself.

A final complication is that, even assuming no conflict between the plausibility of *P* and the credibility of *S*, the various factors can conflict in particular situations in which judgment about *P* is required. Perhaps a life-or-death decision must be made, which calls for certainty, but one has only a few minutes in which to make it (as can happen in hospital emergency wards), which calls for a quick-and-dirty judgment. The need for practicality and the need for certainty conflict in such cases, and that affects the conditions of reasonable reliance on a source in those situations. A different kind of example: perhaps most authorities agree that *P*, yet one eminent authority, who has a track record for astute, minority judgments, dissents.

12.3.1.3 Generalizations from the First Example

We have seen that in the case of reasoning to the truth of information on the basis of the sayso of some source gains its rationality from the social practice of truthfulness. This practice at the same time justifies our reliance on sources for information, and alerts us to various limits on that reliance. Our recognition of those limits inspires a checklist of the common sorts of excepting circumstances. If this case is at all typical, we can in general expect to find some such particular ground for relying on the reasoning pattern captured by any reasoning scheme. As well, we should not expect that reliance to be justified unconditionally. For any given reasoning scheme there will be exceptions, and to the extent that the exceptions can be classified, we can generate a checklist of critical questions to guide anyone using the reasoning scheme in question.

We have also seen that, for a number of reasons, it is not possible to provide a single, simple, universally applicable list of specific critical questions for a reasoning scheme. The attempt to provide a complete set of specialized sets of critical

questions for each type of occasion in which a scheme might be used, while it might be interesting, would result in a welter of question-sets, with unavoidably problematic splitting of closely related but slightly different contexts, and much overlapping. The result would have dubious practical value. Thus, the criterion of selection for critical questions is their usefulness for the purpose at hand. Accordingly, not only is there room for reasonable disagreement about any given set of critical questions, given that means-ends judgments are in principle contestable, but also there may be different sets of critical questions for any given reasoning scheme, each for its own purpose.

In other words, the critical questions associated with a reasoning scheme are generated by knowledge of the types of circumstances in which there are exceptions to what is normally good reasoning. What makes the reasoning good in the normal or default situation is what might be called the warranting condition of that kind of reasoning. In the case of reasoning based on information provided by a source, the proposal made here is that the warranting condition is the existence of the social practice of truthfulness. That is what justifies the reasoning. In some loose sense of entailment, we might say that the practice of truthfulness entails P for R in C when S tells R that P in C , other things being equal. We will see that the warranting condition is what justifies the warrant that functions in the reasoning scheme.

The suggestion is that the rationality of reasoning schemes is a local, or individual matter. Each normative scheme will have its own warranting condition. (Thus “different” schemes that have the same warranting condition should turn out to be varieties of the same generic scheme.) This contention can only be justified inductively, but the discussion of the scheme for reasoning from information from a source is a start. In order to strengthen the case, I will next show how these generalizations apply to some other reasoning schemes.

12.3.1.4 Another Example: Reasoning from *A Priori* Analogy

When reasoning from analogy is good reasoning, why is it good reasoning? We quickly notice that there is both normative and empirical reasoning from analogy: sometimes we draw conclusions about what is right or wrong, what ought or ought not to be done, what is good or bad, or how something ought to be understood, on the basis of analogies, and sometimes we draw conclusions about what is probably in fact the case on the basis of analogies (and in the latter case, sometimes our conclusions are general and sometimes they are particular). Consider for present purposes only the first kind of case, labeled by Govier *a priori* reasoning from analogy.

One convicted sexual offender gets a 4-year jail sentence, another gets a 1 year jail sentence. It is argued that the penalty of the second is unjust, or that the penalty of at least one of them is unjust. The reason given for the complaint of injustice is that both offenders were convicted of the same crime, and the nature of their respective offences was similar. Was the judge in the second case wrong—was his reasoning bad? The judge in the second case says that the sentence is lighter than usual because the second offender, unlike the first, is very old and ill. Presumably the judge is reasoning that the effect of the punishment on the offender should be

similar in similar cases, and that the effect of a 1-year sentence on the aged and ill offender will be similar to the effect of a 4-year sentence on a younger offender. Was the judge in the second case right—was his reasoning good after all?

What seems to underlie a priori analogical reasoning is the principle that similar cases should be treated, or conceived, similarly, or in other words, the assumption of the rationality of consistency. If two cases are similar in the respects relevant to the kind of judgment being made about them, and there are no particular reasons in the circumstances for distinguishing them, then to make a particular judgment of one but not the other is *inconsistent* or *arbitrary*. What counts as consistent treatment is a judgment call, given real-world complexities such as the differences between the convicted offenders in the kind of case alluded to above. Moreover consistency is not the only value there is, so whether it should be overridden in a particular case is also a judgment call. Still, consistency is an avatar of rationality, and reasoning based on it is *prima facie* good reasoning. We might call consistency the “warranting condition” of a priori reasoning from analogy.

12.3.1.5 Additional Examples

It should be possible, if the thesis being developed here is true, to supply the warranting condition for any reasoning scheme that has substitution instances that count as good reasoning. Walton (1996b) lists twenty-five of what he terms “the” argument schemes. Although there are problems with his formulations (for example, some are entailments, as stated), Walton’s list provides a good sample for testing our thesis. But rather than discuss all twenty-five schemes in detail, one by one, it will be more efficient to comment briefly on the generic warranting conditions that recur in the reasoning schemes that Walton describes.

One of these warranting conditions might be called the *implication of a convention or practice*, and it is found in Walton’s schemes labeled “argument from a position to know” and “argument from expert opinion.” Both of these are special cases of reasoning from information provided by a source, and we have already discussed how that scheme relies on the convention of truthfulness. The general idea is that, given the existence of a certain social convention or practice, one is justified in normally expecting conduct of a certain sort when that practice is in play, for that is what it *means* for the practice to be operative.

A second generic warranting condition is *consistency*. For example, in Walton’s “argument from commitment”—reasoning that someone should do something by virtue of some commitment they have made—the appeal seems to be to acting in a way that is consistent with that commitment. (Or, perhaps the argument from commitment is another case of relying on a social convention, that of promising. One could also see classify this reasoning as employing a sort of *ceteris paribus* class or quantificational logic, for it takes the following form: “All those who have a commitment to X should, *ceteris paribus*, do A; you have made a commitment to X; so you should do A.”) A special case of the argument from commitment is the “argument from established rule,” since it appeals to a rule to justify a judgment, and such an appeal has force only if the person to whom the judgment applies has a

commitment to following or obeying that rule in general. The “argument from verbal classification”—for example, one of my father’s standard rejoinders was, “That policy is unacceptable: it’s pure socialism!”—seems similarly to employ consistency as its warranting condition: consistency with the classification in question implies assigning the property mentioned. And it too can be modeled by a kind of *ceteris paribus* class or quantificational logic: “This A may be classified as an X, X’s normally have property Z, so this A has property Z.” Walton’s “argument from consequences” scheme is a kind of causal-cum-normative *reductio ad absurdum* reasoning. The reasoning is that a given act or policy will have bad consequences and so shouldn’t be done or implemented. The consequence is not a logical one but a causal one, and its “absurdity” consists not of contradiction, but of undesirability. But again, what warrants the reasoning is an appeal to consistency, this time between espoused values and the consequences of actions. A special case of the argument from consequences scheme is the “argument from causal slippery slope.” This is the reasoning that taking a first step will cause a second, which will cause a third, and so on until a final consequence that is undesirable is reached, and therefore refraining from taking the first step is justified. Another special case of the appeal to consequences reasoning is what Walton labels the “argument from waste,” which is the reasoning that because a large investment towards reaching an uncertain outcome has been made to date, and because that investment would be wasted if the efforts were broken off, the pursuit of that outcome should be continued. In both the causal slippery slope argument and the argument from waste the appeal is to act consistently with (the implications of) one’s values.

Another of Walton’s schemes belonging to the group relying on consistency as the warranting rationale is reasoning from analogy, discussed in detail above. Reasoning from analogy is itself a generic reasoning scheme. The “argument from precedent” and its variant, the “precedent slippery slope argument” both appeal to analogies in their reasoning and so too rely on consistency as their warranting condition.

A category of reasoning schemes that appeals to consistency in another way takes the form of reasoning to an explanation. Both Walton’s “argument from evidence to a hypothesis” and “argument from a correlation to a cause” have this feature. When we reason in these ways we are seeking order in the world we experience—either to find it or to impose it. Why? Maybe there is order that manifests itself to us. Maybe there is some survival instinct that causes us to construct an order, since order permits predictions. These are deep and difficult questions, but whatever the answers to them, the order-seeking/finding of this reasoning is undeniable, and what we seek is an account that is consistent with both the new data and what we already believe.

A half-dozen of Walton’s reasoning schemes rely in one way or another on spelling out the causal implications of causal generalizations in particular circumstances. The “argument from cause to effect” is the generic scheme of this group. The warrant of such reasoning is a causal generalization, and the warranting condition is the nature of causality as we understand it. Given that events of type A cause events of type B, the occurrence of a particular A justifies inferring the occurrence

of a particular B, *ceteris paribus*. The “argument from sign” might be called the argument from effect to cause. It is reasoning from something that is a sign of a thing to the presence of the thing itself, and assumes a causal relation between the sign and the thing signified. Walton’s example—there are bear tracks, so there’s a bear—assumes (safely enough) that bears normally are the cause of bear tracks. The “circumstantial argument against the person” is a variation, for it involves reasoning from a generalization that one type of property (say, inconsistency between preaching and practice) is causally associated with another (say, the unreliability of what’s preached). The “argument from popularity” is reasoning from the fact that a position is widely held to the conclusion that it is plausible. This would appear to be a special case of reasoning from a source, with the credibility of the source being taken to lie not in an individual’s trustworthiness or expertise, but in the strength of numbers. However, it is more likely that underlying this reasoning is the assumption of a causal relation between a position’s being widely accepted and its being true, *ceteris paribus*—the assumption that error would not survive the scrutiny of so many. The “ethotic argument,” that someone’s good character is assurance of the truth of her pronouncements, relies on assuming a general causal relation between character and credibility. The “argument from bias” is one inverse of the ethotic argument, involving as it does reasoning that bias undermines credibility, thus relying similarly on a general causal claim. All of these varieties of inferring a particular causal implication of a general causal claim share the general assumption of the rationality of our causal understanding.

I have left to the end a couple of examples that seem to rely on an analogue of the logical principle of *modus tollens* exported to the non-deductive world. What Walton calls the “argument from vagueness of verbal classification” is reasoning that because a verbal classification is too vague, no particular application of it can be made. One of his examples is the argument that the point at which a fetus becomes a human person cannot be used as the dividing line between permissible and impermissible abortion, because that “point” is too vague. In general the reasoning seems to be that for a judgment or decision to rely on a degree of precision, such precision must be possible; but in the given case such precision is not possible; so the judgment or decision cannot rely on that kind of precision in the given case. Walton’s “argument from arbitrariness of a verbal classification” is similar. For a judgment to rely on a non-arbitrary verbal classification, such non-arbitrary classifications must be possible, but in the given case such a non-arbitrary classification is not possible, so in the given case such a judgment cannot rely on such a classification. Both of these are cases of qualified *modus tollens* reasoning (if p then q ; but not q ; so not p)—qualified, because unlike *modus tollens* proper, each of them includes a *ceteris paribus* clause. The warranting condition of these reasoning schemes is the rationality of the idealized entailment.

So much for the abbreviated treatment of Walton’s particular argumentation schemes, most of which have been discussed. Admittedly the argument is sketchy, but what it suggests is that there is a relatively small number of types of rationale for reasoning in these various ways, which may or may not reduce to one or another aspect of consistency, but which really do justify such reasoning when all things are

equal, but which don't justify it universally, since frequently other things are not equal and so an exception must be made.

12.3.1.6 Recapitulation

We can now see what Hastings meant by calling schemes “modes of reasoning.” More precisely, a reasoning scheme represents a particular way or manner of reasoning. We can see what Walton meant by describing them as structures of argument (we would say, of “reasoning”). A reasoning scheme sets out the pattern that is instantiated in particular substitution instances of reasoning or argument. We can see why Kienpointner takes the Toulmin model to capture the prototype or most general type of structure of a reasoning warrant. Each of these modes of reasoning is distinguished by the *ceteris paribus* (Walton's “pragmatic”) principle that authorizes or warrants inferring a particular conclusion from a particular configuration of grounds or evidence. (There is no objection to including the warrant as a component of the scheme that parallels the objection to including the associated conditional of an argument as a premise in the reconstructed argument—that it opens the door to a vicious infinite regress. For a scheme is not an argument or an argument form, and the warrant is not an associated conditional.) The warrant of a scheme derives from the particular conditions or features that make an inference of that type rational, when there are no circumstances that require making an exception and cancelling the default. And finally, we can see why van Eemeren and Grootendorst focused on a very small number (three) of “categories” of schemes, while acknowledging that “[o]f course, there are many subcategories of argumentation schemes” (1992a, p. 97). Walton's list of 25 turned out to contain a quite small number of subsets, each of which could be distinguished by being a variation of a single general warranting principle. And van Eemeren and Grootendorst are also right to use the evaluative function of reasoning schemes as their principle of classification: “Each type of argumentation corresponds to certain assessment criteria that pertain to the relation represented in the argumentation scheme” (1992a, p. 98). This is another way of using the warrants used in reasoning schemes as the basis of their classification, and recognizes the central role of these inference licenses in the conception of a reasoning scheme.

Not everything in these three accounts should find its way into a general theory of reasoning schemes. For instance:

- Van Eemeren and Grootendorst's “category” of reasoning that something is symptomatic of something else is itself a special case of applying a causal generalization (as we saw above in discussing Walton's “argument from a sign”), and so is not as general a category as they take it to be. Also, there appear to be more than three basic categories of reasoning schemes (though, to be fair, van Eemeren and Grootendorst do not explicitly claim there are only the three they describe).
- Walton's qualification that this sort of reasoning is “provisional” and “inherently tentative” (1996b, pp. xi, 42) conflates defeasibility with insecurity. Given that

none of the excepting conditions applies, a presumption in favour of a position can be so secure that it would be irrational to deny the position. If you make a promise, then if no excepting conditions apply, you ought to keep your promise—not provisionally, or tentatively, but most definitely—all the while acknowledging that there might be some factor you have overlooked, or some new factor that will change the picture. The falsifiability of scientific claims does not prevent us from being (with justification) morally certain about some of them to put lives at risk, and the defeasibility of the conclusions of reasoning using schemes similarly justifies moral certainty about them, when the appropriate conditions are met.

- One of Walton’s chapter titles, “The [*sic*] Argumentation Schemes” (1996b, p. 46), conveys the unfortunate suggestion that there is a definite number of reasoning schemes. We have seen that this cannot be so, since it is possible to parse reasoning at various levels of generality, and the specification, and count, of reasoning schemes will vary accordingly.

12.3.2 *The General Theory of Reasoning Schemes*

A complete account of reasoning schemes has to solve a number of problems. One is the *individuation problem*: what constitutes a single scheme? When there is a long sequence of reasoning, or a complicated argument, are there many schemes linked together, or just one scheme? Can there be more and less complex schemes, or simple and compound or single and multiple schemes? A second is the *identification problem*: what determines whether a scheme is the correct scheme of a reason? A third is the *classification problem*: how many schemes are there and how are they related to one another? A fourth is the *evaluation problem*: how is it decided that the reason that instantiates a given scheme is cogent?

The account above has already supplied solutions to the classification and the evaluation problems. Systems of classification are relative to their purposes. Consequently, there can be no single “correct” typology of reasoning schemes. The only pertinent question is whether any particular classification successfully or optimally fulfills its purpose. And what makes an instantiation of a given scheme cogent is that the warrant of the reasoning is rational and all the critical questions are satisfactorily answered in that case. We have seen that there is no single or universal principle of rationality for such reasoning, that the warranting conditions apply only for the most part or *ceteris paribus*, and we have also seen that the critical questions are highly context sensitive. In the remainder of the chapter I take up the individuation and the identification problems.

12.3.2.1 **The Individuation Problem: How Many?**

What is the scope of a reasoning scheme? In the literature on schemes the focus has been on small units. Kienpointner’s prototype includes a set of data (which presumably can be expressed by a set consisting of more than one sentence) and a warrant

that authorizes the drawing of a single conclusion or “claim” directly from that data set. Walton’s examples contain a small number of premises (or premise types) which together are supposed to provide direct presumptive support for a conclusion (or conclusion type). Here is an example, a slight modification of Walton’s account of the (scheme of the) “argument from popular practice” (1996b, p. 84):

If a large majority (everyone, or nearly everyone, etc.) does *A*, or acts as though *A* is the right (or an acceptable) thing to do, then there is a presumption that *A* is a prudent course of action.

A large majority acts as though *A* is the right thing to do.

Therefore, *A* is a prudent course of action.

By defining schemes as reasoning schemes, and by defining a reason as a unit of support for a position, we solve the individuation problem in short order. A scheme will be the scheme of a reason, and a reason is the smallest self-standing unit of support for a position. Thus, what are in Freeman’s (and others’) terminology, “convergent” and “serial” arguments will necessarily exhibit two or more reasoning schemes (1991, chap. 8). In the case of a convergent argument, each branch of argument supporting the conclusion will instantiate (be a substitution instance of) a separate token of a scheme (although they could, coincidentally, all happen to be instantiations or tokens of the same scheme—all arguments from analogy, for example); and in the case of a serial argument, each step in the chain of arguments will instantiate a separate token of a scheme (again, possibly tokens of the same scheme). In terms of Snoeck Henkemans’ (1992) analysis of both cumulative and complementary arguments, there will be more than one scheme at work. She takes each “premise” in such arguments to represent a reason for a different claim. For example, for the argument that might be stated:

I think she’s in love with him because she blushes every time he starts speaking to her and she also keeps talking about him.

She takes the correct analysis to be as follows [I have supplied the numbering] (1992, p. 96):

A [arguer] (1) I think she’s in love with him.

B [actual or anticipated audience] (2) Why do you think so?

A (3) She blushes every time he starts speaking to her.

B (4) Well, that doesn’t necessarily mean that she’s in love with him.

A (5) No, but she also keeps talking about him.

In the present terminology, A offers (3) as a reason for (1), and subsequently A offers (5) as a reason for (1). So there are two schemes in play here, possibly both of the same type.

Freeman (1991, chap. 8) makes a good case for counting convergent and serial arguments as single arguments, and his reasoning would apply equally to what Snoeck Henkemans calls cumulative and complementary arguments. If Freeman is right, a single argument may exhibit several schemes. His point gives us another reason for identifying schemes with reasons and not with arguments.

12.3.2.2 The Identification Problem: Which One?

A scheme can be more or less abstract, depending on how much of the statement of the reasoning or the argument that it represents is expressed by variables and on how large are the units of the argument expressed by a single variable. Thus one reason can be expressed by more than one variation of a scheme, the variations being a function of the variations in their type or degree of abstraction from the reason.

In the literature, sometimes actual reasoning or an argument is quoted and a scheme is formulated that is purported to be the scheme of that reasoning or argument. Let us call such schemes *descriptive*, since they are purported to describe accurately the patterns of particular reasons people have actually used or might use. The reasons so portrayed may or may not in fact be cogent, so there can be correct descriptive schemes of bad or fallacious reasoning or arguments. Such schemes are “correct” just in case they accurately portray the pattern of the reasons in question. Sometimes in the literature schemes are formulated and proposed as patterns of cogent reasoning or argument. Let us call such schemes *cogent* just in case they portray patterns of reasons that can have instantiations that are cogent. It might be debatable whether a particular scheme is in fact cogent in this sense. A particular scheme may be both descriptive and cogent; that is, it may accurately capture the pattern of a particular reason, and such a reason might also be cogent. The identification problem applies to descriptive schemes; the question of whether a scheme is cogent constitutes the evaluation problem.

By the way, to forestall a possible confusion, it is important to distinguish between the type of scheme and the type of reasoning or argument. Let us call an instance of reasoning or argument *empirical* if its conclusion is an empirical, factual or descriptive sentence or proposition, and let us call it *normative* if its conclusion is a prescription or a commendation. Any argument of either type will exhibit at least one descriptive scheme, and presumably there can be cogent schemes for reasoning or arguments of both types. This distinction corresponds to Kienpointner’s distinction between schemes for “*deskriptive Propositionen*” and “*normative Propositionen*” (1992b, p. 166, but also passim).

There are often several possible formulations of the scheme of a particular episode of reasoning. For example, the following reasoning might be represented by any one of the schemes listed below it:

I guess my car keys are in the pocket of my coat in the closet at home because I don’t have them with me and I think that’s the only other place they could be.

- (S1) If an object is probably located in the pocket of my coat in the closet at home or on my person, and it is not in one, it is probably in the other.
 Object X is located either in that coat pocket or on my person.
 Object X is not on my person
 So, Object X is probably in the pocket of my coat in the closet at home.
- (S2) If an object is probably located in location A or in B, and it is not in one, it is probably in the other.
 Object X is located either in location A or in location B.
 Object X is not in location A.
 So, Object X is probably in location B.

- (S3) If an object probably has property α or property β , then if it does not have one, it probably has the other.
 Object X has property α or property β .
 Object X does not have property α .
 So, Object X probably has property β .
- (S4) (*disjunctive syllogism*)
 Either p or q .
 Not p .
 So, q .

We can think of schemes as reason-types, and substitution instances of schemes as reason tokens. What counts as the correct schematic interpretation of a reason token may be a matter of debate. Any token of reasoning or argument will represent at least one descriptive scheme, but whether a particular descriptive scheme accurately portrays a given reason token may be debatable. On what grounds are such disagreements to be settled?

Consider an example. Walton (1996b, p. 83) gives an example of what he calls the argument from popularity:

Nearly everyone who lives in Cedar Rapids thinks that the lake is a good place to swim in the summer. Therefore, the lake in Cedar Rapids is probably (plausibly) a good place to swim in the summer.

And he offers the following as the “argumentation scheme” for the argument from popularity (*ibid.*):

If a large majority (everyone, nearly everyone, etc.) accept A as true, then there exists a (defeasible) presumption in favor of A .
 A large majority accept A as true.
 Therefore, there exists a presumption in favor of A .

“This kind of argumentation,” Walton says, “is deductively invalid, and generally it is not highly reliable” (*ibid.*). But as Walton has formulated it, any substitution instance of this scheme will be deductively valid, for it will have the form of *modus ponens*. Since Walton is here interested in schemes for presumptive reasoning, which he understands explicitly as not deductive reasoning, it looks as though his formulation of the scheme for “argument from popularity” is a slip-up—not what he intended. The scheme for the reasoning used in this type of argument must reflect the type of reasoning it is, or may most plausibly be taken to be. We might try the following:

- (1) If everyone or nearly everyone who has an opinion about it believes p is true, then there is a presumption in favor of p 's being true, and
- (2) just about everyone who has an opinion about it does believe p to be true.
 So, in the absence of reasons to the contrary,
- (3) p may be taken to be true.

In this formulation, substitution instances of (1) and (2) do not entail the corresponding substitution instance of (3).

If we may generalize from this example, one constraint on, or rule for, the formulation of a descriptive reasoning scheme would be that *it should accurately represent the kind of reasoning that it purports to be*. To be sure, it is not always possible to know what kind of reasoning the reasoner or arguer intended, and in situations in which that intent cannot be determined there is no way to decide with certainty what the correct formulation of the descriptive reasoning scheme is. At this point general principles of interpretation such as Charity must be applied.

We can use Walton's example to illustrate another constraint or rule. Suppose someone offered the following as the reasoning scheme of Walton's Cedar Rapids example of an argument from popularity.

If p , then presumptively q .

p .

So, presumptively, q .

In this case, the problem is that by supplying a variable for the entire antecedent, the proposed scheme (qualified *modus ponens*) abstracts too much, removing from view properties of the reasoning that are essential to its particular nature. It is like an aerial photograph taken from too high up, or without sufficient resolution, to reveal the topographical features of interest to its viewers. We can thus make a rule that *a scheme must exhibit the particular warrant of the reasoning: the properties of the reasoning that are salient to its (alleged) cogency*. The implication is not, by the way, that *modus ponens* is never the appropriate focus; the point is that it fails to exhibit perspicuously the warrant of the reasoning employed in the argument from popularity.

It may be that it is a tacit recognition of this rule—a concern with exhibiting the feature of the reasoning salient to its cogency—that leads Kienpointner (1992a, 19 ff.) to adopt the Toulmin model as the “prototype” of all argument schemes. In the Toulmin model, the “warrant” is the statement of the “principle” by virtue of which the “backing” information may be taken as support for the “claim” (Toulmin, 1958). Thus the warrant makes explicit why the inference of the claim from the backing is supposedly justified. (In my terminology, both “backing” and “warrant” are parts of a reason for a position.)

To sum up, a descriptive scheme of an instance of reasoning should satisfy at least two requirements:

- (a) the scheme should accurately represent the kind of reasoning intended by the reasoner or arguer;
- (b) the scheme should perspicuously exhibit the features of the reasoning that are salient to its (alleged) cogency.

12.4 Conclusion

If the argument of this chapter is correct, the theory of normative reasoning schemes constitutes at least one part of the theory of probative reasoning—reasoning the inferences of which are neither deductively valid nor quantitatively inductively

strong, yet which, nonetheless, can be cogent. Normative reasoning schemes capture the structure of such reasoning, including its warrants, and thereby display how such inferences are rational, even though they are not logical entailments and not scientific inductions. This rationality is not left to “intuition,” but in each case can be traced to a particular way in which rationality is manifest. The application of normative reasoning schemes requires an understanding of these local manifestations of rationality, often in considerable specific detail. For such rationality is highly contextual, and the conditions of its exercise are, accordingly, specific to those contexts. These conditions are monitored by the so-called critical questions that theorists have associated with reasoning schemes, and these critical questions thus play an integral role in the application of these schemes.

To the extent that the informal fallacies are associated with normative reasoning schemes, and Walton (1996b) makes a plausible case that they are, we can understand how the study of fallacies has occupied such a central role in informal logic scholarship. Walton argues that the informal fallacies are essentially related to abuses or improper uses of reasoning schemes in reasoning or argument. But reasoning schemes supply the rationale for the Third Category of reasoning and argument, and the field of informal logic is centrally concerned to understand the rationale of non-formal reasoning—more precisely, reasoning the inferences of which are not deductive entailments. Hence it is entirely appropriate that the attempt to understand informal fallacies has been a preoccupation of informal logic.

If this chapter is on the right track, it does not bring an end to the inquiry, but rather opens the door to further work. The specific rationales of particular types of reasoning scheme have been scarcely more than suggested, and in each case require much more thorough investigation. If the suggested general rationale for critical questions is correct, then it is likely that it will be possible and useful to work out a heuristic for the formulation of critical questions. The pedagogy of reasoning schemes also would need to be addressed, since some simplifications might be needed for teaching purposes, especially at the introductory level. The tasks of producing elegant and perspicuous formulations of the most commonly used reasoning schemes and of giving a correct account the different types of generic schemes remain to be taken up. And last but not least, the theoretical question of whether so-called inductive reasoning is *sui generis*, or whether it should be considered to constitute another family of presumptive reasoning schemes, is worth considering. It might turn out that there are not three broad Categories of reasoning, but just two after all: not deductive and inductive, but deductive and non-deductive, with inductive or empirical reasoning being one sub-class of the latter.

Chapter 13

Towards a Philosophy of Argument

13.1 Introduction

This chapter is an essay in the philosophy of argument. It recommends a way of conceptualizing argument and argumentation. The goal is to construct a framework in terms of which various particular theories of argument can be seen to have their place, and the various controversies in the field of argument studies can be located. I argue that the recommended conceptualizations have the implication that some of the controversies have been misplaced, and either disappear or need to be thought of differently.

13.2 Preliminaries

Each of the terms ‘argument’ and ‘argumentation’ is defined in textbooks and the argumentation literature in a variety of ways. Most definitions focus on some particular aspect, element or perspective of a complex of concepts and activities. If philosophy consists, at least partly, of the activity of sorting out or classifying, defining, framing, and thereby clarifying the world for our understanding and action, as I think it does, then the philosophy of argument is in part the task of clarifying this complex. Any account will tend to abstract from the concrete, disorderly reality of the phenomena, and thus select and simplify. Still, the goal is to understand what argument is and how it works.

Jacobs observed that the activity of argumentation (perhaps we should say the *many* activities of argumentation) requires or presupposes at its heart or base the deployment of reasons taken to support claims. As he put it, “Arguments are fundamentally . . . entities that express with a special pragmatic force propositions where those propositions stand in particular inferential relations to one another”

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(2000, p. 264). Jacobs is referring to what I have called the “illative core” of argumentation—the “this, therefore that” which is a *sine qua non* of argument and argumentation. Even the broadest definitions of argument, such as those of Willard (1989) and Gilbert (1997), presuppose some element of reason-using. Otherwise what one has is simply a difference, as when you say “tomayto” and I say “tomahto,” which is not a disagreement. Disagreements are over what is right or correct. If I say that your “tomayto” is the *wrong* pronunciation, *then* we have a disagreement and the possibility of argument. It is expected that there be reasons why one view is correct and its contraries incorrect. Whatever else is going on, without an illative core there is no argument and no argumentation.

However, I also called the illative core the *smallest* unit of argumentation, and in doing so I was conflating two distinct points. One is the point that Jacobs was making and that I have just underscored: illation is a necessary condition of argument or argumentation—hence the metaphor of the “core.” However, what is the smallest unit of illation is another matter. Argumentation often includes any number of units of illation, chained together or running along independent lines, and there is nothing at the “centre” of all of them, even though all might lead in the same direction. So the metaphor of a “core” is misleading. When speaking of the smallest unit of illation, I think it better to use the metaphor of the cell or the atom. So I now want to suggest that the smallest unit of argument consists of a reason to take (that is, maintain, adopt or change) an attitude towards a proposition, or towards an event or state of affairs or property, or towards an action or policy, and so on (in a broad sense of ‘attitude’). I will call this an “atomic argument.” *An atomic argument is something that, taken by itself, does, or is taken to, or is offered to, imply or support a proposition, an attitude or an action.* An argument *supports* a proposition, attitude or action if accepting the argument makes it more reasonable than otherwise to accept the proposition, adopt the attitude or do the action.

It is necessary to include the qualification, “taken by itself,” because there can at the same time exist both an argument in favor of an attitude or action and also an argument against an attitude or action, so that the net effect of the two arguments is a stalemate. Still, either one, taken by itself, will have made the attitude or action either more or less reasonable than otherwise. Also, there can be two or more arguments in favour of an attitude or action, such that any one of them makes it completely reasonable and so adding a second one could not possibly make the attitude or action more reasonable. Still, absent all the others, any one of them, taken by itself, will make the attitude or action more reasonable than otherwise.

It is necessary to add the qualification “than otherwise,” because something can be an argument for an attitude or action without making it completely reasonable to adopt the attitude or perform the action.

By ‘attitude’ I mean to include epistemic attitudes such as degrees of belief, but also non-epistemic attitudes such as degrees of liking or favouring, degrees of supporting, degrees of commitment, degrees of commendation, and the like. By an attitude towards an event or a state of affairs or a property I mean such things as approving or disapproving of it to some degree, wanting it to occur or not to occur, liking or disliking it, and valuing or disvaluing it. By an attitude towards an action or

policy I mean such things as approving or disapproving it, prescribing or endorsing it or the opposite, and choosing it or rejecting it. So when I speak of “adopting” an attitude, I mean to include not only such things as moving from unbelief to belief or conversely, or changing one’s degree of conviction, but also such things as coming to approve or disapprove, or changing one’s degree of approval or disapproval, and so on. By ‘action’ I mean not just act-tokens but also policies or rules, and the like. So when I speak of “doing” or “performing” an action I mean to include as well making a decision, approving or implementing a plan, policy or regulation, and so on.

The extent to which there are or can be reasons for such things is a matter of philosophical debate. My point is that if there can be such reasons, the smallest unit of such reason is an atomic argument. This is not the place to settle the larger philosophical questions that are pertinent here. So the concept of argument should not be specified in a way that begs any of these questions. It should not close off, just by the definition of *argument*, the possibility of arguing for one or another of these things.

By a *reason* I do not mean a *premise* as the latter term is usually understood. Usually a premise is taken to consist of a single proposition. A reason may consist of several propositions, that is, of a conjunction of propositions, or of other vehicles for conveying reasons, if others there are. A reason can be a proposition or group of propositions that stands in the relation to some other proposition. But there can be reasons for decisions or actions, and decisions or actions are not propositions. So reasons mustn’t be conceived in such a way that there cannot be reasons for actions, since clearly there can be. Can there be non-propositional reasons? It seems that sensory experiences can serve as reasons, or partial reasons, for beliefs. One’s gestalt impression of a person can serve as a partial reason to take an attitude towards that person, perhaps of trust or of distrust, of sympathy or hostility. Also, an emotion, such as fear, can serve as a partial reason for an action, such as flight; love can serve as a partial reason for an action, such as marriage; and so on. So rather than presuppose that only propositions can serve as reasons, I will speak more generally of “considerations.” A reason is constituted by whatever considerations *prima facie* justify a modification in either the direction or the intensity (or both) of the attitude or action.

Two or more considerations belong to the same reason just when, although singly they do not constitute reasons, their conjunction constitutes a reason.

Any two offered reasons constitute two distinct atomic arguments just when, if either turns out not to count as a reason, the other, without inconsistency, could count as a reason.

A group of considerations may *be taken to be* or may *be presented as* an atomic argument although they do not constitute an argument at all. In that case, they are irrelevant, although the person offering them might have erroneously thought that they were relevant, or might have thought that the audience to which he addressed them would erroneously think that they were relevant. Whether what is offered as an argument is an argument can be a subject of controversy. So we say such things as, “Her argument was irrelevant,” when what we mean more precisely is, “What

she took to be (or offered as) an argument was not an argument because what she took (or offered) as reasons for the claim in question were irrelevant.”

We identify as arguments considerations that make attitudes or actions more reasonable than otherwise whether or not they are recognized as such. So there can be arguments that not everyone understands, and there can be arguments that have only just been discovered or invented, yet once identified can make a past attitude or action correct, or mistaken. However, as just noted, we also identify as arguments things that are *taken* to make an attitude or action more reasonable even though they do not, and things that are *offered* as making an attitude or action more reasonable although they do not. Otherwise we could not speak of people adopting logically bad arguments or deliberately using logically bad arguments. A logically bad argument is something either unintentionally or deliberately taken to make, or offered as making, an attitude or action more reasonable when it does not do so.

Atomic arguments are *prima facie* reasons when an atomic argument in one direction is consistent with an atomic argument in a different direction. For example, there can be an atomic argument in favor of adopting a point of view when there is also an atomic argument in favor of rejecting it, or an atomic argument that a point of view should be firmly adopted when there is also an atomic argument that a point of view should be only tentatively adopted.

We might, following Pinto (2001) (and Beardsley, 1976, p. 5), think of offering an atomic argument as *inviting* another or others to take something to be an atomic argument, that is, to take its considerations as reasons to take an attitude or action—in other words, to infer the attitude or action in question from the considerations it adduces.

A group of considerations constituting an atomic argument can belong anywhere on a continuum from weak argument to strong. Atomic arguments can be weak or strong in either of two dimensions. First, assuming that there is no question or doubt about the truth or acceptability of the considerations adduced, they may present justifications that have varying degrees of force. Second, there can be varying degrees of confidence in the truth or acceptability of those considerations, whatever their justificatory force would be if they were true or acceptable. The strength of atomic arguments in either dimension can be a subject of controversy.

Atomic arguments are used for any of a number of purposes (to be discussed), and in the process they are regularly used in groups and in combinations. The logical merits of groups or combinations of atomic arguments are partly a function of their individual logical merits, but also a function of the comparative logical merits of different groups or combinations. An atomic argument supporting taking a particular attitude or action can itself be supported by one or more further atomic arguments, and these can in turn be similarly supported, and so on, indefinitely. I call such a chain of atomic arguments a *line of argument* for the ultimate attitude or action. An attitude or action can be supported by more than one line of argument supporting it, in light of more than one line of argument against contrary attitudes or actions, together with a “balance of considerations” argument that weighs the relative strengths of all the pro and con lines of argument. Such a complex of

atomic arguments supporting an “all-things-considered” attitude I call *a case* for that attitude.

Atomic arguments can be discovered, assembled, invented, or borrowed.

13.3 Uses of Arguments

The term ‘argumentation’ is used so variously and loosely in the literature that any definition will be a stipulation. However, some recent accounts run along similar lines. Van Eemeren, Grootendorst, and Snoeck Henkemans (1996, p. 5) characterize argumentation as “a verbal and social activity aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge.” Goldman (1999, p. 131) calls argumentation the activity of presenting arguments to an audience, whereby someone asserts and defends a conclusion by appeal to the premises. Johnson (2000a, p. 12) calls (the practice of) argumentation the socio-cultural activity of constructing, presenting, interpreting, criticizing and revising arguments. All of these accounts take argumentation to be the use of arguments. The first two tie argumentation to particular uses of arguments; the third does not specify any particular purpose for the activity.

I will follow these accounts and use ‘argumentation’ to denote any activity involving the use of atomic arguments, lines of argument or argument cases, and to denote such arguments when they are being or have been so used. So we can speak of analyzing someone’s argumentation, when what we mean is that we will identify the nexus of atomic arguments that she used for a particular purpose. And the atomic arguments traded in an argumentative discussion will constitute its argumentation.

It seems to me that arguments can be put to any number of intrinsic uses. They certainly can be used try to convey knowledge and its grounds (the use Goldman has in mind) or to try to alter someone’s opinion (the use that van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Snoeck Henkemans, and that Johnson, have in mind). They can also be used to try to demonstrate knowledge (for instance, when students are expected to produce or reproduce arguments in examination answers). They can be used to try to persuade an audience to take an action or adopt a policy. They can be used to explore the pros and cons of a position with a view to deciding what attitude to take or action to perform. They can be used as a means of resolving conflicts. I call these *intrinsic* uses because in these uses arguments are integral to realizing the objective. The point is not that one cannot (try to) achieve these ends in other ways; it is that (usually) what is wanted is that these ends be achieved by means of arguments.

Such uses of arguments can at the same time have other, additional objectives. For instance, one might want to persuade someone to change her mind about something and at the same time maintain her friendship or respect, or at the same time ensure that she will be amenable to future persuasion, or at the same time impress her with one’s cleverness or erudition. These might be called *associated* or *incidental* uses of argument, since these are objectives that might as well be sought and

achieved in other ways than by using arguments, but can be aimed at along with an intrinsic use of arguments.

To be distinguished from both intrinsic and associated uses of arguments are uses of arguments to achieve some end for which arguments are not particularly designed. Think of using a tool, such as a screwdriver. A screwdriver's intrinsic use is to drive screws into some substance. One might use a screwdriver at the same time to impress someone with one's dexterity or to demonstrate that one's arthritis is not debilitating. These are associated or incidental uses. But one might also use a screwdriver for some purpose for which it was not designed—as a pry, a wedge or a chisel, for example: what might be called *extrinsic* uses. Arguments can be put to extrinsic uses. For example, arguments might be used to filibuster, or to intimidate someone, or to distract someone, to bore someone so they depart, to insult someone, and so on.

In communicating arguments to others, a person can be addressing one particular person, or a particular group of people, small or large, or anyone who might listen to or read the arguments. Typically, atomic arguments are presented to another person or persons with a view to modifying *their* attitude or inducing action, but they can also be presented to one audience with a view to changing the attitude or decision of some third party.

13.4 Norms Relative to Uses

Given the various types of intrinsic purpose for which arguments can be and are used, it is to be expected that (at least slightly) different norms will be appropriate for each such use. Consider a number of instances.

If atomic arguments, singly or in groups, are used to convey knowledge, it is to be expected that the considerations serving as reasons will themselves be known or reasonable to believe, and that the arguments used will indeed strongly support the knowledge-claims they are used to support. Thus the reasons offered will be expected either to entail or to provide strong inductive support for the claims based on them. Also, one would expect appeals to testimony or authority to meet norms designed to maximize the chances that accurate information will be conveyed. And so on.

Goldman (1999, p. 134) develops a set of such rules, among which are the following:

- (1) the speaker believes the asserted conclusion;
- (2) the speaker believes each of the asserted premises;
- (3) the speaker is justified in believing each of the asserted premises;
- (4) the asserted premises jointly provide strong support for the conclusion.

If atomic arguments are used in dialogues aimed at rationally resolving a difference of opinion, it is to be expected that arguments will appeal to common

ground (mutually acceptable reasons) that support by mutually acceptable reasoning an attitude both parties will endorse. There will be norms governing the interchange of arguments aimed at maximizing the chance of an agreement. See rules of the sort van Eemeren et al. develop (e.g., 1996, pp. 283–284), among which are the following:

- (1) Parties must not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from casting doubts on standpoints.
- (2) A party that advances a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked by the other party to do so.
- (3) A party's attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has indeed been advanced by the other party.
- (4) A party may defend a standpoint only by advancing argumentation [my atomic arguments] relating to that standpoint.

If atomic arguments are used in monologues by one person rationally to persuade others, then it will be expected that the arguments will satisfy norms of reasonableness, and that the arguer will use arguments to try to remove any questions or doubts that the audience can be expected to harbor. See the norms that Johnson develops (2000a, chap. 7): the acceptability, truth, relevance and sufficiency requirements, and rules of good process.

If atomic arguments are used by a person to decide for herself or himself what to believe or do in connection with a particular issue, the arguments should include those offered by proponents of the various alternatives, as well as any the person can generate based on her or his own experience. Any considerations the person finds problematic (that is, questionable, improbable or implausible, given her or his background knowledge) would themselves have to be tested in turn by considering arguments for and against them. And so on. See, for example, Meiland's "steps" in an argumentative paper (1981, pp. 62–66).

If atomic arguments are used to persuade independently of the arguer's commitment to them (that is, commitment to the truth or acceptability of their reasons or to the force of their reasons as support for the attitude in question), then the norms will be a function of what the market will bear. Appeals to the prejudices of the audiences, to erroneous beliefs or other unjustified attitudes the audience holds, will be permissible up to the point that it becomes counter-productive to use them (such as if the risk of exposure outweighs the benefits of persuasion). Thus the informal norms will be prudential. There are also conventional restraints on such uses of argument in various situations. For example, the rules applicable to criminal trial pleadings, the rules of debating games, the rules of parliamentary debate, the legal rules governing political campaigns, the legal restrictions on advertising, all impose restrictions on the lengths to which the arguer may go in trying to persuade the relevant audience, presumably with a view to protecting the integrity of the argumentative practice in each case.

To the extent that different uses of atomic arguments share properties, it is to be expected that the norms appropriate to them will be shared.

The use of atomic arguments is often an action affecting others, and as such is subject to the norms of individual, social and political morality. But these are not norms governing arguments or their use in particular, but actions in general, of which the uses of arguments are types.

13.5 Norms of Different Perspectives on Arguments

Independently of their intrinsic uses, arguments can also be assessed from different perspectives. I have in mind the logical, dialectical and rhetorical perspectives.

Each atomic argument's reasons can be assessed for their truth, probability, plausibility or acceptability relative to the purposes at hand. And each atomic argument's reasons can be assessed for the strength of the support they supply for the attitude at issue. These are factors affecting the *logical* merits of an argument. Considering the strength, for example, it can be asked whether the reasons entail the attitude (whether the inference from the reasons to the attitude is deductively valid). If they do not, it can be asked whether the reasons make the attitude probable (or as probable as it is claimed they do), or plausible (or as plausible as it is claimed they do). For different purposes, different logical norms for the reason-attitude link will be appropriate. If one is trying to prove that a proposition is true, then showing that it is entailed by other true propositions makes the strongest case, followed by showing that it is highly probable, given all the available evidence. If one is trying to show that someone should consider performing a given action, then showing that there is a presumption in its favour might constitute a logically good argument. And when evaluating a line of argument, or a case for a position, the logical merits of each individual atomic argument component need to be investigated.

