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The Secret Lives of Arguments

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ABSTRACT: My discussion advances a conception of rhetorical argument by considering respectively the type of rhetoric and the type of argument involved, along with the hidden information that is contained. What does an argument conceal? Its assumptions; its prejudices; its construction of the normal, with all that involves; its values and cultural determinations; and more. Arguments teach us about the arguers themselves and the ways audiences are imagined. All this awaits unpacking, and rhetoric provides the means to do so, making present what is otherwise absent and layering flesh across logic's skeletal frame.

KEYWORDS: argument, informal logic, metaphor, rhetoric

1. INTRODUCTION

In Leiden in 1637 an event occurred which occasioned a considerable shift in the study of argument and argumentation, a shift with which we are still taking account. The event in question has real consequences for how we understand rhetorical arguments, then and now. And it is the nature of such arguments that is considered in this paper.

Exploring this nature requires revisiting, rethinking and expanding the assessments I first gave earlier (Tindale 2004), as well as developing themes that James Klumpp discussed in his ISSA address (Klumpp 2012). Having explored its nature, I turn to the capacity that a rhetorical argument has and discuss the “secrets” that it conceals, the richness and depth involved in such arguments. This is to approach argumentation in a particular register, where a register is a variety of language typically used in a specific type of communicative setting.

2. THE ARGUMENT OF RHETORICAL ARGUMENTATION

Few will disagree that ‘argument’ has many meanings. We spend much of our days sorting through those meanings and developing cases for preferring one over the other. Why we still disagree over how we should understand ‘argument’, may be an occasion for humour to anyone watching from outside the field. But to those within it, it makes perfect sense. Because our understandings of ‘arguments’ are embedded within our understanding of and theories of argumentation (Blair, 2012).¹ And these theories are marked, among other

¹ Some theorists take “argumentation” to be the more important concept for what we do and place emphasis there. Frans van Eemeren (2018), for example, identifies crucial theoretical concepts that are “indispensable

things, by their different goals. Argumentation modifies our social environments in different ways and by achieving different ends: presenting options and exploring differences; advocating actions and policies; negotiating settlements; inquiring into puzzles; aiming for truth and justifying our beliefs; aiming for consensus; and even, on occasion, trying to persuade. Of course, in identifying these goals in this way, I suggest that none is more important than the others. And that's where our real disagreements start. This is only part of the story of what divides us. 'Argument' has a notoriously English determination. By which I mean that its 'core' English meaning has travelled throughout the world. And the world has not responded to it in a uniform way, has not even recognized it always in the same register. The O'Keefe distinction between argument₁ and argument₂ (1977) challenges translators in other languages. Luis Vega (2022, p. 90), for example, notes the difficulty of translating argument₂ as 'argument':

El uso del español "argumento" es menos polisémico y su referente es menos interactivo o más pacífico que el uso del inglés "argument"; normalmente, solo se emplea en el sentido de argument₁. Cuando dos o más personas arguyen entre sí en el curso de un debate -de un argument₂-, no decimos que tienen un argumento, sino una discusión.²

The languages of India designate different meanings to 'argument' as one moves down through regions of the country. Indeed, the degree to which other cultures agree with the English meanings of argument, is the degree to which the English hegemony has been successfully imposed, marginalizing, or eliminating Indigenous senses. Thus, the logic class of China can generally reflect the logic classes in the United States, whereas the logic class in parts of the Arab world cannot. We may be an international society, but this 'international' can be marked by its gaps, the absences of representation from certain quarters of the globe. And these absences may be due to the failure to recognize the same things when terms like 'argument' are heard.

Most of us have been introduced to arguments through what might be called the 'propositional route' and so there is a understandable tendency to accept this as the *natural* sense that we attribute to arguments (Dutilh Novaes, 2021a; 2021b; Siegel, 2023). But there is a clear way in which this sense is not natural. The recent media attention to ChatGPT has brought this home: an AI program may produce arguments on demand, but it does so in a way that does not seem quite natural.

J. Anthony Blair (2012, p. 172) accommodates various meanings of 'argument' in an account grounded in a basic sense of "reason-using". He now judges his illative 'core' a poor metaphor because he is addressing the smallest unit. Accordingly, he prefers "to use the metaphor of a cell or an atom" (Blair, 2012, p. 172)³: "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". These atomic arguments and their reasons can then be assessed

in developing adequate theoretical instruments for methodically improving the quality of the analysis, evaluation and production of argumentative discourse" (6). The most prominent of these crucial concepts are 'standpoint', 'unexpressed premise', 'argument scheme', 'argumentation structure', and 'fallacy'.

² Fernando Leal in his translation of Michael Gilbert's *Arguing with People* (Gilbert 2017; [2015]), also renders argument₂ as discusión.

³ The cell invokes interesting associations with specific types of space, tracing its origins to Robert Hooke in 1665, looking through the first microscope and seeing room-like structures that reminded him of monks' cells.

differently by different perspectives—the logical, dialectical, and the rhetorical (Blair (2012, p. 178).

Let's elevate Hooke from the footnote into the body of the text and recognize his new way of seeing the world, of seeing what was hidden. While Blair does not explain why he chose 'atom' over 'cell', both are 'scientific' metaphors, but one extends to the interests of the physical. We may think of ourselves as comprised of atoms, but that we are comprised of cells is an even more natural thought. Cells are the smallest functioning unit in an organism. Comprised of atoms, the cell is situated between the atom and the whole. Cells are alive; atoms are not.

On the atomic conception of 'argument', there are not different types but different uses (See also, Blair 2004). So, it makes no sense to Blair (2012, p.181) to contrast different modes of argument, or different perspectives of argument: "rhetorical argumentation—as contrasted with logical argumentation—risks overlooking the consistency of rhetoric and logic". Controversies that have emerged in the argumentation literature are based on a failure to distinguish different uses (Blair, 2012, p. 183). Still, one cannot help thinking that reducing all arguments to the atomic argument tends to prioritize the logical perspective, as some view it.

One informal logician who seems to have appreciated this is Ralph Johnson, who builds on Blair's core/atom/cell conception. He raised a few eyebrows when he defined argument as: "A type of discourse or text—the distillate of the practice of argumentation—in which the arguer seeks to persuade the Other(s) of the truth of a thesis by producing the reasons that support it. In addition to this illative core, an argument possesses a dialectical tier in which the arguer discharges his dialectical obligations" (Johnson, 2000, p. 168). Controversy lay not in the introduction of the 'dialectical tier' but the way an argument was said to 'possess' it. It transpires that the tier is a central and necessary condition for an argument: "an argument without a dialectical tier is not an argument" ((Johnson, 2000, p. 176). Commenting on this, I once suggested that a close analysis shows ways in which the dialectical tier cannot be divorced from the core to the extent that "the line between the two tiers really begins to dissolve" (Tindale, 2002, p. 306). This judgment needs revision, as does the relationship Johnson identifies.

