Rhetorical Argumentation: The Copenhagen School

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Christian Kock and Marcus Lantz

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Chapters Previously Published

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Introduction

Christian Kock and Marcus Lantz

Why is it relevant to present a collection of works on a rhetorical approach to the study of argumentation? This introduction will address that question and then go on to present the contributions that constitute this book.

Aristotle taught us that rhetoric is centered around deliberation, and he emphasized that we may only deliberate about things that we can in fact undertake (*Rhetoric*, 1357a, and elsewhere, mainly in the ethical works). Rhetorical argumentation is, in its essence, the bedrock of such deliberation: It provides the reasons for and against various choices, which we exchange when, in some human collective, we are to decide on a course of action. To be sure, not all rhetoric is argumentation. But all deliberative discourse uses rhetoric, and in such discourse rhetorical argumentation is central (and should be, we might add). Hence, we have found it in place to present a collection of work that revolves around the conception of rhetorical argumentation just outlined and asserts the centrality of that notion in any theory of argumentation.

Argumentation Studies as a Discipline

Within the last few decades, argumentation theory and argumentation studies have emerged as a scholarly discipline. An increasing number of journals, scholarly books, regular conferences, institutional units, and study programs have seen the light across the world of academia, all of which declare themselves as representing that discipline. Of course, argumentation has been studied intensively since antiquity, but until the latter part of the 20th century, the study of argumentation consisted mainly of

specialized efforts within larger categories, such as philosophy, logic, dialectic, rhetoric, or jurisprudence.

Argumentation studies, this remarkable innovation in humanistic scholarship that began and grew in the second half of the 20th Century (as noted by Hauser, 2007a), was spearheaded by a few pioneering figures (among them Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958; Toulmin, 1958), who were, in turn, followed by a larger, but still countable group of bold thinkers and organizers. Among those who laid the groundwork for the institutionalization of argumentation studies it is not amiss to single out two loosely organized groups of individuals, several of whom are still alive and active today.

There is the 'Informal Logic' initiative in Canada, represented (more or less full-throatedly) by such figures as J. Anthony Blair, Michael Gilbert, Trudy Govier, Leo Groarke, Hans Hansen, David Hitchcock, Catherine Hundleby, Ralph Johnson, Robert Pinto, Christopher Tindale, and Douglas Walton (the order in this and the following enumerations is alphabetic); many of these are or were active at the University of Windsor and, since 2006, at the Centre for Research in Reasoning, Argumentation and Rhetoric there. And there is the 'Amsterdam School', propagating the theory and practice of Pragma-Dialectics, as defined and spearheaded by Frans van Eemeren, Bart Garssen, Rob Grootendorst, A. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, and Peter Houtlosser—to mention just a few names. Both groups, sometimes in collaboration and with many overlaps, have done admirable work organizing conferences, editing, and contributing to journals, publishing impressive handbooks, and all in all producing a remarkable output of scholarship. Add to these great individual scholars working within the overlapping fields of rhetoric and argumentation. A small sample of American figures would include William Benoit, Wayne Brockriede, James Crosswhite, Douglas Ehninger, Jeanne Fahnestock, G. Thomas Goodnight, Jean Goodwin, Robert Ivie, Sally Jackson, Scott Jacobs, Henry Johnstone Jr., Fred Kauffeld, Dale Hample, James F. Klumpp, Michael Leff, Daniel O'Keefe, Joseph Wenzel, Charles Willard, David Zarefsky—one could go on. In Europe, apart from the Amsterdam school, several

outstanding scholars have helped constitute the discipline—among the names coming to mind are Jean-Claude Anscombre, Marianne Doury, Oswald Ducrot, Manfred Kienpointner, Joseph Kopperschmidt, Christoph Lumer, Christian Plantin, Harald Wolhrapp… . The argumentation community is rapidly proliferating worldwide, and argumentation studies as an academic discipline would not have been able to establish itself in the widely visible way it has if it had not been for the work of all these enthusiastic and prolific scholars, along with others—pioneers all, with two 'schools' as the primary centers of gravity.

We now present a book that aims to define and represent a third direction, if not even a separate 'school', in argumentation studies. We present a 'school' that has learned much from all the scholars who launched argumentation studies as an independent discipline. It is a school that has overlaps with many of them, but also offers a coherent perspective and emphasizes insights that may have been underrepresented.

The specific orientation and emphasis holding together the selections in the present volume can perhaps best be understood if one remembers that the scholars represented here in this collection have all worked within, and issued from, a *rhetoric* program. The distinctive *rhetoricity*[1] of the present volume is clearer when we remember that the two strong schools that we have alluded to both originate in intellectual environments that were predominantly philosophical (respectively with a logical and a dialectical tilt). Allow us to briefly elaborate.

Informal logic primarily developed, as the name suggests, as a reaction against the way reasoning and argumentation were studied and taught within a formalized logical framework that informal logicians viewed as a straitjacket, perhaps primarily because of its reliance on deductive entailment as the quintessential form of argument.[2] Pragma-dialectical argumentation studies combine

1. Our aim here is not to present a long discussion of the evolving definitions of rhetoric (see e.g., Foss 1990); for insightful discussions on the scope of rhetoric and the critique of 'Big Rhetoric', see Schiappa (2001), and, in Danish, Kock (1997).
2. For a lengthier discussion of the philosophical foundations of respectively pragma-dialectical argumentation studies and informal logic, see Kock (2009). For the rich and

normative insights from philosophical dialectics, philosophy of science and dialogue logic with pragmatic insights from speech act theory, Gricean theory, and discourse analysis. In the United States, studies and pedagogy in argumentation were taken up by scholars many of whom took a major inspiration from Stephen Toulmin—a philosopher whose thinking on argumentation informed the work of, e.g., Brockriede and Ehninger as early as 1960. There have been other important initiatives, but most of these too have taken their inspiration from branches of philosophy, or from the borderland between the philosophy of language and linguistics. Significant attempts to develop an argumentation theory rooted in rhetoric have indeed been made, but without coalescing into a well-defined school.

Rhetoric in Copenhagen

In a sense, rhetoric has a long tradition at the University of Copenhagen. We can even trace it back to as early as 1720, when the Norwegian-born scholar, playwright and poet Ludvig Holberg—sometimes called the father of Danish literature—was appointed Professor of Eloquence (essentially a chair in Latin literature and composition, of which Holberg had complete mastery). In 1730, he moved on to the chair in history, to which he had substantially contributed, and he served as the University's Chancellor for a year. In a hilarious comedy Holberg ridiculed academics' misuse of scholastic logic, but his conception of rhetoric was just as dismissive, being thoroughly Platonic, in line with the Socrates of *Gorgias*. Much like numerous Enlightenment figures such as Locke before him and Kant after him, the term 'rhetoric' to Holberg signified primarily empty bombast and flattery—a vain attire easily stripped away by the merciless North wind, as one of his eloquent epistles describes. Aside from that,

at times polemic conversation between rhetoricians and philosophers, that we may easily trace back to Aristotle and Plato (Conley, 1990), we suggest (re-)reading Campbell (1776) and diving into the annals of the journal Philosophy & Rhetoric (e.g. Verene 2007).

rhetoric had no home at the University of Copenhagen until a small rhetoric program was instituted in 1970, offering a two-year degree with emphasis on speech communication and classical rhetorical theory. From 1988, the university upgraded the program to a full master's-level degree which encompassed writing and argumentation as well. To fill the latter gap, Charlotte Jørgensen and Merete Onsberg, both of whom are represented in this volume, published the first edition of their textbook *Praktisk argumentation* in 1987. It successfully filled a need even outside the rhetoric program and went into several editions. Its main theoretical inspiration was Toulmin's theory in a form that drew on Brockriede and Ehninger's adaptation, but which also was clearly marked by the authors' schooling in classical rhetoric, emphasizing, among other aspects, stasis theory and rhetorical criteria for assessing arguments.

A next stage in the formation of what we now venture to call a Copenhagen 'school' of argumentation studies was the research project "Rhetoric that Shifts Votes"—a collaborative effort by Charlotte Jørgensen, the speech expert Lone Rørbech, and Christian Kock. He had come to the program in 1987 from a position as Associate Professor of English and a year as visiting professor of English and American literature at Indiana University, Bloomington, and his primary task was to build the writing component of the program. These three conceived the idea of doing empirical studies on persuasive rhetorical practices by exploring a data set of rare value: a series of 37 'townhall'-style debates, televised by the national broadcasting corporation. In each of these, two politicians or other public figures argued for, respectively against, a motion drawn from current political issues in front of a live, representative audience, with audience votes on the motion taken both before and after a 50-minute debate. This material was not a series of experiments but consisted of authentic debates, with voting statistics. The three scholars realized that this would make it possible to match the debaters' net results in terms of votes won or lost with their general attributes as well as with their specific rhetorical strategies and maneuvers, resulting in a statistically validated profile of typical 'winners' in debates in this

format. The immediate outcome of this project was a massive book in Danish (Jørgensen et al. 1994) and a research article in English (1998). At the same time, the three also used materials and examples from the project in their teaching.

One of the insights that emerged from the project on "Rhetoric that Shifts Votes" was the following: Both opponents in such debates (which might, for example, concern a motion like "The free access to abortion should be restricted") might have good and legitimate reasons speaking in their favor with a certain weight—except that this weight was in fact *un*certain. 'Weight' clearly appeared to be a factor that could not be objectively gauged by philosophical reasoning or any graded criteria that might be proposed by argumentation theorists. The citizens who were to vote on the motion might legitimately, as individuals, ascribe different relative weight (or 'strength') to arguments (reasons) offered by the two debaters—as people in fact do on real-life issues in the political as well as the private sphere. In other words, there is a legitimate subjective variance in citizens' assessment of the relative weight of reasons advanced in public political debates. The notion of the relevance of a given consideration invoked on a certain issue might also (without judgment of its weight) allow for graded assessment; hence, a certain subjective variance may legitimately be involved here as well.[3] On the other hand, it was also clear that debaters' reasons, and debate behavior generally, might meaningfully be assessed from a normative angle. For example, debaters might fail to offer any reasons at all, wasting

3. It is obvious that in argument assessment, the two dimensions relevance and weight do not stand alone. Before they can be applied, a dimension relating to the 'factual' dimension of reasons offered as arguments must be invoked. The informal logicians have proposed the term 'acceptability', thereby sidestepping various epistemological quandaries inherent in the notion of 'truth'. Another useful terminology is the phrase 'true and fair', used by accountants in auditing financial statements. The triad acceptability-relevance-weight closely resembles the "ARG Condition" for argument assessment stipulated in Govier's admirable textbook (1985 and many later editions), except that where she lets "G" stand for "good grounds". The corresponding term used in this book, 'weight', more clearly emphasizes that this is not a binary dimension but on that involves a graded and relative assessment—which again implies a legitimate element of subjective variance.

their own and the audience's time with irrelevant material. Or reasons might be advanced that could be accorded no relevance, or whose implied relevance could be seen to rely on assumptions that were dubious or highly controversial. Or reasons given might fail to instantiate the warrants that were advanced or implied to make them relevant. Or debaters might fail to respond to countervailing reasons or to objections to their own reasons. These types of debate behavior, and several more, could be identified that were apt to reduce the value and usefulness of the debate as seen from the audience's angle.

In short, this study of a unique empirical corpus of debates on public policy issues brought home a basic, dual insight. It could be seen as the defining position of the Copenhagen 'school'. An apt formula for it might be a key phrase from John Rawls (1989, 1993), "reasonable disagreement":

On the one hand, an objective and graded determination of the exact merit of the practical argumentation advanced by the two sides in a debate cannot, as a rule, be obtained; the fact that both relevance and weight are parameters that allow for some subjective gradation further tells us that there can be no philosophically decisive, absolute answer to substantive issues such as, for example, whether abortion should be freely accessible, restricted or even outlawed. It follows that argumentation theories are misleading if they assume—whether in a Habermasian or a pragma-dialectical framework—that a properly conducted exchange of reasons about practical decisions will generate or approach consensus.

On the other hand, it is just as clear that norms are needed to assess the merit of debates and debate behavior and perhaps regulate public political debate. The Copenhagen orientation recognizes the meaning of formulating normative rules and even 'commandments', as for example the pragma-dialecticians have done, although it advocates broader, less formalized, more rhetorical framework that goes well beyond the identification of 'fallacies'. Instead. the desirable uses and functions of debates in a democratic society are key.

In a free society, there is no absolute 'truth' on such vexed policy issues; no deductively valid conclusion on matters like this can be drawn, neither in specific cases nor in general, and thus reasons advanced in a debate cannot be required to build a case that is deductively valid in the traditional logical sense. Significantly, there is no such concept in Aristotle as a 'practical syllogism', i.e., an algorithm that, in a given situation, tells a polity categorically what to do. On the other hand, it is still meaningful to speak of good and bad reasons, and to seek, formulate and teach criteria for such reasons, and one can still seek to define what a meaningful and productive debate is, and what types of debate behavior help or harm the productivity of a debate.

We should note, in all justice, that the notion of deductive validity does not, because of this, lose its meaning. The term is traditionally (and meaningfully) used to say that the truth of an argument's conclusion follows from the truth of its premises. Note, however, that this only holds for conclusions that are statable as *propositions* (as conclusions are usually, and tacitly, assumed to be). They may indeed be true, i.e., follow from the truth of their premises by deductive inference. In practical argumentation, such propositions serve as *premises*; however, conclusions in practical argument are not propositions, but *proposals* to enact choices—and, in a pithy formulation by Aristotle, "choice is not true or false" (*Eudemian* Ethics, 1226a). This has to do with the fact that several mutually independent warrants are relevant to the issue. For example, most people probably find it true that abortion is, in some sense, an undesirable thing; but to prohibit a specific instance of it, or to ban abortions altogether, is also, many would agree, undesirable.

This is where rhetoric enters the stage.

Two further fundamental insights that came home with great strength to the scholars involved in the "Rhetoric that Shifts Votes" project concerned 1) the importance of the *audience* in a political debate, and 2), even more fundamentally, the social *purpose* of political debates.

First, political debates should be studied and evaluated with a view to what they offer *to the audience*; that is, they should be seen

as 'trialogical', not merely as dialogical, as they have traditionally been considered since Plato's Socratic dialogues (but similarly in philosophically based theories of proper communication and argumentation, such as those of Habermas and also the pragma-dialecticians). Moreover, consensus cannot be reasonably expected, although consensus may be desirable and to be welcomed if it emerges, as will compromise (which is not the same thing); we should instead point to the other productive purposes that debates may have in a democratic society, as well as to the ways in which they can turn useless or destructive.

Secondly, consideration of the televised townhall debates made it clear that what accounts more than anything for the particular properties of argumentation as heard there was precisely the fact that these were *political* debates, understood broadly as debates about imminent proposals for action facing a polity—i.e., they were public, practical reasoning about what the polity to which the debaters and the audience belonged should *do* (or not do). Ultimately, they were *not* about what the 'truth' might be regarding some moot issue, nor were they even about what the 'true' moral assessment of something might be.

This emphatically does not mean that factual claims advanced as reasons in such debates should not be required to be true or at least probable or 'acceptable'; that they should be so is obviously one of the first requirements that any reasonable set of normative criteria for debates should posit. Also, what has just been said does not in any way mean that moral assessments and moral arguments have no place in political debates. But for one thing, several claims that may all be true may speak for opposite conclusions; that is the case in all sorts of debates. Furthermore, a distinctive feature of *practical* debates (debates about what to do) is that value judgments not only *may* be invoked, but *have* to be invoked, even if implicitly, and it is an inescapable circumstance that reasons invoking different and sometimes incompatible value claims may legitimately speak, with a weight that may be debated, for opposite courses of action. This is so because the set of relevant values, even those held by one single individual, is *multidimensional*, i.e., values are of many kinds: There is, for example, ethical value,

economic value, aesthetic value, value in regard to lawfulness as well as to justice (these are not always the same thing) … and there are more. And all the values relevant to a specific choice may not, and often do not, speak for making the same choice.

A further finding of interest emerging from the project is the following, which will probably not surprise argumentation scholars, but it might be news to some political theorists. Contrary to what an 'aggregative' understanding of democracy would predict (as defined by, e.g., Dryzek 2002, 10), 'preference transformation', i.e., citizens' change of their views on political issues under the influence of deliberative argumentation, is in fact possible and actually takes place. In the debates studied in the project, an average of nearly one fifth of the audience members changed their votes on the motion between the three positions Pro, Con and Undecided after witnessing c. 45 minutes of argumentation, and nearly a tenth switched from Pro to Con, or conversely. Thus, all citizens' 'preferences' are *not* fixed. Argumentation matters.

These insights, and others, came to inform the research work and the teaching practice in argumentation at the rhetoric program in Copenhagen. It was also clear that there is much in the rhetorical tradition from Aristotle onwards that clearly aligns with these insights and adds to them, and these impulses enriched and complemented the approach that had gradually crystallized.

A further boost to the basic orientation came from the groundbreaking work of Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. Further impulses, as noted, came from Stephen Toulmin's theory, which emphasized that 'warrants' for good argumentation come in many forms and degrees, dependent on 'field'—rather than just as the one-size-fits-all kind of 'validity' hallowed by traditional logic.

In speaking about the 'Copenhagen School' of argumentation studies, we do not wish to over-emphasize the geographical location in this collection; we must stress that of course the tradition for studying argumentation rhetorically is not restricted to scholars connected with the rhetoric program at the University of Copenhagen. All the scholars represented in this volume studied

and/or taught there, but some only did so briefly, to retire or move on to other institutions. What connects them is not institutional affiliation, but a set of broadly conceived notions that constitute what we might call a Wittgensteinian 'family likeness'. Some share these or these features, others these and these, all weaving an irregular web of commonalities in which no one has all the features, and no feature is shared by all. Furthermore, we see that the strong international connection between schools and traditions continues to grow, and thanks to the editors at Windsor Studies in Argumentation we can present an open-access collection of contributions available to curious thinkers, rhetoricians, rhetors and deliberators across the globe.

The book spans wide, but its focus is on deliberation concerning choice of action, typically in the civic sphere, and as it happens such a view has enjoyed conditions for flourishing in Copenhagen. If we take a glance at other academic schools originating (or nurtured by thought and an invigorating intellectual environment) in that city, there is, for example, the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum mechanics emanating from Niels Bohr and the Institute that bears his name; there is the Copenhagen School of structural linguistics ('glossematics') headed by Louis Hjelmslev; most recently there is the Copenhagen theory of international relations established by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver. But it is clear that ideas are central, not location. Yet, we emphasize contemporary Copenhagen as a place where a *rhetorical* approach to argumentation studies blossomed from the 1980s on, and where we continue to see new ideas grow in the argumentative landscape.

More on Theoretical Foundations

We might also approach the broad conception underlying this book in a wider, less geographical, less historical, more theoretical perspective. After all, we can hardly talk about a specific school of argumentation theory about without examining and unfolding its philosophical foundations—even though we are then also wandering into an epistemological minefield. Nonetheless, we

dare to do so in our attempt to lay out the key philosophical premises and be transparent about our stance.

It is well known that Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is the first attempt in the West at a tightly reasoned definition and theory of that discipline. Among his crucial statements is this, which was referenced above, but which is less frequently cited than certain others: "The duty of rhetoric is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us" (1357a). Now, "such matters as we deliberate (*bouleuein*) upon" are, as several other remarks by Aristotle in the Rhetoric and the ethical writings help make clear, actions *that we may decide to undertake*—not matters on which we have no influence, such as the existence of gods, or the origin of the universe, or the nature of the good, or whether it will rain tomorrow, etc. We deliberate on what we will do—that is, we use rhetoric to talk about just that. *Bouleuein* is etymologically related to *volo, vouloir, wollen, will*, etc. In fact, this remarkably restrictive Aristotelian demarcation of rhetoric is not one that all rhetoricians would fully endorse today, nor is it one that has been enforced, for example, in the rhetoric program at the University of Copenhagen; but it will serve well to circumscribe the *core* domain of rhetoric—the sort of discourse for which rhetoric was originally conceptualized and used: argument about action.

The monumental work of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) embraced the rhetorical tradition more or less in its strict Aristotelian version, equating rhetoric with argumentation, and positing a crucial distinction between argumentation and 'demonstration'. We would perhaps prefer to say that rhetoric has argumentation at its center but encompasses many other potentially persuasive resources. Because argumentation (which, to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, equals rhetoric) is mostly, if not exclusively, about what to do, not just about what is true, it does not allow for deductive validity in reaching conclusions. This completely accords with the tenets we have sketched above. Demonstration is the domain where deductive entailment and proof, or something very similar, is possible, while argumentation/ rhetoric subsumes a rich storehouse of practices and devices that

may serve to persuade, and may *have* to serve, because we cannot prove. A central subset of that domain is precisely discourse where humans debate on what to do. An emphasis on decision and action as the core subject domain of rhetorical discourse is present in numerous passages of *The New Rhetoric* and even more in Perelman's later writings (e.g., 1979 [1970]). With their combined breadth and depth, they established a modern foundation for the ontology of rhetorical argumentation theory.

As for the way Toulmin's argument theory in *The Uses of Argument* (also from 1958) shaped the Copenhagen approach, the most significant factor was perhaps not Toulmin's persuasive argument model, but rather his insistence (presumably Wittgenstein-inspired) on an ontological *pluralism* in argumentation: There are several different 'uses' of argument, and there are several argument 'fields', each with field-specific practices and argumentative norms. There is more to argumentation than deduction, and even the inclusion of deduction's old sidekick, induction, far from completes the picture. That made this philosopher's theory relevant and useful to rhetorical pedagogy, although Toulmin originally conceived his work as a contribution to the theory of science (see also his *Return to Reason*, 2001).

A last inspiration that we also want to emphasize is the insightful debate influenced by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's article "The Ontological Foundations of Rhetorical Theory" (1970), which links to Henry Johnstone's article "The Relevance of Rhetoric to Philosophy and of Philosophy to Rhetoric" (1966). Campbell underlines key insights about the nature (ontology) of rhetoric and rhetorical criticism and, indeed, also our perspective on rhetorical argumentation, namely that all humans are subject to and capable of persuasion. The key difference is whether we view human actors as rational, behavioristic, or symbol-using, and Campbell's argument supports the latter perspective. Of key importance to the rhetorical perspective on argumentation, which we present here, Campbell underlines that "…this theory (the symbol-using view, ed.) sustains the notion that choice is an

integral part of persuasion and generates an intrinsic ethic by which to judge persuasive uses of language" (1970, 105).

In sum, a rhetorical perspective on argumentation, emphasizing deliberation about choice, must also acknowledge the multiple ontologies that exist when humans interact and exchange arguments, especially involving events that are yet to happen (if at all).[4]

Decision as Key Aspect

These are points where the 'Copenhagen School' parts company with schools with which it has several *other* things in common. The reason for this is probably that they are and remain wedded to a Platonic, philosophically oriented view that focuses on interpersonal dialogue with the truth as the desired end, whereas rhetoric focuses on 'trialogue' and civic conversation aiming at decisions, made in sustainable coexistence. Although scholars in both Pragma-dialectics and Informal Logic have for several years done much to reach out to rhetoric and include rhetorical insights in their thinking (e.g., Tindale, 2004; see also Kock, 2009), the Copenhagen school, originating in a rhetoric program, insists on differences in perspective that stem from the Aristotelian, rather than the Platonic, conception of what rhetoric is about and what it is for; in Aristotle's words, the duty and function of rhetoric is not only to 'discover the persuasive facts' (as in *Rhetoric*, 1355b) on any subject whatsoever (his most quoted definition), but more specifically "to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon" (1357a)—that is, decisions facing citizens in a polity. On such matters there are no disciplinary "arts or systems to guide us" (*ibid*.), and no way to reach conclusions on those decisions with deductive validity; on the other hand there is a virtually endless

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4. An attempt to identify a rhetorical perspective on argumentation, as seen by rhetoricians, and very similar to the orientation sketched in this preface, underlay a special issue of the journal Argumentation (vol. 34, issue 3, 2020), edited by Christian Kock and titled Rhetoricians on Argumentation. A hardbound edition of this special issue was published in 2022 by Springer Nature.

plurality of argument types and persuasive devices. Arguers in a political debate and other kinds of rhetorical argumentation may fail to ever reach anything resembling consensus, and so may citizens, even though they may still reach a decision with which they may acquiesce, and which allows them to move forward; rhetoric is the medium for that.

The rhetorical tradition still has many untapped insights to contribute to the understanding and teaching of argumentation, and Copenhagen happened to provide a fruitful ground for maturing such insights. One important legacy of the rhetorical tradition is its status as a pedagogy of *civic participation*—its original aim in the hands of the sophists. Contrary to a widespread misconception, rhetorical argumentation is *not* defined by the arguer's wish to prevail by any means. As we have seen, it is distinctive of the rhetorical approach to see argument and other discourse on actions and decisions of shared concern as central to its identity; the issues at the core of rhetorical argumentation are proposals, not propositions. Because of this, rhetorical argumentation is, in its nature, *multidimensional* in that a broad spectrum of warrants, means and strategies may be employed in arguing about actions and decisions of shared concern. Rhetorical argumentation cannot categorically (let alone deductively) 'prove' what it argues for, since proposals (about actions and decisions) cannot, in principle, be either true or false (unlike propositions). This is also why the rhetorical view of argumentation does not subscribe to consensus as a theoretical and normative ideal.