When an argument is used in any of the ways that involve interacting with the views of other people, it can be asked how adequate is the interaction for the purposes at hand. For example, in the case of dialogical argumentation, if one wants another person to adopt an opinion on a particular standpoint, it will be otiose to use arguments prior to discovering whether the person in fact holds a different opinion with respect to that standpoint. Having established that there is a difference of opinion, if one's goal is to resolve the disagreement rationally, one will need to argue against the opinion the interlocutor actually holds, and not against some deceptively similar opinion with a view to deceiving the interlocutor. Also, the arguer will have to answer whatever objections the interlocutor raises. In the case of monological rational argumentation (that is, one arguer presenting arguments to a non-interacting audience), there will need to be norms governing how extensively the arguer must canvas and reply to objections. There will be many other factors to consider when assessing arguments from this *dialectical* perspective. Often, perhaps usually, a condition of dialectical adequacy will be that the atomic arguments used are logically adequate, but it is possible to imagine uses of argument in which dialectical rejoinders might be effective even when logically faulty.

The question of the effectiveness of a use of arguments brings us to the *rhetorical* perspective, insofar as rhetoric is conceived at least in part as the art of effective communication and the use of arguments as a type of communication. Any properties of argumentation that bear on the effectiveness of its communication will be rhetorical properties, and the assessment of how effective is the communication of arguments and argumentation will be rhetorical assessment. On this conception, the rhetorical perspective does not apply when arguments are used in a way that does not entail interaction with others, but purely to inquire, or to establish attitudes without regard for any interlocutors. (Perhaps there are no such cases.) However, in many uses the arguer will have it as a communicative purpose that arguments play some role or another. So, for example, if their persuasiveness with the audience is affected by the ordering of the arguments, then their order is a rhetorical property. Arguments can be ordered well or poorly. The arguer presents himself or herself to the audience in such a way as to enhance or inhibit its receptiveness of the argumentative message, so the *ethos* of the arguer in the situation will be a rhetorical property. To the extent that the emotional state of the audience can make it more receptive to the arguments on offer, the arguer can take advantage of, or try to create, such a conducive emotional state, so the *pathos* of the argument will be a rhetorical property. To be sure, in most situations logically sound arguments will be more effective than unsound ones, and argumentation will be more effective if it is dialectically thorough than if it is dialectically incomplete. So, in those situations, logical and dialectical properties will also be rhetorical ones.

The point of view of the assessor is a variable that can bear on the relevant norms to be used in assessing arguments. For instance, someone designing the presentation of arguments to persuade an audience will want to be sure to use effective rhetoric; whereas a person to whom the persuasion is addressed will want to appreciate its rhetoric in order to discount it when necessary and not to be improperly influenced by it, should that be a possibility.

13.6 The Emphasis on Given Norms Relative to Users

Different users will have interests in different properties of arguments. As one to whom an argument is addressed inviting your adherence to the conclusion or your support for an action, you will presumably be interested in its having sound logic and thorough dialectical coverage. You want to form a judgment or make a decision based on good reasons, and on all the relevant considerations. As someone who is producing an argument, scanning the rhetorical situation will be your initial priority, and refining the rhetorical virtues of the case your final task, with good logic and dialectic occupying your time in between. You want to be sure that your argument addresses the rhetorical and practical interests and needs of your audience and the occasion. Depending on her interests, the scholar or critic or editor might place emphasis on different combinations of properties in evaluating an argument or a case.

13.7 Fallacies

On the conception of argument being proposed, there will be no single theory of fallacies. The character of particular fallacies will be a function of the use of argument in question. According to the Pragma-Dialectical theory, the abusive *ad hominem* is an illegitimate attempt to block an interlocutor from engaging in an argumentative discussion, and as such is a dialectical fallacy (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992a, pp. 110–113). According to the use of argument to transmit knowledge, the use of an abusive *ad hominem* to block an objection is an epistemic fallacy, since it impedes consideration of a factor that might bear on the truth of the claim in question (see Goldman, 1999, p. 152). Similarly, the fallacy of begging the question can be given either a dialectical or an epistemic interpretation. In a dialogue designed to resolve a disagreement, it is dialectically illegitimate to appeal to the very point at issue, since that is what the interlocutor is denying, so begging the question is a dialectical fallacy. In an argument aimed at establishing the truth of a proposition, it is illegitimate to appeal to that proposition, since the assumption is that the proposition requires support; so begging the question is an epistemic fallacy. To argue that all fallacies are dialectical in nature or that all fallacies are epistemic in nature or that all fallacies exhibit some other basic characteristic is to overlook alternative uses of arguments, or to attempt to elevate one to the exclusion of all others.

13.8 Types of Argument

On the conception of argument being proposed, there are not different types or modes or models of argument or argumentation, but rather different uses of argument and different perspectives in the light of which to interpret and assess arguments and argumentation. Thus, on this conception it makes no sense to contrast the logical mode of arguing with the emotional mode of arguing (as does Gilbert, 1997, p. 79), or the logical model of argumentation or the dialectical model of argumentation with the rhetorical model of argumentation (as does Tindale, 1999, p. 207).

I think what Gilbert is interested in establish is the claim that emotions can legitimately play a role in arguments. I would agree that there are arguments in which emotions are relevant in various ways, but it confuses things to denominate these as the “emotional mode” of argument in some sense that contrasts them with the “logical mode” of arguing, as Gilbert seems to want to do. It seems clear that the fact that someone is angry or upset or anxious or fearful is relevant to him as a consideration in his deciding what to do, and in such cases it does and should play a logical role. To contrast emotion and logic is therefore misleading. It also seems clear that the emotional state of the audience of an argument will affect how the argument is received and so plays a rhetorical role. In any case, the debate about whether emotions are or can be reasons for acting, or for believing, belongs to action theory, or epistemology, respectively, not to the theory of argument, on the conception of argument I am proposing.

To speak, as Tindale does at times, of rhetorical argumentation—as contrasted with logical argumentation—risks overlooking the consistency of rhetoric and logic. I have suggested that one will want one’s logically impeccable arguments addressed to others to affect their attitudes, and so will want to attend to the properties of the situation of the argument, including of the audience and the occasion (among other things), and consequently to consider what argument selection, ordering, presentation (and so on) that will best attain that end. Similarly, I have suggested that there will be (many) contexts in which the most effective way to attain one’s communicative goals involving the use of arguments will be to make sure that the arguments one offers are logically sound. Tindale suggests that rhetoric is more important or more fundamental than logic or dialectic, and by that he seems to mean that in order to achieve one’s argumentative goals, one must first assay the rhetorical context, and adapt one’s logic and dialectic to that context. I think this is right for some uses of argument, but wrong for others. One can think of situations in which the arguer’s overriding objective is to have logically good and dialectically complete arguments. To be sure, this claim presupposes that logical and dialectical goodness can be identified independently of rhetorical properties (such as the beliefs and attitudes of an audience) in such situations. I cannot think why one would want to deny such a possibility a priori, and granting this point, it would have to be granted that such situations are at least in principle possible. In using arguments to help oneself decide what position to take on a pressing issue, for example, the rhetorical perspective does not come into the picture. Suppose I am trying to decide what my position should be on whether the names and current addresses of convicted child-molesters who have served out their prison sentences should be made public. I need to consider all the arguments on both sides that I can find or generate myself, assess the logical merits of those arguments, and come to an all-things-considered judgment. I might want to do this with no intention of mentioning my view on the matter to anyone else. The effectiveness of my communication is not a factor since I do not (intend to) communicate it. To be sure, I will need to understand the rhetorical properties of the discourse in which I find the arguments that I need to examine. But the interpretive moment is distinguishable from the judgment-formation moment. So while it is important to emphasize the centrality of the rhetorical perspective, as Tindale has done, it seems a mistake to elevate any one perspective to primacy in all possible uses of arguments.

A similar objection might be developed against van Eemeren and Houtlosser’s (2000c) attempt to relegate the logical and rhetorical perspectives to subservience to the dialectical perspective.

13.9 Competing Schools

It should be evident from what has been argued so far that Goldman is mistaken to reject the Pragma-Dialectical model of argument for failing to function well as an account of argument used to transmit knowledge (Goldman, 1999, pp. 159–160). Goldman produces a list of standards of good argument and argumentation based on

the point of argument being to establish the truth of a proposition and the point of argumentation being to maximize veritistic values—roughly, knowledge and freedom from error (see 1999, pp. 87–94). He then criticizes the Pragma-Dialectical model, which is based on the point of argumentation being to rationally resolve a disagreement, for failing to meet veritistically grounded norms of argumentation. He does not argue that veritistic goals are the only proper goals for argumentation, or that disagreement resolution is an improper goal of argumentation.

And it would be equally mistaken for van Eemeren, *et al.*, to reject Goldman's epistemic model for failing to function well as an account of argument used to resolve a difference of opinion, should they be tempted to do so. I think it also follows from the conception of argument being proposed that the Pragma-Dialectical model is not fruitfully superimposed on all uses of argument for purposes of analysis or assessment. The Pragma-Dialectical model was designed for the use of arguments to resolve a disagreement rationally. On the face of it, there are other, different, equally legitimate uses of arguments. It would be surprising if the norms of the disagreement resolution use of arguments applied in every other use.

A somewhat weaker claim than that the Pragma-Dialectical model is the ideal type in terms of which all argumentation should be analyzed and evaluated is the claim that all uses of arguments can be modelled as dialogues. That would be another way of saying that the dialectical perspective is always applicable to arguments. I can see that the dialectical perspective often applies when two or more atomic arguments are chained together in a line of argument, or when two or more lines of argument are generated in a case. What motivates a second atomic argument is frequently some question about or challenge to the first, and such a question or challenge is then readily and helpfully modelled as a turn in an argumentative dialogue. But the dialectical perspective does not apply to individual atomic arguments. Whatever dialectical considerations might motivate the formulation or presentation of an individual atomic argument, its logical virtues will be independent of its dialectical function in any line of argument.

Some proponents of Pragma-Dialectics seem to be committed to the view that in supplying a second consideration to a reason one is *always* responding to a dialectical critique (Snoeck Henkemans, 1992, sometimes seems to suggest this). But an arguer can present a reason that has no missing considerations without being prompted by an interlocutor to do so; and presenting such a complete atomic argument does not necessarily presupposes challenges to the relevance of any of its elements taken by itself. Suppose I am dubious about r , and you, seeing that p and q entail r and believing you can persuade me of r by pointing out that fact, present me with the argument, " r , because p and q ." If supplying both premises betrays anticipation of an objection to the relevance of one of them taken by itself, which one of p and q did you think I might have challenged? It is perfectly plausible that you see that p and q jointly entail r , and so offer the pair as an open-and-shut case for r . Again, it is sometimes argued that any time there is a line of argument—a reason with one of its considerations backed by a further reason—that is so because the arguer has anticipated (or received) an objection and is producing an additional atomic argument to refute the objection. I think that is often the case, but it need not

always be so. Suppose, for example, that you want me to believe r , which I resist, and the following story is also true. You know that I believe p , and in your opinion: (a) p implies q , (b) I will recognize that p implies q if you point it out to me, (c) q implies r , and (d) I will recognize that q implies r if you point it out to me. So you present me with the following line of argument: “ r , because q , and q because p .” Did you offer the atomic argument “ q because p ” because you wanted to argue “ r because q ” but you thought I would balk at q ? Not as I am imagining your reasoning. As I am imagining your reasoning, you notice that p supports r , but only indirectly, by way of directly supporting q , which in turn directly supports r . So while a line of argument *can* reflect an actual or anticipated dialectical interchange, it doesn’t *have* to.

The general point is that the attempt to assimilate all argumentation to a single use as the exemplar or primary is misguided. My prediction is that any such attempt will run into the sort of detailed objection just demonstrated, and is motivated by undue emphasis on a single use of argument.

13.10 Conclusion

What I have tried to sketch is a conception of argument and argumentation that is consistent with arguments being put to a wide range of uses and that frees the definition of argument from association with any particular use. I have suggested that some of the controversies that have occurred in the recent argumentation literature are based on a failure to distinguish different uses of arguments, or else (or as well), a confusion of modes or models of arguments with perspectives on argument. The conception of argument I am proposing is in an important respect pluralistic, and is hostile to the attempt to reduce the variety of models or uses of arguments to any single one.

Chapter 14

Argument and Its Uses

14.1 Introduction

The theme of the conference for which this keynote address was written was inspired by the work of Stephen Toulmin (1958; Toulmin, Rieke, & Janik, 1979). I hope that my remarks reflect at least part of the spirit of Professor Toulmin’s work—namely, a healthy irreverence toward received views. As will be evident, my remarks also borrow heavily from the substance of Professor Toulmin’s work.

The larger question motivating much of my thinking, as no doubt it does yours too, is this one: How does it all fit together? By “it all” I mean all the definitions of argument and argumentation, all the theories, all the perspectives, and all the norms that have been accumulating as our field has developed since, let’s say, 1958, the year *The Uses of Argument* (Toulmin, 1958), and also, *La Nouvelle Rhétorique* (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958), were first published. But what I will do here is much more modest, namely, suggest that we slightly rethink the concept of argument.

14.2 Some History

I need to begin with a word about the historical development in philosophy that has come to be called “informal logic.” It began partly as a reaction against a tradition of logic instruction. This was the tradition of teaching the skills of argument identification, analysis and assessment on the assumption that these tasks are sufficiently managed with the tools of formal logic. It was also partly a related reaction against the focus on decontextualized arguments and simplified, invented examples that was prominent in so much of the tradition of instruction centered on formal logic. Informal logic emerged in the process of developing a new kind of logic course offered by philosophy departments in the United States and Canada, one in

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which a key innovation was to examine texts that were chunks of real discourse, identify the arguments to be found in them, set them out perspicuously, and evaluate their logical cogency without relying on the traditional criterion of “soundness.” We began to shape new conceptual tools to serve these tasks.

But along the way, we have made some unwarranted inferences. For starters we nearly threw a couple of babies out with the bathwater.

We initially perceived ourselves to be opposed to formal logic—hence our moniker: “informal logic.” But quite early on we recognized our mistake. Our disagreement with the “formal logic is all you need for logic” camp, implies no disagreement with formal logic itself. Our name is therefore misleading, although it is too late to change it now. So we retrieved that baby.

Next, some time ago now many of us came to realize that we also disagree with those who think that all you need to understand arguments and argumentation is the logic of arguments—be it formal or informal. We first came to realize that, in order to understand argumentation we need to understand dialectic as well, and belatedly have come to realize that we need to understand rhetoric too. But now some who oppose “logic is all you need for argumentation” think that this position implies opposing logic, or at least minimizing its role in argumentation. This implication, just like the earlier one, is on the face of it suspect, and I think we need to retrieve that baby too.

14.3 A Standard Concept of Argument and Why It Is Mistaken

But those are not the only bad inferences we have made. By focusing almost exclusively on the persuasive function of arguments and on argumentation as a process of rational persuasion, we have tended to conceptualize argument as having an analytic connection with persuasion.

There is a lot of evidence that this is how we conceive of argument. Consider how many prominent informal logicians define the word ‘argument’ or otherwise characterize what an argument is. Toulmin et al. (1979) say that an argument in one sense is a “chain of reasoning . . . the sequence of interlinked *claims* and reasons that, between them, establish the content and force of the position for which the particular *speaker is arguing*” (1979, p. 14). Scriven says that “The function of an argument is *to persuade you* that since the premise is true, you must also accept the conclusion” (1976, pp. 55–56). Pinto insists that “the word ‘argument’ . . . is appropriately applied to sequences of propositions only when they serve as *instruments of persuasion*” (2001, p. 36). Freeman is interested in an argument as “a *message* which attempts to establish a statement as true or worthy of belief on the basis of other statements” (1988, p. 20). Hitchcock has called an argument “a set of *claims*, one of which is put forward on the basis of the rest” (1983, p. 31). Govier says that “An argument is a set of *claims a person puts forward* to show that some further claim is rationally acceptable” (2001, p. 3). Woods, Irvine, and Walton say that in the broad sense of “argument,” “an argument is a *presentation* of reasons or evidence in support of some *claim*. It is an attempt to build a case

in favour of a conclusion” (2004, p. 2). [My emphasis in all the above quotations.] These definitions reveal how these scholars are thinking about arguments, and that is a pretty prestigious group. But if we make reference to claims and messages and presentations, we are talking about assertions, which are communications, and in this case are messages aimed at affecting the beliefs, attitudes or conduct of others. So whether they are explicit about it or not, these accounts all make the concept of argument out to be analytically connected to the function of persuasion. They all conceive an argument as a particular instrument of persuasion.

Now, persuasion is a kind of activity. Resolving a difference of opinion is a joint activity. These are things that we do. When we persuade by arguing, what we do is we use arguments to persuade. But is persuasion the only possible use of arguments? Does using arguments *entail* trying to persuade? I don’t think so. I think we use arguments in all sorts of different ways, and using them to try to influence an interlocutor or audience to accept some proposition, or to try to resolve a difference of opinion by getting the other party to accept your position—that is, using them to try *to persuade*—is just one of many uses. Here is a list of six or seven other uses or types of uses of arguments, and I expect there are more. By the way, because the names I use are in many cases the same as the names that Walton gives to his list of dialogue-types (see 1998, for example), I need to make it clear that I do *not* intend this as a list of different kinds of dialogues. Perhaps they can all be analyzed as if they occur in dialogues, but that is another question, and one that I won’t address.

(1) *Quasi-persuasion*. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) remind us that we use arguments to strengthen adherence to an already-held point of view, and presumably, conversely, we can use them to weaken the grip of an already-doubted point of view. Goodwin has noticed that we can use arguments with the intent merely of opening our interlocutor’s mind to a possibility, of getting a foot in the door. These need not be cases of trying to get someone to abandon a belief, attitude or course of action, or to adopt a completely new one.

(2) *Inquiry/investigation* and *deliberation*. We use arguments to try to think our way through to a considered opinion on an issue. We mull over the arguments on all sides, and try to see what they point to, all things considered. We want to determine for ourselves what position on an issue we think is justified. Doing that is different from self-persuasion, since we don’t necessarily start out with a standpoint that we are committed to. This is the use of arguments *to inquire* or *to investigate* if it is using them to decide what to believe, and it is their use *to deliberate* if it is using them to decide what to do.

(3) *Justification*. There is a use of arguments that is a lot like persuasion in that its goal is to gain the adherence of others to a thesis or proposal, but also a lot like inquiry or deliberation in that the arguer is presenting to the others the considerations that he or she finds compelling—that he or she thinks show that the thesis is true (or the most reasonable or most plausible) or show that the proposal is right (the best alternative, etc.). The arguer takes herself or himself to be explaining why the thesis is true or right. Maybe this use of arguments is really nothing other than persuasion, but there are plenty of cases of persuasion in which the arguer’s goal is to get the

others to agree, whether or not that involves getting them to appreciate the truth of the matter. So I will list justification as a distinct use.

(4) *Collaboration*. Some have recently urged that we stop using arguments adversarially, and start to use them collaboratively (Gilbert, 1997, esp. chap. 8; Tannen, 1998, pp. 284–290; Tindale, 2004, esp. chap. 4). Instead of identifying what is wrong with a view you disagree with and trying to refute it, or instead trying to get another to come around to your view, look for what you both think is right about one another's standpoints, and try to build on common ground. The use of arguments in collaboration is like inquiry in that its participants are trying to get at the truth of the matter: they are trying to get it right. But it is also like justification in that usually they are also writing up their findings in a way that, they hope, will gain the assent of others or at least be clearly understood by others. I am not convinced that collaboration is a distinct use of arguments, but I list it because it does emphasize the possibility of people using arguments constructively, trying to get at what is true in the other's position, a win-win activity, rather than adversarially, trying to defeat the other and win the argument, a zero-sum activity.

(5) *Rationale giving*. In some types of situation, someone's decision or judgment is expected to be accompanied by a rationale, no matter how the decision or judgment was arrived at. Administrators and judges are often in the position of being required to accompany their judgments with such rationales. Although such rationales are addressed to audiences, the object is not to persuade the audience so much as it is to show that the judgment can be supported in terms of the criteria on the basis of which it was expected to have been made, or in some cases, legally required to have been made. Call this argument used as *rationale giving*. I don't like to use the term *rationalization*, since it suggests bad faith and there need be no bad faith in rationale giving arguments.

(6) *Edification/instruction*. By discovering the arguments that convince someone else of a thesis or theory, along with the objections to that view, we arrive at a better understanding of the person's position than we would have had, had we been given just a statement of the position by itself. As instructors, we require our students to study and come to an understanding of such arguments, with a view to deepening their understanding of the theory or thesis under study. We thus use arguments both for our own *edification* and also for the *instruction* of others. This use of arguments often entails working backwards from conclusions to premises, not from premises to conclusions.

(7) *Evaluation*. We similarly use arguments to assess peoples' understanding and their intelligence. Someone's criticisms of others' positions and arguments reveal how, and thus whether, they have understood what they are criticizing. This is the purpose of assigning argumentative essays and examination answers to students. Arguments are thus used for *evaluation*.

If all of these uses of arguments are different from persuasion, then it is just implausible to think of persuasion as the only or even the paradigm use of arguments. And if at least one of them is different from persuasion, then it is a mistake to *define* argument in terms of persuasion.

14.4 A Revised Concept of Argument and a Brief Defense of It

If argument is not to be identified with the use of arguments in persuasion, then we need a definition and conception that enables us to think and speak of arguments as something that we can and do use to do these other things besides trying to persuade.

At the heart of things, I suggest, are reasons—reasons for beliefs or for believing, reasons for attitudes or for emotions, or reasons for decisions about what to do. An argument is a reason for some such propositions, using ‘proposition’ in a broad sense. Arguments are, to borrow Mill’s apt phrase, “considerations . . . capable of determining the intellect either to give or withhold its assent” (Mill, 1979, chap. 1).

So I propose that we conceive a set of one or more propositions to be an *argument* (understanding ‘proposition’ in the broad sense) just when all but one of them constitute a *reason* for the remaining one. And a set of propositions is a reason for a belief, attitude or decision, just when the former *support* the latter to some degree. What constitutes support is an epistemological question, understanding epistemology in a broad way, so as to be the theory of the justification of attitudes and various kinds of normative propositions as well as of beliefs.

Argument is to be distinguished from argumentation if argumentation is understood to be an interchange involving two or more parties resulting in the assertion of one or more arguments coupled with an anticipated or actual critical response, and any consequent chain of responses, including the assertion of other arguments. Argumentation in this sense is dialectical, understanding dialectic as an ordered interchange between two or more parties that is motivated by the question whether a proposition asserted by one party should be accepted by the others and it presupposes that reasons are available as a means of establishing that it should or that it should not be accepted. Dialectic thus presupposes reason giving as a tool or move, and reason giving presupposes the possibility of reasons supporting propositions, namely arguments.

To take something to be an argument is to take a consideration to supply some amount of support for a proposition. So the identification of a set of propositions as an argument is a judgment, and individual people make judgments. So whether some set of propositions is an argument is a judgment that someone makes.

I think the Toulmin model (Toulmin, 1958; Toulmin et al., 1979), with a slight modification, works well as a model of argument. I think it is useful to employ the Toulmin model because its concept of “warrant” makes explicit the inference rule that is functioning in any argument, and being able to refer to the inference rule at work provides a way of distinguishing kinds of logical criteria. But I define argument in terms of propositions rather than claims because claims are tokens of a type of speech act, namely, the act of assertion, or putting forward a proposition as true, which is a kind of communication with others that carries with it the obligation to defend the proposition claimed if challenged, and so connects argument analytically with persuasion.

I would like to add two parenthetical remarks about the Toulmin model. First, I believe that criticisms of the Toulmin model for being insufficiently dialectical or insufficiently rhetorical mistake it for something it isn’t. It is a model of argument,

not a model of a use of argument or a model of argumentation. Second, calling it the “Toulmin” model should not be taken to imply that it is something Toulmin dreamed up, some confection of Toulmin’s that has caught on, like a fad, in some quarters, and so might as readily be dropped. Toulmin deserves credit for bringing it to our attention once again, but it is nothing else than the *epichairema*, described in Cicero’s *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and *De Inventione*. It has been around a long time (see van Eemeren et al., 1996, pp. 47–49).

Other things being equal, reasons can be judged to make it necessary, or more likely, or more plausible than otherwise that the proposition they support is true or worthy of acceptance. In some kinds of arguments, the warrant makes rejecting the conclusion while granting the grounds inconsistent in some way (see Scriven, 1976, pp. 30–32). That is, when a set of propositions supports another one in such cases, there is some kind of inconsistency in accepting the former and rejecting the latter. In other kinds of arguments, the warrant in effect makes a prediction that the conclusion will be borne out, given the grounds. In such cases the warrant’s backing is supported by the success rate of such predictions. In other kinds of arguments, the warrant in effect postulates the conclusion as the best explanation of the grounds. In yet other kinds of cases, the warrant conveys an entitlement to shift the burden of proof to anyone who would disagree with the conclusion, given the grounds. And so on: all of this and more needs to be worked out, to be sure.

The essential idea is that an argument, or more precisely, a unit of argument, is a compound proposition consisting of a proposition together with a consideration that supports it, other things being equal. The supporting consideration can include more than one proposition, so it is not a premise, but a group of premises. The consideration tends to show that the proposition is true, or reasonable, or probable or plausible, other things being equal. We often harmlessly speak as if the consideration itself is the argument, but this is always to be understood as short for “the consideration that does the supporting in the argument.” Whether what counts as support is always relative to persons and situations is an open question so far as the concept of argument goes. The *ceteris paribus* rider is necessary, because there can in many cases be arguments for and arguments against a proposition—or, more precisely, arguments with the affirmation of a proposition as their conclusion and arguments with the denial of that same proposition as their conclusion.

Someone will notice that by my definition there cannot be an argument with *no* support. To be sure, it is convenient to be able to refer to someone’s “argument” even when what the person adduces as support for a proposition does not support it at all. I want to say that such a person might think he has an argument, but he doesn’t; however, there is no harm in using the term ‘argument’ to refer to a “proposed argument” that might turn out on investigation to be a non-starter. I am suggesting that “argument” is thus a normative concept.

I would like to take up one objection to the proposal to conceptualize argument independently of its uses. It runs as follows. In doing so, am I not falling back into the kind of abstraction from context that it was part of informal logic’s founding spirit to avoid? Am I not proposing that arguments are in some way context-independent? Am I not implying that they can be understood and appreciated apart

from the situations of their use? My answer is: no, no and no. I am talking about what an argument is, not about how to recognize one, or how to reconstruct expressed arguments, or how to evaluate one.

My own view is that discourse can be identified as argumentation or as containing arguments only in the light of a given particular interpretation of it. Arguments are embodiments of meaning, and meaning is generated by participants' understanding of the situation. The particular meanings of sentences, or how they are understood, are thus not accessible aside from their contexts, that is, the particular situations of their use. One's understanding of the meaning of a sentence will depend on what one understands the purpose of the communication to be, on what one takes the issue to be and on what one takes the communicative role of the utterance to be.

So I am not denying that identifying the particular argument that someone has presented or that someone is thinking about relies on an understanding of the situation. This is part of the rhetorician's point. Nor am I denying that identifying the argument depends on an understanding of the role of the use of the sentences. This is part of the dialectician's point. But once we have a particular understanding of the discourse that makes it out to be argumentation, and we have a particular understanding of the argument in question, we can then ask, from whatever perspective we occupy, whether the reasoning of that particular argument as it stands, so understood, and at that moment, is any good—that is, in our judgment to what extent do the considerations adduced support the proposition in question, or to what extent should they be taken to support it?

14.5 Assessing the Logic of Arguments

One reason I want to avoid losing sight of arguments as distinct from their uses is that I think we need to keep in the forefront of our attention the fact that we do not yet have the *logic* of arguments worked out. We do not yet have a normative logic for arguments that everyone agrees is right.

I don't have a theory to propose, but I will sketch an approach that I think is promising. You will recognize in it the views of many other people—Toulmin (1958), Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958), Perelman (1982), Hitchcock (2003), Walton (1996b), Pinto (2001), van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1984, 2004), Johnson (2000a), and I'm sure many others—and there is really nothing new about it.

The question of whether an argument is logically any good is the question whether someone has any business drawing that conclusion from those premises, or accepting those considerations and taking them as warranting his or her assent to that proposition.

In Toulmin's framework, an argument consists of considerations from which the inference to a qualified proposition is licensed, other things being equal. I therefore put the question this way: when is the logic of an argument so understood any good? When is one entitled to infer the conclusion of an argument?

There are two parts to the answer. First, the grounds must be adequate for the purposes at hand. They must be true, or probably true, or plausible, or acceptable to the audience—whichever of these is required by the nature of the qualification attached to the conclusion. And, second, the support the grounds provide for the conclusion must be adequate.

In assessing the adequacy of the support in any particular argument, we can ask, first, whether the grounds *entail* the proposition in question—whether the conclusion follows deductively from the grounds. If the answer is yes, well and good. What makes an argument deductively valid is that in the circumstances it has a defensible warrant that is a rule of inference with no qualifications: the warrant has the form, “given grounds of this sort, a proposition of that sort cannot possibly be false.” If the argument is not deductively valid, then I don’t think we should refashion it to make it deductively valid, unless there are unambiguous textual indicators that the arguer intended an entailment. Otherwise, doing so would produce a different argument. This is not the place to do it, but I would argue against methodological deductivism. Instead, I think we should ask, second, whether the argument might be inductively strong. Does it have in the circumstances a warrant of the form, “given grounds of this sort, a proposition of that sort is probably true” or something similar, perhaps with the probability quantified.

If the argument is not deductively valid and its conclusion is not warranted by a probabilistic rule of inference, we can ask, third, whether in the circumstances the grounds support the proposition at issue on the basis of some other kind of rule of inference. Here is where the path forward is not so clear. It strikes me that one promising way to understand Walton’s work on presumptive reasoning is to regard it as developing a conceptualization of a third kind of rule of inference: the presumptive warrant. And this is where argument schemes come into the picture. The various argument schemes—argument from analogy, argument from authority, argument from consequences, and so on—are to be understood as presumptive warrants. Attached to each particular kind of presumptive warrant is a set of types of critical questions. Tokens of those questions are to be asked about any particular argument that instantiates that scheme and they must be answered satisfactorily in order to justify the verdict that the argument in question does indeed have the presumptive force claimed for it.

So, part A, check for premise adequacy. Part B, check for support adequacy. To do the latter, step one, check for deductive validity. If invalid, step two, check for inductive strength. If there is no probabilistic warrant, then, step three, see if the argument instantiates a presumptive argument scheme, and if so, run through the critical questions. I find such a procedure promising, but I don’t claim that it covers everything. What about evaluative arguments, for example? I have in mind arguments that have a format something like this: “X is good, or a good of its kind, because the appropriate criteria for assessing Xs are A, B and C, and X satisfies A, B and C to a high degree.” Is that one more argument scheme, and therefore covered by the above sketch, or is it a fourth kind of reasoning or argument? And are there, or can there be, presumptive arguments that do not have a scheme that has been described and named? Also, how do arguments from the best explanation fit into

this picture? Are they a kind of inductive argument or a separate kind? Well, there is clearly much work to be done here.

Someone might infer that I have abandoned the criteria of argument cogency that Johnson and I introduced in 1977 in *Logical Self-Defense*: acceptability, relevance and sufficiency (Johnson & Blair, 1977). Let me say a word about each of these. (By the way, Hans Hansen has pointed out to me that Perelman introduced a similar distinction in *The Realm of Rhetoric*. Perelman's criteria seem descriptive; whereas Johnson's and mine are normative.)

I now think that the judgment about whether grounds are relevant is one *the arguer* makes in deciding *what belongs in* the argument, one *the interpreter* makes in deciding *what to attribute to* the argument, and one *the assessor* makes in deciding whether they're both right. A statement that is irrelevant to the proposition being argued for just does not belong to the argument, so arguments cannot have irrelevant premises, though of course what are presented as or taken to be arguments can. So relevance is not a criterion of a logically good argument, but of argument itself.

I regard acceptability as the generic name for the adequacy of an argument's grounds, and I think that which criterion of adequacy is appropriate in any particular assessment will depend on the type of argument and the circumstances in which the person is appraising the argument. In some circumstances, we want the grounds offered in support of a proposition to be true and known to be true before we consider them acceptable. But in other circumstances, we quite rightly settle for what it is reasonable to believe. And in yet other circumstances, if the interlocutor accepts the grounds offered, that is all that is wanted.

The criterion of sufficiency of the grounds as support for a proposition is more complicated. I am inclined to distinguish sufficiency as a logical criterion from sufficiency as a mixed logical and dialectical criterion. Let me explain. An argument unit is logically sufficient if the strength of its support matches the qualification attached to the conclusion, other things being equal. But in many situations what we are interested in is not just argument units, but a complex of many argument units that makes up a case for a proposition—the arguments for and against it, and for and against each other. So a sufficiency judgment about a case is a mixed judgment about both the logical adequacy of the argument units making up the case and the dialectical adequacy of the case itself.

So my current view about the relevance, acceptability and sufficiency criteria is not so much that they are mistaken, but that they require adjustment.

I am arguing for retaining a focus on the logic of arguments, and for distinguishing arguments from their uses and from argumentation. The point is not that we can or should assess arguments out of their situations of use, including their use in argumentation. The point, rather, is that we should not conflate the criteria for good logic in arguments with the criteria for the good use of arguments. These are not the same. The norms for good logic in arguments are different from the norms for the good use of arguments. As the straw man fallacy illustrates, an argument can be logically sound but its use might be dialectical malfeasance in the sense that it changes the subject, violating a legitimate assumption of the discourse that the response is supposed to be relevant to the position being debated. Moreover, the use of a straw

man argument will in some cases be unethical as well as dialectically inappropriate, inviting unfair and even harmful reactions against the party to whom the view is falsely attributed. But using a straw man argument might be an effective debating tactic, and so deserve praise on that account. And it is even imaginable that a straw man attack focuses the public's attention on what the issue ought to be, and so it is a politically praiseworthy move. So to suggest, as too many textbooks still do, that all we need to focus on is the logic of arguments is not just mistaken, but also an egregious oversimplification.

14.6 What About Dialectic and Rhetoric?

What is the relation among the criteria of good logic, good dialectic and good rhetoric? I am increasingly inclined to think that it is misleading to present logic, dialectic and rhetoric as three parallel or three competing perspectives on argument or argumentation. Standard logic isn't even about arguments in use. Deductive logic is the study of systems of patterns of necessary relations among propositions. Some arguments exhibit such deductive patterns in their premise-conclusion relationship; many do not. Moreover, there are dialectical models of deductive logics, as Lorenzen (1982), Lorenz (1982), Krabbe (1982) and others have shown, so a dialectics/logic dichotomy seems out of place. In addition, it is difficult to imagine a use of argument that is not dialectical, and the question whether a particular argument is logically good in the sense that it asks whether one is justified in drawing a given conclusion from a given ground often cannot be answered without considering whether there are objections to the argument that have been adequately refuted, which seems to be a question about satisfying dialectical norms. And rhetoric, for Aristotle (1984), was the faculty of observing the available means and proper modes of persuasion (*Rhetoric* 1355^b27–28, 1354^b21–22), specifically oratory, using arguments, but currently rhetoric is taken to have any form of symbolic representation as its subject matter, not just arguments. Argumentation theorists, taking themselves to be spelling out the implications of a rhetorical perspective, have made a valuable contribution by emphasizing the overlooked importance of paying attention to the situatedness of arguments—including reference to such elements as audience, occasion, venue and objective—when it comes to their interpretation and evaluation. But whether logical or dialectical norms are constructs of a collaboration between audience and arguer and hence in some sense basically rhetorical, as some seem to have suggested (e.g., Tindale, 2004), strikes me as an epistemological question, and it is one I cannot take up here. So while I think it has been extremely valuable for Wenzel (1980) to have drawn attention to the importance of logic, dialectic and rhetoric for the study of argumentation, I think we do him no honor by sticking to the neat parallels that his formulation suggested. Moreover, there might be other perspectives on the uses of arguments and argumentation in addition to those of logic, dialectic and rhetoric. So I agree that even if we had the logical criteria worked out, we would not yet have a complete normative theory for the evaluation of arguments or of argumentation. Nevertheless, losing sight of arguments as distinct from their uses risks neglecting the task of working out a satisfactory normative theory of their logic.

14.7 Conclusion

What I have been trying to do in this chapter is raise an alarm about the direction that our theorizing seems to be taking. We rightly attend to arguments on the hoof when we consider their logic, and we rightly consider more than their logic when we come to analyze and evaluate them. These legitimate moves seem to have led us to focus on the persuasive use of arguments to such a degree that many of us now define argument as a tool of persuasion. But there are plenty of other uses of arguments and it's possible, and indeed desirable, to define 'argument' without reference to any particular use. It is important to focus on arguments so defined because we have not yet finished the job of providing a complete account of their logical norms. I sketched one way of framing their norms within the Toulmin model that assimilates a lot of the recent work of various theorists, and I indicated where I now stand on the relevance, acceptability, and sufficiency criteria that Johnson and I introduced 28 years ago. Finally, I would be the first to insist that assessing the logic of an argument isn't all there is to evaluating arguments.

If I have achieved nothing else, I hope I have raised issues of the need to rethink our conceptualization of argument, and of the unfinished task of working out a theory of the criteria for logically good arguments.

Chapter 15

A Time for Argument Theory Integration

15.1 Introduction

Argument theory has witnessed three decades of remarkable flowering, a proliferation of theoretical insights, and following the Iron Law of Theory Formation, each has been developed in contradistinction to the others. It's not that theorists have been insular. On the contrary, they have for the most part proceeded with a thorough and accurate knowledge of activities in other theoretical gardens besides their own, even borrowing cuttings from one another (for example Walton from Pragma-Dialectics, Walton, 1998) or digging together (for example, van Eemeren & Grootendorst with Jackson & Jacobs, 1993). They've exhibited together, every 4 years, at the Amsterdam theory show. This familiarity, however, has not produced much theoretical integration.

Theoretical integration is not theoretical assimilation. Incompatible theories cannot be assimilated. But what if two apparently conflicting theories turn out to be about different subject matters, and so not incompatible after all? Or what if the claim that a paradigm is mistaken turns out to be better framed as a claim that it has been mis-applied by overenthusiastic (or imperialistic) advocates? What if the reach of a particular theory exceeds its grasp, but within its proper sphere it cannot be seriously faulted? What if an appearance of conflict turns out to be due to a misunderstanding? In such cases, theoretical integration would show how the different theories could cohabit. The result of looking to see how everything fits together might require greater modesty on the part of individual theoretical players, but a more accurate estimate of the extent of their respective theoretical domains.

To be sure, seeing how "everything" fits together is too ambitious a goal for a single short paper. In order to find where opportunities for integration might fruitful, it is useful to look where conflict and incompatibility have been thought to exist. Some of those historical antagonisms include: different conceptions of argument, and of argumentation; formal logic vs. argumentation and informal logic;

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logic vs. rhetoric vs. dialectic; Pragma-Dialectics vs. informal logic; emotion, intuition and logic. There are certainly others. In this chapter I will examine just these antagonisms or ambitions, seeking common ground, or possibilities for coexistence.

15.2 Conceptions of Argument

Twenty-five years ago D.J. O’Keefe (1977, 1982) drew to our attention the significance of two very different concepts denoted by the word ‘argument.’ As it happens, each of the two has several variants, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists another four or five senses of the word. I recently tracked the definitions of O’Keefe’s “argument₁” in about 30 of the formal logic textbooks published since 1950 (reported in Blair, 2003) and found several distinct varieties, including the following three: (a) sets of propositions such that one is implied (or supported) by the others, (b) propositions taken to imply (or support) another, and (c) propositions offered in support of a claim. The first makes no reference to human judgment or intention but the other two do. The second makes such an argument out to require human intention, but not communication. The third requires both intention and communication. Which of the three is the correct conception of argument₁?

The answer I suggest is: any of them. It depends on one’s interests. If you are interested in the syntactic or semantic implication relationships among propositions, then what’s of interest to you are simply groups of propositions. Those relationships obtain whether or not anyone thinks of them or knows about them. There is a tradition in which such implication-related proposition sets are called arguments, but in that case, you are talking about something different from arguments understood as what people take to be reasons why something is true or something should be done, which is also a sense of ‘argument’ with a tradition of use behind it. Both these senses are different from the third, because one person can offer another person reasons for believing something or doing something that don’t imply or otherwise support it and that the arguer doesn’t think support it either. Yet this too is something widely called an argument. To my knowledge, there is no good reason for assigning a privileged status to one of these senses over the other two. The argument theorist might want to pick one for some theoretical purpose or another. One could in principle determine empirically their respective frequencies of use, but to what purpose?

15.3 Argumentation

The word ‘argumentation’ has many meanings in English too, but the one that has acquired currency in argumentation theory is “a discussion dealing with a controversial point” (*Random House Dictionary*, 1967), especially if it involves the use of arguments. The theorists here stipulate different definitions. As stipulations one can perhaps have no quarrel with them, however, they have a way of eliding into what

Stevenson dubbed “persuasive definitions”(1944). For example, van Eemeren and Grootendorst are quite careful to insist that the definition of argumentation that they give in their groundbreaking 1984 book is a stipulation (see 1984, p. 18, and endnote 10), but by the time of their introduction (with Snoeck Henkemans) to their 1996 review of the literature anthology, they say, without qualification that “the general characteristics of argumentation are . . . recapitulated in the following definition:”

Argumentation is a verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting together a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge. (1996, p. 5)

Here is the epistemologist Alvin Goldman’s take on “argumentation” (1999, p. 131):

If a speaker presents an argument to an audience, in which he asserts and defends the conclusion by appeal to the premises, I call this activity argumentation. More specifically, this counts as monological argumentation, a stretch of argumentation with a single speaker. Later I shall also discuss dialogical argumentation, in which two or more speakers discourse with one another, taking opposite sides of the issue over the truth of the conclusion.

And here is the informal logician Ralph Johnson’s account (2000a, p. 12):

By “the practice of argumentation,” I understand the sociocultural activity of constructing, presenting, interpreting, criticizing, and revising arguments. (p. 12)

Goldman criticizes Pragma-Dialectics as focussed on producing rational agreement, but inadequate to optimize truth (Goldman, 1999, p. 160). As avowed Popperians, van Eemeren and Grootendorst would, I expect, take issue with Goldman’s veritistic epistemology. Johnson questions whether the Pragma-Dialectical rules guarantee the kind of manifest rationality that he espouses, which can require giving arguments even if one’s interlocutor doesn’t require them (Johnson, 2000a, pp. 309–320).

But why should Goldman or Johnson criticize the Pragma-Dialectical conception of argumentation? Goldman’s interest lies in a procedure that transmits knowledge and maximizes true belief. Johnson’s interest lies in a procedure that ensures evidently or manifestly rational persuasion. And van Eemeren and Grootendorst are interested in a procedure that resolves disagreements in a way that satisfies constraints of procedural rationality. Each defines argumentation to suit his theoretical goals, and there is nothing wrong with that. The mistake occurs when any one of them criticizes the others’ definitions for failing to be based on his own theoretical preoccupations—in other words, when any one of them proclaims his definition as the correct or the one and only adequate definition of argumentation. None of these theorists makes the case that his is the only correct conception of argumentation.

