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For Deliberative Disagreement: Its Venues, Varieties and Values

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Even in established democracies, an observer of political debates and political communication generally cannot help being struck by discouraging developments. The notion of "fake news" represents just one of the worrying factors. The purpose of this article is not to investigate causes, but to sketch a theory of political debate that can provide a reasoned foundation for normative monitoring of debate and undergird proposals for improvement.

The Essential Nature of Political Debate

A basic insight for a theory of political debate is that at its core it is "practical reasoning" – i.e., is essentially and ultimately about what to do. Political debate and argumentation is discourse about what a polity, such as a nation, is to do. Many argumentation scholars arguably fail to fully recognize what this insight entails. A philosophical axiom, an heirloom from Plato, prevents them from it: the idea that all argumentation is about the truth of some claim. This goes even for much work within "Informal Logic", a school in argumentation studies that arose from a need to adequately consider practical argument, in the belief that deductive logic could not do so. For example, Johnson & Blair in their classic textbook, *Logical Self-Defense*, posit as a shared feature of all arguments that "their motivation is doubt about the truth of the claim that occupies the position of conclusion" (2006, p. 246). These scholars founded the most realistic philosophically based approach to real-life argumentation, and as will be clear I have learned much from them. I suggest, however, that they underestimate the distinctive differences between arguments about truth (often called "theoretical" reasoning) and arguments about what to do (practical reasoning). I hold that a fuller recognition of these differences is needed, and will contribute to this below.

To be sure, truth is crucial in reasoning of any kind, and premises advanced in practical reasoning always include (and should include) claims that should be true. But what we ultimately argue about in practical reasoning, the issue at the top of the argumentative hierarchy, is not the truth of a claim, but a choice to do something (e.g., to build a wall). A choice or decision is often put before us in the form of a "proposal"; but proposals are not "propositions". Neither a choice, a decision, nor a proposal can be true or false in the same sense that a proposition may be true or false.

Think about our most quotidian decisions and choices. At a restaurant with friends, we may want to choose between the lamb and the chicken. The chicken is cheaper, but the lamb is probably nicer. We may now reason, in discussion with our companions or inwardly, on what to choose; we may choose the same or differently, but whichever choice anyone makes cannot be said to be "true", nor "false"; it would be a misuse of these concepts to predicate any of them of a choice made by any of us. A friend who has the lamb may afterwards say and feel that it was indeed the "right" choice, while another – perhaps out of a felt need to economize – chose the salad and felt, with equal justification, that this was the right choice *for him*. Using "truth" in a way that would accommodate both these choices would make the concept useless for most of the other uses we normally make of it.

Practical Reasoning Always Involves Value Premises

A further mark of practical reasoning is that it invariably involves value concepts used (explicitly or implicitly) as premises. Someone who recommends a given action may reason that this action has a value ‘in itself’–it is simply, he believes, something one “should” do. Such a concept is often referred to as a “deontic” norm or reason. Someone else might reason that the action he recommends will produce “consequences” he sees as valuable; this is “consequentialist” reasoning. The values invoked may be of many sorts: ethical, aesthetic, prudential, economic, altruistic, self- serving. But for deontic as well as consequentialist reasoning it holds that the value is “inherent”, either in the very action he recommends or in the foreseen consequences of it.

In contrast, a typical kind of reason in reasoning about truth occurs when some circumstance is cited as a “sign” or symptom that some proposition is true. For example, if a young woman presents at the doctor’s with nausea, the doctor will see this as a possible symptom of pregnancy. Aristotle calls this a *sēmeion*, i.e., a sign that something is the case with some likelihood; a decisive sign is a *tekmērion* (*Rhetoric* 1357b). The nausea is a reason of some strength (or “weight”) to believe the woman is pregnant, but further examination will be in order. It may then be found that the nausea was caused by gastritis, not pregnancy. Its weight as a sign of pregnancy is then canceled.

Richard Whately formulated many insights relevant to deliberative rhetoric, such as the following (to insert his point into the present discussion, note that his “moral and probable reasoning” equals our notion of practical reasoning): “It is in strictly scientific reasoning alone that all the arguments which lead to a false conclusion must be fallacious. In what is called moral or probable reasoning, there may be sound arguments, and valid objections, on both sides” (1867 [1828], I, iii, p. 7). When a value, *V*, that a certain action *A* is said to have or promote is cited as a reason for undertaking *A*, then, even if a decision to undertake A is overturned by other reasons, the value *V* is still inherent in *A* and is *not* canceled.

We may restate this as follows. Whereas a reason in theoretical reasoning invites us to infer a certain conclusion, a reason in practical reasoning invites us to prefer a certain action. Both kinds of reason may invite more or less strongly. Their respective conclusions may both be rejected. If we had inferred pregnancy from the nausea of the young woman with gastritis, we would have inferred falsely. But in practical reasoning, as for example in the choice between lamb and chicken in the restaurant, where the lower price of the chicken invites us to prefer it, this property remains an uncancelable (irrefutable) advantage. It is an “inherent property”. This is implied when we say that it is an advantage. Only there were other reasons speaking against it that we took to be weightier.

Irrefutable Reasons on Both Sides

This is in the nature of practical reasoning (including political debate). It implies that deliberation, meaning a balancing of considerations, is called for: there will typically be good, irrefutable reasons speaking both for and against any given choice or proposal.