The first stop in any inquiry into the argument of rhetorical argument has to be Aristotle and the distinctions he makes in the *Rhetoric*. Rhetoric differs from dialectic in the kinds of arguments used and the nature of the propositions involved, and thus it differs also in the *type* of argument used. Rhetorical arguments are marked by the condition of possibly being otherwise, of uncertain conclusions. The domain involved affects content in this case, where arguments that cannot be definitive in their outcome. Thus, to be effective they need to draw also on features that mitigate the 'could-be-otherwise' nature. Rhetorical arguments also connect with the audience at a level of agreement, bringing the audience directly into the discussion. One of the things that rhetorical argument shares with dialectical argument is the forms in which we find them. And there are two of these: syllogism (*sullogismos*) and induction.

Rhetorical induction is identified as example (*paradeigma*). Such arguments are just as persuasive as those using enthymemes (1356b22-3), and its varieties are explored in the twentieth chapter of Book II. That which appears to express the deductive standard, Aristotle calls the enthymeme—the body of persuasion—which involves careful thought or deliberation (1356a35-b17). This receives far more attention than the example.

Enthymemes draw their materials from commonly held views, or *endoxa* (1357a10), and the inferences that most appropriately express them are likelihoods or signs. “I call an enthymeme a rhetorical syllogism,⁴ and an example a rhetorical form of induction, and anyone who proves a point by means of demonstration uses either examples or enthymemes, and nothing other than these” (1356b4-5). Aristotle identifies specific kinds of reasoning or premises that are particularly appropriate for expression as enthymemes, those based on likelihoods (*eikota*) and those based on signs, simple and necessary (*tekmēria*)—1357a32-b25).

Likelihoods generally speak for themselves. They fit naturally into an account of reasoning to claims that could be otherwise. It is the discussion of signs that helps most to see how Aristotle may understand the ways conclusions “follow from” premises in rhetorical arguments. And this is also an account which explains a puzzle that has perturbed commentators of a parallel text to the *Rhetoric*—namely the *Poetics*. So, an apparent detour here pursues this solution.

In five passages from the *Poetics* Aristotle explores the natural flow and unity of the plot, insisting in each case (and in some passages several times) that the narrative of a plot must proceed according to likelihood or necessity. For example, in Chapter 9 we read that: “the poet’s function is not to report things that have happened, but rather to tell of such things as might happen, that are possible in accordance with likelihood or necessity.” Herein lies a bridge between the syllogistic argument and the narrative plot. As in the *Rhetoric*, we are in the domain of the uncertain, where things might be otherwise. It is also clearly the domain of likelihood (*eikos*). So, how does *necessity* operate here? This is what puzzles commentators.

We find an answer in the *Rhetoric*’s account of signs (*sēmeia*), which are divided into simple signs (with no distinguishing name) and *necessary* signs (*tekmēria*). Since rhetorical arguments (enthymemes) are derived from likelihoods and signs, “it follows that likelihoods and signs must be the same respectively as contingent and necessary premises.” Aristotle explains that some signs stand to what they signify as a particular to a universal, others as a universal to a particular. He writes: “An instance of a sign that is related to what it signifies as particular to universal is if someone were to say that the fact that Socrates was wise and just is a sign that the wise are just. Now, this assertion may be a sign, but even if true it is refutable, because it does not take the form of a syllogism” (1357b10-14)⁵. Here we have a simple or contingent sign. The conclusion (the universal) does not follow necessarily from the premise (the particular); but it may well have plausibility.

Aristotle then turns to the necessary sign: “On the other hand, if someone were to say that the fact that he has a fever is a sign that he has an ailment, or the fact that she has milk is a sign that she has given birth, either of these assertions would be an infallible sign, which is the only kind that constitutes evidence, because it is the only kind whose truth is irrefutable” (1357b15-17). The term “evidence” is controversial here. This is Waterfield’s

⁴ Some translators render *sullogismos* here as “form of deduction,” creating a contrast between induction and deduction. Waterfield (Aristotle 2018a) and Reeve (Aristotle 2018b) take this course. I follow Freese/Striker (Aristotle 1926/2020), Kennedy (Aristotle 2007) and Bartlett (Aristotle 2019) in the choice of “syllogism.” It is closer to a transliteration and avoids modern-day connotations of ‘deduction’. The ways in which the rhetorical enthymeme differs from logical deduction encourages this reading.

⁵ There need be no mention of ‘deduction’ here, but another way to render it is “is impossible to derive a valid deduction from it.”

translation for the term *tekmērion*.⁶ The previous example of Socrates had also provided evidence in a weaker sense. But the larger point is that this distinction between simple and necessary signs, both features of the domain of human action that rely for their cogency on human experience, can be easily transferred to the contexts of the *Poetics*. I would suggest that when Aristotle repeatedly employs the tandem likely/necessary, declining to use one term in the absence of the other, this is the kind of distinction he would have in mind. The two works illuminate each other, because it is in light of this proposed solution to the problem in the *Poetics* that we see further the nature of rhetorical argument in the *Rhetoric*. Stephen Toulmin (1983) gathered something of what is at issue when he unconsciously echoed O’Keefe’s (1977) two-argument distinction: argument₁ and argument₂ (122). O’Keefe was himself echoing Wayne Brockriede’s (1975) account. O’Keefe’s distinction, importantly, while distinguishing arguments I make for myself from those that engage others, and while worrying that Brockriede elided the two senses, still *associated* those two together in the so far as the second included the first. As Michael Gilbert (2015, p. 21) explained, “An argument₂ likely contains arguments₁ as objects”. This goes a little bit further than any commitment O’Keefe (1977, p.127) makes, although he raises this relationship as a question to the point of further asking whether we are prepared to say “that arguments₁ can be made if no argument₂ ensues” (O’Keefe, 1977, p. 128).⁷ That is, in part, the question.