15.4 Formal Logic and Argument

At the beginning of their current era of flourishing, both the speech communication and the informal logic orientations to argument and argumentation attacked logic, or formal logic. Scriven asserted that the emergence of informal logic, “marks the

end of the reign of formal logic. Not by any means the end of the subject, just its relegation to its proper place in the academic zoo, somewhere over just north of mathematics and west of computer science . . . ” (1980, p. 147). Willard likened the relation between propositional or syllogistic logic to actual arguments to the relation between a nineteen-legged French Provincial table to an ordinary four-legged table (1983, pp. 29–30). These are amusing comments, and typical of the revolt against formal logic that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s. The vigor of the vituperation suggests that those making the criticisms might have been exorcising their own demons.

I don’t mean to suggest that the critique of the hegemony of deductive logic was mistaken, but the problem is not with logic. It lies in taking logic to be the normative theory of argument. Most logicians, when practising their craft, focus on the purely formal properties of logical systems, leaving the applications of those systems to others. Some argumentation theorists retain a central role for deductive implication relationships. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 1992a) have opted for deductive reconstruction in the analysis of arguments, and Groarke (1995, 1999) has been arguing for something similar—what I call “methodological deductivism.” They treat arguments as if they are supposed to be deductively valid and reconstruct them on that assumption, thus finessing the problem of having to deal with premise-conclusion relationships for which no theoretical account yet exists. Whether or not that approach leads to overlooking whole classes of arguments, as Govier (1987, 1999b) and Walton (1996b) have contended, is a debate that can be carried on within the argumentation community without disparaging formal logic. Also, other norms besides deductive validity, or even deductive validity and inductive strength, no longer have to struggle for recognition. Logicians have recognized that dialectic and rhetoric introduce essential perspectives. The idea that arguments can be adequately analyzed and evaluated outside the contexts or situations of their use is more or less dead among all but the most isolated philosophers and logicians. And deductive logic, in the service of computer modelling and artificial intelligence, has itself changed so much over this period that non-monotonic logics that can model the flexibility and *ceteris paribus* character of the situated inferences of actual reasoning and arguments are at the cutting edge of logical theory.

The upshot is that argument theory is now robust enough to tolerate old-fashioned deductive logic, and contemporary deductive logic has adapted itself to the imperatives of argument theory. The antagonism of argumentation theorists towards formal logic should be a thing of the past.

15.5 Logic, Rhetoric and Dialectic

A certain amount of pushing and shoving goes on among the adherents of a logic-first approach, a dialectic-first approach and a rhetoric-first approach to argument analysis and evaluation. The Pragma-Dialectical school takes dialectic to be primary, rhetoric as strategic manoeuvring in dialectical interactions, and logic as

a contribution to rational dialectic. Tindale suggests that rhetoric is foundational (1999, p. 18)—that argument is at root rhetorical, and dialectic and logic supervene upon it. Johnson (2000a) takes logic to be fundamental, dialectic to complete it, and rhetoric to serve it. They cannot all be right, but they can all be wrong. I think Wenzel (1990) was right: each of logic, dialectic and rhetoric is an essential perspective on, or aspect of argument, with none more important than the others.

Here's why. Apart from quarrels, there can be no argument without a reference to reasons (cf. Jacobs, 2000, p. 264). Even the Monty Python disputes—"It is./No it isn't./Yes it is." and "I did./No you didn't./Yes I did."—give way to, "Prove it./No, you prove it." Whenever the reasons are identified, one can ask: What kind and strength of support do they offer? The answer comes from some theory of logic, if logic is understood to include the theory of cogent support. So, no argument without logic. Yet most argument occurs in the context of exchanges between contending parties, or occupants of contending roles, and one can ask whether such exchanges are well ordered. The answer comes from some theory of dialectic. So, almost no argument without dialectic. Finally, at least for argument considered as a tool of attitude-change, the exercise of the art of presentation is inescapable from the advocate's perspective, as it is no less from the perspective of the interpreter of the advocacy, or of its critic. Moreover, considering argument as a particular type (or collection of types) of communication, all the resources of the art and craft of communication have application to it. Rhetoric, either in its narrower or its wider characterizations, is the name of these arts. So, no argument without rhetoric.

If it be argued that since one must take the rhetorical perspective in order accurately to interpret the logic of someone's argument, rhetoric is basic to logic (see Tindale, 1999), I would reply that what originally motivates the hunt is the logic, *sine qua, non*; so, by parity of reasoning, logic is basic. Similar arguments refute the claims to primacy of dialectic and of logic. Grant that all arguments, including monological ones, can be modelled as dialogical exchanges; even so, what makes those dialogues argumentative exchanges, as distinct from, say, chat exchanges—"Nice day."/ "Gonna be a hot one."—is that the turn-takers offer up reasons for their claims, reasons purported and expected to pass some test of minimal logical adequacy. And to turn the point around, the appeal to logic in argumentation is made in the service, typically, of responses to dialectical challenges, carried out in a way that achieve the arguer's wider communicative goals and (perhaps) narrower persuasive objectives.

15.6 Pragma-Dialectics and Informal Logic

Johnson (2000a) thinks informal logic competes with Pragma-Dialectics, which he discusses in a section titled, "Alternative Theories" (see pp. 309–320). But over the years, theorists who self-identify as informal logicians (such as Walton, and Johnson himself) have tended to agree with the Pragma-Dialecticians that informal logic's focus is as much pragmatic as logical (indeed, Johnson subtitles his

book, “A pragmatic theory of argument”), and that argument is typically and deeply dialectical (see Blair & Johnson’s early article, 1987). While informal logicians have approached the identification and interpretation of arguments without a theoretical underpinning like speech-act theory, they haven’t held that the Pragma-Dialectical use of speech-act theory is mistaken. I’ve noted that some informal logicians argue against the need for deductive-reconstruction in interpreting. For instance, Walton (1996a), Govier (1999a), Pinto (2001), and Blair (1999, 2001), have variously proposed that there are legitimate patterns of argument that such a reconstruction would distort. This disagreement, however, is not a deep opposition between contending theories. Nothing prevents someone committed to a pragma-dialectical approach in general, and to all other details of the official Pragma-Dialectical theory, from suggesting a revision in line with the views of these informal logicians. It is true that one or two of the famous ten Pragma-Dialectical commandments (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992a) would have to be modified, as would some details of the theory’s prescriptions for explicitizing unexpressed premises, since those prescriptions rely on the theory’s methodological deductivism (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, chap. 6), but those changes would not be incompatible with the spirit of the pragma-dialectical project.

Another apparent source of disagreement between some informal logicians and Pragma-Dialectics is the latter’s working assumption that all arguments can most fruitfully be analyzed as approximations of the Pragma-Dialectical ideal model. Blair (1998) and Govier (1999a) take issue with this view. However, there is nothing particularly associated with informal logic behind dissent from the universal applicability of the Pragma-Dialectical model. Presumably for proponents of Pragma-Dialectics themselves there is no a priori commitment to its universal applicability, for otherwise the theory would have become an ideology rather than what it is expressly presented as, namely a valid normative/descriptive theory. So the extent of its applicability must be an open question even from within the theory.

15.7 Emotion, Intuition and Logic

In *Coalescent Argumentation* (1997), Gilbert takes aim at logic, formal and informal, as hostile to emotion and intuition as modes of argument. Part of his target is the practice of decontextualizing argument, leaving out of account both the fact that so-called “claims” are almost always but fragments of or abstractions from an interconnected complex of views better understood as a position (see pp. 105–106), and positions attached to individual persons—a point made by Willard a decade earlier, 1989, pp. 63–64.) For example, being opposed to abortion on demand usually doesn’t stand independently of a world-view. Part of Gilbert’s target is the view that reason is incompatible with emotions and feelings. Surely Juan’s deep and exclusive love for Amelia is a good reason why she should marry him (see “emotional” mode, pp. 82 ff.) and getting a creepy feeling from being in it is surely a good reason for not buying a house (see “kisceral” mode, 86 ff.). Gilbert contends that any logic rejects such arguments.

The advice that particular arguments be situated in the contexts of their interlocutors' attitudes is well taken. But informal logic from its inception pressed for looking at real-life arguments in their contexts (see Johnson & Blair, 1980). As for emotions and feelings, the fact that such reasons don't strictly entail the judgments grounded on them is, for informal logic, certainly no bar against such reasoning, or arguments invoking it. Moreover, current theories of practical reasoning do not reject emotions and feelings as irrational or as otherwise illegitimate as reasons for actions (e.g., Audi, 1989). In philosophical discussions of emotions for many years now the Hume/Kant dichotomy between reason and emotion or feeling has been rejected (see Solomon, 1977; de Sousa, 1987). So here is another "disagreement" that dissolves upon examination.

15.8 Conclusion

There is much more to be said, but if the thesis of this chapter is correct, then there is less disagreement and theoretical conflict on the current argumentation scene than some have thought. In some cases, apparently conflicting conceptions are just different; in some cases what have been taken to be conflicts between theories are disagreements, sure enough, but not clashes of deep theoretical perspective; in some cases perceived incompatibilities are compatible. I have tried no more than to illustrate a few ways in which argument theory integration might be carried out in order to encourage others to take up the challenge and do the job properly.

Chapter 16

The Possibility and Actuality of Visual Arguments

16.1 Introduction

For the last 30 years the very concept of argument has come under fairly intense examination by the speech communication community (see Gronbeck, 1980, for the early years). Sometimes the focus has been inward, upon its central features (Brockriede, 1975; O'Keefe, 1977, 1982; Trapp, 1992; Hample, 1985). More recently, its more global features have been scrutinized (Willard, 1983, 1989; van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984). The present chapter is intended as a contribution to the investigation of the extension of argument into a realm hitherto given scant attention. The study of argument since Aristotle has assumed it to be paradigmatically verbal, if not essentially and exclusively so. At a time when technological and cultural developments are increasingly enhancing visual communication, it behooves us to consider whether argument can partake of visual expression.

There is no doubt that images can be influential in affecting attitudes and beliefs. A single visual image can probably be more powerful than a single verbal assertion, other things being equal, although broader claims should be made with caution: probably nothing in history has been more influential than the great verbal religious works, such as the Bible and the Koran. However, it is obvious that paintings and sculptures, and the visual component of movies, television programs and commercial and political advertising, are enormously powerful influences on attitudes and beliefs. Still, from the fact that images influence beliefs and attitudes it does not follow that such images are arguments, for there is any number of other ways of influencing attitudes and beliefs besides arguing.

Indeed, it would be a mistake to assimilate all means of cognitive and affective influence to argument, or even to assimilate all persuasion to argument. In that case, shock therapy becomes indistinguishable from a syllogism; crowd mania merges with a carefully crafted case for a conclusion; and fear mongering or appeals to blind loyalty cannot be separated from clear-eyed appeals to interests or to evidence.

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There is no pedantry, no hairsplitting, in recognizing that a loss of clarity and understanding attends such blurring of conceptual boundaries. So we should at the outset investigate whether there can be visual arguments, not just take it for granted that they exist.

To determine whether they exist, we need to know what a visual argument would look like if we encountered one. How, if at all, are visual and verbal arguments related? An account of a concept of visual argument serves to establish the possibility that they exist. By analogy, knowing what a symphony is tells us that symphonies are auditory, not visual; so a “visual symphony” must be a metaphor. Are visual arguments like visual symphonies? If they are possible in a non-metaphorical way, are there any visual arguments? By analogy, an adult person who is totally free of self-deception is surely possible; but has any such person lived yet? Are all the things that look as though they may be visual arguments the genuine article? These are the questions addressed in this chapter.

16.2 Properties of Visual Arguments

Let us turn first, then, to what would count as a visual argument. We are exploring new territory: little has been written about visual arguments (see Groarke, 1996). Like the Norse adventurers, who are said to have kept a landfall in sight behind them when they sailed into the North Atlantic,¹ it would be best to keep in mind a clear conception of argument and a clear conception of what ‘visual’ means here, when we investigate the *terra* relatively *incognita* of visual argument. That approach sounds a prioristic, which can be a Bad Thing. But the preferred method, starting the analysis from clear and indisputable cases of visual arguments and observing their salient properties, is unavailable here because it would beg the question: the issue before us is precisely whether the paradigm of verbal arguments has room for, or can be extended to include, visual arguments. The latter constitutes a new candidate for inclusion in the concept of argument. And the only other alternative seems to be a list of all sorts of “examples,” or candidates for membership in this class, without any way of deciding which ones really belong and which ones don’t. So let us begin by settling, first, what counts as an argument and, second, what counts as visual.

16.2.1 Argument

For the purpose of the present investigation, D.J. O’Keefe’s concept of argument₁ serves admirably. O’Keefe describes the paradigm case of argument₁ as involving “a linguistically explicable claim and one or more linguistically explicable reasons”

¹ According to Mowat (1965, pp. 356–357), that was one of the navigational methods they used in sailing first from the Outer Islands to Iceland, and later thence to Greenland, and thence to Labrador and Newfoundland.

(O’Keefe, 1982, p. 17). Let it be clear that O’Keefe’s argument₁ is not the logician’s abstraction. Such arguments are made and used. O’Keefe suggests that, “a paradigm case of making an argument₁ involves the communication of both (1) a linguistically explicable claim and (2) one or more overtly expressed reasons which are linguistically explicit” (14).

I use O’Keefe’s argument₁, because if anything is an argument, then argument₁ are. And I use his concept of argument₁ rather than his concept of argument₂ (argument as “overt disagreement . . . between interactants” [11]), because visual arguments are more plausibly akin to reasons for claims (argument₁) than to open disagreements between interacting parties (argument₂).

The explicit properties of argument₁ are the following:

- (1) there is a claim; that is, the assertion has been made that something has to be believed, or chosen, or done;
- (2) there is a reason or there are reasons for the claim; that is, the assertion has been made of something supporting what is to be believed, chosen, or done;
- (3) the reason(s) is(are) linguistically explicable and overtly expressed;
- (4) the claim is linguistically explicable;
- (5) there is an attempt to communicate the claim and reason(s). These explicit properties entail the following implicit properties of arguments:
- (6) there is some person who uses the claim and its reason(s) (this person may, but need not be, its author);
- (7) there is some intended recipient audience or interlocutor(s) to whom the claim and reason (s) are addressed.

Although not entailed by O’Keefe’s descriptions of the paradigms of argument₁ and of making argument₁, I think it is in the spirit of his account that one further property be included:

- (8) it is the intention of the “user” to bring the recipient to accept the claim on the basis of the reason(s) offered.

The concept of argument₁ has two implications of importance to the present discussion.

One is that such arguments are “propositional.” argument₁ are propositional because claims and reasons have to be propositions. That is, the reasons and claims making them up have propositional content, using “propositional content” in a broad way, so as to include as propositions value judgments and action prescriptions as well as descriptions, predictions, and so on. An expression has propositional content in the sense used here if it has truth-value, or (and this is a weaker but broader requirement) if it can be affirmed or rejected. Thus, “The economy is in a recession,” “It is unfortunate that the economy is in a recession,” and “Steps should be taken to get the economy out of the recession” all count here as expressing propositions.

The second implication of the concept of argument₁ that is important for present purposes is that argument₁ are not necessarily linguistic or verbal arguments. All

that is required by O'Keefe's account for something to qualify as an argument₁ is that reasons be *overtly expressed*, and that reasons and claim be linguistically *explicable*. That means we have to be able to state or restate them in language, not that they have to be expressed in language in the first place. Thus O'Keefe's concept of argument₁ is not inimical to the possibility of visual arguments.

What these two further implications add up to is that for something to count as an argument₁, we have to be able to say what the claim is and what the reasons are, and we have to be able to say so clearly enough that the claims and reasons can be accepted or rejected. (You cannot accept or reject "Yuck!"; you can accept or reject the claim, "This steak tastes like shoe leather!")

16.2.2 Visual

When we are interested in visual argument as a distinct and distinctive species, I take it that we mean to emphasize the contrast between the visual and the verbal. To be sure, verbal communication can be transmitted visually, by print or writing, but what is essential to it is the use of words and a language. Visual communication, when understood in contradistinction to verbal communication, occurs without the mediation of words or language in the literal sense. It is true that what is communicated visually can be described verbally, or translated into verbal communication. (Whether such descriptions or translation can be complete or fully adequate is a separate question.) However, such description or translation is not a *reduction* of the visual to the verbal. The visual communication stands on its own feet.

Visual communication may entail the use of conventions, as exemplified by the rich visual symbolism to be found in medieval church sculpture and stained glass images, and medieval and renaissance paintings (Ferguson, 1954), however these conventions are not a language in the literal sense. There is no grammar, just signs and symbols: conventionalized images. Communication through visual imagery is not verbal.

It is also true that we now know that certain causal properties are supervenient on certain visual properties, which thus affect their viewers in predictable ways. For example, colors invoke feelings of warmth (reds, oranges) or coolness (blues, greens); photographs of young animals (puppies, kittens, children) evoke tender-heartedness; photographs of adults in different garb or uniform (physician, police officer, teenager) evoke standard responses according to stereotypes; and certain scenery (the open desert, the mountains, the seashore, hills and forests) evoke feelings of freedom and escape in their viewers. However, once again, while such properties can be and are exploited effectively to cause feelings and attitudes and to evoke responses (for example, in advertising), that does not imply that the visual images to which they attach are languages in any literal sense, for they are not verbal, and so such communication is not verbal communication.

I have been arguing that the fact and the effectiveness of visual communication do not reduce it to verbal communication. What would visual communication have to be like in order to count as argument₁, or else to have some claim to the title of argument by virtue of a degree of family resemblance to argument₁? The answer is,

first, that it would have to have all or some of the salient properties of argument₁, and second, that it would have to be non-verbal visual communication. We have thus at least conditionally answered our question, “What would be the properties of visual arguments?”

16.3 The Possibility of Visual Argument

The next question is, “Are there any?” But first we must determine that they are possible in our world. There seems to be no reason in principle for thinking there cannot be visual arguments.

Visual arguments are to be understood as propositional arguments in which the propositions and their argumentative function and roles are expressed visually, for example by paintings and drawings, photographs, sculpture, film or video images, cartoons, animations, or computer-designed visuals. Is it possible to express argumentation visually?

Propositions can be expressed in any number of ways, including by silence (the standard response to, “Anybody want to take out the trash?”), but also by signs or signals (a one-way street arrow sign, a nod at an auction), or by facial and other body-language expressions (wrinkled brow: “I’m skeptical”; squirming: “I want this lecture to be over.”). So already we have examples of their being expressed visually. “Is June at home?” can be answered negatively (in some cultures) by shaking one’s head from side to side just as well as by saying, “No.” The fact that the communicative function of some of these signs and symbols is conventional—and symbols, at least, are by definition conventions—does not make them *ipso facto* verbal. Even granting a continuum from written languages using words, through written languages using pictograms, to conventional signs (such as traffic signs: one-way, no parking, no passing, curve ahead), and on to communications by facial expressions (such as smiles, grins, wide-open eyes and mouth), does not imply that all items on the continuum are reducible to one type, verbal language. The visual expression of propositions, then, is familiar and relatively unproblematic.

All we need in addition, in order to get visual arguments from propositions expressed visually (“visual propositions”), is for it to be possible to communicate visually the functions of the propositions, so that it can be communicated that some visual propositions are intended as claims and others as reasons for those claims—or that some visual propositions are intended as reasons for unexpressed but expressible claims. Since, “X is a reason for Y,” and “You should accept Y, given X” are themselves propositions, and given that propositions can be expressed visually, there is nothing in principle preventing the “reason for” or illative function from being expressible visually. As for the assertion function, which is what turns the statement of a proposition into a claim—a claim being a proposition asserted or put forward as to be accepted—we can readily do that by adopting certain visual conventions, for certainly in verbal communication we have conventions for identifying claims, when there is any doubt about it. So there seems to be no problem in principle in having visual assertions, including the assertion of illation.

In practice, however, there is in this connection the following difference between verbal and visual expression. Asserting or claiming is the default function in spoken or written language. That is, to utter or write a declarative sentence is, in the absence of any counter-indication, to assert its propositional content. The same is not true for all visual expression. When we go to an art gallery or to the movies, we do not at the outset take it that what we are encountering is likely to be visual assertion. In fact, although this is an empirical question, I suspect that there is no default function for visual expression, but instead a range of possibilities that we usually must sort through on each occasion. Sometimes the context is labeled for us: an exhibition of paintings is billed as “abstract expressionist,” for example. But more often we must infer what we can from the external and internal contextual clues. Thus the movie “Batman” is taken to be sheer entertainment, not argumentative; whereas the movies “Dances With Wolves” or “J.F.K.” are not only given advanced billing as “making a statement,” but are dramatically structured so as to leave no doubt that they express a point of view, and thereby become candidates for, or locales for possible, visual arguments. Thus there is a systematic tendency to indeterminacy about visual expression, at least in our culture at the present time, that is absent from verbal expression.² To put this point more precisely, in most instances in our culture the conditions of interpretation of visual expression are indeterminate to a much greater degree than is the case with verbal expression.³

What distinguishes visual argument from verbal argument, then, are the differences in argument expression facing the arguer, and the hermeneutical differences of identification and interpretation facing the interlocutor, audience or critic. These are likely to create formidable practical problems for arguer and audience, but they do not make visual arguments impossible in principle.

16.4 The Occurrence of Visual Arguments

Visual arguments are possible if we are right so far, but are there any in fact? It would be nice to find some examples. That turns out to be more easily said than done. We might expect to find visual arguments in such things as dramatic painting and sculptures, magazine and other static advertisements, television commercials and political cartoons. Consider each of these in turn.

16.4.1 *Arguments in Dramatic Paintings and Sculpture*

It is important to keep in mind the difference between an argument and a statement, even a complex set of related statements. Many works of art that convey a message,

² This fact makes visual irony more difficult to achieve, or detect, than verbal irony, since irony requires the reversal of surface assertion.

³ Thanks for David Birdsell for this formulation.

that communicate a point of view, emotions or attitudes, do not provide or constitute arguments. Expressing a proposition, even forcefully and dramatically, is not arguing for it.

Consider as examples four famous dramatic paintings. Goya's portrayal of the execution of Spanish patriots by Napoleon's troops, "The Third of May, 1808, At Madrid: The Shootings on *Principe Pio* Mountain" (1808), portrays human cruelty, fear, terror, hopelessness and courage; but it gives no reasons for favoring the loyalists or opposing Napoleon. Géricault's "The Raft of the Medusa" (1818–1819) expresses the despair and misery of being adrift at sea after a shipwreck, and shows us the fifteen survivors of the 150 who had clung to the raft twelve days before when the Medusa foundered; but it gives no reasons for drawing any conclusions, for example about a need for life-boats, safer vessels, or less risk-taking in trans-oceanic trade, nor is it a justification of the cannibalism that allegedly took place on the raft. Picasso's "Guernica" (1937) depicts and expresses the horrors of the German bombing of women and children in the town of Guernica in the Spanish civil war; but what conclusion are we to draw? That this was a terrible, cruel, destructive act? But that is what Picasso's painting expresses; there is no argument. Munch's "The Cry" (1893) expresses anxiety and dread; but tenders no conclusion. It may render the alienation of modern life, but it isn't an argument against it.

In order to reconstruct any of these paintings as an argument, it is necessary not only to give propositional expression to it—to treat the picture as delivering a message—but also to identify and distinguish premises (reasons, evidence: grounds) from conclusions, whether asserted visually or unexpressed (and discoverable from the context). This is the main difficulty in interpreting any of these four dramatic paintings as an argument. There is no way to have confidence in any one conclusion that the painter wanted his viewers to draw. Clearly the painters sought to communicate. At least the first three of these paintings have narrative intent: they are records of events, they tell stories. The artist in each case intended to send a message and to evoke a reaction. I think these artists are inviting us to ponder, or to agree with, their statements. They wish us to feel or identify with the terror or fear or horror their paintings convey. It does not follow that they are presenting us with arguments.

Any assertion whatever can be placed in a context that renders it the premise of an argument. Indeed, Anscombe and Ducrot (1983) see all discourse as argumentative (see 1983). Take our earlier example, "June is not at home." Imagine it uttered in circumstances when we knew that normally June would be sure to be at home. We may then be expected to infer that something out of the ordinary has happened. The utterance of "June is not at home" is then, in that situation, the assertion of an argument (or a part of one), with a conclusion expressible as, "Something (unusual? untoward?) has happened." But in the absence of such contextual information, all we have is the possibility of argument, or possible arguments. It's easy to think of an indefinite number of possible conclusions to draw from the assertion of "June is not at home" in the absence of any context: "June is at her office," "June has run off with Chris," "June has already left for the airport," and so on. The possibility of a conclusion following from it in some imaginable context does not turn an assertion into an argument.

In the case of the dramatic paintings in question, nothing in principle rules out an argument-creating context. My point is that, in none of these four cases is there a context that permits anything more than speculation about a range of possibilities. Perhaps Picasso meant to argue that the Nazis were vicious, but he equally might have meant to argue that war is hell; or he might not have meant to argue at all, but just to express his own horror and evoke ours. That any of these paintings might have been an argument in other circumstances does not make it an argument as things stand.

Will no work of art be an argument? I haven't made that claim. Indeed, as I have argued, nothing in principle prevents a painting or other art from expressing an argument. But I think that to do so the work of art has to satisfy the condition that we are able to identify its premise(s) and its intended conclusion (whether expressed or not).

A nice example of exactly how such conditions can be met is Groarke's (1996) case that Jacques-Louis David's famous painting, "Death of Marat" (1793), was an argument for the conclusion that "Marat was, like Christ, a great moral martyr." Groarke points out that David painted in an historical context which "saw art as a vehicle for "the edification and uplifting of mankind" (quoting Kelder, 1976), and that "he was committed to works that encouraged high moral standards and a sense of patriotic self-sacrifice." But Groarke goes beyond showing that David might have been painting an argument, by identifying three particular statements that may be inferred from the painting,⁴ and showing how—in the context of the time—these are best explained as premises in an argument. Premise 1: "Marat gave his last penny to the poor" (supported by the alm on the box beside Marat's bath and the adjacent note, portrayed as written with Marat's dying hand, which reads: "You will give this *assignat* to this mother of five children whose husband died in defense of the fatherland" plus the widely held belief that this was Marat's total wealth when he died). Premise 2: "Marat was a benefactor of the unfortunate" (supported by the note from Marat's assassin, Charlotte de Corday, that David painted in Marat's hand, which appeals to him as a benefactor of the unfortunate). Premise 3: "Marat was a poor man of great dignity and composure," supported by numerous details in the painting that portray Marat in this way. Although Groarke takes these premises and the conclusion (that "Marat was, like Christ, a great moral martyr") to be expressed, not implicit, whereas it seems to me that all are unstated inferences which David, by his painting, invites the viewer to draw, nevertheless, I think Groarke makes a compelling case that this is one conclusion of the argument which David uses the painting to make. Notice that in establishing his interpretation of "The Death of Marat" as an argument, Groarke has identified the propositions expressed or implied visually and their logical roles in the argument.

Another example of argument in art are the stone sculptures of the Last Judgment which adorn the tympanums above doorways of many Gothic cathedrals (see Male,

⁴ Groarke says that these statements are made by the painting, but what the painting actually depicts is the evidence for them.

1898/1858, chap. VI). To the right of Christ the judge, and the Archangel Michael holding the scales to weigh the good actions against the sins of the resurrected souls, are dynamic, dramatic portrayals of the elect, clothed in royal garments and crowned as they enter heaven; and to the left are the condemned, being led off in chains to the burning mouth of hell. Although these sculptures are portrayals of biblical themes and contemporary theological writings, dramatized by individual sculptors, it seems plausible to regard them at the same time as conveying the message to the illiterate populace: “Here is what will happen to you at the time of the Last Judgment if you are virtuous, and here is what will happen to you if you are a sinner.” The unexpressed assumptions, “No one wants to experience everlasting tortures; everyone wants to experience everlasting joy,” and the implied conclusions, “You would be well advised not to sin, but to be virtuous” are unproblematic in the context of the times.

So I certainly agree that visual arguments in art exist; I just think they are not to be conflated with visual assertions that are expressed without argument, and thus not to be found automatically in every dramatic work of art.

16.4.2 Arguments in Magazine and Other Static Visual Ads

Many magazine advertisements combine words with pictures. The case for visual arguments in advertising will be more convincing if it can be made with purely visual ads. There are plenty of them. One striking recent example was an eight-page block advertising the Benetton clothing company that appeared in the April 29 and May 6, 1996 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine (pp. 51–58). This was a special, double issue of the magazine devoted to the theme, Black in America. I want to discuss the Benetton ad in some detail because it seems to be a strong candidate for purely visual argument in an ad.

The Benetton block began with a blank all-black right-hand page. The following six pages consisted of three full two-page spreads, in color. On each set, the tag “UNITED COLORS OF BENETTON” was in white print on a bright green background; the other colors appeared natural, undoctored. The page after the Fig. 16.3 picture, a left-hand page, was blank, all-white.

The overt messages are richly evocative. (1) The three hearts (see Fig. 16.1) suggest: we’re all humans, with hearts (and all that they symbolize) under our skin; skin color of donor and recipient is irrelevant to a heart transplant; the distinctions of color are just labels put onto us (by others); and much more. (2) The little girls (see Fig. 16.2) suggest: innocent children have no racial prejudices; those come from adults; and adult racist attitudes destroy possibilities children represent for interracial harmony (a kind of Rousseauian thesis); and much more. (3) The manacled hands (see Fig. 16.3) suggest: we are locked together, whites and blacks; there is no escaping our condition of whites-and-blacks together in the country and the world; we are the prisoners of our own prejudices. The identical clothing suggests equality. It is possible to find in the photo a reminder of Hegel’s master-slave commentary: the unformativeness of the picture as to which man is the controller and which is

Fig. 16.1 “Hearts,” United Colors of Benetton, Concept: O. Toscani, Spring 1996

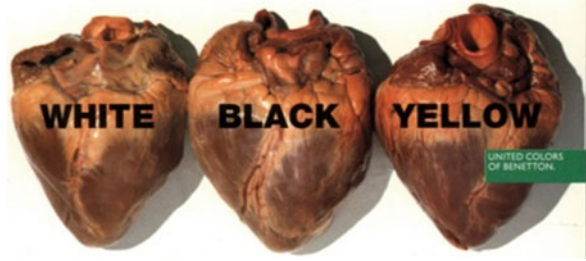


Fig. 16.2 “Angel/Devil,” United Colors of Benetton, Concept: O. Toscani, Fall/Winter 1991/1992



Fig. 16.3 “Handcuffs,” United Colors of Benetton, Concept: O. Toscani, Fall/Winter 1989/1990



the controlled (if either) reminds us of Hegel’s point that the master is controlled by the relationship by which he supposedly exerts control, and the slave has a measure of control in the relationship whereby he supposedly is denied any control, and that thus freedom for either one entails freedom for the other.

The three two-page spreads are brilliant in their suggestiveness, but are they an argument (or a set of arguments)? It is easy to supply further claims that are supported by the propositions suggested by the photographs, especially in the context of the ad's appearing in the special issue of *The New Yorker* on Black in America in 1996: racism is unjustified, harmful; we should be rid of it.⁵ It is plausible, therefore, to interpret these photographs as a set of visual arguments against racism. Premise 1 (see Fig. 16.1): we are all the same under our skin; we are biologically the same species, and we are all human. Premise 2 (see Fig. 16.2): racism is a construct, not an inborn attitude; adults impose its ugliness on the innocence of children. Premise 3 (see Fig. 16.3): we are joined together, black and white, inescapably; we are prisoners of our attitudes. Conclusion: racism is unjustified and should be ended.

Let us not forget, however, that this is a very expensive advertisement by the Benetton clothing company. How does it sell Benetton clothes? Virtually no clothing, and nothing distinctive, is shown. Factor in the Black in America theme and the fact that the readership of *The New Yorker* is predominantly upper middle class and wealthy, mostly white, liberals, judging by the advertisements typically found in its pages and its standard editorial content. What the ad does is identify Benetton with the self-image of their racial attitudes held by *The New Yorker* readers. One thing that is going on is that through the ad, Benetton is conveying the message, "We share your color-blind ideals, your opposition to racism, and your recognition of the problems facing the ideal of blacks and whites living in harmony and your desire to see them overcome." And it does so with powerful images and symbols. The Benetton ad is a paradigm case of the classic advertising ploy: create an ad that the viewer feels good about or identifies with and the viewer will transfer these feelings and that identification to your company or product(s). One particular concrete way the identification in this case might transfer to the act of purchasing is that the consumer who makes it will want to act on his or her solidarity with Benetton's powerful anti-racism message by buying Benetton: "I support your stand, and I want to put my money where my mouth is—I'll take a couple of those shirts."⁶

But is the ad an argument for buying Benetton clothes? My contention is that the way this and similar visual ads work is precisely by NOT being arguments designed to persuade or convince us to buy the product or patronize the company. They do not engage our intellects in critical thinking about purchasing or product choices; they supply no reasons for buying the product or patronizing the company. They sell precisely by creating and trading on unconscious, unexamined identifications. In the case of the Benetton ad, just as soon as the viewer realizes what these ads are doing,

⁵ Even though the three photos were not initially conceived as a unit, but on different occasions over the past seven years, their grouping here in this special issue of *The New Yorker* supplies a new context.

⁶ This last point is due to David Birdsell. He recalled a discussion of the effectiveness of Nike's ads with kids. The point made was that kids don't think buying Nikes would transform them into Michael Jordans, but they wanted to declare their allegiance. I believe one such discussion occurred in an article devoted to the agency responsible for those Nike ads, that appeared in *The New Yorker* a few years ago.

she or he will see that they constitute a clever, perhaps even a cynical, attempt to trade on her or his attitudes. The now more fully aware viewer might very well reason as follows: “Benetton is a company that sells clothing. Its purpose in spending a lot of money for the creation of this ad and its placement here is to sell Benetton in order to sell Benetton clothes. Hence its evocation of my feelings and attitudes is self-serving manipulation. I don’t want to give my business to a company that tries to do that to me.” In other words, the moment the viewer’s focus escapes from the overt message and his or her reasoning becomes engaged, the selling power of the ad begins to weaken. (To be sure, the unconscious identifications may be more powerful than the conscious rejection of the manipulation, so exposing the manipulation may not defuse the effectiveness of the identifications.) The ad works best by being an argument at the superficial level, but above all by *not* being an argument at the deeper, affective level. In fact, the stark, spare simplicity of the Benetton ad is extremely clever as a means of avoiding reminding the viewer that this is an ad to sell clothing, while the green tag keeps the company name identification prominent.⁷

Let me sum up my theses about the Benetton ad. First, the ad presents a powerful, multi-premise, visual argument against racism. Second, the ad presents no argument, visual or otherwise, for buying from Benetton. Third, the way (or at least one principal way) that the ad is likely to contribute to an increase in Benetton sales is through the unconscious effect on viewers of the statement about Benetton that the visual argument of the ad presents. Fourth, while this effect can take various forms (simultaneously), essential to them all is the identification of the viewer with the values expressed by the argument, and the transfer of that identification to Benetton as a company and to Benetton products.

Many print ads that combine texts with photographs or other pictures use the text to convey an overt argument, thereby disguising the fact that the visuals serve up the affective, psychological identification, and thus do the real selling job. It’s a clever shell game: suspicious of a non-rational sell, we get an (apparently) rational sell, which disarms us, thus leaving us vulnerable to the covert non-rational sell. Of course, if the argument (verbal or visual) sells by itself, or reinforces the non-argumentative identifications of the pictures, so much the better.

The interaction between text and visuals in advertising and elsewhere (in television news, and in documentary reporting like “60 Minutes” for instance) is extremely important, and deserves careful study that is beyond the scope of this chapter. I speculate, however, that such study will not reveal arguments to play more than a disguising role in effective visual advertising. Recall, for example, the old STP ad that *showed* someone with STP-slicked fingers unable to hold onto a screwdriver by the tip. The voice-over *said*, “STP reduces friction in your engine.” Was the ad an argument from analogy: “The friction between fingers and a screwdriver tip is like that between a piston and a cylinder; as you can see, STP reduces the former friction; therefore it will reduce the latter?” I don’t think so. Seeing the ad

⁷ This general position on advertising is developed more fully in Johnson and Blair (1994a, chap. 11).

in terms of an argument from analogy made explicit provides the viewer with hooks on which to hang critical questions, such as, “*Are* the two kinds of friction at all comparable?” Much more likely, I suspect, is the hope that the viewer will think, “Wow! Look how slippery that stuff is: the voice-over claim is true.” In any case, there is a fruitful field for case studies here.

16.4.3 Television Commercials

What has just been said about print ads goes in spades for TV commercials. The latter have enormously powerful means of evoking identifications that are independent of the text. They have music, which in a few seconds can create a mood. A familiar tune can flash us back to earlier experiences, evoking floods of feelings. The dynamics that TV images provide mean that, instead of giving us a snapshot to identify with, we can get an entire drama, with plot and character development, structure of crisis, climax and dénouement, all in 30 s. It is easier with TV than print to use humor, which is disarming and misdirecting. Many more evocative symbols (such as children, animals, nature, family, mother, doctor or scientist) can be packed into a thirty-second clip than into a static one-page magazine ad. It is also easy to use the overt, surface, verbal argumentation of the spoken script to mask the manipulation of feelings by the music, the drama, and the visuals.

Again, I am not saying that TV ads never use visual arguments directly to sell a product or a brand. But I would hypothesize that the effective ones either don’t use arguments at all, or else they get their efficacy not directly from any arguments they proffer, but from underlying and hidden identifications and feelings they evoke. Should we call such manipulation “persuasion,” if not argument? That is the question taken up in Section 16.5, below.

16.4.4 Arguments in (Political) Cartoons

A good case can be made that political cartoons can and do present us with arguments. (Notice how cartoon-like are the medieval cathedral sculptures of the Last Judgment.) Groarke has found an excellent example in a 1938 David Low cartoon. In it, a man is shown sitting on a steep hillside reading a newspaper, with his back to a pile of big boulders poised above him, all prevented from tumbling down by one key boulder, labeled “Czechoslovakia.” The boulders above are labeled, “Poland,” “Romania,” “French Alliances” and “Anglo-French Security.” The man is saying, “What’s Czechoslovakia to me anyway?” Low’s visual argument was clearly that anyone who thought the Nazi psychological war against Czechoslovakia did not matter to England was wrong, because if it fell (to Hitler’s bullying), then Poland and Romania would be next, followed by the French alliances, and finally the Anglo-French security pact would come crashing down. As Groarke points out, this is an obvious example of a slippery-slope argument.

Not all political cartoons present arguments; many simply make statements. What is the difference? Again, as with paintings and advertisements, enough information has to be provided visually to permit an unambiguous verbal reconstruction of the propositions expressed, so that, combining that with contextual information, it is possible to reconstruct a plausible premise-and-conclusion combination intended by the cartoonist.

Let me sum up this part of the discussion. While visual arguments are possible, they seem not to be widespread. More significantly, they seem not to constitute a radically different kind of argument from verbal ones. What makes visual messages influential, taking television advertisements as the most striking examples, is not any argumentative function they may perform, but the unconscious identifications they invoke. There is no reason to ignore or overlook visual arguments. However, their existence presents no theoretical challenge to the standard sorts of verbal argument analysis. They are easily assimilated to the paradigm model of verbal argument characterized by O'Keefe's concept of argument₁. The difficulties they do present are practical ones of exegesis or interpretation. Moreover, we have to translate them into verbal arguments in order to analyze and criticize them. So verbal arguments retain their position of primacy.

In the process of answering the question, "Are there any instances of visual arguments?" (Answer: Yes), we have answered the further question, "Are visual arguments significantly different from verbal arguments?" (Answer: No).

16.5 Non-propositional Argument

For visual argument to represent a radically different kind of argument, it would have to be non-propositional. But what kind of argument could that conceivably be? Let us consider some candidates.

There is a use of "argument" that counts states of affairs and complex entities as arguments. "The way those two dress is an argument that opposites attract," "Eric Maria Remarque's novel and Lewis Milestone's eponymous film, *All Quiet on the Western Front*, are arguments against war," "Some critics think that Norman Mailer's oeuvre (*malgré lui*) is an argument for authorial absence," or "The horrible final six months of Zoë's cancer-racked life is an argument for legalizing euthanasia." But the use of "argument" exemplified by such cases is a handy shorthand for, or summation of, an extended case consisting of verbally expressible propositions. In each case, someone can ask, "What do you mean?" and would, and should, expect in answer a fuller account showing how a propositional argument making the case would run.

We also naturally speak of narratives as arguments, or at least having an argumentative or else at least a persuasive function. Striking examples are the great religious narratives, or the historical stories in terms of which we justify national policies, both domestic and foreign (for example, "The Opening Up of the West," or "The Cold War"). Certainly narratives can be powerfully persuasive; they may be the most persuasive kinds of discourse that exists. Yet, on the one hand, they

too are propositional, however complex their propositional structure may be; and on the other hand, they accomplish their influence not by argument in any traditional sense, but by connecting our beliefs and experience into meaningful stories which we adopt as elements of our personal or collective worldviews.

Metaphors are another powerfully persuasive force. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have shown how persuasively they shape our conceptual schemes, and hence the perceptions, interpretations and choices in terms of which we construct our lives. However, (a) metaphors can function independently of argument, but in any case, (b) metaphors too are propositional.

As we review the extended concepts or kinds of argument or persuasion, we discover that what distinguishes them from the paradigm is not that the paradigm is propositional whereas they are not. They turn out either to be propositional, or else not arguments.

16.6 Reprogramming, Persuasion, Argument and Rhetoric

Various ways of influencing beliefs, attitudes and behavior can be placed along a continuum. A course of treatments consisting of electrical impulses delivered to key locations in the brain that causes a pedophile to lose his sexual interest in children, is not an example of argument or persuasion. A physical seduction (kissing, stroking, licking, nibbling) which causes someone to act very much against his or her better judgment is persuasion of one sort, but it cannot be classified as argument in any sense. The offer of a cigarette to a smoker trying to quit, or the dessert tray shown to a struggling dieter, may persuade the person (even if not persuasive in intent and made in ignorance of the interlocutors' conditions); but again, there is no argument involved. We come to a case bordering on argument with the example of the robber who points a gun at you and demands your wallet or purse.

The significant variable in all these cases is the nature and degree of mediation by the agent. Imagine a mediation mechanism that has a beep function that sounds to alert us when we have a choice to make (think of the loud warning klaxon activated when commercial vehicles are in reverse gear), and a "Yes" and "No" pair of buttons we can press to make the choice. With the brain implant treatment, the choice mechanism is bypassed: the beep does not even go off. With the seduction, the static from the stimulation of our erogenous zones interferes with our hearing the beep. (The real possibility that we make a prior choice to allow the interference to mask the choice beep is what leads us to suspect self-deception in the case of "seduction.") The habits, perhaps the addiction, in the smoking or overeating examples, seem not to camouflage the choice beep (it sounds loud and clear), but to draw us inexorably to push the "Yes" button. Most of us know first-hand the phenomenology of temptation: the sense of being pulled by a force-field to say "Yes," while the faint voice that says "No" is overwhelmed by another more powerful and seemingly reasonable one, citing ever-so-good reasons for making an exception this time. What makes the robbery case different is that, at least on some occasions, for a moment we clearly experience the opportunity to choose and the choice seems open: we do

a quick cost-benefit analysis (which normally makes it clear that refusal to comply is not worth the risk).

