8.

Why Argumentation Theory Should Differentiate Between Types of Claim*

This paper argues that argumentation theory should see the various claims that arguers may disagree and argue about as representing a spectrum of types. Not all claims that people may disagree about concern the truth of some proposition. Some claims, for example, are proposals for doing something. The distinction between propositions and proposals equals that between epistemic and practical reasoning, and the article leans on Aristotle's thinking about these concepts, as interpreted by Anthony Kenny. Also, the essential kinship of the notions of deliberation, rhetoric and conductive reasoning is asserted, as is the inalienable role of subjectivity in practical reasoning. The proposed spectrum of types of claim ranges from epistemic (factual) claims at one end to practical claims at the other—with, e.g., evaluative, interpretive, and stipulative claims in between.

1. Introduction

Argumentation theory needs a typology of *types of claim* (where "claim" means that for which an arguer argues). This view is in line with the Wittgensteinian idea of multiple "Sprachspiele" and with the notion of different fields with different types of warrant, etc., in Toulmin (who was, incidentally, Wittgenstein's student).

The main reason that necessitates such a typology is that much which can be said theoretically about argument for one type of claim is misleading when said about argument for claims of other types; neglecting the differences between these types is a pernicious Platonic fallacy, against which philosophical argumentation scholars should be warned.

One important type distinction, as I have argued repeatedly elsewhere, is that between theoretical or epistemic reasoning (i.e., arguing for truth of propositions) and practical reasoning (i.e., arguing for the adoption of proposals); although some argumentation theorists have recognized this

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distinction, they have not, I believe, fully understood the amount and the depth of the differences it implies.

In general, there is no lack of recognition that not all the claims we argue about in real-life argument are about philosophical truth. But the distinctions most often applied are, I suggest, either too vague or directly misleading. For example, we often hear a distinction between necessary and contingent propositions, where a contingent proposition is one that is neither necessarily true nor necessarily false. But as this definition makes clear, all claims are still seen as propositions which are to be assessed with regard to their truth or falsity. Another related, insufficient distinction depends on the concept of probability: some claims, it says, are about something being true, others about something being merely probable. This distinction, for example, is seen by Brockriede and Ehninger as an important reason to adopt Toulmin's argument theory for the teaching of practical argument:

> Whereas in traditional logic arguments are specifically designed to produce universal propositions, Toulmin's second triad of backing, rebuttal, and qualifier provide, within the framework of his basic structural model, for the establishment of claims that are no more than probable (1960, p. 46).

However, I would argue that the concept of probability misleads us regarding the nature of the claims we argue about in practical reasoning. To say that something is probably the case is an epistemic claim just like the claim that something is definitely the case. To say that the ongoing global warming is probably to a large extent man-made is such a claim. But to say that the EU should reduce its CO_2 emissions by 30 per cent is not a claim or proposition about what is "no more than probable"; it is not a proposition at all, but a proposal to the EU to make a decision and implement it.

Just as the concepts of contingency and probability are insufficient to identify the differences between the types of claim that we may argue about, they are also insufficient for another task, namely that of demarcating what rhetoric is about. Although rhetoric has been defined, at least since Aristotle, as argument centered on issues in a certain domain, that domain is not properly defined by means of concepts like the contingent or the probable, nor is that what Aristotle did, as we shall see below.

Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor are rhetoricians who, in a number of papers and textbooks over several years, have made a proposal for a

typology of claims or arguments, based on a reinterpretation of ancient *stasis* theory. One recent version of their proposal (Fahnestock and Secor, 2003) distinguishes between the following types of argument: What is it? (definition arguments); how did it get that way? (causal arguments); is it good or bad? (evaluation arguments); what should we do about it? (proposal arguments). An earlier version (Fahnestock and Secor, 1988) proposed that what they call the stasis of an argument could belong to five types, according to whether it concerns an issue of fact, definition, cause, value, or action.

Basically, my proposal in this paper is not new and adds nothing to such an approach as far as the notion of different types of claim is concerned. Rather, my intention is to point to the necessity of making this kind of typological distinction at all, and to show that the differences between types are deeper than generally assumed by most contemporary theorists of argumentation. As a consequence, we will find that many irreducible theoretical differences emerge, in particular between "theoretical," truth-oriented argument on the one hand and practical, action-oriented argument on the other.