While showing no awareness of this history, Toulmin approached the issue in a lecture at the University of Michigan in 1982.⁸ He distinguishes between the abstract and the concrete as follows:

The theory and techniques of rational criticism must be approached from two complementary directions, *formal* and *functional*. On the one hand, we can use the word “argument” for a string of propositions, which may be written on the blackboard or thought about in the abstract; and we can examine the formal relations—of consistency and inconsistency, entailment and contradiction—by which these propositions are (or are not) knitted into a logical fabric... On the other hand, we can instead use the word “argument” for the stating of a substantively disputed position, followed by an exploring of possible consequences, an exchanging of evidence, and a sound (or unsound) resolving of the dispute. In our second sense an “argument” is not a *string of propositions* which may (or may not) be formally consistent: rather it is a *human interchange* which is not substantively adequate (Toulmin, 1983, p. 396, italics in the original).

Toulmin finds that professional philosophers of his day had lost track of the second sense and the art that uses it. He variously associates that art with topics or rhetoric or argumentation (they seem synonymous to him at that time), but notes that this has come to be called informal logic, an awkward label due to its negativity, and one he replaces with “*substantive* logic” (Toulmin, 1983, p. 398).

What Toulmin has identified is a distinction familiar to us all, one that continues to fuel discussions and disagreements. It is difficult to ignore the propositional sense of

⁶ Robert C. Bartlett in his translation (Aristotle, 2019) renders *tekmērion* here as “decisive evidence”. That’s an appropriate qualification given that it recognizes other non-decisive support that is still to be judged evidence. C.D.C. Reeve (2018b) prefers proof and “proof alone” for the phrase in question.

⁷ Brockriede (1975, p. 129) agrees that the distinction can be made more “sharply,” argument₁ represented by a noun, since something has been produced; and argument₂ representing a process in which people are engaged.

⁸ Subsequently published in a collection on *rhetorical* theory in 1983.

arguments. Textbooks insist on starting there; it is the place from which the journey begins. But Donald Philip Verene (2021, p. 47) is not far off the mark when he observes “To attempt to prove something in the modern manner of presenting a deductive-style argument is to take the mind nowhere”. That’s a little uncharitable; they do take us somewhere, but nowhere we haven’t already been.

The above aims to clarify something of what distinguishes rhetorical from propositional argument. What stands out in many accounts of propositional arguments is the description of them as “abstract.” What we should be asking ourselves here is “abstract” from what, and how (successfully) has that abstraction been achieved? It is a move away from the contexts and situations that provide the details of the argument. And it is a move away from the lives that are involved, what I have elsewhere called an *ethotic logic* (Tindale, 2023b, 23ff; 243). Catarina Dutilh Novaes (2021, p. 87) extends a warranted ambivalence towards this abstraction. She observes that as the concept of deduction has developed it has, on one front, involved “a departure from embodied, situational elements of concrete dialogical situations, in particular specific interlocutors, toward more abstract, ‘de-personalized’ conceptualizations”. Given all this, it may be better to reserve ‘abstract’ for translations into a formal language and adopt something like ‘detached’ for the propositional arguments that are removed from any argumentative situation.

It is time to recognize the situation for what it is, one of an incompatibility in the way we speak and think and use a central term of our concerns. We do have strategies to deal with such incompatibilities. Most obvious here is Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca’s (1969, pp. 413-17) strategy of dissociation. When an incompatibility arises in the use of a term, that term is opened up to reveal two senses, one of which is elevated and valued (term II), and the other left below (term I). Term II results from a dissociation effected within term I. We can see Toulmin essentially effecting a dissociation on ‘argument’, and the type II sense of the term that emerges is that of argument as human interchange. Left behind is the term I (propositional) sense.

3. THE RHETORIC OF RHETORICAL ARGUMENTATION

If argumentation theorists disagree about how we understand and use ‘argument’, they disagree less with how to understand ‘rhetoric’. There is a tendency to think of rhetoric as synonymous with persuasion, encouraged no doubt by the definition that Aristotle provided in chapter 2 of Book I: “Let rhetoric be the capacity to see in each particular case the available means of persuasion.”

This understanding finds its way into a number of contemporary theories of argumentation. For example, Hubert Marraud (2015, p. 2) in the development of a dialectical approach writes: “Rhetoric focuses on the symbolic means of persuasion and evaluates them by their effectiveness to achieve the communicational end of the process of argumentation”. For Christoph Lumer (2005a), viewing things from the perspective of an epistemological approach, rhetoric targets persuasion or conviction in ways that stray from a clear truth; they aim to induce beliefs that are chosen by the arguer for whatever reasons

and are not “bound to truth” (2005a, p. 238).⁹ From such perspectives, rhetoric, stained by the vestiges of Plato’s attack, aims at persuasion.

Harvey Siegel (2023) “favors” this sense, but in fairness, he recognizes multiple senses that have force in their appropriate domains:

There are thus four senses of ‘argument’ that are best distinguished: (a) arguments in the abstract propositional sense, (b) arguments in the complex speech act sense, which may or may not constitute instances of argumentation, (c) arguments as communicative activities involving arguments in either or both of the first two senses, which activities themselves constitute instances of argumentation, and (d) extended episodes of argumentative interaction (p. 6).

The ‘problem’ as Siegel sees it, is that distinctions are too readily elided into one sense, which is then treated as if it were another. But the problem is not just the separation of senses, but whether priority should be extended to one sense over the other. Siegel’s (2023, p. 36) epistemic theory “captures and explains the most fundamental sense of ‘argument’”—the propositional. I am interested in another of those perspectives that captures his sense of the rhetorical, or his reading of my use of the rhetorical.

Siegel (2023, p. 27) complains that rhetorical argumentation, in the terms I use it “locks in on one sense of ‘argument’ – the perfectly respectable rhetorical sense, according to which an argument is a persuasive device, to be evaluated in terms of its persuasive force or effect – but illicitly extends its analysis to other important senses of the term, in particular the abstract propositional sense, transforming it into something to be evaluated in terms of which its premises provide rhetorical (rather than epistemic) ‘support’ to its conclusion”. This is a complaint we will hear echoed elsewhere. Siegel reminds us, quoting Blair (2004), that there is error in conceiving arguments as primarily instruments of persuasion. The operative term here is “primarily,” and the suggested criticism is that rhetorical argument advances the stronger claim that persuasion is the only way of conceiving argument. To a certain degree, what I am discussing here is an attempt to show otherwise, to indicate other non-Aristotelian ways of conceiving rhetoric and rhetorical arguments.