Nevertheless, rhetoric is, in its nature, likely to take a normative view of the discourse and artifacts it studies. The normativity of rhetoric is twofold: It concerns not only what rhetoric's critics since Socrates have emphasized, namely how well the arguer serves his or her own ends (although serving one's own ends in discourse is, as rhetoricians see it, per se legitimate); rhetoric's normativity also concerns how well public discourse, including argument, accords with societal norms and needs (e.g., the need for a sustainable public dialogue across disagreements). This is why rhetoric puts a high priority on close, observant, and critical study of authentic public discourse.

Chapters

To dive into the plethora of public and social discourse phenomena, centered around deliberative argument about choice of action, this collection presents three themed sections, offering, respectively, conceptual reflections, empirical applications, and new chapters written exclusively for this collection.

Section 1: Conceptual Foundations

The articles in this section should be read mainly as contributions to a rhetorical argumentation theory. They include one translation from Danish, two reprints of earlier publications, and one new contribution (a revised version of previously published work).

Chapter 1: Jørgensen on Debate as Central

We are delighted to have Charlotte Jørgensen open the ball. Her seminal paper "Debate for Better or Worse: Hostility in Public Debate" was originally published in Danish in 1995, which explains why its discussion of modern debate arenas makes no mention of social media but concentrates on TV. Nevertheless, it offers insights that remain relevant today. It belongs to the formative phase of the Copenhagen approach. Partly for that reason, the article contains much material that serves to clarify concepts and to define a position in relation to existing thinking, primarily the two 'schools' that were already then dominant on the scene of argumentation studies: Pragma-dialectics and Informal Logic.

    The article represents a view of *debate,* not just discussion, as a fundamental venue of civic rhetoric: Rhetorical argument is not just found in speeches and other types of monologues, as a look at the great moments of oratory, from the Greeks onward, might lead us to believe. The empirical project that ensued in publications about 'rhetoric that shifts votes' was a study of authentic political debates (townhall-style debates, televised by the national

broadcasting corporation). Charlotte Jørgensen was a key participant in the project and did a major part of the painstaking analytical work it involved. The study of these debates confirmed an underlying view that has characterized rhetorical thinking and theory from its earliest days: When citizens in a polity debate their collective future actions, there will as a rule be more than one course of action that may legitimately be advocated.

'Legitimately' in this context is to be taken as suggesting that no advocate for a given course of action will in the standard case be able to mount a deductively compelling argument for it; there will always be, and remain, valid reasons speaking against it, or for alternative courses of action. 'Valid' in this context has a different meaning from the way it is used in logic and mathematics, where a 'valid' argument or chain of reasons is one from which a given conclusion follows as an inescapable entailment.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, as we have seen, defined the realm of rhetoric as the domain where such entailment, sometimes called *demonstration*, is not possible. Because there are, in the standard case, legitimate reasons speaking both for and against any proposed course of action, people involved in a decision about it may legitimately be, and remain, in disagreement. Their disagreement may be rooted in their legitimately different, but relevant reasons, and in their assignment of different priorities to them. To assess the merit of just one argument in isolation, or the arguments advanced by just one side in a disagreement, will never be sufficient to decide on action-related issues.

This is why 'debate' is the keyword, not 'dialogue' or 'discussion'. The Platonic ideal is the Socratic dialogue, in which just two participants walk hand in hand towards a shared discovery of the truth (as Socrates explains to young Polos, *Gorgias* 474a). In present-day Pragma-dialectics, a key notion is the 'critical discussion', in which the discussants, if they steer clear of fallacies by abiding by a set of rules, will 'resolve' their difference of opinion. This conception bears a clear similarity, not often noted, with the truly communicative, non-'strategic' dialogue envisaged by (early) Habermas, from which consensus is expected to ensue thanks to the proverbial "zwanglosen Zwang des besseren

Arguments" ("the unforced force of the better argument", as in, e.g., 1972, 161). By contrast, the default genre is a rhetorical argumentation theory is debate, because disagreement may legitimately persist–and probably will.

Chapters 2 & 3: Kock on Definitions, Demarcations and Distinctions

Christian Kock contributes with two theoretical chapters examining, respectively, the differences between a rhetorical and philosophical view of argument, and the unavoidability and potentially salutary nature of civic disagreement. "The Difference between the Rhetorical and the Philosophical Concepts of Argumentation", written with a philosophical audience in mind, explores the distinction we have discussed above between arguing about what is true (epistemic argument) and arguing about what to do (practical argument). From this theoretical difference he derives a series of profound dissimilarities between the elements and functioning of argumentation in the two domains. He notes, as we have done above, that the rhetorical conception of argumentation is centered around the latter domain and points out that while many philosophers who failed to understand this have based their attacks on rhetoric on a misconception of what it is, there are indeed other philosophers who have seen the differences and aided us in understanding them.

The article "For Deliberative Disagreement: Its Venues, Varieties and Values" offers a range of concepts that may help us better understand the multiple roles of rhetorical argumentation in our personal and civic lives. 'Venues' refers to the three different sites where deliberative disagreements may occur: It may be *intra*personal, i.e., take place in an individual's own mind; it may be *inter*personal, i.e., occur in person-to-person dialogue (the form on which dialectical thinkers from Plato to Habermas and the pragma-dialecticians, along with most deliberative democrats, have concentrated); and it may be *public*, taking place in front of audiences. 'Varieties' refer mainly to different purposes of deliberation, which include open-ended *inquiry* as well as 'strategically' oriented *advocacy*. Finally, 'values' are the

normative standards and criteria by which we may try to assess deliberation in any venue and variety: In all of them, there will be legitimate and responsible rhetorical practices as well as illegitimate and socially detrimental ones, with everything in between. The article presents a fuller account than space allows in this introduction of what distinguishes rhetorical and philosophical argumentation theory, and why deliberative disagreement is key to understanding the rhetorical perspective that we lay out.

Chapter 4: Pontoppidan on Where to Place One's Argument

Christina Pontoppidan's "Where do You Place Your Argument?" engages with one of the founding fathers of argumentation theory: Stephen Toulmin. She discusses the great influence of Toulmin's argument model, with its logical foundations, and points to the challenges that such a 'logical' foundation poses to our understanding and usefulness of rhetorical argumentation.

Early on, Pontoppidan asks us: "Why did Toulmin, a British logician ostracized by his peers, become an integral part of the rhetorical canon?" The chapter develops an elaborate and persuasive answer, beginning by underlining that just because Toulmin's conceptualization of practical argumentation is more useful than traditional logic (which leans toward making prescriptive models of the world, rather than depicting how actors indeed argue 'in the wild'), this still does not make the Toulmin scheme *the* most accurate and useful structural model of rhetorical argumentation. Conceptually, the chapter goes on to develop an argument model emphasizing *topics*, a model which better represents the persuasive *process* of argumentation, rather than focusing on an inferential *product* that rhetorical scholars (and others) may analyze *post-hoc*. Through a detailed reading of Toulmin and key resources within the argumentation literature, Pontoppidan unfolds how, for Toulmin, the relevance of the topics is not essentially rhetorical, but rather dialectical (in an Aristotelian sense), and it is thus a helpful methodological toolbox for formalizing actual arguments and assessing the soundness of the proposed inferences. Such an approach aids us in assessing

single existing arguments, but not in understanding the messy, dynamic nature of argumentation processes; instead, she suggests an argument model inspired by a rhetorical reading of the topics that depicts the dynamic process of argumentation, including the many choices any rhetor has at her disposal, and involving the delicate balancing act of that ancient rhetorical staple, the theory of *stasis* (of which a usable modern plural form might be *stases*). Such an approach may better help the practicing rhetor identify common ground(s) with the intended audience(s) and draw on various 'proofs' to concretize justifications for the standpoint taken.

Section 2: Empirical Applications: Prostitution, Roars, and (Other) Persuasive Figures

The second section illustrates the analytical breadth of a rhetorical approach to argumentation studies and presents three translated articles, one recently published and one original contribution (an updated version of an earlier work).

Chapter 5: Onsberg on an Unimpressive Debate

Onsberg in "The Danish Debate about Prostitution: Some Characteristics" (published in Danish in 2011) samples and assesses the debate in Denmark about an issue of serious public concern. It is like a snapshot of what this particular debate was like at a specific juncture, namely when a proposal to criminalize prostitution clients was advanced in 2009—at a time when an upcoming election for the European Parliament motivated many candidates to make themselves heard. The article is also an example of a kind of scholarship that a rhetorical approach to argumentation studies considers democratically useful but in too short supply. It performs a service to scholars and citizens alike by presenting an overview of which types of arguments are being advanced in relation to a topical issue, and, even more importantly, it offers motivated quality assessments of arguments and argument

types actually used in the debate—without taking a stand on the issue itself. The need to look critically at both sides in a debate, without assuming that such critical scrutiny will necessarily entail the adoption of one standpoint rather than the other, follows from the underlying tenet in rhetorical argumentation theory that in the domain of civic issues there are good and bad arguments on both sides (or all sides), but no compelling (deductive) entailment from a set of arguments to specific decisions.

In the public sphere, not much stringent evaluation of arguments on moot issues is available, and what little there is tends to be of a partisan nature, where debaters representing one of the sides attempt to show that arguments coming from their opponents are as ludicrous as their own are unassailable. Generally speaking, news journalism and political commentary, also when it comes from academics, tends to be weak on argument evaluation and correspondingly strong on prophecies and guesswork, typically about politicians' hidden motives for what they do and say. What evaluation there is in political journalism and commentary tends mainly to be assessments of political agents' strategic wisdom (or lack of it). In so far as this is the case, citizens who wish to see themselves as participants in democracy are let down by media and pundits alike. A rhetorical approach to argumentation assumes that citizens need all the help they can get in surveying arguments on current issues (those that are in fact advanced as well as those that are conspicuous by their absence), and in discerning which ones have merit and which lack it. Balancing those pro and con arguments that do have merit, and forming a standpoint on that basis, is then the individual citizen's own task. In these respects, Onsberg's article is a rhetorical argumentation scholar's helping hand to citizens on an issue that is fraught with misinformation, misunderstanding, prejudice, and irrelevancy. It might also serve the purpose of saying to political agents: "Give citizens arguments. Give them ones that have merit. Respond to arguments from your opponents that have merit. We are watching you."

Chapter 6: Rønlev on Polyphony and Agency in Online Debate

Continuing the rhetorical examination of the arguments that
citizens, politicians, pundits, and journalists encounter, exchange,
and sometimes enlarge, Rønlev, in his "The Roar in the Comment
Section: How Journalists Mediate Public Opinion on the Danish
Online Newspaper politiken.dk" (published in Danish in 2018),
zooms in on online political debate and asks how journalists may
provide rhetorical agency to citizens. Using as a case the public
debate about a young university student's op-ed piece about her
tight economy, Rønlev employs a classic rhetorical critique, i.e.,
a close reading of texts and the intertextual reactions they trigger.
His analysis (including 1,971 reader comments!) unveils a
polyphonic choir of arguments of the interplay between digital
media and the function, format, and forms of public debate.
Although we might expect Rønlev's analysis to confirm that online
newspapers contribute to the democratization of public opinion
formation and thus make journalists superfluous as moderators
of public political communication, he elegantly unpacks how, in
the case of the university student who 'dared' to see herself as
poor, journalists' traditionally privileged position as interpreters
and mediators of debate among citizens is amplified online.

Rønlev continues the tradition shaped by what we now refer to
as the 'Copenhagen school' approach to argumentation studies by
combining argument analysis of public debate with constructive
criticism of news media and journalists. Building a typology of
arguments, he highlights the *craft* of doing critical argument
analysis and provides us with nine categories (3 topics x 3
attitudes) based on his close reading of the comments to the
original op-ed that form the empirical basis of his inquiry.
Theoretically, the chapter builds on Gerard Hauser's
understandings of public opinion formation as taking place in
society's ongoing *multilogue* (1999, 2007b) and on work in media
and journalism studies showing that journalists continue to enjoy
rhetorical privileges in public debate, despite the rise of digital
networked media.

Overall, Rønlev helps advance our understanding of rhetorical *agency* (understood as a dialectic interplay between citizens' individually conditioned abilities and structurally conditioned opportunities to act rhetorically and achieve influence) by underlining that 'public opinion' is anything but a homogenous construct, and by showing how important journalists' agency is in this sense, which in turn underlines how they may provide agency—or fail to do so—to citizens who participate in public opinion formation online. In the case of the student, it becomes clear that the media grossly simplified and distorted her views and the ensuing multilogue of debating citizens—thus failing in their task as facilitators of public conversation. Also, the chapter reminds us that we, both as scholars and citizens who also happen to be media users, should allow ourselves to make rhetorical deep dives into the messy pluralities of public debates before jumping to the (easily digestible) conclusions provided by, at least some, journalists.

Chapter 7: Lantz on Temporality and Emotion in Argument

The next chapter in this section deals with the deliberative genre and examines the arguments used by political leaders in situations of national crisis. Lantz, in his article "Affecting Argumentative Action: The Temporality of Decisive Emotion" (original publication 2021), combines the concepts of time and emotion and illustrates how political leaders argue for action in a now well-known example of a rhetorical situation, namely the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, in which decisive action turned out to be crucial, yet not warranted by much existing evidence because it was a novel disease.

Lantz tackles two dimensions that are inherent in political rhetoric *and* in rhetorical argumentation theory (with its emphasis on arguments about doing, as we stress in this volume): *when* to act and *how* to act. Specifically, these dimensions concern time and emotion. While the concept of time (in a very simple sense) is fundamental to the three classic rhetorical genres of legal rhetoric (past), epideictic (present), and political rhetoric (future), Lantz

engages with a neo-classic text by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca on the temporality of argumentation (originally published in 1958, the same year as *La Nouvelle Rhetoric*, but not translated into English until 2010). Emotion, on the other hand, has played a key role (mostly cast as the villain) throughout the history of practical debate, and especially because of what neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, now famously, chose to label "Descartes' error" (2004): the disjoining of reason and emotion.

Drawing on recent emotion research (combining psychological, sociological, and philosophical insights) and paying close attention to debates within rhetorical and argumentation studies, the chapter conceptualizes a model and shows its applicability in an analysis of Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's now-historic "closing down society" speech on March 11, 2020. Thus, the chapter illustrates the willingness of the Copenhagen school to combine what we may call standard accounts of practical argumentation (in this case two interacting practical inferences) with state-of-the-art research in rhetorical studies and neighboring research arenas, and the chapter likewise contributes to the long-standing debate within argumentation studies on how to approach, understand, and analyze the rhetorical reasonableness of emotional appeals.

Chapter 8: Just and Gabrielsen Resuscitate *Stasis* Theory

Staying with public debates, but taking a broader perspective, Sine Just and Jonas Gabrielsen in their "Persuasive Figures: Harnessing Stasis Theory for Rhetorical Criticism" (an updated version of an article published in Danish in 2008) show how transformations and adaptations of the classical stasis theory can make it an apt tool for rhetorical criticism of public meaning formation as it occurs in contemporary contexts. Just and Gabrielsen have updated their original article from 2008 (focusing on the financial crisis) to also include Covid-19, and they combine these two empirical lenses by underlining that what the pandemic is to global health now, the financial crisis was to the health of the global economy then.

The chapter demonstrates the critical potential of the stases and engages with three theoretical issues that continue to be relevant to rhetorical argumentation theory: the number of stases, the breadth of application of stasis theory, and the relationship recognized between the four stases. They advocate a conception involving four levels and argue that the fourth stasis must be reinterpreted as a change of scenes in the metaphorical sense (instead of a literal relocation to a different court), thereby conceptualizing the fourth stasis as a matter of 'framing' an argument anew. Secondly, they argue for a broad understanding of stasis that embraces both identifying the point of contestation within a dispute and designating possible rhetorical responses to a contested issue. While the determination of the level used within an utterance is imperative, the chapter argues that it is equally important to situate different responses at the various stasis levels. Just and Gabrielsen ask whether the relationship between the stases is a linear progression from stasis to stasis—or can rhetors combine the stases as a case evolves? Here, they argue for a dynamic view of stasis theory: Rhetors do have the chance to combine and activate all the stases in many different ways—at any one moment in time and across the course of an exchange.

Just and Gabrielsen's arguments advance our understanding of how rhetorical theory (in this sense, the classic concept of stases) can engage with analyses of explicit arguments in the public sphere about highly politicized subjects (e.g., the financial and pandemic crises). Hereby, the chapter illustrates the depth and breadth of the Copenhagen School's approach to argumentation theory, underlining that a distinctly rhetorical take on argumentation theory also invites the tradition of rhetorical criticism (as distinct from classic rhetorical theory) into the argumentative spaces. In a more general way, their article also demonstrates how rhetorical argumentation has at its disposal an almost inexhaustible storehouse of argumentative maneuvers and devices.

Chapter 9: Bengtsson on Political Commentary without Arguments

Mette Bengtsson's article "The Second Persona in Political Commentary", which appeared in Danish in 2016, is characteristic of the Copenhagen approach in that, like Rønlev's article, it moves beyond the study of argumentation proper, focusing instead on the role of argumentation in civic life, in this case in an emergent genre of journalism. Or rather, Bengtsson highlights the conspicuous *absence* of argumentation in a journalistic genre where one might have expected it to play a leading role: political commentary—a type of journalism whose importance in the media system rapidly grew in the 1990's. In Denmark, political commentaries are not quite like the texts coming from the 'commentariat' in, for example, the US. There, political pundits primarily turn out opinion pieces that aim to be sharply argued and elegantly written; Danish pundits instead cast themselves as objective observers of the political scene who write purely analytical commentaries, aiming to help citizens understand what *really* goes on in national politics.

Bengtsson uses the rhetorician Edwin Black's notion of the 'second persona' in a text (1970), a term which designates the reader or addressee implicitly defined by what the text says and by the stylistic features of how it says it. Her main finding from a close reading of a broad sample of political commentaries is that these texts seem to be addressing readers who will implicitly accept the commentators' expertise regarding the political scene and who will therefore expect no supporting argumentation for the claims made; instead, what readers are given is to a large extent interpretations, assessments and predictions referring to politicians' assumed strategic considerations, revolving around powerplay. Accordingly, *arguments* on issues, and for or against policies, hardly get any mention at all—as if readers, i.e., citizens, had no interest in them and did not need them, since their preferences on political issues are assumed to be fixed beforehand. Instead, citizen-readers are cast as passive onlookers to the unfolding political game. Bengtsson not only takes a critical attitude to the conception of democracy thus implied, she also cites

two qualitative studies of her own, done with an innovative variant of protocol analysis, in which readers vent their dissatisfaction with being cast in such a role. This article, while offering little in the way of argumentation theory or analysis, still stands squarely in the Copenhagen tradition with its concern for deliberative argument and reflection on public issues—a function that the commentary genre, according to the article, conspicuously fails to serve.

Section 3: Novel Contributions: From Arguing Against Argumentation to Scientist-Citizens

In this section, we are delighted to present four freshly minted articles on rhetorical argumentation spanning very diverse concepts and empirical fields.

Chapter 10: Appel Olsen on Arguing against Argumentation in Science

Frederik Appel Olsen's "Arguing Against Argumentation in Science" dives into a detailed critical reading of Paul Feyerabend's now famously polemical *Against Method* (1975), applying Erin Rand's insights about "queer polemics" as a rhetorical form to understand how, in general, polemics and provocations can have value for political debate, not only in the public sphere but also as part of specialized communities in the technical sphere such as the 'sciences'.

Appel Olsen not only proposes this as a general claim, he also adduces considerable evidence, not so far considered, to support it—in the form of pronouncements from many of the book's original reviewers, who declared it to have done the rhetoric of science field great services by itself being a stirring and thought-provoking event—even if the reviewers were unwilling to adopt Feyerabend's own radical stance. Olsen's point is not to defend Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism, and his claim is not that a rhetorically informed theory of argumentation in science is identical with Feyerabend's 'anything goes' position. Rather, the

point is to argue that polemical rhetoric may be a productive practice not only in civic and practical argumentation (which, in the Copenhagen conception, is the core of rhetorical argumentation), but also in technical spheres, including the sciences. In other words, the paper's main concern is Feyerabend's rhetorical practice, not his epistemological radicalism. In an enlightening parallel, Appel Olsen points to the function performed in the political sphere by 'trickster' figures, as seen as by the rhetorician Robert Ivie.

One might wonder what Appel Olsen's argument implies for the deep distinction, urged by many of the contributors to the present book, between practical and epistemic argumentation, where science would presumably belong in the latter category. After all, if science is a quest for epistemic truth, then the properties that the Copenhagen interpretation sees as distinctive of practical argumentation—multidimensionality, lack of deductive inference, the space for subjectivity, etc.—should not apply to it. But science is never *only* an epistemic quest for truth; in any science, there are also, as in politics, many components of *choice*—which, as Aristotle insisted, is neither true nor false. Scientists and scholars in all fields *choose* to *do* this or that in many respects, often unwittingly—not just in their basic assumptions, but also regarding the very purposes, questions, perspectives, allegiances, 'methods', and the discursive practices that inform their work from top to bottom. Hence, a disrespectful, out-and-out polemical trickster-type intervention like Feyerabend's may not only cause disruption, but also new self-awareness, new reflections, new practices.

Chapter 11: Gruber on Bullshit-Sniffing

In his chapter on bullshit (!), Gruber argues that even though rhetoricians will probably agree to consider bullshit nothing but a gross and smelly substance, we might do well to take such rhetorical substances seriously in political argumentation. Sure, all that glitters is not gold, but bullshit glitters in some people's eyes, and it might be valuable to understand why. Gruber holds

that bullshit, initially defined as speech with (an) indifference to how things truly are, deserves careful consideration as a rhetorical concept—not only because of the substantial piles of bullshit arguments in political rhetoric but, equally important, because we might in fact view bullshit as helpful (think 'vernacular' or 'rowdy' rhetoric, as theorized and defended by rhetoricians Gerard Hauser and Robert Ivie, respectively). To just see it as harmful because it hinders good faith deliberation between two reasonable parties trying to find a solution for the common good might be unduly limiting.

Gruber first outlines the standard 'Platonic' view of bullshit as a pernicious cancellation of truth, but goes on to ask how citizens (and rhetorical scholars, for that matter) should engage with bullshit, accepting the fact that it abounds in numerous argumentative contexts—if the presumption is that bullshit is something merely offensive in the midst of a rhetor's blatantly 'fake' claims. We might view bullshitting as worth attending to for other reasons. Invoking Krista Ratcliffe's notion of 'rhetorical listening' (2005), he asks us to listen for what we, with our dominant logic, might otherwise fail to hear—something that we are 'exiling', but which makes the bullshit sound like delicious dessert to its intended audience, all the while it sounds like metaphorical poo to us.

This is unfolded in an analysis of a variety of bullshit statements about the Covid-19 pandemic delivered by the Governor of the state of Florida, Ron DeSantis, and in Gruber's interpretation of how various rhetorical tactics, including those some regard as mere bullshitting, need greater attention in rhetorical criticism because bullshit is an inherent part of everyday argumentation and often geared precisely to make a claim glitter more seductively to some. The chapter underlines that listening and reflecting suggest one viable path for productive engagement in which we may respond to, and counteract, bullshit with curiosity.

Gruber's chapter aligns with Olsen's in the sense that they both plead for a more tolerant and inquisitive attitude to specific types of rhetorical behavior—enjoining us to see provocative polemic and bullshit, respectively, as acts that may prod us to think, see

and hear differently. Underlying both chapters is the concern for a sustained and sustainable conversation on matters of shared concern between stakeholders—scientists, bullshitters or just citizens.

Chapter 12: Møllebæk on Rhetorical Argumentation in the Clinic

Mathias Møllebæk's "Paper Tigers in the Clinic? Rhetorical Argumentation and Evidence-Based Medical Practice" unpacks how a rhetorical approach to argumentation is also valuable in elucidating the functioning of arguments in more technical and scientific spheres, such as the use of emergent evidence to potentially change physicians' clinical practices. Using in-depth ethnographic data, the chapter details how arguments that claim epistemic authority through appeals to 'evidence' and 'data' often disregard crucial insights that rhetorical argumentation brings forth: Data and evidence function in arguments that are oriented towards an audience, those arguments are about possible courses of action (in this case, physicians' practice), and they may involve values, considerations and preferences that are incommensurable with general, evidence-based guidelines, or even make them irrelevant.

The chapter opens with a discussion of the empirical research field of policy analysis, underlining that this field itself has experienced an 'argumentative turn'. Møllebæk then makes the interesting choice of examining how Toulmin's concept of argument fields can illuminate a very specific area of policy analysis by focusing on the arguments involved in the somewhat messy policy implementation phase. At the same time, he contributes to argumentation studies by paying close attention to the argumentative field shifts of *justifications* and *evaluations* within the empirical field (here, the clinical practice of general practitioners), and specifically in noting how these argumentative transitions in themselves impact evaluations. In the argument field of the family doctor's practice, a diverse plurality of relevant but incommensurable arguments conditions the doctor's decisions, which belong in a field different from the one in which

policymakers and official regulators argue. We may perhaps say that in the latter of these fields, there seems to be a way to calculate what the one 'true' action is, but in the former field there is not. To revert to Aristotle's dictum: "choice is not true or false".