2. A spectrum of types

However, I do not wish to set up what might be a misleading dichotomy. Nor am I eager to commit myself to a fixed number of distinguishable "types," whether four or five or another number, as in Fahnestock and Secor's theory and pedagogy. Rather, I suggest that we need to think about the relevant differences in terms of a spectrum. It would have purely theoretical (truth-oriented, "alethic") claims at one end and purely practical ones at the other. In between, and probably with intermediary areas separating the "types," should, at least, be types like interpretive claims (next to theoretical claims) and value claims of different kinds (next to practical claims). My basic concern is to heighten an awareness of differences.

I believe the point I want to make here is highly apposite because contemporary argumentation theorists, in my view, give far too little attention to these differences, assuming too blithely that argumentation is about one homogeneous kind of thing, and that, for instance, all argumentation is basically about showing the truth of something. As the example of Fahnestock and Secor shows, scholars with strong practical and

pedagogical leanings are far more aware of the usefulness of making these distinctions.

What this has to do with conductive argument is that the closer you move toward the "practical" end of this spectrum, the more will conductive argument be the natural and inevitable order of the day. Some of the corollaries of this are these: at this end of the spectrum, good arguments are rarely, if ever, logically valid; the "goodness" of arguments is gradual, multidimensional, and in certain respects relative to individuals; and inference, in the strict, traditional sense of that term, does not exist.

It should be added that rhetoricians such as Aristotle, Cicero, and many others, have always, in some form or other, recognized these views (or most of them), although not many rhetoricians after Aristotle have theorized them. However, philosophically trained argumentation scholars have, at best, only recognized them very reluctantly, or not at all. So I am also trying to add the weight of an "authority" argument to my case when I base it, in particular, on Aristotle. To spell out one important difference between the two ends of the spectrum I turn to Aristotle's theory of the will and related subjects, including his theory of practical reasoning, i.e., reasoning about what to do, as propounded by the British philosopher Anthony Kenny (1979).

3. The logic of practical reasoning

One important insight in Aristotle that Kenny has helped clarify is that in practical reasoning we argue as it were backwards; that is, we start with the valuable goal or result that we want to bring about, for example, health; thus, if health is a good thing, it follows that what brings health is also good, and since exercise is something which brings health, it follows that exercise is good; moreover, if I bicycle to work rather than drive, I get exercise, so bicycling to work is good. Bicycling to work is an available means to this good, i.e., it is in my powers to do. So I may decide to do it. Before I decide to do it I may engage in deliberation (with myself and possibly with my family) on whether that is what I will do.

What we see here is that in practical reasoning, and hence in practical argumentation (we leave aside for the moment the relation between these two terms) we begin with the goal or the end, i.e., the value we wish to promote. Given that the end is good, we look for a means to bring about that end, because that means will also, in that respect, be good. So we look

for steps in reasoning that will transfer or *preserve goodness* from the end to the means.

If we compare this kind of reasoning with reasoning about propositions, we see that there we look for steps in reasoning that will *preserve truth*. For that purpose we need truth-preserving rules, whereas in practical reasoning what we need is something that could be called goodness-preserving rules. But these two kinds of rules are quite different. Kenny makes clear that whereas Aristotle himself managed to formulate truth-preserving rules for propositions, he did not even try to formulate a parallel set of goodness-preserving rules for practical reasoning, nor has anyone else attempted to do so, let alone succeeded. The reason is that practical reasoning is much more complicated, and so are the goodness-preserving rules that would be required to codify it. Because practical reasoning works as it were backwards from the desired effect or good to an available means, whereas reasoning about propositions works forward from the truth of one to proposition to the truth of another that follows, we may notice the following:

> If a proposition is true, then it is not also false; but if a project or proposal or decision is good, that does not exclude its being also, from another point of view, bad. Hence, while truth-preserving rules will exclude falsehood, goodness-preserving rules will not exclude badness. (Kenny 1979, p. 146)

As an example of this "backwardness", we might take the following piece of reasoning:

"More nuclear power means reduced CO_2 emission" (p => q).