Furthermore, in deliberation it is not enough to have *one* goal or intention or value in mind and *one* action that is seen as a means to promote it. “Deliberation” is a cognate of *libra*, a pair of scales. Weighing something on a pair of scales implies that there is something on both dishes. Taking the weighing as a metaphor for deliberation, we see that deliberation is reasoning in which we consider not only *one* given action as a means to a goal; we need also consider *other* means that might serve the same goal, and/or how *other* goals (values) might be affected by the action.

For example, although buying a flashy sports car might bring me ease of transportation and aesthetic bliss, it might also exhaust my economic means. My use of the car might further result in increased CO2 emission that contradicts my view of proper climate-conscious behavior. More generally, whenever we consider a given action because we expect it to promote a desired goal, we have occasion to remember that we may have (in fact we inevitably have) other goals in life that might be thwarted if we choose to undertake the proposed action. Moreover, other actions may probably serve just as well or better as means to the goal; or the action might be only a partial or an uncertain means to the goal.

Further, different *kinds* of considerations that cannot in a simple way be said to pertain to “goals” or “intentions” might influence our reasoning. This is the case with deontic norms such as “What one has promised, one must do”, “Thou shalt not kill” or “Thou shalt not eat pork”.

These examples also make it clear that often such norms are only recognized by a certain set of individuals; but for any deontic norm it holds that those who recognize it do not do so for the sake of any particular goal or intention that they believe will be promoted by the observation of it. Lukes (1992), among others, is very clear on this kind of heterogeneity among the considerations that may be pertinent in situations of moral and other kinds of practical conflict.

Multiple, Multidimensional Goals and Values

Deliberation, then, is practical reasoning that involves a broader scope of considerations than just one single goal and one single means. Humans have multiple “goals”, “ends”, or “values”, or as political scientists often say, “preferences”, and in a given situation they speak for opposite courses of action. Moreover, they may belong to different categories or “dimensions”. This is so not just between individuals, but also seen from a single individual’s point of view. The philosopher Isaiah Berlin (1998) has spelled this out clearly. Even if one goal is at times seen as trumping all others, we inevitably will find that *several* different actions might be undertaken to promote it, and it may be uncertain which will serve it best and with the least cost in regard to *other* goals. For example, the defeat of Hitler’s Germany was surely the one paramount goal considered by Churchill and the British government during World War II, but that only intensified their need to deliberate on which means might best serve that overriding goal. Deliberation and attendant concepts are crucial in Aristotle’s thinking, notably in his ethics, rhetoric, and politics (on this see Kock, 2014; reprinted in Kock, 2017). He is mainly concerned with the ethical choices individuals make and the collective choices made by citizens in a polity. He also says that the function or duty of rhetoric “is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us” (*Rhetoric* 1357a), that is to say, issues of common concern in a polity. For such matters, as for less substantial ones, Aristotle insists on some of the same points that were made above concerning practical reasoning in general. The kind of choice we make, he declares, is “not either true or false”: *eti ouk esti proairesis alēthēs ē pseudēs* (*Eudemian Ethics* 1226a).

Aristotle’s term for choice or decision is *proairesis*, which literally means “taking one thing rather than another”. As individuals, we may deliberate on whether to take lamb, chicken or a salad, or whether to sell all our possessions and give the money to the poor; as citizens we may deliberate on whether our polity should build a wall. We should understand, with Aristotle, that what we may truly “deliberate” about, either in ethical reasoning, political debate, or other types of practical reasoning, is not whether something is the case or not, or even whether something “ought” to be the case or not; it is not even whether we ourselves “ought” to do some particular thing. Believing or knowing that one “ought” to do something is not, strictly speaking, the end point of deliberation. “Nor yet”, Aristotle continues in the passage just quoted, “is choice identical with our opinion about matters of practice which are in our own power, as when we think that we ought to do or not to do something” (*Eudemian Ethics* 1226a). Even the opinion that one *should* do something is just one reason of one particular kind, pertaining to a given choice (as we know, choices between duty and inclination are classic themes in narratives). It is a “reason” in practical reasoning, a consideration that should be taken into account, and one that we may use as an argument in debate; sometimes this consideration is sensed to be so “strong” that we believe it decides the matter for us, determining our choice. It is this kind of choice or decision that is *ultimately* at issue in practical deliberation and defines it nature. Of this choice Aristotle says that it cannot be true or false – whereas the *reasons* or *premises*, i.e., the considerations or arguments that speak for or against the choice, obviously can. For example, the assertion that Saddam Hussein had WMD’s was used as a reason in the deliberation about whether to go to war against Iraq. Its truth or falsity was a crucial issue in itself, but not one that anyone could "deliberate" about.

Aristotle does not have a term that directly corresponds to "practical reasoning", but he does have one, or rather two, for "deliberation", namely *boulē* and *bouleusis,* as well as a corresponding verb: *bouleuein*[1]. *Boulē* is the Greek word for "will" or "decision" (they are etymologically related to the English word "will"); it may designate the processes and/or institutions through which we may come to shared decisions (the Greek Parliament in Athens is called the *Boulē*). Below I will define deliberation more fully as a certain subcategory of practical reasoning, but we may note here that something Aristotle says about deliberation also goes for practical reasoning in general: "We deliberate about things that are in our power and can be done" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1112a). As we shall consider in a moment, Aristotle also makes clear that we can deliberate about such things *only*. Following deliberation, we may then come to a choice, a *proairesis*.