Also, Møllebæk's work represents an empirical, qualitative approach to rhetorical studies, as also found, for example, in the work of Jens Kjeldsen and others on audience reception (2017), but—equally important to stress here—it calls for an empirical sensitivity drawing inspiration from the ethnographic disciplines, a sensitivity that has grown at the Section of Rhetoric at the University of Copenhagen during the last decade. The chapter further strengthens the link between in-depth ethnographic work and rhetorical argumentation.

Chapter 13: Pietrucci on Scientist-citizenship

Pamela Pietrucci's article "Muzzling Science? Cultivating Scientists' Rhetorical Awareness in the Public Communication of Expertise in an Era of Pandemic Fatigue", written for this collection, engages a broader issue that is (or should be) central to any theory of argumentation: What relation should there be between, on the one hand, what scientists and other experts have to say on matters within their epistemic fields, and on the other hand their participation in debates about public policy, for example in times of crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic?

This question may in fact be seen, in the optic of a rhetorical argumentation theory, as instantiating the relation between epistemic and practical issues. Pietrucci, drawing on a native observer's immersion in the Italian context, highlights the issue by initially discussing a proposal by a member of Italy's Parliament (who was also a doctor) to restrict scientists' access to public media during the pandemic: They were, he proposed, to obtain prior approval from their institutions for what they wanted to say in the public sphere. That idea, Pietrucci argues, was in a sense well-intended, as it sought to address a real problem: Too many scientists were communicating to the Italian public in ways far too marked by contradiction, factionalism and polarization. The

result of this was a documented, rapid growth in ordinary people's confusion, in their distrust in science and authorities and in their belief in crackpot ideas and conspiracy theories.

The proposal was roundly condemned as an attempt to muzzle scientists, but that didn't solve the exigence. Pietrucci finds that although the diagnosis was correct, the proposed cure was wide of the mark. Rather than restricting scientists' freedom of speech, she argues, a way forward would be to help them to a better rhetorical awareness of the contexts into which they were drawn: They would need to cultivate public rhetorical identities as *scientist-citizens*. They needed a sharper sense of when they were speaking (as *scientists*) on matters of scientific fact, and when they were commenting (as *citizens*) on issues of public policy. Far too often were these two roles confused and intermingled by scientists in the public sphere, and the media didn't help, but made matters worse. Pietrucci recycles the ancient rhetorical notion of *stasis* to highlight this difference.

We may say that this is where the epistemic-practical distinction resurfaces. Rhetorical argumentation inhabits, and is centered around, the policy domain. This does not mean that rhetorical argumentation theory, because it has this focus, will want to downplay epistemic truth; on the contrary, the best of scientists' professional knowledge and theories is crucially necessary in a society trying to manage, e.g., a pandemic. But all this knowledge has the status of arguments, premises, *reasons* for or against policies, and scientists play a vital role in finding these reasons and promulgating them; however, for those who make *decisions* on policies (and for citizens), many kinds of credible reasons from other fields too must be available and taken into account, including, e.g., economics, ethics, law, social psychology, and more. That is why, in the case of Covid-19, virologists discussing policies must emphasize the citizen part of their dual identities.

The rhetorical awareness that Pietrucci believes scientists who communicate publicly should cultivate is a crucial element in a rhetorical argumentation theory as sketched in the present volume. Her paper might help us think straight about the role played by the epistemic dimension in argument and decisions about action.

Pietrucci's paper, by highlighting the role of scientists, places a needed emphasis on the epistemic. But she also demonstrates that there is no need for a tension or rivalry between, on the one hand, the emphasis on epistemic truth—an emphasis made by argumentation theorists working on a philosophical basis such as the informal logicians—and on the other hand the emphasis on action and decisions, as emphasized by a rhetorical argumentation theory like ours. Pietrucci makes it clear that epistemic truth—or the closest we can get to it, such as probabilities and scientific consensus—is indeed a *sine qua non* in argument about action, just as it is in epistemic argument. But it is never enough in action-oriented argument to have ever so many premises that are true (or consensually 'acceptable', or whatever term we prefer).

The reason for his is that in action-oriented argument we discuss not only what the world *is* like, but also what we *want* it to be like. To do that, we need premises regarding values. And the values held by humans are multiple; they are often not compatible and not objectively commensurable, i.e., not reducible to a common denominator recognized by all. For example, in a pandemic, some people will ascribe a very high value to the personal freedom they may exercise by choosing or not choosing to keep their shops open or take a vaccine. To many others, such a value is relatively small and expendable compared to the value of saving lives and preventing serious disease. Argumentation theorists must recognize that these values, while not fully compatible or objectively commensurable, are equally real; hence argumentation theorists, philosophers or other experts cannot authoritatively determine for all which of them should, on balance, be prioritized. However, saying that in no way implies a low regard for truth or a license to deny or neglect scientists' epistemic insights.

Rhetorical Argumentation Theory: The Core

With this book's fourteen chapters now presented and introduced to the reader, we hope to have made good on our promise to circumscribe and make plausible the existence of an identifiable,

while loosely connected, Copenhagen 'school' in argumentation studies.

A very brief summary of the tenets that, in various ways, permeate these chapters might be in place. Three simple statements might do the job.

First, in action-oriented argument (which is the central domain of rhetorical argumentation theory and indeed of humans' use of arguments) no stand-alone argument can conclusively decide any issue. There is no deductive entailment from any argument to a conclusion on how to act; old-school logical 'validity' and 'soundness' are alien in this domain. An argument may be ever so relevant, yet there will also be other arguments and considerations—other *frames*, other *topoi*, if one prefers—that may legitimately be invoked.

Secondly, assessing the merit of an argument in action-oriented debate should not be considered a dichotomous decision in which its conclusion is found to 'follow', or else it has no merit at all. Some arguments really have no merit at all, but on the other hand no argument ever conclusively decides a practical issue, even when accompanied by a whole array of others. This, in a sense, follows from the first statement. All we can say is that any argument with any merit at all has a *certain* merit (or 'weight')—which, ironically, means that it has an uncertain merit. Some individuals might, *legitimately*, think it tips the scale to one side, others that it does not. It also follows that efforts to reach an exhaustive appraisal of a single argument or argument type become less meaningful.

This has to do with the third statement, which is this: There are legitimate subjective factors in the appraisal of argument merit. In we assume a three-dimensional argument appraisal model with the dimensions 1) acceptability/truth, 2) relevance, and 3) weight (related to the 'acceptability—relevance—sufficiency' triad first proposed by Johnson and Blair in 1977 and to the 'ARG conditions' taught in Govier's classic textbook from 1985 on)—then there is a legitimate element of subjectivity (i.e., individual variance) on all these dimensions, especially on the 'weight' dimension: Even if two individuals agree that certain

considerations are indeed acceptable and relevant to an issue, they may legitimately disagree on their relative weight when held together with other relevant considerations. This is a fact of human life that neither argumentation theory nor philosophy itself can cancel. Rather than trying to disregard it, we should explore it more.

Let us add to these tenets on argumentation theory that argumentation is only one domain within rhetoric. Humans' attitudes and actions may be impacted by messages, and impulses of many other kinds, coming from other humans or elsewhere; not only argumentation, in the strict sense of messages that are intended to move us by giving reasons, may do this. Argumentation is a subset of the influences that impact us. Some of the articles in this collection bear witness to that. And messages, actions and objects may also affect us in other ways than by influencing our attitudes and actions (for example, aesthetically). Aristotle's emphasis on *ethos* and *pathos* is an attempt to include other means of persuasion than explicit reason-giving; his remarks on *katharsis* in the *Poetics* and the *Politics* suggest some of the influences that may strongly impact humans in ways not necessarily affecting their attitudes and actions.

Nevertheless, we hold that action-oriented argumentation in human encounters is central to human life and that it has many intriguing and special properties that ought to receive even more attention than they have so far in scholarship, education, and the media. Rhetorical argumentation can, in its best form as reasonable disagreement, be a factor in building and consolidating a sustainable society. For these reasons, the study of action-oriented argumentation in social settings ought to be a central domain in any argumentation theory. In rhetorical argumentation theory it constitutes the core.

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I

Conceptual Foundations

1.

Debate for Better or Worse: Hostility in Public Debate

Charlotte Jørgensen

> Well, now, sir, I put it to yo', being a parson, and having been in th'
> preaching line, and having had to try and bring folk o'er to what yo'
> thought was a right way o' thinking – did yo' begin by calling 'em
> fools and such like, or didn't yo' rather give such kind words at first,
> to make 'em ready for to listen and be convinced, if they could; and
> in yo'r preaching, did yo' stop every now and then, and say, half to
> them and half to yo'rsel', "But yo're such pack of fools, that I've a
> strong notion it's no use my trying to put sense into yo'?"

> *Elizabeth Gaskell: North and South, chapter 28*

Many regard *debate* as a genre that is by nature hostile, a kind of public quarrel between adversaries who attack each other and seek victory by any means. In this view, debate is disdained as a second-rate format for making decisions in the public sphere.

The purpose of this article is to challenge such a view of debate. Instead, I look at debate as a potentially rational form of communication that is a hallmark of political argument in a democratic society. In particular, I will discuss the relation between debate on the one hand and *discussion* or *critical dialogue* on the other, and argue that we should abandon the view of debate as an intrinsically inferior form of argumentation than discussion.

The Central Place of Debate in Rhetoric

The discipline of rhetoric is predominantly seen as concerned with *set speeches*—well-prepared addresses delivered by a speaker within an allotted length of time. Classical rhetoric is generally regarded as a study of communication entirely devoted to *oratio* as its subject matter—as distinct from *sermo*, which refers to spontaneous quotidian discourse, and philosophical *dialogue*, as dealt with by dialectics.[1] The entire conceptual system of classical rhetoric, its traditional system, reflects the attachment of the discipline to oratory: The five *rhetorices partes*, the subdisciplines of rhetoric, are derived from the five stages of the speaker's task, just as the classical five-part speech outline is based on practical forensic speeches, etc.

In the course of time, rhetoric has widened its field of activity, including many other text types and communication situations than oral one-way communication.[2] Modern rhetoric defines itself, in various formulations and interpretations, in continuity with the classical notion of *persuasio*, and rhetoric has become a widely ramified discipline encompassing all kinds of communication that are persuasive or involve a persuasive component. In Denmark, Jørgen Fafner has spoken for such a modern, comprehensive rhetoric: "Whenever we wish to present a matter to our fellow human beings and involve them in it, there is … a rhetorical

1. Quintilian, II.xx.7: "Itaque cum duo sint genera orationis, altera perpetua, quae rhetorice dicitur, altera concisa, quae dialectice … " (Consequently, since there are two kinds of speech, the continuous which is called rhetoric, and the concise which is called dialectic…); XII.x.43: "Nam mihi aliam quondam videtur habere naturam sermo vulgaris, aliam viri eloquentis oratio" (For the common language of every day seems to me to be of a different character from the style of an eloquent speaker.) (The Loeb translation by Butler.) Cf. Pinborg 1963, 7.
2. In the Middle Ages, for example, rhetoric was transplanted and became a purely written practice in the art of letter-writing, *ars dictaminis* (cf. Fafner 1982, 150ff.). The expansion of the domain of rhetoric from the traditional doctrine of *oratio* is also in evidence, for example, in Perelman's "New Rhetoric", which is primarily based on written texts and makes clear that even philosophical texts are subject to rhetorical principles and employs rhetorical forms of argument—cf. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969.

and hence a purposeful (intentional) situation" (Fafner 1977, 45). The definition of rhetoric as purposeful speech and writing posits rhetoric as a general communication discipline, a doctrine of exposition that applies to texts of any kind, regardless of channel, genre and form of interaction.

However, the theoretical and epistemological considerations regarding the scope and ubiquity of rhetoric in real-life communication do not change the fact that speeches are still of central significance in modern rhetoric. Fafner arrives at his comprehensive definition of rhetoric by distinguishing between *persuasio* in a *broad* and a *narrow* sense (1977, 38ff.). He finds it most natural to reserve the term *persuasio* for the narrow conception, and substitutes the broad sense of the term with the notion of intentionality. This implies a new interpretation which is also an *expansion* of the classical demarcation of rhetoric; but there is no displacement of how the foundation of the discipline is seen. At its center we find communication that is persuasive in the narrow sense of the word, i.e., situations where a sender, by means of persuasion seeks to resolve a *divergence of opinion*. Centered around this core we find texts and communicative forms that are more or less persuasive, with gradual transitions between them; at the outer rim there is communication which is non-persuasive but intentional, i.e., where the intention may be, for example, to explain a given matter without the interlocutor holding an opposing opinion.

Thus, in the spectrum of rhetorical texts political speeches, now as before, are the epitome of rhetorical address. The core concept of the discipline, *persuasion*, is fully in evidence here and may be studied with regard to all the traditional subsections of the discipline.[3]

The extent to which rhetoric is equated with set speeches means that there is a tendency to forget the speech genre *debate*, despite its being just as narrowly persuasive. This bias is also evident

3. That political speeches may be regarded as the dominant "high rhetorical" genre is also evident in the numerous analyses of past and present speeches that account for a great deal of the academic literature and curricula in rhetoric. Likewise, public speaking is a favored form of practical activity in the curricula.

in the way classical rhetoric is seen as a doctrine of *oratio* and one-way communication, where one speaker addresses a crowd of listeners. This view of classical rhetoric is based on a very superficial view. In fact rhetorical address was nearly always embedded in a context of actual debate. It holds for political as well as forensic speeches that they were inserted in a process of *speech—counter speech*; on civil cases this pattern was even duplicated to indictment – defense – reply – rejoinder (Hansen 1969, 18). Among the literary speeches in Thucydides we find paired speeches that illustrate political debate as it unfolded in the popular assembly. However, we mostly only have one of the classical debate speeches preserved (this is the case, for example, of the forensic speeches of Lysias), and this has probably contributed to the widespread view that associates rhetoric with monological persuasion.

That we should as a rule see speeches as embedded in a debate frame is particularly evident in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. In his three first chapters about the nature and status of rhetoric as a discipline, he gives priority to the *political* genre, not the forensic, which the textbooks of his time are far too preoccupied with, since political oratory "is a nobler business, and fitter for a citizen, than that which concerns the relations of private citizens" (1354). Like dialectics, rhetoric "draws opposite conclusions" (1355a), but unlike dialectic, rhetoric is concerned with *political decision processes in public assemblies* where ordinary citizens meet: "The duty of rhetoric is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us, in the hearing of persons who cannot take in at a glance a complicated argument, or follow a long chain of reasoning. The subjects of our deliberation are such as seem to present us with alternative possibilities" (1357a). The conception of rhetoric that underlies Aristotle's view of the rhetorical audience is debatable, but the point of these pronouncements is to underscore rhetoric's nature as doctrine concerned with decisions on moot public issues, based on the principle that an issue always has (at least) two sides. The rhetorical text always relates to an opposing view, where one opinion confronts the other; the underlying idea is that decisions

must be made on the basis of partial pleas that are tested and weighed against each other. This is implied by the term chosen for political rhetoric: the *deliberative* genre (Gr. *genos symbouleutikon*, Lat. *genus deliberativum*). Political rhetoric is a *debating* activity in this broad sense of the word, whether practiced in a formal debate situation where opponents take turns speaking, or in one-way communication where the speaker relates to an absent opponent or to listeners holding opposing views, regardless of whether the address be oral or written.

Debate As a Speech Genre

Today we use the word debate as an umbrella term for argumentative texts of multiple kinds. We tend to talk about contributions to *public debate* whether we refer to an editorial in a newspaper, a book review, an investigative TV documentary about Greenpeace or a citizen's speech at a townhall meeting. Some scholarly textbooks consider such artefacts to belong to the *debate* genre in the same broad sense.[4]

The term has a narrower meaning when applied to *debate as a speech genre*—that is to say, a *formalized* or *moderated* debate. This is a traditional text type characteristic of political argument in Western democracies, with roots in the Athenian popular assemblies (as noted above). In our time this genre is typical of legislation in parliaments and of more open forms in townhall-type debates, in particular during election campaigns.

In a parallel process, debate has been developed and institutionalized in education, particularly in Britain and the US, where debate contests are common in schools and colleges. Here, the genre is called *educational debate*, or—somewhat confusingly—*forensic debate*, that is, debates patterned after court proceedings, even if their subject matter is political: the claim in thedse debates is a policy proposal which the two opposite sides

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4. Togeby 1977, 118-119, uses this term in his taxonomy of texts, distinguishing *debating* texts from *informative* and *regulatory* texts.

then argue for or against (*policy advocacy*).[5] In accordance with a set of predetermined rules a 'winner' is then named by a panel or an arbiter, often the teacher of the class.

The traditions of public political debate and of academic competitive debating build on a shared basic situation. The constitutive features of what we might call the *forensic debate format* may be stated based on Jeffery J. Auer's description of the elements of the debate genre. He offers the following definition involving five generally accepted criteria, all evolved in the American debate tradition:

> *A debate is (1) a confrontation, (2) in equal and adequate time, (3) of matched contestants, (4) on a stated proposition, (5) to gain an audience decision.* Each of these elements is essential if we are to have a true debate (Auer 1962, 146).

Auer's definition contains the minimal requirements for a good debate, hence it is *prescriptive*. Normativity is evident in criteria 2 and 3 with their requirements for "adequate" time and "matched" contestants. If we disregard these, we can transform it to the following *descriptive* definition of the speech genre 'forensic debate': *A debate is 1) a confrontation 2) according to certain formal rules 3) of parties arguing for divergent standpoints 4) on a given theme 5) to gain an audience decision.*

This compressed definition calls for some comments regarding the individual points.

On (1): The forensic *confrontation* implies that a debate always has a disagreement as its starting point and involves a clash of the opposite views that exist regarding an issue. This point always implies that the disagreeing parties are able, to a certain extent, to address each other, for example by scrutinizing the opponent's arguments and answering attacks.

On (2): The confrontation typically involves two *parties*, each of which may consist of a single debater or a team, and where

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5. Sproule 1980, 363-364: "*Forensic debate* is customarily defined as a situation of dispute in which two sides argue the merits of a stated proposition: one side supporting the proposition, the other opposing it."

each party argues for its own proposition regarding the issue. More parties than two may also be involved.

On (3): The *formal rules* primarily concern the administration of the right to speak. At the least, a predetermined distribution of speaking time is required, preferably equal time, as emphasized in Auer's criteria. This implies that a debate will always need to have a *moderator* who administers the right to speak and enforces any further formal rules that may apply, for example that a debater must answer if the opponent has the right to question him. Also, debaters may be subjected to directions regarding their actual arguments, such as a prohibition against introducing irrelevant content, etc.

On (4): Prototypical debates have one theme, called the *proposition* or *resolution*, stated in a way that both parties know and have accepted. Competitive college debates have elaborate rules for the formulation of the debate proposition, as well as with regard to the roles assigned to the debaters and their turn taking. (See, e.g., Goodwin 1982, 61-66.) In public debates the theme will often be a broad topic, divided into subsidiary issues. The theme will typically be advocative, i.e., it will concern *what to do*. Whether or not the theme is stated in advocative terms, it has a directive purpose, and the argumentation is aimed at societal practice. The nature of the theme brings us to the next point:

On (5): On closer inspection, the description of the purpose of the debate involves two constitutive features: The argumentation by the debaters is addressed to a *decision*-making *audience*. The speakers are not meant to persuade each other; instead, both seek to gain adherence to their standpoints regarding the issue at hand from the listening third party, the audience. The decision aimed at may take the form of a direct manifestation (e.g., a vote taken in the audience), or it may consist in auditors making up their minds about the issue—with the practical consequences such a resolution may be expected to have.

As perhaps the most famous example of the tradition of public debates in modern times we may point to the *Lincoln-Douglas debates*, described in David Zarefsky's work (1990) that bears the telling subtitle *In the Crucible of Public debate*. These seven

debates were held in various venues in Illinois during the campaign for the election to the US Senate in 1858. The overall topic was slavery in the territories; each debates lasted three hours and drew audiences of 15,000-20,000 people—outdoors, on the prairie! Zarefsky shows, in his painstaking argument analysis, that the glorification the debates have enjoyed in posterity is partly undeserved. Both debaters made use of wild accusations (conspiracy arguments), and the debates were not a simple showdown between good and evil. But Zarefsky also finds much in them to emulate. In conclusion, he says, among other things: "They provide a valuable lesson in the 'micromanagement' of value conflicts under which public argument is meaningful and successful. They illustrate successful patterns of argument and refutation" (1990, 244).

TV: A Modern Debate Forum

In Denmark there is not a strong tradition for the use of forensic-style debate as a pedagogical practice. Also, owing to the dwindling membership of political parties during the last decades and a failing interest in campaign rallies, the townhall-style debate has lost its former importance. But forensic-style debate has had a renaissance in the electronic media, first radio and now above all TV.

The great variety of existing TV debate programs and the numerous experiments with the format and execution of debates show that the genre is alive and being adapted to the medium. TV debates based on the forensic concept may be divided in two main groups, which I will call the *simple* and the *complex* debate.

In *simple* debates there are just two debaters and a moderator. The issue is usually one of topical interest covered by the media. These programs are relatively short (15-30 minutes), and there are typically few rules. The journalist stays in the background and has the primary function of seeing to it that the debaters get about equal talking time, as well as intervening when they talk over each

other, and occasionally asking questions when an aspect of the issue seems to have been exhausted.

Complex debates are large-format events involving several debaters, inserted video clips and interviews, statistical information, questions from viewers, etc. They tend to be longer (usually 45-60 minutes). In this category we may distinguish between programs following a strict journalistic plan where moderators see to it that debaters' argumentation stays on topic, and more traditional debate formats that follow many of the principles known from competitive educational debates; such debates are highly formalized, but debaters still have free reins regarding how to fill the frames (cf. Jørgensen et al. 1994, 341ff.).

The way the debate genre has evolved, in particular because of the influence of TV, has generated widespread concerns regarding the state of democracy (cf. Jørgensen et al. 1994, Ch. 22). There seems to be a great distance between, on the one hand, the ideal of a deliberative activity that involves citizens in a society's concerns, securing a basis for informed decisions through multilateral, thorough argumentation, and on the other hand debates such as actually broadcast on TV. These often seem superficial and aimed at entertainment value, while in-depth argumentation about grave and important political issues has low priority. For example, the veteran journalist Walter Cronkite, interviewed on Danish TV news on August 15, 1993, declared:

> Our use of television for political campaigns has been absolutely disastrous to democracy. Here is this magnificent medium to carry meaningful debate on the serious subjects under consideration by the government to the people, and it is not used in that fashion at all. Our debates are a laugh. They are not debates at all, they are shows.

A similar assessment of the decline of political argumentation caused by TV had already been expressed by J. Jeffery Auer (1962), who, in the volume *The Great Debates* about the Kennedy-Nixon debates in 1960, dismissed these televised debates between presidential candidates, the first of their kind, as "the Counterfeit Debates".

In Denmark, the discussion about the deterioration of political debate on TV has intensified, in particular because of a perceived increase in hostility. 'Mudslinging' became a preferred term during the election campaign of 1994. The use of this word reflects a disenchantment with politics and a widespread dissatisfaction with the quality level of debates, which allegedly makes political argument look like public bickering in a sandbox. The general talk about mudslinging was amplified after the change of government in 1993, where media and politicians themselves, acting together, created a fixation on the persons of the Prime Minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, and the leading figure of the opposition, Uffe Ellemann-Jensen. During the time leading up to the next election campaign a new phenomenon emerged, reflecting the Americanization of political journalism on TV: The major televised debates between these two figures carried suggestive titles like *Summit Meeting* and *Duel*.[6] In particular the latter of these two programs drew reactions deploring the low level of the debate, where the two leaders talked over each other and addressed each other with general contempt to a rare degree.[7]

The trend towards hard-hitting debate may be considered an instantiation of how politics adapts to the TV medium. Seen in that optic, the idea of meaningful deliberative discourse addressed to an active, decision-making public is undermined by the medium's need for spectacular entertainment for a passive audience.[8]

But there is also another way of viewing the matter. It sees the rhetorical model of debate as an illusion, an idealistic masking of a political reality whose very nature involves propaganda and manipulation. The nature of debate is to enforce one's views on the public. The very etymology of the word (derived from French, *débattre*, the core meaning of which is to exchange blows) is

6. Thus the two national channels TV2 on Nov. 9, 1993, and DR on May 18, 1994, respectively.

7. On the general trend in the US toward hostility in politivcal debate, see, e.g., Jamieson 1988, 49.

8. The impact of the media is discussed from various perspectives by Swanson, Bennett, Sigelman, Zarefsky and Gurevitch & Ravoori in their articles from 1992 under the heading *Are Media News Spectacles Perverting Our Political Processes.*

telling according to this view, and when, for example, TV debates tend towards hostility, they simply expose the inherent essence of debate. Let us consider this conception of debate more closely.

Debate Defined as Hostile Argumentation

In descriptions of debate it is common to compare it with the related concept of *discussion*. In ordinary language both words have rather vague denotations and may be used synonymously (Sandersen 1995). We may, for example, use the term a "heated discussion" of something that might as well be called a quarrel, and by a "sober debate" we mean the opposite of a quarrel. We have all heard children ask: "Why are you quarreling?", to which parents will reply: "We are not quarrelling, we are discussing!"