=>

"Reduced CO_2 emission is good" => More nuclear power is good" (q *good* => p *good*).

Notice the backward, goodness-preserving reasoning from the desired goal to an available means. What should be remembered, however, is that more nuclear power may be good *from this point of view*—but possibly bad from other points of view. So it does not simply follow deductively that we should have more nuclear power because we want reduced CO_2 emission, i.e., no such "inference" is valid. The notion "practical inference," if understood as a piece of reasoning on which a certain purposive choice follows as a deduction or entailment from the recognition of a certain goal, is a phantom; other means to the same goal might be available and indeed preferable, and there might be other goals that might be interfered with if

we chose to aim for this particular goal. It is no improvement on the notion of "practical inference" to speculate that practical inference is an entailment that is "presumptive"; what this amounts to is essentially to say that when a good reason for a given choice has been offered, the inference is accepted, but as soon as a counter consideration is brought forward, it is cancelled—and so on *ad infinitum* (cf. this volume, Chapter 4).

This state of affairs is illustrated in Figure 1. The rectangles are available means or courses of action, while the circles are the goals or ends, that is to say, the goods that we wish to promote. Triangles are means that happen to be unavailable. A straight arrow between a means and a goal indicates that this means will promote this goal, while a dotted arrow indicates that the means will counteract the goal. The point is that for any goal there is more than one available means; but any means that promotes some goal will at the same time counteract at least one other goal. As for the means represented by triangles, all their effects are desirable, i.e., they promote several of our goals and counteract none; sadly, however, these means are unavailable.

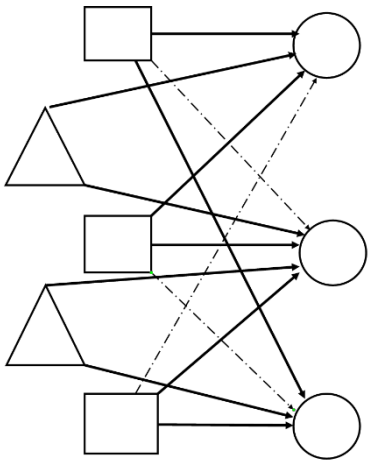

Figure 1: Practical reasoning illustrated.

The rectangles are available means or courses of action, while the circles are goals (goods that we wish to promote). Triangles are unavailable means. A bold arrow between a means and a goal indicates that this means will promote this goal, while a dotted arrow indicates that the means will counteract the goal.

To this complicated structure is added the further complication that when we are engaged in practical reasoning, what we have to do first is consider a goal we want to promote, and then look backwards along the straight arrows at the various means that might promote it. Some of these, as we saw, happen to be unavailable, and among the ones that are available

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we find that they also have dotted arrows leading towards other goals; that is, although they may be good from the point of view of the goal we began our reasoning with, they counteract other goals and are thus bad from other points of view.

The backward logic by which we reason from ends to means is called by Kenny, in an early paper (1966), a "logic of satisfactoriness," as opposed to the "logic of satisfaction." The former is concerned with the way a satisfactory end or goal transfers its satisfactoriness backwards to the choices that will promote it, while the latter is concerned with the way a proposition's state of satisfaction, i.e., of being satisfied, is transferred forwards to another proposition.

If we could reduce practical reasoning to inferences from the truth of certain propositions to the truth of others that follow, things would be simpler; but we are not reasoning about truth. If I want to stay healthy and therefore choose, in light of that premiss, to pursue the habit of bicycling to work, then that decision cannot be called true, nor is it false. It may be true that this kind of exercise may enhance my health, but that is not the same thing as saying that the decision to pursue it is a "true" decision. Kenny, interpreting Aristotle, says: "if the conclusion of a piece of practical reasoning has the imperative form 'Pursue this' or 'Avoid that' it is not something which can itself be straightforwardly described as true or false." (Kenny 1979, p. 94)

Another way of stating the same difference is this: Truth is a one-dimensional thing, perhaps even a dichotomous thing; for many propositions it is indeed the case that they are either true or false. Goodness, by contrast, is a multi-dimensional thing (cf. this volume, Chapters 6 and 5). That is why there is no goodness-preserving rule that excludes badness. My decision to bicycle the twelve miles to work may be good from the point of view of my personal fitness; but it may be bad from another point of view: it might imply that I cannot find the time or energy to do my work properly, or to walk my dog in due time after work, or maybe I risk being run over by cars or mugged on the way, or catching pneumonia in the rain, or over-exercising and thereby permanently damaging my weak knee. Also, there is the fact that I may find exercise of any kind, including bicycling, so dreadfully boring that is significantly reduces my quality of life.