This feature of deliberation distinguishes practical reasoning in general and is insisted on or implied by Aristotle in numerous passages (e.g., the *Nicomachean Ethics* 1112b, 1139a, 1140a; the *Eudemian Ethics* 1226a-b, the *Politics*, e.g., 1298a, and the *Rhetoric*, e.g., 1357a, 1383a): deliberation is a distinctive kind of reasoning that can only meaningfully take place with regard to actions that those who deliberate "have it in their power to undertake" (not that one can necessarily finish or accomplish these actions). Those who rule a country may deliberate on whether to go to war; but in normal cases they may not *deliberate* on whether to win that war.

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1. Strangely, although Aristotle repeatedly insisted on the precise and restricted meaning of *boulē* or *bouleusis* and the cognate verb *bouleuein,* we find that even the most respected translators of Aristotle's works (e.g., Kennedy, 1991) often dilute its precise meaning, translating it, apparently at random, as "discuss", "debate", and only sometimes as "deliberate"

Deliberation Weighs Reasons

We should not be misled by the fact that Aristotle sometimes speaks of a simple form of practical reasoning that considers just one end and one means at a time, as in this example: “if everything sweet ought to be tasted, and this is sweet, in the sense of being one of the particular sweet things, the man who can act and is not restrained must at the same time act accordingly” (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1147a). Such examples have led commentators to speak of Aristotle’s “practical syllogism”—a term he never used. But his insights about practical reasoning and deliberation are not exhausted with these pedagogical ’test tube’ examples. The philosopher Donald Davidson says, in a discussion of Aristotle’s view of practical reasoning: “The practical syllogism exhausts its role in displaying an action as falling under one reason; so it cannot be subtilized into a re-construction of practical reasoning, which involves the weighing of competing reasons” (1963, p. 697). In other words, the so-called “practical syllogism” misrepresents the complex nature of practical reasoning. Davidson is also right to insist that syllogistic reasoning fails to account for the weighing of *competing* reasons. It is true, though, that there *are* examples of practical reasoning which seem to involve just one action and one reason. Aristotle’s “sweet things” example is that kind of reasoning, and he has others of the same kind. In our time, many of Douglas Walton’s writings on practical reasoning (e.g., 1990, 1997) feature similar examples. But they are not strictly deliberation.

Deliberation, rather, is reasoning that seeks to “weigh” *reasons for and against* a decision. As Davidson says, “competing” reasons must be weighed. But note also that it is not deliberation when mere claims (proposals) are stated and considered. What we can “weigh” in deliberation is the *reasons* speaking for a proposal, against those speaking against it. The substance of deliberation is reasons, not claims. When pondering my choice at a restaurant, I only deliberate if I consider *reasons* that speak for each of the alternatives (and note that there are several competing choices, as well as several reasons for and against each choice).

This bears emphasizing because many theorists of deliberation seem to think that the essential feature of deliberative democracy is merely that the *claims* (“preferences”, “aspirations”, etc.) of all members and groups may be freely stated and heard. Many thinkers on deliberative democracy are content to emphasize that claims by individuals or groups should be heard and not suppressed or excluded. This requirement is just, but asks too little. Of those who want their claims to be heard we should also require that they *support them with reasons*.

However, deliberative democrats, often inspired by (early) Habermas, have been more concerned with matters of access and other preconditions of deliberative communication; they have had less to say on *what* those with access should bring to the deliberative process, and about *criteria of merit* or *quality* that could be applied to it. Instead, they tend to emphasize that what makes for proper deliberative communication is the freedom and equality inherent in the Habermasian “ideal speech situation”. Habermas, in those writings that have influenced deliberative democrats most, has emphasized absence of coercion, deception and ‘strategic’ intent in those who deliberate. Under such conditions “the force of the better argument” is believed to prevail, leading towards a rational consensus (Habermas, 1990, 1997 and many other writings). However, this emphasis should be accompanied by requirements regarding what participants *say* when they participate. Similarly, references to the force of the better argument, when mentioned, are primarily used as injunctions to participants to *yield* to this force; but usually such injunctions give little or no indication as to what a “better” argument *is*.

John Rawls, Habermas’s counterpart as a discussion partner and major theorist of democracy, was, despite claims to the contrary, not a consensus theorist. His notion of the “burdens of reason” (1989) or “burdens of judgment” (1993) provides an understanding of *why* consensus in political disagreements should not, even theoretically, be expected.

What Norms If Not ‘Validity’?

Habermas’s discourse ethics and his norms for rational procedure and good argumentation are defined either by their results (consensus) or by the (non-coercive, non-“strategic”) attitudes and intentions of the arguers. But neither kind of definition will, taken by itself, tell us what the substantial properties of good or “rational” argumentation are.

Even less will they tell us which of two good arguments is the “better” one. We began by establishing that in practical reasoning there are usually “good”, irrefutable arguments both for and against a proposal, so it follows that a good argument (reason) is not the same thing that logicians traditionally call a “valid” argument—i.e., an argument from which the conclusion (in this case, the proposed policy) can be deductively inferred: obviously, two contradictory, “valid” conclusions cannot both be deductively inferred from the same set of premises.