   In academic texts there is a distinction between the two terms debate and discussion, which are seen as two main types of argumentative communication, but the two terms may be defined very differently. One widespread view of the relation between them is formulated by the discourse theorist Klaus Kjøller, who offers these stipulative definition in his Danish textbook on argumentation:

> *Discussion* is what we have when the parties are driven by a wish to come to agreement about the truth or about what solution to a problem is best for all those involved. Considerations of power and prestige play no part in a discussion.
>
>   By contrast, the purpose in *debate* is to win a contest about who can maintain a pre-conceived standpoint as well as possible, and consequently wiping the floor with the opponent as far as possible; while discussion requires each participant to consider all the arguments advanced with as little prejudice as possible, so that they will often express uncertainty or ignorance and change their standpoints as the discussion unfolds, in debate it will be comparable to a knock-out if a debater yields to the opponent's best arguments (1980, 25-26).

Here, Kjøller lets the main difference between the two concepts depend on the debaters' attitudes toward each other and to the

act of argumentation in which they are involved. Discussion is a peaceful speech act. Debate is hostile. And while discussants are willing to change views, debaters will stand immovably by theirs.

Also note that Kjøller describes debate and discussion as *forms* of argumentation, i.e., ways of arguing, rather than as concepts that refer to different text types and communication situations. Thus, one cannot analyze the communication situation in order to formally determine whether, for example, an argumentative dialogue on TV between two politicians about a major construction project is a debate or a discussion; it depends on how they argue and relate to the situation and to each other.

This, for one thing, makes the definitions somewhat unmanageable for textual analysis. Also, it is a problem that the forms of argumentation are described in terms with different valences, one positive, the other negative. This means that the stipulative definitions will automatically be understood as persuasive definitions: Discussion is *good* argumentation and is viewed in an *idealistic* light, debate is *bad* argumentation and is viewed *realistically*. Given these definitions, it is impossible to discuss in an underhanded way, and equally impossible to debate honestly. I find this position unreasonable; it implies that there is *in principle* no difference between the genres debate and discussion: The argumentation in a debate will have to be evaluated with a yardstick made for discussion and becomes legitimate only if it observes the normative requirements of discussion.

This criticism of Kjøller's definitions rests on the assumption that debate and discussion are concepts referring to communication situations of different kinds, hence with different success criteria and normative standards. Such a distinction has a long scholarly tradition behind it; it leads us back to the classical disciplinary boundary between rhetoric and dialectic. In fact, Kjøller's characterizations of debate and discussion involve elements that point back to the fundamental differences traditionally emphasized, such as quest for 'truth' in the case of discussion and 'contest' in the case of debate.

Debate between Rhetoric and Dialectic

In the classical system of disciplines there is a sharp distinction between the approach to argumentation in rhetoric and dialectic. Rhetoric is typically concerned with political speech in public assemblies, dialectic with philosophical dialogue. As Fafner has it: "Dialectic is essentially the art of arriving at truth dialogically through a series of logical distinctions" (1982, 61, note 1). It is on this basic understanding that dialectic was founded as a discipline by Socrates/Plato and Aristotle. The modern notion of "logic" is usually invoked to explain this definition, but from an Aristotelian point of view that is an oversimplification.[9] The distinctive features that constitute the classical difference between rhetoric and dialectic may be understood as in the following table, drawn from Josef Klein (1991, 356):

9. The explanation offered by Fafner applies if "logic" is taken in roughly the same sense as "informal logic". However, it is downright misleading when Kjørup (1993, 34) identifies the Aristotelian concept of dialectic with "formal logic". Aristotle distinguished between three forms of reasoning. "Aristotle recognizes three levels of reasoning: scientific demonstration (discussed in the *Prior* and *Posterior analytics*), dialectic or the art of discussion by question and answer (discussed in the *Topics*), and rhetoric, the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject. Dialectic and rhetoric both employ for the most part argument from probabilities rather than from certainties and differ in the subjects they cover, in their literary form, and in the fact that rhetoric may also make use of proof by ethos and pathos." (Kennedy 1963, 96). Aristotle's disciplinary boundaries are drawn in a very complicated manner: "Aristotle divided intellectual activity into (1) theoretical sciences, which include mathematics, physics, and theology; (2) practical arts, including politics and ethics; and (3) productive arts, including the fine arts, the crafts, and also medicine. In addition, there are (4) methods or tools (*organa*), applicable to all study but with no distinct subject matter of their own. Logic and dialectic belong in that class … rhetoric is a mixture. It is partly a method (like dialectic) with no necessary subject of its own but partly a practical art derived from ethics and politics on the basis of its conventional uses" (Kennedy 1991, Introduction, 12).

		Domain		
		Rhetoric	Televised political discussion	Dialectic
Para-meter	Form of address	Set speeches	Discourse and counter-discourse in quick, often spontaneous turn-taking	
	Communicative configuration	Trialogical		Dialogical
	Addressee	Audience		Interlocutor
	Level of validity	Plausibility/Probability		Truth
	Purpose	Defeat of opponent by persuasion of audience		Consensus with interlocutor through arrival at truth

As is evident from the table, Klein considers political TV debates (which he calls "discussions") to belong, in most respects, to the disciplinary domain of rhetoric. But their assignment to this category relies on the classical disciplinary boundaries. Are they at all valid today?

Applying a modern view of rhetoric, one might well doubt that. Thus, Fafner asserts, under the heading "The dialogical nature of *persuasio*":

> The ancient theory of *persuasio* nearly always assumed a state of one-way communication. It was more concerned with "talking *to*" than "talking *with*". The art of moving in dialogue towards grasping the truth through an unpacking of concepts was a matter for *dialectics*.
>
> The distinction between "rhetoric" and "dialectic" no longer has validity. What newer conceptions of rhetoric assert is precisely that persuasion is a reciprocal process. Whoever want to convince, persuade and move others must be willing to let themselves be convinced, persuaded, moved. Whoever wants to talk must also be able to listen. The persuasion only becomes mutual when the dialogue partners "persuade" each other and jointly reach the truest solutions.
>
> By thus choosing dialogue as the fundamental rhetorical situation we arrive at a concept of greater general applicability than *persuasio/peithō*. It is the concept of *pistis* (Lat. *fides*), which may be considered as the goal of *peithō* and at the same time its condition,

and which therefore is posited by some as the real key notion in rhetoric. … In a broader context it may simply be translated as faith, trust or confidence as a condition for the responsiveness that may pass through all the stages from merely being on speaking terms to a total accord. *Pistis* refers to the necessary conditions—biological, psychological, social and linguistic—for any rhetorical situation (1977, 43).

With this description of the cognitive basis of rhetoric, Fafner posits a rhetoric that is more than a mere effect-oriented persuasion technique or art of manipulation: With the principles of the dialogical nature of *persuasio* and *dialogue as the fundamental rhetorical situation,* rhetoric is placed at a distance from the kind of propagandistic persuasion that is monological and asymmetric.[10]

Fafner does not mean to say that dialogue is always better than speeches because these are easier to abuse. The point is that a speech is only successful when conceived as underlying dialogue between parties who have a free choice, and rhetoric envisages an ideal situation of this kind. The formal feature of interaction is of less importance: Good persuasion may be practiced in one-way communication, just as two-way communication may deteriorate to monologues in disguise, where the parties shout at each other in opposite directions.

When Fafner says that the distinction between rhetoric and dialectic no longer has validity, I understand that as a refutation of a rigoristic distinction between, on the one side, rhetoric as a purely effect-oriented study of persuasion, and on the other a truth-seeking, consensus-oriented dialectic. This implies a call for an opening between the two mutual arch enemies, a recognition that there is a graded spectrum between the two classical disciplines, and for recognizing a continuum of texts and communication situations between the narrowly persuasive speech and the philosophical dialogue.

The revisionist view of the conflict between rhetoric and philosophy is telling for the renaissance of rhetoric that occurred

10. The relation between rhetoric and propaganda is further discussed in Fafner 1985.

in the 20th century.[11] The rapprochement between the disciplines has made itself visible, among other places, in the development of argumentation theory, a field that has manifested itself as an independent domain of research under the influence of Perelman and Toulmin in particular. Scholars from many different fields identify themselves as representing this new argumentation-centered discipline, in particular rhetoricians and informal logicians. Coming from a philosophical background, a new dialectical group of non-formal logicians has emerged. Among these, it is worth mentioning the duo consisting of Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst, of the University of Amsterdam, who label their doctrine in argumentation studies *Pragma-Dialectics*, and Douglas Walton, first at University of Winnipeg, then at the University of Windsor, whose approach to the discipline resembles theirs.

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst's Pragma-Dialectics

The text-type that constitutes the subject of van Eemeren and Grootendorst's pragma-dialectics is the *critical discussion*,[12] where the dialogue partners are driven by the shared main purpose of removing a difference of opinion (the recurrent key formulation is 'resolve a difference of opinion', used interchangeably with 'resolve a dispute' or 'conflict').

   The authors themselves offer this summarizing description of pragma-dialectics:

> [W]e give shape to the ideal of reasonableness in critical discussion. The dialectical aspect consists of two parties who attempt to resolve a difference of opinion by means of a methodical exchange of moves in a discussion. The pragmatic aspect is represented by the description of the moves in the discussion as speech acts.
>   In our pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, we describe argumentation as a complex speech act, the purpose of which is to

11. See, e.g., IJsseling 1976, in particular Ch. 1, "The Rehabilitation of Rhetoric".
12. The following discussion is based on their 1992 book. A briefer account that builds strictly on the book is their article from 1993.

contribute to the resolution of a difference of opinion, or dispute (1992, 10).

The most pioneering aspect of the argumentation doctrine of van Eemeren and Grootendorst is their theory of fallacies. These are described in pragmatic terms as breaches of the normative rules that apply to critical discussion: "Fallacies are analyzed as such incorrect discussion moves in which a discussion rule has been violated" (1992, 104). Underlying the twenty-six best-known fallacies the authors identify a set of rules for critical discussion. This set they reduce to ten fundamental rules, so that each of the known types of fallacy is a violation of (at least) one of the ten rules regulating what speech acts participants in a critical discussion should do to settle a dispute. For example, the various fallacies belonging under the heading *argumentum ad hominem* are violations of normative rule No. 1: "Parties must not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from casting doubt on standpoints".

In principle, van Eemeren and Grootendorst take an open stance towards rhetoric and in an Aristotelian spirit they present rhetoric and dialectic as equal doctrines, each with its distinctive characteristics and disciplinary principles. Among other aspects, they emphasize that rhetoric is oriented towards 'audience' and 'persuasiveness', whereas dialectic is similarly oriented towards 'resolution' and 'cogency' (1992,7ff).

Already here we detect a narrow conception of rhetoric which many in the discipline itself would not acquiesce to. The pragma-dialecticians' understanding of rhetoric is perhaps closest to an extreme Neo-Aristotelian view of the discipline which only considers the effect on the actual audience and excludes normative considerations regarding the way the orator tries to achieve the desired effect.[13] Rhetoricians taking a different view would also object to the idea that rhetoric is more oriented towards the audience than to the resulting decision. On the contrary, classical and modern rhetoric agree to emphasize that the rhetorical

13. An example of a Neo-Aristotelian who represents a purely descriptive rhetoric focused on persuasion is Hill 1972.

situation stems from the need for action to solve a problem of urgency.[14] That is also inherent in the very concept of debate.[15]

Further, the pragma-dialecticians' concept of *persuasio* is narrower than what is common in rhetoric in the way it refers to 'persuading' as opposed to 'convincing', whereas most rhetoricians are emphatic that this distinction is misleading.

The pragma-dialecticians connect *persuasio* with emotional 'persuading' or 'talking round', as distinct from rational 'convincing'; this is evident, for example, from the following self-identification vis-à-vis rhetorical argumentation theory: "Dialectification is achieved by treating argumentation as a rational means to convince a critical opponent and not as *mere persuasion*. The dispute should not just be terminated, *no matter how*, but resolved by methodically overcoming the doubts of a rational judge in a well-regulated critical discussion" (1992, 10-11; italics added).

van Eemeren and Grootendorst expressly caution against the risks involved in extending the norms for critical discussion and applying them to other situations than those that can be referred to this text type. They emphasize that the norms expressed in the ten rules for critical discussion can only be applied to situations "where the discussion is actually aimed at resolving a dispute", and as a consequence of this they assert: "The identification of fallacies is therefore always conditional: only given a certain interpretation of the discourse is it justified to maintain the allegation that a fallacy has occurred" (1992, 105). Unfortunately, they only mention the text type debate in passing. This is the case in the following passage, where they seem to violate their own principle that the norms cannot be applied outside critical discussion:

> [V]ery often the protagonist is not really trying to convince the professed antagonist but addresses, over his head, a third party. In a political debate, the target group may, in fact, consist of the television viewers; in a letter to the editor, of the newspaper's readers. Then, there are actually two antagonists: The "official" antagonist and the

14. In modern rhetoric, see in particular Bitzer 1968.
15. See Auer's definition, above

people who are the real target group. A quasi-dialectical goal is then pursued with regard to the first antagonist, whereas the predominant goal with regard to the second is rhetorical (1992, 42).

Here, van Eemeren and Grootendorst imply that they consider debate as a text type which *pretends* to be a critical discussion, and that debaters thus *ought* to abide by its norms. This is dangerously close to the view of the relation between debate and discussion represented by Kjøller, as discussed above—a view that implies a dismissal of the debate genre as inherently suspect.

Walton's Relativistic Pragma-dialectics and His System of Argumentative Dialogue Types

Walton, too, describes his approach to argumentation as pragma-dialectical, but he applies a broader perspective. While van Eemeren and Grootendorst limit themselves to studying critical discussion, Walton includes other forms of dialogue in his argumentation theory. Its close kinship with van Eemeren and Grootendorst is evident in the following definition: "*Argument* is a social and verbal means of trying to resolve, or at least contend with, a conflict or difference that has arisen or exists between two (or more) parties" (Walton 1992, 187). But by including other types of argumentation dialogue he adds the properties *pluralistic* and *relativistic* to the pragmatic and dialectical approach he shares with van Eemeren and Grootendorst:

> *Argument* is best defined as reasoning directed toward fulfilling an obligation. So conceived, an argument is a path of guided reasoning leading from a dialectical basis, or initial situation of a type of dialogue, toward some goal that is appropriate and characteristic for that type of dialogue. … An argument is correct (good, reasonable, successful) insofar as it fulfills a goal of dialogue and is used rightly and constructively toward that end … What is an appropriate goal for one type of dialogue may not be so for another type of dialogue. Therefore, whether an argument is good or bad depends essentially on the context of dialogue in which it used (1992, 184-185).

Walton's extension of the textual domain to other kinds of dialogue, e.g., debate and negotiation, implies that his argumentation theory overlaps with the domain of rhetoric, whereas van Eemeren and Grootendorst keep rhetoric and dialectic separated. By endorsing the principle that norms vary, dependent of the dialogue type in question, Walton expresses a basic view that he shares with rhetoric. On the whole, he belongs to the group of informal logicians who relativize the boundaries between rhetoric and logic.

The rapprochement to rhetoric is evident, e.g., in Walton's use of the term *persuasion dialogue* as synonymous with *critical discussion*. Thus, he does not share van Eemeren and Grootendorst's tendency to simplify the traditional distinction between rationally convincing dialectic and irrationally persuasive rhetoric; instead, Walton adopts the extended notion of a *persuasion* that encompasses how interlocutors persuade each other in rational conversation.[16]

Walton has presented his system of dialogue types in an early version (Walton 1989, Ch. 1) and in a more detailed and elaborated version in the book from which the above quotations are drawn (1992, Ch. 3 and 4). He defines a series of main types, each of which has its distinctive characteristics, and devotes a large part of his interest to the relation between debate and critical discussion. The basic consideration most relevant to the issue dealt with in the present article is Walton's view of debate as an intermediary type between quarrel and critical discussion. Let us take a closer look at his distinctions.

In his early version, Walton presents the dialogue types and the primary differences between them in the following schematic table (1989, 10):

16. One might say that Walton goes a step further in "rhetoricizing" dialectics by extending the speech act in the verb *to persuade* to critical discussion, whereas van Eemeren and Grootendorst content themselves with the small opening implied in describing the dialogue with the phrase "difference of *opinion*", thereby refraining from making the dialogue a simple question of finding true knowledge.

Dialogue	Initial situation	Method	Goal
Quarrel	Emotional disquiet	Personal attack	"Hit" out at other
Debate	Forensic contest	Verbal victory	Impress audience
Persuasion (critical discussion)	Difference of opinion	Internal and external proof	Persuade other
Inquiry	Lack of proof	Knowledge-based argumentation	Establish proof
Negotiation	Difference of interests	Bargaining	Personal gain
Information-seeking	Lacking information	Questioning	Find information
Action-seeking	Need for action	Issue imperatives	Produce action
Educational	Ignorance	Teaching	Impart knowledge

In accordance with his critical approach to argumentation (1989, 9), Walton places the first three of these dialogue types on a scale in this way:

The private *quarrel* represents the *lowest* level. It is marked by aggressive personal attacks, heated emotional appeals and the wish to win at any price. "The quarrel is no friend of logic and frequently represents argument at its worst" (1989, 4).

    Persuasive dialogue (= critical discussion) is located at the *highest* level and represents the norms for rational argumentation (Walton's key concept is "reasonable argument"). This type is characterized by having two participants, each of which tries to persuade the other of his or her standpoint. "The main method of persuasion dialogue is for each participant to prove his own thesis by the rules of inference from the concessions of the other participant" (1989, 5).

    Forensic *debate* occupies a position between these two. Because of the formal rules it is "more congenial to logical reasoning than the personal quarrel" (1989, 4), but since the rules will often allow personal attacks and other types of fallacies, and since the purpose is always to win the debate in the judgment of an audience, debate will always tilt toward quarrel.

    Here, Walton's distinction between debate and discussion suffers from the same weakness as Kjøller's: Both propose a systematic typology which, however, teeters between applying

a normative and a descriptive criterion. Critical discussion is characterized by the features that distinguish it when it conforms to its ideal, debate, in contrast, by those features that often mark it in practice. This methodological problem comes to the fore when debate is characterized with terms that reveal a negative attitude towards it. Seeking to win a 'verbal victory' and to 'impress' the audience could never be legitimate activities.

The misdirection implied in the terms used in the table for debate and discussion, respectively, becomes apparent when we consider these terms in relation to a typical example of debate such as the Danish TV programs "Town Parliament" analyzed in Jørgensen et al. (1994, 1998). True enough, these televised debates were in fact 'forensic contests' insofar as votes were taken, and the debaters in them did compete to win the audience's adherence. But the issue in each of them might be defined as a 'difference of opinion' with the same justification as in critical discussions. Why should participants in such debates not use the methods of 'internal and external proofs'? And above all: Why reserve the term 'persuade' for critical discussions and degrade the debater's purpose with the word 'impress'?

This last example of biased terminology is corrected in Walton's later version of the dialogue types, which also has other modifications (1992, 95). There, they are described as follows (I reproduce only the part of his table covering the three text types at issue here):

Types of dialogue	Initial situation	Individual goal of participants	Collective goal of dialogue	Benefits
Persuasion	Difference of opinion	Persuade other party	Resolve difference of opinion	Understand position
Debate	Adversarial contest	Persuade third party	Air strongest arguments for both sides	Spread
Quarrel	Personal conflict	Verbally hit out and humiliate opponent	Reveal deeper conflict	Vent emotions

Walton's typology of dialogue types allows for combining them in two ways that matter for the evaluative assessment of the argumentation. One of the ways to combine them is the dialogue *shift*. In practice, a pure dialogue type is the exception rather than

the rule, and the parties will tend to wander from one dialogue type to another. For example, a dialogue between the two parties in a divorce may begin as a negotiation about child custody and then move into a critical discussion about which parent is best qualified to administer custody, seen from the child's viewpoint. In Walton's pragmatic optic, dialogue shifts may be either good or bad. That depends primarily on whether the parties consent to the shift. Thus it will be illegitimate if one party jumps from critical discussion to quarrel when the other is not in agreement with it.

The other way to combine dialogue types is to *blend* them. Here, features from two (or more) text types occur simultaneously, resulting in a characteristic mixed form ("mixed dialogue"). Walton's prime example is precisely the dialogue type debate, and that brings us to the crucial point in his perspective that I wish to dispute.

Debate vs. Quarrel

It is not the purpose of this article to dispute that debates often assume a very hostile character and degenerate into quarrels. Rather, my point is that debate has a different purpose from quarrel, and that the debate genre relies on norms and expectations which imply that debates should precisely *not* slide into quarrels. In other words, I dispute that debate is inherently a hostile type of speech act, and that this text type should, because of its inherent nature, push a debater towards quarrel.

Walton emphasizes that the rules for formal forensic debates may restrain tempers. But instead of seeing the rules the way he does: as sporadic attempts to counteract the inner nature of debate, I see them as expressing the underlying norms of the genre. That is, the rules reflect the existence of a generally accepted ideal that debates should not be quarrels, not even the informal ones.

The notion of debate as an inherently hostile speech act builds on its competitive element and on the addressee configuration, and it is here that we find the crux of the issue. The reasoning in both Kjøller and Walton is that the hostility follows from the

debaters' one-sidedness or partisanship and from their contest for the audience's adherence.

Thus, when Kjøller says that the purpose of debate is "to win a contest about maintaining one's pre-conceived standpoint as well as possible, and *consequently* wiping the floor with the opponent" (cf. above [p.50](#)), I see that as a piece of fallacious reasoning—one which, however, also marks Walton's much more elaborate and nuanced discussion.

This reasoning rests on the assumption that hostility is an effective means of persuasion *vis-à-vis* the third party, the audience. This is a dubious assumption. It may be in place in certain situations where the audience is particularly motivated in regard to the issue, in particular if the audience holds an attitude of hate towards the opponent or seeks a scapegoat. After demagogues like Hitler and Goebbels there is no denying that rhetoric reflecting 'the beast within' is effective under certain social conditions. But disregarding situations where the audience is particularly susceptible to hostility, much seems to suggest that hostility has a negative effect on observers. The study of the "Town Parliament" debates (Jørgensen et al. 1994, 1998) points in that direction. Although only one single statistically significant result can be cited in support,[17] the probable conclusion is that hostility will weaken a debater's chances of winning adherence, and the few winning debaters who have an overall 'eristic' profile arguably won despite their hostility, not because of it (1994, 316ff).

This conclusion is supported by other empirical studies. For example, Infante et al. (1992) show that audiences are highly sensitive to debaters' hostile attacks on their opponents, and that the debaters who begin a hostile exchange decrease their credibility with the audience and get fewer persuasive arguments attributed to them.

Theoretical considerations, too, provide reasons to maintain a conceptual distinction between quarrel and debate. Walton, by considering debate as a transitional form between quarrel and

17. 1994, 151: Debaters employing very hostile arguments invoking the notion of a "coup" do significantly worse than those who don't.

critical discussion, assumes a graded spectrum of rationally argumentative text types, but in doing that, he overlooks the distinctive feature that marks some text types as *persuasive by nature*—a decisive feature in my view. This objection requires a clarification of the concepts of *argumentation* and *persuasive* argumentation.

Modern argumentation theory has no unequivocal concept of argumentation. One relatively narrow definition is offered by Perelman, who adopts the traditional distinction between *argumentatio* and *demonstratio*. The term argumentation is here used about rhetorical argumentation theory, i.e., persuasive argumentation aiming at winning adherence with an audience, whereas *demonstratio* refers to formal logic and aims at reasoning *more geometrico*—i.e., presenting compelling proof (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, Introduction, 1-10).

This distinction differs from contemporary ordinary language, in which the word argumentation covers both domains and all forms of communication where reasoning is used. Most definitions follow what Willard calls *the Claim-Reason Complex* (1989, 77), and they focus on the presence of arguments consisting of a claim by the sender, in connection with an explicit or implicit reason. Willard himself might then be cited as an argumentation theorist who takes an even more encompassing view. His broad definition goes as follows: "argument is a kind of interaction in which two or more people maintain what they construe to be incompatible positions" (1989, 42). This definition includes all communication that originates in disagreement, for example also an all-and-out quarrel where participants express their emotions without giving any reasons.

It is debatable whether such a broad definition is practical; but the question is irrelevant in regard to debate, which is precisely an argumentative text type involving reasons. In most cases quarrels will be argumentation to some extent in the sense that some reasons for claims will be given, but the text type does not require it. In other words, argumentation consisting in a combination of claims and reasons is constitutive for debate, but not for quarrel.

However, my crucial objection to Walton is that *debate is essentially persuasive*, whereas quarrel is not. In debate, there is argument with the purpose of winning adherence to a standpoint from the intended addressees; in a quarrel the purpose is something else. A quarrel, as Walton himself lays out the differences, is marked by the participants' need for emotional release. The purer the quarrel, the more the emotive language function will dominate, the more it is an act of affect, i.e., the motive is the release of affect, not influencing someone else's affect. That is why private quarrels between two persons belong to the domain of psychology rather than to argumentations theory (Walton 1992, 123). A quarrel may indirectly aim to regulate action, but it is significant that the argumentation which makes it possible to have the other person change behavior may only begin when the air is cleared in the proper quarrel. This means, in Walton's terminology, that a dialogue shift occurs, from quarrel to negotiation or persuasive dialogue.