The key disagreement that marks the distance between Siegel and myself lies in my belief that, as he phrases it, “we must choose between two senses of ‘argument’, and treat them dynamically *rather than* statically” (Siegel, 2023, p. 29)¹⁰. And as much as I would like to find a rapprochement between our two positions, I cannot disagree with his reading here. While we can recognize these as two senses of ‘argument’, we must ultimately choose between them if we are to advance the interests of argumentation theory. We find in the human interchange conception of argument, in the term II conception, something that is dynamic rather than static. We *must* choose between the two senses if we want a conception of argument with which we can work in a range of argumentative situations, one true to the experiences of the participants in those situations. This is the problem/issue recent work on tools of cross-cultural argumentation and establishing mutual cognitive environments at the borders seeks to address.

⁹ Some theorists, when encountering anything rhetorical will treat it as “clutter” and strip it away to get at *the* argument; while others see in rhetorical features important clues for understanding arguments. Unfortunately, such theorists are in a minority (Leal & Marraud, 2022, p. 33).

¹⁰ Of course, Siegel agrees with the first clause, insisting on a different choice. And thereby disagrees with the second clause.

So, this might be the place to recall those infamous experiments conducted in the 1930s on ‘pre-literate’ subjects in Uzbekistan by Alexander Luria and his colleagues (Luria 1976), experiments that have been replicated elsewhere (See Tindale, 2021a, Ch.2). These experiments were ostensibly to track cognitive development but ended up dismissing subjects as competent reasoners because they failed to follow logical inferences, something we would now surely recognize as epistemic (or argumentative—Bondy, 2010) injustice (Tindale, 2023d). So, for example, a subject was asked: “In the far North, where there is snow, all bears are white. Novaya Zemlya is in the Far North and there is always snow there. What color are the bears there?” (Luria, 1976, p. 115). The subject’s subsequent answers (because the prompt was repeated) included “There are different sorts of bears”; “I don’t know; I’ve seen a black bear, I’ve never seen any others... Each locality has its own animals: if it’s white, they will be white; if it’s yellow, they will be yellow”; “Well, it’s like this... Your words can be answered only by someone who was there, and if a person wasn’t there he can’t say anything on the basis of your words.” In discussing this and other examples, I have placed emphasis on what the subjects didn’t say, on the conclusion not drawn. Now, I realize what I should have focused on were what was actually said *as appropriate responses*. Because it is quite conceivable that the subjects are trying to indicate the *wrongness* of the experimenters’ assumptions! They essentially reject not just the flow of the syllogism but the authority of the testimony of the experimenters. Arguments are not abstract things but embedded discourses that depend for their evidence on experience.¹¹ One is reminded of the example John Locke (1959/1690) used in his treatment of testimony, an example subsequently changed and adopted by David Hume. Locke reports the Dutch ambassador speaking to the king of Siam. He tells him many remarkable things, all of which the king absorbs. But when he tells him the cold weather freezes water in Holland making it so hard that men can walk upon it and that it could even bear an elephant, the king’s credulity is exhausted: “Hither to I have believed the strange things you have told me, because I look upon you as a sober fair man, but now I am sure you lie” (Locke, 1959/1690, 4.15.5). There is an intuitive nature to these responses in keeping with the kisceral arguments of Gilbert’s (1997) multi-modal account.

Few contemporary accounts make a concerted effort to explore either the argument or the rhetoric of rhetorical argument. Admittedly, their attention is directed elsewhere. But left unacknowledged in all this is the richness and power of this type of argument—the rhetorical. After all, what does rhetoric *do* for argumentation?

Aristotle’s definition is a response to a misunderstanding that he believes has infected earlier treatments, developing a counterargument against a then-current trend. This misunderstanding is two-pronged. In the first place, he believes earlier writers have overlooked the fact that at the core of rhetoric is its argumentative nature. He believes they have said nothing about enthymemes, which “constitute the body of proof” (1354a13). Secondly, they have misapplied it, focusing on the forensic and overlooking the deliberative (1354b28), even though the two follow the same method. So, when Aristotle turns in chapter 2 to the matter at hand, there is the sense of a fresh start at rethinking the

¹¹ I think we could pursue a similar line of contrast in another argumentative tradition, that of early Islamic thought and the distinction between speculative discourse (*kalam*) and the Aristotelian syllogism. The first depended on what inferences could be born from experience; the latter abstracted from experience to judge what could be produced in the syllogism (Nusseibeh 2017, 70-75). As Nusseibeh notes, “Speculative discourse...had developed its own style, indigenously grown from actual speech practices” (103).

nature of rhetoric. And he does this in what George Kennedy recognized as a hypothetical way, an approach that may well have reflected the nature of inquiries at a specific time in the Academy.¹² During the development of the dialectical method that came to characterize Plato's model there was a period during which hypotheses were favoured (Tindale, 2023b). Aristotle's proposed definition of rhetoric has all the hallmarks of such a focus on the hypothetical. The opening phrase is invariably overlooked in discussions of the definition: ἔστω δὴ ἡ ῥητορικὴ. "Let rhetoric be..." Not "rhetoric is..." as we read at the start of chapter 1 where it is being set beside dialectic. In drawing attention to this phrase in a way the more recent translations of the *Rhetoric* fail to do, Kennedy observes that the use of *estō dē* is characteristic of a working hypothesis rather than a definitive judgment. As a working hypothesis, there is no commitment to the ideas involved; Aristotle is simply introducing ideas associated with rhetoric.¹³ On these terms, the attention to persuasion is exploratory, but not definitive. Other senses of rhetoric may still come into play. In the context of a debate over how rhetoric has been expressed in the handbooks, Aristotle proceeds to explore it *on those terms*, correcting the misinterpretations of the rhetoricians. But is he committed to this goal as the main goal of rhetoric? Even if he is, there is no reason we should be so constrained. Yes, the tradition invites this focus and, as we have seen, it has become a commonplace of references to the rhetoric of rhetorical argument. In fact, the sense of rhetoric as persuasion (or *seeing* the means of persuasion) is so ingrained that we cannot avoid it.

Even as persuasion, though, rhetoric still has more positive senses than often allowed. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (Bolduc & Frank, 2023/1950, p. 126) for example, in "Logique et rhétorique," note the way persuasion shifts attention from the mind to the person: "If we open the Spanish encyclopedia, it tells us that to convince is only the first step; the essential is to persuade, that is, to stir the soul so that the listener will act in accordance with the conviction that has been communicated". Granting this, a rhetoric of persuasion serves us poorly in situations of cross-cultural argumentation, where our principal interest is in the development of understanding and shared interests.

Once released from a tradition of persuasion, we are free to think more laterally about the nature of rhetorical argument and the crucial ideas involved. A more accurate understanding of the rhetoric in rhetorical argument, as this is now being deployed, can be drawn from two specific accounts, that of I.A. Richards, and that of Michel Meyer.