The paradigm for persuasion is verbal persuasion, as it is for its subspecies, argument. As a result, we are more comfortable identifying as persuasion those cases of belief/attitude/behavior influence in which speech is involved, even if we admit that it can be other factors than the speaker's arguments, such as her ethos or the figures she used, which are persuasive. Still, we do permit locutions like, "The mouth-watering aroma of its sauce persuaded me to try the fish," which implies that verbal factors are not necessary to persuasion. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, almost all definitions of the word "persuade" focus on the result produced. The only reference to the means used identifies persuasion with "inducing" to (believe, act, and so on). Now to *induce* someone to believe or act is to act against their will, which brings us back to the factor of the agent's mediation which distinguishes the brain surgery for the other cases in our examples above.

We refuse the label "persuasion" to behavior modification through brain surgery, because the agent has no mediating role to play: nothing acts on his will. We classify the cases of seduction and the temptations of smoking and dessert as persuasion precisely because the agent knew there was a choice, and could and did in some sense make a choice. The distraught cuckold or the disappointed dietitian would be entirely right to counter our protestations with: "Nonsense! You had a choice and you made it!" The salient difference between these two cases and the robbery case is phenomenological—namely the experience of having a choice that accompanies the latter more than the former. That is what, to my mind, associates the robber's threat with argument, for in the case of argument the agent's mediation is essential: the audience or interlocutor must identify the premise and conclusion propositions and make a determination about the degree of support the former lends to the latter.

Some might want to assimilate the offer of dessert or a cigarette to argument, too. In most restaurants that show a dessert tray, the point is either to inform the diner (visually) of what is available, or to tempt the diner, or both. The person offering a cigarette is normally just being polite, or (sometimes) mean. It strikes me as forced to view these as attempts to get someone to accept a proposition on the basis of reasons offered. However, admittedly I have not offered a formal analysis of the difference between argumentative and non-argumentative persuasion.

To the extent that visual communication causes us to change our beliefs or attitudes, or to act, without engaging our choice buttons, it is assimilable neither to persuasion nor argument. Once the choice light flashes, persuasion is occurring. And once we have identified expressible reasons that are provided for pressing one button rather than the other, we are being persuaded by argument. In sum, the act of argument is a species of persuasion, and both entail the attempt to engage the agent as mediator in a decision to act or to change an attitude or belief. (We can be persuaded against our better judgment, but not against our will.) Persuasion by argument entails the making of propositions and their alleged illative relations.

If all this is right, then the psychological sell of the advertiser who manipulates our unconscious identifications can be classified neither as argument nor as non-argumentative persuasion, visual or otherwise: we don't get to choose or decide. If

we reach for or ask for a Coke or a Coors instead of a Pepsi or a Bud,⁸ most of us don't really know why. Many ads provide no reasons whatever for preferring one brand or the other, or one type of product to alternatives; the "reasons" others supply often cannot withstand even cursory critical analysis. Yet we claim to have preferences, and since the principal differences are between the ads, not the products, presumably somehow the ads get to us. How exactly they do so is a question eminently worthy of study. The hypothesis that I have ventured, namely manipulation of unconscious ego-identification, is undeveloped and may turn out to be untestable or false, but the idea that these ads work by persuading us with visual arguments is barking up the wrong tree, and even the hypothesis that they persuade us (perhaps non-rationally), is not plausible either, unless the concept of persuasion is stretched to include causally efficacious influence in general. Such an extension of the concept then runs into the difficulty of distinguishing that kind of persuasion from behavior modification by brain surgery.

At this point one may well ask, "Where is rhetoric on this map?" Even mentioning rhetoric opens a Pandora's box, yet failing to do so in the present discussion would be culpable, so I will timorously and briefly venture a proposal. Reboul (1991, p. 4) notes a range of definitions of rhetoric, and states his own preference to be "the art of persuading by speech [*l'art de persuader par le discours*]" thereby agreeing, in general, with Foss, Foss and Trapp (1985, p. 12), who say, "the paradigm case of rhetoric is the use of the spoken word to persuade an audience." If these authorities are right, and if the above points about persuasion are correct, then (a) the study of rhetoric includes the study of argument, (b) the concept of visual argument is an extension of rhetoric's paradigm into a new domain. Whether the realm of rhetoric is identical to that of persuasion, or instead just partially overlaps it, depends on how tightly the concept of rhetoric is tied to that of persuasion. If rhetoric in a broader sense is the use of symbols to communicate (see Foss et al., 1999, p. 11), so that symbolic communication rather than persuasion is its fundamental property, then some but not all rhetoric will be persuasive in intent and some but not all persuasion will be rhetorical in nature; there will be non-persuasion-oriented rhetoric and non-rhetorical persuasion. On the other hand, if the persuasive function lies at the heart of rhetoric, then any form of persuasion, including visual persuasion, belongs within rhetoric's province.

16.7 The Importance of Visual Argument

What is lost by foregoing or overlooking visual argument? The question asks what can be accomplished only or best by using visual arguments. And what are the disadvantages of visual arguments? Like much else, visual arguments have correlative virtues and vices.

⁸ For non-North Americans: Coors and "Bud" (Budweiser) are brands of beer.

The incredibly evocative power of a movie (even more than a novel) can bring us as close to actual experiential knowledge as it is possible to get, short of living the experience. Thus movies can make the truth of premises more “real” than can any assemblage of evidence in, say, a legal brief. For example, by getting us to feel what it is like to be exploited or discriminated against, they can provide enormously powerful arguments against these treatments and the attitudes and systems that foster them. Of course, the same power can be used to distort or misrepresent, and thus to argue falsely. Movies can bring us to experience the panoply of emotions—impatience, fear, disappointment, joy, rage, frustration, contentment—but the reality of those feelings does not vouch for their legitimacy. People can be furious when they should be understanding, complacent when they should be angry; and so on. By creating false experiences, movies can convince us of conclusions that should not be drawn.

To be sure, with argument-containing films and plays too, we have a hybrid of the visual and the verbal, not purely visual argument. It is therefore hard to extract the argumentative force of just the visual dimension of the communication. However, the dramatic difference in effect between reading a film script or a play and watching the movie or the play in the theater is familiar to us all. The nature of the visual contribution may be difficult to describe, but its force is undeniable. (The relation between the textual, the visual and the auditory dimension of film deserves study.)

The power of the visual granted, visual arguments tend to be one-dimensional: they present the case for one side only, without including the arguments against it, or without doing so sympathetically, and without representing alternative standpoints and their merits and defects. The demands of the movie or TV dramatic form include pressures for simplicity and for closure. Painting or sculpture are even more limited in this regard. Visual arguments, then, must always be suspect in this respect, and their power countered by a degree of skepticism and a range of critical questions: “Is that the whole story?” “Are there other points of view?” “Is the real picture so black or white?” Visual argument will tend to be one-sided, uni-dimensional argument.

While visual communication can be concrete and particular, it can also, even simultaneously, be vague or ambiguous. If suggestiveness is the aim, this is a virtue; where clarity or precision is a desideratum, it is a disadvantage. The sender of the message lacks the power to have his or her intentions well understood, since the receiver is free to interpret in various ways. To be sure, this is a problem with written or spoken argument too, but less so than with visual argument. So visual argument has both the strength and the weakness of its form.

In sum, while there can be no doubt that visual argument is important by virtue of its ability to be powerfully influential, its responsible deployment calls for great skill and integrity, and its responsible consumption requires alert critical interaction.

16.8 Conclusion

The main point that I draw from these reflections is that visual arguments are not distinct in essence from verbal arguments. The argument is always a propositional entity, merely expressed differently in the two cases. Therefore visual arguments are not a particularly exciting conceptual novelty; they do not constitute a radically different realm of argumentation. The need to give visual arguments premise-conclusion propositional embodiment has the consequence that plenty of dramatic visual statements fall short of being arguments. And the non-propositional character of the truly effective psychological manipulation in much advertising has the implication that such powerful visual persuasion comes no closer to argument than the decoys or facades of argument that, by disguising the manipulation, enhance it. The attempt to conceive of the possibility of non-propositional argument (as distinct from non-propositional persuasion) comes up empty. Finally, the great advantages of visual argument, namely its power and its suggestiveness, are gained at the cost of a loss of clarity and precision, which may not always be a price worth paying.

While the preceding contentions downplay the theoretical distinctness of visual arguments, they are not meant to understate the differences inherent in its medium of communication. Just how visual images and visual forms in general can and do communicate propositions, just how the important ancillary concept of context is to be understood and how in practice context is to be interpreted and combined with the visual, and just how text and visuals (and sound) interact to produce meaning are all questions which strike me as important, difficult and unanswered by the present chapter.

Postscript

Chapter 11. “Walton’s Argument Schemes . . .” and *Chapter 12* “A Theory of Normative Reasoning Schemes.” Douglas Walton continues to work on argument scheme theory (see Walton et al., 2008), and I continue to share his conviction that it provides an account of what justifies us in our confidence in defeasible inferences. Robert Pinto (1999) has argued against the idea that such schemes should be considered to be normative, and undoubtedly many schemes capture the way people in fact reason and argue, with the circumstances—the answers to the critical questions associated with each scheme—supplying the information that enables them, or onlookers, to assess the cogency of their reasoning or arguments. On the other hand, some schemes strike me as outlining *pro tanto* reasonable ways to reason or argue whereas others seem *pro tanto* unreasonable ways to reason or argue. In any case, argument scheme theory continues to be a work in progress, with attempts to classify schemes and attempts to account for their probative force still ongoing.

Chapter 13. It continues to strike me as curious that the discipline that is supposed to be supremely self-reflective and that uses argument as its principal method, namely philosophy, has yet to take on the study of argument as a central task. I still think “Towards a Philosophy of Argument” is a modest contribution to that neglected topic.

Chapter 14. The controversial claim of “Argument and Its Uses” is that relevance is analytically connected to the concept of argument. That is, if someone tries to offer an argument and the premises they put forward are irrelevant to their conclusion, then they have not advanced an argument. They might have intended to produce an argument, but since the “premises” are irrelevant, they have failed. David Hitchcock (2006) has criticized this view, taking an argument to be a kind of speech act the correctness conditions of which do not require relevant premises, but only premises advanced as relevant. In general I am opposed to such “ideal” definitions as the one advanced in this chapter. Compare Aquinas’s doctrine that an unjust law is no law to my doctrine in this chapter that an irrelevant argument is no argument: both are counter-intuitive. I am inclined to accept the criticism, but it requires a considerable reworking of the chapter: unfinished business.

Chapter 15. “A Time for Argument Theory Integration.” I remain convinced that it is useful to seek clarity about which theories or parts of theories are incompatible

and which ones are just different. Whether “integration” should be the operative word is another matter. I recall teaching a class at the University of Amsterdam in which the students were largely convinced that informal logic is incompatible with the Pragma-Dialectical theory. It struck me then, as it still does, that this is a gross oversimplification. Some elements are incompatible, some are not. Having an accurate map of argument space remains a worthwhile objective.

Chapter 16. Some amendments to “The Possibility and Actuality of Visual Arguments” are to be found in [Chapter 19](#). I should note that the claim in the chapter that visual arguments are not an exciting conceptual novelty was not meant to downplay the importance of visual arguments. But the main revision I would make to this chapter today is to replace the classification of arguments as “the visual,” “the verbal” or “the mixed” with one of arguments a “the visually-expressed or communicated,” “the verbally-expressed or communicated” and “the combined visually and verbally expressed or communicated.” These categories will be unduly restrictive if it can be shown that arguments can be expressed or communicated in still other ways. For instance, perhaps Gilbert’s (1997) “visceral” mode or category of argumentation should be understood as one more way arguments can be expressed or communicated.

Part IV
Logic, Dialectic and Rhetoric

Introduction

When I encountered the Pragma-Dialectical theory of Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst in 1984 (see their 1984), it was an eye-opener. My training in philosophy had exposed me to the concepts of dialectic found in Plato, Hegel and in Marx, but I had not encountered Aristotle's *Topics*, or dialogue logic, or any dialectical conception of argument and argumentation. I immediately recognized an affinity between the Pragma-Dialectical approach to argument interpretation, analysis and evaluation and what Johnson and I were trying to do in what we were calling "informal logic." Their book inspired me to write the first draft of the chapter "Argumentation as dialectical" (Blair & Johnson, 1987) for the first issue of the new journal, *Argumentation* (a paper Johnson republished in his collection, *The Rise of Informal Logic* (1996a)). So the "push-back" against the Pragma-Dialectical theory found in some of the chapters in Part 4 stems from admiration and sympathy, not hostility or antipathy, for the most prominent argumentation theory of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The target of [Chapter 17](#), "The Limits of the Dialogue Model of Argument," is pushing back as much against a view of Douglas Walton as it is van Eemeren and Grootendorst's theory. Walton (e.g., 1996a) has seemed to claim that every argument is a dialogue. Even the weaker claim that every argument can best be modeled as, or is best understood as if it were taken to be, a dialogue struck me as overstated, as I tried to show in this chapter.

As my reading expanded over the years, it became ever more apparent to me that not only had I initially overlooked the importance of dialectic, but I also had neglected the importance of rhetoric for argumentation theory. I make this admission with some embarrassment today. In the early years I accepted the dominant negative (Platonic) view of many analytic philosophers that rhetoric is window dressing and in principle deceptive. Later, exposure to the writings of Joseph Wenzel (1980, 1987, 1990) began to disabuse me of this error. But only in the last few years have I begun to appreciate how woefully ignorant I have been of the rich rhetorical tradition in Western thought and of the dynamic proliferation of rhetorical theory in the 20th century.

[Chapter 18](#), "Relationships among Logic, Dialectic and Rhetoric" was an early attempt to come to terms with these concepts as they intersect with argumentation.

[Chapter 19](#), “The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments” was written for a book on visual rhetoric, and so was an attempt to relate argument to that theme. It goes beyond [Chapter 16](#) in several respects.

[Chapter 20](#), “Pragma-Dialectics and *Pragma-Dialectics*,” is an attempt to understand the nature of the Pragma-Dialectical theory. One of the features of that theory that has intrigued me has been its apparent immunity to criticism—its apparent ability to seal itself against any objections. It has seemed to me that any theory, empirical or philosophical, should be falsifiable, so the question behind the chapter was, what would have to be the case for the Pragma-Dialectical theory to be false?

[Chapter 21](#), “Investigations and the Critical Discussion Model,” is more push-back against Pragma-Dialectics. I argue that the use of arguments to investigate hypotheses cannot be assimilated to the use of arguments to resolve a difference of opinion.

[Chapter 22](#), “Perelman Today on Justice and Argumentation” was written for a conference organized with these themes. As time passes, Perelman’s theory of argument seems to me more and more relevant, as this chapter argues.

[Chapter 23](#), “Rhetoric and Argumentation,” a recently written chapter, returns to the exploration of different conceptions of rhetoric and their applications to argumentation. I hope the reader will find my understanding of rhetoric to have grown deeper from [Chapter 18](#) to [Chapter 23](#).

Chapter 17

The Limits of the Dialogue Model of Argument

17.1 Introduction

A dialogue is an extended verbal exchange between two people (in its simplest form), in which the parties take turns responding to what the other said in one or more of the preceding turns.

What an argument is cannot be so straightforwardly described, for there are many different conceptions, not all compatible. The concept of argument that is discussed in this chapter is defined by the fourth *Oxford English Dictionary* definition of ‘argument’: “a connected series of statements or reasons intended to establish a position,” which specifies the components of arguments and their functions. Such “series of statements” are often, perhaps even typically, produced during, or as a result of, disagreements, disputes or quarrels—“arguments” in the second sense—which are a type of verbal exchange in which the parties take turns responding to what the other said in preceding turns—in other words, dialogues. Arguments (sense 1), the functionally defined ordered sets of statements, are typically asserted during arguments (sense 2), disputatious interchanges; and such interchanges are typically dialogues.

This close tie between argument and dialogue has been studied in the argumentation literature for some time now. In 1984, van Eemeren and Grootendorst published a powerful idealized dialogue model of argument (sense 2) as a discussion aimed at the rational resolution of disagreements using arguments (sense 1). In (1987), Johnson and I made the case that argument (sense 1) has important dialogical properties, a fact we thought tended to be overlooked in the informal logic literature. And over the past decade Walton has produced a stream of monographs a number

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of which have developed the theme that arguments (sense 1) and argumentation (sense 2) can be illuminated by the model of the dialogue.¹

Those following this literature have become familiar with Walton's list of types of dialogue (Walton, 1992c, 1995, 1996b, *inter alia*). Walton and Krabbe (1995, p. 66) give a recent version (not intended to be exhaustive), which distinguishes dialogues primarily according to their purposes—the goals of the dialogues and of their participants. They distinguish “persuasion” or “critical discussion” dialogues, “negotiation” dialogues, “inquiry” dialogues, “deliberation” dialogues, “information-seeking” dialogues, “eristic” dialogues, and various mixtures of these. To be sure, not all dialogues are arguments or contain arguments. Think of dialogues in which the parties exchange greetings, or reminiscences, or in general just pass the time of day together. I will use the term ‘argument-dialogue’ to denote a dialogue in which argument typically plays a role—either because the dialogue is itself an argument in sense 2 (for example, a quarrel), or because it is an exchange in which arguments in sense 1 (reasons supporting claims) are presented. Walton and Krabbe do not explicitly say that the dialogue types Walton lists are all types of argument-dialogue. However, their interest in dialogues seems clearly motivated by expected connections between argument (or else fallacy) and dialogue.

Walton more recently (1996a) has proposed a tight connection between argument and dialogue:

An argument, according to the pragmatic theory advocated here, is typically a sequence of subarguments used in a larger goal-directed unit of dialogue. Although arguments occur in dialogue, often a dialogue can best be seen as one large argument. The core of the argument is always a set of inferences or propositions, but the argument is determined by how those inferences are used in a context of dialogue. (pp. 40–41)

And again:

... in any given case, they (arguments) always occur as used in a context of dialogue. Hence, in any argument, there is a triadic containment relation of nested components (see figure 1.4). [Figure 1.4 shows a box labeled “Reasoning” drawn inside a second box, labeled “Argument,” and an ellipse drawn around the two boxes labeled “Context of dialogue.”] (p. 41)

It is this view, that dialogue is a necessary condition of argument and that arguments always occur in a context of dialogue, that I want to challenge in the present chapter.

¹ Walton borrows most directly from van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1984), but the idea can be found in Barth (1982b), Krabbe (1982), Lorenz (1982), Lorenzen (1982), Naess (1966) and no doubt many others. (See Walton, 1989, 1992a, 1992b, 1995, 1996a, 1996b; Walton & Krabbe, 1995.)

17.2 Dialogue Types

One way to examine the fit between argument and dialogue, inspired by Walton's well-developed point that there are different types of dialogue, is to notice that argument-dialogues differ with respect to their complexity, and therefore to investigate how variations in the complexity of argument-dialogues affect how arguments "occur in a context of dialogue."

In what follows, I have attempted to characterize argument-dialogues according to increasing levels of the complexity of the argument ingredient at each turn of a dialogue. I contend that at a certain stage in the increasing complexity of the argument turns, there is a qualitative change in the nature of the dialogue.

The following account arranges argument-dialogues into four groups arranged according to increasing complexity within and among the groups.

17.2.1 Group A

In perhaps the simplest class of argument-dialogues the typical objective is for one party to force the other into conceding a proposition that contradicts some other proposition that the other party had earlier endorsed. At each turn after the opening one, each party must respond to the immediately preceding turn in the exchange.

(1) Question-and-Answer dialogues with questions that permit only "yes" or "no" answers. The questioner's objective is to force the answerer to affirm a proposition that implies the denial of some proposition he or she had earlier asserted. One side asks the questions and the other must answer "Yes" or "No." The questions must ask for an answer that affirms or denies either a simple proposition or a compound proposition the components of which are simple propositions previously affirmed by the proponent. The answerer must answer honestly and consistency is obligatory. This type of dialogue is modeled in the following schema, where the letters are variables for propositions:

Turn No.	Questioner	Answerer
01	p?	Yes.
02	r?	Yes.
03	r implies s?	Yes.
04	s?	Yes.
05	t?	Yes.
06	t and s imply not-p?	Yes.
07	not-p?	Yes.

(2) Open-ended Question-and-Answer dialogues. The questioner asks open-ended questions, which require simple propositions as answers.

(3) Dialogues with a combination of questions of type (1) and questions of type (2). Many of Plato's Dialogues have this combination form, and such argument-dialogues seem to be the sort of argument game Aristotle had in mind in the *Topics*. Here is an excerpt from *The Republic* (1961) that illustrates it.

Socrates (S): . . . Simonides thought this to be just, to give to each man what is proper to him, and he called this what is due?
 Polemarchus (P): Surely
 S: . . . if someone asked him: "What does the craft we call medicine give that is due, and to whom?" what would his answer be?
 P: It is the craft which prescribes medicines and food and drink for our bodies.
 S: And what does the craft which we call cooking give that is due and fitting and to whom?
 P: It adds flavor to food.
 S: What, and to whom, does that craft give which we would call justice?
 P: It must follow from what was said before, Socrates, that it is that which benefits one's friends and harms one's enemies.
 . . .
 S: Now, when people are not ill . . . the physician is no use to them?
 P: Yes
 S: Nor is the pilot when they are not sailing?
 P: Yes
 S: So to people who are not fighting a war the just man is useless?
 P: No
 S: Justice then is useful also in peacetime?
 P: Yes. (*Republic* I, 332c-333a)

It is a feature of dialogues of this first group that no argument is provided at any given turn of the dialogue. Instead, the turns separately establish the ingredients of the arguments—the premises or reasons, the reasoning steps, and the conclusions. The answers are often affirmations, or assertions, of propositions that are logically implied by propositions affirmed or asserted at earlier turns in the dialogue. So each argument as such is kept in the interlocutors' heads as the dialogue proceeds. In effect, it is always the questioner who presents or asserts the argument (over several turns) and the answerer who concedes that the questioner's premises and reasoning establish the assertion (the affirmation or denial of a proposition) in question. So the dialogue is a medium or vehicle for the presentation of the argument. The question-and-answer exchange is not essential. The "questioner" could as well assert the complete argument, and the "answerer" respond whether he or she will grant the premises and the inferences made, and so grant the conclusion. What the dialogue model does make explicit is that for the answerer to be convinced by the questioner's argument, he or she must accept each of its premises and each step of its reasoning.

17.2.2 Group B

In a somewhat more complicated class of interactions, the rules will permit fuller exchanges.

(4) One side might be permitted in one turn to produce a "simple" argument in answer to the questions of the other side. If we think of an argument in the pragmatic

sense we are discussing as an invitation to infer the acceptability of a proposition from cited reasons, then a “simple argument” is one that invites just one inference.² The questioner could then query either the reasons or the inference link of such arguments.

(5) A somewhat more complicated exchange than type 4, would be one in which the answerer was permitted to offer two or more simple arguments in a given turn for the proposition questioned.

(6) If the roles of the questioner and answerer could be switched back and forth between the parties during the argument, and each permitted the same moves, the dialogue would become yet more complex.

(7) An additional complexity would occur if the questioner were permitted to offer simple arguments for his or her doubts about the reasons or the inference links of the answerer’s argument.

What all the dialogues of Group B have in common is that only simple arguments are permitted at each turn. An implication of this requirement is that in such dialogues the speaker would be permitted to offer reasons in support of the premises or of the inference links in his or her arguments only if these were challenged by the interlocutor. Had such supporting reasons been allowed initially together with the argument, then there would have been at least two invited inferences at that step, the argument would no longer have been simple, and the complexity would have been increased to a significant degree.

An example of argument-dialogues of Group B would seem to be the dialogue-games of P. Lorenzen (1982) and Kuno Lorenz (1982). It looks to me as though the Permissive Persuasive Dialogue model defined by Walton and Krabbe (1995) may belong here too, but it is not clear whether they want to restrict each interlocutor at each move to simple arguments.

Argument-dialogues of Groups A and B also share the feature that what is supplied by each participant at each turn is a direct response to what was stated or asked in the previous turn. Thus these might be termed “fully-engaged” argument-dialogues (using a term West (1997) introduces in describing the Harman-Thomson exchange discussed below).

It may also need to be noted that although argument is the essential product of such exchanges, that does not preclude ancillary kinds of move at any given turn, such as requests for and the provision of definitions, distinctions, explanations, examples, and so on.

² I owe the characterization of argument as an invitation to infer to Robert C. Pinto. I have since found the same idea in Beardsley (1976): “To argue is to attempt . . . to change someone’s mind by getting him to make an inference” (p. 5).

17.2.3 Group C

A third degree of complexity is introduced when the dialogue rules allow in a given turn anything beyond a “yes” or “no” answer, a single simple or compound proposition, or a simple argument. Once support for a premise or an inference link of an argument is permitted in addition to the argument at any given turn of the dialogue, there is the beginning of a sea change in the character of the interaction. Consider some sub-types, again in order of increasing complexity.

(8) Perhaps the simplest of this group is the dialogue in which one or both parties are permitted to provide in a single turn a line of argument for a proposition. By a “line of argument” I mean a simple argument, along with at least one additional simple argument supporting any of its premises or its inference link. (Others might prefer the term “chain” of arguments.) Any such premise-support or link-support argument is in effect an answer to a question about the acceptability of that premise or that link. The supporting arguments are one kind of indirect support for the main conclusion. We will see others below.

(9) There is no reason in principle why the premises or inference links of these supporting arguments should not themselves be supported by arguments, at the discretion of the interlocutor whose turn it is. However, each additional iteration adds to the complexity of the turn.

(10) Complexity increases in a different direction once more than one line of argument is permitted in any turn.

(11) A combination of (8), (9) and (10) could in principle result in a very long and complicated turn in an argument-dialogue indeed.

In fact, although type (11) is not the most complicated kind of turn imaginable, as we will see in a moment, nevertheless it illustrates how dialogues of Group C are significantly different from those of Groups A and B. Once an interlocutor in a dialogue is permitted to offer, and in turn support, several lines of argument for a proposition, he or she is no longer responding to a single question or challenge from the other party.

So far all the argument-dialogue types described have the feature that nothing other than arguments which have as their conclusion a proposition in question is envisaged at a given turn in the dialogue, whether that proposition is the main point at issue, a premise of a supporting argument or an inference link of a supporting argument.

17.2.4 Group D

The next level of complexity is to permit at any one turn, in addition to the above, two other kinds of indirect arguments in support of the main proposition at issue.

- (12) In addition to the moves permitted in (1)–(11), permit (a) arguments intended as refutations of alternatives to the main proposition, and (b) arguments intended as refutations of arguments aimed at refuting the main proposition.

With (12) we have reached the most complicated possible argument turn. Here we have the possibility of a whole case for a position presented in a single turn.

The most complete possible “case” for a position, *c*, at issue consists of:

- (Pro-*c*₁) arguments, with the position at issue as their conclusion (p₁, p₂, p₃, . . . , so *c*);
- (Pro-*c*₂) arguments with the premises or inference links of Pro-*c*₁-level arguments as their conclusions (p_{1a}, p_{1b}, p_{1c}, . . . , so p₁; p_{2a}, p_{2b}, p_{2c}, . . . , so p₂; . . .);
- (Pro-*c*₃) arguments with the premises or inference links of Pro-*c*₂-level arguments as their conclusions (p_{1ai}, p_{1aii}, p_{1aiii}, . . . , so p_{1a}; p_{1bi}, p_{1bii}, p_{1biii}, . . . , so p_{1b}; . . . ; p_{2ai}, p_{2aii}, p_{2aiii}, . . . , so p_{2a}; p_{2bi}, p_{2bii}, p_{2biii}, . . . , so p_{2b}; . . .);
- (Pro-*c*₄–Pro-*c*_{*n*}) arguments with premises or inference links of Pro-*c*₃-or-higher-level arguments as their conclusions;
- (Con-~*c*₁) arguments with the denial of alternatives to the position at issue as their conclusions (that is ~r₁, ~r₂, ~r₃, . . . , so ~r, where r implies ~c);
- (Con-~*c*₂) arguments with the premises or inference links of level Con-~*c*₁ arguments as their conclusions;
- (Con-~*c*₃–Con-~*c*_{*n*}) arguments with the premises or inference links of arguments at level Con-~*c*₂ or higher as their conclusions;
- (Super-Con₁) arguments whose conclusion is the denial of the premises or inferences of arguments with the contrary or the contradictory of the position at issue as their conclusion;
- (Super-Con₂) arguments with the premises or inference links of level Super-Con₁ arguments as their conclusions; . . .
- (Super-Con_{*n*}) arguments with the premises or inference links of level Super-Con₂. . .etc arguments as their conclusions.

It is not clear where to locate examples of argument-exchange dialogues such as those envisaged by Barth (1982a), or those which would fit van Eemeren & Grootendorst’s model (1984), along the above continuum. Barth clearly has in mind exchanges in which the audience responds to the speaker as an active partner in the discussion, the verbal reactions of the audience are considered in detail, and there is interplay between the locutions of the occupants of the “dialectical roles” (see Barth, 1982b: viii). Since she contrasts such “dialectical” argumentation with the rhetorical argumentation analyzed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958), in which the speaker appeals to the concessions of the audience but the audience does not interact with the speaker, the kind of argument-dialogue Barth is thinking of would seem to belong somewhere in Group C. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) seem to leave open the possibility that a turn in the dialogue can reach type (12) complexity, yet they also seem to have in mind exchanges in which the two sides interact during the course of the presentation of a case, which cannot happen if someone is making a type (12) case for his position at a single turn in the exchange. So it is not clear to me where their model should be mapped on the above continuum.

17.3 Implications of Complexity

I am claiming that dialogues approaching type (12) complexity are different in kind from those of groups A and B. This point can perhaps be appreciated by considering some examples.

One example is the paper that was the original version of this chapter, and the response to that paper written by Prof. dr. E.C.W. Krabbe, which were presented together at a conference. That paper can be understood as one turn of a dialogue, and Prof. Krabbe's response as the second turn of the dialogue.

Another example is a recent book by Gilbert Harman and Judith Jarvis Thomson, called *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity* (1996). In the first five chapters of this book, Harman defends a version of moral relativism. In the next three chapters, written independently, Thomson defends a version of moral objectivity. In the ninth chapter, Harman responds critically to Thomson's three chapters, and in the tenth chapter, Thomson responds critically to Harman's first five chapters.

The Harman–Thomson “exchange” in this book is illustrative. The conclusion that Harman draws from his defense of moral relativism is presumably incompatible with the conclusion Thomson draws from her defense of moral objectivity, yet the two parts of the book in which each author defends his or her conclusions do not engage each other at all. The authors engage in “dialogue” in the respect that they speak to (opposite sides of) the same issue, but it is a “non-engaged” dialogue because, except incidentally, they do not argue for or against, or question, each other's arguments. Only in the second part of the book does each co-author take up and argue against the case that each had made in the first part. And even there the dialogue is not completely engaged, since there is no communication between the co-authors about their respective refutations of the other's case. In sum, part of their dialogue is “non-engaged,” and part is only “quasi-engaged.”

Scholarly journal articles and scholarly monographs, in general, can also be conceived as turns in dialogues. Assuredly, their authors are responding to doubts or questions raised against their positions and arguments by arguments against their positions or against their arguments, and by incompatible positions found in the literature and argued for elsewhere. Yet if such extended arguments count as argument-dialogue turns, they are turns of type (12) complexity. Moreover, while they presuppose the two sides Walton (1996a, p. 38) says are found with every argument, they are assuredly “non-engaged” or “quasi-engaged” dialogues, like the Harman–Thomson exchange described above. In such cases the “interlocutors” take up the same topic, defending (apparently) incompatible positions on it, but they do not interact directly with one another, interrupting each other with questions or challenges. Even where they do respond to one another explicitly in later publications, the respondent chooses which of the other side's views to attempt to refute and which of his or her own claims to support, and is not forced by questions or challenges from the other side to address additional issues that the critic deems important.

The arguments in such dialogues, while addressed to another side, are solo performances, and I will call them “solo arguments.” Non-engaged, or quasi-engaged, dialogues are to be contrasted to the types of dialogue grouped in A. and B., which are of necessity engaged. The arguments of such engaged dialogues are like duets, and I will call them “duet arguments.”

What is the significance of the difference between duet arguments and solo arguments, between engaged and non-engaged argument-dialogues? There seem to be several noteworthy differences in the properties of these two pairs, which I will discuss under three headings.

17.3.1 Participation of the Respondent

One obvious difference is that with solo arguments the argument is not developed over a series of turns in which there are exchanges with the respondent. The respondent is typically physically absent, and in any case the argument must be developed without direct questioning from or interaction with the respondent. It is true that in many cases the identity of and the views held by the people on “the other side” are known. However, while that fact gives the proponent something to go on, there can be doubts about the precise interpretation of these views, and there are likely to be doubts about how the respondent would reply to the premises or inference links used by the solo arguer. The respondent’s absence means the solo arguer has choices not available to the duet arguer. The solo arguer is free to take the argumentation in directions that are not envisaged by the questions of the respondent, and to refrain from taking up points that “the other side” might challenge.

Even when there is a dialogue of sorts, such as when one paper followed by a response to it are presented together at a scholarly meeting, the author of the initial paper is not exclusively in an interchange with the anticipated challenges of the respondent. The respondent’s identity may be unknown in advance to the author, but even when it is known the author cannot know in advance what all the respondent’s challenges will be. The author might be able to predict some responses, but to the extent that the author wants to make new arguments, the respondent’s reactions are in principle unknowable in advance.

17.3.2 Composition of the “Respondent” or “Other Side”

In many cases the precise identity and opinions of the respondents are not known. You cannot predict, for example, who will be reading your letter-to-the-editor. In many cases, there is no single “other side,” but a heterogeneous array of points of view, maintained from a wide range of theoretical backgrounds, by people whose information bases or belief stores vary enormously in kind, quantity and quality. An example of such a diverse audience is the electorate addressed by a politician in a nationally televised interview with a journalist. The commitment stores of the audience members or groups may conflict, and often do.

The solo arguer is free to choose which “audience” to address. He or she may try to address them all, or some particular group of them, or some idealized subset of them (think of Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca’s “universal audience” (1958)). These choices cannot always be based solely on the known cognitive attitudes of the audience, since, by hypothesis, in such cases these may be contradictory.

17.3.3 Norms

In artificial engaged dialogue games, with their argument-generating duets, argument norms are standardly specified and are partly constitutive of the game in question. They can be enforced by the participants or by the referee or judge. In real-life, “live” engaged dialogues, the participants are the guardians of argument norms, free to challenge the acceptability of problematic premises, the relevance of seemingly unrelated premises, or the sufficiency of the evidence supplied, according to their own favored criteria of adequacy. The norms themselves can be challenged, leading to meta-arguments over the standards that apply or over procedural issues. Whether contrived games or live duets, the norms of argument in such dialogues are fairly determinate.

However, in non-engaged dialogues in real life, the arguer has no such guidance as to the norms he or she is expected to satisfy. In some cases, the arguer’s best recourse is to examine the current practice in the context and try to meet the norms exhibited therein. For example, different academic or scientific journals have their own norms, which are sometimes stated, and otherwise can be inferred from the papers they publish. But such norms are necessarily vague and flexible, and the judges who enforce them—the referees and editors of any one periodical, for example—are a variable group. In other cases, there is no guiding practice. Theorists can and do construct and commend sets of norms based on such factors as the aims of the interlocutors and the underlying purpose of the argument. The recommendation of such norms is part of Walton’s project, I would say, if I understand it correctly. Perhaps some day such norms will have become unproblematic, well established, taught, and socially enforced, so that they then are part of the fabric of our argumentative lives. But under present circumstances the live solo arguer can make no such assumption. So the arguer has to make decisions, to try to meet the expectations of the audience (so far as these can be anticipated), and to satisfy his or her own epistemic or decision-making standards.

Rules that might suit idealized engaged dialogue argumentation cannot apply to solo arguments in non-engaged dialogues. To see that this is so, consider some of the pragma-dialectical rules that van Eemeren and Grootendorst have generated for idealized rational disagreement-resolution argument dialogues, which they call “critical discussions.” Several of these pragma-dialectical rules do not apply to solo arguments because the presuppositions of the rules are not satisfied.

Rule 1 says: “parties must not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints” (1992a, p. 208). But in a solo argument, the arguer

might, in order to narrow the discussion to the main contending positions on the issue at hand, be justified in suggesting that some alternatives are just implausible and do not deserve attention, or in order to focus on supporting the truly problematic or controversial premises of his or her argument be justified in dismissing out of hand some doubts as simply unreasonable and unworthy of comment. Both the time available and the need to focus the audience on what he or she regards as crucial points can lend support for violating Rule 1 in a solo argument, even though a critical discussion requires obedience to it.

Rule 2 says: “a party that advances a standpoint is obliged to defend it if the other party asks him to” (1992a, p. 208). But there may well be members of the solo arguer’s audience who would challenge a premise of the speaker’s argument, but who can legitimately be ignored if their objections are implausible, ill-motivated or unimportant. Critical discussions would break down in short order if either party did not have to defend claims the other challenged, but it does not impede solo argument, nor is it a vice of solo argument, if the arguer ignores marginal objections or straw person objections.

Or again, consider Rule 5, governing the handling of the other party’s unexpressed premises: “A party may not falsely present something as a premise that has been left unexpressed by the other party or deny a premise that he himself has left implicit” (1992a, p. 208). This rule envisages an engaged dialogue, in which the arguments of another party have been expressed and are being responded to. But Rule 5 has no place when a solo arguer’s audience is so diffuse that it often cannot be held responsible for any particular argument in enough specificity to have definitively identifiable premises, expressed or unexpressed.

Similarly, the pragma-dialectical rule governing premises often cannot be applied. Rule 6 states: “A party may not falsely present a premise as an accepted starting point or deny a premise representing an accepted starting point” (1992a, p. 209). In solo arguments, just what the audience accepts as starting-point premises will often not be known, and when the audience’s own arguments are not known, *eo ipso* neither can be their premises.

Rule 9 says: “a failed defense of a standpoint must result in the party that put forward the standpoint retracting it and a conclusive defense in the other party retracting his doubt about the standpoint” (1992a, p. 209). But in solo arguments, the speaker will tend not to recognize a failed defense of his or her position, and certainly cannot be expected to do so, nor can the arguer have any assurance that arguments which conclusively establish points the audience initially doubted will successfully persuade the audience.

The point here is not at all that the so-called “pragma-dialectical rules for critical discussions” are improper rules for argument duets. It is, rather, that such rules, which may make sense for engaged dialogues, do not necessarily apply to solo arguments. Yet no one proposes that there are no norms that apply to solo arguments. Other norms are needed, as are other grounds of those norms than the need to maintain a fruitful engaged-dialogical interaction between or among the participants.

The variety of types of non-engaged dialogues suggests further that the search for a single set of norms is misguided. Consider a list of such dialogues:

- political addresses (on radio or TV, in the legislature, on the hustings, etc.)
- encomia, eulogies
- essays (literary, political, or on general topics)
- scholarly or scientific papers (in journals, read at meetings)
- popular books with a message
- scholarly monographs
- educational lectures
- motivational, inspirational speeches (coaches' locker room speeches, business motivational talks, sermons in church or on TV, old-style convention speeches to the party faithful)
- individual educational lectures, courses of such lectures

On the face of it, what counts as a “good” argument in one of these contexts will not necessarily qualify as such in another. That is not merely because we can distinguish between different virtues of arguments, for example, rhetorical virtue and logical virtue. To be sure, a logically cogent argument can be ineffective in convincing its audience, and a persuasive argument can have gaping logical holes in it. However, the point about varying standards is a different one.

Consider an example. Teachers and scholars are familiar with the need to vary the nature of the arguments they use in the lecture hall and from those they use in a journal article. The qualifications, provisos, distinctions, objections to be dealt with that are a must in our arguments when we go into scholarly print will be confusing to students, who need first the main outlines only. Again, the confused views that the instructor must labor to expose and refute in the introductory lecture do not (presumably) arise at all for the scholarly audience. Some might insist that the arguments for the introductory class are poor arguments whereas those for the scholarly article are good, or better, ones, but that would be a mistake. The good argument for the introductory class is not a fallacious argument or a weak argument, in comparison with the one used in the journal article. The variations in such cases lie instead along the dimensions of thoroughness or completeness, depth, selection, precision, qualification, and proviso. The standards for these criteria will vary with the context of the exchange. Their satisfaction requires an astute assessment of the cognitive and affective attitudes of the audience on the part of the solo arguer. None of these factors need worry the duet arguer, who has only to respond to the expressed demands of his or her interlocutor.

17.4 Conclusion

I have spoken of “argument dialogues” as though their characterization as dialogues of such non-engaged complex exchanges as pairs of books were unproblematic. On this account, Richard Nozick’s *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974) is in dialogue with

John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) is in dialogue with Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748). But such talk is metaphorical, as surely as Whitehead (1929, p. 63) was using a metaphor in characterizing the European philosophical tradition as consisting of a series of footnotes to Plato. Dialogues proper, or strictly speaking, are exchanges between identifiable individuals known to each other in which each person takes a brief turn, and more or less responds to what was said in the immediately preceding and other previous turns. Thus only members of Groups A and B, and perhaps some of Group C are dialogues. Plenty of arguments are delivered and considered outside the settings of such dialogues.

While it stretches the concept of dialogue badly out of shape to try to fit into it all the types of so-called "argument-dialogues" listed above, it is easy enough to understand the motivation to do so. There is something dialogue-like about Nozick's response to Rawls, and Kant's to Hume. More than that, we expect solo arguers to behave as if they were in dialogue with their actual, or possible, or some ideal, audience, as well as with those who have previously expressed themselves, especially those who have argued in ways relevant to the solo arguer's thesis and arguments. It would be handy to have the terminology to distinguish properties unique to dialogues proper (Groups A and B), from the argument properties that are common to duet arguments and solo arguments.

Up to this point the word 'dialectic' has not figured in this chapter. Its omission was deliberate. A glance at the literature on argument and argumentation will show that the terms 'dialogue,' 'dialogical,' 'dialectic,' 'dialectics,' and 'dialectical' are used either interchangeably, or with so much variation that they mark no accepted distinction. A good example is the ground-breaking proceedings of the 1978 Groningen Conference, *Argumentation: Approaches to Theory Formation* (Barth & Martens, 1982), which was intended to focus on "the dialectical stage of the theory of argumentation" (p. viii), and had papers with titles including the following terms: 'dialogische,' 'dialectical,' 'dialogues,' 'dialectics,' and 'dialogue logic.' As far as I can tell, the terms are used in this collection without discrimination or distinction.

It will never happen, but it would be nice if the term 'dialectical' were reserved for the properties of all arguments related to their involving doubts or disagreements with at least two sides, and the term 'dialogical' were reserved for those belonging exclusively to turn-taking verbal exchanges. Then we could use this terminology to express the points that (1) all argumentation is dialectical, but by no means is all argumentation dialogical, and (2) the dialectical properties of dialogues, and the norms derived from the dialogue model, do not all apply to non-dialogical argument exchanges, even though the latter are dialectical too. In other words both duet arguments and solo arguments are dialectical, but only duets are dialogues.

The suggestions of this chapter have at least the following two implications. One is that studies of dialogues, such as Walton's, will not suffice to reveal all the salient properties of solo argumentation, nor all the norms appropriate to them. The other, which is undeveloped but lurks nonetheless, is that the rhetorical dimension of solo

argument, the properties and norms entailed by the addressing of an audience by a rhetor, need to be explored more closely by the student of the pragmatic conception of argument. Even if the contentions put forth here are mistaken, at the very least those who insist that dialogues are sufficient to model all argumentation, or that arguments always occur in a dialogue context, owe a more precise account of what these claims mean and how they are true.