Thus it is clear that we must stop theorizing as if all claims people may argue about are claims about something being true. Some claims are claims for a purposive choice, or in Aristotle's term, for a προαίρεσις. And a

προαίρεσις is not a proposition expressing a belief or an opinion (a δόξα). The *Eudemian Ethics* in particular makes that very clear:

> … it is manifest that purposive choice is not opinion either, nor something that one simply thinks; for we saw that a thing chosen is something in one's own power, but we have opinions as to many things that do not depend on us, for instance that the diagonal of a square is incommensurable with the side; and again, choice is not true or false [ἔτι οὐκ ἔστι προαίρεσις ἀληθὴς ἢ ψευδής]. Nor yet is purposive choice an opinion about practicable things within one's own power that makes us think that we ought to do or not to do something; but this characteristic is common to opinion and to wish. (1226a)

Carl Wellman, the originator of the concept of conductive reasoning, seems to take an ambiguous position on the question of whether what we argue for in practical reasoning can be true or false. In several of his ethical writings he declares himself an ethical objectivist, in the sense that ethical judgments in his view can indeed be true or false; but on the other hand a statement like the following seems to accept that truth or falsity is not what we argue about in practical reasoning:

> Too often reasoning is conceived of as a logical operation upon propositions, statements, sentences, or beliefs only. Reasoning must be so restricted, it is alleged, because the validity of an argument is tied to the truth-value of the premises and the conclusion. Where there is no truth or falsity, as in the case of exclamations or imperatives, there can be no reasoning. But if this were so, there could be no such thing as practical reasoning; reasoning that does not arrive at practice or action in the end is not genuinely practical. (1976, p. 545)

So practical reasoning is ultimately about action, not about beliefs that may have truth or falsity. But could we not say that after all purposive choice is a kind of belief, namely to the effect that one *should* do something? Aristotle specifically addresses this question and answers it in the negative. His reasons include the following: The object of such a belief is a goal, e.g., to be healthy; by contrast, the object of purposive choice is a means, e.g., exercise. Moreover, one can believe that one should do something without acting on that belief or even intending to. Other observations in Aristotle that refute the identification of a purposive choice with a belief are these: We choose *to* do something or avoid it; we believe *that* something; a choice is judged as good because its object is good, i.e., it is a choice of the right object, whereas a good belief is judged as good

because is the right kind of belief, i.e., a *true* belief; and finally, belief has gradations, whereas purposive choice is dichotomous: you either choose to do a thing or you don't (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1112a2-14; Kenny 1979, p. 72).

4. Deliberation, rhetoric and conductive reasoning

In Aristotle's thinking on practical reasoning, the concept of purposive choice is wedded to that of deliberation. The domain of deliberation is demarcated in exactly the same way as that of purposive choice. A purposive choice is one that is preceded by deliberation on the object of that choice. This is where we may notice a link in Aristotle's thinking that has not been properly pointed out yet, not even by experts like Kenny, namely the link between his ethical thinking and his rhetoric. It is precisely the concept of deliberation that connects them. Deliberation (βούλη; verb: βουλεύειν) is the kind of reasoning that concerns our ethically relevant choices; but it is also the kind of reasoning that rhetoric is made of. What distinguishes rhetoric from ethical reasoning is the fact that rhetoric is speech in front of audiences about the things on which we deliberate in public, i.e., the purposive, collective choices of the polity; moreover, the function of such reasoning is not to achieve consensus between the discussants but to influence the members of the audience, whose role (as Aristotle makes clear) is to act as judges.

Let me add that the expression "influence the members of the audience" reflects the function of rhetoric from the point of view of the public speaker; from the point of view of the polity as such, the function of rhetoric is to supply the available reasons for the decisions being considered. (There is more on social deliberation as the domain of rhetoric in this volume Chapter 2; more on the social function of rhetoric in Chapters 5 and 9.)