For Richards (1936) rhetoric "should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies." In taking the study of rhetoric in the direction he thought important, Richards (1936, p. 37) shifted attention from what a word means to *how* it means, focusing on the processes involved in meaning communication, and tracing the meaning of words to the utterances which contain them. In these processes he thought to detect the remedies for misunderstanding. Elsewhere he wrote: "Surely it should be possible to go directly to the

¹² As Kennedy notes in his Introductory essay (Aristotle, 2007), there are grounds for seeing the *Rhetoric* as the notes of lectures given at the Academy, during afternoons when less 'serious' matters were explored. Kennedy does qualify matters: sometime in the mid-350s B.C.E. Aristotle is believed to have taught rhetoric in the Academy, although the information comes from later sources and "may not be entirely reliable," explaining the course was open to the public and offered in the afternoons.

¹³ It is the case that the closing line of the previous chapter announces a new start with a fresh definition. But the relationship between the first two chapters of Book 1 remains contentious in ways I cannot address here (See McAdon, 2006; Walzer & Inabinet, 2011). Suffice it to say that the choice of *estō dē* deserves more attention than it has received.

root of the trouble, to study verbal misunderstanding, its nature and cause, deeply enough to find and apply a cure?" (Richards, 1942, p. 18). Here, he is concerned with the reading of texts, but I think something similar must hold for the comprehension of other types of utterances. A decade later, he introduced the speech situation into the discussion. Speaking of the "fields" of comparison that permit the translation of meanings, he writes "Let the units of which these comparison fields consist be *utterances-within-situations*" (Richards, 1955, p. 23, emphasis in the original).

The depth of Richards' (1955, p. 27) study of utterances is seen in the seven functions of language that he believes are involved. There is no constant logical order to these, and he proposes that any "full utterance does all these things at once, and invites all of them in the comprehender". How we mean, Richards suggests, depends on the shared nexuses in which we operate, nexuses built through utterances in similar situations. And meaning comprehension involves the whole experience of being addressed in relevant ways and the ability to recognize this meaning in the address.

Arguments can be understood as utterances within situations, with a depth of connective traces throughout those situations. We might extract a propositional inferential core, but these acts of translation simply lift the skeleton out of the membranes and other connective tissues of a body of which it did no more than unify the whole and never defined it.

Another contemporary definition of rhetoric captures further what is important in argumentation studies. This is the definition provided by Michel Meyer (2008; 2017). In the English text, he advances rhetoric as "the negotiation of the distance between individuals, *ethos* and *pathos*, on a question (*logos*) which is more or less divisive, or more or less reductive of the distance between them" (Meyer, 2017, p. 225).

To a certain degree this continues Meyer's earlier work, where he had opposed a "propositional rhetoric" to a "problematological rhetoric" (Meyer, 1994, p. 72). The idea of "propositional rhetoric" involves a *logos* closed to interrogation, canceling out the questions at its heart (Meyer, 1994, p. 32). A problematological rhetoric" rectifies this.¹⁴

Outside of his own program of problematology that this definition supports, what is attractive about Meyer's proposal is the central metaphor of distance, a space that rhetoric negotiates, drawing the different components (elsewhere (Meyer, 2017, p. 7), he calls them anchor points) together.

Rhetoric here is about closing distances, spaces of misunderstanding and difference, aiming at creating shared environments of meaning, promoting comprehension and perhaps agreement. Meyer (2017, p. 222) does promote the complete closing of distances, but also allows that some gaps may be unbridgeable. Here, we might see the merits of an equilibrium in the sense of a balance between positions, established on understanding and respect and the prospect of further integration and even assimilation. In the fragile fabrics of our social disagreements, rhetoric's work is never complete.

¹⁴ A little later, the work on the passions (Meyer 2000) does, I believe anticipate a richer conception of rhetoric, as he focuses on the importance of "equilibrium" (2000, 50). The passions aid in bringing things into balance: "To live together...is to negotiate differences with the other in order to arrive at identity" (51). This negotiation is echoed in the later work.

4. WHAT LIES CONCEALED

Rhetorical arguments are, then, complex, thick structures of concealment (Tindale 2021a). They can be “reduced” to many forms, captured in the thin skeletons of argumentation schemes. But for their structures to be fully understood they need to be unpacked with, for example (but only an example) the critical questions that accompany those schemes in the informal logic tradition. As Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca warned, rhetoric hides an argument’s secrets particularly well (1969, 452). But, there again, it is on hand to help reveal them.

Drawing from the above discussions of ‘argument’ and ‘rhetoric’ and their integration in rhetorical argumentation, arguments will involve *in their nature* at least the following six features.

- i. *A valuational stance on what they express.*
 - ii. *The dispositions of the arguer.*
 - iii. *Aspects of their cultural origin (with the expectations and so forth that are involved).*
 - iv. *A sense of time in the temporal dimension of their expression (past, present, future).*
 - v. *A sense of place beyond the cultural.*
- In the space left to me, I will say something about each of these, but they all warrant more expansive discussion.

i. A valuational stance on what they express.

Arguments are value-laden discourses. They may concern facts, but not without taking a position on those facts. It was the return to value that prompted the New Rhetoric project, especially with its celebration of a non-Aristotelian sense of the epideictic. The *choices* that an argument coheres around are value judgments of the chooser.

These values facilitate the movements from conviction to persuasion noted above. Arguments that address the whole person move that person to action and conviction is transformed into persuasion. This is not the persuasion of Aristotle, lest I be accused of contradiction. It is more in keeping with the ideas of Richard Whately, who advocates for a similar “inversion” of the traditional relationship between conviction and persuasion (Whately 1963, 175).

This distinction of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, and the conceptions of the human and of argument that underly it, reflect one of the most important shifts in the field. In aspiring to develop a logic of value, they called reason back from the wastes in which it was wandering and directed it toward the task of improving human communities and contributing to wellbeing. This amounted to a different kind of rhetorical argument than that which had engaged Aristotle. This they make clear in “Logique et rhétorique” (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1950).¹⁵ Aristotle’s tendency to marginalize the epideictic at the expense of the forensic and deliberative turns rhetoric towards “a logic of the plausible” (Bolduc & Frank, 2023, p. 137). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1950, p. 137), by contrast, develop a rhetoric that could also be called “a logic of the preferable”. This partly indicates why Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1950, p. 163) would not consider themselves Aristotelians, even as Aristotle continues to influence them.

¹⁵ Newly translated by Michelle Bolduc and David Frank (2023).