We need to say this because many theories and textbooks still cling to ‘validity’. In practical reasoning, however, including political deliberation, what is at stake is not the truth of some proposition but the adoption of some proposal—about which a choice can in principle never follow deductively from *any* set of premises. Rhetoric, we might say, comes in where deductive validity goes out.

Is the validity criterion then of any use at all? Yes, it is of *some* use. Debaters routinely pretend, explicitly or implicitly, that their arguments for a proposal *entail* an adoption of it. Such false pretenses should be exposed. In politics the yardstick of deductive validity (entailment) has this, rather limited, purpose. But where policies and decisions are concerned, we are dealing with practical reasoning; here there is never, in principle, any deductive entailment from the arguments for a proposal to the adoption of it. As the philosopher and Aristotelian expert Anthony Kenny has it, “if a project or proposal or decision is good, that does not exclude its being also, from another point of view, bad” (1979, p. 146). Hence, we cannot blame debaters for not presenting arguments that *entail* their proposal, since that is in principle not possible; but we can blame them for *pretending* that they do. When we look for other theoretical models of how deliberative reasoning proceeds, and how it *should* proceed, we find that the most widely used models and theories adopted in textbooks are, even if helpful in some respects, insufficient.

Toulmin's model (1958) has proved useful and durable in providing a layout for how an argument is (or rather, should be) put together; but it is, in my view, best suited for describing scholarly and scientific argument. In fact, Toulmin's purpose in 1958 was to say something about argument in those fields. Also, the model applies to just one single argument at a time; but in practical reasoning, as we have seen, the standard case is that several relevant arguments can be adduced on both sides of an issue, and that raises the question of how these are to be addressed and assessed together.

Another influential effort in argumentation theory has been the Pragma- Dialectical school (as, e.g., in van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004). Its doctrine has much to recommend it in certain respects, such as its insistence on rules ("commandments") for reasonable argument, but it misses the nature of practical reasoning in laying down the axiom that any argument in principle aims at "resolving" a dispute (i.e., achieve consensus) between the discussants, and in assuming that this will in fact ensue if both discussants only make reasonable and non-fallacious moves. This assumption is a corollary of the theory's failure to recognize a special status for practical reasoning.

The renaissance thinker Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) ridiculed the medieval manner of seeking logically deductive proof in human or theological matters; commenting on the philosopher Boethius (c. 600) he wrote:

> What is more inept than arguing the way the philosophers do, where, if one word is wrong, the whole case falls? The orator, on the other hand, uses many reasons of various kinds, he brings in opposites, he cites examples, he compares similar phenomena and forces even the hidden truth to appear. How miserable and inept is the general who

> lets the entire outcome of the war depend on the life of one single soldier! The fight should be conducted across the whole front, and if one soldier falls, or if one squadron is destroyed, others and still others are at hand. This is what Boethius should have done, but like so many others he was too deep in love with dialectics (Valla, 1970, p. 113).

With this eloquent swipe Valla captures the fact that in practical reasoning, because of the lack of deductive proof, there is instead a *variety* of argument types and devices which may all lend *some* strength or weight to a reasoner's case, but never *prove* it. In a similar vein, the rhetorician Thomas Farrell described rhetoric as the principal art "for giving emphasis and importance to contested matters; in other words, for making things matter" (1998, p. 1). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) make the unavailability of deductive proof the defining feature of what they call "argumentation" (as distinct from "demonstration", but for them synonymous with "the realm of rhetoric"); they also, in several passages, specify that argumentation aims at decision and action. The lack of a *logic* for practical, value-based argument was precisely what sent them on their great systematic search for all the ways people actually argue in such matters, resulting in *The New Rhetoric*.

How are we then to assess practical argument, including political debate? Building on "Informal Logicians" such as Govier, Johnson, and Blair, I posit the following three dimensions of argument appraisal in practical reasoning. Arguments should be:

1. Acceptable
2. Relevant
3. Weighty.

Acceptability

Acceptability in deliberative rhetoric means, roughly, that factual propositions offered as reasons should be "true and fair" – in a sense similar to that ascribed to it in auditing. Outright falsity is not the only vice violating the acceptability criterion. Accountants and auditors, as noted, use the expression “true and fair”. This means that alleged facts and numbers provide a good and trustworthy account of how things really are, not just that the numbers, taken in isolation, are “true”, but that we get a full picture.

Already during the US Presidential campaign of 2012 (to say nothing of the 2016 campaign), observers and media were concerned that the world was now decisively entering on the “post-factual” age – a scenario articulated by Manjoo (2008) and one that also underlies the activity of fact-checking organizations such as the website Factcheck.org, headed by rhetorician Kathleen Hall Jamieson (on which see, e.g., Jackson and Jamieson, 2007). A rising concern is that powerful, highly vocal organizations and individuals, including Presidents, are harnessing the power of online media and, energized by their own web-based “echo chambers” (Sunstein, 2009), will construct their own artificial worlds of made-up or doctored “facts”.