Chapter 18

Relationships Among Logic, Dialectic and Rhetoric

18.1 Introduction

A consideration of the relationship among logic, dialectic and rhetoric was found already in the work of Plato and Aristotle and others in the first golden age of Western philosophy, and this relationship has received attention down through Western history (see the historical observations in Krabbe, 2000; in Hohmann, 2000; and in Leff, 2000). The argumentation scholarly community was reminded of its salience in the late 20th century (see Wenzel, 1990) and has returned to its examination. In the last 5 years or so, a flurry of activity has raised the profile of these questions in this community, particularly with the focus on how dialectic and rhetoric and their relationships bear on the identification, interpretation and assessment of arguments and argumentation (see the special issues of *Argumentation* edited by Hansen & Tindale, 1998, and by van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2000d).

In English-speaking philosophical communities, in contrast, there has been little attention to argumentation at all, to say nothing of the relations among logic, dialectic and rhetoric. The work of Johnstone, Jr. (1959) and Habermas (1981) are noteworthy exceptions. However, in the last 30 years a small number of philosophers, some of whom characterize their field, for rhetorical reasons, as “informal logic,” have been working out the implications of expanding the analysis and assessment of arguments beyond the identification of the deductive or entailment relationships they might exhibit. In broadening the scope of their perspective in this way, they recognized the bearing of dialectic (see Blair & Johnson, 1987), and more

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recently, the importance of rhetoric (see, Gilbert, 1997; Tindale, 1999). In doing so, they raise for themselves the question of the relationship among the three.

So, under the influence of the recent attention to rhetoric and to the relation between dialectic and rhetoric by the broader community of argumentation scholars, and also due to their own internal theoretical development, some philosophers working in informal logic have come to an interest in these issues. It is from this historical situation that my own interest in this topic arises. This chapter is an attempt to come to grips with the relationship of these three fields or perspectives. To begin, I explain the senses of logic, dialectic and rhetoric used here. My thesis is that there is no one type of relationship among these three, but rather several—at least four, and there may be more. For each of these types of ways the three can be related, the question arises as to how they in fact are related. For each type there is not always only one way the three are related.

18.2 The Concepts of Logic, Dialectic and Rhetoric Used in This Chapter

18.2.1 *Logic*

According to the Amsterdam Pragma-Dialectical theory, argumentation is, or is most perspicuously to be interpreted as if it were, a particular kind of speech event (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 1992a). According to this theory, argumentation presupposes an expressed disagreement. The word ‘disagreement’ is here used in a technical way, to denote a lack of complete identity of commitment. For example, if Anna states confidently that a certain restaurant will be open, and Ben, knowing that Anna sometimes has misplaced confidence in such things but no particular reason to doubt that she is right in this case, responds, “I hope so,” then Anna and Ben have an expressed disagreement in the sense in question. So at a minimum, argumentation presupposes an expressed disinclination of at least one party to commit to precisely the same position or “standpoint” that another party expressly does commit to, regardless of how similar their positions are otherwise. They disagree at least on some specifiable particular point. If the parties decide to try to settle their disagreement by engaging in a discussion, and the ensuing exchange is properly regulated, that is, regulated by the norms necessary and sufficient to procure a rational resolution of the disagreement, then (among other things) each party defends its position using logically acceptable arguments. Such arguments are thus components of the overall communicative interaction of argumentation.

It is possible to consider arguments apart from their use in argumentation so conceived. Even each party in a Pragma-Dialectical “critical discussion” must consider both which arguments to offer or express and also which arguments on offer or expressed by other parties to accept. To be sure, the context of argumentation is essential to the interpretation of the arguments, but once interpreted in light of that context, one must consider their “logic.” By considering their logic, I mean that if it is an argument on offer, one can ask, “Do the grounds offered make it rational

for me to accept the position they allegedly support?" If it is an argument one is considering offering and one is committed to a rational resolution of the disagreement, one can ask, "Do the grounds make it rational for me and my interlocutor to accept the position in support of which I am considering offering them?" Moreover, to my knowledge no one has established that arguments cannot, ideally, be used for other purposes besides the rational resolution of disagreement. If it turns out that arguments can be put to other uses, then the question of their "logic" can be raised in those other contexts as well.

If one wants to reserve the word 'argument' to denote the reasons to which people are publicly committed, then we would need another word for the organized thoughts entertained by an interlocutor independently of whether he or she makes them public. We might then speak of the interlocutor's reasoning, and so of the logic of his or her reasoning. And we do speak this way. However, no one owns the word 'argument,' and there is a long and respectable history in philosophy, and in non-technical English as well, of referring to such potential contributions to argumentative discourse as "arguments" and "reasoning" more or less interchangeably, whether or not they end up as someone's public commitments.

My use of the word 'logic' might seem idiosyncratic to scholars who identify themselves as logicians. For example, John Woods has said, "no theory is a logic if it lacks proof procedures" (1995, p. 192). To my knowledge there are no proof procedures available to answer the question that I have just suggested it is a task of logic to answer, namely, whether the grounds on offer make it rational for someone to accept the position they are adduced to support. I stand to be corrected by logicians, but taking Woods as authoritative, then the term 'logic,' "strictly speaking," would denote the study of, and systems of, proof procedures for the necessary or entailment relations among sets of sentences, for different kinds of operator. Understanding 'logic' in this way, one can speak of examining the "logic" of someone's argument or reasoning when one means examining it to see whether the premises used entail the conclusions derived from them according to some logical system. But as is well known, logical validity in this sense is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of a rational or reasonable argument. My use of 'logic'—Woods might say, my corrupt use of 'logic'—has the virtue of allowing for the possibility that reasoning or an argument might be logical in the sense that it is rational to use it or to accept it, even if its premises do not entail its conclusion. For instance, the argument might be invalid yet inductively strong, or it might be invalid but highly plausible. Or, it might be invalid as it stands, but open to reconstruction that makes it valid if and only if some additional premise is accepted. In the latter case it becomes necessary, in order to decide whether the enriched premise set that entails the conclusion should be taken to be the argument, to decide whether it is reasonable to believe or accept that additional premise, which is not a logical question in the strict sense of "logic."

Some (e.g., Goldman, 1985; Pinto, 1994) have said that, understood in such a broad sense, logic is not an independent field, but a branch of epistemology. Johnson (2000a, pp. 281–283) has listed a number of reasons for resisting the reduction of logic in the broad sense to epistemology, but even if he is wrong, that implication is no *reductio* objection against using 'logic' in this broad way, because the arguments

for the subsumption of such logic under epistemology rely precisely on distinguishing it from logic in the strict sense. If the word 'logic' is reserved for logic in the strict sense, then the term 'informal logic' might be used as the name of what I am calling logic in the broad sense.

However, let us resist terminological imperialism. One need not favor terminological anarchy to hold that if there is a healthy tradition of the use of a word in a certain way, that gives it some claim to legitimacy, even if it lacks the theoretical purity of a technical sense assigned to it by some science. Nobody owns the language, and just as even the Pragma-Dialectical school does not own the word 'argument,' so, too, professional logicians do not own the word 'logic.' They are of course free to assign to it a precise technical sense for their purposes, but if others use it in other ways, logicians have no business telling them that on that ground alone they are misusing the word. What logicians can do is point out that this other use is different from theirs, and it can be important to keep that fact in mind. However, to declare that the term 'informal logic' is a solecism, as Hintikka has done in one criticism of informal logic (1989, p. 13), is irrelevant to the question of the legitimacy of the enterprise that is carried on under that name. Such reasoning is like saying that the name "football" is a solecism for a game that requires the player to carry the ball in his hands, and from that observation drawing the inference that there is something wrong with what Americans or Canadians call "football." (American and Canadian "football" are slightly different versions of a game that is much more like British or Australian rugby than what is called "football" in the rest of the world). But that point aside, there is a perfectly good use of 'logic' according to which an argument's logic can be deemed acceptable although the premises do not entail the conclusion and can be deemed faulty although they do entail the conclusion.

18.2.2 Dialectic

I have just contended that in evaluating the reasoning or the arguments in argumentation for various purposes, we are interested in (among other things) their logical strength. To be sure, their logic can enter into the prior identification and interpretation of arguments, because one indication that a piece of discourse is an argument is that it contains a logically plausible (or stronger) case for a claim. In addition, even where situational or textual indicators suggest independently that an argument is present, what argument the discourse is taken to contain can be a function of that reconstruction of it is logically plausible as support for a claim. However, the principal reason we want to identify and interpret argumentative discourse is because we are interested in evaluating the logical merits of the reasoning or arguments expressed in it, for some purpose or another. One primary reason for this interest is that we want to decide whether we ourselves should be convinced by that reasoning or by those arguments.

However, if we focus particularly on arguments used in argumentation, there is another dimension to be taken into account besides their logic, when considering their adequacy for various purposes. Argumentation constitutes an activity in which

there is a question about whether, or at least why, a standpoint is worthy of acceptance. And typically there is more than a question. Frequently, doubt about a standpoint, or disagreement with it, is either voiced or anticipated. The practice of argumentation as advocacy presupposes the questioning of a standpoint. Objections to a protagonist's arguments, and arguments against the standpoint a protagonist is supporting, have to be met by the protagonist. He or she has either to produce additional arguments or to explain why it is not necessary to do so. If dialectic is understood broadly as question-and-answer interchanges, then the practice of argumentation is inherently dialectical.

Why do objections "have to" be met? Why does the protagonist "have to" produce a reply, or explain why not? In short, why "must" argumentation be dialectical? What is the basis of this imperative? First, there is the practical matter of convincing the interlocutor. If his or her objections are not answered, the argumentation will fail in its objective. So there can be and usually is a rhetorical basis for meeting dialectical challenges. Second, and quite apart from winning the argument or succeeding in persuading the interlocutor, if the protagonist argues for the standpoint because he or she believes it to be true (or highly probable, or very plausible, or the best alternative, or worthy of acceptance on some other basis), then, in order to be fully justified in that attitude, he or she must be able to answer not only this or that particular interlocutor's objections, but any other reasonable objections that he or she can discover. It is true that we allow for qualified assertions when the protagonist has made only a partial inquiry, and the extent of the search for possible objections required for full confidence in an assertion is a matter of debate (see the discussion of Johnson's concept of a "dialectical tier": Johnson, 1996b, 2000a; Govier, 1998, 1999c), but being able to deal with objections in general is a condition of reasonably maintaining an epistemic or other attitude in the face of objections or counter-arguments. So there is an epistemic basis for meeting dialectical challenges as well (see Goldman, 1999).

The epistemic basis for requiring dialectical rejoinders in argumentation has a rationale that is related to the protagonist's objective of rationally justified beliefs or other attitudes. The very practice of argumentation—of advancing arguments with the expectation of their making a difference to the beliefs, non-cognitive attitudes or conduct of others; and of expecting others to supply arguments in support of positions they propose—would have no point without the background assumption that having, or giving, reasons is having or giving more than a rationalization. The practice of argumentation presupposes that having or giving arguments is rational in some sense (see also Biro & Siegel, 1992; Johnson, 2000a). At the least, it imposes a requirement of consistency with our current beliefs and attitudes. And if there are any foundational starting points for conduct or attitudes (including epistemic attitudes), argumentation is the means of tying our current beliefs and attitudes down to those foundations.

There seem to be various kinds of norms that characterize dialectical interchanges. Some might be called "house-keeping" rules, for they are rules that maintain a tidy, confusion-free exchange. "Wait for your turn" and "keep to one point at a time" are examples. Other rules are more centrally connected to the practice, and might be seen as defining it—that is, they are constitutive rules. "Meet

the burden of proof” would be an example of a rule constitutive of argumentation’s dialectical aspect. What the burden of proof requirements are will vary according to the type of dialectical practice. For instance, the Pragma-Dialectical burden of proof rule is that he or she who asserts must defend if, but only if, challenged (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, p. 161), whereas Johnson recommends that the person who asserts must defend unless exempted from doing so (2000a, p. 310). These different burden of proof rules entail, if not entirely different conceptions of argumentation, at least different purposes for it.

Some of the norms governing dialectical interchanges will be a function of the objectives of such interchanges. For instance, if you and I are arguing over some proposal we disagree about, for example, whether Celia or Dan is the candidate to whom an appointment should be offered, and each of us has the objective of convincing the other, we will each have to answer the questions and respond to the challenges raised by the other, but no others, for once one of us has convinced the other, the objective has been met. If, on the other hand, you are trying to come to a reasoned opinion on some issue, for example, about whether the ban on hunting whales should continue, you should not stop considering objections once you have looked at the arguments of actual interlocutors. Let us say that only the Japanese and the Norwegian governments have advanced arguments against the whaling ban. Your interest does not lie in refuting the Japanese and Norwegian position, but in deciding what position seems right, all things considered. Thus, besides considering the merits of the Japanese and Norwegian arguments against continuing the ban, you need to consider that there might other arguments, either against or in favor of the ban, that deserve consideration. I am suggesting, then, that there is probably not one single set of dialectical norms, given that dialectical situations and dialectical objectives can vary considerably.

18.2.3 Rhetoric

Aristotle noted the differences between arguments in conversations, in the simplest case organized by the turns of a two-party dialogue, and arguments in speeches, in which the requirements of addressing a heterogeneous audience and the expectations of different kinds of speech-making occasion make quite different demands on the speaker, as Krabbe has reminded us (2000). Krabbe suggested that Aristotle took dialectic to be the practice and theory of conversations and rhetoric to be the practice and theory of speeches, recognizing that speeches can contain elements of conversations and conversations can contain elements of speeches. Just as dialectic gives us the rules for winning dialogue games, so rhetoric gives us their counterpart for successful speeches.

One hesitates to disagree with Aristotle; however, I am inclined to cut the pie differently. One can identify what might be called the pragmatic properties of argumentation in both conversations and speeches. In both there are different possible purposes or goals of the argumentative discourse, often several at once, and there are all the properties of the various kinds of situation in which the argumentative

discourse can occur, often with their associated conventions, that necessarily condition it, whoever may be the parties involved in the discourse. My suggestion is that we take one branch of rhetoric as a discipline to be the study of the norms for most effectively achieving those purposes in those situations, whether the discourse situation be a two-party conversation (such as between parent and child, between lovers, between colleagues, between dialogue-game players); whether it be presentation to a small group (such as an academic paper, a summation before a jury, a contribution to a policy-making meeting); whether it be an address to a large group (such as a political speech to hundreds of party faithful, a sermon, a commencement address); or whether it be a presentation to an absent audience, more or less specifiable (such as a journal article or a monograph, a magazine article, a television address); and so on. We can then speak of the rhetorical (as well as the dialectical and logical) properties of both speeches and conversations, and indeed of any kind of communication whatever, and we do not have to try to assimilate all sorts of different kinds of communication to one or the other branch of the conversation/speech dichotomy, or to model them all as either conversations or speeches.

Whether rhetoric, as a discipline or as an art, is to be restricted to dealing just with the norms of effective argumentative communication, or is to be considered to deal with the norms of effective communication in general, or, indeed, is to be characterized in some other way, are questions I do not need to try to answer here, for the present discussion is about rhetoric as it applies to arguments and argumentation, whether that is the whole of rhetoric or only a part of it. (Reboul, 1991, seems to regard rhetoric as restricted to arguments; others, such as Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1985, regard communication in general as the domain of rhetoric.)

The norms of rhetoric differ in kind from those of logic and dialectic. One expects the norms of rhetoric to vary with the practices of different cultures, so that communicative behavior that might be tolerated or expected in one could be found offensive or surprising in another, even if the communication is of the same type. A philosophy lecture that fails to trace its topic back at least to Aristotle would not on that account be condemned in most professional philosophical circles in the United States, but it was once in some professional philosophical circles in France. What makes for effective communication in general, and for effective argumentative communication in particular, is something to be discovered by empirical research. Rhetorical norms are contingent. The norms of logic and dialectic, in contrast, are culturally invariant. The kind of support expected might vary with the subject-matter, being different in mathematics, chemistry, sociology, law, public policy deliberations, and so on. And there might be different dialectical norms in different forums, being different in academic discussions, in criminal trials, in parliamentary debates, and so on. But these differences are due to variations in methodology or to functional variations in these argumentative practices, not to cultural contingencies. And what constitutes entailment, or what makes for a good longitudinal epidemiological study, does not vary from one social situation to another. It is possible that there are universal psychological traits that result in certain kinds of rhetorical norms being culturally invariant, but it remains the case that such norms are contingent, unlike those of logic and dialectic, which are necessary relative to the systems

in which they operate. So there seems to be a significant difference between the grounding of rhetorical norms and those of logic and dialectic.

18.3 Types of Relationships Among Logic, Dialectic and Rhetoric

Understanding logic, dialectic and rhetoric in relation to argument in these ways, the question arises as to how they might be related one to another. In what follows I distinguish four different types of possible relationship. The first is the conceptual or logical relationship among the norms of the three perspectives. The second is the contingent or empirical relationship among their norms. The third I call the relationship of theoretical priority, and the fourth, that of normative priority.

18.3.1 The Conceptual or Logical Relation Among Logical, Dialectical and Rhetorical Norms

Cohen (2001) has recently suggested that so far as the evaluation of arguments goes, the norms of logic, dialectic and rhetoric are logically (that is, conceptually) independent of one another.¹ According to Cohen, any argument may be assessed according to its logical cogency, its dialectical satisfactoriness and its rhetorical effectiveness. In addition, he suggests, an argument's assessment according to one of these criteria will be independent of its assessment according to either of the others. Cohen's view is thus a position on one type of relationship among the three perspectives, namely the logical relationship among the norms appropriate to each of them. It is a position on the question of the implications of an assessment of an argument according to the criteria of one of them for the assessment of the argument according to those of either of the others. Cohen's position on the question of this logical relationship is clear: "Arguers and their arguments," he says, "can succeed or fail in three separate ways" (p. 75). Thus, if he is right, where an argument fits according to the criteria of any one perspective will be logically independent of where it fits according to those of either of the others. In other words, there is no logical relationship—there are no implications—among evaluations from the logical, rhetorical and dialectical perspectives.

¹ The differences between Cohen's characterizations of logic, dialectic and rhetoric and mine are not great, and I believe they are immaterial so far as this point goes. For Cohen, "In a purely deductive context, the logical axis could be replaced by a bivalent function, the two values being 'valid' and 'invalid,' for assessing inferences. But . . . the premises have to be weighed apart from their use in the inference at hand, In real-life contexts, logic is better conceived as providing a sliding scale measuring the relevance, sufficiency and acceptability . . . of the premises as reasons for the conclusion" (2001, p. 74). "An arguer has argued well dialectically when all of the objections and questions that have been raised have been answered satisfactorily" (pp. 74–75). "The rhetorical perspective examines the argument's effects on the audience. . . . [S]uccessfully persuading the audience to accept a conclusion is one of the possible effects of an argument" (p. 75).

What might such a logical relationship look like, were it to exist? One such relationship has been urged by Johnson (2000a), whom I interpret to take the position that an argument is not logically adequate if it is dialectically incomplete. Johnson does not put his point quite this way. He says that an argument is logically adequate only if sufficient support is provided for its conclusion. But he also holds that sufficiency is a criterion of logic, and that support for a conclusion is not sufficient if there are objections to or other criticisms of the argument as stated so far that have not been dealt with (see Johnson, 2000a, chap. 7). So, in my way of talking, for Johnson, dialectical adequacy, at least in a certain respect, is necessary for logical adequacy. I take it that Johnson would therefore disagree with Cohen's position.

The qualification, "at least in a certain respect," is needed because there is more to dialectical adequacy than meeting the burden of proof. For instance, among other things it also requires providing explications and explanations when these are requested and it forbids argumentative moves that improperly limit the argumentative moves of the other parties. So on Johnson's account, dialectic is presupposed by logic in the respect that a necessary condition of an argument's being logically adequate is that it be at least partly dialectically adequate. This implication seems right. A challenged standpoint is not adequately supported by the grounds adduced in its support if those grounds fail to include adequate responses to legitimate objections. However, is the converse not also true? One would have thought that for a response to an objection to be dialectically adequate, it must be logically adequate. The Pragma-Dialectical theory, for example, requires, as a rule of dialectical adequacy that the argumentation adduced in support of a standpoint be valid and correctly use an appropriate argumentation scheme (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992a). That amounts to the view that logic is presupposed by dialectic in the respect that a necessary condition of an argument's being dialectically adequate is that it be logically adequate. This implication also seems right. It is difficult to imagine acceptable rules of a dialectical theory that values rationality to allow logically bad arguments to count as dialectically satisfactory responses. The norms of (rational) dialectic and those of logic thus seem to be interdependent.

Even if this reasoning is correct, and the satisfaction of the norms of logic require the satisfaction of some of the norms of dialectic (and conversely), the two perspectives are nonetheless different, because there is more to logic than dialectic and more to dialectic than logic. Dialectic has to do with rules for well-ordered exchanges of arguments, whereas logic applies only to the arguments themselves; logic has to do with rules for well-designed arguments, which includes more than satisfactory dialectical design.

Johnson focuses on logic and Pragma-Dialectics focuses on dialectic. We should also consider whether there are norms of rhetoric that have implications for those of the other two perspectives when it comes to the assessment of arguments. Rhetoric calls upon us to shape our discourse to the success of our goals, taking into account the particularities of the situation (such as audience and occasion, among others). Since it is normally a principal objective of argumentation to convince whomever it is we are addressing of the truth or acceptability of our standpoint, it follows that argumentation should be assessed from the rhetorical perspective according to

how well the means used might have been expected to contribute to that objective. It seems probable that argumentation that fails to allay the objections to our standpoint in the minds of our interlocutors will not be successful in convincing them, so it looks as though there is a rhetorical reason for being dialectically astute. However, one can imagine argumentation that manages to preoccupy the interlocutors with some particular issue, and thereby distract them from the objections that they might otherwise raise. Think of Marc Antony's speech over Caesar's body in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* that manages to preoccupy the crowd with Caesar's generosity and thereby cause them to forget for the moment his imperial ambitions. This kind of example suggests that rhetorical effectiveness does not logically imply dialectical completeness. The converse seems true as well. It seems possible that a dialectically thorough argument could be so complicated as to become tedious, so that the audience loses track of its meanderings, loses interest, and begins to wonder whether the arguer "doth protest too much," thus failing to be convinced by what is in fact a dialectically satisfactory case. So it seems that there is no necessary connection between rhetorical effectiveness and dialectical completeness.

The same kind of point applies to the connection between rhetorical and logical norms. While on most occasions it is probably more effective in convincing the interlocutor to use logically strong arguments instead of logically problematic or weak ones, it is possible to imagine cases in which logically flawed arguments are persuasive. Certainly the concern about logical fallacies (as distinct from dialectical ones) presupposes this possibility. And, conversely, a logically tight argument might, as a result of its complexity (or its simplicity!), fail to persuade an audience that thinks the arguer is getting a bit too fancy (or too spare), or suspects him or her of dressing up a weak case (or not making enough of a case), and consequently fails to be convinced by what is in fact a logically strong case. It would follow, then, that as with dialectical norms, any connection between the logical strength and the rhetorical virtues of arguments is contingent.

In sum, first, one kind of relationship among logic, dialectic and rhetoric is the conceptual relationship among the applications of their respective norms or criteria for good argument. Second, it seems that any argument satisfying the criteria for logical goodness must partially satisfy criteria for dialectical goodness, and conversely, any argument satisfying the criteria for dialectical goodness must satisfy those for logical goodness. Third, there seem no necessary or conceptual relations in either direction between satisfying the norms of logic or the norms of dialectic, on the one hand, and satisfying rhetorical norms for arguments, on the other.

18.3.2 The Contingent or Empirical Relations Among Logic, Dialectic and Rhetoric

The conceptual relationship just discussed is different from the empirical relationship among the three sets of norms as applied to arguments. Regarding the latter, we may ask whether there will be positive correlations between the logical or the dialectical adequacy of argumentation (or both) and their persuasiveness. If so,

which one is the independent variable, or is some other factor causing both? Or, are there more complex empirical relationships. For example, one might hypothesize that, keeping other aspects of logical quality constant, as an argument takes up and deals with the objections that are dear and pressing to the audience, it will be increasingly persuasive for them, but if the argumentation continues to entertain and respond to objections that do not interest the audience, its persuasiveness for them will progressively decline. The formulation of such hypotheses, and the design and implementation of their testing, both lie outside the scope of this chapter.

18.3.2.1 Normative Priority

Suppose that the story told above about conceptual relations among the norms of these three perspectives is correct. And grant that the actual effect upon the audience or the argument interlocutors of meeting these norms is a matter to be discovered by empirical investigation. What ought to happen if the norms of these different perspectives were to render conflicting advice? Suppose logically weak arguments were in some situations more rhetorically effective than strong ones. Suppose dialectically inadequate arguments were in some situations more persuasive than those that are dialectically faultless. Would it ever be appropriate to use logically weak or dialectically incomplete arguments because of their persuasiveness? Suppose there were situations in which a logically and dialectically impeccable body of argumentation is much more difficult to understand than necessary, and is expressed in ways that antagonized its audience—in short, is rhetorically clumsy. Should it be rejected on that account?

It seems to me that here there is no one right answer to these questions. Instead, it will be appropriate for the emphasis to be different in different contexts or situations of argumentation. More specifically, the purpose of the evaluation and the perspective of the agent can be determining factors. Let me give some examples.

In criminal trials, the legal system sets the objectives of the argumentation used within it, and imposes numerous constraints. The Crown or prosecuting counsel in criminal trials in liberal democratic states has the task of establishing the accused's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The criminal defense counsel has the role of defending his or her client against the criminal charge. A defense requires trying to show that the prosecution has not proved guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, which in turn consists in trying to persuade a judge, a majority of a judicial panel, or (sufficient members of) a jury that the prosecution has failed to make its case beyond a reasonable doubt. Suppose we want to assess the argument of a defense counsel's final address to the jury. How do the normative criteria of logic, dialectic and rhetoric apply? It is an obligation of the accused's lawyer to argue for the weakness of the prosecution's case in the most persuasive manner possible. Therefore, we ought not to condemn the defense counsel's argument if its logic is flawed in ways unlikely to impair or, indeed, likely to help, the persuasiveness of his presentation. Nor ought we to condemn the argument if the defense counsel fails dialectically to deal with parts of the prosecution's case, if this failure is, again, unlikely to impair or

likely to help the persuasiveness of his presentation. In addition, the defense counsel would be in violation of his duty to provide the best defense possible if he were to bring forward reasons for thinking his client guilty, or to raise objections that would undermine his defense. It is the prosecution's role to do those things. The adversarial system forces the defense counsel to try to deal with the evidence of the prosecution, and by failing to respond to arguments or evidence the defense takes the risk that the prosecution will use that failure in arguing for the guilt of the accused. But these are contingent exigencies, and with sufficient imagination it is possible to imagine, and probably with enough research, to discover, cases in which the successful argument fails to meet the highest standards of logic and dialectic. Such a case would not satisfy the Pragma-Dialectical rules for a critical discussion (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984), nor would it satisfy Johnson's requirement of manifest rationality (see Johnson, 2000a), but it might be the right case for the defense counsel to make.

A successful and highly respected civil litigation lawyer in Canada once said that there is only one argumentation rule for litigation, namely: "Know your judge."² Part of his point was that to win a favorable ruling or settlement, it is not necessary to prove that you have the better case, but only to persuade the presiding judge that you have the better case. The other part of his point was that different judges are swayed in different ways. In principle, the logical and dialectical acumen of judges can vary. Thus, again, in such situations the rhetorical virtue or persuasiveness can in principle, and arguably should, trump logical cogency or requirements of dialectical satisfactoriness.

It might be objected that I am merely describing certain argumentation practices, and providing no principles that would justify the priority of meeting rhetorical standards over those of logic and dialectic.³ However, these particular practices have a very long history of functioning fairly well in realizing their objectives in the criminal and civil legal systems in a number of countries. Included in those objectives are the instantiation of moral and political values. So I believe a case could be made that such practices are justified, and consequently that the subordination in them of logical and dialectical norms to rhetorical standards is in turn justified.

Here is a different example. Consider a setting for argument that is familiar to most readers of this book: the academic journal article. Since there are many sub-genres, let me focus on those in philosophy journals in the analytic tradition. In a paper submitted for publication in such a journal, a mistake in logic, if noticed, is a serious obstacle to its prospects, requiring at the least a revision to the paper, or if it isn't a minor slip that is easy to fix, resulting in its outright rejection by the journal. The demands of dialectic are almost as stringent. The author must respond to the questions and objections raised in or implied by the already-published articles in the literature, and as well to those raised by the referees who review the paper. An author

² Mr. Harvey Strosberg, Q.C., at the Third International Symposium on Informal Logic, University of Windsor, June, 1988.

³ I owe this objection to M.A. van Rees.

is not even castigated for inventing an objection only to rebut it, provided that it is not frivolous. It is true that editors and referees might agree that an objection does not deserve attention when a strong case can be made that it does, so there is room for a small measure of dialectical leniency. In contrast to the demands of logic and dialectic, severe rhetorical shortcomings in such papers are tolerated, especially if the logical and dialectical merits are strong. Moreover, rhetorical virtue is supposed never to trump the requirements of logical cogency and dialectical satisfactoriness. For instance, it is a virtue of such a paper that it is clear and easy to understand and to follow, but not a requirement. (By the way, note that in this sort of context it is difficult to separate dialectic from logic, for a paper that fails to respond to telling objections is not logically cogent, and one that responds to objections, but with logically flawed arguments, is not dialectically satisfactory. Their close connection in this context is thus substantiation of the point made earlier.)

The objection may once again be made that I merely report norms in practice without justifying them, but the reply made above applies here as well. The practice in which these norms are imbedded functions moderately well, and, in spite of certain failings, it is difficult to imagine an alternative that would be as good. Assuming that the purpose of the practice is to expand our knowledge and understanding in philosophy, then insisting on logical rigor and dialectical thoroughness above all are necessary to that end, whereas requiring rhetorical virtue is not.

Are there general principles on the basis of which it can be determined which norms should take precedence in each type of situation, however situation-types might be characterized? I have just discussed examples in which the purpose or goal of the argumentation seems appropriately to make a difference as to the perspective that should receive normative priority. It seems that the perspective of the agent can be a relevant factor as well, or instead. For instance, it is generally assumed that the person formulating and presenting an argument should ideally have the rhetorical perspective among his or her considerations—perhaps for some purposes more than for others, but always to some extent. When selecting which arguments to use, and when organizing their presentation, he or she should consider who the audience is, what the occasion is and what the purposes of the presentation are. However, from the perspective of the person assessing the argument with a view to deciding whether to adopt its conclusion on the basis of the reasons offered in support of it, the key perspectives seem to be logical and dialectical. Do the grounds offered actually lend support to the claim, and are the objections answered that need to be answered? These are the questions the consumers of the argumentation ought to have front and center in their analyses. To be sure, in some roles (think of being a jury member), awareness of rhetorical devices designed to sway the consumer's opinion might be useful in order to see through them and give appropriate attention to the logical and dialectical adequacy of the case presented. But the norms used to decide what to believe (for instance, whether to convict or to acquit) should not be those of rhetoric, but those of logic and dialectic. (This point assumes that such judgments as the appropriate weighting of the evidence belong to the latter domains.) On the other hand, someone assessing the argument with a view to giving advice to the arguer about how to be more persuasive will appropriately focus on its rhetorical

merits, though not necessarily at the expense of its logical and dialectical adequacy. I conclude from considerations such as these that there is no single, universally applicable order of normative priority when considering the norms of logic, dialectic and rhetoric.

18.3.2.2 Theoretical Priority of Emphasis

Students of argumentation theory will be aware that different theories tend to give different emphasis to logic, dialectic and rhetoric. For instance, the Pragma-Dialectical theory consists of an ideal model for a kind of dialectical interaction within which framework logic and rhetoric have subordinate roles (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 1992a). Granted that, for an argumentative discussion to be rational according to this model, the particular arguments used in the process of a dialectical exchange must be logically acceptable, and within that and various dialectical constraints, the interlocutors are free to use whatever rhetorical strategies they think will help them to have the disagreement settled in their favor (see van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2000a, 2000b). But when interpreting argumentative discourse, according to the Pragma-Dialectical theory, we should treat it as if it were an attempt to follow the rules of the idealized dialectical model. In this respect, dialectic has theoretical priority for this theory.

Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) or Tindale (1999), in contrast, take the position that rhetoric has, or should be deemed to have, priority over logic and dialectic. *La Nouvelle Rhétorique* defines logic as the science of demonstration, where rational disagreement is impossible, and conceives argumentation to occupy disagreement space where only rhetoric has application. It does not address the role of dialectic. Tindale's position seems to be that, because arguments are in fact always situated in particular contexts, with such variables as their specific purpose, their audience, and the circumstances of their delivery, among other things, all influencing how we should interpret them, or design them, it follows that logical and dialectical norms cannot be brought to bear until after rhetorical judgments have been made. On this view, the first task of argument interpretation and assessment, and of argument design and presentation as well, is to situate the argument or argumentation rhetorically, and in this respect, rhetoric has theoretical priority.

Toulmin's influential model (1958) seems intended for the logical assessment of arguments and does not include any reference to dialectical or rhetorical elaborations. And many of the philosophers identified with the informal logic movement have taken their objective to be the interpretation and evaluation of arguments, yet most fail to discuss the dialectical or the rhetorical dimensions of argumentation.

So we see that, for the Amsterdam school, the most important feature of argumentation is its dialectical dimension; for the New Rhetoric and Tindale, the most important feature of argumentation is its rhetorical dimension; for many informal logicians, the most important feature of argumentation is its logical dimension. Those who give priority of theoretical emphasis to just one of the three perspectives cannot all be right, but they can all be wrong. Is there some way to decide which theoretical perspective ought to be given priority?

Historically, and in different disciplines, one or two of them have been given pride of place and the other(s) ignored, denigrated, or relegated to minor roles, but this seems to be a mistake. The philosopher who treats logic as central and primary forgets that when he or she writes a paper or makes a presentation there is unavoidably dialectical interaction with alternative views and contending arguments, and also that all sorts of rhetorical decisions have to be made in framing, organizing and formulating the case. When the cultural critic makes the rhetorical perspective central, presumably he or she argues for that position, and in doing so interacts with contending views and relies on logical standards. When a communication theorist emphasizes the dialectical and pragmatic properties of argumentation, he or she nonetheless allows that to the extent that the practice is rational in some sense, norms of logic are essential components, and to the extent that it involves successful communication, norms of rhetoric are followed. It seems that any complete theory of argumentation will account for the role of each, not emphasizing any one at the expense of the others.

However, it is understandable that different interests will result in different emphases. If the theorist's primary interest lies in the epistemic or justificatory functions of argumentation, then the logical perspective will appropriately be emphasized. If the primary interest lies in the conflict-resolution functions of argumentation, then the dialectical perspective should be emphasized. And if the primary interest lies in the communicative functions of argumentation, then the rhetorical perspective will appropriately be central. If, as seems to be the case, argumentation always has all of these functions to some degree, then it seems to follow that no perspective should be emphasized to the complete exclusion of the others. In any case, the details of what precisely it means to give theoretical priority to one or another of these perspectives remain to be worked out.

18.4 Conclusion

In the paper that initiated the interest in these three fields as intersecting in the study of argumentation, Wenzel (1980) referred to them as "perspectives." The implication was that argumentation could be studied from any one of them, and Wenzel's thesis was that it would be a mistake to consider the study of argumentation to be complete without considering all of them. His view was that, as related to the study of argumentation, logic is concerned with the product of argumentation, dialectic is concerned with the procedures used, and rhetoric is concerned with the process of argumentation. He did not address whether these concerns could be addressed independently of one another. The examinations in this chapter seem to support Wenzel's view that all three perspectives exist in every actual case of argumentation. However, it seems that the picture is slightly more complicated than Wenzel envisaged. In the study of arguments and argumentation all three must be considered in relation to one another, but there is more than one type of relationship among them.

Chapter 19

The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments

19.1 Introduction

The book for which this chapter was originally written is about visual rhetoric, and this chapter was a chapter about visual arguments. I took it as part of my task, then, to address the relationships among these three: rhetoric, argument, and the visual. How can there be visual arguments when arguments as we usually know them are verbal? And if there can be visual arguments, what is their rhetorical aspect? Since arguments are supposed to be tools of persuasion and rhetoric is often thought of as including (but not exhausted by) the study and use of the instruments of persuasion, I began by exploring the relationships among rhetoric, argument and persuasion. Then I turned to the difficulties and opportunities that present themselves when considering visual argument in particular. The chapter ends by taking up the question: What does being visual add to arguments?

19.2 Rhetoric and Argument

Rhetoric and argument have been associated since antiquity, and in that connection arguments have traditionally been thought of as verbal phenomena. Aristotle, one of the earliest in European culture to study rhetoric systematically, identified the art of rhetoric with knowledge of modes of persuasion (*Rhetoric* 1354^a13-14). The method of persuasion, he held, is “demonstration,” and demonstration’s instrument is the *enthymeme* (*Rhetoric* 1355^a5-6), which is a form of argument. An Aristotelian enthymeme is an argument in which the arguer deliberately leaves unstated a premise that is essential to its reasoning. Doing so has the effect of drawing the audience to participate in its own persuasion by filling in that unexpressed premise itself. This connecting of the audience to the argument is what makes the

Reprinted, with permission, from Charles A. Hill and Marguerite Helmers (Eds.), *Defining Visual Rhetorics*, Ch. 2 (pp. 41–61). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004.

enthymeme a rhetorical form of argument.¹ But next, Aristotle took it for granted that the agent of persuasion is the orator, and from that it follows on his conception that the principal tool of persuasion must be the orator's medium, namely, language. So, according to one of the earliest and most influential accounts, the material to which rhetoric is to be applied is verbal arguments.

The conception of rhetoric as essentially about speech has remained with us to this day, although it has become more and more contested. As recently as a decade ago, the French rhetoric scholar, Olivier Reboul, restricted rhetoric to the use of language to persuade: "Here, then, is the definition we propose: rhetoric is the art of persuading by means of speech"² (Reboul, 1991, p. 4). Since non-argumentative speech, or non-argumentative properties of speech, can be persuasive, Reboul's definition does not make a necessary connection between rhetoric and argument, but it certainly does envisage speech as essential to rhetoric. In the introductory chapter of their book on contemporary perspectives on rhetoric, Sonja Foss, Karen Foss and Robert Trapp urge a broader conception, proposing to "define rhetoric broadly as the uniquely human ability to use symbols to communicate with one another," and they explicitly mention as one possible instance, "an artist presenting an image on canvas"—in other words, visual rhetoric (Foss et al., 1985, p. 11). Even so, on the very next page they make this concession to the tradition: "We believe that the paradigm case of rhetoric is the use of the spoken word to persuade an audience" (ibid., p. 12).

One task, then, is to explain how rhetoric may be conceived as extending beyond the boundaries of the verbal, its *terra cognita* since antiquity, so as to include as well the visual; in other words, to show how there can be *visual persuasion*. That task was taken up in the other chapters of the book, so I did not address it in this chapter. A second task, assuming there can be a rhetoric of the visual, is to make the connection between visual persuasion and argument—to see how there can be visual arguments.

19.3 Persuasion

This might seem to be a simple matter. In the first place, the power of things visual to persuade us, to shape our attitudes, and even our beliefs and actions, seems obvious. However, from this perspective a lot hinges on how "persuasion" is understood. It was Reboul's view that rhetorical persuasion consists in *causing* someone to believe

¹ For a recent, insightful discussion of the rhetorical role of the enthymeme, see Christopher W. Tindale, *Acts of Arguing, A Rhetorical Model of Argument* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 8 ff.

² "Voici donc la définition que nous proposons: la rhétorique est l'art de persuader par le discours."

(“*faire croire*,”) by means of speech (Reboul, 1991, p. 5). Now, if we drop the connection with speech³ in order to allow for the possibility of visual rhetoric, but retain the understanding of persuasion as a cause of changes in belief (and let’s add changes in attitude, or in conduct), then what sorts of causal instruments will we allow to count as persuasion?

Persuasion cannot be just any manner of influencing a person. Imagine (what might already be possible, for all I know) that by manipulating neurons or implanting electronic circuits in a human brain, neurosurgeons could produce changes in the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour of the person whose brain is modified in this way. The rapist loses his anger and misogyny; the pedophile no longer has erotic interest in children; the self-sealing unreason of the Holocaust denier and of the conspiracy theorist disappears. Would we then classify such brain surgery as persuasion? As rhetoric? Surely not, but if not, then—assuming persuasion is a kind of cause—what marks persuasion off from other kinds of causal factor affecting beliefs, attitudes or conduct? If rhetoric is to retain its connection with persuasion, the concept of persuasion requires attention.

We have just seen that not all causes of behaviour count as persuasion. What seems to be a necessary ingredient in persuasion as a kind of cause of behavior-change is that the person persuaded assents to the pressure of the vector of influence. The person consciously assents, and that implies that he or she is free to resist the causal influences. We do not consider the neurosurgeon’s implant to be persuasion because going along with its influence is not subject to the agent’s control. Other examples reinforce this point. The robber’s gun *is* persuasive, just because we can choose to comply with his demand under its threat or, foolishly, to resist. There was a time when if a girl stuck her tongue in my ear, she could pretty well do with me as she would. Her seduction was persuasive, because it was possible to resist it. Suppose she had paused to whisper in my ear that she was HIV positive. I think my ardour would have cooled pretty quickly. If I was capable of processing that information and acting on it, as a normal person would be, then my assent was under my control. In both cases of persuasion, the assent was not compelled, precisely because the capacity to resist the influences was present.

The narratives we formulate for ourselves from visual images can easily shape our attitudes. Think of scenes of mid-town Manhattan during rush hour. The energy and excitement will be hugely attractive for many; the disorder and cacophony will be repulsive to others. And presumably messages expressed visually can be resisted no less than other kinds. Your heart goes out to the grief-stricken parents of children killed in war or terrorist attacks, shown on TV news video clips, but you can also ask hard questions about whether those parents might have put their children in harm’s way. Also there will be borderline cases. We learn from color specialists that rooms painted in different colours tend to cause different reactions. Certain blues are cool, certain greens are relaxing, certain reds are warm and comforting. Shall we then

³ I would also resist Reboul’s restriction of what gets influenced to belief, and add changes in attitude and conduct to rhetoric’s goals.

speak of the rhetoric of wall paint? On the one hand, the colors have their effects unconsciously. On the other hand, once we know about their effects, can't we resist or compensate for them? So perhaps the rhetoric of color is a legitimate sub-field; it's not a clear call either way. Visual persuasion, then, is clearly a going concern.

19.4 Persuasion and Argument

However, just as not all influences that result in changes of behavior count as persuasion, visual or otherwise, so too not all cases of persuasion count as arguments. Consider the examples just used. To speak of the robber's gun as an "argument" is to make a joke or use a metaphor, even though it is persuasive (or for a sensible unarmed person, it ought to be persuasive). It is reasonable to hand over your wallet or purse, but the robber has not presented an *argument* for doing so just by pointing his gun at you. My fantasy girl's seduction might have been persuasive, but stimulating an erogenous zone does not constitute providing an *argument*. Such a stance might puzzle rhetoricians since, as Scott Jacobs has put it, "rhetorical theorists have . . . tended to think of *any* mode of communication as argument if it functions to gain assent." But Jacobs continues: "And that just will not do. . . not all symbolic inducements are arguments, and arguments are not the only way of gaining assent" (Jacobs, 2000, p. 263). What distinguishes arguments from other kinds of "symbolic inducement"? It has to do with how they function. Arguments supply us with *reasons* for accepting a point of view. The fact that certain propositions are deemed true, probable, plausible or otherwise worthy of acceptance, is considered to provide a reason, or a set of reasons, for thinking that some claim is true, some attitude is appropriate, some policy is worthy of implementation, or some action is best done. Here is Jacobs again: "Arguments are fundamentally linguistic entities that express with a special pragmatic force propositions where those propositions stand in particular inferential relationships to one another," (ibid., p. 264) and he continues, in a note appended to this sentence:

The canonical form that I have in mind here is captured in the speech act of assertion. Among other things, in making an argument one commits to defending the truth of a complex of propositions and to undertaking to get the hearer to accept the truth of one proposition (call it the standpoint) as being justified by the truth of other propositions (call those the arguments). (Ibid., note 4.)