In contrast, debate typically aims directly at regulating action and is persuasively argumentative. The whole point of debate is, through argument and counterarguments, to obtain the adherence of the audience to one or the other decision, advocated for by the participants. The emotive language function is only activated to the extent that it may promote adherence.[18] Emotions may carry one away, but uncontrolled affect will as a rule be experienced as alien to the act of debating and have a negative effect. If one spouse in a quarrel bursts into tears out of anger, it may make a deep impression and cause the other to see the problem; if a debater reacts in the same way, there is a grave risk that it will make the audience laugh.

This ties in with another difference: The purely personal quarrel belongs in the private sphere, behind closed doors. Debate, on the other hand, is a *public* text type because of its indirect reception, where the listening audience is the primary addressee. In that regard, the line is rather to be drawn between debate on one side

18. By this I obviously do not mean that emotive appeals in the form of ethos or pathos are not characteristic of debate. I am merely pointing out the fundamental difference between pure affect release and intentionally expressive utterances.

and quarrel and critical discussion on the other. While critical discussion is not private in the sense of being intimate, the fact remains that it is closed around the two interlocutors and the norms they agree on. Debate differs, with the term drawn from Klein's description (above p.53), from the other two text types by the 'trialogical' configuration of the parties involved in the communication.[19] There can, of course, be quarrels and critical discussions to which others attend as audiences, but in such cases they are mere onlookers without any influence on the communication. In debate, by contrast, the silent audience is an active partner in the interaction. Its presence is constitutive for the text type, and consequently the role of the addressees must determine the kind of communication in which the debaters are to engage.

Debate and Critical Discussion

Having addressed the pragma-dialectical approach, we may now return to the issue of the traditional distinction between rhetorical debate and the dialectical discussion. Which of the distinctive differences noted by Klein in the table shown above (p.53) are valid in a modern context?

The difference between set *speeches* filling a given time slot and spontaneous exchange of *remarks* is no longer crucial. On the whole, the former is more prevalent in debate and the second in discussion, but debate—not least on TV, as noted by Klein—often

19. Klein has drawn the term from Dieckmann (1981), who says, in a section on "Öffentlich-insitutionelle Kommunikation als trialogische Kommunikation": "Der zuschauende oder zuhörende Dritte ist konstitutiv nicht nur für das Interview, sondern für jedes Sprechen in den Massenmedien, das intern als Zweier- oder Gruppengespräch (Rundgespräche, Pro und Contra, Frühschoppen etc.) organisiert ist. Das, was er sagt, hat nicht nur faktisch verschiedene Hörer, sondern ist oft auch intentional doppelt addressiert" (218). As far as the term "trialogical" is concerned, it makes good sense when used to characterize the configuration of persons; as a term for a type of communication, however, it is less obvious, since a "monologue" and a "dialogue" are texts with one, respectively two, talking participants, and a "trialogue" should then, on this logic, have three.

trades in brief, spontaneous exchanges. And conversely it is possible to conduct a critical discussion in sequences of speeches.

In contrast, the criterion of *trialogical vs. dialogical* configuration is a fundamental difference between debate and discussion. It connects with the next criterion.

Likewise, the difference between the *audience* as addressees in debate and the interlocutor in discussion is crucial.

In regard to the relevant criterion of validity, it is not possible to maintain a clearcut difference with *plausibility/probability* as a mark of debate, vs. *truth* for discussion. In debate, plausibility and probability constitute a more central dimension than truth, but plausibility and probability are in fact recognized as characteristic validity criteria in critical discussion as well, even if truth is seen as the highest ideal in pragma-dialectics and the hardest to attain.[20] The acceptance of plausibility and probability is implied by the key concept of 'reasonable argument'. It is significant that the words "Plausible Argument" occur in the title of Walton's 1992 book. Pragma-dialectical doctrine is not wedded to truth in an objective, absolute sense of the term.

To say that the goal in debate is *victory* over the opponent through persuasion of the audience, whereas in discussion the goal is consensus with the opponent through the discovery of *truth*, is, as the previous points make clear, an oversimplification. The description holds in a broad way, but as noted the concept of truth in discussion is complex, and reserving the concept of *persuasio* for debate is too narrowing.

Debate and Discussion as Counterparts

In place of Walton's systematic table I propose a typology that draws a line between quarrel on the one hand and on the other hand the two persuasive types of argumentation: debate and critical discussion. This way, they would both have a status as potentially rational forms of decision making, but they rely on different norms

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20. In his respect, pragma-dialectics is in better alignment with Aristotle than with Klein's more Platonic view, cf. note 16 above.

for legitimate and good argumentation. For both, there is a norm to the effect that they should not degenerate into quarrels. This way, debate is raised from the intermediary position it occupies in Walton, and in theory it becomes an equal counterpart of discussion, while quarrel is situated at a lower level as a contrasting type. In its natural setting, the quarrel may have a positive value, and in that case it serves very different purposes having to do with personal relations and psychological mechanisms. But in relation to debate and discussion it constitutes a negative standard and represents the epitome of irrationality.

This description of the types remedies a lopsidedness in Walton's system. By making debate a semi-eristic form of communication because it often degenerates into quarrel in real life, he overlooks the fact that so does discussion. Anyone who has witnessed, for example, public discussions of dissertations in academia will have to admit that even in scholarly discussion, ideal critics easily morph into aggressors who allow themselves the most vicious attacks and appear on the whole mainly concerned about 'impressing' those present. If nothing else, the whole literature on fallacies testifies clearly to the fact that discussion cannot be acquitted of this vice.

The relation between the three types may be conveyed visually in this figure:
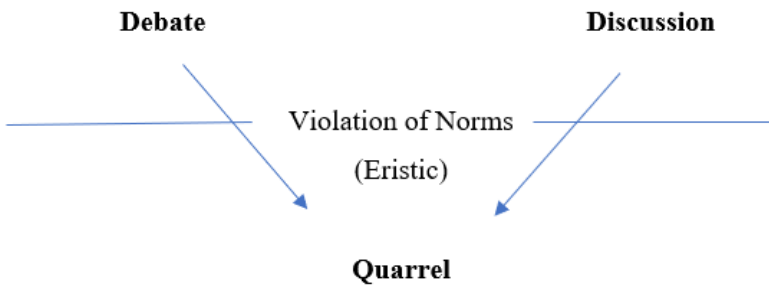
The figure places the two types of rational/reasonable argumentation, debate and discussion, on a par and the quarrel as

the normative contrast to both. The arrows indicate that arguers who employ eristic/hostile argumentation violate the norms of debate as well as discussion and turn both types into quarrel.

Debate: between Opposition and Consensus

As noted, it is basically the notions of a debater's partisan and fixed position that cause Kjøller and Walton to consider debate as an inherently hostile interaction. In a follow-up discussion, Walton presents a more nuanced view than in the account given above. On the one hand he asserts that "by its nature political debate is always on the verge of becoming a group quarrel or negotiation", but on the other hand he concedes that it is "only when these contained types of dialogue are 'out of control' that the argumentation in the speech event becomes subject to normative censure as fallacious, biased, etc." (1992, 154). He makes it clear that both debate and discussion build on the principle of opposition, as both involve an adversarial element, and that in this context "tactical moves to get the best of your opponent" are not inherently bad (1992, 156). This leads to a distinction between good (admissible, constructive) and bad (unacceptable, obstructive) bias—a paper-thin boundary line that is overstepped when debaters obstinately maintain their positions and are unwilling to be persuaded of the opposing view. Regarding critical discussion, Walton says:

> To say that a participant in an argument is obstructively or harmfully biased is to say that for him, the argument is never really open to the risk of loss. He always sees it only from the viewpoint of his own position, which he will not retract or modify significantly. And therefore, this type of biased arguer will never concede defeat. The fault is what we could call *hardened bias* (1992, 157).

Walton then transfers this observation to debate: Since debaters maintain their positions and attempt to persuade the audience, but not each other, they are seen as engaged in a hostile obstructive clash. In my view, the error in this reasoning about the inherent hostility of debate consists in the following:

On the one hand, Walton says that bias in debate is not necessarily a negative thing. On the other hand, it necessarily ends up being a negative thing because debaters by definition have the task of arguing for their own standpoint without letting the opponent move them in regard to the claim at issue. This line of thinking implies that one can only perform constructive opposition by stepping out of the role one has been assigned by the debate concept. Debaters who suddenly declare themselves persuaded by their opponents break the expectation defined by the genre. It is of course thinkable that debaters are in fact persuaded and change views *after* the debate. But if this happens *during* the debate, the speech situation collapses and is no longer debate. Thus, Walton 's requirement to a debater who wants to qualify as non-hostile forces that debater to step out of the role as debater and switch to critical discussion. This leaves no room for a non-hostile debate that is qualitatively different from a discussion. Hence Walton's reasoning leads to the unreasonable position that in order to debate legitimately, one should honor the requirements for critical discussion, as laid out above ([pp. 60&61](#)).

This implication disregards the fundamental difference between debate and discussion in regard to their respective addressees. The trialogical configuration of debates implies that the norms for how debaters relate to each other are different from the norms that apply in discussion, where the dialogue partners try to persuade each other, and where the goal is *consensus*. But the rules regulating a conversation for two who seek to reach agreement cannot be applied to debate. Whether the addressee is the public audience or the opponent matters for what norms for legitimate argumentation will apply. In a discussion, where the participants seek to persuade each other and thus reach consensus, dialogue would be pointless if participants were unwilling to let themselves be persuaded by arguments according to rules that both recognize. In debate, by contrast, such unwillingness would not render the dialogue pointless. The purpose is not that the debaters should reach agreement; they each should present their standpoints in such a way that third parties can make a decision for one or the other

standpoint. Accordingly, it is not a part of the 'contract' that debaters should be willing to change views on the claim at issue.

On this understanding, debate is not in principle more hostile than discussion. They are legitimate, but different text types, both used for conflict resolution. Both are based on the idea of *opposition* as a constructive factor and operate on the principle that a basis for decision-making can be obtained by pitting standpoint against standpoint. The difference is found in purpose and in the constitution of the addressee:

In *critical discussion* the purpose of having the participants oppose each other is that they themselves should develop new insights and make qualified decisions. Thus, it is preferable that one participant persuades the other, whose original standpoint is then retracted, or both may have to move towards the other. Since the communication is a closed event only involving the two arguers, the removal of all doubt is the best possible result, and a realistically attainable one. And as the parties are driven by the wish to reach the resolution closest to the truth together, it may be satisfactory that they refrain from a decision if the uncertainty is too great.

In *debate* the participants oppose each other in order that a third party should find new insight and make a qualified decision. The two debaters represent opposite sides of the issue and are not expected to let themselves be persuaded by the opponent. Since debate is public and addressed to a heterogeneous group of addressees, it has no aspirations to reach a solution in full agreement. And as the point of departure in debate is generally a more or less pressing current issue which requires a resolution within a limited time span, it is satisfactory that a decision is adopted even in a case of great uncertainty.

This lets us see debate and discussion as two systems of rationality with different functions. Critical discussion is characteristic of situations of an academic sort and may be practiced in other situations where two persons choose to

cooperate in accordance with the relevant rules.[21] If the participants have the authority to decide on an issue, critical discussion may also be an important element in social decision-making. While critical discussion may typically be practiced where the goal is *insight,* the point of departure for debate is the need for *action.*[22] Although debate issues *may* be treated in discussion form in accordance with pragma-dialectical rules, debate is the predominant, natural political text type in democracies, where decisions are made in public, and where citizens are active in civic life.

The Normative Obligations of the Debater

If our approach to debate is a normative one as just outlined, what expectations could one then have of the good debater, and what requirements can one make of to a debate if it is to be fair? In what follows, I will try to partly answer this large question by unpacking the speech act of debating and by describing the attitude and mindset characteristic of a constructive debater.

   The first, obvious requirement follows from the fact that debate is, in its essence, an *argumentative* text. Argumentation is what van Eemeren and Grootendorst call a *complex* speech act.[23] While the illocution in simple speech acts may be determined by means of the performative formula, that is not the case for the speech act of arguing. For example, one can determine whether the utterance *I'm coming tomorrow* counts as a promise by inserting the verb for that speech act: *I hereby* promise *that … ;* but the same operation cannot be done with the verb *argue.* This is because the speech act of arguing is complex by involving not only a *claim* to some effect—i.e., it proposes a standpoint to which one seeks

21. Cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, 40): "Scientific discussions are perhaps the closest we ever come to approaching the ideal model of critical discussion."

22. Cf. Goodnight 1993, where the tie to action is emphasized as characteristic of rhetoric, as distinct from dialectic. Thus, rhetorical argumentation is defined as "informed action" (334).

23. The authors build upon Austin's and Searle's speech act theories, respectively.

adherence—but also another speech act, for example an assertive or an expressive one, which *justifies* the standpoint.

In a typical debate, as in a critical discussion, one undertakes the obligation to represent one of two opposite standpoints regarding the issue, but there is a fundamental difference between the tasks of the debater and the discussant. The partners in a critical discission must, as the term makes clear, primarily be *critical* and scrutinize each other's arguments on the assumption that if the opponent can find no *faults* with the argument, then it is a *good* argument which the other must accept. In debate, by contrast, it is not a sufficient criterion that the opponent cannot find weaknesses in the opponent's argumentation.[24] Even if the opponent can find no objections against the piece of reasoning, it may still be a weak argument, lacking all power to persuade the audience. The critical balancing of the arguments advanced rests with the audience rather than the two debaters, who obviously cannot hope to persuade each other, and the good argument is thus one that *weighs heavily* with the audience, i.e., that argument among those advanced that makes them accept one of the two standpoints—or consider doing it. This addition implies that the good debater is not just characterized as the one who persuades fully and completely, but also the one who is able to gain a hearing with the opponent's adherents and make them seriously consider the opposite standpoint.

In debate, critical assessment of the opponent's arguments is thus of second priority. The debater's first obligation is to marshal those arguments that speak most strongly for one of the two standpoints, while the opponent does the same for the opposite standpoint, and it is then up to the audience to do the balancing and assess, when all is considered, which debater has the strongest arguments. This description of the norm for what sort of reasons are required from the good debater aligns directly with Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (*Rhetoric,* 1355b). The scope of this definition, as I understand it, appears from Aristotle's important demarcation of the function of rhetoric as "not simply

24. Cf. Jørgensen et al. 1994, 374.

to succeed in persuading, but rather to discover the persuasive facts in each case" (1355b). The good debater does not seek the greatest possible effect measured by the amount of adherence in the audience, won at any price and with any means. The good debater is to offer the best arguments for one of the standpoints on the issue, but of course that does not exempt the debater from following general communicative norms, such as not saying something against one's better knowledge.

This brings us to an understanding of debate that does not inherently assign an illegitimate role to the debater. The task is to advance the best arguments for one's own standpoint and by subjecting oneself to testing through opposition to persuade the audience of what one considers to be the rightest solution regarding the issue. Even if debaters defend their main claims to the very end, this is not an expression of illegitimate recalcitrance or irrational partisanship. It is, however, irrational partisanship if debaters totally reject everything the opponent says, if they are unwilling to budge or make concessions in regard to some of the supporting arguments, and if they generally fail to recognize their opponents' right to have another opinion on the issue. This is precisely the difference between good debaters, who defend their standpoints as well as they can, with respect for their opponents, and bad debaters, who descend into hostility.

To argue is in itself a *face-threatening* act.[25] It follows that the same also applies to debate, and even more so because the whole idea of debate is a confrontation of parties who remain in disagreement.[26] Since debaters are cast in a role where each threatens the other's face, it follows, in the first place, that the face threat is not illegitimate in this particular communication situation,[27] and in the second place, that debaters must accept the

25. This concept is drawn from Goffman's theory of *face* and *facework*, see Goffman 1955.
26. Cf. Jørgensen et al. 1994, 121-123.
27. Cf. Kleinau 1982, 228, on the basic qualities that characterize the ideal debater in academic training debates: "The debater must be responsible for clashing, which is the principal ingredient of great debate … Our ideal judge should severely penalize either team for failure to clash on the key issues."

risk of suffering a loss of face. Debaters should not prop up each other or consolidate each other's self-esteem; they enter a fair fight and should live with the defeats that may follow. But a fair fight also implies that there are low blows, and this sets the bad debater apart from the good.

Hostile debate may be characterized as follows:

> debate where incivility markers do not serve the principle of efficiency, but are superfluous in relation to the *issue* and the illumination of the disagreement. The hostile debater's attacks are *personal*. Hostile debaters seek divergence and will if possible widen the gulf between themselves and their opponents. The aim is to 'own' the opponent. They signal lack of respect for their opponents and their views. They not only behave in a *face-threatening* way, but are openly trying to make their opponents suffer *loss of face* (Jørgensen et al. 1994, 122-123).

This description reflects a balance that good debaters must strike: They do not argue to make their opponents lose face; they are only face-threatening to the extent necessary to uncover the essential disagreement and explain why their own standpoint is the best solution.

In given circumstances, it may in principle be legitimate to actually attack the other person in a debate. For example, debaters are perhaps well-nigh morally obliged to warn against their opponent's sinister motives when harboring a reasonable suspicion that these are relevant in the matter (Jørgensen et al., 1994, 147-150). This is not tantamount to saying that debate requires hostility, and it does not cancel a norm saying that debaters should desist from personal attacks if at all possible, and that they should not quarrel but argue with mutual respect.

The difference between hostile and good debaters is apparent in, among other things, which of each other's argument they choose to rebut. Hostile debaters, who see the act of debating as a contest in "doing best", will jump upon those arguments from the other side that are easiest to "slam", that is, usually the weakest. In contrast, the good debater, who engages in the interaction in order to persuade others, will focus on the opponent's best arguments,

which are normally also the hardest to rebut. Doing this may not only be expected to be the most effective strategy; it also aligns with the norm that in debate, as in discussion, the strongest argument prevails.

This requirement for good debaters points to yet another quality which reflects mutual respect. Good debaters recognize that their opponents have certain good arguments on their side. They do not pretend to be 100 % right, but concede that the opponent, too, is right about something. They do not, as for instance the Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, according to press reports, did in a debate in 1994 before the referendum about Norwegian membership of the EU, claim that they can see no arguments at all for the opposite view. In that case, the act of debating would be totally meaningless. Space must always be given for a remaining doubt; as a rule, 100 % certainty that a decision is the right one is impossible. Pretending otherwise is false.

Hostility and The Rhetorical Debate Audience

If debaters endeavor to live up to the normative requirements just discussed, then the difference between how debate and discussion are conducted will not be miles apart, such as, e.g., Kjøller's description suggests. The requirements call for a rational attitude in debaters, different from the irrational attitude typical of debates as contests in 'doing best' and 'owning' each other. If, at this point, we turn our attention to the third party involved in debates, the audience, and reflect on the addressee configuration, we shall likewise see that the concept of debate does not in itself invite hostility or irrational argumentation.

Since public debates in a forensic format confront two parties who advocate for opposite standpoints, they are based on a principle of simplification that reduces an issue to an either-or relation. This simplification may promote tendencies to polarization that lead away from the idea of rationality and towards a propensity to see things in black and white and engage in trench

warfare.[28] But on closer inspection, the dichotomy intrinsic to debates is counterbalanced by the nature of the public audience for whose benefit they are staged in the first place. The audience, as we know, is precisely heterogeneous. This is true not only of townhall debates, where the actual audience is a fairly small crowd, whereas the intended audience potentially encompasses all citizens—it is also true of TV debates, whose mass audiences are a much larger share of the population. For one thing, a public debate audience is heterogeneous because it is composed of all kinds of citizens (considered politically, socially, etc.). But it is also heterogenous in the sense that relatively few of those addressed place themselves completely in one or the other camp in the debate. Most will feel torn between the two standpoints and lean to one of the sides with a smaller or larger remnant of doubt.

Using terms reflecting the partisan standpoint of debaters, we may divide the public debate audience into the following groups (with gradual transitions between them): the supporters, the undecided, the opponents. The first and last of these groups may be subdivided into immovable and movable supporters, respectively opponents. The undecided may be divided into the 'active' ones, i.e., those who really feel in doubt because they endorse arguments from both sides or lack a sufficient basis for the decision, and the 'passive' ones, i.e., those who haven't made up their minds because they are unengaged in the issue.

Of all these, only the *middle groups* constitute the *rhetorical debate audience*, as it is wasted effort to address the immovable supporters and opponents. Debaters may then choose to focus on these persuasive tasks: to hold on to the supporters that the

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28. Cf. Jamieson on the modern decline in light of the great political orators in the golden age of rhetoric: "These speeches engaged the ideas of the opposing sides in a way that moved the argument forward. When the bulk of the available evidence favored one side, such speeches helped the audiences towards consensus. By contrast, contemporary political discourse tends to reduce the universe to two sides—one good, one evil—when in fact there may be four or five sides, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. After drawing simplistic and often false dichotomies, contemporary speech tends to canonize one side and anathematize the other" (1988, 11).

opponent is trying to shift; to draw some of the undecided over to their own side; to shift opponents.

Similarly, we may distinguish between winning adherence by either holding on to and mobilizing one's supporters, or by persuading opponents. The first strategy may be called *vote-gathering* rhetoric, the second *vote-shifting* (Jørgensen et al. 1994, Ch. 21; 1998, 295-297). Vote-gathering rhetoric appeals to supporters and to passive undecided individuals whose views are in harmony with the debater's. Vote-shifting appeals to opponents and active undecided individuals.

The persuasive functions and addressee configuration in debates may be illustrated as follows (bold type is used for the different categories of the rhetorical debate audience):

Debater   ←——————→   (Opponent)

Vote-gathering   Vote-shifting

Immovable supporters / **Movable supporters** / **Undecided** / **Movable opponents** / Immovable opponents
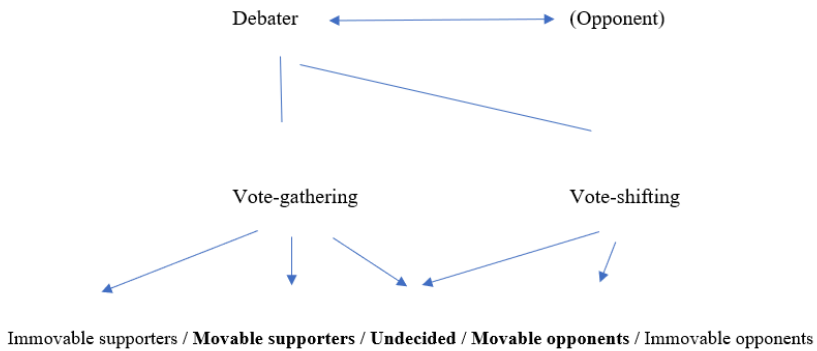
Optimally persuasive debaters are those who practice both vote-gathering and vote-shifting rhetoric and who manage to combine strategies belonging to both forms. However, the two forms will often pull in opposite directions: What has a positive effect on supporters, will affect opponents negatively. This in particular is true of hostility. It can only be expected to play well with the immovable supporter who is blind and deaf to the opposite view—and possibly with the passive undecided. With the majority of the rhetorical audience, hostility risks having a negative effect, partly because the eristic debater, by being hostile towards the opponent, demonstrates contempt for arguments that the unpersuaded audience member might endorse.

The most critical addressee, we may assume, will be the responsive opponent, since such an opponent would also react most negatively to hostility. If debaters were to select one of the groups as their primary addressees for persuasion, they ought definitely to focus on movable opponents. This is because a vote won from the opponent's camp, when compared to a vote won from among the undecided, counts double (Jørgensen et al. 1994, 330; 1998, 295). Precisely because hostility is most ineffective with this group, and at the same time is only effective with the least movable of the supporters and some of the undecided, the calculation is simple: In so far as the aim is to increase adherence to a decision in the public, it will as a rule be unwise to bet on vote-gathering hostility instead of honoring the rational requirement to argue with respect for each other, without attacks on the person.

The concept of debate which, on the basis of these considerations, favors vote-shifting rhetoric, is thus self-regulating in such a way that a wish to be efficient does not set aside norms of good argumentation.

The Noble Art of Debate

Democracy thrives in the field of tension between dissensus and consensus. On the one hand, disagreement is respected as a fundamental condition, on the other hand the largest possible agreement on decisions is aimed for. The concept of debate reflects both sides of this basic and essential idea. The aim is not to eradicate disagreement or set aside all doubt, but to achieve as much agreement as possible on decisions that obtrude themselves, and through confrontation of disagreeing parties supply the public with arguments that, when weighed against each other, secure the best possible decision.

This ideal rests on the idea of rational political argumentation and on a view of rhetoric as a discipline that Thomas Goodnight has made himself a spokesman for with the phrase "a responsible rhetoric". He identifies such a rhetoric as a worthy counterpart to the new dialectics with the following words:

> [I]f we conceptualize rhetorical argument as the situated discourse of a public forum produced when a community addresses matters of common urgency and undertakes informed action, then … *a responsible rhetoric* may yet emerge. Such a rhetoric would take discourse ethics as its informing dialectic, by resituating the rhetor as one who is obligated both to speak and listen effectively in the service of a cause *and* also to hold open, even reinforce, communicative reason. In such rhetorical practice, the speaker is not viewed as merely the source of a single message intended to coerce audience …, but one voice among many in a moment of public controversy (Goodnight 1993, 333).