Relevance

Next, the *relevance* criterion. Applying Toulmin’s term, we may say that relevance is conferred by a recognized “warrant” sanctioning a reason for a claim. Warrants may be explicit or implicit (they often are the latter). Problems of two kinds arise: 1) when an argument is not in fact covered or subsumed by the warrant it depends on, and 2) when the warrant itself that it depends on is one that hearers cannot endorse. The warrants appealed to in practical argument may be value concepts and ideological positions endorsed by the debater, but not by his opponents or hearers. This is a reason why an implicit warrant that a reason depends on for its relevance should, if possible, be made explicit; a lacking or dubious recognition will thereby be brought to light.

At the same time, it is inevitable that warrants may be differentially recognized by different individuals. For example, even if everyone accepts it as a fact that in 2013, 99.8 percent of the Falkland Islanders voted for staying British, Argentina did not recognize popular majority as a warrant and instead based her claim for the islands on a territorial warrant—which, in turn, Britain does not recognize. This example makes it clear that relevance appraisal in argumentation, more so than the assessment of factual accuracy (acceptability), allows for a certain amount of legitimate, even deep, disagreement—or, to invoke a controversial notion, *subjectivity*. More of this below.

Weight

Finally, the *weight* criterion. Even if an argument has factual acceptability and irrefutable relevance, argument appraisal is not done. The warrants in political debate tend to include multiple *value* concepts. Hence, a policy might be good according to one relevant value, for example that one should keep one's promises; but it might be bad according to another relevant value, for example economic prudence. Say that a government has made pre-election promises—but that it may later deem it prohibitively expensive, or otherwise imprudent, to fulfill them. It may find that the situation has changed so much that it now rejects the policy it promised to implement. It may also, without the situation having changed significantly, simply have come to ascribe more weight to a consideration that speaks against the policy—and decide not to implement it. The question then arises of how much weight should be attributed to the promise originally made—and how much to the reasons that now cause the government to go back on it.

This is a typical case of reasons on opposite sides of an issue belonging to two different orders or 'dimensions'. Again we face what we might call the *multidimensionality* of arguments in political debate. Many citizens in such a case would probably feel that both contradictory warrants have *some* relevance, so the task for deliberating citizens would be to assess their *relative* weights, i.e., prioritize them. That would be each citizen's personal responsibility: there is no pre-ordained or intersubjective way to determine whether the ethics of promises or alleged prudence has more weight in the specific particular case.

Thus *legitimate subjectivity* in relation to the relative weights assigned to competing considerations is omnipresent. Not only are relevant warrants in practical argumentation typically multiple and may easily conflict; also, because they are multidimensional, they are not *commensurable*, i.e., there is no objective, authoritative norm for determining their relative weights.

In choosing the term ‘weight’ for the third argument criterion I choose to deviate from the corresponding term often used by Informal Logicians: ‘sufficiency’. The problem is that sufficiency is a dichotomous notion. A quantity either is or is not sufficient; it cannot be sufficient by degrees. I either have sufficient time to catch my plane, or I don’t; I cannot catch it ‘to some extent’. A ’sufficient’ condition for something in math is one from which that something *necessarily* follows; deductive inference obtains. Informal logicians rightly want to abandon deductive inference as a necessary criterion of good argumentation; ‘sufficiency’, if it is to have a clear meaning, lets deductive inference in again by the back door. In deliberation we may instead say that a reason has ’a *certain* weight’.

This implies that the weight of reasons adduced on the issue is a matter of *degrees*. This again means that other reasons relevant to the issue may be felt to have more weight, or less, than this one. Paradoxically, to say that a reason has a ‘certain’ weight really implies that is has an *un*certain weight. But note also the implication that some reasons may have no weight at all (because they are factually unacceptable and/or irrelevant). Speaking of the ‘weight’ of reasons as a matter of degrees, and of subjectivity as legitimately involved, does not imply that *all* conceivable reasons advanced on the issue have weight; on the other hand, we can never assume that a reason with a certain weight conclusively *decides* the issue. ‘Weight’ is an appropriate metaphor in that it conveys the notion of degrees—but inappropriate in that it suggests an absolute, objective property, whereas argument weight is relative and subjectively assessed. ‘Weight’ is thus different from logical validity. A logically valid argument decides the issue, but a reason that has a certain weight in deliberation may be outweighed by another, countervailing reason—and yet the first reason is not canceled but continues to have a certain weight.

Borrowing the term introduced by Wellman (1971), such reasoning is sometimes called “conductive”. Conductive reasoning, as we have seen, involves considering how several ends or values will be affected by the action—as well as by the omission of it. This again will easily lead to a consideration of alternative means to each of the ends or values we wish to respect or promote.

Varieties of Deliberation

Practical reasoning, including deliberation, comes in various forms. These may be placed along a dimension that has, at one end, *inquiry*, and at the other end what we may call *advocacy*. Inquiry-oriented practical reasoning is aimed at coming to a decision on what to do. A reasoner engaged in deliberative inquiry is undecided about what to do in a given situation. In contrast, a reasoner engaged in advocacy *has* come to a decision on what to do and engages in deliberative discourse to persuade others to endorse that decision. Inquiry may occur within a single individual’s mind and not result in one word being uttered. It may also be an interpersonal activity—in which a group of persons discuss to reach a decision on what to do, either as a group or as individuals; and this activity may take place with only that group of people present, or in front of an audience.