Arguments are traditionally associated with speech, either written or oral, for a couple of linked reasons. First, because the reasons they use are propositions. Second, because propositions are standardly expressed by sentences in languages. A proposition is what is expressed by a sentence that has a truth-value, which is to say that it is either true or false (unlike, say, a command, a request, a promise or a question). In presenting an argument (of the simplest possible form), someone *asserts* that some proposition, B, is true (1) because some other proposition, A, is true and (2) because B follows from or is supported by A. *Asserting* is a kind of action, paradigmatically a speech act, whereby the assertor takes responsibility for the truth of the sentence

she or he asserts. Just as when you promise you take responsibility for doing what your promise commits you to do, so when you assert or make a claim (for example: “The AIDS epidemic is over.” or “Democratic administrations are, historically, as likely to go to war as Republican administrations.”), you take responsibility for its truth, and may legitimately be asked to produce your evidence for it. But photographs or paintings or cinematic images or video images do not seem, on the face of it, to be capable of being true or false. They might be moving, funny, clever, or beautiful (or their opposites), but to call them “true” or “false” seems to be, at best, using a metaphor, and at worst, just inappropriate. “Visual argument,” then, seems to be a solecism.

19.5 Visual Argument?

To be sure, no one owns the word ‘argument.’ It is entirely possible to use the word to refer to any form of persuasion whatever and thus simply to reject outright Jacob’s ruling: “But that just will not do.” After all, who is *he* to say? However, such a dismissal of Jacob’s point carries a cost. If you use the word ‘argument’ in a different way, so that it is not tied down to reason-having and reason-giving, or to propositions with their truth-values, then you lose contact not only with argumentation scholarship but also with the way the concept of argument has functioned historically and the way it works in standard English, or in any corresponding language. You are then really talking about something different from argument in anything but a stipulated sense of the concept.

This is an important theoretical point. Words and concepts have meanings in historical contexts; they are situated in the conventions of their usage communities. To be sure, community conventions, including conceptual and linguistic ones, can change, and often should. But if words are stretched too radically, they break their connection to their anchorage and drift anywhere, meaning anything. A good example is ‘democracy.’ The former Soviet Union called itself a “democracy” because its government claimed to represent the best interests of its people. But if a totalitarian dictatorship or oligarchy can count as a democracy by self-definition, then the concept of democracy has lost its connection to rule by (as well as for) the people. Almost any system of government can then count as a democracy, and the word ‘democracy’ has lost its value as designating a distinctive type of political system. The theoretical point I am making can also be used equally to justify the introduction of new terminology. In trying to remove the sexism that is built into the language, why not, for example, just get used to thinking of postmen and stewardesses as *both* female and male? The answer many feminists gave was that it was important to make the break from conventions that needed changing, and so completely new terms were needed, “letter carrier” and “flight attendant,” that had none of the old associations of being exclusively male, or exclusively female, occupations. With respect to the concept of visual argument, I am trying to urge that we be cautious about stretching the concept of argument too far, for similar reasons. We might like the idea of calling any kind of visual persuasion an argument, but unless we can

make a connection to the traditional concept, it would be best not to stretch the term ‘argument’ to that extent. If there is no real connection, let’s just use a new term, and leave ‘argument’ to the domain of the verbal.

So the issue of whether there can be visual arguments is uninterestingly settled by simply declaring any instance of visual persuasion to be an argument. It is much more interesting if it turns out that, in spite of their historical association with language, arguments *in the traditional sense* can be visual as well as verbal. It is much more interesting if it can be shown that visual communications can be a legitimate tool of rational persuasion. Now, some hold that there can be no visual arguments or visual uses of arguments in the traditional sense of ‘argument’ (see Fleming, 1996) and if they are right, then visual rhetoric cannot include visual arguments and there is no place for a discussion of the rhetoric of visual arguments.

There are two central reasons offered against the very possibility of arguments being visual. One is that the visual is inescapably ambiguous or vague.⁴ The other is related to the fact that arguments must have propositional content, and the apparent fact that visual communications do not. Both of these objections have been answered.⁵

The vagueness objection runs as follows. Arguments aim to move us by appealing to considerations that we grant and then by showing that the point of view at issue follows from those concessions. If it is not at all clear, because of vagueness or ambiguity, what considerations we are granting, or what is supposed to follow from what we grant, then we cannot tell what we are being asked to concede, and we cannot decide whether to agree or whether the alleged conclusion follows. The process is impossible if the appeal is vague or ambiguous. Thus vagueness or ambiguity makes argument impossible.

The answer to the vagueness or ambiguity objection is simply that these features inhabit spoken and written arguments as well as visual communication, if not to the same extent. Indeed, they are common enough in verbal arguments that we have identified as fallacies with their own names—“equivocation” and “vagueness” (“*sorites*” and other forms)—such moves if they impede the goals of argument. However, not every case of ambiguity or vagueness is considered a flaw in a verbal argument or in communication in general. So long as everyone can tell from the context what is really meant by such potentially ambiguous communications as an advertisement stating, “Bathing suits 40% off” (*amphiboly*), a sign saying “Slow School” (*accent*), a notice stating, “All donors have contributed \$1000” (*division*), there is no mis-communication whatsoever (examples from Engel, 1980). Then the use of such statements in arguments would not be fallacious. Similarly, vagueness,

⁴ Strictly speaking, ambiguity exists when there are two possible meanings, and the context makes it impossible to determine which the author (or image creator) intended. The difficulty with visual images is more often that there is any number of possible interpretations, and there is no way to determine which of them was intended or indeed if any particular one of them was intended, and this phenomenon is properly termed “vagueness,” not “ambiguity.” The headline, “Lawyers offer poor free advice” is ambiguous, absent further contextual specification; “Coke is it!” is vague.

⁵ See Birdsell and Groarke (1996) and Blair (1996) for fuller discussions of these points.

far from always being fallacious, is necessary for efficient communication. We do not expect a speaker or writer to be more precise than is needed for the purposes of his or her communication in any context. If someone asks what the population of Canada is in order to compare it to that of the Netherlands, a number rounded off to the nearest million is precise enough. But such a degree of vagueness about population size would be unacceptable in a census report. When you are asked your age, you are not expected to answer to the minute, the hour, or the day, or the week—just to the year, which is pretty vague but entirely precise enough for most purposes. It is relevant that children often identify their age to the half-year. That is because at a young age, with freedoms and other perceived advantages increasing with age, half a year makes a big difference, and so there is a (perceived) point to the greater precision. Vagueness in diplomatic language is essential to maintaining good relations between states: the vagueness of statements made by the Secretary of State in news conferences is studied and necessary. So, on the one hand, while either vagueness or ambiguity can in some circumstances be a flaw in an argument, they are risks that verbal argument manages to negotiate. Their presence in visual arguments, therefore, does not constitute an in-principle objection to arguments communicated visually. Moreover, since many so-called “visual” arguments are in fact mixtures of visual and verbal communication, their verbal content can (and often does) function to disambiguate them or make them sufficiently precise. (More on this point that “visual” arguments are usually mixed “visual plus verbal” arguments below.) On the other hand, the presence of ambiguity and vagueness in verbal arguments is very far from always being objectionable, so once again, their presence in visual arguments cannot be a reason for rejecting the possibility of such arguments in principle. And finally, as we will see in a moment, it is simply not true that all visual arguments are vague or ambiguous. The visual is not inexorably vague or ambiguous.

The other principal objection to the possibility of visual arguments is that visual communication does not have truth-values, and so cannot convey propositions, whereas argument requires propositions in order to perform its role. I have already alluded to this point.

Typically, arguments have as their primary purpose to influence people to change their beliefs, other attitudes or conduct. Arguers do this, first, by appealing to belief commitments their audience already has, and, second, by showing (or alleging) that these beliefs, attitudes or behavior also commit that audience to accept the modified or new belief, attitude or conduct being advanced. The “object” of a commitment will be a sentence or proposition that is capable of being true or false. My belief, in 2003, that India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons is a cognitive attitude I have towards the proposition expressed by the sentence “India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons.” If those countries don’t have nuclear weapons at the time, my belief is false; if they do, it’s true. And it’s got to be one or the other. For it to be possible for visual arguments to occur, it would have to be possible for visual images to be true or false—to have truth-value. But a photograph or photographic collage, or a piece of film or a series of visual images (as in a TV commercial), or a painting or sculpture, are not “true” or “false.” The meaning conveyed is not propositional. Therefore such visual communications, however they

work, cannot express arguments. In whatever manner they achieve their rhetorical effects, it cannot be by the use of visual *arguments* because the essential components or arguments—propositions—cannot be expressed visually.

There are at least two replies to this “no-propositions” objection. One is to grant that for arguments aimed at changing beliefs propositions are essential, but then to show that it is possible to express propositions visually. To establish this possibility, all that is needed is one actual case. Here is one. There is a famous pre-World War II cartoon by the British cartoonist David Low in which an evidently-complacent Englishman is depicted in a lawn chair reading a newspaper, sitting directly beneath a jumble of precariously-balanced boulders rising steeply above him. The bottom boulder, sticking out but wedged under and holding up the rest, is marked, “Czecho.” Sitting directly on it are boulders marked “Rumania” and “Poland” and together they support a large boulder labelled “French Alliances,” which in turn supports a huge boulder labelled, “Anglo-French Security.” A thick rope is attached to the out-thrust end of the “Czecho” boulder and pulled up overhead and out of sight. Clearly a strong pull on that rope would dislodge the “Czecho” boulder, causing the rest to come crashing down on the Englishman below. The cartoon’s caption reads, “What’s Czechoslovakia to me, anyway?”

Low is arguing that to regard the fate of Czechoslovakia as having no consequences for England is mistaken. The reason Low offers for this proposition is the conditional proposition that if Czechoslovakia were to fall to Germany, that would initiate a chain of events (the fall of Poland and Rumania), which would result in the fall of the French alliances and eventuate in the collapse of Anglo-French security and that would have disastrous consequences for England (example borrowed from Groarke, 1996). I have just expressed Low’s visual argument in English and in doing so have expressed two propositions—his conclusion and his premise. It was at the time either true or false that “to regard the fate of Czechoslovakia as having no consequences for England is mistaken,” and that “if Czechoslovakia were to fall to Germany, that would initiate a chain of events (the fall of Poland and Rumania), which would result in the fall of the French alliances and eventuate in the collapse of Anglo-French security.” (The argument has the unexpressed premise that “the collapse of Anglo-French security would have a major impact on England.”) In short, to the objection that propositions cannot be expressed visually the reply is that since it has been done in Low’s cartoon, it is possible. (Notice that there is no ambiguity or vagueness whatsoever about Low’s meaning.)

A second reply to the “no-propositions” objection is to point out that arguments are used for primary purposes other than to cause belief-change. We also use arguments with the intention of changing the attitudes, or the intentions, or the behavior of our audience. The structure of the arguing process is the same. The arguer appeals to attitude-, intention- or behavior-commitments of the audience, and tries to show that they commit the audience to the new attitude, intention or behavior at issue. But attitudes, intentions and conduct do not have truth-value. My preference for the Democrats over the Republicans isn’t true or false; I just have it. Perhaps it is ill-advised, perhaps I have no good reason for it (“we’ve always been Democrats”); what it is *not* is false (or true). Yet since we do offer reasons to people to change

their attitudes, intentions and behavior, it is clear that there can be (even) verbal arguments in which not all the components are propositions. Not all arguments must be propositional. Hence, even if it is true that (some) visual images do not express propositions, it does not follow that they cannot figure in arguments.

If these two replies to the “no-propositions” objection do not lay it to rest, I will take it that at least they shift the burden of proof. And combined with the replies to the “vague or ambiguous” objection, they clear from our path the general theoretical objection that visual arguments are not possible, and leave us free to consider the rhetorical properties of visual arguments.

Here let me add a stipulation. Although there can exist purely visual arguments, most communications that are candidates for visual arguments are combinations of the verbal and the visual. The words might be in print (as in cartoons), or voiced (in the case of television or film). When I refer to “visual” arguments in what follows, I mean to include these combinations of verbal and visual communication. By “verbal” arguments I will mean exclusively verbal arguments, with no visual element.

19.6 Visual Arguments vs. Other Types of Persuasion

If it is correct to distinguish visual persuasion from visual argument, presumably visual argument is one type of visual persuasion among others. The question then becomes, what distinguishes visual argument from other types of visual persuasion?

My suggestion is that what differentiates visual argument is the same as what differentiates argument in general. To be an argument, what is communicated by one party to another or others, whatever the medium of communication might be, must constitute some factor that can be considered a reason for accepting or believing some proposition, for taking some other attitude⁶ or for performing some action. A test of whether such a factor is present is whether it would be possible to construct from what is communicated visually a verbal argument that is consistent with the visual presentation. This verbal construction would in no way be the equivalent of the visual argument, precisely because it could never adequately capture the evocative power of the visual element in the original presentation of the argument. However, it would abstract from the visual presentation the component that constitutes a reason for the claim being advanced.

Some of the best examples of visual arguments are the political advertisements made for television. One of the classics is the Democrats’ anti-Goldwater spot run during the Presidential race between Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater in 1964.

⁶ I say, some “other” attitude, because it has become widely agreed among philosophers analyzing the concept of belief that beliefs are a kind of attitude themselves (a type of “propositional attitude”).

Here is a description of what became known as “The Daisy Ad” that I downloaded from the Web:⁷

This chilling ad begins with a little girl in a field picking petals off a daisy, counting. When the count reaches ten, her image is frozen and a male voice commences a militaristic count-down. Upon the countdown reaching zero, we see a nuclear explosion and hear President Johnson’s voice: “These are the stakes, to make a world in which all God’s children can live, or to go into the darkness. Either we must love each other or we must die.” Fade to black. White lettering. “On November 3rd vote for President Johnson.”

The purpose of the ad—remember, this was at the height of the Cold War—was to suggest that Goldwater was trigger-happy about the use of the H-bomb, and thus that to elect him would be to place the nation in grave peril. The ad did not mention Goldwater. It was thus a kind of visual enthymeme, requiring the viewing public to supply Goldwater as the alternative to Johnson. Never mind that the ad was an indefensible slur on Goldwater; it was brilliant. It conveyed the impression that Goldwater might, on something as arbitrary as a whim (the mere chance of which petal was plucked last), engage the nation in a nuclear holocaust, thus causing the destruction of everyone, including the innocent children who pluck daisies playing “s/he loves me; s/he loves me not.” The inference that it would be a danger to the national interest to elect Goldwater follows straightforwardly.

I have just expressed in verbal form the *reasoning* of the ad, but to be clear let me set it out even more explicitly.

Goldwater might, on something as arbitrary as a whim, launch a nuclear holocaust.
Such a holocaust would cause unspeakable horror for everyone, including innocent children.

Hence, it would endanger the national interest to elect Goldwater.

To repeat, I do not for a minute suggest that this verbal expression of the argument is equivalent to the visual argument. For one thing, a number of equally plausible alternative verbal renditions of the argument are available. For another, and more importantly, this verbal extraction leaves out completely the enormously evocative power of the visual imagery and symbolism of the actual visuals making up the ad. For instance, the juxtaposition of the child in its innocence and the nuclear mushroom cloud has huge pathetic force that words cannot capture. However, what the verbal construction does succeed in doing is identify how the visual ad contained within it a reason for not voting for Goldwater. And that, I contend, is what made the Democrats’ attack ad an argument.

If this account is correct, then visual arguments constitute the species of visual persuasion in which the visual elements overlie, accentuate, render vivid and immediate, and otherwise elevate in forcefulness a reason or set of reasons offered for modifying a belief, an attitude or one’s conduct. What distinguishes visual arguments from other forms of visual persuasion is that in the case of the former it is possible to enunciate reasons given to support a claim, whereas in the case of the

⁷ See the ad at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExjDzDsgbww>

latter no such element is present. Thus we can see that the “Daisy” ad was conveying an argument against supporting Goldwater.

19.7 The Visual Difference

The advantage of visual arguments over print or spoken arguments lies in their evocative power. Part of this power is due to the enormously high number of images that can be conveyed in a short time. Television commercials today show between one and four *dozen* different moving visual images in a thirty-second spot. We have no trouble processing that much visual information, whereas it would be impossible to express thirty different propositions verbally in thirty seconds, and even if it were not, it would be far beyond normal human capacity to process them. Visual images can thus be used to convey a narrative in a short time. Recall the Coca Cola commercial shown during the 2002 Winter Olympics in Utah, in which an awkward youth wins the heart of an elegant female figure skater against the competition of several older handsome young men by giving her a Coke at the end of her program. The story is told with ingredients of poignancy, sexiness and humor—all in thirty seconds—and although (I would argue) this commercial is not an argument, it does illustrate the narrative capacity of the visual.

Another factor is the sense of realism that the visual conveys. My students, for example, year-in and year-out tell me that television news is better than print news in the respect that with television news they can see for themselves what happened whereas with print news they are told by a reporter, and so have only second-hand access to the events depicted. I believe that this impression is quite mistaken. A lot of TV news pictures are file footage, but even video of the actual event being reported is limited to a small number of camera vantage points and angles, and a very few seconds of footage, and the video is packaged with voice-over and cut-aways. Besides that, each TV news “item” on network news programs, and often on local news programs too, is a carefully crafted “story.” It is deliberately assembled with a beginning (a problem or question), a middle (information, opinions) and an end (resolution of the problem or answer to the question, followed by *dénouement*). The result is that the “reality” is a selected perspective presented in a highly structured or filtered way. Nevertheless, my students are under the impression that the visual gives them direct access to what is visually portrayed in a way that print does not, and their impressions are what matter so far as the power of the visual is concerned.

The visual element in visual arguments is most significantly a *rhetorical* dimension, rather than logical or dialectical. Understanding the dialectical dimension of arguments to be the process of interaction between the arguer and interlocutors who raise questions or objections, we can see that visual arguments lack this dialectical aspect. The visual makes an argument in the sense of adducing a few reasons in a forceful way. It might contain or present a didactic narrative—a story that supports a point. But it does not permit the complexity of such dialectical moves as the

raising of objections in order to refute or otherwise answer them. This is a serious deficiency in what Johnson has called the “manifest rationality” that ought, ideally, to characterize argumentation (Johnson, 2000a). Johnson’s suggestion is that when we try to convince another or others using arguments, we ought to mention the objections to our views that we know about and explain how we would answer them. There should be no suppressed problems with our case. Johnson is calling for a kind of “truth in arguing”—a “full disclosure” policy. If his ideal is one we ought to try to meet, and if visual arguments cannot, as it seems they cannot, incorporate this “dialectical” dimension of challenge and response, then visual arguments will always fall short of dialectical rationality.

Understanding the logical dimension of arguments to be the support that the reason(s) offered provide for the viewpoint that is supported by them, we can see that visual arguments supply simple, minimalist support. The verbal expression of the argument will have one or two premises, tending to be more or less syllogistic in structure. The logic of the argument will not be complicated or subtle.

Understanding the rhetorical dimension of arguments to consist of the various facets of its situatedness, it is plain that the visual is above all rhetorical. To be effective, the visual properties of a visual argument must resonate with the audience on the occasion and in the circumstances. The visual symbolism must register immediately, whether consciously or not. The arguer must know and relate not only to the beliefs and attitudes of the intended audience, but also to the visual imagery that is meaningful to it. The arguer needs also to be sensitive to the surrounding argumentative “space” of the audience, since so much of the argument must remain tacit or unexpressed. Visual arguments are typically enthymemes—arguments with gaps left to be filled in by the participation of the audience. The anti-Goldwater “Daisy” ad is a clear example, with Goldwater the clear target of the ad but never mentioned in it. So the arguer has to be able to predict the nature of the audience’s participation. Given the vagueness of much visual imagery, the visual arguer must be particularly astute in reading the audience. Thus in a variety of ways, visual arguments rely particularly on the rhetorical astuteness of the arguer for their success. We may say, then, that visual arguments are distinguished by their rhetorical power. What makes visual arguments distinctive is how much greater is their potential for rhetorical power than that of purely verbal arguments.

19.8 Why Argue Visually?

One reason for using visual arguments is that there is no alternative way of giving the argument permanence. In a largely oral culture with little literacy, verbal arguments have only as much endurance as their currency in the oral tradition. Thus we see the didactic visual arguments chiselled in the granite “decorations” of the great European mediaeval cathedrals. A striking example is the sculpture of the damned going to hell and the saved going to heaven to be found in the tympanum over the south transept door of the high gothic cathedral. The damned are depicted in graphic

detail, being led or herded naked down to the right, their bodies twisted in grotesque contortions, their faces distorted and their open mouths screaming in pain. They are shackled, flames lick at them, devils prod them with pitchforks, and some are tossed into great cauldrons of boiling liquid. The saved, on the other hand, troup triumphantly upwards to the left, clad in gowns, their faces smiling with delight, with those at the top being welcomed to heaven. The message is clear: these are the fates awaiting the virtuous and the vicious upon their respective deaths. The obvious implicit premise is that no one would want the fate of the damned and anyone would want the fate of the saved. The tacit conclusion follows straightforwardly: be virtuous and refrain from vice. Many of these depictions of the argument have so far lasted, unmodified except by the weather, for over 700 years. They are fixed in stone no less effectively than had they been fixed in print.

Besides giving this moral argument a permanence, its visual expression communicates something unavailable to the verbal version, whether it is communicated orally or in writing. No words can convey the horrible fate of the damned or the ecstatic beatitude of the saved as dramatically, forcefully and realistically as do the stone carvings. It is one thing to hear a description of these respective fates; it is quite another, far more vivid and immediate, to *see* them with your own eyes. So here is another reason for conveying an argument visually: one can communicate visually with much more force and immediacy than verbal communication allows.

I think there are two related reasons for the greater force and immediacy of the visual. First, visual communication can be more efficient than verbal communication. In order to convey and evoke emotions or attitudes, the verbal arguer must rely on his or her oratorical powers to cause the audience to exercise its sympathetic imagination. There are three opportunities for failure in such communications. The arguer can fail to be effectively evocative, the audience can refuse to cooperate in the imaginative exercise, and the audience can, even if trying, fail in its imaginative task. In the case of visual arguments these three chances to misfire reduce to one. The creator of the visual expression of the argument can fail to give adequate or appropriate visual expression to the feelings or attitudes to be conveyed, and in that case the advantages of the visual expression of the argument are lost. However, should the visual expression succeed—as the mediaeval cathedral tympanum sculptures do so marvellously—then the audience cannot help but become involved, and in just the way the arguer intends. Hence the arguer does not have to rely on either the cooperation of the audience or its powers of sympathetic imagination. In this respect, then, visual argument is likely to be more efficient than its verbal counterpart.

What takes the need for the cooperation and competence of the audience out of the visual argument equation—and this is the second reason for the greater force and immediacy of the visual—is the power of visual imagery to evoke involuntary reactions—reactions that must be consciously countered by the recipient if their power is to be at all defused. Evidence of this power is today found most pervasively in movies and in television commercials. The power of visual imagery in commercials is actually confirmed empirically, at least for national TV advertising campaigns, though movies are increasingly also tested on focus groups prior to their release. The effects of various symbols are well-known and much exploited.

For instance, images of young children and young animals evoke immediate sympathy in adults. Several years ago Pepsi ran a commercial that consisted of nothing else than two little boys (clearly twins, maybe 3-year-olds) and three or four puppies from the same litter at their ungainly stage of locomotion, frolicking together across a slightly sloping lawn. The puppies were jumping up to lick the boys' faces, the little boys were giggling with delight, and both the boys and puppies were tumbling together and getting up and running on down the slope. The kids and the puppies were utterly adorable, and any adult viewer who wasn't a sociopath couldn't help smiling and responding, "Ohhh, they're so cute!" What the commercial had to do with choosing Pepsi is not my point at the moment. The point is that this imagery, however it might be explained, evoked a powerful involuntary response in the normal viewer.

It seems plausible that there is an evolutionary advantage to having the caring and protective responses of the adults of most species that are triggered by the young of their own or even other species biologically hard-wired in them. The hard-wiring seems indisputable. I have seen a pair of robins hatch and feed a starling nestling along with their own, and cowbirds are notorious for taking advantage of this response by laying their eggs in other birds' nests and having them raised by those other birds. We have all heard of nursing mothers of various mammal species taking on the nurture and care either of other offspring of their own species or the offspring of other species. Notice how advertisers often rely on this response by showing cute babies, both human and those of other animals, in commercials in which there is no plausible connection between the baby and the product. (Such appeals are *pathetic* appeals—appeals to the sympathy or emotional responses of an audience.)

Other kinds of symbolism, such as the authority of the physician or scientists used in pain-killer or indigestion-remedy commercials that is conveyed by actors dressed in white lab coats with a stethoscope around their necks, clearly have learned, conventional associations. (This is an *ethotic* appeal—an appeal to the character or stature of a person or a role to lend credibility to what is portrayed.) Yet others are mixtures of learned and biological responses, such as heterosexual responses to the appearance of members of the opposite sex considered beautiful. Sexual attraction is presumably at least partly hard-wired, although there are clearly social factors in sexual attraction that are culturally variable. Lean or stout, short or tall, tattooed or clear-skinned, punctured or unadorned—these are variations in sexual attractiveness that any student of other cultures, or indeed of our own, are bound to notice. The point is that our responses—learned, innate, or a combination of the two—are used by advertisers, and their effectiveness in advertising is well-tested.

Thus, the use of such symbolism in visual arguments can almost guarantee the ethotic and pathetic rhetorical influences that the arguer intends. And all it takes to accomplish these rhetorical effects is the flash of a series of visual images.

For as long as we have had near-universal literacy and a tradition of print, verbal arguments have been as permanent as we might wish them to be, and in fact have greater permanency than the evanescent television screen or the movie. So the

motivation for visual arguments has not in our time been the advantage of fixing the argument in a stable medium. The evocative power of visual means of communication, especially television (but also movies, pictures in magazines, and posters or billboards) is what has recommended the visual as a medium of argument.

19.9 Genres of Visual Argument

Traditional rhetoric as applied to arguments was concerned with the means of giving the greatest possible persuasive power to the written or spoken word. It did not seek to replace the propositional content of argument, but to position it so as to be maximally forceful. The same goes for rhetoric as applied to visual arguments. My contention is that visual persuasive communication cannot ignore or set aside propositional content and continue to count as argument. Argument requires the giving and receiving of reasons. However, visual media offer rich means for generating forcefulness for arguments expressed visually. Let us consider briefly the different genres of visual argument, and some of their tools, and deficiencies.

I have already given an example of a political cartoon used to make a visual argument. Cartoons are distinctive because they permit an explicitness and precision of meaning found in few other visual genres. The convention that allows for labelling, and the abilities of cartoonists to capture the distinctive visual traits of well-known public figures, and the opportunity that caricature provides for exaggeration, all enable their messages to be unambiguous. To be sure, a great deal more than that is going on in cartoons, as Janice Edwards in her paper on the visual rhetoric of cartoons makes clear (Edwards, 2004). The multi-layered meanings and associations of various visual cultural icons generate powerful resonances around simple pen-and-ink drawings. When the cartoonist is making an argument (and not every cartoon is intended as an argument), the points asserted visually have a particular forcefulness and credibility when such iconic imagery is used, and the means used can be analytically identified, as Edwards, and Perlmutter (whose work she applies) have shown in their list of ten characteristics of photographs of outrage that can give them iconic status.

Films empower arguments visually largely by means of the construction of credible narratives. When a movie is making an argument (and by no means is every film intended as an argument), it tells a story that makes the argument's cogency seem inevitable. Oliver Stone's *JFK* made the case that there was a conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy and to cover-up the conspiracy. In telling that story, it made the characters who believed in a conspiracy highly credible, and those who denied it highly unbelievable. The film made the argument forcefully by presenting a narrative in which that conclusion was the most plausible interpretation of the events portrayed. *Black Hawk Down* is a more current example. It makes the case that the U.S. attempt to capture a local warlord in Mogadishu during the Somalia intervention was an ill-conceived plan by portraying dramatically the horrible consequences that snowballed from just one thing going wrong (a soldier falling out of a helicopter during the initial attack). The idea of narratives

functioning as arguments is familiar to us all. To give just one example, our countries often justify their foreign policies in terms of narratives the only plausible resolution of which is the policy being defended. Thus the “Communist conspiracy” was a narrative that justified Cold War policies. More recently, the Muslim fundamentalist threat epitomized by the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001 were woven into a narrative that justified the Bush administration’s “war on terrorism.” To call these arguments narratives is not to call them fictions or to challenge their legitimacy, although they might be open to such challenges. The point is, rather, that as narratives they tell stories that have “logical” resolutions, and hence function as arguments. Since pictures, and especially films, both fictional and documentary, are wonderfully suited to telling believable stories, they provide an excellent medium for visual argument by means of narrative construction.

What the visual element adds to film or video, over, say, a novel or short story, or over documentary prose alone, is that with film or video we don’t just imagine the narrative, we “see” it unfolding before our eyes. Seeing is believing, even if what we are watching is invented, exaggerated, half-truths or lies.

The third and last type of visual argument that I want to discuss is advertising, and television advertising in particular. For the most part, we watch TV to relax, as a diversion from our working lives. Television commercials thus invade our private space and time and reach us when we tend not to be alert and vigilant. Although we can control which programs we view, we cannot control which advertisements accompany those programs and it takes an effort to “mute” the commercials. Moreover, advertisers can and do predict with a high degree of accuracy the demographics of the audiences of any program, and so they design their messages to exploit the vulnerabilities of the members of that demographic group. Combine with these factors the huge influence of repetition, and the attraction of the visual as the medium of influencing choice becomes obvious.

My view of whether TV ads are visual arguments is not widely shared. My initial point was to emphasize the evocative power of visual communication. This power is thus available for visual arguments, whether static (print) or dynamic (television). But that does not imply that all uses of visuals in persuasion are cases of visual arguments. It strikes me that while magazine and television visual advertising often presents itself as more or less rational persuasion aimed at influencing our preferences and actions, what is in fact going on in the most effective ads is that the actual influence is accomplished behind this façade of rationality.

Whether or not even to call it persuasion strikes me as moot, since it is not clear that we have the capacity to reject the influence. When I think of a rich custard cream sauce or creamy chocolate mousse, foods I adore, I cannot help but salivate. (I am salivating as I write this description! Try thinking about tastes you love without having your mouth water.) The only way to avoid it is not to think of these foods. It might be that especially television advertising is for most of us what chocolate mousse is for me—something whose influence can be avoided only if we avoid exposure to it. If that is true, it is more like the surgeon’s brain implant than even

the robber's gun. And then it is not persuasion, but unconscious causation, and so not rational persuasion, and so not argument, visual or otherwise.⁸

The Pepsi commercial with the giggling children and frolicking puppies was, I want to argue, not a visual argument at all. It merely evoked feelings of warmth and empathy, which were then associated with the brand. The objective of the advertiser, I expect, was to cause the audience to feel good about the commercial, and then transfer that good feeling to the brand. Presumably the hope (and probably it was an empirically-confirmed conviction) was that the good feeling about the brand would cause shoppers to reach for Pepsi on the supermarket shelf when buying pop for their families. (In this case, the target audience was probably women, because they do most of the family grocery shopping.) There was no reason of any kind offered for preferring Pepsi to alternative colas or other types of soda. To insist that this commercial be understood as an argument strikes me as to be in the grip of a dogma, the dogma that all influence on attitudes or action *must* be at least persuasion if not its subspecies, argumentation. What premises could possibly be reconstructed from the advertisement? That drinking Pepsi causes little kids and puppies to be cute? Absurd. That Pepsi, like you and I, thinks little kids and puppies are cute and so we, the consumers, should favour Pepsi over other cola brands or types of soda, which don't think kids and puppies are cute? Far-fetched. Stupid as we consumers might be, we are not complete idiots. Given the choice between interpreting this commercial as a completely stupid argument, on the one hand, and as not an argument at all but an attempt to influence us via our psychological associations with young children and puppies, on the other, any principle of interpretive charity points to the second alternative as by far the more plausible.

By the way, this sort of visual influence through association and the power of visual symbols is not restricted to advertising. Consider another, more mundane, example. Every evening on network television news broadcasts, when the broadcast turns to federal political news from Washington, a reporter stands against the backdrop of the White House or the Capitol and reads his or her report (with cutaways edited in, to be sure). The White House and the Capitol are not just buildings. They are powerful symbols that convey the immense authority and prestige of the institutions of the Presidency and the Congress. Thus these visual images lend to the television reporter, by association, some of the authority of those political institutions, thereby adding to his or her credibility. These backdrops are visual rhetorical devices that render the message conveyed more believable or persuasive. They lend *ethos* to the reporter. However they are not arguments. No argument is offered to show that the reporter is credible or authoritative. If the reporter were to say, "I am standing in front of the White House, and it follows from this fact that you should take my report or opinions seriously," we would on that basis *not* take him

⁸ I am setting aside for purposes of this discussion the enormous influence of music in television advertising. From the perspective of a study of persuasion, the role of music must be given a central place.

or her seriously. The symbols do their work precisely by making contact with our unconsciously-held symbol-interpreting apparatus, not by engaging our capacity to assess reasons and their implications.

What typically happens in TV commercials and other visual advertising is that there is a surface “argument,” usually supplied by the accompanying verbal text or voice-over. This argument is usually thin, offering little by way of reasons for preferring the product in question to similar products sold by competitors, or for liking that brand name. What does the influencing is the psychological appeal. Charles Revson, the founder of Revlon, is reported to have once said, “I don’t sell cosmetics; I sell dreams.” Advertising agencies use social science research (or do their own) into the current values and aspirations, the dreams and fantasies, *of their target markets*. What’s hip? What’s cool? What’s *bad*? Their ads then use actors or celebrities dressed and behaving in ways that embody those values, aspirations, dreams and fantasies. We viewers transfer our identifications with the commercials to the brand or product. We want this brand or product because we think of ourselves as like the person in the commercial, doing the kinds of things done in the commercial. No reasoning occurs here at all. Think of the old Marlboro cigarette ads. A billboard with a picture of a cowboy with a tattoo on a horse smoking a cigarette. Visual influence? Absolutely. Visual argument? None.

So my view is that while TV commercials and other kinds of visual advertising might seem to represent the epitome of visual argument, in reality they constitute a poor case for their existence. I cannot claim that no TV commercial can reasonably be construed as an argument. On the contrary, I construed the Democrats’ “Daisy” political ad against Goldwater as a visual argument. But “visual” plus “influence” does not add up to “argument” in every case.

19.10 Conclusion

It is time to sum up. Are visual arguments possible? It might seem not, since argument is paradigmatically verbal and essentially propositional, and visual images are often vague or ambiguous. However, we saw that vagueness and ambiguity can be managed in verbal argument, and so are in principle manageable in visual communication; moreover not all visual communication is vague or ambiguous. As well, propositions can be expressed visually no less than verbally. Argument in the traditional sense consists of supplying grounds for beliefs, attitudes or actions, and we saw that pictures can equally be the medium for such communication. Argument, in the traditional sense, can readily be visual.

It does not follow that visual argument is a mere substitute for verbal argument. The spoken word can be far more dramatic and compelling than the written word, but the visual brings to arguments another dimension entirely. It adds drama and force of a much greater order. Beyond that it can use such devices as references to cultural icons and other kinds of symbolism, dramatization and narrative to make a powerfully compelling case for its conclusion. The visual has an immediacy, a

verisimilitude, and a concreteness that help influence acceptance and that are not available to the verbal.

While granting the persuasiveness of visual argument, we saw that in logical terms its structure and content tends to be relatively simple. The complications of the dialectical perspective are not easily conveyed visually, and the result is that visual argument tends to be one-sided, presenting the case for or the case against, but not both together. Qualifications and objections are not readily expressed. Where visual argument excels is in the rhetorical dimension.

Rhetoric as related to argument, we saw, is the use of the best means available to make the logic of the argument persuasive to its audience. In communicating arguments visually, we need to attend particularly to the situation of the audience. What is the setting, and how does it introduce constraints and opportunities? What visual imagery will the audience understand and respond to? What historical and cultural modes of visual understanding does the audience bring to the situation? Visual arguers will answer these questions in creating their visual enthymemes, thus drawing the viewer to participate in completing the construction of the argument and so in its own persuasion. When argument is visual, it is, above all, visual rhetoric.

Chapter 20

Pragma-Dialectics and *Pragma-Dialectics*

20.1 Introduction

Three general approaches are possible in any reflection on the Pragma-Dialectical theory of argumentation, initially devised by Frans H. van Eemeren and his late colleague Rob Grootendorst (1984), and continuing to undergo refinement and applications by van Eemeren and his colleagues at the University of Amsterdam and elsewhere. One can develop insights based on its inspiration, one can respond to part or all of it from a *sed contra* perspective, or one can attempt a new insight inspired by the theory in response to objections to it. Each approach implies an acknowledgement of the importance of the theory and all are animated by its spirit. This chapter takes the third approach, with admiration and respect.

Pragma-Dialectics is not one theory but an amalgam of several. Together, its components constitute a detailed, multi-disciplinary theoretical complex concerning the nature of argumentation (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 1992a, 2004). The overall complex is designed to be capable of informing the analysis, reconstruction and evaluation of any sort of actual argumentation and it is identifiable by the combination of a number of specific features. The whole should be referred as the “Pragma-Dialectical” theory of argumentation, with upper-case initial letters to indicate that it is a proper name.

In this chapter I distinguish from the Pragma-Dialectical multiplex the “*pragma-dialectical* approach” to the study of argumentation—to borrow a phrase from the authors’ sub-title (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). This is an orientation that is generalizable from the particulars of the Pragma-Dialectical theory, and that should be termed the “*pragma-dialectical*” theory of argumentation, with all lower-case letters, since it is a descriptive term, *not* a proper name. (In order to keep the contrast present in readers’ minds, I will in this chapter also always italicize the generic term.)

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The hypothesis envisaged in this chapter is that the Pragma-Dialectical theory is one particular version—the Amsterdam version—of the *pragma-dialectical* theory, and the two can and ought to be distinguished. The *pragma-dialectical* theory is the general theory, and the Pragma-Dialectical theory is a particular version of that general theory. An implication of this understanding is that it is possible to accept the general theory without accepting every feature of the specific instance of that theory, but not conversely. Another implication is that the general theory might have other versions that apply where the Pragma-Dialectical theory strictly-construed does not, and so, by being more general, the former is more powerful than the latter.

The Pragma-Dialectical theory's authors and promoters have argued over the years against attempts to show that there are some particular kinds or uses of argumentation to which the theory does not apply, as if the success of such claims would undermine the theory. It might be that the success of such claims would undermine the contention that the Pragma-Dialectical theory is perfectly general, but if the distinction suggested here holds, the success of such claims would not undermine the contention that the *pragma-dialectical* theory is general. My own view is that the *pragma-dialectical* approach to argumentation is the correct approach—that in some sense the *pragma-dialectical* theory is true, whereas the particular version of it called “Pragma-Dialectics” is open to serious objections to some of its elements, and if one is required to assess it as the conjunction of all its specific component sub-theories, it is false.

It might be thought that the distinction I am proposing has already been made in other terms—that it is embodied in the distinction between normative pragmatics (the generic theory) and Pragma-Dialectics (a specific version of normative pragmatics). This suggestion requires a word of caution. The label “normative pragmatics” has been appropriated by different people for slightly different purposes. In *Argumentation, Communication and Fallacies* (1992a), van Eemeren and Grootendorst construe the study of argumentation to be part of normative pragmatics, “[i]f pragmatics is taken to be the study of language use” that permits the “convergence of normative idealization and empirical description” (p. 5). In his contribution to “a unified philosophy of language and mind” (1994, p. xxiii), Robert Brandom in *Making it Explicit* identifies his subject as normative pragmatics. He takes “pragmatics” to be “[t]he study of the practical significance of intentional states, attitudes, and performances (including speech acts)” (133), and he takes linguistic practice to have an ineliminable normative dimension (xiii). Scott Jacobs (1999; see also Jacobs, 2000) sees normative pragmatics to include in particular the study of the communicative properties of messages (their expressive design) and the functional design of messages (the ways “meanings are implicated in chains of social and cognitive consequences that have a bearing on the deliberative process”) (1999, p. 400). Goodwin (2001) also stresses the importance of a “design theory” approach in normative pragmatics, and contrasts design theory with Pragma-Dialectics. The accounts of van Eemeren and Grootendorst, and Brandom, while slightly different, are compatible. One might take Jacobs and Goodwin to be contrasting normative pragmatics with Pragma-Dialectics, but it would be more accurate to take them to be proposing an alternative

normative pragmatic account of argumentation to the normative pragmatic account offered by Pragma-Dialectics. Understanding normative pragmatics, then, to be the study of the norms presupposed by and operating in language use, is the distinction I am proposing the distinction between normative pragmatics, the generic field, and Pragma-Dialectics, one particular theory of the normative pragmatics of language use in argumentation?

The answer is, “No.” The distinction I am proposing between Pragma-Dialectics and *pragma-dialectics* is the distinction between a particular normative pragmatic theory of argumentation, and a more general normative pragmatic theory of argumentation. To borrow terms from biological classification, “normative pragmatics” is the family of which *pragma-dialectics* is a genus, and Pragma-Dialectics is a species of the genus *pragma-dialectics*.

The hypothesis of the chapter will be supported if there are specifics of the Pragma-Dialectical theory that can be dropped or modified without the loss of the more general outlines and structure of a *pragma-dialectical* theory of argumentation. The strategy is to begin by identifying the elements, the particular features, of the Pragma-Dialectical theory. Next comes a list of possible criticisms of the theory, many of which have been proposed in the literature. These indicate possible vulnerabilities of Pragma-Dialectics. They also raise the prospect of setting aside or modifying some elements of the theory while retaining others unchanged or with only minor revisions. We are then in a position to try to distinguish between what must be retained for Pragma-Dialectics to survive, and what must be retained to maintain a *pragma-dialectical* theoretical perspective that is distinguishable from and more general than Pragma-Dialectics.

20.2 Elements of Pragma-Dialectics

The Pragma-Dialectical theory might be regarded as a combination of propositions about argumentation and its analysis and evaluation. To be sure, it is not the mere conjunction of these components; in the Pragma-Dialectical theory they are woven together in a particular, distinctive way. Among these components are the following.

(a) There is a particular concept of argumentation captured by the definition: “Argumentation is a verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint” (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 1). On this view, argumentation is a communicative practice with a single particular goal. It turns out that this definition is stipulative, for if one cites instances of argumentation that do not satisfy this definition (such as interior reasoning in a single agent’s mind, or collaborative investigations of a standpoint’s truth), the authors take the position that such argumentation can be adequately analysed and evaluated *as if it were* an instance of the practice captured by the definition.