The preferable directs us towards the values we choose, to what is better; the plausible directs us towards what may be the case, to what is likely but uncertain. We see the preferable in the advocacy of the better that encourages action. But the scientist in her laboratory also identifies her preferences in the hypotheses she chooses and proceeds to test and in the ways she evaluates those hypotheses and the decisions she makes regarding them. The facts of her study never “speak for themselves” but always and only through her. Consider Paul Thagard’s (2002, p. 245) study of emotion in scientific cognition. For him, hypotheses not only have a cognitive status of being accepted or rejected, but also an emotional status of being liked or disliked. Thagard has earlier introduced his theory of cognitive and emotional coherence, which has at root a coherence theory of argument (he calls it inference). At least one of its features, recalled in 2002, is relevant here:

All inference is coherence-based. So-called rules of inference such as modus ponens do not by themselves license inferences, because their conclusions may contradict other accepted information. The only rule of inference is: Accept a conclusion if its acceptance maximizes coherence (Thagard, 2002, p. 245).

Is it better to adopt the language of conclusions being entailed or following from premises, or of being in harmony with them? A similar debate that surrounds Plato’s use of the term *sunphronein* in his dialogue the *Phaedo* (Tindale, 2023b). “In harmony with” allows a broader appreciation of connectedness more consistent with a rhetorical conception of argument with its expression of what is preferable.

ii. The nature and dispositions of the arguer (however we understand them).

Much can be said about ways arguers are present in arguments conceived as human interchanges, and a history of *ethos* has directed this focus (Amossy, 2001). Arguments are value-laden in part because of the agency that motivates them. An argument is a result of choices, and those choices stem in the first place from the arguer indicating what he or she has decided. What strategies to use. How to imagine the audience. What to stress and what to leave as an invitation for the audience to complete. Aspects of authority are captured here: the status of the arguer and how that status is asserted and conveyed. We draw attention not just to what is said but how it is said.

Less clear is how we might understand *dispositions* of the arguer, because reasoned action requires a disposition to act. Here, dispositions will be the leanings or tendencies of character rather than just character or *ethos* itself. Dispositions, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, pp. 52-3) appreciated, are one of the durable results of rhetorical (epideictic) argumentation. Taking a lead from several of the Belgians’ suggestions, one identifiable approach to how values are conveyed in argumentation is by examining the nature of dispositions and how argumentation can be seen to create such dispositions in people.¹⁶

While the work of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca speaks clearly to the importance of instilling or encouraging certain dispositions, they leave unaddressed the *how* of the matter, nor do they really indicate how dispositions are revealed in arguments. Arguments are addressed to the whole person, not just to reason. This is a commonplace. But by the same token arguments express the whole person, not just the reason.

We might turn to the tradition of epideictic arguments to see how character is praised. Such arguments identify specific people as instantiating in some way the values

¹⁶ This is a discussion I pursue in detail in (2021b).

that a community or society finds important and want replicated. These are people who manifest the valued kinds of dispositional behaviour, who are looked up to because of positive qualities of their character, and in such arguments an appeal is made to those people (perhaps on a specific issue; perhaps generally). This is the understanding that informs the tradition of epideictic speeches that take the funeral oration as the paradigm. On such occasions, the qualities of an individual are praised in a way that the individual comes to represent a standard expressing those qualities and thus is someone to be emulated. This further recognizes the private, hidden nature of dispositions. We look for some public demonstration of them, as Aristotle pointed out (*EN* 1104b5), an outward sign of what resides within.

The other side of *this* is the argumentative behaviour of those praised. Indeed, what is praised are the actions of the person, but those actions include the arguments they express. Arguments that convey, in Aristotle's terms, good will, practical wisdom and virtue. Critical questions for ethotic schemes ask if the arguer can be trusted, is she reliable, does she convey an unacceptable bias? And where do we look for the answers? The critical questions are tools for exploring arguments that instantiate the scheme.¹⁷

Reflecting on how dispositions arise in an individual encourages the larger question of how values are instilled in a society, because dispositions activate those values, express and reinforce them. We know that values can be activated, strengthened, promoted, and encouraged through speech. We see this whenever a political leader appeals to values as an argument in support of certain practices or behaviours. For example: People should self-isolate because the community is supported by values of care and concern for others and self-isolation is the best way to express those values at this time. But how are arguments brought into the activity of instilling values in the first place? That is another hidden aspect of their nature.

iii. Assumptions of their cultural origin (with the expectations and so forth that are involved). Can we take arguments out of their place of origin without loss or penalty as the detached view would allow? Arguments are of a place, and invariably that place is "present" in the argument. This is particularly clear from cross-cultural situations. Consider the following example from anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (2022, p. 1), where a Fijian chief speaks to an English missionary in the early days of Christian proselytization:

"Your ships are true, your guns are true, so your god must be true."

That's the utterance. But how to understand it? How does the chief "see" the relationship between the premises and the conclusion? That is, how does the conclusion work in harmony with the premises (or even "follow from" them)? And how should we understand the use of "true," which surely derives its meaning from a belief structure with which we are unacquainted? There are assumptions operating here which make the reasoning difficult to understand and therefore to evaluate.

Sahlins (2022) provides his own commentary. The chief, he insists, is not commenting on the existence of the Christian god and deriving proof of it in some strange way. The chief *sees* the god in the ships and guns, which are material expressions of that

¹⁷ This is just one of the ways in which scheme theory provides ways to uncover the hidden lives of arguments through the critical questions.

potency or power. The conflict is between a transcendental sense of the divine and a perspective in which the divine is immanent, is *in* the ships and guns (Sahlins, 2022, p. 1). The point for us is that, as we take the “so” of the last clause as a conclusion indicator, the argument is largely inaccessible without the cultural understanding that Sahlins provides. The point for us is that it is more helpful to understand the conclusion as in harmony with the premises than following from them.

Again, consider this:

庄子与惠子游于濠梁之上。庄子曰：“鲦鱼出游从容，是鱼之乐也。”惠子曰：“子非鱼，安知鱼之乐？”庄子曰：“子非我，安知我不知鱼之乐？”惠子曰：“我非子，固不知子矣，子固非鱼也，子之不知鱼之乐，全矣。”庄子曰：“请循其本。子曰汝安知鱼乐云者，既已知吾知之而问我，我知之濠上也。”

Chuang Tzu [Zhuangzi] and Hui Tzu [Huizi] were strolling along the dam of the Hao River when Chuang Tzu said, “See how the minnows [little fishes] come out and dart around where they please! That’s what fish really enjoy!”