As for advocacy, it is perhaps contradictory to imagine it taking place in a single individual’s mind. Yet we may imagine a person who has decided, in one part of his or her mind, on a given action but needs to engage in ‘inner advocacy’ to persuade himself/herself to actually do it. The natural setting for advocacy, however, would be an interpersonal exchange where person *A* tries to persuade person *B* to support a given proposal, and perhaps conversely; or a situation where *A* and *B* discuss in front of an audience, whose members they both try to persuade to endorse their respective proposals. Think about parliamentary debates and political TV debates. Clearly debaters here are usually not trying to, nor meant to, persuade each other; instead, they try to impress and influence the audience, whose presence is either physical or mediated.

The distinction, within practical reasoning, between inquiry and advocacy allows for a clearer definition of rhetorical argument. *Rhetorical argument is advocacy about practical issues*. In the nature of the case, rhetorical argument typically belongs in public contexts, i.e., in front of audiences. This, too, is basically Aristotle's definition of rhetoric. It is narrower than those of, for example, Quintilian or Joseph Campbell. How closely Aristotle sees rhetoric as tied to the shared concerns of the citizens in the *polis* is apparent in many aspects of his work.

In the *Rhetoric*, we saw rhetoric defined as dealing with those things on which we deliberate (*bouleuein*) (1357a). Also, we hear in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that rhetoric is a part of the art of politics, together with strategy and economics (1094a). Politics is the highest art because its aim is the good life of all citizens of the polis (cf., e.g., *Politics*, 1252b); but all three arts are indispensable in the endeavour to approximate that supreme goal. And of course there are other "arts" involved in statecraft—we might think of the arts of acting ethically, of lawgiving, of meting out justice, of organizing the upbringing of young citizens, and several others.

Rhetoric As Part of Statecraft

Even this hasty enumeration makes it clear that in statecraft, i.e., politics, several incommensurable dimensions may intersect in deliberation. For example, a war may appear to be the only ethical action in a situation where tyrants, or barbaric bands of thugs, murder or torture innocents. Yet such a war might be hazardous, as a strategist might point out, or costly, as an economist might caution. Similarly with all the other decisions faced by the polity: any moot issue will in principle turn out to involve intersecting considerations, placing us in a situation where they all demand our attention, but no logical or otherwise philosophically cogent solution to our quandary is at hand. This kind of situation, and the discourse it engenders, is precisely the subject matter of rhetoric, because this is the sort of issue on which we may, and should, deliberate. And because rhetoric is about the sort of decisions that make up statecraft, it also follows that statecraft should, as a matter of course, include rhetoric.

As already stated, rhetoric should not, if we follow Aristotle's lead, be defined as discourse using particular persuasive devices, such as *pathos* or *ethos* appeals (a *means*-based definition); nor should it be defined as discourse whose dominant aim is to persuade (an *aim*-based definition). These are, nevertheless, the predominant ways rhetoric is understood and defined by most of those non-rhetoricians in other academic disciplines who have intended either to find a place for rhetoric in their own thinking, or to distance themselves from it. But neither the use of certain appeals and devices nor the dominant aim to persuade is, in Aristotelian terminology, the *diaphora*, i.e., the essential property of rhetoric (cf. *Topics*, 101b); both are some of the peculiar properties (*idia*) of rhetorical argument and follow as natural corollaries of its essential property: that of being public advocacy about decisions on issues of shared concern.

Through the ages rhetoric has been the object of much suspicion, especially among philosophers such as Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Habermas, just to name a few. Central to their suspicion has been the view that rhetoric and rhetors are unconcerned with truth, or that they subordinate truth in argument to effect. This view stems from the fact that the defining feature of rhetoric is taken to be the rhetor's aim to win, and/or the rhetor's use of a broad range of persuasive devices as means to achieve that aim. However, if we realize that rhetoric as defined in the rhetorical tradition itself is to be seen as a subcategory of practical reasoning, and that what is ultimately at issue in practical reasoning (i.e., decisions) cannot meaningfully be categorized as either 'true' or 'false', then it becomes clear that a rhetorical arguer is not *ultimately* arguing about the 'truth' of anything. This follows from a proper conceptual understanding of what practical reasoning is; it is not a matter of rhetorical arguers being, by definition, unconcerned with truth (although some are).

Several contemporary democratic theorists wish to welcome ‘rhetoric’ in political discourse, thus abandoning an ingrained philosophical mistrust; for example, Iris Marion Young speaks of “inclusive political communication”, where rhetoric is invited and welcomed. By “rhetoric”, Young means emotional tone, figures of speech, and forms of communication other than speech:

“All these affective, embodied, and stylistic aspects”, she says, “involve attention to the particular audience of one’s communication” (2000, p. 65). In this, Young takes issue with, among others, Seyla Benhabib, who, Young says, constructs “an opposition between the rational purity of argument and the irrationality of other forms of communication” (p. 78). Young, in a true democratic spirit, is concerned that “expectation about norms of articulateness and dispassionateness sometimes serve to devalue or dismiss the efforts of some participants to make their claims and arguments to a political public” (2000, p. 38).

In a sense, however, what Young has done for rhetoric among political theorists is essentially to cement the same problematic distinction that thinkers like Benhabib (1996) have assumed between pure, rational argument on the one hand and, on the other hand, rhetoric, seen as “other forms of communication”—only with the difference that in Young’s conception, rhetoric is something to be included rather than dismissed. But her definition of rhetoric is still means-based, thus missing what Aristotle and thinkers following him saw as its defining feature. Neither the approving nor the dismissive attitude to rhetoric, defined as discourse using emotional, stylistic, and audience-related appeals, is in line with the original *domain*-based definition of rhetorical argument, from Aristotle onwards, as advocacy in front of an audience about decisions of shared concern.