(b) The approach to the analysis and evaluation of argumentation makes several explicit theoretical assumptions. It treats argumentation from a pragmatic and

a dialectical point of view—hence its name. The perspective is pragmatic insofar as it understands argumentation as a use of language with a given purpose. It is dialectical insofar as it envisages two parties seeking to resolve a difference of opinion by means of a methodical exchange of moves in a well-ordered discussion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992a, p. 10). As such, the approach has four elements. (i) Externalization: only what is expressed or can be reconstructed as expressed is the subject of analysis. By eschewing reference to beliefs, the aim is to avoid making the theory into a psychological theory. (ii) Functionalization: expressions of argumentative discourse are to be analysed in terms of their functions. That is, argumentation is regarded as a complex of speech acts playing various roles in the speech events in which they occur. It is not analysed in terms of the logical relations between the propositions expressed or presupposed by the speech acts. (iii) Socialization: argumentation is taken to be an interactional process between two or more parties that always aims at bringing about the effect that differences over a standpoint will be resolved. (iv) Dialectification: argumentation is taken to be rational in the sense that it aims to convince a critical opponent by means of rules regulating a methodical discussion in which the parties attempt to overcome one another's doubt.

(c) It follows from (b) that a detailed description of argumentation will require a speech act–theoretic analysis, and a detailed prescription for argumentation will require rules about which speech acts are permissible at which points in the course of any argumentation process and interaction. Argumentation is viewed as a complex speech event in which a variety of speech acts, direct and indirect, can, according to certain principles of communication, be appropriate at its different stages.

(d) A distinctive element of the Pragma-Dialectical theory is that it assumes the correctness of a Popperian critical rationalist epistemology. It assumes a generalization of Popper's view that the closest that it is possible to arrive at scientific truth is the survival of attempts at refutation. There is no "objectively" ascertainable truth, just propositional attitudes or "standpoints" that withstand attempts to refute them by systematically following a procedure that is "rational" in the respects that it serves successfully to resolve differences of opinion and each step in doing so is acceptable to the discussants. The authors explicitly accept the "Münchhausen trilemma," according to which *justification* of any kind must either (1) result in an infinite regress of "justifications," or (2) end up being circular, or (3) be broken off at some point that is arbitrarily privileged (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 131). The Amsterdam theory holds that a standpoint is reasonable if it can withstand the scrutiny of a Critical Discussion.

(e) A crucial feature of the Pragma-Dialectical theory is its use of the ideal model of a "Critical Discussion." ("Critical Discussion" is a term of art in the theory, and since it is also a common-enough descriptive phrase outside the theory, when it is used in its privileged or technical sense it should be capitalized.) Actual argumentation is to be analysed, reconstructed and evaluated as if it were supposed to conform to an ideal model of argumentation. Any text of argumentation is treated as if it were an episode with four stages. These "stages" are actually different types of interaction that play different roles in the discussion contributing to the goal of rational resolution of a difference of opinion. The theory is not an "ideal observer"

theory—that is, it does not presuppose or require judgments as if these were made by an ideal (omniscient, rational, fair) arguer or critic—but rather it is an “ideal procedure” theory. It requires resolutions that are the result of a rational procedure. The theoretical assumptions are that (a) argumentation is rational in the sense that (or just insofar as) it can produce positive results (as opposed to resulting in an endless iteration of pro and con arguments, or in question-begging circularity, or in some arbitrary stopping point) that are acceptable to its participants, and that (b) such a condition is achievable if and only if a “reasonable” procedure is followed in an exchange of arguments. Such a procedure has several requirements. (i) The parties must agree about and identify clearly what is at issue between them. (ii) They must agree to the discussion rules and the discussion rules they agree to have to be in some sense rational or reasonable. To be reasonable they must include, first, orderly sub-procedures for identifying commitments that may be appealed to as premises in the arguments that they use. They must include, second, reasonable inference practices to be used in deriving conclusions from such premises. (In particular, they must allow valid deductive entailments to count as determinative arguments, and in the absence of entailments they must allow instances of appropriate argument schemes appropriately used to count as determinative arguments.) (iii) The parties must agree about what counts as a resolution of their disagreement. The theory does not suppose that actual argumentative exchanges satisfy this ideal model, but it regards the model as constituting a set of norms that can be used to analyse and evaluate actual argumentation. A Critical Discussion is described by a set of constitutive prescriptive rules (15 in the latest version: van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004).

(f) The theory contains a theory of fallacy. By definition, any violation of the rules undermines the rational resolution of a difference of opinion, and it is a contention of the Pragma-Dialectical theory that any and all of the traditional fallacies identified in the history of the study of arguments and argumentation correspond to one or another violation of the Critical Discussion rules. Thus the theory also provides a systematic and complete account of all historical fallacies as dialectical—as violations of discussion rules for reasonable disagreement-resolution.

20.3 Possible Objections to Pragma-Dialectics

One motivation for the distinction between Pragma-Dialectics and *pragma-dialectics* arises from the fact that there are many possible lines of criticism against the Pragma-Dialectical theory as it stands, and many actual criticisms have been registered. Some of these criticisms seem addressed to details whose abandonment or revision would not seem to entail abandoning Pragma-Dialectics as a whole. Other criticisms seem addressed to more significant portions or aspects of the theory, so that were they to stand up, Pragma-Dialectics would be refuted.

(1) Critical rationalism is rejected. The Münchhausen trilemma is rejected. One might argue that the burden of proof rests with the proponents of the Münchhausen trilemma, since contemporary epistemology carries on as if it were false. As consistency requires, van Eemeren and Grootendorst do not try to justify this claim.

One might note the paradox, which is worrisome, that if the Münchhausen trilemma is true then it cannot be shown to be true, and if it can be shown to be true, then it is false. Moreover, contemporary epistemologists are not one and all Popperians. Alvin Goldman (1999), to name one of many, defends a veritistic epistemology, according to which the aim of argumentation is to arrive at truth rather than at disagreement-resolution.

(2) Searlean/Austinian speech-act theory, or its application to argumentation theory, might be rejected. The formulators of Pragma-Dialectics themselves have had to modify Searle's theory so as to apply it to argumentation, which is not a single speech act, but a whole complex of speech acts (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, pp. 32–35). Moreover, it is not so clear that speech act theory is needed to illuminate the analysis of argumentative discourse. To take an example: whether a grammatical interrogative utterance is meant literally or rhetorically is a matter of whether it is an "assertive" or an "interrogative." However, the decision as to which speech act analysis is correct must depend on analysing the function of the grammatical interrogative utterance in the discourse, and once one has made that determination, the classification of the utterance as one or the other speech act seems superfluous.

The Cooperative Principle of Paul Grice (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, pp. 75–80; see Grice, 1989) might be challenged. There are rumblings of dissent from it in some quarters (see Davis, 1998, for instance). Grice's principle is not a synthetic a priori principle, and it has resisted confirmation as an empirical prediction.

Notice that speech act theory allows beliefs, ruled out by the externalization requirement, to enter the scene by the back door. One way to see this is to note that according to their analysis, the sincerity condition of the speech act of assertion in argumentation requires that the assertor *believe*, to some degree, that what s/he asserts is acceptable, that is, will be accepted by the other party (or parties) (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992a, p. 33). Moreover, there is no reason for an interlocutor in a Critical Discussion to commit to a proposition that he can foresee will result in the refutation of his standpoint or the successful defence of the opponent's standpoint unless he *believes* it and is arguing sincerely from his *beliefs*.

(3) The argument reconstruction theory is rejected. As it stands, the theory employs a kind of methodological deductivism in its doctrine about how to reconstruct argumentation from discourse in which it is imbedded. The discourse is to be analysed as if the arguments were (intended to be) deductively valid, and propositions that must be added to the discourse to produce such analyses are considered to have been unexpressed premises of the arguments. This doctrine has been questioned by some theorists (such as Govier, 1987, and Johnson, 2000a), who contend that, absent contextual clues indicating deductive intent on the author's part, it will be an uncharitable interpretation to render the argument deductively valid if the requisite added unexpressed premise is implausible.

(4) The theory of fallacy is rejected. John Woods (1992) and Douglas Walton (1992c) separately propose conceptions of fallacy that are at odds with the Pragma-Dialectic theory. There are (at least) three lines of argument against the theory of

fallacy. One grants the insight that some fallacies are dialectical, but rejects the claim that all are (holding that some are logical or epistemological). Another contends that the theory stretches the concept of fallacy out of shape by counting any dialectical misbehaviour as a fallacy. A third holds that what makes for (some) fallacies is not a violation of the Critical Discussion rules but instead illegitimate dialogue-type shifts.

(5) The four stages might be wrong, or apply only to one type of argumentation. One might accept a stage theory, but distinguish different stages. For instance, in such fields as philosophy, much of the argumentation that is carried on is about how precisely to identify the question at issue, so the confrontation stage might be divided to allow for a meta-level argumentation stage. Or again, the argumentation stage seems to bundle together arguments for and against the standpoint, on the one hand, and arguments for and against aspects of the arguments for and against the standpoint at issue (another kind of meta-argument), on the other. Both frequently occur in argumentation. If meta-arguments are conceived as new arguments, the door is opened to an infinite regress. So perhaps the argumentation stage needs to be subdivided. Alternatively, as seems implied by van Laar's defence of the theory against my criticism that it doesn't apply to complex solo arguments (Blair, 1998; see van Laar, 2005), it might be desirable to distinguish layers or levels of dialogue at the argumentation stage. Thus van Laar conceives a protagonist and an antagonist, each of whom can be conceived as playing the roles of both proponent and opponent at a different level.

(6) The Critical Discussion rules might be changed in some respects. To take just one rule, Rule 7 (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, pp. 147–150), which calls for the appropriate use of appropriate argument schemes, it might be argued that the Pragma-Dialectical classification of argument schemes into symptomatic, analogous and instrumental (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, pp. 96–97) is open to challenge as not being exhaustive (for example), or it might be held that argument scheme theory is in general problematic. A more general point is that the theory as it stands contains no argument that each of the listed Critical Discussion rules is necessary and all are jointly sufficient (see Johnson, 1995). Hans Vilhelm Hansen (2003), for instance has argued that some entail others, from which it would follow that some are basic and others derivative.

(7) Either not all argumentation can be modelled as an attempt to resolve a difference of opinion, or else it is not economical or fruitful to try to assimilate all argumentation to that model. Jean Goodwin (2001) has argued that argument can have other goals than the resolution of disagreements. I think that individual or collective argumentation used for inquiry or deliberation is not best modelled as if it were argumentation aimed at disagreement resolution (see Blair, 2004).

(8) Ideal model theorizing is rejected. It is possible to take the position that norms and ideals can be pursued without presupposing an ideal model, and much normative theorizing about argumentation is carried out without embracing an ideal model. Whether or not they are right, there is no necessary requirement that one must be assuming an ideal model in regarding argumentation as a practice (and hence as normatively guided) and in holding it up to standards of logical, epistemic or dialectical rigor.

(9) The primacy of the dialectical is rejected. A case in point are rhetoricians such as Christopher Tindale (2004), who argues that a rhetorical perspective, not a dialectical one, is in some sense basic.

20.4 Pragma-Dialectics and *Pragma-Dialectics*

Several possibilities are raised by the prospect of these lines of possible criticism, or others like them.

One possibility is that what is telling in the lines of criticism at most calls for some revisions of the Pragma-Dialectical theory. This would be this case, for instance, if the threefold classification of basic argumentation schemes were to be replaced by some other classification, or if the rules constitutive of Critical Discussions were added to or modified without changing the basic character of a Critical Discussion. For instance, a revised conception of the nature of logic could be dropped into the theory, calling for a replacement of “Commandment” 7 (the validity rule) and “Commandment” 8 (the argument scheme rule) of the latest version of the theory (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, pp. 193–195) without changing the essential nature of the theory. Even if the precise characterization of the four “stages” of an idealized argumentative interchange were modified, I think the revised theory would still be recognizable as a modified version of the Pragma-Dialectical theory. In this regard, notice how van Eemeren and Houtlosser’s (2002a, 2003) recent renovation to allow for a rhetorical component does not invite the judgment that the theory has been abandoned or replaced. The theory would be Pragma-Dialectics revised.

A second possibility is that the scope of the Pragma-Dialectical theory has to be restricted. If it should turn out, for instance, that the rational resolution of a disagreement is not the only purpose of argumentation—or, to put the point somewhat differently, if it should turn out that using the Critical Discussion ideal to model argumentation with other objectives than the rational resolution of a disagreement is not the most perspicuous way to model them—then the Pragma-Dialectical theory would not have been shown to be false or unacceptable, but it would have been established that there is a need for a parallel theory or model that is more perspicuous for these other purposes of argumentation. Since the model of a Critical Discussion is a central tenet of the Pragma-Dialectical theory, the parallel theory would not be a version of Pragma-Dialectics, but it might still be a *pragma-dialectical* theory in that it might share enough of the features of its opposite number to be classified as belonging to the same genus. Such a theory would be a complement to Pragma-Dialectics.

A third possibility is that so many of the elements of the Pragma-Dialectical theory are replaced by alternative accounts that the resultant theory bears only a family resemblance to the Pragma-Dialectical theory. For instance, if critical rationalist epistemology were replaced by a veritistic epistemology, and the fallacy theory were replaced by Walton’s theory, and some of the precise features of the theory’s approach to the analysis of discourse were rejected (say, due to a rejection

of Grice's Cooperative Principle), then even though the resultant theory retained many Pragma-Dialectical features (for instance, it might remain an ideal-model theory, it might retain the speech-act analysis, it might have discussion rules), it could not be advertised using the Pragma-Dialectical trademark. However, it might remain pragmatic and dialectical in inspiration, and look in many respects like its Pragma-Dialectical cousin. It might be most accurate to identify it as a *pragma-dialectical* theory, though not Pragma-Dialectics. Such a theory would be a competitor. This might be the place to locate Walton's ever-developing conception of argumentation (see, for instance, 1998) or that of Jacobs (see 1999, 2000).

The fourth possibility is that so much of the theoretical apparatus of Pragma-Dialectics is rejected that no theory of argumentation consistent with that rejection has any generic resemblance to the original theory and so none could be termed "*pragma-dialectical*" in any accurate sense.

What properties would a theory of argumentation have to have in order to qualify minimally as a *pragma-dialectical* theory? I suggest that it would have to have as a minimum the following three properties. (1) It would be a pragmatic theory in the following respect. Argumentation would be analysed and assessed not just in terms of the probative relations among propositions, but also in interactional and functional terms, and hence as well in terms of the particular contexts in which it occurs. Argumentation would be taken to be a kind of communication practice. (2) It would be a dialectical theory in the following respect. Argumentation would be analysed as in some essential respect involving shifts from pro to con points of view, from challenges to responses, examining an issue or responding to a proposal both from the perspective of what can be said positively in its favour and also from the perspective of a critical assessment of it. (3) It would be a normative, or a descriptive and normative theory. It would have a normative element that plays a central role. Argumentation would be taken to be, or to be parasitic upon, a rational activity in some sense and to some degree. By this test, Willard's theory of argument is not *pragma-dialectical* (Willard, 1989), but, perhaps surprisingly, Johnson's is (Johnson, 2000a).

A *pragma-dialectical* theory would not be a version of Pragma-Dialectics unless it were beefed up with additional properties. It seems that at least the adoption of the critical rationalist epistemology, an ideal model approach, and in particular the ideal model of a Critical Discussion, which also implies the adoption of some sort of speech act theory, would have to be included.

What would a theory of argumentation that was not *pragma-dialectical* look like? There are several possibilities. One would be a theory that focussed exclusively on the logical or epistemic properties of the sentences or propositions (informal logic?). Another would be a purely empirical theory that classified argumentation exclusively in terms of such categories as persuasive effectiveness and sought explanations of variations in those properties in terms of variations in social or psychological properties of arguers, audiences or variations in rhetorical strategies or figures (the "new rhetoric"?). A third would be a theory that focussed microscopically on the linguistics of argumentation, such as the theory of *argumentation dans la langue* of Anscombe and Ducrot (1983).

Readers might hope for a systematic basis for the inclusions and exclusions of these classifications, but I am afraid the effort to supply one will have to be subject of another paper. At this point, the grouping is based on features that seem salient to this writer. I invite others to take on this task if the distinctions proposed here seem worth maintaining.

20.5 Conclusion

It is both liberating and empowering to distinguish *pragma-dialectics* from Pragma-Dialectics. It is liberating, because it releases the theorist who is critical of some parts of the Pragma-Dialectical theory yet convinced of the merits of others of its features from having to take an all-or-nothing stand with respect to the theory. It is a Hobson's choice for such a theorist to be confronted with the two options of accepting the theory in its entirety or giving it up in its entirety. Moreover, as we have seen, recognizing that one can embrace a *pragma-dialectical* approach without having to sign up for every detail of Pragma-Dialectics also opens up the possibility of a third option, namely a version of Pragma-Dialectics that differs from the original theory by virtue of containing corrections or modifications that improve it. The distinction is also empowering, because it enables the application of insights that are generalized from the Pragma-Dialectical theory to be applied to uses of arguments that are not Critical Discussions and are not perspicuously modelled as if they were. Even if a theorist cannot subscribe to certain essential features of Pragma-Dialectics, such as its critical rationalist epistemology, he or she can still be in the *pragma-dialectical* business and apply the insights of that approach to the study of argumentation.

The possibilities that the generalization of Pragma-Dialectics opens up are entirely due to the great suggestiveness and complexity of that theory. The community of argumentation scholars over the past 20 years owes much to the original insights of van Eemeren and Grootendorst and, even setting aside the continuing work of the School of Amsterdam, which shows no signs of abating, the influence of their work to date will shape the field of argumentation studies for many more years to come. It is an honor to have the opportunity to offer these reflections as a token of gratitude to Professor van Eemeren and the memory of Professor Grootendorst.

Chapter 21

Investigations and the Critical Discussion Model

21.1 Introduction: The Alleged Scope of the Critical Discussion Model

This chapter is an investigation of the scope of the Pragma-Dialectical theory of argumentation, and in particular of its ingredient concept of a Critical Discussion (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 1992a, 2004). The Pragma-Dialectical theory is explicitly designed to apply to argumentation aimed at the rational resolution of a difference of opinion, what Walton and Krabbe (1995) call “persuasion dialogues.” On the face of it, there are other uses of argument besides attempting to resolve disagreements, for example, to inquire about what is true. But the proponents of Pragma-Dialectics seem either to regard that theory as having universal application or to regard all uses of argument as reducible to disagreement-resolution argumentation. The evidence for this claim is found in their application of a central component of their theory, the model of a Critical Discussion.

A “Critical Discussion,” as that term is defined in the Pragma-Dialectical theory, is a technical concept—a term of art (hence here capitalized, as is “Pragma-Dialectics” and its cognates, for the same reason). The Pragma-Dialectical Critical Discussion is an ideal model of a discussion between two parties with a difference of opinion who agree to use arguments and follow an instrumentally rational procedure in doing so to try to resolve their difference. The model aims to specify the conditions that an actual argumentative exchange would satisfy if the parties were orderly and reasonable. They would order their discussion in the way best designed to resolve their disagreement, and they would carry out their discussion according to norms that make it rational for them to agree to (or to decline to) make concessions and to accept (or to reject) alleged implications. In the end, one party would convince the other to withdraw the commitment or the doubt that started the discussion, or the parties would remain in disagreement.

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The model of a Critical Discussion is introduced as applicable to argumentation exchanges aimed at resolving a difference of opinion, but it is taken to apply generally, as the following passage in van Eemeren and Grootendorst's latest statement of their theory (2004) makes clear:

The aim of a pragma-dialectical analysis is to reconstruct the process of resolving a difference of opinion occurring in an argumentative discourse or text. This means that argumentative reality is systematically analyzed from the perspective of a critical discussion

What exactly does such an analytic reconstruction of an argumentative discourse or text entail? . . . In the reconstruction, the speech acts performed in the discourse or text are, where this is possible with the help of the ideal model of a critical discussion, analyzed as argumentative moves that are aimed at bringing about a resolution of a difference of opinion. (p. 95)

Notice the *glissement* that occurs in this text—not from one dialogue type to another (see Walton & Krabbe, 1995, p.102)—but from one claim to another. The first sentence notes that a pragma-dialectical analysis focuses on the process of argumentation aimed at resolving a difference of opinion. But the very next sentence mentions subjecting “argumentative reality”—without qualification now—to analysis from the perspective of the Pragma-Dialectical model of a “critical discussion.” So argumentation aimed at resolving a difference of opinion is quickly identified with argumentative reality in general. An argumentative discourse or text, the next paragraph declares, is to be reconstructed, using the ideal model of a critical discussion. And what the authors are referring to is a Critical Discussion—the ideal construct they designed expressly to model argumentation aimed at rationally resolving a difference of opinion. So any argumentation text or discourse is to be modeled as if it were argumentation aimed at bringing about a resolution of a difference of opinion.

The text quoted above makes clear the commitment of the proponents of the Pragma-Dialectical theory. It has two related aspects. One is to assimilate all argumentation to opinion-difference resolution argumentation. The other is to treat the ideal model developed as an element of that theory as applicable to any argumentation whatever. From a perspective internal to the theory, these are two sides of the same commitment, but they are two distinct claims, since it is in principle possible for either to be false while the other is true. It is in principle possible that not all argumentation functions to resolve a difference of opinion yet the critical discussion model can be usefully applied generally. And it is in principle possible that all argumentation does boil down to attempts to resolve differences of opinion rationally yet the critical discussion model is flawed and does not apply as neatly as its proponents believe it does.

21.2 Epistemic Investigations

There is a type of argumentation transaction that is, on the face of it, different from one whose purpose is to resolve a difference of opinion. I will call it the use of arguments to conduct an *epistemic investigation*. I elsewhere have called this the

use of argumentation to *inquire* (Blair, 2004), but Walton (e.g., 1998) has used the term “inquiry” to name a kind of proof-seeking dialogue, which is different; hence the need for a different name. The question of this chapter can be raised in relation to epistemic investigations. Does the Critical Discussion model apply to them? If it does, then there is some basis for thinking that other uses of arguments besides its use to resolve a difference of opinion can be assimilated to persuasion dialogues. If it does not, then the Pragma-Dialectical theory’s scope is more limited than its proponents claim.

Understand by an “epistemic investigation” an attempt to ascertain the epistemic standing of some proposition or group of propositions. I am using ‘epistemic’ in a broad sense. An epistemic investigation begins with a question about whether some judgment is justified. By a judgment here I mean an attitude towards a proposition (e.g., that it is true, or that it is probable or that it is plausible to some degree), or a proposal (e.g., that an action should be performed or that a policy implemented), or an assessment (e.g., that something or someone has some instrumental, moral or aesthetic quality), and so on. Perhaps the standard philosophical connotations of ‘epistemic’ militate against this stretch of the term, for epistemology is paradigmatically occupied more narrowly with the grounds of knowledge and reasonable belief, and these are widely thought to have propositions as their objects—propositions in the sense of what are expressed by declarative sentences and that are true or false. Recommendations and evaluations are held by some not to have truth-values. However, they do have values. A proposal can be wise or foolish, correct in the circumstances or mistaken, good or bad. Similarly, an assessment can be accurate or mistaken, sound or wrong. We can be justified in such judgments as that a piece of advice was poor advice, if only in retrospect; we can similarly be justified in evaluative judgments. We can and do make such determinations based on reasons, and we act on them with more or less success and innocent of any conceptual blunder. So it seems useful to use “proposition” in the wider sense and to allow the scope of epistemology to include such judgments within its domain.

There is a question about the epistemic standing of some proposition if there is some other proposition or group of propositions that, if true, imply that the epistemic standing of the proposition in question is different from what it is alleged to be, and there is some reason to believe one or more of the alternatives. This would be the case, for instance, if there are one or more incompatible propositions that have or seem to have an equal or higher epistemic standing, though that is just one type of argument supporting the conclusion that the proposition’s epistemic standing is different from what it was claimed or seemed to be.

So one way to investigate the epistemic standing of a proposition is to look for arguments that go to support it and for arguments that go to undercut or block alternative possible claims about its epistemic standing, and also to look for arguments that go to refute it or support alternative possible claims about its epistemic standing, and then to assess how cogent those arguments are. This is what I mean by an epistemic investigation.

The attribution of burden of proof in an epistemic investigation is crucial, for some ways of assigning the burden of proof make the task of investigating the epistemic standing of a proposition an infinite one, and it is pointless to conduct such an

investigation if there is no prospect of completing it. The following points may be made about the burden of proof in an epistemic investigation.

Beliefs or assertions or other commitments have a weak presumption in their favor. That is, there is a weak burden of proof to establish that the alleged epistemic standing of some proposition is open to question. Just questioning or doubting a proposition does not oblige anyone who asserts or is otherwise committed to it to support it, for otherwise, an infinite regress of challenge and response would be possible and in that case the epistemic investigation would have no prospect of ending. But the presumption is weak because it is easily overcome. For instance, it is enough that others are known to have incompatible beliefs or to be committed to incompatible propositions, for in that case the question as to which one is justified is legitimately raised. The existence of two or more plausible answers to a question about what is or ought to be the case (and so on) is sufficient to impose a burden of proof on whoever would contend that one of them is true.

Thus, when someone is aware of two or more plausible answers to such a question, and one does not know which one to prefer or maintain, there exist the conditions for the beginning of an epistemic investigation. I will call a plausible answer to a question that gives rise to an epistemic investigation an *hypothesis*. (An hypothesis is plausible if it is consistent with current beliefs.)

For any simple argument in support of one hypothesis—call this a pro argument—there is, for the reason just given, again a presumption in favor of its premises and the inference from them to its conclusion. Similarly, for any simple argument against that hypothesis—a contra argument—there is a presumption in favor of *its* premises and inference. In neither case is there a burden of proof to support the argument in the absence of any reason to question or challenge it. However, if there are both pro and a contra arguments relating to an hypothesis, or if there is a pro argument for one hypothesis and a pro argument for an incompatible hypothesis, then the presumptions are cancelled. For when there are two opposing arguments in one or another of these ways, then at least one of them must be mistaken, so there is a reason to require that it be shown of any of them that it is not the mistaken one.

If one wants to ascertain the correct or best hypothesis among alternatives on a question about what is or ought to be the case (and so on), then one has a motive for conducting an epistemic investigation.

21.3 Elements of an Epistemic Investigation

An epistemic investigation will begin, then, with the following situation: There is a question that has two or more possible plausible but incompatible answers or hypotheses—that is, if any one hypothesis is correct or true (etc.) then the others are mistaken or false (etc.), and either (a) for each of two or more hypotheses there is at least one person who seriously supports it, or (b) for each hypothesis there are considerations that support it, or (c) for at least one hypothesis there are one or more considerations for it and one or more considerations against it—and at least one person wants to ascertain which hypothesis is best or correct.

An epistemic investigation will proceed by one or more parties completing the following elements. (I speak of “elements” of the procedure rather than of stages, because there is no “right” temporal ordering to these elements, and “stages” carries temporal connotations.) In general, evidence must be gathered, assessed, revised in various ways (with a view of strengthening it by addition, modification or subtraction), and its upshot judged. The objective is to make a judgment about the epistemic status of the proposition in question—the hypothesis—on the basis of weighing the best case that can be made in favor of it against the best case that can be made against it, and comparing the upshot to similar assessments of the alternative hypotheses. I use ‘evidence’ in a broad way to include any considerations, not just empirical data, relevant to the truth of a hypothesis. Such considerations can be expressed as arguments pro or contra the hypothesis.

- (1) Evidence-gathering element. Set out the pro and contra arguments for each hypothesis, seeking to produce a complete inventory of the arguments that have historically been given and also that imagination and further research can devise.
- (2) Evidence assessment element. (2.1) Seek out or construct critical arguments—arguments for doubting or for rejecting the premises of the evidentiary arguments or for doubting or rejecting the justificatory force of the evidentiary arguments. (2.2) Assess the critical arguments by seeking plausible replies to (i.e., arguments against) the critical arguments on behalf of the evidentiary arguments and assess the merits of those replies (i.e., those arguments).
- (3) Evidence revision element. Revise the evidentiary arguments in light of the assessment. Some might have to be abandoned because they have been refuted; some might be amenable to repair by altering them to avoid objections or by finding additional evidence as required by the assessment; and some might survive unchanged.
- (4) Hypothesis revision element. Should there be strong evidence that an hypothesis as it was initially formulated is false, but that a reformulated hypothesis would not be subject to those objections, then that hypothesis may be revised and the investigation continued into the merits of the revised hypothesis.

Elements (1) to (4) can have as many iterations as resources allow.

- (5) Concluding element. Decide, on the basis of the assessments of the strengths of the pro and contra arguments, on the epistemic standing of the hypotheses under investigation.

21.4 Are Epistemic Investigations Critical Discussions?

Such an investigation can be modeled as a two-party dialogue, or as a group of nested dialogues. A dialogue is a conversation between the occupants of two roles. One role can be conceived as the questioner or critic and the other as the answerer or

proponent. In an epistemic investigation, all investigators occupy both roles in turn, since the goal is to test each hypothesis as thoroughly as possible and not for one role occupant or the other to prevail. Are these roles identical to the roles of antagonist and protagonist in the Pragma-Dialectical theory's ideal model of a Critical Discussion? Does the Critical discussion model apply to epistemic investigations?

From the point of view of the purpose and nature of an epistemic investigation, it seems not to fit the Critical Discussion model. An epistemic investigation has a different starting point and a different objective from a persuasion dialogue. There are not two sides or parties who disagree; neither party is trying to convince the other of anything; all parties take both a pro and a contra perspective, seeking both to find arguments that support an hypothesis and also to refute the very arguments that they have just found.

In addition, it seems that the discussion rules for the two enterprises will differ in many ways. An investigation does not get started by incompatible commitments, but by an absence of commitment on an issue on which the parties all want to decide what commitment is justified. In a critical discussion, the burden of proof is asymmetrical: who asserts must defend; who questions has no obligation to defend. In an investigation, the burden of proof is complicated. The investigators have an obligation to seek both pro and contra arguments, but once any argument has been formulated, the burden of proof must lie with the "critic," not the "proponent"—the argument stands until some further argument establishes a weakness in it, for otherwise there would be a vicious infinite regress, a requirement of arguments supporting arguments *ad infinitum*. At the same time, however, all the investigators have an obligation to seek such critical arguments. Thus no investigator consistently occupies the role of protagonist or of antagonist, as must occur in a Critical Discussion. Also, unlike in a Critical Discussion, the investigators do not agree independently about what may constitute premises or legitimate kinds of support. In an investigation, any grounds that can be found may be put forward and their appropriateness, relevance, and strength of support are subject to critical examination as part of the assessment element. As well, revisions to arguments and, indeed, to hypotheses, are permissible throughout an investigation, since the object is not to maintain one's initial position, but to follow the evidence to the truth. So the two enterprises of epistemic investigation and disagreement resolution seem to be quite different. And finally, there is no philosophical assumption of Popperian rationality. It is an open question whether there are objective truths or whether the best "truth" available just is what investigators agree to at the moment, subject to future disagreement.

On the other hand, from the point of view of the inner workings of an epistemic investigation, the Critical Discussion model does seem to have application. Consider any single hypothesis being investigated. It can be thought of as a standpoint that has been asserted by its protagonist. The requirement to produce arguments in its favor can be treated as an obligation incurred by the questioning of that standpoint by an antagonist. The arguments produced against it are like the argumentation required of an antagonist in a multiple dispute (see van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, p. 80). The assessments of those arguments can be conceived as the argumentation of sub disputes (*ibid.*, p. 89). The revision of any argumentation is like a concession, and

the revision of any hypothesis can be treated as the defeat of the original hypothesis, and any examination of the revised argument or hypothesis can be treated as a new discussion occasioned by the new argument or new hypothesis. So it seems that an epistemic investigation can indeed be analyzed as if it were a series of Critical Discussions.

What has happened? It seemed clear that an epistemic investigation is a different use of argumentation from the use of argumentation to resolve a difference of opinion. And yet it also seemed clear that the model of a Critical Discussion developed for the analysis and assessment of argumentation aimed at the resolution of a difference of opinion applies equally well to the argumentation of an epistemic investigation. This is the puzzle.

The solution I propose is to regard the ideal model of a Critical Discussion as a chameleon. When it is at home in the Pragma-Dialectical theory, it is applied to the argumentation designed to resolve a difference of opinion, and it accommodates the Popperian epistemology underlying the Pragma-Dialectical theory. But when it is applied to other uses of argumentation, it changes its coloration. It models simply the interchange of pro and contra argumentation, including meta-argumentation (arguments about the arguments). It is neutral with respect to any particular epistemology. It does not require that the role-occupiers be committed to the initial positions that occasion the exchange of arguments. It is not committed to the four stages of the Pragma-Dialectical account. While it does, as any model of argumentation must, allow only for the interlocutor's contributions to any particular exchange of arguments, it does not require the assumption that there is no basis for claims or arguments apart from what the interlocutors agree to. In other words, the accretions belonging to the Pragma-Dialectical approach to argumentation are dropped.

This equivocation of the critical discussion model can be treated either as a weakness or as a strength. On the one hand, there is sleight of hand at work in the suggestion that precisely as formulated as part of the Pragma-Dialectical approach to argumentation, the Critical Discussion model applies to any argumentation whatever. On the other hand, if the model of a critical discussion (now spelled with lower-case first letters) is detached from all the Pragma-Dialectical philosophical assumptions and expressed in general terms (so that its Pragma-Dialectical version is a special case), then it is plausible to think that it applies to any argumentation. For any argumentation will have the generic properties identified by the general features of the critical discussion model. Any argumentation will have different components—what Pragma-Dialectics calls “stages” and what I have called “elements.” There must be some initiation and some conclusion to the argumentation exchange. There must be argumentative roles assigned, and burdens of proof distributed. There must be regulatory rules specifying the conditions of a well-ordered argumentative exchange, rules for turn-taking, commitments and concessions, and so on.

This generalizing of the Critical Discussion model is, in effect, what Walton and Krabbe (1995) have already done, although they continue to call the model a critical discussion. But they introduce a crucial modification of the Pragma-Dialectical theory's formulation of a Critical Discussion, and in so doing they effectively

generalize the model. They write, “in our usage, the term dispute will stand for a type . . . of dialogue rather than for a type of conflict” (p. 69). This switch from conflict type to dialogue type makes all the difference, because they are now modeling the argumentative exchange and not the motivating problem—such as a disagreement between two parties as distinct from a puzzle about what stand to take on some vexed question. The type of dialogue they model is one in which at least two incompatible propositions are in competition for endorsement, acceptance or belief, and that is the situation when two or more hypotheses are mooted as plausible positions to take on some problematic issue. There are not two (or more) parties in dispute; there are two or more positions up for consideration.

Although welcoming their modification, I am suggesting a somewhat different analysis than that proposed by Walton and Krabbe. They assume that a critical discussion, or what they prefer to call a “persuasion dialogue,” is the most fundamental kind of argumentative dialogue, although during critical discussions, other types of dialogues, such as negotiations and quarrels, occur as well (1995, p. 7). If the present argument is correct, the persuasion dialogue understood in Pragma-Dialectical terms is not the most fundamental kind of argumentative dialogue, however important it might be. There is at least one other important kind of argumentative dialogue, namely, the epistemic investigation.

To see the distinction more clearly, consider what we are modeling. Is it a type of argumentation (distinguished by its purpose) or is it the exchanges that occur within any type of argumentation? Any type of argumentation entails arguments pro or contra (plus at least the possibility of arguments on the other side). But not every type of argument entails one person attempting to persuade another, or one party differing in opinion from the other, for an epistemic investigation entails the possibility of one or more person with no opinion (and hence nothing to differ from) attempting to discern what opinion to take.

Proponents of the Pragma-Dialectical theory might try to assimilate these two uses of argument. One person trying to decide what to believe or what position to take, they might say, is someone with two (or more) minds about a question, and so is, in effect (and from a modeling perspective, identical to), two (or more) people disagreeing with one another. But that is not the case. The person in this situation does not have two or more opinions; *ex hypothesis*, the person has *no* opinion. The metaphor of “being of two minds” does not indicate having two opinions; it indicates being undecided as between two (or more) alternatives, seeing the *prima facie* merits of two incompatible positions, and being unable to choose between them. In fact, it is impossible to disagree with oneself. (One can at a given time disagree with one’s position at an earlier time, but that is changing one’s mind, not disagreeing with oneself.) Being undecided as between which of two alternatives to believe or commit to is not the same as believing or maintaining both of them; quite the contrary, it is being committed to neither of them. Rather than a single-person epistemic investigation being a just a variant of a multi-party investigation, it’s the other way around: a multi-party epistemic investigation is no different from a single-person investigation, except that it has more resources.

It is true that the single investigator must formulate pro and contra arguments, and so can be said to have to occupy two roles—the roles of protagonist and antagonist. This is what makes an investigation a dialectical enterprise. But the investigator, unlike the persuader, occupies *both* roles (and if there is more than one investigator, they all occupy both roles). It is certainly possible to speak of the pro or the contra arguments “winning” and the arguments on the other side “losing.” But that is strictly a metaphor borrowed from debate, a short-hand way of referring to the fact that the arguments on one side are more compelling, on balance, than those on the other, and that the position they support merits (more or less qualified) endorsement. It becomes thereby a (relatively) justified opinion, and the investigator now has a reasonable basis for disagreeing with anyone who rejects or refuses to accept that opinion.

Finally, notice that so-called “strategic maneuvering” (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003) has no place in an epistemic investigation. The selection of how the topic is framed (“topical potential”), the adaptation of the arguments to be responsive to “audience demand,” and the use of the most effective “presentational devices” that characterize rhetorical choices within the Critical Discussion framework are all aimed at prevailing in a competitive, zero sum argumentative discussion. In an epistemic investigation, there is no motivation for such maneuvering, since the goal is not to persuade an interlocutor, not to “win” for one’s opinion, but to get as close to the truth of the matter as possible.

21.5 Conclusion

The conclusion that emerges from these considerations is that there are two concepts of the model of a critical discussion. There is the special model of a Critical Discussion that applies within the Pragma-Dialectical theory to argumentative discussions aimed at a rational resolution of a difference of opinion. And there is the general model of a critical discussion that applies to other kinds of dialectical argumentation. I would speculate that it applies to any exchange of arguments that has their critical assessment as an essential property. The scope of the Pragma-Dialectical theory and its special model of a Critical Discussion are overstated. At the same time, that overstatement is understandable, because the special model can be generalized, and when it is, it has broad application.

Chapter 22

Perelman Today on Justice and Argumentation

22.1 Introduction

This chapter is a reflection upon how some of Perelman’s central claims stand up to more recent theoretical developments. The claims examined and the developments reviewed are highly selective. Perelman’s intellectual journey from the study of justice to the study of argumentation is briefly examined, and the distinguishing features of argumentation that Perelman proposed are scrutinized. The upshot is that, while some of the claims of Perelman examined here require revision, those views of 50 years ago tend to stand up remarkably well.

22.2 Justice and Argument

Perelman holds the surprising view that arguments are to be assessed by using the Rule of Justice. Normally it is laws and their application and enforcement, or policies or acts distributing benefits and burdens, which are considered to be subject to the judgment of their justice, not arguments.

Unlike demonstrative reasoning, arguments are never correct or incorrect; they are strong or weak, relevant or irrelevant. The strength or weakness is judged according to the Rule of Justice, which requires that essentially similar situations be treated in the same manner. Relevance and irrelevance are to be examined according to the rules and criteria recognized by the various disciplines and their particular methodologies. (Perelman, 1967, p. 83)

Keep in mind that “relevance” is ambiguous between “having some degree of probative weight above zero” (and in that sense is “On” or “Off”), and “probative weight” (and in that sense is a matter of degree). Since Perelman here distinguishes between strength and relevance, it seems he is using “relevance” in the first sense.

For Perelman, the concept of justice has a formal and a material interpretation. Formally, the Rule of Justice is simply the injunction, “Treat (relevantly) similar

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cases similarly.” Materially, he suggests that we can distinguish the justice of laws, of their interpretation and of their application as well as the justice of social policies. The rules for any of these material judgments of justice presuppose the identification of criteria and require the application of those criteria to particular cases. Both the selection of criteria and their applications provide opportunities for justice or injustice to occur.

The formal Rule of Justice, treat similar cases similarly, is nothing else than the requirement of consistency. Treating similar cases similarly is being consistent in one’s treatments. The injunction to be just, then, is equivalent to the injunction to be consistent. But as such, it is also equivalent to the injunction to be rational, for formal rationality is simply consistency in judgment. Recognizing that the application of the Rule of Justice is equivalent to the application of a rule of reasonableness in the form of consistency helps us to understand why Perelman regards the rule of justice to apply to argumentation.

How are the relevance and strength and weakness of arguments worked out in practice?

Consider first the Rule of Justice as it applies to the strength and weakness of arguments. Perelman does not illustrate it, but the following examples seem plausible. If you judge that an expert’s credentials provide a strong reason to accept his testimony when it favors your case, you must be willing to treat that expert’s or a similarly-qualified expert’s testimony as equally authoritative when it tells against your case. If you judge that an automobile’s high fuel consumption is a reason that on environmentalist grounds disqualifies the purchase or use of such a vehicle, you must be prepared to judge that their causing equivalent environmental damage also disqualifies the purchase or use of similar conveniences, other things being equal. And in a debate, you must allow the kind of reason that you count as strongly in support of your position to count equally strongly in support of your opponent’s position, and you must allow that the kind of reason you regard as weakly supporting your opponent’s position or a criticism of yours can amount to no more than weak support for your position or for your criticism of your opponent’s position. If these examples are appropriate, however, the application of the Rule of Justice leaves it undetermined whether it is reasonable to judge a given argument to be strong or weak in the first place. It might, therefore, be fairer to take Perelman to be proposing a constraint on judgments of argument strength and weakness rather than a way of determining those qualities in arguments.

The second criterion of good argument that Perelman mentions, relevance, is in his view to be applied “according to the rules and criteria recognized by the various disciplines and their particular methodologies.” This proposal seems, in retrospect, remarkably similar to Toulmin’s (1958) proposals about the conceptualization of argument as they apply to assessing relevance.

Toulmin, it will be recalled, suggested that an element of any argument is a “warrant” that is used to license the inference from the grounds or reasons being relied upon to the claim or conclusion being advanced on the basis of them. A warrant is of the form, “Given such grounds, one may infer such a claim.” As such, it underwrites the relevance of the grounds, because grounds entitle drawing an inference only if

they are relevant. And just as Perelman takes relevance to be relative to “the various disciplines and their methodologies,” so too Toulmin takes warrants to be relative to different fields. What Toulmin actually says is that there is “variability of field dependence of the backing needed to establish our warrants” (1958, p. 104), but this is to imply that what licenses certain data as relevant support for some claim is a rule the cogency of which is relative to the support (the “backing”) it receives from a particular field.

It might be thought that warrants of the Toulmin type sanction judgments or assumptions about both the relevance of the argument’s grounds and also the strength of the support that they allegedly supply. Doesn’t the warrant, after all, entitle the arguer (and audience) to accept the proposed claim on the basis of the proffered data? And doesn’t that entitlement imply that the data are not merely relevant, but also strong enough to justify accepting the claim on the basis of them?

It might seem so, however Toulmin contends that the layout of arguments includes further elements whose presence suggests otherwise. Those elements are the qualification of the conclusion and the itemization of factors whose presence would rebut the inference from the data to the claim, even given the warrant. The qualification is nothing else than an assessment of how strongly and in what manner the data support the claim, given the warrant. For instance, “presumably” signals a different kind of support from “probably.” Presumption and probability are different ways support can bear on a claim. And “very probably” indicates stronger support than “there is a slight probability,” just as “there is a strong presumption” signals stronger support than “there is a weak presumption.” Also, the conditions of rebuttal give further indication of the strength of the support, for the more likely they are to occur, the weaker is the support supplied by the data, and conversely. So in fact the warrant alone does not speak to the strength of the support allegedly provided by the grounds; that determination is expressed separately by the qualifier and the conditions of rebuttal. We may conclude that Toulmin’s warrants are indeed purely relevance entitlements and do not speak to the strength of the support alleged.