Hui Tzu said, “You’re not a fish—how do you know what fish enjoy?”

Chuang Tzu said, “You’re not I, so how do you know I don’t know what fish enjoy?”

Hui Tzu said, “I’m not you, so I certainly don’t know what you know. On the other hand, you’re certainly not a fish—so that still proves you don’t know what fish enjoy!”

Chuang Tzu said, “Let’s go back to your original question, please. You asked me how I know what fish enjoy—so you already knew it when you asked the question. I know it by standing here beside the Hao.”

This translation comes from an anthology (Ames & Nakajima, 2015) on the example that contains ten variant translations. This one might be preferred because of the solution to the debate it suggests. Michael Beaney (2021) explores the debate between Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu in a way that stresses what he calls Chuang Tzu’s perspectivism. In the course of this, he indirectly reinforces what the translator recognizes and captures: that Chuang Tzu’s final answer calls them back to where they are and the insights that place emit. “I know it by standing here beside the Hao.” Not through some abstract logical analysis, but from the experience of place. It matters where this occurs, because that is the source of Chuang Tzu’s evidence for his position.

Secondly, there is something to note in the cultural divides over how this debate is understood. The English translations of 2015 refer to the Happy Fish debate (as does Beaney’s later analysis). Most Chinese scholars refer to it as the debate at the Hao bridge. The English readers stress *what* the debate is about, the content; the Chinese readers stress *where* it occurs, its place. This is not a casual difference. It reflects cultural assumptions that impact the way the argument is understood and assessed. These assumptions are inextricably part of what we identify as the argument.

iv. A sense of time in the temporal dimension of their expression (past, present, future).

Aristotle saw that rhetorical arguments are temporal discourses, and they carry that temporality within them. Whether it's the past of the forensic argument, the future of the deliberative or the present of the epideictic, a temporal dimension is unavoidable (even for those religious arguments that imagine an eternal present).

Time can also insinuate itself as part of the argument, as with student Emma Gonzalez's speech at the March for Our Lives Rally after the Florida high school shooting in 2018.¹⁸ Gonzalez notes the things that the murdered students would no longer do, naming each, and then falls into silence. A long silence; one disturbing for the audience and, ultimately, the organizers. Finally, she concludes: "Since the time I came out here, it has been 6 minutes and 20 seconds. The shooter has ceased shooting and will soon abandon his rifle..." This argumentative speech mirrors the time of the event, replicates it in a different register. The use of the present to recall the past enfolds time back on itself bringing then and now into alignment. The silence in the speech, like the silence into which the victims fall, shocks the mind, and gives it focus. That what happened did so in 6 minutes and 20 seconds serves as evidence to the charge of wastefulness of young lives, and brings the event and its memorial into alignment.

Argumentation is rooted in the temporal. This was core to the way Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, in their resistance to the atemporal and aspatial assumptions of Cartesian thought, distinguished it from demonstration (Scott, 2020). The contrast between the timeless and the temporal brings out the importance of history, of the concrete situation, and the unique occurrence (Bolduc & Frank, 2023, p. 198). Indeed, the act of recognizing the moment that is captured in the idea of *kairos* underlines the importance of "when" something should be said: reinforcing points to which an audience already adheres and watching for the right moment to put forward the claim. And, thereafter, when it was said; when it might be said again, in different terms. Of course, on many occasions, the audience, invited into an exchange, will move ahead and discover that conclusion for themselves. But it is equally the case that on some occasions it would be counterproductive to utter the principal claim too soon. With some visual arguments, attention is captured by drawing different temporal moments into the visual context of one space to achieve an argumentative effect that might not otherwise be achieved.

Perelman's and Olbrechts-Tytetca's attention to the durability of arguments recognizes this temporal dimension, as when a "seed" is embedded in the discourse to be activated at the appropriate moment when action is possible, and not before (you cannot vote for your candidate until the moment allows). "Vote for me on December 8th, if you want policies that take climate science seriously." The argument imagines our desires now extended to a future where something may be done to realize them. Some arguments have fleeting relevance; others imagine a duration that will prevail. But all arguments are temporal in nature. Attending only to whatever inferential structure they may have overlooks this completely.

v. A sense of place beyond the cultural.

Michel Meyer's definition of rhetoric as the negotiation of a distance between people captures the importance of place in our history, with the ubiquity of the metaphors that express it, from the *topoi* of Aristotle, to the paths that some will trace from premises to

¹⁸ The rally in support of gun control legislation was in response to the shooting deaths of 17 people in February 2018 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Miami.

conclusions, to the space of reasons located in the marketplace of ideas. We cannot move in argumentation theory without occupying space, without shifting metaphorical places. It matters so often *where* an argument occurs to the degree that, again, place is embedded in the argument itself, waiting to be identified and acknowledged (Vélez-Posada 2022).

The Western readings of the above “happy fish” argument exhibit (among other things) a failure to appreciate the importance of place, to see how immanence (rather than an objective transcendence) operates in the argument, providing its body and force.

If we want a more Western example of what is involved, we need look no further than the speeches of Barack Obama. A simple example is his so-called “Race Speech” of March 2018. It begins:

“We the people, in order to form a more perfect union”.

Two hundred and twenty one years ago, in a hall that still stands across the street, a group of men gathered and, with these simple words, launched America’s improbable experiment in democracy. Farmers and scholars; statesmen and patriots who had traveled across an ocean to escape tyranny and persecution finally made real their declaration of independence at a Philadelphia convention that lasted through the spring of 1787.¹⁹

The argument is situated in Philadelphia, across the road from a hall where the declaration of independence was formed. Force is achieved by Obama having situated his argument where he did, speaking from a place central to the nation, calling on them to revisit that place and think on what occurred there. Taking the argument out of the place, robs it of something, reduces it to less than what it is. You can say the same things somewhere else, but they would clearly lose some of their force, and so the argument is “of a place.”

In these features of argument, we are deeply engaged with Toulmin’s (1983, p. 396) second category of human exchange. The contrast is sharp and extreme. It is one between the abstract and the immanent. It divides those who step back from the argumentative situation and extract a core (an atom, a cell), and those who immerse themselves in it and address the immediate. In the history of philosophy there have been those who take us outside of the context in search of universal truths, and those who take us back to the human roots of the case, the immanent. Here, then, is the dualism that affects the nature of argument: the transcendent, universal, abstract versus the concrete, immanent, situational.