We have applied three major distinctions so far: first, between practical and theoretical reasoning, where practical reasoning is action- or choice-oriented, while theoretical reasoning is truth-oriented. Second, between one-sided and conductive reasoning, which enabled us to define deliberation as conductive practical reasoning. Third, between inquiry-oriented and advocacy-oriented reasoning, which allowed us to define rhetoric as advocacy-oriented practical reasoning. Given this, it seems natural to ask whether there is both one-sided and conductive (i.e., deliberative) rhetoric. The answer is yes: the fact that rhetoric is advocacy does not prevent it from considering both the pros and the cons of an issue. To do this would, since rhetoric is advocacy for a given decision on the issue, typically involve some explanation by the rhetor of *why* the pros, in the rhetor's estimate, outweigh the cons. Such an explanation, in turn, would typically involve *answers* to the cons. Rhetoric with these properties could properly be called deliberative, while remaining advocacy.

Arguably a lack of adequate answers to counter considerations is one of the dominant vices besetting public political debate in Western democracies (to say nothing of autocratic regimes elsewhere). Informal logician Ralph Johnson (2000) has advanced the useful concept of "dialectical obligations" as an essential component of a set of norms for argument. Arguers should not only present adequate arguments, but also answer counter considerations adequately. But what, in practical reasoning, is an "adequate" answer?

I suggest this norm: to be adequate, an answer must *either* give good reasons why the counter consideration it addresses is unacceptable or irrelevant; *or*, if this cannot be done, it must *recognize* that the counter consideration is in fact acceptable and relevant—and then address its *weight*. That is done, as noted above, by giving reasons why one thinks it has less relative weight than the reasons that speak *for* one's proposal. This kind of public deliberation—in the literal sense of balancing the scales—is the sort of input that may best help citizens decide whose policy deserves their support.

Venues of Deliberation

As already indicated, practical reasoning may occur either in private (i.e., in an individual's mind), or among a group of people, or in a public setting, i.e., with other people as spectators or listeners. Deliberation may and should occur on all these three levels. And those who believe in deliberation as essential to democracy ought also to emphasize that there is a need for deliberation, or for *more* and *better* deliberation, on them all. Of those who have discussed deliberation in theory and in practice, some have mainly concerned themselves with the *public* level, i.e., the level where public sources such as politicians address audiences or debate in front of them. There has also been much work on deliberation on the middle (interpersonal) level, i.e., where citizens deliberate with each other. The “deliberative polls” organized by, or inspired by, James Fishkin are in this category (see 1991 and many other writings), along with, e.g., the “Australian Citizens’ Parliament”, whose main organizer was John Dryzek, himself a leading theorist of deliberative democracy (see Dryzek, 2009), and the “Study Circles” initiatives (Scully and McCoy, 2005).

However, as political theorist Simone Chambers (2009) has argued, the focus on designing and studying deliberative events of this sort has, despite the merits of these events, meant that attention has been turned away from deliberative democracy in society at large, in favor of democratic deliberation in closed groups. Deliberative democrats, Chambers holds, have too one-sidedly argued for deliberation among citizens who meet to debate with each other; this kind of deliberation, however, will never engage more than a fraction of the population, and more attention must be given to deliberation in the public sphere—that is, what we may call ‘trialogical’ deliberation, usually brought to citizens by the media, wherein no citizens, or only few, take an active part, but in which citizens are the third party: the audience.

While recognizing that deliberation is indeed central to democracy, Chambers argues, we should realize that “the mass public can never be deliberative”, i.e., we shall never see all the members of the mass public engage in deliberative debate with each other. However, the public rhetoric we hear, mainly through the media, does have a potential for providing deliberation to serve deliberating citizens’ needs – but only a potential. Most public rhetoric is what Chambers calls “plebiscitary”, i.e., based on pandering and manipulation. So scholars should critically assess public rhetoric, and the channels that provide it, in hopes of "making the mass public more rather than less deliberative": "If rhetoric in general is the study of how speech affects an audience, then deliberative rhetoric must be about the way speech induces deliberation in the sense of inducing *considered* reflection about a future action" (2009, p. 335).

With a phrase borrowed from Robert Goodin, such reflection may be called "deliberation within" (2005). Its importance was also realized and expressed by Perelman as part of his effort to formulate a "new rhetoric"; he speaks of "intimate deliberation", i.e., "weighing for one's self the pros and cons of a proposal" (1955, p. 798).

"Deliberation within" may even be seen as the basic form of practical reasoning—in the sense that one solitary person is trying to decide what to do. The solitary deliberator is, in most cases, engaged in inquiry, i.e., in making up his or her mind, that is, considering what position to take on an issue of personal, interpersonal or public concern.