This kind of rhetoric cannot be enacted by debaters who view debate as a hostile encounter. It presupposes—in Fafner's understanding of the concept—*pistis*.[29] Goodnight arrives at the same insight using the equivalent term *shared ethos*:

> [I]nformed consensus can be achieved only if there is enough confidence for at least two parties to take the risk of being wrong when acting together … Reasoning that strengthens communicative bonds affirms or creates shared ethos, a mutual respect that emerges from the communicative relationship between interlocutors. Fallacious reasoning, to the contrary, reduces respect and so impedes the situated requirements of making a consensus. If a public forum is filled with fraudulent attacks on the person, then the good will necessary to continue to adjudicate separate questions erodes … effective rhetorical address is regulated by the *ethos* obligations of a community of interlocutors (Goodnight 1993, 338-339).

Thus, eristic is properly considered an enemy of debate, not—as in Walton's conception—its permanent companion.

But why are debaters then so hostile as is often the case? Considering the distance between a normative theory of debate, such as this article insists on, and practical reality, which under the influence of mass media seems to evolve towards ever stronger aggressiveness, are the beautiful thoughts about responsible rhetoric and good debate then anything but empty idealism?

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29. See the quote above, pp. 53&54.

As for the 'why' question, my answer is that the propensity to hostility is to be attributed to psychological rather than rhetorical reasons. Debaters turn hostile because they feel threatened, are deeply involved, are cantankerous, etc. Of course, some also believe that they win adherence this way, and in certain situations they do; but the persuasive advantage in hostility is limited and short-lived.

As for the 'idealism' question, my answer is that ethical requirements and norms of good communication are rarely honored fully in practice, but nevertheless they are really existing phenomena in language users. Even if ever so many debaters stumble and repeatedly demonstrate the human quarrelsomeness, the idea is still alive that a political debate should not be a quarrel.

The actual existence of such a norm in Danish citizens' minds is suggested by a poll done by the Gallup organization during the election campaign of 1994. It showed that 62 % agreed that "the mutual criticism that politicians subject each other to … is primarily attempts to throw mud at each other and put each other in a bad light", whereas 24 % agreed that it "reflects a natural exacerbation of the parties' views". 57 % agreed, 40 % disagreed that election campaigns could take place without such mudslinging. A massive 77 % "would prefer for politicians to avoid mudslinging", whereas 18 % "would not do without the mudslinging" (the newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*, September 14, 1994). The use of the leading term 'mudslinging' leads one to ask whether this study presents an honest picture of the voters' preferences regarding what they see and hear on TV, and what they allow to influence them; but the numbers still show that most Danes believe that political debate ought not to be mudslinging, and that the politicians betray an ideal when they aim to put each other in a bad light.

The fact remains that in language norms and usage mutually influence each other. If debates in the media continue a development that drains the concept of debate of its constructive meaning and overemphasize the element of confrontation, this is a serious threat to democracy. Hence the issue of how to define debate theoretically is not purely academic. With a normative

debate theory one can at least shout against the wind—and that, in any event, is better than saying nothing. But if we who are engaged in argumentation theory identify debate with quarrel, as Walton and others have done, we may as well say the game is over for TV democracy. This way, the unwelcome development is seen as a natural consequence of the nature of debate, and it will be useless to design debate programs on TV to provide frames for deliberative argumentation. This article offers a basis for believing that it is still worth a try.

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2.

The Difference between the Rhetorical and the Philosophical Concepts of Argumentation

Christian Kock

The dominant philosophical concept of argumentation, as I see it, is essentially Platonic. More precisely, argumentation is an activity that, through dialectical discussion, aims to find the true answer to some question. It is assumed, in principle, that if an argument is good, any reasonable person will have to follow the steps in reasoning that it presents. In other words, any dialogue partner will be led by necessity to the solution the arguer presents. In a sense, the dialogue partner represents everybody, that is, any reasonable person; he or she assents to the steps in the argument on behalf of everybody, for the philosophical arguer's claim aspires to universal validity.

This, admittedly, is a view of argumentation that only represents some of Plato's works—in particular, "middle" dialogues such as, e.g., the *Phaedo*, where Socrates argues in such a manner for the immortality of the soul. We know that Plato's Socratic method of philosophical inquiry was inspired by contemporary geometry, for example Theaetetus, among whose achievements was the irrefutable proof that there are five and only five "Platonic solids" (the tetrahedron, the cube, etc.). Without venturing into Platonic exegesis, I think it fair to say that Plato created a tradition which saw philosophical reasoning as, in principle, analogous to mathematical proof. Argument, no matter what issue it is about, is meant to seek out the truth regarding some problem, in a way

that aims to be compelling, regardless of the dialogue partners' subjective disposition.

There is also a traditional philosophical view of *rhetorical* argumentation; this too originates with Plato. Socrates says in the *Gorgias*: "rhetoric is a producer of persuasion. Its whole business comes to that" (453a2-3). Here, rhetorical argumentation is defined as argumentation whose dominant aim is to persuade. That is why it uses, among other things, appeal to emotions and verbal trickery.

This view took a firm and lasting hold. In the late 17th Century, we find it, for example, in John Locke. To him, rhetoric obstructs "the proper ends of language": "if we want to speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric (except for order and clearness)—all the artificial and figurative application of words that eloquence has invented—serve only to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so they are perfect cheats" (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* 1690, Book II, Ch. 10, Section 34). Kant, a century later, takes the same line: „Rednerkunst (ars oratoria) ist, als Kunst sich der Schwächen der Menschen zu seinen Absichten zu bedienen (diese mögen immer so gut gemeint, oder auch wirklich gut sein, als sie wollen), gar keiner Achtung würdig" (*Kritik der Urteilskraft*, 1790, § 53).

So, there is a tradition in philosophy for seeing rhetorical argumentation as defined solely (or primarily) by the arguer's *aim to persuade* and by an arsenal of dubious *persuasive strategies*—including a tendency to sweet-talk the audience (what Socrates in the *Gorgias* called *kolakeia*).

In our own time, several philosophers with an interest in argumentation have again begun to look to rhetoric. Ralph Johnson, for example, is one of the founders of the "Informal Logic" movement. Among the features that, in his view, separate the rhetorical and the logical views of argumentation are these: rhetoric emphasizes "the need to take into account the role of Ethos and Pathos. … Logic, on the other hand, sees the *telos* of rational persuasion as governed especially by Logos"; furthermore: "Informal Logic should tend to favor the truth

requirement over the acceptability requirement, whereas rhetoric will, I believe, take the reverse view" (2000, 269). In other words, rhetorical arguers are willing to set aside truth for the sake of persuasive efficiency.

Another trend in modern argumentation theory is the Amsterdam school of "pragma-dialectics". It draws on "speech act" theory, on Popper's rationalism and on the "dialogische Logik" of the Erlangen school (Paul Lorenzen). Pragma-dialectics has much in common with Habermas and believes that good argumentation should serve the reasonable *resolution* of disputes. Since around 2000, the leaders of this school have tried to integrate rhetoric, rather than take a skeptical attitude to it, as they originally did. But essentially, they hold the traditional view: rhetoric is defined as argumentation aimed at winning; rhetorical argumentation therefore involves "Strategic Manoeuvring", which manifests itself in *topical selectivity, audience adaptation,* and *presentational devices.* "Strategic Manoeuvring", which in practice is synonymous with rhetoric, is all right as long as it does not get "derailed" (cf. van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002). I admit I find it hard to see how two arguers can stay on the rails and aim to resolve their dispute, that is reach consensus, while at the same time they both aim to win.

So, as we see, philosophers and argumentation theorists tend to define rhetorical argumentation with reference to its *aims and strategies*. I will argue that this definition is misleading.

What many of the most important thinkers in the rhetorical tradition itself tend to emphasize when they define rhetoric is something else: its *subject matter*. They typically define rhetorical argumentation with reference to a certain *domain of issues*—those concerning *choice of action,* typically in the civic sphere. I will take a closer look at some of these thinkers.

Aristotle has a twofold definition of rhetoric: one intensional, one extensional. The intensional definition is famous and begins: "Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" (1355b; Kennedy's translation). But that is not all he has to say: "The function of Rhetoric … is to deal with things about which we deliberate, but

for which we have no systematic rules" (1357a). This is Freese's translation. The authoritative English translation nowadays is usually thought to be Kennedy's (1991). Freese seems to have followed the tradition of philosophical suspicion against rhetoric by naming his translation *The "Art" of Rhetoric*; but unlike Kennedy, Freese was at least consistent in using "deliberate" for the Greek verb βουλεύειν (*bouleuein*). This I consider important.

Bouleuein is derived from *boulē*: will, determination, plan; it is genetically related to words such as Latin *voluntas* or English *will*. Literally *bouleuein* means that we resolve with ourselves *what is our will* on an issue. What Aristotle's use of this verb means is that rhetoric is *not* a generic name for any kind of argument that aims to persuade, regardless of its subject; rhetoric is about a certain *domain* or *category* of subjects: "we only deliberate about things which seem to admit of issuing in two ways".

Here, Aristotle clearly is not just referring to all those issues on which people may differ; that would mean any issue at all and make the statement vacuous. Take, for example, the scientific issue of whether matter is composed of atoms; to say that atoms exist is to claim that a chemical element cannot be divided endlessly and remain that element. Scientists in the past have *argued* about this issue, on which a decisive argument for atoms was advanced by Einstein in 1905. But scientists could not and did not *deliberate* about the issue, since atoms cannot be "willed" into existence. Issues like that are unfit for rhetorical argumentation; Aristotle says: "as for those things which cannot in the past, present, or future be otherwise, no one deliberates about them, if he supposes that they are such" (1357a). Thus, we cannot decide that atoms should exist by saying "Let there be atoms"; but certain groups of humans can, for example, choose to build an atomic bomb.

As for Aristotle's "extensional" definition of rhetoric, he names the famous three *genres*. This too is a clear demarcation of the *domain* of rhetoric. In the deliberative genre we argue about a future action in order to reach a decision together (although we may not all *agree* with that decision). In the forensic genre we try to decide on an action that responds adequately to a crime or some other fact in the past.

The debate in Thucydides about how Athens should punish the rebellious people of Mytilene (see on this Jørgensen 2003) is a forensic debate that nevertheless is also clearly deliberative (*The Peloponnesian War*, 3.36).

As for epideictic speeches, we may wonder what they have to do with deliberation. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, 50-51) explain that the function of epideictic speeches is to consolidate the set of shared *values* on which all debate about of actions and judgments must rest; so, epideictic rhetoric helps consolidate the warrants that argumentation and deliberation in the other two genres is based on.

In short, both Aristotle's ways of defining rhetoric—one of them intensional, the other extensional—refrain from referring to the arguer's aim or strategies. Instead, they refer to a domain of subjects: *those on which we can deliberate*. And Aristotle insists that deliberation is about that which we may decide to *do*: the issues of deliberation "are all those which can naturally be referred to ourselves and the first cause of whose origination is in our own power" (1359a). This may be why he goes on to say that "much more than its proper area of consideration has currently been assigned to rhetoric" (1359b)—perhaps a criticism aimed at certain sophists.

In his other works too, Aristotle insists on the restricted domain of *bouleuein.* One example of several is from the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which says:

> nobody deliberates about things eternal, such as the order of the universe, or the incommensurability of the diagonal and the side, of a square. … The reason why we do not deliberate about these things is that none of them can be effected by our agency. We deliberate about things that are in our control and are attainable by action (1112a).

In sum, *bouleuein* is central to what we do in rhetorical argumentation; also, it is a central concept in Aristotle's ethical and political thinking. The domain of rhetorical argumentation is, for

Aristotle, civic action, that is, issues relating to how a collective of humans will choose to act.

This notion of rhetoric is also asserted by later rhetoricians. Cicero's *De inventione* proposes to classify "oratorical ability as a part of political science" (I, vi, 6). Rhetorical argumentation has no business dealing with general or "infinite" questions: "It seems the height of folly to assign to an orator as if they were trifles these subjects in which we know that the sublime genius of philosophers has spent so much labour" (I, vi, 8).

In later writings, Cicero defines a middle ground between rhetoric and philosophy; this middle ground is concerned with "infinite" questions of right action. We might call it a "rhetoric of the philosophers"—a term used by Cicero himself in *De finibus* 2.6.17. Today many would call it "practical philosophy". What remains clear is that Cicero defines rhetorical argumentation by the *social* and *practical* nature of the issues discussed. The statesman and lawyer Antonius in *De oratore* (c. 55 BC) suggests that the sphere of the orator "be restricted to the ordinary practice of public life in communities" (Book I, 260). In the same work, Crassus—whose views are often taken to coincide with Cicero's own—represents a more expansive conception of rhetoric, where rhetors are in effect defined as practical philosophers; but all three speakers in the dialogue agree to link the function of rhetoric to the practical and social sphere: according to Crassus, rhetoric pertains to the "humanum cultum civilem" and to the establishment of "leges iudicia iura" (Book I, 33).

Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (c. 90 AD), written under an absolute imperial rule where citizens had little room for civic debate, leans toward a broader, less domain-bound view. Rhetoric to him is central to the education of the "vir bonus"; yet action is still at its center: "in the main, rhetoric is concerned with action; for in action it accomplishes that which it is its duty to do" (II.xviii.2).

The domain-based definition is upheld throughout the Middle Ages even by thinkers who apply rhetoric to the purposes of the church, such as Isidore of Seville (c. 630): "Rhetoric is … a flow of eloquence on civil questions whose purpose is to persuade men

to do what is just and good" (quoted from Miller, Prosser and Benson 1973, 80). Renaissance culture in Italy sees a resurgence of rhetorical thinking, still with a strong emphasis on the civic definition. For example, the first great renaissance textbook of rhetoric, George of Trebizond's *Rhetoricorum libri quinque* (c. 1430), drawing on all the classical sources, affirms the domain-based view of rhetoric as "a science of civic life in which, with the agreement of the audience insofar as possible, we speak on civil questions" (quoted from Kennedy 1999, 235).

It is true that there are also thinkers who assert a broader, persuasion-based definition. In fact, a broad view of rhetoric as *belles-lettres* gains strength in the 1600's—and at the same time rhetoric loses the prestige it had in the world of learning during the Renaissance. Instead follows the long period where rhetoric is condemned as verbal trickery by leading philosophers such as Locke and Kant. Only a few thinkers such as Giambattista Vico speak up for rhetoric; it is significant that his *Institutiones oratoriae* (1711-1741) reasserts the action-centered definition: "The task of rhetoric is to persuade or bend the will of others. The will is the arbiter of what is to be done and what is to be avoided. Therefore, the subject matter of rhetoric is whatever is that which falls under deliberation of whether it is to be done or not to be done" (1996, 9).

Not until late in the 20th Century did rhetoric begin to regain academic respectability. Chaïm Perelman's thinking played a major part here. To him, the domain of rhetoric, and of argumentation, is usually defined as those issues where arguers seek the *adherence of audiences* rather than the *demonstration of truths*; deliberation and argumentation are seen as synonyms (1969, 1), and the aim of Perelman's work is to construct "a theory of argumentation that will acknowledge the use of reason in directing our own actions and influencing those of others" (3). The view of rhetorical argumentation as centered on action seems to become even clearer in Perelman's later writings, such as the long article titled "The New Rhetoric: A Theory of Practical Reasoning" (1970). Other important rhetoricians in our time have asserted the same view, such as Lloyd Bitzer: "a work of rhetoric

is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it functions ultimately to produce action or change in the world" (1968, 4), and Gerard Hauser: "rhetorical communication, at least implicitly and often explicitly, attempts to coordinate social action" (2002, 3).

To sum up: the original and perhaps the dominant definition of rhetoric in rhetoric itself is the *domain*-based definition, where rhetoric is deliberation about civic action. From Aristotle onwards, leading rhetoricians see rhetoric as practical argumentation, which means not just argumentation *in* practice, but argumentation *about* practice.

The distinction between philosophical and rhetorical argumentation can be restated with a term from the philosophy of language. John Searle and others have defined different types of speech act and analyzed their distinctive features. For example, "assertive" speech acts differ from "directive" and "commissive" speech acts in regard to their so-called "direction of fit". Searle says: "the Assertive class has the word-to-world direction of fit and the Commissive and Directive classes have the world-to-word direction of fit" (1979a, 76; see also Searle 1979b, 1983). What matters about assertives is that the word (a proposition) should fit the world; what matters about commissives and directives is that the world should be made to fit the word (which may be, for example, a proposal). Argumentation theorists too often neglect this distinction, seeing all argumentation as concerned with the truth of assertions and the validity of inferences. But the key issues in rhetorical argumentation are commissives or directives, not assertives; rhetorical argumentation is centered on the choice and evaluation of actions, based on value concepts.

If we understand that, we will see that the features which Plato, Locke, Kant and other philosophers used to define rhetorical argumentation are really just corollaries or secondary features that *follow* from this primary feature. Many other differences between philosophical argumentation and rhetorical argumentation follow from this understanding, as I will now try to explain.

When we argue about the truth of an assertion, we only have one value dimension to deal with: truth value. When we argue

about action, we are dealing with many dimensions, because an action may be called good or bad in many respects. In ethics, two types of goodness or badness of an action are often distinguished: First, we may argue that the action is good or bad as a matter of principle. That is a *deontic* argument; another term for the principle it invokes is a *value concept*. But we may also say that the action is good or bad in view of the *consequences* we expect it to have. These are *consequentialist* arguments. They refer to *advantages* or *drawbacks* of the action. An action may have advantages and drawbacks in many respects or dimensions. It might save money; it might save lives; it might facilitate traffic; it might save the environment; it might create a thing of beauty; it might be fun. All such arguments also rely on value concepts—but on different value concepts. When we argue about actions, we use a plurality of value concepts as "warrants", as Toulmin (1958) would say, for our arguments.

These value concepts we often assume to be shared by our audience already. If my daughter suggests that the whole family watch a DVD of the film *American Pie* tonight, I might say, No, *American Pie* is vulgar, let's all see *Der Untergang* instead, it's a deep and serious film, then I take for granted that the other family members already that vulgarity is bad and depth and seriousness are good.

This is why rhetorical reasoning is full of *enthymemes*. This is Aristotle's term for a premise which is assumed to be present in the hearer's mind—and just that is the original meaning of the word. Philosophers tend to use the word "enthymeme" as referring to any argument with an unexpressed premise, but the fact that it may be unexpressed is not essential. An enthymeme is something which an arguer assumes to be there already in the *thymos*, i.e., "in the soul", of the hearer. In fact, it might *not* be there. For example, some family members might think that vulgarity, although quite bad, is not *so* bad, so they might agree to watch a film which has some vulgarity in it if it also has other qualities. Others might actually think that the vulgarity of *American Pie* is appealing, not appalling.

From this follows another fact which some thinkers are very suspicious about, namely that these value concepts may differ from one hearer to the next, or to be quite frank: they are in a sense *subjective*.

An example illustrating the same point, but this time on the level of national policy, might be a law which invades people's privacy in order to promote security against terrorism. Some citizens might resent such a law, feeling that the drawback (loss of privacy) outweighs the advantage (the alleged gain in security); but other citizens might have it the other way around. So, although different individuals may *share* the values that rhetorical argumentation appeals to, they may not support them with the same *degree of strength*. In other words, the strength of the value concepts on which rhetorical argumentation relies for its warrants is subjective; with a less provocative term, it is audience-relative. The reason Perelman provided a large place for the audience in his theory is that his theory is about rhetorical argumentation.

But even though most people in a culture do have a lot of value concepts in common, most individuals probably also hold values *not* shared by a majority. And just as importantly, we have seen that even though they share these values, they may not agree on the *relative priorities* among them.

A further complication, however, and perhaps the most important one, is that the values held by any one individual are not necessarily in harmony with each other. For example, when I face a specific decision, the values I believe in often turn out to be incompatible. This is due to what the philosopher Isaiah Berlin calls "value pluralism"; he points out, for example, that "neither political equality nor efficient organization nor social justice is compatible with more than a modicum of individual liberty … justice and generosity, public and private loyalties, the demands of genius and the claims of society can conflict violently with each other" (1958, repr. 1998, 238).

Of course humans have always known this in an intuitive way, and practical philosophers have said it. Cicero wrote in *De officiis* that "since all moral rectitude springs from four sources (one of which is prudence; the second, social instinct; the third, courage;

the fourth, temperance), it is often necessary in deciding a question of duty that these virtues be weighed against one another" (*De officiis* 1.63.152).

Yet many philosophers, beginning with Plato, tend to theorize as if all values *are* compatible and do *not* clash—or at least as if their incompatibility is no real problem. These philosophers have mainly discussed what it meant for a thing to be good, and argued about what things are good in a general sense, and so they have thought less about situations where many different things are good, but we cannot have them all.

Some philosophers who have actually faced the problem of plural values, such as Jeremy Bentham, believed they could solve it e.g., by going for the "greatest happiness for the greatest possible number". Stuart Mill (1863), however, wrote about the lack of a "common umpire" to settle any clash between incompatible values. Such a common umpire would have to be a universally agreed common denominator. If we had it, we could, among other things, balance deontic arguments against consequentialist arguments, and we could also take the possible advantage that a given action might have in regard to a certain value, convert it to "happiness" and balance it objectively against the unhappiness caused by the drawbacks the action might have in regard to other values; for example, the invasion of privacy that an anti-terror law might entail could be objectively measured against the advantage of possibly preventing some terrorist acts, and increasing the chance of solving others.

Unfortunately, and obviously, such a common denominator does not exist and never could exist; the very construction of it would be just as contentious as the contested law in our example.

The problem is that the relevant arguments on any practical issue usually belong to different *dimensions*. There *is* no common denominator or unit by which they can all be objectively computed and added up. They are, to use a mathematical term, incommensurable. The German philosopher and argumentation theorist Harald Wohlrapp has described the difficulty this way:

Um hier methodisch sicher voranzukommen, dazu hätten wir ein subjektinvariantes metrisches Prädikat der Form ‚Argument A wiegt n' zu bilden. Dieses Prädikat wäre eine Größe, mit der Argumente in eine hierarchische Präferenzskala einzuordnen wären. So etwas zu konstruieren erfordert die Lösung einiger gravierender Probleme:

- die Präferenzhierarchien sind in der Regel subjektspezifisch

- die Präferenzhierarchien sind meistens nicht einmal innerhalb desselben Orientierungssystems transitiv

- Argumente können in verschiedenen Kontexten verschiedene Präferenzen haben.

Wohlrapp further points out that

ein so ermöglichtes Berechnen kein Argumentieren ist. Die Chancen des argumentierenden liegen allemal vor dem Berechnen: nämlich dort, wo es darum geht, wie und weshalb einem bestimmten Argument ein bestimmtes Gewichtsquantum zugeordnet wird. Das „Gewicht" von Argumenten ist ja zunächst einmal etwas subjektives (2008, 319).

So we have at least three fundamental reasons why rhetorical argumentation is different from truth-oriented argumentation: There is, first, the *subjectivity* of the many value concepts which are the necessary warrants when we discuss what actions to take; secondly, there is the *incompatibility* of all these values; thirdly, we now also face what some recent philosophers have called their *incommensurability.*

This does not mean that all possible actions are equally good, or that there is no point in discussing what to do, or in choosing one action over another. It means, rather, that we have no *objective* method of *calculating* or deciding philosophically what to choose. If we did have such a method, we would have no choice; our "choices" would be prescribed and already made for us by the method. Choice means precisely that we may legitimately decide to do *either* this *or* that; choice does not mean that we might as

well not choose anything, or that there is no reason to debate our upcoming choices. The point, rather, is that each individual has the right to choose, and that no one has the authority to choose on everyone's behalf.

Individuals and societies have choices to make every day, and that nevertheless makes it desirable that they have somehow compared and weighed the advantages and drawbacks, the pros and the cons, of the alternative choices. Now this weighing process, while not possible in an objective way, is still necessary and possible in a non-objective way.

When a social group must choose between actions that are within its power to undertake, the choice may be preceded by what we call deliberation. This word is related to the Latin *libra*, a pair of scales. Given the individual's value concepts and the preference hierarchies existing among them (which, as we remember, are in principle subjective), and given the alternative choices as they appear to that individual, one of the alternatives may eventually, after a comparison of the pros and cons, the advantages and drawbacks, appear preferable to the individual. The same alternative may not appear preferable to that individual's neighbour, or to the majority. But then individuals are free to try to influence their neighbours so that they may perhaps eventually come around and see things as they themselves do. This kind of influencing is mostly exerted by means of language and is called rhetoric.

Below, we will look at some distinctive features of rhetorical argumentation. Let us remember the difference between what we argue about in the two domains. In truth-oriented argumentation, also known as "epistemic" argumentation, we argue about propositions that may be true or false. But rhetorical argumentation is about choice of action, and actions as such do not have the property of being true or false. Whenever a debater argues for a certain action and/or an opponent argues against it, neither of these two standpoints can ever be predicated to be "true". As Aristotle points out in the *Eudemian Ethics*, in deliberation we argue about choice; and a choice is not a proposition that can be true or false; here follows this key insight, given in its context:

> 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 (1226a).

One way to explain why this is so is the following. When a human (or a collective of humans, such as a legislative body) deliberates about a choice, several values may be invoked both pro and con, and several desirable "ends" will be variously affected by whatever choice is eventually made. For ends we may also read "values". Friends, wealth, health, honor, security are some of them (Aristotle has enumerated these in Book I, Chapter 5 of the *Rhetoric*). Normally, a given proposal cannot serve all these ends equally; if it is designed to serve one of them, then the other ends that we are also committed to may not be served quite so well, or they may actually be harmed, and that may speak against the proposal.