Thus the initial impression of a similarity between Perelman’s idea that relevance is relative to the rules and criteria of the various disciplines and their methodologies and Toulmin’s idea that relevance-bestowing warrants are relative to the fields from which their backing arises, on examination turns out to be well-justified. It is striking that these two argumentation theorists, working independently and influenced by different traditions, around the same time came to a remarkably similar view about the subject-matter-dependency of the criteria of argument strength. The only difference is that Toulmin regarded relevance as similarly subject-matter-dependent, whereas it is not so clear that this was Perelman’s view.

22.3 From Justice to Rhetoric (and Dialectic)

Perelman makes it clear that his initiation into the study of argumentation began with his study of justice and a concern about an apparently inescapable conclusion about the non-rationality of basic values, and hence the impossibility of any reasonable

argumentation concerning them. Justice, it seemed to him, has three elements: “the value that is its foundation, the rule that sets it forth” and “the act that gives it effect” (“Concerning Justice,” in 1963, p. 56). Perelman deemed it possible to settle disputes about whether the rules of justice derive from the value that is their foundation, and about whether a particular act accords with the rule, but not possible to argue over the foundational value. This conclusion led him to wonder whether “all the fundamental values and norms that guide our actions are devoid of rationality” (1967, p. 56). “This conclusion,” he reasoned, “must be adopted by those who say that proof must be founded on either logic or experience, since deduction and induction are the only forms of convincing reasoning” (ibid.).

Yet, Perelman thought, this conclusion “jars common sense” and that judgment led him to question its assumption: “Is it really true that deduction and generalization based on experience are the only acceptable bases for proof, and that it is [thus] impossible to reason about values?” (ibid., p. 57). Perelman was led to make the empirical turn, and along with his colleague Olbrechts-Tyteca, to launch a study of how people actually do reason about values, the result of which was, as we all know, *Traité de l’argumentation* (1958). What they discovered, he reports, was “the long-neglected logic” studied in ancient treatises on rhetoric and in Aristotle’s *Topics*, namely, the logic of dialectical proofs, which he labels a “nonformal logic.” What he takes himself and Olbrechts-Tyteca to have discovered and to be reporting in *Traité de l’argumentation* are “the techniques of reasoning which we use to criticize and to justify opinions, choices, claims, and decisions” as well as to criticize and justify “statements that are usually qualified as value judgments” (ibid., p. 58–59). Thus, he says, argumentation is “the technique of reasoning that is indispensable for practical judgment”; it is “the discursive means of convincing” that is “not founded on formal logic or experience” (ibid., p. 59).

It is significant that Perelman regards the so-called “new rhetoric” as actually a retrieval of dialectic, and it is also significant that he describes his theory of argumentation as a “nonformal logic” (ibid., p. 58). Often Perelman’s theory of argumentation is classified as belonging exclusively to rhetoric. Such a characterization misrepresents the theory. Perelman himself seems to have regarded it as belonging equally to logic and dialectic. As Perelman understands argumentation, it is both rhetorical and dialectical. It is rhetorical because arguments should be adapted by the arguer to his or her audience—that is, they should anticipate the audience’s attitudes, beliefs, values, and expectations. It is dialectical because arguments should respond to the expressed views of the audience related to the arguer’s position—the audience’s doubts and objections about the arguer’s thesis and arguments, and the audience’s commitments to alternative theses to those the arguer wishes to convince it of. Since “the enterprise of justification has meaning only if the acts one is seeking to justify are open to criticism,” (1967, p. 61) the very act of argumentation presupposes such a dialectical context. Moreover, “a speaker who is trying to convince his audience . . . must . . . base his argumentation only on principles that his audience admits at the start” (1967, p. 81), and that is a norm of any dialectical understanding of argumentation. But argumentation is also logical. Its

techniques of gaining adherence should be universalizable, in the respect that any reasonable member of the audience addressed should find them convincing.

22.4 Justification and Behavior

Perelman's conception of justification has a feature that seems particularly modern in light of some more recent theories. The distinction between justification and proof is a function, in his view, of the difference between two kinds of claim or conclusion. A proof aims to establish the truth or falsehood of a statement or proposition; hence its conclusions must have truth-value. A justification, in contrast, aims at "an action, a kind of behavior, a disposition to act, a claim, a choice, a decision." Perelman is clearly a non-cognitivist about such outcomes if he thinks what distinguishes them from the objectives of proofs is that only the latter have truth-value. Here is how he puts it:

The justification of a proposition or of a rule . . . consists in justifying one's adherence to it or one's statements in favor of it. It is, then, a justification of behavior. (1967, p. 60)

This statement seems remarkably similar to views expressed by some contemporary theorists who were probably not at all influenced by Perelman. For instance, if Brandom is right that an assertion is the undertaking of a kind of commitment (1994, p. 167), then asserting a claim on the basis of a justification offered for it amounts to the act or behavior of committing to it. Thus, for Brandom too, a justification would be a justification of behavior.

Or compare Perelman's view to that of Pinto, expressed in a recent paper (2003, p. 2):

The reasons overtly expressed when arguments are made are always, in a broad sense of "doing," reasons for *doing* or for *not doing* something. The reasons articulated may be *reasons for accepting or believing some proposition*, called the conclusion of the argument.

For Pinto too, a justification would be a justification of behavior.

Either by implication or by explicit statement, Brandom and Pinto regard the assertion of any conclusion to be a kind of behavior. Thus the assertion of the conclusion of a proof—the claim that it is true and that the inference to it from the premises of the proof is justified—would count as a kind of action for both Brandom and Pinto. Yet Perelman is at pains to distinguish proof from justification precisely on the basis that the adherence to the conclusion of a justification is behavior whereas the acceptance of the conclusion of a proof is not. For Perelman, sound proofs establish truths, whether they are accepted or not, whereas convincing justifications lead to the behavior of commitment to their conclusions by members of an audience. So although Perelman did not have the insight that accepting the proof of a demonstration is no less an act—a commitment—than accepting the recommendation of a justification, he did have the insight that at least the latter is.

However, if it is true that accepting any kind of claim is to be regarded as an act and if all acts are subject to justification by argument, then it seems that the basis Perelman relies on for his distinction between proof and argument has been lost.

22.5 Proof vs. Argument

In fact Perelman characterizes the proof vs. argument distinction in at least four different ways. (1) One is that one cannot rationally disagree with the conclusion of a sound proof whereas one can consistently deny the conclusion of an argument that one grants is a strong one. (2) A second is that proofs are objective and arguments are subjective. (3) A third is that the conclusions of proofs have truth-value whereas the conclusions of arguments do not. (4) The fourth is the one we have just been considering, that what is justified by arguments is behavior whereas what is justified by proofs is propositions. These are distinct differentia, because any one of the four could be true even if the others were false.

Unfortunately, none of these bases for the distinction is without its problems.

- (1) It is possible rationally to disagree with a deductive proof that is advanced as sound, even if one agrees with the premises, for the proof might be very complicated and mistakes are always possible. On the other hand, the denial of a non-deductive argument, while in principle possible, can in practice be no less unreasonable, or even no less irrational, than denying the conclusion of a simple *modus ponens* argument whose premises are not in question. For if the evidence is overwhelming and there is no reason offered to question it or its bearing on the claim in question, it would be unreasonable to deny the claim.
- (2) The “objective” vs. “subjective” dichotomy is notoriously slippery; it has historically been rendered in a great many different ways. Thus, without first stipulating how these terms are to be understood, it is not possible to establish without question that proofs are objective and arguments subjective. If the point is that the situation of the person to whom the proof is addressed can make no difference to its acceptability, whereas the addressee’s situation can make a difference to the acceptability of an argument, that point is suspect. It is true that whether the audience is male or female, rich or poor, believer or unbeliever, European, Iranian, Indian or Chinese makes no difference to the acceptability of a mathematical proof, but neither does it make a difference to the acceptability of arguments that are utterly compelling. For example, anyone at all who believes in a fair trial will have to agree that eyewitness testimony should as a rule be treated with great caution, given how thoroughly many studies have challenged its reliability. Perelman seems to have it in mind that basic values cannot themselves be established by evidence or arguments, and so the acceptance of this or that basic value is “subjective,” which seems to mean that a commitment to it is a matter of happenstance. Even if that is true, it does not show that all non-deductive, non-formal justifications are subjective, because not all of them rely on basic values.

- (3) As for truth-value presence or absence being the basis for the distinction between proofs and arguments, there are several questions to be dealt with. For one thing, besides the conclusions of mathematical and formal deductive proofs having truth-value, so do the conclusions of scientific demonstrations and of other kinds of scientific arguments, and, in general, of empirical arguments. Perhaps Perelman wanted to include “generalization from experience” as a kind of proof—some of the quoted passages suggest he does. Even so, plenty of other kinds of statements have truth-value. What is the best thing of a kind? Given criteria for evaluation, it is often possible to say definitively that one token is the best of a type. “‘Jones is the most courageous person in the group’ is true,” or “‘These five people stand head and shoulders above all the others as the best Xers’ is true” are meaningful sentences.
- (4) Finally, as we have seen, the distinction between proofs and arguments cannot without dispute be based on the distinction between justifications that have propositional attitudes as their conclusion and justifications that have behavior as their conclusion, for some (such as Pinto and Brandom) hold that adopting a propositional attitude is a kind of behavior.

Is there, then, no distinction to be made between deductive proofs and other kinds of justifications, including justifications offered for value judgments such as claims about justice? I think Perelman is right to be seeing a distinction in this vicinity, but he did not quite put his finger on its basis. I would suggest that the key differentiating factor is that the paradigms of what Perelman had in mind as “proofs,” namely mathematical or formal deductive demonstrations of the entailments of axioms in formal systems, are non-defeasible, whereas all the rest, including scientific “demonstrations,” are defeasible.

To say that a proof, *P*, is not defeasible is to say that, if *P* is a proof of *X*, then there is no additional information, *I*, such that *P+I* points to not-*X*. New information cannot invalidate the proof. To say that support is defeasible is to say that it is possible that new information can defeat the inference to the conclusion. New information can be defeating in two ways. New information can provide strong grounds for taking the original conclusion to be false; this is overriding information. And new information can weaken the strength of the support offered; this is undercutting information. (For the “overriding vs. undercutting” distinction, see, among others, Pinto, 2001, pp. 102–103.)

There are many different kinds of defeasible arguments. Arguments about matters of fact are defeasible no less than are arguments about values and their applications. So if it is granted that defeasibility is the mark of argumentation, whereas non-defeasibility is the mark of proofs, the line will have to be drawn somewhat differently than Perelman allowed. “Generalizations from experience” (1967, p. 57) will have to be moved out of the category of topics amenable to proof and into the class of topics about which argumentation is possible and appropriate. But the new criterion remains in the spirit of Perelman’s view that some things can be demonstrated definitively, whereas others are always, in principle at least, open for reconsideration.

22.6 Conclusion

We have found, in the first place, an interesting overlap between the views of Perelman and Toulmin on the question of the subject-matter relativity of judgments of relevance in assessing arguments. Second, we have found that Perelman anticipated some current thinking about how drawing a conclusion is a type of action or behavior, even though Perelman unduly restricted this insight to apply just to arguments about values. Third, while accepting Perelman's insight that proof is a distinctive kind of operation, we critiqued the bases he offered for distinguishing between proof and argumentation, and proposed an alternative one: non-defeasibility vs. defeasibility.

In general, rereading Perelman 50 years later continues to turn up insights and evidence of remarkable prescience.

Chapter 23

Rhetoric and Argumentation

23.1 Introduction

How is the relationship between rhetoric, on the one hand, and argument and argumentation, on the other, properly understood? That is the question this chapter sets out to answer. Given the historical connections between rhetoric, argument and argumentation, it is fundamental for any understanding of rhetoric.

Why bother with this question? One reason that will become clear is that there are several different, and on the face of it incompatible, conceptions of this relationship in the more or less current literature, so it doesn't seem that they can all be right. Another reason, as will also become clear, is that how we understand rhetoric and how we understand argument and argumentation depend partly on how we understand their relationship, and conversely.

The concepts of rhetoric and of argument have undergone many changes since their articulation by the ancient Greeks. Rhetoric, said to have originated as the art of successful pleading in the courts of Syracuse (5th c. BCE), was extended by the time of *Rhetoric to Alexander* (see Braet, 1996, 2004) and Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (4th c. BCE) to include the art of public persuasion in court, persuasion in political forums and on occasions of public celebration. Cicero (1st c. BCE) introduces the "offices" of the orator: *docere* (to teach, inform or instruct), *delectare* (to please) and *movere, flectere* (to move or "bend"). Following its Ramist (16th c.) relegation for a few centuries to the art of style and embellishment, in rhetoric's resurgence in the 20th century it was enlarged to, in Burke's (Burke, 1969, p. 43) famous characterization, "the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols," and beyond that, to the art of symbolic communication, not just persuasion (e.g., Foss et al., 1985, p. 11), and finally expanded to cover the symbolic construction of cultural meaning: "rhetoric usually is seen

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now as incorporating virtually any humanly created symbols from which audiences derive meaning” (Foss et al., 1999, p. 6). It is possible to see in these changes a progression from the more particular to the more general, with the term “rhetoric” being promoted each time to designate the more general conception. But as Burke (1969, Section II) has shown, there have traditionally been several strands in the concept of rhetoric, some of which are emphasized more than others in different conceptions.

The concept of argument or illation too has expanded from its early understanding. Aristotle identified argument with two species of relations of probative support, which we might loosely call “deduction” and “induction” (each having a scientific or theoretical variant, and also a public or popular variant). Today theorists would both introduce a narrower concept of deduction than Aristotle’s (restricted to necessary implication), and also expand the varieties of induction beyond generalizing from examples, to include, for instance, sample-to-population generalizations and statistical correlations. Moreover, many would add such further species of argument as conduction (Campbell, 1963; Wellman, 1971; Govier, 1999b; Hansen, 2008), abduction (Peirce, 1940; Walton, 2002; Woods, 2008), and more generally presumptive or plausible arguments (Rescher, 1976; Walton, 1996b), and perhaps most generally of all, defeasible arguments (Pollock, 2008).

Argumentation, if understood as the social practice entailing at its heart the delivery and exchanges of arguments (but including much else), has seen its spheres expand and contract. For Aristotle, besides its role in rhetoric, it could occur as a student game called dialectic, and more seriously as a method of building and testing philosophical theory. It was also for Aristotle a tool to be used in speeches addressing various kinds of wider audience. In contemporary theory, some restrict its purview to the resolution of disagreements (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004), whereas others regard it as a way of maintaining dissensus (Willard, 1987), as an instrument for negotiating in public spheres (Goodnight, 1982), as a method of investigation (Meiland, 1981), and/or as a method of decision-making (Rieke & Sillars, 2001; Hollihan & Baaske, 1994).

This chapter proceeds by classifying some of the current views about the rhetoric–argument or argumentation relationship, followed by a critical discussion of them, and ending with comments about which might be preferable. There are, to be sure, many more views on these topics than those canvassed here, and that implies a restriction in the scope of this chapter.

23.2 A Survey of Some Current Rhetoric-Argument Conceptions of Argument

I have found four different ways of conceiving the relation between rhetoric and argument. In this section I describe these in turn.

23.2.1 *Class Inclusion*

According to one, the class of arguments is a member of the class of rhetorical entities or processes. All arguments are rhetorical. Argumentation is inherently rhetorical.

However, rhetoric is not restricted to argumentation or arguments. “[W]e affirm,” writes Perelman, an advocate of this view, “that every discourse which does not claim an impersonal validity belongs to rhetoric. As soon as a communication tries to influence one or more persons, to orient their thinking, to excite or calm their emotions, to guide their action, it belongs to the realm of rhetoric” (Perelman, 1982, p. 162). Unless “argument” is defined to be identical with such discourse, the domain of rhetoric must include other things as well as arguments. The color a room is painted, the background music in a shop, the furnishings and lighting of a restaurant—these and countless more examples are clearly rhetorical by Perelman’s definition, but they are not arguments unless that term is so stretched that it becomes too flabby to be useful.

According to some versions of this first conception of the rhetoric–argument relation, logical (that is, deductive) or mathematical or scientific demonstrations, which might look like arguments or argumentation, are excluded on the ground that they claim pure rationality and complete independence from the emotions of the audience or the character of the arguer; they claim objectivity; they claim to hold universally without reference to audience, occasion, situation, or historical circumstances. Argumentation, in contrast, occurs over matters on which reasonable people may differ, with particular arguers addressing particular audiences—none of which is true of demonstrations. Thus, on Perelman’s conception, argumentation is by definition rhetorical, and what might look like an argument insofar as there are grounds adduced in support of a claim, if it qualifies as such a demonstration, does not count as an argument.

Besides Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958), Meyer (2008) takes this view and Reboul’s (1991) position is similar. Meyer defines rhetoric as “the negotiation of the distance between individuals in relation to a given question” (Meyer, 2008, p. 21).¹ I am reminded of once when I was driving in Italy and at a roundabout I inadvertently started to infringe on another driver’s right of way. He responded with an angry blast of his horn. I stopped immediately, made an apologetic face and held up my hands in surrender. He responded by smiling magnanimously and signaling me to go ahead of him. We had negotiated the distance between my mistake and his indignation—I, by obsequious apology; he, by magnanimous forgiveness (all communicated visually). It was a thoroughly rhetorical exchange, by Meyer’s definition, but there was no argument in sight. Yet Meyer affirms that “argumentation

¹ “*Le rhétorique est la négociation de la distance entre des individus à propos d’une question donnée.*”

traditionally makes up part of the discipline of rhetoric” (Meyer, 2008, p. 85).² So Meyer belongs among those who regard argument or argumentation as one vehicle of rhetoric, among others.

Reboul has a narrower definition of rhetoric, namely, the art of persuading by speech (Reboul, 1991, p. 4).³ Still for him argument is not identified with rhetoric, but included as part of it. He insists on a fundamental distinction between two means of persuasive discourse, the rational and the affective (ibid., p. 7). The means belonging to reason are arguments; those belonging to affect are ethos and pathos (ibid.). To be sure, these are typically combined and not always easy to distinguish (ibid.). For Reboul the point seems to be not so much that rhetoric includes other kinds of activity besides giving arguments, but that the bare bones of rational argument often needs to be, or in any case is, accompanied by various affective aspects and devices.

I will call this first view of the rhetoric–argument relation the *class-inclusion* view.

23.2.2 *Class Overlap*

A second way of conceiving the rhetoric–argument relationship sees the class of arguments overlapping with the class of rhetorical entities or processes, so while some arguments are rhetorical, others are not, and while part of the domain of rhetoric relates to arguments, part has to do with entities or processes other than arguments. According to proponents of this conception, what makes an argument a rhetorical argument is a matter of its domain—the subject matter it is concerned with. In particular, rhetorical arguments on this view are arguments about choices and actions, either directly, or else indirectly by focusing on the values or norms that govern choices and actions. There can be arguments with other subject matters, such as theoretical matters in general, or more particularly philosophy or science, but they are not rhetorical arguments, for their conclusions are about what is true or reasonable to believe, not about what should be done. To be sure, although these arguments are not rhetorical, some of the properties that can belong to arguments in the rhetorical domain, such as the intention to persuade, may be found in some of them.

Advocates of this second conception include Hauser (2002) and Kock (2007, 2009). Hauser’s definition of rhetoric is strongly Burkean: “Rhetoric, as an area of study, is concerned with how humans use symbols, especially language, to reach agreement that permits coordinated effort of some sort”; or again, “*Rhetoric . . . is concerned with the use of symbols to induce social action*” (Hauser, 2002, pp. 2–3). For Hauser, rhetoric is a mode of arguing (ibid., p. 33). Rhetorical arguing is based on opinion, where the objective is persuasion, in the realm of the contingent, aiming

² “*L’argumentation fait traditionnellement partie de la rhétorique comme discipline.*”

³ “*Voici donc la définition que nous proposons: la rhétorique est l’art de persuader par le discours.*”

at probable solutions (ibid., p. 34). Rhetorical argument is to be contrasted with dialectical argument, which is also a mode of arguing, but a different one from rhetorical arguing. Where rhetorical arguing aims at securing agreement of opinion, dialectical arguing aims at securing a transcendent truth (ibid., p. 33). Dialectical arguing occurs among experts discussing their subjects in technical fashion, typically belonging to a specific discipline or domain of knowledge (ibid., pp. 33–34). The objective of dialectical arguing is criticism, working out the necessary conclusions that follow from initial opinions, with results that “can reach the point of virtual certainty” if no counterarguments can be found to refute the conclusion (ibid., p. 34).

Kock (2009) cites favorably George Campbell’s description of rhetoric as being “about that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end.” With “the ends of speaking . . . reducible to four; every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will” (Campbell, 1963, 1969). Kock agrees with Campbell that some of what Campbell would call discourse, such as poetry, “so far as it aims to ‘please the imagination’, would not belong to the subject matter of argumentation theory” (Kock, ibid.). Kock concludes,

Clearly, then, argumentation theory does not cover the entire discipline that rhetoricians cultivate; argumentation and rhetoric intersect, but are not coextensive. Not all rhetoric is about argumentation; [and] . . . not all argumentation is rhetorical. (Ibid.)

Kock (2009) argues that Aristotle also defines rhetoric in terms of the domain of choice and conduct, and Aristotle does seem to allow that there can also be non-rhetorical arguments (namely dialectical ones), so there is a case that Aristotle belongs to this group as well.

I call this second conception of the relation between rhetoric and argument the *class-overlap* view.

The class-overlap view might look almost like the class-inclusion view, just lacking its definitional fiat against demonstrations counting as arguments. If that were the only difference there would be not two but one conception, with two terminological variants. But proponents of the class-inclusion view don’t see arguments and argumentation—all rhetorical—as restricted to the domain of choice and conduct. Reboul, for instance, insists that while argument can be aimed at getting someone to do something, if it is to be rhetorical argument it must do so by getting that person to believe that it is the right thing to do: “Argumentation always aims at causing belief” (Reboul, 1991, p. 5).⁴ And in the *Traité de l’Argumentation*, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958), and Perelman (1982) pretty clearly envisage arguments and argumentation to be about what it is reasonable to believe no less than about what to do. However, for proponents of the class-overlap view even the arguments that are not context-free, definitive demonstrations but are about what it is reasonable to believe still do not belong within the realm of rhetoric. For Aristotle, and following him closely, Hauser, dialectic is such a domain and is to be distinguished

⁴ “Celle-ci [l’argumentation] vise toujours à faire croire.”

from rhetoric. So the class-inclusion and class-overlap conceptions, at least as held by these theorists, are distinct.

23.2.3 *Perspectival*

The third conception of the relation between rhetoric and argument or argumentation seems to understand these concepts in a different way from the first two. According to the class-inclusion conception, arguments and argumentation have features that identify them as rhetorical. According to the class-overlap conception, argument and argumentation can be identified independently of any rhetorical properties, and while some possess rhetorical properties, others do not. According to the third conception, arguments and argumentation are amalgams of three different kinds of properties. They typically have rhetorical properties, dialectical properties and logical properties. These three kinds of properties correlate with three perspectives from which to consider arguments and argumentation. Arguments can be considered as entities or products, in which case their logical properties are salient; or they can be considered from a procedural perspective, in which case their dialectical properties are salient; or they can be considered as processes occurring in time and embedded in historical contexts, in which case their rhetorical properties are salient. To look at just their logical, or just their dialectical, or just their rhetorical features is to abstract from argument and argumentation, to focus on one perspective to the exclusion of the others, and thus to misunderstand the essentially complex nature of arguments and argumentation.

The person most emphatically identified with this third, *perspectival*, conception of the rhetoric–argument relationship is Wenzel (1980, 1987, 1990), and Tindale (1999, 2004) may also be associated with this view.

Each places the emphasis slightly differently. Although Wenzel himself is a rhetorician and communication theorist, he regards none of the three perspectives as privileged; each has its legitimate uses and provides its distinctive illumination. Wenzel's conception of rhetoric is quite traditional: "the practical purpose of rhetoric is helping speakers marshal all the available means of persuasion to help people in social groups make wise decisions" (Wenzel, 1990, p. 14), for "rhetoric is applied in decision-making situations where people have to make a choice between alternatives and where there may be good reasons on both sides" (*ibid.*, p. 13). His conception of rhetoric seems to line up with that of Kock and Hauser. But he does not, as they do, identify a particular type of argument as rhetorical. "Human judgment," Wenzel writes, "depends upon argumentation, and argumentation depends equally upon the resources of rhetoric, dialectic and logic" (*ibid.*, pp. 25–26).

Tindale, an informal logician initially, has come to see the rhetorical perspective as deserving priority. Rhetoric, for Tindale, "concentrates on the communication process inherent in argumentation, on the means by which arguers make their cases for the adherence of audiences to the claims advanced" (Tindale, 1999, pp. 3–4). Quoting Richard Andrews, Tindale understands rhetoric as, "'the arts [sic] of discourse' with all the associations of discourse embedded in social contexts"

(Andrews, 1995, p. 30, as quoted in Tindale, 1999, p. 14). Discussing the effect of rhetorical figures such as analogy, *praeteritio* and *prolepsis*, Tindale writes, “It is [the] . . . rhetorical nature [of arguments drawn from figures] that makes them most effective, not just in persuading an audience, but engaging them at a quite deep, often emotional level, before reason moves in as an organizing force. They relate” he continues, “to a level of engagement that grounds the argumentative situation, and thus”—and this is the point of difference with Wenzel—“they further demonstrate why the rhetorical is the primary, most influential layer in any model of argument that seeks to integrate the logical, dialectical, and rhetorical” (Tindale, 2004, p. 86).

However, both Tindale and Wenzel regard an argument’s or argumentation’s rhetorical properties as just one set of properties that coexist with the other two. And both think that any argument put to use in argumentation, and the argumentation itself, will have rhetorical properties. So the perspectival conception of the rhetoric–argument connection shifts the focus from rhetorical *vs.* non-rhetorical argument to argument as rhetorical *or* dialectical *or* logical.

23.2.4 *Cosmetic*

I turn now to the fourth conception of how rhetorical and argumentation relate. According to it, the rhetorical properties of arguments and argumentation consist of the framing, selecting or formulating arguments or argumentation that can make logically and dialectically good arguments more appealing and persuasive, although it can also be mis-used to cover the blemishes of logically or dialectically defective arguments. Thus this fourth conception of how rhetoric is related to argument might be called the *cosmetic* conception. Rhetoric is enhancement. This view is Platonic in spirit, and also somewhat reminiscent of the 16th century Ramist position that rhetoric is style and presentation that is also expressed by writers such as Blair (1783) in the 18th century *belles-lettres* tradition.

I regard Johnson (2000a) and van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2002a, 2002b, 2007 among many others) as contemporary proponents of this view.

Johnson thinks a speaker or writer can have different and often incompatible goals. The *arguer* aims at rational persuasion, the goal of which is to justify truth-claims and in which the logical and dialectical strengths and weakness of the argumentation are made manifest. The *rhetor*, in contrast, aims simply to persuade the audience of the claim being argued for, where the truth of the premises from which the argument starts and the truth of the conclusion it seeks to establish are not essential and persuasion may consist simply of getting the audience to accept the claim. To be sure, one can try to combine the objectives of arguer and rhetor, but for any arguer, rhetorical dressing should always function as auxiliary to the goal of logical and dialectical manifest rationality.

For Johnson, rhetoric’s aim is persuasion and its norm is effectiveness, so arguments used for rhetorical purposes will be designed for success, even if that means glossing over their weaknesses. “The arguer,” Johnson writes, “cannot ignore objections to his argument, even if it is not known how to forestall them, . . .

The rhetor is under no such constraint: If ignoring the objection will lead to a more effective communication, and if doing so is rational, then the objection can be ignored” (Johnson, 2000a, p. 163). Argument is thus contrasted with rhetoric; both are potentially rational activities, but argument must be open and transparent, whereas rhetoric can sugar coat or skip over awkward difficulties that argument is required to raise and confront. Johnson thus sees rhetoric as in principle distinct from argument.

For van Eemeren and Houtlosser, the rhetorical aim is to win; and in the use of arguments to resolve a difference of opinion it is to use arguments to resolve the disagreement in one’s own favor.

People engaged in argumentative discourse are characteristically oriented toward resolving a difference of opinion . . . —maintaining certain standards of reasonableness This does, of course, not mean that they are not interested in resolving the difference *in their own favor*. Their argumentative speech acts may even be assumed to be designed to achieve primarily this effect. There is, in other words, not only a *dialectical*, but also a *rhetorical* dimension to argumentative discourse. (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2000c, p. 295)

While the arguers can be presumed to maintain . . . critical standards, they can at the same time be presumed to be out for an optimal persuasive result. In their efforts to achieve this result, they will resort to what we have called *strategic maneuvering*, directed at diminishing the potential tension between the simultaneous pursuit of critical and persuasive aims. (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2000c, p. 290)

On their view, “Rhetoric is the theoretical study of practical persuasion techniques” (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2000c, p. 297). Since, in their view, argumentation is a dialectical activity, which means that it lies under the constraint of rationality, and since the whole point of argumentation is to use reasons to resolve a difference in a reasonable way or on the merits, it follows that the result can be a conflict between the rhetorical objective of winning and the dialectical constraint of being reasonable. Rhetoric’s influence on arguments makes them subject to derailment. “If a party allows its commitment to a critical exchange of argumentative moves to be overruled by the aim of persuading the opponent,” they write, “we say that the strategic maneuvering has got ‘derailed’” (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002a, p. 290).

The rhetorical aspect of argumentation manifests itself in our view in the strategic attempts to direct the resolution process effectively toward the acceptance of one’s own position. As the word goes, effective persuasion must be disciplined by dialectical rationality. (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2000c, p. 297)

It is dialectic that keeps the rhetorical components of the discussion on the tracks.

Although Johnson’s and van Eemeren and Houtlosser’s theories differ in many respects, they both treat rhetorical objectives as in potential conflict with fully manifest rationality. Rhetoric consists of strategies to win or persuade, and while it can thus enhance the attractiveness of a dialectically or logically reasonable argument, there is always the risk that it will mask dialectical or logical subterfuge. So on both views, rhetoric has the properties of a cosmetic designed to make merits more appealing but subject to being used to conceal flaws.

23.3 Discussion

23.3.1 *The Class-Inclusion Position*

My reservation about the class-inclusion conception is its acceptance of the positivist identification of logic with formal deductive logic. This conception of logic is open to challenge.

On Perelman's view, logic is restricted to formal deductive systems. Deductively valid arguments in natural language are relegated to the status of "quasi-logical" arguments. Presumably that would also be the fate of materially valid deductive arguments in natural languages. (Example: Question: "Did Fred have any siblings?" Answer: "Didn't you know that he was Julia's uncle?") It would thus exclude from logic proper what Ryle (1960) termed "informal logic," by which he meant the entailment relations among concepts that map their structure, for example that the concept of fear entails the apprehension of danger. It also relegates to extra-logical or quasi-logical standing the "logic" of presumptive inferences, and in general of defeasible reasoning and arguments. To be sure, one can use terms any way one likes as long as one is consistent, but restricting the scope of logic to formal deductive logic banishes to a conceptual limbo various kinds of reasoning and arguments that don't clearly have a home anywhere else than under the rubric of logic. And if the term 'logic' is to denote the norms of good reasoning or good inferring as such reasoning and inferring are exhibited in or invited by arguments used in argumentation, it certainly must include other norms besides deductive validity, let alone formal validity.

If the term 'logic' is given the wider denotation I suggest it ought to have, then it becomes permissible to speak of the logic of arguments in argumentation without relying on the qualifier "quasi," and to see logic as a tool of rhetoric. Since logically good arguments in fact tend to be effective arguments (see O'Keefe, 2003), the class-inclusion conception of the rhetoric–argument relation, at least as it is defended by the kinds of arguments Perelman makes, seems to restrict unduly the nature of rhetorical argument.

23.3.2 *The Class-Overlap Position*

The class-overlap conception of the rhetoric–argument relationship regards arguments about what is true or reasonable to believe as lying outside the domain of rhetoric. Rhetoric is to be restricted to arguments about what to choose or do. According to Kock, this is because rhetoric deals with what cannot be settled definitively, about issues on which people may reasonably disagree because these issues are decided on the basis of people's values, priorities and weightings, all of which are subjective. Presumably, then, the tools of rhetoric are the only reasonable resource to use to move people to choose or act in a certain way; objective arguments cannot settle disagreements here. For example, there is no way to establish by impersonal argument that everyone should rank liberty more highly than security

(i.e., to establish that it is *true* that liberty is preferable to security) should the two conflict, whereas rhetorical arguments stand a chance of getting a person who is willing to sacrifice some liberty in exchange for greater security to shift his perspective.

Kock's reason for confining rhetoric to arguments about choices is a meta-ethical position known as *non-cognitivism*. According to non-cognitivism, sentences expressing normative judgments of values, prescriptions, and so on have no truth conditions and are not susceptible to knowledge. In taking this position, Kock joins a respectable tradition in philosophy, but it is one that is far from universally shared. The modern debate between cognitivism and non-cognitivism arose in earnest in the 1930s, with people like Ayer (1936) and Stevenson (1944, 1963) raising the non-cognitivist banner, but the issue remains undecided in the philosophical literature to this day (see van Roojen, 2008). So accepting Kock's rationale requires at the least relying on a promissory note that non-cognitivism will win out over the cognitivism.

Even if Kock is right that prescriptions cannot have truth conditions, it does not follow that they cannot be objectively evaluated on other grounds, for instance, as being practical or impractical, wise or foolish, short-sighted or far-sighted, and so on. And a good many such judgments are liable to a very high degree of inter-rater reliability. I do not mean to suggest that these properties take arguments about choices out of the realm of rhetoric. On the contrary, my view is that arguments that can have a degree of objectivity should not therefore be excluded from rhetoric. A good deal of what we argue about even when the ideal is to establish the truth of the matter cannot be settled beyond doubt or controversy. For example, predictions constitute a huge class of such arguments. Think of predictions about the weather, or the economy, or the adult traits a child will develop, or the success of a student, or the effects of human actions upon the environment, and so on and on. These are judgments about what we hope to be true and think to be reasonable to believe. Arguments for and against various alternative cognitive positions are thus in many cases no less subject to dispute than are those about prescriptions or commendations. So if disputability is the password of rhetorical arguments, then all of such disputatious topics in which any position *is* a candidate for knowledge, or reasonable belief will be topics for rhetorical arguments and argumentation no less than decisions or choices.⁵

I conclude from these considerations that the class-overlap view of the relation between rhetoric and argument, at least as defended using the arguments that Kock offers, unduly limits the realm of rhetorical arguments and argumentation. But if matters of belief no less than matters of action can be topics of rhetorical argumentation, then the class-overlap view seems to become the class-inclusion view.

⁵ I won't mention another argument that is too controversial to take up here, namely that philosophical claims—those that Kock contends are about truth—are all conceptual, that is, all about how we *should conceive of* the world, and as such, are all normative.

23.3.3 *The Cosmetic Position*

According to the cosmetic position, rhetoric's inherent objective is persuasion, its overriding norm is effectiveness, and its design and deployment of arguments, although capable of increasing their success and in principle compatible with logic and dialectic, is also liable to conflict with rationality or reasonableness. There is reason to think that this view saddles rhetoric with the reputation cast upon it by those who abuse it, and that seems to subject rhetoric to a double standard. After all, a clever logician or dialectician can use equivocation, vagueness, flawed analogy, improper appeal to authority and other fallacies to trick his audience, but logic and dialectic have managed for the most part to avoid being tarred with the brush of fallacy mongering. It seems unfair that the possibility of rhetorical trickery should be due to the essence of rhetoric any more than logic or dialectic should be deemed guilty by association with those who trade in logical or dialectical fallacies. Braet (1996, 2004) has contended persuasively that from the earliest surviving handbooks rhetoric has included the use of legitimate argument schemes as central to its persuasive devices. In addition, the Roman tradition of forensic rhetoric advised finding and using arguments that would result in rational persuasion. At least part of the aim of rhetoric, traditionally, has been to make rational arguments effective, not to make arguments effective at the expense of rationality.

So it seems that the cosmetic conception of the rhetoric-argument relation relies on an understanding of rhetoric that takes more from its popular reputation than from its historical record, viewing rhetoric as requiring the discipline of logic or of dialectic.

23.3.4 *The Perspectival Position*

I have left discussion of this position to the end because it seems to avoid the shortcomings of the other three. It leaves open the possibility of arguments that count as logical even if they are not formal demonstrations. It also puts no restriction on the domain of rhetorical argument. And it does not seem to require identifying rhetorical argumentation with the goal of mere persuasion. Yet a question can be raised about it just the same.

Here is the problem. If, from the perspective of rhetoric, the aim of the use of arguments and argumentation were *rational* persuasion, then, since logic is the custodian of some of the norms of rational arguments, the rhetorical perspective must include the logical perspective. Furthermore, since dialectic is the custodian of the norms of reasonable argumentation, then the rhetorical perspective must include the dialectical perspective. In sum, if rhetoric's use of arguments is to persuade rationally or reasonably, then logic and dialectic must be tools of rhetoric. But if the rhetorical perspective is conceptually distinct and separate from the logical and the dialectical—which is what the perspectival position requires—then the norms of rhetoric would seem to be independent of those of logic and dialectic. And if that is so, then it will be possible for an argument to be good rhetorically but weak logically

and/or dialectically. Thus the door is opened to the position that rhetoric's *telos* is after all mere persuasion. In other words, it appears that the perspectival position implies the cosmetic position.

23.4 The Upshot

If these last speculations are correct, then we seem to be faced with the following dilemma. Either rhetoric as it relates to arguments and argumentation is to have rational persuasion as its goal, in which case the rhetorical commitment to reasonableness means that the norms of rhetoric imply those of logic as applied to arguments and of dialectic as applied to argumentation. Or else, rhetoric represents one analytic and normative perspective on arguments and argumentation independent of those of logic and dialectic, in which case there is no commitment to logical or dialectical norms from the perspective of rhetoric, and the rhetorical reasonableness of arguments and argumentation becomes purely instrumental—whatever works.

It could be that we can talk and think either way. That is, theorists might be free to adopt whichever conception of how rhetoric relates to arguments they prefer. However, there are risks in overlooking the insights of tradition. The class-inclusion and class-overlap views build in no commitment on this matter and so offer us no guidance. The cosmetic view of the relation between rhetoric and argument seems to over-emphasize in its conception of rhetoric the goal of winning over or persuading the audience or interlocutor. Whether the perspectival view shares this defect depends on what conception of the rhetorical perspective one builds into it.

In appealing to the tradition of rhetoric, I am guided by the arguments of Michael Leff in a paper discussing the relation between rhetoric and dialectic, arguments which have a bearing on the rhetoric–argument relationship. Leff draws attention to the fact that historically there was a difference even for Aristotle “between using the art [of rhetoric] properly and achieving a specific outcome” (Leff, 2000, p. 244). Leff continues:

Rhetoricians in the Latin tradition make much the same point when they differentiate the end and the duty of the orator. The end is to persuade through speech; the duty is to speak in a manner suited for persuasion. (Ibid., p. 245)

The point is that rhetoric is subject to normative standards of its own.

In the tradition that stretches from Isocrates to Cicero and from there to the Renaissance humanists, content and style, words and thoughts, the aesthetic and the rational are regarded as interconnected parts of eloquence. Rhetorical argument is not simply decoration added to logic. It is a fully embodied expression of reason that is at once accommodated to and also capable of intervening in public situations. Rhetoric, then, imbricates style and argument to achieve evocative and emotional force, and while rhetorical argumentation often uses dialectical principles, it does not add a linguistic veneer to them so much as it transforms them into instruments for public action. (Ibid., p. 246)

If this understanding of rhetoric is correct, then the relation between rhetoric and argument and argumentation is more complex than what has been suggested by the views canvassed above, although three of the four are consistent with it.

The class-inclusion conception, at least with a broadened notion of logic, leaves room for independent and non-instrumental rhetorical norms to apply to arguments as well as to other forms of discourse. The class-overlap conception, if extended to envisage arguments about contentious matters of belief as well as prescriptions, is also consistent with independent rhetorical norms. The perspectivalist too is at liberty to understand the rhetorical perspective as bringing to bear on argument and argumentation standards of suitability to audience and occasion that go beyond, and thus can override, the goal of winning over the audience.

It is only the cosmetic conception that shortchanges the rhetorical tradition, on Leff's expansive reading of it. For the cosmetic conception of the rhetoric-argument relationship relies on a narrow, merely instrumentalist conception of rhetoric. While it is no doubt a virtue of the cosmetic conception that it emphasizes that the goal of winning the argument or persuading by argument can conflict with dialectical or logical norms, it is also a shortcoming of this view that it leaves out of account in its conception of argument and argumentation the broader rhetorical norms that the rhetorical tradition cited by Leff assigns to them. This broader role allows rhetorical insights about how new possibilities for thought and action can be brought to public consciousness to shape our arguments and our argumentation, while continuing to respect people's capacity for reasoned and reasonable belief and conduct.

Postscript

Chapter 17. “The Limits of the Dialogue Model of Argument.” It now seems to me that it is possible to model any argument, including what I have called a solo argument to a non-interactive audience, as if it were a dialogue, although I am not convinced that doing so is always illuminating. When the arguer is addressing a diverse audience with incompatible expectations and attitudes, dialogue modeling becomes convolutedly complex and the payoff remains to be demonstrated.

Chapter 18. “Relationships among Logic, Dialectic and Rhetoric.” I am today more than ever convinced that there are necessary (not contingent) connections between logic and dialectic, and between dialectic and rhetoric—always assuming the definitions of each used in this article. My guess is that logic and rhetoric will turn out to have necessary connections as well, but I have not yet tried to think that question through. I also still believe that no one of the three has normative priority.

Chapter 19. “The Rhetoric of Visual Argument” is more programmatic and less developed than I would have wished. I now find the accounts there of the value added of the visual expressions of arguments, reasons for arguing visually and the genres of the visual expressions of arguments to be rather thin. I hope and expect that such reflections will encourage others to do a more thorough job on these matters.

Chapter 20. “Pragma-Dialectics and *Pragma-Dialectics*.” I continue to believe that a pragmatic and dialectical approach to understanding argumentation is correct, but at the same time, I wouldn’t wish to exclude either rhetoric or logic. I also think the Pragma-Dialectical theory is capable of self-correction at various points, such as building in a fuller and richer understanding of logic—such as that sought by informal logic—and an even richer conception of rhetoric than the purely instrumental notion incorporated so far.

Chapter 21. “Rhetoric and Argumentation.” My thinking on this topic has not developed much beyond this recent chapter. As always, it is necessary to attend to how a theorist understands rhetoric and argumentation, and the view of their relationship will vary according to variations in these conceptions. The concluding section of this chapter seems to me its weakest point, but I have yet to work out an understanding of the rhetoric–argumentation relationship that satisfies me.

Chapter 22 and *Chapter 23* are recent chapters that I have not yet had occasion to have second thoughts about, except to say this. A satisfactory account of how

rhetoric relates to logic and dialectic in arguments and argumentation still escapes me, and I would welcome being informed of possible solutions that readers would recommend.

For such a suggestion, or any other matter of interest, I can be reached at: *tblair@uwindsor.ca*.

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