Monological, Dialogical, Trialogical

The distinction between public, interpersonal, and internal reasoning also brings to the fore another distinction that is related but not identical: the distinction between "monological", "dialogical" and "trialogical" reasoning. Blair (1998) has referred to monological reasoning as "solo argumentation". This sort of reasoning is often taken to be the essence of what rhetoric is about. Themistocles's speech urging the Greek mariners to remain at Salamis before the battle (Herodotus 8.83) is a prime example. Dialogical reasoning is just as familiar. Interlocutors seek a shared decision about a choice or problem they face, engaging either in inquiry or advocacy (or a mixture). One interlocutor may convince the other(s) that the decision she supports should be adopted. Or they may reach a shared decision different from any originally advocated by any of them—perhaps a compromise, or a shared, but new position they may all prefer. On the other hand, after deliberating none of them may be willing to adopt the decision advocated by any of the others, and no shared decision, as a compromise or otherwise, comes about. In many deliberating assemblies, for example a parliament or a corporate board, what happens after this point is reached is that a vote is taken, and the decision advocated by the largest group is then adopted. These scenarios all belong to ‘dialogical’ category: participants deliberate jointly, seeking a shared decision, one way or the other. Whether there are two or more persons or parties involved is not essential.

In “trialogical” reasoning (a term probably first used by Klein, 1991), two or more rhetors are engaged in joint deliberation; however, their purpose is not primarily to seek a shared decision. Rather, the purpose of each is probably that some of the third parties—the citizens who listen, the TV viewers who watch—should choose to support his or her proposed decision. As for the purpose of the debate as such, it may be a variety of things—for example that the audience should be helped towards making their own decision, perhaps by vote. A trialogical debate may involve just two rhetors, as the debate in Thucydides (III, 37-49) between Cleon and Diodotus on the punitive steps to be taken against Mytilene; but often there are more, as in Parliamentary debates. In all these situations the rhetors who debate are engaged in competitive advocacy for support from the third parties and are not in any real sense seeking a shared decision with each other.

Enhancing Deliberation

I agree with Chambers that the most important loci for deliberation in a deliberative democracy will probably not be organized events where citizens actively deliberate with each other; rather, citizens’ “deliberation within” and their dialogues with each other are the modes of deliberation that will and should constitute most of the deliberation in a democracy. Yet to enhance these modes of deliberation among citizens we need more and better deliberation in the public sphere, including trialogical, deliberative rhetoric, to serve as input for citizens' deliberative reflections, whether 'within' or in dialogue. The primary need is for deliberative conversation among citizens, and for "deliberation within" by individuals.

However, evidence suggests that many people, out of conflict avoidance, hesitate to "discuss politics" with others that they expect to disagree with (e.g., Mansbridge, 1983, 1999; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002). Meanwhile, polarization increases. It seems that it is primarily the most politically active, the partisans, who enter into "cross-cutting conversations", i.e., dialogue where both sides of an issue are stated—a prerequisite for deliberation (Mutz, 2006). But Mutz's evidence also suggests that if citizens discuss political disagreements with "civility", they find less discomfort and more benefit in it. This again suggests that an important goal of education in democracy and citizenship should be to train students in schools to have cross-cutting discussions that are candid but civil; that might motivate them to engage in more such conversations.

As for public political rhetoric, I propose that scholars and commentators should expressly monitor and assess it from the point of view of *citizens*. An important goal will be to make it better suited to be a model for citizens' rhetorical culture. So what must political debates and debaters deliver in order to meet citizens' needs?

The starting point for an answer is that political debate should function as *input for citizens' deliberations*. It should help each of us citizens estimate what problems we face, what choices are available for doing something about them, and which of these we deem best. Further, on the basis of who proposes the best choices, we citizens might better deliberate on whom to entrust with the leadership of the polity. Debates should help each one of us take a stand on what should be done—before it is done. In short, public political debate should be deliberative in order to help citizens deliberate.

Political communication has been thoroughly professionalized during the last couple of decades. The number of speechwriters and communication consultants employed by politicians, cabinets and political organizations has exploded. All of these communication experts are, of course, paid by the politicians and organizations that employ them. This means that their natural vantage point will always be how their employers can communicate so that *their* own interests (or perhaps one should say their assumed interests) will be best served; it is not natural for these communication professionals to ask how their employers can communicate so that it serves *citizens'* interests best. Moreover, a significant trend has been for political communication professionals, who typically have a background in journalism, to switch back and forth between employment by the political actors and by the media. Thus, when political media consultants switch over to the media, they will often tend to apply the same optic as before; a journalist who used to work as a communication consultant for a politician will continue to use the same concepts and standards as then. He or she will typically ask, "How well did this politician serve his own interests in saying what he did, the way he did?" – rather than, "How well are citizens' needs and interests served by politicians communicating to them like this?" To serve those needs, deliberative rhetoric should, I suggest, focus on *issues*, *proposals*, on *pro and con arguments* about those proposals, and on *answers* to those arguments. Observers who monitor public political debate, like the writer and perhaps the readers of the present essay, should do so with those requirements in mind.

Again, a main function of public debate, and of all political rhetoric, should be to provide usable input and models for citizens' deliberations, either in conversations or "within". But much public debate fails to do this: it is permeated with debate "vices" (cf. Kock, 2011, 2014) and becomes, in Chambers' term (2009), "plebiscitary". So plebiscitary rhetoric should be exposed in order that deliberative rhetoric may be enhanced.

This is the foundation on which we should base a normative assessment and attendant suggestions for the improvement of public political rhetoric. It should be deliberative in order to help citizens deliberate *among* themselves, and *within* themselves.

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