For example, a new treatment for a certain disease may be so expensive that public hospitals that use it cannot give patients with other diseases the best available treatment at the same time; more generally, any decision that costs public money precludes the use of the same money to do something else. However, there is no generally agreed and intersubjective way to calculate and balance benefits in one area against costs in another; for example, most people would agree that not all the important considerations relevant to political actions can (or should) be converted into economic terms. In addition to economic cost there are all sorts of other accounts on which a proposal may be either recommended or opposed. For example, national security considerations that may arguably be served by, e.g., the indefinite detainment of suspected terrorists, but this might be contradicted by counter considerations of ethics, legality, honor, or the friendship of other countries. In such situations, some people usually judge that the considerations speaking for the proposal or policy outweigh those against, while

others feel just as strongly that those speaking against it are weightier.

So, in principle, deliberation will always have to recognize the relevance of *several* ends, *several* kinds of considerations, and several dimensions to the choice that has to be made. Moreover, individuals will differ regarding the relative weights they assign to them. It may be that for each consideration in itself—such as the economic cost of a war, or its cost in human lives—debaters may have views that may be more or less true (or at least probable). But the fact remains that the relevant considerations in such a case belong to different dimensions, so that none of these considerations, e.g., cost in human lives, can be reduced or converted to one of the others, or to a "common denominator" or "covering" unit for all the relevant considerations. What lacks is, in Stuart Mill's phrase, a "common umpire" (1969, 226) to which all the considerations may be referred, yielding an objective calculation of how to balance the pros and the cons.

Now for some of the distinctive features where practical (i.e., rhetorical) and epistemic argumentation differ.

First, the status of arguments is different in the two domains.

Rhetorical pro and con arguments draw, for their warrants, on deontic principles and on advantages and drawbacks instantiated by the proposed action; these arguments, if valid, remain valid even if another action is chosen.

Let us take a simple example drawn from family life. One family member, let us call him F, wants to buy a large Chesterfield armchair for the family room. He argues that such a chair is comfortable and great for watching TV and chilling out. Another family member, let us call her M, agrees that such a chair is comfortable, etc., but argues that it is ugly, heavy and expensive. F acknowledges these drawbacks but thinks that the advantages offered by the chair outweigh them. M disagrees. So, both F and M may well agree on all the advantages and drawbacks of the chair. However, they still disagree on how much *weight* to assign to each of them. No advantages or drawbacks are "refuted" even if either F or M "wins" the debate. If the family buys the chair, it is still heavy

and expensive. If M manages to keep the chair out of her home, it remains comfortable.

In epistemic argumentation, by contrast, pro and con arguments are only relevant by virtue of what we may call their probative or inferential force (Johnson speaks of their "illative" force—a term with the same verbal root as "inferential"); that is, they are important for what they appear to signify or suggest, not for what they *are*. They are *signs* that a certain state of affair obtains, not *qualities* of a proposed state of affairs. Einstein's 1905 paper argued that the irregular movements of tiny particles suspended in a liquid was a sign of the existence and activity of atoms, and this together with a later paper went far toward deciding the issue (and won him his Nobel prize in physics in 1926). Once an epistemic issue has been decided, any arguments supporting the refuted position are then seen as irrelevant; they did not signify what they were thought to signify. Inferential signs are *external* to the conclusion they argue for; the good or bad qualities that are used as arguments for or against a proposed action are *inherent* in it.

Second, the fact that the principles, advantages and drawbacks advanced as pros and cons in rhetorical argumentation may all be real and relevant, and remain so even after a choice is made, explains why two alternative actions at issue may both be valid and legitimate options at the same time. In epistemic argumentation, by contrtast, the reasons used as pro and con arguments may also be true in themselves, but the two conclusions signified by the pro arguments and the con arguments, respectively, cannot both be true simultaneously.

Third, arguments in rhetorical argumentation can never in principle be logically "valid" in the traditional sense: that their conclusion is *entailed* by the premises. An argument for a certain policy may be completely good and relevant, but it cannot deductively *entail* the policy it argues for. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca made this *the* distinctive feature of what they call argumentation. All premises in that domain are, in principle, like weights among other weights on a pair of scales—except that the "weights" (premises) in rhetorical argumentation do not have an

objective physical mass. Whether or not to accept the action they argue for is a matter of choice for each individual in the audience. In epistemic argumentation, by contrast, logically valid inferences from premises to conclusion do exist, and scholars and scientists are trying to make them all the time.

Logicians and other philosophers have had great difficulties understanding this difference, and in accepting the idea that reasons advanced in rhetorical argumentation can be perfectly good without being logically "valid". But we need only look at any political proposal to see that this is so. There are, for example, many good reasons (premises) for building the 18 kilometer Femern Belt tunnel below the Baltic Sea between Germany and Denmark (a project now in progress). There are also many good reasons that speak against the project. That is precisely why neither the case for the tunnel nor the case against it is logically valid.

Manfred Kienpointner, in his otherwise excellent book *Alltagslogik*, has discussed whether "Gültigkeit" is necessary for "Plausibilität", and he seems to conclude „dass Gültigkeit im Sinne der APL [Aussage- und Prädikatslogik] und auch der IL [Informal Logic] nicht ausreicht, um Plausibilität zu gewährleisten" (1992, 106). This suggests that arguments to be good must *at least* be logically valid, and many textbooks take the same position. This is probably because there are many everyday arguments that are in fact flawed because they *pretend* to be valid although they are not. However, the reason they are flawed is not that they are invalid, but that they pretend to be valid. So it is wrong to claim, as Kienpointner seems to imply, that *all* invalid arguments are bad. In the domain of action, some arguments are good, and some are bad; but they are all logically invalid.

Fourth, the weight of arguments in rhetorical argumentation is a matter of degrees. Advantages and drawbacks come in all sizes. People may gradually come to attribute more weight to a given argument for a proposal, for example the Femern Belt tunnel, so they may gradually warm up to that proposal. Not so in epistemic argumentation. The philosophical tradition has it that arguments are *either* sound ("haltbar") *or* unsound.

Fifth, in rhetorical argumentation arguers should have no problem in granting the relevance of their opponents' reasons. The cons that my opponent sees in my proposal may in fact be real and relevant, just as the pros that I see in it. In philosophical argumentation theory we rarely hear about situations where there are relevant and weighty reasons on both sides of an issue; there is a tradition for looking at premises one at a time to decide whether that particular premise is sound. Carl Wellman, a Canadian philosopher, proposed the term *conductive reasoning* for reasoning with relevant reasons on both sides, to supplement the widely held view that *de*ductive and *in*ductive reasoning were the only legitimate kinds (1971). His attempt, which does have some unclear aspects, never found much resonance. Harald Wohlrapp (2008) has deplored the lack of theory building in this domain, and he rightly praises another Canadian philosopher, Trudy Govier, for being almost the only argumentation theorist who has seriously discussed these pro-and-con situations; yet he also criticizes her procedure for balancing pro and con arguments (Govier 2004) because it doesn't prescribe a decision on specific issues. To this critique a rhetorician would say that there cannot *be* a philosophical procedure which prescribes a decision because choice and subjectivity are involved. Yet Wohlrapp seems to envisage a dynamic procedure by which it can actually be objectively determined which side has the stronger case, for example on the issue of legalizing euthanasia. Here I think Wohlrapp falls into the Platonic trap of believing that philosophy can and should definitively decide practical issues.

Sixth, this brings us to a crucial feature of rhetorical argumentation. As the armchair example shows, two opponents in rhetorical argumentation will not necessarily move towards consensus, let alone reach it, even if they follow all the rules we may devise for responsible and rational discussion. They may legitimately *continue* to support their contradictory proposals. In epistemic argumentation, for example on whether there is a man-made global warming going on, both sides in the debate (assuming there *are* two sides) cannot be right. There is a truth somewhere about such a matter, and we want to find it. So indefinite

disagreement in, e.g., science over an issue like that is an unstable and unsatisfactory state of affairs.

Jürgen Habermas has emphasized, just as I do here, that there are divergent domains of argument, and that arguing about actions is not like arguing about the truth of propositions; the warrants we appeal to in action-related discussions will not only be propositions that we hold to be true, but *norms of action* that we hold to be "right". This "rightness", Habermas points out, is a *Gültigkeitsbedingung* of a different kind from truth. This is an important insight; nevertheless Habermas originally maintained that utterances in both of these domains, truth and action, have the same goal, namely "die Erzielung, Erhaltung und Erneuerung von Konsens … und zwar eines Konsenses, der auf der intersubjektiven Anerkennung kritisierbare Geltungsansprüche beruht" (1981, I, 37). In later writings, however, Habermas himself has recognized that "in the case of controversial existential questions arising from different world views" it is "reasonable to expect continuing disagreement" (2001, p. 43).

The belief that consensus will be the ultimate goal of rational argumentation, even in the sphere of action, is a major point where rhetoricians must differ from (early) Habermas and those who have followed him. There is such a thing as what John Rawls has called "reasonable disagreement" (1989, 1993). Individuals may legitimately disagree over some practical proposal, and *continue* to do so, even after a prolonged discussion that follows all appropriate rules of communication and argument. This is due to the fact, noted above, that although *most* norms or values in a culture are shared by most of its members, not *all* their norms are the same, and—even more importantly perhaps—everyone does not have the same *hierarchy* of norms. As we saw in the armchair example, for some people an appeal to one given norm carries more weight than an appeal to a certain other norm, whereas for another individual it is the other way around—although both in fact recognize both norms. If they realize that they share some of the same norms, they may reach what the political philosopher John Dryzek calls "meta-consensus" (e.g., Dryzek & Niemeyer 2006), and that would be a big and important step; but even so

they may never reach consensus on what to do, no matter how reasonably they argue.

So in rhetorical argumentation consensus is *not* the inherent goal, and it is therefore legitimate, despite Habermas, that both individuals in such a discussion argue in order to gain adherence for his or her proposal, that is, argue "strategically" (which Habermas condemns), rather than aim for consensus. In deliberation, dissensus is not an anomaly to be rectified. So, instead of trying to *prove* that the opponent is wrong, the wise deliberative debater will often acknowledge the relevance of the opponent's premises (that is, if they are indeed found to be relevant), and then try to make his own *outweigh* them in the view of those who are to judge (or *some* of them). This kind of discourse is the core of rhetoric.

The seventh feature of rhetorical argumentation that we shall look at has to do with what we just saw. In rhetorical argumentation, arguers argue in order to persuade *individuals*. The weight of each argument is assessed subjectively by each individual arguer and audience member, and each individual must also subjectively balance all the relevant arguments; it follows from this that what will persuade one individual will not necessarily persuade another. In epistemic argumentation, by contrast, there is an underlying presumption that whatever is valid for one is valid for all. To be sure, it is also true that an epistemic proposition will in fact only be accepted by some, not by all; but the presumption of just about any philosophical theory is that it is presents a truth which is still valid for all. By contrast, practical arguers hope to win or increase the adherence of *some* individuals for the proposal they support. That is also why in a democracy we tend to have votes taken on practical proposals, but not on propositions. A majority cannot decide what the truth is; but in a democracy it can decide what the collective it belongs to will *do*.

So the nature of rhetorical argumentation is controversy more than it is consensus. It is certainly good if antagonists do find consensus, but they might not, and it may be legitimate and reasonable that they don't; that is to say, none of the disagreeing parts is "wrong", just as none is "right". In epistemic

argumentation, continued dissensus means that uncertainty still prevails, and debate must continue until consensus is reached.

All these properties of rhetorical argumentation may lead someone to reason that if there is no one true answer in the domain of deliberation, is there any reason to have criteria of argumentative and deliberative merit? Why not conclude that in rhetorical argumentation anything goes—not just in the sense that in fact we see absolutely anything being used by political opponents against each other, but also in the sense that rhetorical and democratic theory should just accept this as the way things are, and have to be?

A theory of rhetorical argumentation should come down decisively on the side of those who would define and try to uphold criteria of argumentative merit. It should stand in a third position in relation to two extreme positions, both of which it rejects: on the one hand the belief that consensus will and should ultimately ensue after proper discussion (a belief shared, in two very different versions, by early-Habermasian ideas of deliberative democracy and pragma-dialectical argumentation theory)—and on the other hand various more or less cynical beliefs in some varieties of political theory that politics is a raw struggle between selfish interests in which argumentation can change little or nothing.

But the question remains as to why we should have argumentation of some merit at all if not in order to find consensus, or at least move toward it. What other purposes and functions could argumentation between antagonistic positions possibly have? And *how* could it have these functions?

To answer these questions one has to think of a factor that is curiously left out of most current theories of argumentation: the *audience*. It is primarily for the sake of the audience that it makes sense to have a debate between antagonists in rhetorical argumentation. The civic sphere consists not only of participants, but also, and primarily, of spectators who are also citizens. They are individuals who are all, in principle, entitled to choose freely among two or more alternative policies or proposals. In order to choose they need information on the alleged pros and cons, on how real, relevant, and weighty they appear in the light of their

respective value systems. Citizens are entitled to receive, consider and weigh such information if they are not to be defenseless victims of ignorance, lies, manipulation, diversionary tactics and all the other forms of irrelevancy thrown at them. Individual citizens will be the ultimate losers in a polity where nothing is done to develop, disseminate and uphold criteria of argumentative merit, and such a polity is on the road to disintegration.

A crucial factor in the critical assessment of rhetorical argumentation is that debaters must in principle *answer* what their opponents have to say. Any premise either pro or con offered by one debater must have a reply from the opponent, who should be ready to acknowledge its relevance and weight, and then explain why he thinks his own premises are more relevant and/or weightier. This kind of debate behavior is needed if a debate is to help audience members form their own assessment of how relevant and weighty the arguments on both sides are, and then make a choice on that basis. This way, antagonists may feel that their arguments have been heard and considered, so that, even if they disagree with the decision that is made, they may *acquiesce* with it. Hence this sort of process will confer added legitimacy to decisions. This is how continued dissensus and controversy may be constructive without ever approaching consensus. And this is how rhetorical argumentation, as Cicero thought, can be the force that helps people build a society, and one that helps hold it together.

It is an old assumption in rhetorical thinking that rhetorical debate is constructive not only in helping debaters motivate and perhaps propagate their views, and not only in helping audience members build an informed opinion, but also in building societies. Isocrates and Cicero are among the chief exponents of this vision. We cannot all agree on everything, but we can build a cohesive society through constructive controversy.

It is worth noting, in conclusion, that in political science and philosophy there is a growing body of scholarship and opinion arguing for a conception of democracy based on a recognition of dissensus rather than consensus. For example, Nicholas Rescher (1993) is resolutely pluralist and anti-consensus, in theoretical as

well as practical reasoning. There are determined "agonists" such as Bonnie Honig (1993) and Chantal Mouffe (e.g., 1999, 2013), as well as thinkers who emphasize the centrality of "difference" in democracy (such as Iris Marion Young, e.g., 1996). Amy Gutmann & Dennis Thompson take a balanced view, emphasizing deliberation as well as pluralism: "A democracy can govern effectively and prosper morally if its citizens seek to clarify and narrow their deliberative disagreements without giving up their core moral commitments. This is the pluralist hope. It is, in our view, both more charitable and more realistic than the pursuit of the comprehensive common good that consensus democrats favor" (2004, 29). John Dryzek too is cautiously balanced in arguing that the ideal of deliberative democracy must recognize dissensus: "Discursive democracy should be pluralistic in embracing the necessity to communicate across difference without erasing difference" (2002, 3). All these thinkers acknowledge the need for continued exchange among citizens of views and arguments, despite the impossibility (or undesirability) of deliberative consensus.

Few seem to realize that rhetoric is based on, and has always existed in, this democratic tension: we cannot force agreement, but we can and should present reasons to each other for the free choices we all have to make. As Eugene Garver has said: "The more we take disagreement to be a permanent part of the situation of practical reasoning, and not something soon to be overcome by appropriate theory or universal enlightenment, the more rhetorical facility becomes a central part of practical reason" (2004, 175).

Continuing dissensus is an inherent characteristic of rhetorical argumentation. In the rhetorical tradition this insight has always been a given. In contemporary political philosophy it is by now perhaps becoming the dominant view. Argumentation theory should not be so specialized that it remains ignorant of these facts.

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3.

For Deliberative Disagreement: Its Venues, Varieties and Values

Christian Kock

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 CO_2 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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4.

In Search of the Productive Place(s) of Rhetoric: Outlining a Rhetorical-topical Argument Model for Argument Invention

Christina Pontoppidan

Abstract

The author argues that even though the Toulmin model has proven useful and influential in the rhetorical tradition, the model represents a logical approach to argumentation that focuses on argument assessment. This leaves room for an argument model born out of rhetorical thinking designed for argument invention. The author outlines a rhetorical-topical argument model that shows the process of building a persuasive argument: from finding a standpoint, to finding common ground and support. The model exploits the conceptual richness of the place metaphor by showing how each step of the argument-building process involves a new understanding of what a place means. At each step, a certain type of topoi catalogue functions as a heuristic tool that guides the arguer in a systematic search for the available means of persuasion. The heuristic reading of the topics as a tool for argument invention allows the author to integrate different rhetorical conceptualizations of the topics into one model: the stasis doctrine, the special topics, and the common topics.

Introduction

Rhetoricians were quick to adopt the argument model Toulmin presented in *The Uses of Argument*. Brockriede and Ehninger (1960) paved the way for its influence on rhetorical argumentation studies when they claimed that the model "promises to be of greater use in laying out rhetorical arguments for dissection and testing than the methods of traditional logic". The ensuing rhetorical tradition has agreed and incorporated Toulmin's model in textbooks and articles on rhetorical argumentation to an extent that makes Conley (1990, 295) conclude: "Over the years, *The Uses of Argument* came to dominate the literature on debate and argumentation almost completely."

Maybe, however, rhetoricians have been too pleased with the Toulmin model? Maybe we lost sight of some defining traits of a rhetorical approach to argumentation when we adopted a logical argument model?

In the first part of this chapter, I discuss the rhetorical appeal and limitations of the Toulmin model. I argue that, while the Toulmin model is undeniably "of greater use" than traditional logic, it remains a logical argument model designed to evaluate arguments, not to invent them. This part serves as an argument in favor of developing an alternative argument model that more fully captures rhetoric as "an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle *Rhet.*, 1355b; trans. by Kennedy, 2007). In the second part of the chapter, I outline a *rhetorical-topical argument model* that depicts three discrete steps in the process of building an argument: Finding a standpoint, finding common ground, and finding support. The model illustrates the inventive power of topical thinking and the metaphor of place as a nuanced and productive language: Each step in the argument-building process evokes a new meaning of "place", and at each step, the rhetorical tradition provides the preparing arguer with an inventory of places to systematically search for argumentative material. In the

last part of the chapter, I show how arguers' choices of places are connected to *topical paths*, taking arguments from the Danish debate on ritual male circumcision as examples.

The Rhetorical Appeal of the Toulmin Model and It's Limitations

Why did Toulmin, a British logician ostracized by his peers, become an integral part of the rhetorical canon? What is so appealing to rhetoricians about Toulmin's thoughts on argumentation in general and his argument model in particular? We find a clue in Brockriede and Ehninger's introductory article when they state that "Toulmin's model provides a practical replacement" to "the terms and principles of traditional logic" (Brockriede and Ehninger 1960, 47). The elements *claim*, *data*, and *warrant* certainly capture the different logical functions of a practical argument more intuitively than the syllogistic equivalents minor premise, major premise, and conclusion. The diagrammed structure of the model provides a clearer picture of the inferential steps in arguments found in the wild than the linear syllogism. And the three additional components *rebuttal*, *backing*, and *qualifier* grant the doubt and opposition of real-life arguments a legitimate and visible place.

Even more appealing to rhetoricians, perhaps, is the fact that the Toulmin model not only deals with arguments *in* practice but also *about* practice. The idea of field-dependent warrants captures a world of uncertainty that made his logical colleagues feel uncomfortable, but where rhetoricians have always felt at home. The contingency of the warrant resonates well with an academic discipline that operates in the practical domain of *doxa*, dealing with "things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are" (Aristotle *Rhetoric*, 1357a). Context matters to Toulmin as it does to rhetoricians. Toulmin's sensitivity to the contingency of the practical domain allowed him to accept "the variety of steps from the data to conclusions which appear in the course

of justificatory arguments" (Toulmin 1958, 12), which is on par with classical topical thinking. As Toulmin himself realized much later, the inferential variety had been treated systematically by Aristotle: "Only in retrospect it is apparent that—even though sleepwalkingly—I had rediscovered the topics of the *Topics*, which were expelled from the agenda of philosophy in the years around 1900" (Toulmin 1982, 256).[1] This passage has been widely cited among rhetoricians who see it as a sign of Toulmin's association with rhetoric (Conley 1990, 295; Gabrielsen 2008, 60-61; Godden 2002, section 4; Golden, Berquist and Coleman 2000, 251; Jasinski 2001, 206).

Perhaps, however, rhetoricians have been too selective in their reading of Toulmin and too willing to ignore that Toulmin speaks the rhetorical language with a distinct logical accent. The authors of *Handbook of Argumentation Theory* seem to suggest that:

> It is striking that most authors who used Toulmin's model as a general model for argumentation analysis—again, including Brockriede and Ehninger, Trent, and Toulmin himself 20 years later— ignore the logical ambitions Toulmin intended his model to serve with regard to the replacement of formal validity in the geometrical sense by validity in the Toulminian procedural sense (van Eemeren et al. 2014, 239).

Wenzel, who draws clear lines between the logical, dialectical, and rhetorical perspective on argumentation, describes the Toulmin argument model as "a straightforward application of the logical perspective" (Wenzel 1992, 138). He sees the rhetorical use of the model as an "example of the perspectival problem", stating that: "Many students on first learning the model construe it as a rhetorical prescription; they can easily be disabused of that notion

1. The passage echoes Bird, who in his article "The Re-Discovery of the Topics" twenty years earlier pointed out that Toulmin's treatment of inference-warrants "has many similarities with the analysis of the Topics in medieval logic. The resemblance is so close, as I hope to show, that it appears we are witnessing something of a re-discovery of the Topics." (Bird 1961, 534).

if someone explains to them how *The Uses of Argument* constitutes a refinement of the logical perspective" (p. 136). Tindale (2004, 8) also indicates Toulmin's logical influence on rhetoric, stating that the Toulmin model "has been very influential as a new standard of logical thinking, particularly among scholars of rhetoric and speech communication."[2]

The logical perspective is reflected in the purpose, terminology, and design of the argument model. Toulmin's key interest in *The Uses of Argument* is "the ways in which we set about grading, assessing and criticising" arguments (Toulmin 1958, 12, 33, 39). In introducing his model, Toulmin asks: "How, then, should we lay an argument out, if we want to show the sources of its validity? And in what sense does the acceptability or unacceptability of arguments depend upon their 'formal' merits and defects?" (Toulmin 1958, 95). This squares with Wenzel's description of logic as a discipline that "seeks to discover or develop canons of correct inference" (Wenzel 1992, 128).

General keywords in Toulmin's logical parlance are "standards", "criteria", "soundness", and "validity"—words that help "to keep in the centre of the picture the *critical* function of the reason" (Toulmin 1958, 8, italics in the original). The warrant contains "rules, principles, inference-licenses" (98); it is what "justifies", "bridges", "legitimates", "authorizes", "entitles", and "guarantees" the inferential step from data to conclusion with a certain inferential "force". The arrow and the location of the claim to the right in the model indicate an inferential movement from data

2. 2 In their introduction to a special issue on argumentation in education in Scandinavia and England, Andrews and Hertzberg (2009, 434) point out the limitations of the Toulmin model as a pedagogical tool for composing arguments: "The limitations of the model for the latter function are evident: it appears rather static as a composing tool, its architectural nature proving hard for young writers to use as they develop their plans and drafts. But its value in checking (for both students and teachers) where an argument has clear claims (propositions) and supporting evidence—and what the warrants and backing are that enable such a connection between claims and grounds—is invaluable."

towards claim, supported by the warrant. If we pair this with the fact that Toulmin uses the terms "claim" and "conclusion" interchangeably through chapter 3 in *The Uses of Argument*, we get a model of argument that can "be expressed in the form 'Data; warrant; so conclusion' and so become formally valid" (Toulmin 1958, 119). The Toulmin model is essentially designed to critically assess the logical validity of practical arguments, whereas a rhetorical argument model would be, first and foremost, designed to invent them.[3]

The critical approach to argumentation influences Toulmin's notion of audience and context. The audience we meet in *The Uses of Argument* takes on the role of a persistent "challenger" (Toulmin 1958, 97). The challenger poses critical questions such as "Does it really follow?", "Is it really a legitimate inference?" (139), and the recurring "How do you get there?" and "What have you got to go on?" (cf. 97, 98, 99, 130, 140). In other words, the challenger acts much like a questioner in a dialectical debate who critically tests the inference-warrant applied by the speaker. The challenger incarnates the court of reason, who is capable of judging what are acceptable inferences within a specific field. This understanding of audience as a rational *challenger* differs from the rhetorical counterpart. In rhetoric, the designated role of the audience is not primarily to challenge but to provide change; and assuming that role, the audience is not only driven by rationality but also by their values, interests, and beliefs. Also, Toulmin's understanding of context as a *field* of knowledge forms a more stable construct than the ever-changing *rhetorical situation* which the preparing arguer must read and respond to in a time-sensitive manner.