Moreover, it is clear that as soon as we are looking at claims for something being the best choice, we are dealing with conductive reasoning. This is precisely because any purposive choice, although it may be good from some point of view, might still be bad from another point of view. In fact these other points of view are always relevant—or shall we say, in the standard case they are. Admittedly, it is also true that Aristotle in his discussions of practical reasoning and practical inference has pretty consistently limited himself to cases where only one end is taken into consideration and only one available means to bring it about is considered;

thus one might get the false impression that in practical reasoning, as in deductive reasoning, the normal case is that we are able to establish a chain of reasoning which necessarily leads us to a conclusion, namely a claim regarding what one should do. That is to say, we might get the false impression that there is something we might call practical inference which is structurally very similar to deductive inference, and we might be tempted to introduce the term "practical syllogism," although there is no such expression in Aristotle, and although the examples of practical reasoning we find in him are hardly ever syllogisms in form, but are much more complex.

Two further claims that I made at the outset should also be explained, namely these: "goodness" of arguments is gradual, and it is, in certain respects, relative to individuals. Both of these claims are based on the multiplex structure of practical reasoning. Nuclear power plants may help us reduce CO_2 emission, and that is a good reason for building them—but *how* good? That of course depends on what can be said against building them, i.e., it depends on what other goals might be adversely affected, and what alternative means might also be available to promote the same goal. For example, the risk connected with radioactive waste from nuclear power plants is a well-known reason that speaks against them, and so is the cost of building them, running them, demolishing them, etc.

What we have here is clearly a case of conductive reasoning, insofar as there are, in Govier's terms, "separately relevant non-sufficient factors" as well as "counter considerations" (Govier, p. 69). But once we recognize the presence of separately relevant factors and counter considerations, we must necessarily ask how strong these factors and considerations are, i.e., "how much support they give to the conclusion" (Govier 1987, p. 70)—in other words, we must recognize that their strength is a matter of degrees. And along with that insight also goes the insight that the strength of the reasons and counter considerations is, at least in some respect, relative to individuals. How could it be otherwise? If we recognize that the weight of reasons and counter considerations is assessed by individuals along continuous scales, how likely would it be that all individuals would assign exactly the same weight along these scales to all these reasons and counter considerations?

In the example of the nuclear plants this problem of indeterminate degrees is obvious: just *how* strong is the counter consideration about radioactive waste disposal? Experts can give us figures about radioactive decay and the likelihood of accidents now and in the future—but how much

weight these considerations will have in our deliberations on whether we to choose to build more nuclear power plants is still, and unavoidably will be, relative to individuals. Some will decide that the counter considerations outweigh the pro considerations, others that they do not. There is no objective answer to the question—which amounts to saying that the answer is relative to the individuals who have to decide.

This is so not only because of the fact that individuals must be assumed to assign weight to any given factor along a continuous scale, but also because of the fact that there is no inter-subjectively recognized *commensurability* between the scales that will be involved. For example, just how much weight will risks affecting future generations have in relation to risks affecting the present generation? What part should be played here by ethical considerations? And how much weight will risks as such have when held against the putative benefits in regard to the prevention of climate change, especially when these benefits are also putative and of uncertain magnitude—just as are the predicted climate changes? Moreover, what about the financial costs of making certain choices now, held against the putative future costs of not making them? And what about risks and costs held against benefits?

My point is not that we should not try to hold all these considerations together and against each other, because we have to, and that is what deliberation is all about; but the point is that there is not and cannot be any authoritative and inter-subjectively demonstrable way or doing so.

5. The vexed subjectivity issue

The issue I have just addressed is one that, in my view, constitutes a sore point in philosophy and philosophically based argumentation theory. It is an issue that you had better not touch, or you risk an outcry of pain and rage. Philosophers, at least those coming from logic and epistemology, seem so wary of being associated with any sort of "subjectivism" or "relativism" that they, as I see it, will blithely deny the testimony of an overwhelming bulk of everyday experience. Even those few philosophers, such as Wellman, Govier, and other informal logicians who have been bold enough to reject deductive validity as the one criterion of good argument, and who have given us a three-dimensional method of assessing arguments (e.g., Govier's "ARG": Acceptability, Relevance, and Good Grounds/weight)—even these thinkers have been extremely wary, or blankly unwilling, to concede the property that seems to me to follow with necessity from the

admission of relevance and weight as aspects of a good argument: namely the fact that both of these aspects, and in particular weight, are subject to legitimate individual judgment.