5. RETHINKING SCHEMES

We do have tools to unpack arguments in the sense I am advocating. Informal Logicians and other theorists stress the value of argument or argumentation schemes, for example. Douglas Walton (2013, 6) gives us a very basic definition of schemes as “commonly used types of arguments that are defeasible [...] that can be challenged by raising critical questions”. Patterns of reasoning indicate a regularity that seems to tell against the uniqueness I have stressed. But it is the tool within the tool, the critical questions, that addresses the details of each instantiation of such a pattern or scheme. We might reconsider the “pattern” metaphor in light of what I have suggested earlier, looking for something more immersive, more connective, something reflective of the human interchange involved. But this matters less insofar as it is the critical questions (CQs) that are the real

¹⁹ Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrp-v2tHaDo>

tool. As developed, scheme theory tends to reflect the cultures in which it has been developed. But it has the potential to be a portable tool that crosses cultural borders.

Recognizing the scheme alone is an entry into evidence-appraisal. It tells us what else to use, where to look. But it doesn't give definitive answers. It doesn't provide evidence for the strength of an argument. For that, we need to explore the case using the CQs. Again, the CQs are guarantees of the rationality of the process. They reflect a community's standards. They are corroborated by a cognitive environment.

Robert Pinto (2001, 111) argues that the value of identifying argument schemes lies with the critical questions associated with them, they direct the focus onto the key issues and contextual features involved with each case. They tell us the kinds of things we should be looking for with respect to each argument. Pinto is insistent that the normative force of an argument is not to be found in its exemplification of an argument scheme, but in contextual considerations that bear on rhetorical factors specific to a case: "considerations that would justify the use of *this* sort of evidence in *this* sort of context to settle *this* sort of question" (Pinto, 2001, p. 111). It can't be the scheme itself that validates presumptive reasoning because the use of the scheme on any occasion itself requires validation. In fact, even this talk of a *sort of* evidence, context, or question stresses the particularity of the case that should prevent the easy use of logical criteria with a reliance on patterns and forms.

A further distinction of importance is that between thin and thick analyses. In the contexts of argumentation, thick descriptions delve into the details to explore the merits of each case. They "flesh-out" the case, attentive to the features I noted above, asking about what is assumed, culturally and otherwise, about the values inherent in the argument and the dispositional tendencies of the arguer, asking about the place of the argument and its temporal dimension. This is to reorient the current sets of CQs, bringing them to bear on arguments as I have presented them. In this way, we thicken the evaluations to focus on the features I have discussed.

Schemes have promise, then, as tools to understand arguments in different contexts. Insofar as they constitute regular patterns of argument-use we should expect cultures that depend more on, say, narratives in their communications, to have narrative-based schemes that would not be shared by most Western argumentative cultures. What such schemes would look like, and the CQs that would be used to assess them, await future research.

Indeed, there may be other tools that work well in current theories that can be adapted for richer analyses of arguments in other environments. But if we talk about transporting our tools elsewhere, it is important to consider how we do this without the risk of imposing Western ideas on non-Western communities, of trying to fit round non-Western pegs into square holes.

6. CONCLUSION: FROM MACHINE TO ORGANISM

It may be objected that the division of arguments at the heart of the dissociation shown earlier is artificial, that an inferential core remains and must be there in any sense of argument. But I now think the reality has things the other way around: the propositions lie outside of the interchange. We can teach argument in the abstract, propositional sense and will continue to do so effectively. But in teaching about arguments, we should not convey the idea that this is *the* important aspect, the paradigm. What we teach takes us into the

uncertain domain of human interchange, the domain of rhetorical arguments. As we continue to adjust the metaphors that inform our field, that suggested by Blair is more apt—the cellular nature of the argument returns us again to the places of argument, to their situated nature. The monk in their cells dwell in a place that is part of their identity. This situatedness, that never loses sight of an argumentative situation to which it belongs and the nature of which infuses the arguments arising there, is core to what distinguishes real from artificial arguments.

It might also be objected that all I have been discussing is the usual rhetorician's interest in context or the argumentative situation. But contexts are places arguments are in; what I have focussed upon is what is in arguments.

So, a rhetorical argument on the terms here explored is... cellular in nature, in which essential details (reflecting the experiences of the participants) are embedded in a harmonious relationship from which aspects might *then* be inferred or detached.

In the 1637 Leiden publication of his *Discourse on Method*, Rene Descartes effected a shift of perspective that was to have serious consequences for argumentation theory. For some, it marked the end of a particular moment in the history of philosophy (Verene 2021, 62), although the way had been prepared by many others, including Bacon and Galileo.²⁰ In advancing a Method that contained everything that gave “certainty to the rules of Arithmetic” (Descartes, 1931, p. 94) mathematical rigor cast a shadow over what Toulmin (2001, p. 15) fittingly calls “human argumentation”. A predilection for the abstract took ascendancy over the uncertainty that accompanied reasoning from opinions. But this is a shift that has been resisted by many in our field (see Perelman, 1982). Toulmin details it further, spelling out some of the details that anticipate much of what I have said:

The contrast between the reasonableness of narratives and the rigor of formal proofs, between autobiography and geometry, is the contrast between the “soundness” of substantive *argumentation*, which has the body and force needed to carry conviction, and the “validity” of formal *arguments*, whose conclusions are determined by the starting points from which they are deduced (Toulmin 2001, 15).

Once again, those formal arguments take us nowhere that is not predetermined. In contrast, the reasonableness of narratives and the richness of autobiography—this accounting of the experiential—announce the “soundness” (a term appropriately qualified, given its “natural” occurrence) of substantive argumentation. Toulmin's human interchange of 1982/3 has found its way into a later work to identify the kind of argumentative details needed to achieve conviction. The substantive argument that he preferred to “informal logic” still holds sway for him decades later, as it should hold sway for us. I hope in the preceding discussion I have given some sense to how such substantive argument might be understood as well as a justification (!) for our interest in it.²¹

Understanding rhetorical arguments involves bringing reason and rhetoric into a better relationship. But “better” here needs clarification. It is better in that it more clearly and explicitly returns reason to its human roots. This is both the inspiration and the aspiration of those theories of argumentation that recognize the way our nature as rhetorical beings arises from below to inform our logical and dialectical engagements. Propositional

²⁰ Some commentators play down the impact of Descartes' Method (Ong 1958, 230).

²¹ Where I would differ is in the suggestion he makes that the same story could be parsed in both formal and substantive terms (2001, 16).

constructs give us the argument shell, not the argument. We should direct our focus to the life inside those shells. Argumentation's exoskeleton protects its rhetorical life, wherein lies those well-fleshed words—the human cells of argumentation, cells that rhetorical arguments expel, express, and explain.

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