Wellman's position on this issue is representative. He insists that the "validity" of arguments in conductive reasoning is not governed by rules or criteria—where, we should remember, the "validity" of an argument does not mean deductive validity, but simply that it offers "good reasons for its conclusion" (Wellman 1971, p. 21). Yet both in *Challenge and Response* and elsewhere he professes ethical objectivism and says, e.g., "that there can be one and only one correct answer to any ethical question and that which answer is correct is independent of anyone's acceptance or rejection" (Wellman 1968, p. 98). Although he insists that no objective weighing can take place, as in an actual pair of scales, his basic position is that "we" will weigh the arguments in conductive reasoning as if we were one person; the way to find the "correct" answer is to continue our discussion, because such "disagreement can be overcome by further reasoning" (Wellman 1975, p. 220). His view of validity "projects an ideal of universal agreement" (Wellman 1971, p. 96) —with one restriction "built into the claim": "a valid argument will, through the process of criticism, remain or become persuasive *for everyone who thinks in the normal way*" (ibid.).

We may remark, in passing, that this "restricted" view of validity would seem to place Wellman in the company of Perelman and his "universal audience." But in any case, I suggest that even if we accept the claim that valid arguments in ethics (and other instances of conductive argument) will be persuasive for anyone who thinks "in the normal way," this does not prove the stronger claim that "there can be one and only one correct answer to any ethical question" (or similar claims in different phrasings). For what is a "valid" argument to Wellman? It is simply a good one; but it is not one that *entails* its conclusion. And even if we all (or at least all those of us who are "normal") were to agree that an argument is "good," this may not lead to the same conclusion for us all, for it does not *entail* its conclusion.

There is, for one thing, the matter of just *how* good the argument is, i.e., the matter of its *weight*, and even more importantly, of its *relative* weight when held against the counter considerations. Of these "weights" Wellman, Govier, and others have clearly said (and I could not agree more) that they *cannot* be "calculated," "measured" or the like. In fact, Wellman himself, almost inadvertently as it appears, concedes that the "weighing" may not lead to the same result for everyone; the whole "calculation" idea "suggests too mechanical a process as well as the possibility of everyone reading off

the result in the same way"; so assuming that everyone would do that is apparently erroneous, and furthermore we should avoid "suggesting any automatic procedure that would dispense with individual judgment" (Wellman 1971, p. 58).

This is possibly the only reference to individual judgment in the book, but it represents, I would say, an inevitable insight that many philosophers have sought to repress because they feel about it the same way one feels about a sore tooth. In ethical assessment, there *is* individual judgment involved, certainly in the sense that the relative *weight* of a consideration when "weighed" against other considerations, pro and con, is subject to individual judgment. As I said, even if we do admit that we may have universal agreement among all normal people that an argument is "valid" (i.e., good)—and we may admit that for the sake of the argument—we would still, to reach the one "correct" answer together, also have to agree on the *relative* weight on this consideration when "hefted" against all the others (to use the term Wellman suggests). And why and how would we assume that this quasi-universal agreement on the relative weight of all relevant considerations would come about? To claim that it would is an empirical hypothesis that, as I see it, is challenged by a massive amount of daily experience. Do disagreements of this nature generally get resolved by prolonged discussion between people holding different ethical and political views? Have recurring disagreements of this kind generally been settled by centuries of discussion among philosophers? These, obviously, are "rhetorical" questions: they answer themselves.

Most of those who happen to read this paper are probably academics who routinely serve as examiners in their institutions. In my own country, many exams are graded by two examiners—one "internal" (the instructor who has taught the course) and one "external" (an experienced expert in the field, coming from outside the institution). Often in grading a paper or an oral presentation these two will disagree on the "conclusion," i.e., the grade to be given. Both may agree on all the noteworthy properties of the student's effort, the good ones as well as the not so good ones; so there will be agreement on which considerations are acceptable and relevant to the assessment. Yet we may still disagree on the relative weight of these considerations, and often do; for example, the fact that the student does not spell very well will undoubtedly count as a "negative" factor for both of us, but in the eyes of the external examiner this shortcoming is perhaps weighty enough to cause the grade to be a C, all things considered, whereas to me it

is not quite as weighty as that, given the "positive" considerations, to which I assign more relative weight.

In such cases we naturally discuss things for a while, but let us say that this does not bring agreement. We also look at rules and regulations, but although there is a clause about "formal" factors such as spelling having some weight in assessment, there is no rule to help us decide whether this degree of bad spilling is enough to land this effort in the C category, or whether it should still be a B. Yet rules dictate that we should find agreement.

What I believe this example shows, along with countless others in everyday disagreements in the domains of ethics, politics, education, etc., is that there *is* no "one and only one correct answer" as to the merit of the student's paper. The external examiner and I both disapprove of bad spelling; it just happens that, in this particular case, he disapproves more strongly than I do. To generalize, the circumstance that different individuals may legitimately differ as to how much relative weight they assign to relevant considerations when making practical decisions such as this one, is an undeniable and ineradicable fact of life, and moreover, I suggest, one that no one could really *wish* would go away.

6. The problem of many dimensions

Moreover, while this example highlights a problem that could hardly be seen as ethical, the argument I have made could be made in an analogous manner for issues with clear ethical considerations involved. Let us imagine a student who does rather badly at an exam. The external examiner wants to fail her; I lean towards letting her scrape through. I now point out that she is eight and half months pregnant and poor as well; in fact, she comes from a disrupted family with a history of drug abuse, crime, sexual abuse, etc. The external examiner seems unmoved. I now change tactics and point out that the department depends for its survival on the number of graduates we turn out, and every "pass" grade counts. Silence. I further inform my co-examiner that the young woman, if she passes this exam, will have finished her final degree, and incidentally that her whole family, or what is left of it, is eagerly waiting at home to start the celebrations, but also she already has a been offered a rather nice job, provided she gets her degree; however, if she fails to get it, and thus the job, her residence permit will expire, and she will be expelled from the country, to which she came as a fugitive from Afghanistan, and where she worked her way up through the educational

system, studying at day and washing floors at night. Back in Afghanistan, by the way, there's a good chance that she will be caught by fundamentalist thugs and killed.

What would you say if you were the external examiner in this case? Would you say that *all* these considerations are absolutely irrelevant and should not have been cited, and we should simply assess the young woman's performance at its merit and fail her? Or would you say that one or two of these considerations, especially the last one, might after all fact be relevant to what you decide, and if relevant, it is also weighty enough for you to let her pass? (In any case, you would probably say that the internal examiner—that is, me— "doth protest too much.") Or would you say that the first considerations I mentioned are perhaps relevant, but surely not weighty enough to let her pass, but the last ones are?

What I believe the example shows is a number of things: 1) It is also true of *ethical* considerations that they may legitimately be assigned different relative weights by different individuals. 2) Moreover, it is quite possible that also the *relevance* of given considerations in ethical and other practical issues may legitimately be differently assessed by different individuals. 3) In relation to a given decision, such as grading an exam, there may be considerations belonging to different *dimensions* of judgment—considerations which are not compatible because they are incommensurable. In academic exams, grading is supposed to be determined only by professional (i.e., scholarly) considerations; but who can deny that, at least in extreme cases, other considerations, such as ethical and humanitarian ones, to say nothing of economic ones, may legitimately be cited.

Even if, in deliberating on a given choice, we did not have multiple and incommensurable factors to deal with, and even if we could have some kind of objective quantification of just how much good that choice would do in relation to a given goal or value, and even if that choice could objectively be said to do a lot of good, it would still be categorially wrong to call it a "true" choice. Truth value is one thing, but the kind of value that a good choice brings is another.

7. The spectrum of claims

I have now tried to show that argumentation scholars should distinguish between claims about beliefs and claims about choices. But instead of advocating a dichotomy I wish to suggest that our typology of claim types

should probably be more like a spectrum. It would have purely theoretical (truth-functional or alethic) claims at one end and purely practical ones (choices) at the other. In between, and probably with intermediary areas separating the "types", should, at least, be types like interpretive claims and value claims of different kinds.

A hasty version of such a spectrum or continuum might look like the chart on page 165.

Some of the points I wish to make are these:

There are intermediary gradations between pure factual (alethic) claims and pure claims of choice. Norms and values are in a third position in between; they are not facts about the world as such, nor are they pure arbitrary choices. Aristotle sees them as intuitions underlying claims of choice.

Carl Wellman, it might be added, is another philosopher who thinks that practical claims are distinct from epistemic ones, and also that there are additional subtypes and intermediary types of claim or argument that ought to be distinguished. Some claims or arguments are more practical than others: "The most practical arguments, I suppose, are those that conclude with judgments of what ought to be done or ought not to be done; only one step more remote from practice are those which conclude with value judgments setting up goals worthy of pursuit or evils to be avoided" (Wellman 1976, p. 531). So Wellman too sees value judgments in some intermediary position between epistemic claims and "real" practical arguments.

Specific evaluations are more like choices than abstract values are; using abstract values as warrants, we make specific evaluations of acts or objects in our world.

Interpretive claims as a category seem to me to resemble choices even more. We choose a paradigm or a theory in scholarship not simply because we think it is truer but because it addresses other issues, generates more valuable insight, more interesting discussions, more perspectives—in short, we think it yields more value along several dimensions. (For example, I think it generates more value to look at practical argumentation as conductive rather than as presumptive, deductive, abductive, or what other alternatives there might be.)

Stipulative claims are almost like interpretive claims; they are purposive choices, and as such they cannot have truth value, but we make them

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because we think they bring other kinds of value, such as being more practical.

Finally, the purely *practical claims* about purposive choices are similarly made by people who think that on balance the values, purposes or goals they subscribe to are more strongly promoted by a certain choice than by others (for example, by *not* making the choice they consider)—but as we saw, because of the complexities of practical choices, including their irreducible relativity to individuals, it is categorially misleading to describe them as either true or false.

In conclusion, my aim has been to demonstrate that argumentation theory should abandon all attempts to look at all claims as if they were of one and the same type, namely propositions which may be true or false. Instead of seeing truth value as the only kind of value that is relevant for argumentation theory, we should recognize that there are many values—in fact, an open set of them—that are relevant in argumentation, and that it ought also to be so in argumentation theory.

The difference I have highlighted between propositions and proposals for purposive choice is basically a reflection of distinctions recognized not only in Aristotle but in modern philosophy as well, notably in the distinction in speech act philosophy between assertives on the one hand and directives, commissives, etc., on the other (Searle 1975, 1983), or he distinction set up by Austin (1953), Anscombe (1957), and others between utterances with a word-to-world "direction of fit" and those with a world-to-word direction of fit (such as directives and commissives).

Understanding the importance of this difference will make the need for a developed theory of conductive argument more obvious, for argumentation for purposive choice is necessarily conductive. If argumentation theory insists on neglecting these insights, it makes a bad choice.

Claim type	Factual (alethic, theoretical) claims	Claims about social facts, such as norms	Claims about values	Evaluations	Claims about choice of interpretive claims	Stipulative claims	Practical claims (i.e., about purposive choice of action)
Examples of claims	There is water on Mars; "Look, Sire, the peasants are revolting!"	This nation is a multicultural one	Multicultur-alism is good; Charity is the greatest good	Hubble was the greatest astronomer in the 20th Century; Picasso sucks; "Yuck! The peasants are *revolting!*"	Let's do Deconstruc-tionism rather than mainstream literary history	Pluto is henceforth not a 'planet', but a 'dwarf planet'	Let us send an expedition to Mars
Examples of reasons given	The channels we see could not be caused by anything but water	Everyone keeps saying it	Multicultur-alism makes for a more peaceful world	Hubble's discovery of the expanding universe is mind-blowing	It's more interesting and will get us more graduate students	It is more practical that way	It will make us top nation again and generate a lot of great technology

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