The critical approach to argumentation further has crucial consequences for Toulmin's conception of the topics. What Toulmin found in the *Topics* was a method to formalize arguments to critically test the soundness of the applied inference. The *Topics* offered him a fine-grained system of around 300 acceptable ways to bridge data and conclusion—what modern day argumentation

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3. The subtitle of the book Arguing on the Toulmin Model, edited by Hitchcock and Verheij, is telling in this sense: "New Essays in Argument Analysis and Evaluation".

theorists would refer to as argument schemes—that would accommodate his quest for a functional and flexible logic. The structured dialectical setting of the *Topics* with a questioner and a respondent even resembled the courtroom setting he took as a paradigm case for the jurisprudence logic he advocated for.[4] This dialectical conceptualization of the topics as a critical tool for argument evaluation, however, differs from a rhetorical understanding. As Eriksson (2012, 210) states: "One difference between the dialectical tradition [...] and the rhetorical tradition is that the former tends to view the argumentative *topoi* as a product of an analytical examination, while the latter views them as a process for finding arguments in particular contexts." It is the dialectical understanding of the topics as rules of inference found in Aristotle's *Topics* that resonated with Toulmin's reformative logical project, not the rhetorical understanding of the topics found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and in later works of Cicero and Quintilian. What Toulmin had discovered was the logical potential of the topics to evaluate arguments—not the rhetorical potential to generate them.

What is wanting in Toulmin's approach is the *heuristic* potential of the topics as "search formulas which tell you how and where to look for arguments" (Kienpointner 1997, 226). In the rhetorical tradition, the topics are an *ars inveniendi*, a method for systematically generating argumentative material by pointing out productive places to visit in the inventive process. In *De Oratore*, Cicero vividly stresses the heuristic potential of the topics that lies at the heart of the rhetorical approach to the topics:

> For if I wished to reveal to somebody gold that was hidden here and there in the earth, it should be enough for me to point out to him some marks and indications of its positions, with which knowledge he could do his own digging, and find what he wanted, with very little trouble and no chance of mistake: so I know these indications of

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4. The authors of Handbook of Argumentation Theory state that: "Toulmin seems to construe the arguments he is interested in as (dialectical) verbal products resulting from a (dialectical) process of argumentative discourse" (van Eemeren et al. 2014, 212).

proofs, which reveal to me there whereabouts when I am looking for them; all the rest is dug out by dint of careful consideration. (Cicero *De Oratore*, Book 2, 174)

When the topics are understood as a heuristic method of invention, the idea of a 'place' to dig for argumentative material becomes a productive metaphor. The (neglected) value of the place metaphor is a recurrent theme among commentators focusing on the inventive potential of the topics. Miller (2000, 133) states that "the spatial metaphor of the topos is still a powerful one for conceptualizing invention as generative"; she describes topos as "conceptual space without fully specified or specifiable contents; it is a region of productive uncertainty" (141). Nothstine (1988, 152) remarks that "[w]ithin both the canon of invention and the canon of memory there is an underlying 'place' metaphor whose importance is perhaps underestimated because we have lost sight of its character as metaphor." And Tindale claims that: "Largely suppressed here, though, is the alternative richness of the 'place' metaphor, some sense of which no account of the *topoi* should avoid" (Tindale 2007, 4). The place metaphor, however, is lost in Toulmin's reading of the topics as inference-warrants.

Where Toulmin's logical reading of the topics centers around the challenger's critical question: "How do you get there", a rhetorical reading of the topics centers around the arguer's curious question: Where do I go to dig for argumentative material?

So, to sum up this part of the chapter, Brockriede and Ehninger are justified in claiming the superiority of the Toulmin model for "dissection and testing" rhetorical arguments, and Toulmin is justified in having rediscovered the Topics of the *Topics*. But instead of seeing that as a sign of Toulmin becoming a rhetorician, I see it as indicative of rhetoricians' accept of an unmistakable logical influence on rhetoric. Toulmin's logic might be substantive,

but it is not inventive; and while he has a broad view on inference, he has a narrow view on the topics *as* inference. Applying the Toulmin model is applying a view on rhetorical argumentation that focuses on argument analysis and evaluation, not on argument creation.

In the next part, I outline a rhetorical argument model that accounts for the heuristic power of the topics. The argument model is a productive tool for the arguer to secure adherence, not a critical tool for the analyst to check inference. It employs language native to rhetorical argumentation, and it takes the metaphor of place seriously as it guides the arguer from place to place in the process of building a persuasive argument.

Outlining a Rhetorical-Topical Argument Model for Systematic Argument Invention

I name the model I am going to present the *rhetorical-topical argument model*.[5] As a *rhetorical* argument model, its purpose is to aid a preparing arguer in the process of constructing an argument that would persuade a particular audience in a specific rhetorical situation. And as a *rhetorical- topical* argument model, it is informed by a rhetorical understanding of the topics as a heuristic tool for argument invention. The model consists of the three main elements *standpoint, common ground*, and *support*:

5. I have made some minor changes to the visual design of the model since I first presented it at the OSSA 12 conference (Pontoppidan 2020). The most substantial change I have made is to change the term "proof" to "support" in the outer circle of the model, which better captures the rhetorical function of the element—as opposed to the more logical sounding "proof". This change is made in response to valuable feedback on the model from Mette Bengtsson.
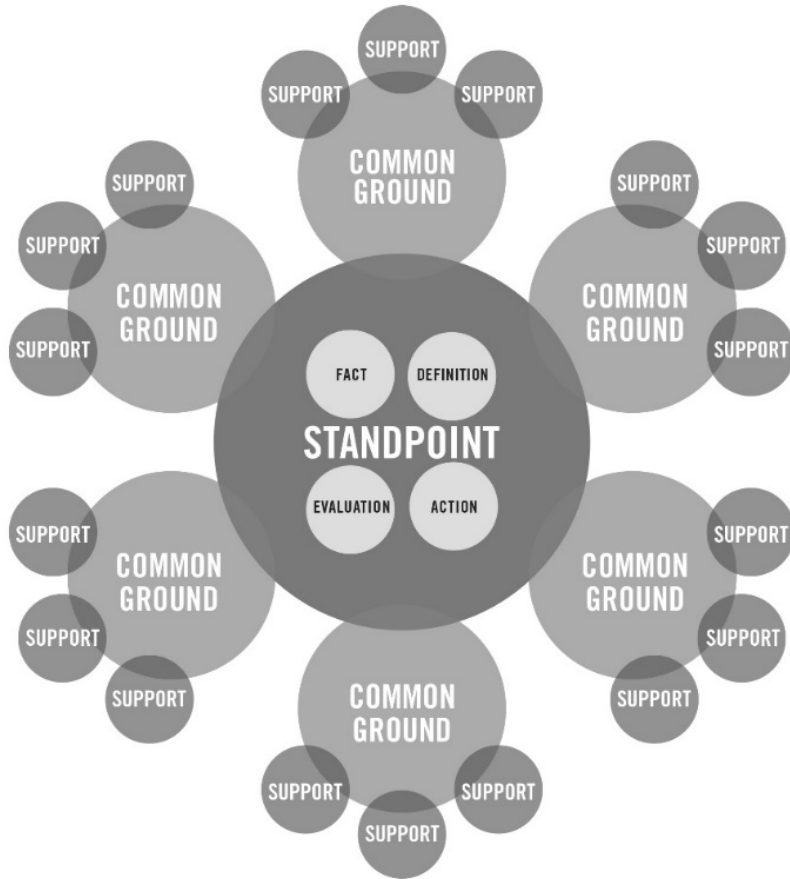
Figure 1: The rhetorical-topical argument model

The circular shape of the elements is chosen to evoke the metaphor of place: Each circle represents an available place to dig for argumentative material in the process of building a persuasive argument.

But what does a place mean? And how does it guide the preparing arguer in inventing persuasive arguments? Commentators agree that the concept of *topos* (and the Roman equivalent *locus*) is ambiguous and multifaceted (Leff 2006, 1983a, 1983b; Rubinelli 2006, 2009; Gabrielsen 2008; Tindale 2007; Kienpointner 1997; Mortensen 2008). Leff (1983a, 23) states: "Even when limited to its technical use in rhetoric, the term

"topic" incorporates a bewildering diversity of meanings." The model both exploits and explains the conceptual ambiguity as it brings together different rhetorical conceptualizations of what a place is as a tool for argument production. As will become clear, each of the three steps in the argument-building process is guided by its own meaning of a place.

The multiplicity of circles at each of the three elements in the model illustrates that the arguer has several "places" to dig for persuasive material at each step in the argument-building process. At each step, the arguer must make a choice among alternative places before moving on to the next step. The rhetorical tradition makes the places available to the arguer in *topoi catalogues* that aid the arguer in a systematic inventive search for persuasive material. As Nothstine (1988, 152) makes clear, "'inventory' (the cataloguing of what is already 'on hand') is etymologically related to "invention" (the combination of materials and principles to produce something novel)". As will become clear, each of the three elements in the model, standpoint, common ground, and support, is related to a certain type of topoi catalogue. The standpoint element is related to *stasis* theory, which provides the arguer with just four strategic options (fact, definition, evaluation, action) as shown in the inner circle. The number of circles shown in relation to the common ground and support elements are arbitrary, as the exact number of available places to choose between will depend on the specific topoi catalogue the arguer chooses to consult at these two steps in the argument-building process. Step by step, place by place, and catalogue by catalogue, the arguer is guided in a systematic search for the available means of persuasion.

This integrative reading of the topics owes its inspiration to Gabrielsen's treatment of the topics and the enthymeme (2008 and 1999). Gabrielsen stresses the importance of the topoi catalogues,

claiming that "The topical methodology *is* its lists of concrete topoi" (Gabrielsen 2008, 120, my translation, italics in the original). In his practical reading of the duality of the topics found in the works of Aristotle, Gabrielsen connects the common topics and the special topics to the two premises in a practical argument—the factual and the inferential. Gabrielsen does not present an argument model, but he presents what he calls a "meta-argument" in the form of a syllogism. The meta- argument illustrates that Aristotle's catalogues of common topics provide the material for the major (inferential) premise while Aristotle's special topics provide the material for the minor (factual) premise. I have a broader and more eclectic approach to the rhetorical topical tradition than Gabrielsen in his Aristotelian meta-argument, and the function of the common and special topics in the rhetorical-topical argument model also differs from the function Gabrielsen assigns to them in his meta-argument. But the idea that different understandings of what a topos is can be combined to an argument with the aid of different topoi catalogues is inspired by Gabrielsen's practical rhetor- oriented reading of the topics.[6]

In the following, I zoom in on the three elements in the model individually, answering the following questions: What is the argumentative function of the element? What meaning of the 'place' metaphor does the element evoke? And what type of topoi catalogue guides the preparing arguer in her search for persuasive material at this step in the argument-building process?

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6. The ambition to integrate different understandings of the topoi into one model is also central to Rigotti and Greco's Argumentum Model of Topics (AMT). The AMT model depicts how two types of topical components, a material- contextual endoxon and a procedural-inferential locus, work as two interconnected syllogistic structures in an argument graphically shown as a quasi-Y structure. As indicated by the title of their book Inference in Argumentation. A Topics- Based Approach to Argument Schemes, the purpose of the AMT model is to assess the inferential steps of arguments. Rigotti and Greco have "the ambition of providing a theoretical and methodological tool to analyze the inferential configuration of arguments, as supported by loci" (Rigotti and Greco, 2019, vii). With their emphasis on inference and argumentative reconstruction, they share Toulmin's dialectical-logical understanding of the topics as a critical tool for argument analysis.

The Standpoint: In what Stasis Can I Move the Audience?

The first step in the process of building a persuasive argument is to formulate a *standpoint*. As stated by Kock (2003, 167): "Indeed, deliberative debaters often do not proceed from 'premises' to 'conclusion', as logicians do, but the other way around, i.e., they begin with a standpoint for which they then try to find arguments." The personal belief in the rightness of the standpoint is what motivates the arguer to engage in the socially risky act of seeking the adherence of an audience. The standpoint is what the rhetorical arguer 'stands on' and chooses to *argue for*.

At this initial step in the argument-building process, the *stasis/status* functions as the guiding topoi catalogue. According to Braet (1987, 89), "[l]iterally, both words mean 'status,' 'state,' or 'standing,' or, to be preferred because of the strategic connotation, 'position' or 'standpoint'". Translations like "standing" or "position" clearly evoke the metaphor of place.

Leff (1983a, 24) refers to the stasis doctrine as a "major topical system in the tradition". While the classical stasis system was originally a typology meant for the arguer in the courtroom, updated versions are suited for other types of argumentation as well. The number of stases as well as the names and interpretations of the individual stasis vary in modern interpretations of the classical doctrine (see, e.g., Fahnestock and Secor 1988; Kienpointner 1997; Just and Gabrielsen 2008; Kock 2011). The version of the theory included in the rhetorical-topical argument model is inspired by Jørgensen and Onsberg (2008) and Brockriede and Ehninger (1960). They provide four topical options: The arguer can choose a standpoint about the *facts*, *definition, evaluation,* or *action*. Taken together, these four stases represent a simple, yet analytically exhaustive catalogue of strategic options for the preparing arguer in the first step of the argument-building process.

As a heuristic tool, the stasis theory has both an inventive and a strategic potential. The inventive potential of the stases is evident in Fahnestock and Secor (1988), who refer to the stases as an

"invention tactic", "a scheme of invention" and "a generating machine". Using a vocabulary that clearly echoes Bitzer's "The Rhetorical Situation" (1968), they state that "the stases represent a full set of possibilities from which an author, in a particular rhetorical situation, under a particular exigence, addressing a particular audience, selects". Braet refers to the stases as a "procedure of *inventio*" and as "the defendant's option, so strongly emphasized in the classical sources, of making a strategic choice from the status" (1987, 79 and 90). The strategic reading of the stases is also evident in the chapter by Just and Gabrielsen in this book. They present the stasis theory as a "*tool for analysis*" that helps "determine the core contested issue of a given case", providing the rhetor with "a catalogue of strategies". The strategic choice of stasis is based on the arguer's analysis of "where he or she can meet the intended audience, because that is where the audience's needs and interests lie, or because that is where they can be reached, no matter where the writer wants to take them" (Fahnestock and Secor 1988, 430). Strategically, the four stases represent a "ranking" (Braet 1987, 83) or "hierarchical order" (Fahnestock and Secor 1988, 428) where a standpoint about facts is considered the easiest to convince an audience about and a standpoint about action the most difficult. This means that "the stasis in which an argument is pitched is not necessarily the stasis in which the arguer hopes to have an effect" (Fahnestock and Secor 1988, 430).

The strategic questions that face the arguer at this initial step of the argument-building process are: Where is the manageable doubt in this rhetorical situation? In what stasis will I stand a realistic chance of persuading the particular audience? Should I 'place' the argument in the lower stases about fact or definition or aim for the higher stases of evaluation or action?

Let us take an example. The dedicated vegetarian might personally be convinced of the evaluative statement that "meat is murder" and, as an effect, feel an urge to make a call to action to "skip all forms of meat". Faced with a meat-loving audience, however, it will probably be a non-fitting response to choose a standpoint this far up the stasis ladder. In this rhetorical situation,

the vegetarian will probably stand a better chance of modifying the beliefs of the audience by focusing on a factual standpoint—e.g., about the positive health benefits of a vegetarian diet or the negative environmental consequences of animal production.

When the stasis is chosen, the rhetorical tradition provides the preparing arguer with different catalogues of ways to formulate the standpoint. Just and Gabrielsen, in their analysis of the housing market and the corona pandemic in this book, refer to these specific instantiations of the more general strategic choice of stasis as "tactics". They describe three concrete tactics within the status definitivus: "dissociative definition", "splitting a whole into its parts", and "the persuasive definition". These are found in catalogues of definitions presented in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) and Jørgensen and Onsberg (2008). In the same vein, Kock (2011) in his "generalized and integrated version of the status system" treats the four *status legales* "as specifications of the *status finitionis*". So, at this initial step in the argument-building process, the catalogue of stases serves as a "focusing tool" (Kock 2011) that can be combined with catalogues of more concrete strategies within each stasis that help the arguer develop a persuasive standpoint.

The Common Ground: Where Can I Meet the Viewpoint and Values of the Audience?The next step in the argument-building process is finding *common ground* with the audience. Common ground is metaphorically speaking a mental 'meeting place' between the arguer and the audience—a shared perspective or point of view. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1969, 26) reference to "the area of agreement taken as a basis for the argument, which vary from audience to audience", and Leff's (1983a, 24) reference to "regions of experience from which one draws the substance of an argument" are useful descriptions of the place metaphor at this step in the argument- building process. The common ground element functions as the normative foundation of the argument containing values, worldviews, beliefs, assumptions, and preferences. It is the result of the arguer's analysis of how she could justify the standpoint in a way that resonates with the point

of view of the specific audience in the specific rhetorical situation. The common ground, in this sense, is what the arguer chooses to *argue from*.

The necessity of establishing common ground with the audience as a prerequisite for persuasion is a recurrent theme in the rhetorical tradition. Aristotle recommends that "one should not speak on the basis of all opinions but of those held by a defined group, for example, either the judges or those whom they respect" (Aristotle *Rhet.*, 1395b, trans. by Kennedy, 2007). Perelman and Olbrechts- Tyteca (1969, 14) make clear that: "For argumentation to exist, an effective community of minds must be realized at a given moment." Burke stresses the importance of "identification" and "consubstantiality", stating that "you give the 'signs' of such consubstantiality by deference to an audience's 'opinions'" (Burke 1969, 55). Brockriede (1974) makes a shared "frame of reference" a defining characteristic of argument. Leff (1983a, 23) states that "rhetoricians must draw their starting points from accepted beliefs and values relative to the audience and the subject of discourse". And Tindale, within a topical framework, states: "The arguer needs not just to know her own mind, and the *topoi* resident there; but also the mind of her audience and what *topoi* they are likely to recognize and, hence, to be persuaded by the arguments drawn from them" (Tindale 2007, 9). The point is clear: to overcome doubt and disagreement, one must depart from a place of agreement with the audience.

As the model shows, the arguer is again faced with a strategic decision about where to go and search for argumentative material. At this point, the places are graphically arranged all the way around the standpoint to indicate a choice of perspective. Nothstine in his hermeneutic reinterpretation of the 'place' metaphor provides valuable insight by stating: "The 'place' metaphor may refer to a position affording a particular point of view, a perspective, from which one regards one's world" (Nothstine 1988, 155). Within this hermeneutic conception, the place metaphor takes on the meaning of 'perspective', 'vantage-point', 'viewpoint', 'point of view', horizon'

and a general 'situatedness'. Miller's notion of topos as a "problem space" as "a located perspective, *from* which one searches" is also informative (Miller 2000, 141). The design of the model at this point, further, can be seen to visualize a recurrent theme in Kock's writings: the "multidimensionality" of practical reasoning (Kock 2003, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2013). The model shows that there are multiple ways to justify the standpoint and, hence, it encourages the arguer to deliberately consider the alternatives, being aware that "[t]here will always be other arguments in the matter, pertaining to other dimensions" (Kock 2003, 162).

It is in this multidimensional topical landscape of perspectives and problem spaces that the arguer must ask herself: Where can I meet my audience? What norms and values do I have in common with my audience? What is their expected hermeneutic horizon in relation to the issue at hand? Where are they mentally situated? This is perhaps the most difficult point in the argument-building process.[7]

Fortunately, the preparing arguer is not limited to her own idiosyncratic horizon of values and viewpoints in the search for common ground. As was the case with the standpoint, the topics provide the arguer with a repository of places that "helps speakers see the multiple sides of an issue" (Rubinelli 2009, 146). The type

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7. What is going on at this step in the argument-building process resembles what pragma-dialecticians, in in an attempt to incorporate a rhetorical dimension in their extended theory, call "strategic maneuvering". Van Eemeren (2010, 108) describes strategic maneuvering as a way to meet "audience demand" stating that: "In order to be not only reasonable but also effective, the strategic moves a party makes must at each stage of the resolution process connect well with the views and preferences of the people they are directed at, so that they agree with these people's frame of reference and will be optimally acceptable." Despite the apparent resemblance, there is, however, a crucial difference between the concept of strategic maneuvering and the common ground element in the rhetorical-topical argument model that originates from the different theoretical approaches to argumentation: Common ground is an element in an argument aimed at persuasion, strategic maneuvering is a move in a dialectical exchange aimed at resolution.

of topics that helps the arguer at this point in the argument-building process is what Aristotle identifies as the 'special' topics—thereby indicating that they pertain to special genres or subjects. Rubinelli (2009, 102; 2006, 254) refers to the special topoi as "subject-matter indicators", which makes it clear that they serve to define what the matter is about. And Gabrielsen and Juul Christiansen (2010, 72) refer to them as "thematic topoi" the purpose of which is "to open a case in the largest possible number of ways in regard to content."

The Aristotelian catalogues of special topics provide the ancient rhetor with common grounds for epideictic praise, forensic defense, and deliberative advice about future actions. We learn, e.g., that the component parts of happiness are: noble birth, numerous friends, good friends, wealth, good children, numerous children, a good old age, bodily excellences like health, beauty and fitness for athletic contests, a good reputation, honour, eloquence, good luck, and virtue (Aristotle *Rhet.*, 1360b). According to Leff, the special topics "consist of an inventory of propositions expressing abstract beliefs and values generally accepted by the public" (Leff 1983b, 220-221). In that respect, today's arguer might find the 4th-century BC catalogues of belief and values somewhat offbeat in search for common ground with a contemporary audience. Kock, however, has repeatedly made a case for the modern relevance of a topoi catalogue found in the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum,* where the author lists six common justificatory perspectives: just, lawful, expedient, honourable, pleasant, easy of accomplishment (Kock 2003, 159; 2006, 254; 2013, 453). These are common ways to argue for an action that could serve as an expansion of Brockriede and Ehninger's underdeveloped category of "motivational arguments" (Kock 2006, 249).

To get the full benefit of the topical method, however, the modern arguer will need updated catalogues of special topics. Pontoppidan, Gabrielsen and Jønch-Clausen (2022) have developed three new topoi catalogues pertaining to *products,*

persons, and *policy*. The product catalogue contains seven topoi that we have observed to be recurring common grounds in sales rhetoric: price, time, uniqueness, popularity, accountability, safety, and experience. The person catalogue contains eight recurring topoi in personal presentation: roots, outer traits, personality traits, values, competences, relations, interests, and goals. And the policy catalogue contains seven recurring topoi in arguing about policy proposals: economy, law, ethics, environment, culture, health, and aesthetics.[8] For the modern arguer, these are relevant places to visit in search for common ground when trying to sell a product, appear trustworthy or likeable, or succeed in the modern agora of policy proposals. Returning to the convinced vegetarian, the policy catalogue serves as a heuristic resource that allows her to systematically dig up arguments about, e.g., 'the price of meat', 'animal rights', 'animal welfare', 'CO2 emissions', 'health benefits', 'the growing vegetarian community', and 'the colour, flavour and tastiness of vegetarian food'.

Other recent catalogues of special topics are more context- and subject-specific. They include topoi catalogues of the European shale gas debate (Lewiński 2016), the Hungarian nuclear expansion controversy (Egres 2021; Egres and Petschner 2020), corporate social responsibility in the travel and tourism industry (Culler 2015), discriminatory discourse in Austria (Wodak and Meyer 2001), and Danish public leadership (Pontoppidan and Gabrielsen 2017). The level of 'specificity' of the topoi catalogue and the number of topoi it contains is less important to the design of the rhetorical-topical model. What is important is that the arguer chooses a catalogue that allows her to systematically explore the multidimensionality of the case at hand and make a strategic choice among the plurality of possible ways to justify the standpoint. The special topoi catalogues sum up what *is* common to make it easier for the arguer to see what she has potentially *in* common with the audience.

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8. See Pontoppidan and Gabrielsen (2009) and Pontoppidan, Gabrielsen and Jønch-Clausen (2010) for a previous version of the policy catalogue.

The arguer's choice of common ground is essentially a hermeneutic act that defines the argued subject. As stated by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, argumentative "choice is not mere selection, but also involves construction and interpretation" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 119, 120). Whether the vegetarian chooses to construct an argument that focuses on the price of meat, the environmental consequences of meat production, or the health benefits of a vegetarian diet, she places herself within a particular perspective that provides a particular interpretation of vegetarianism and puts the audience in a certain frame of mind. Sometimes the interpretative choice of perspective involves a tension "between creativity and constraint" (Nothstine 1988, 158). This happens when the arguer finds herself in a strategic dilemma between either adapting to the audience's predominant perspective or arguing from an alternative and in her view more important perspective that might challenge the audience's established "value hierarchy" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, §20). Whether the arguer chooses to confirm or challenge the audience's value hierarchy influences the visibility of the common ground in the eyes of the audience: A common ground in sync with the audience's preestablished view on the matter will probably be transparent, while an alternative interpretation of the matter will tend to provoke attention and critical reflection in the audience. An attempt to move an audience to a foreign place always involves the risk of losing the possibility of creating a "community of minds" with the audience.

Support: Where Can I Find Material Confirmation?

The third and final step in the argument-building process is finding *support*. Like the common ground, the support element functions as justification for the standpoint. But where the common ground operates in the inner, immaterial, mental world, the support element belongs in the material world of things, persons, actions, and experiences providing concrete content to the argument. Where the common ground departs from what is intimately known

to the audience—their values and preferences—the support element provides new information. The support element is what the arguer chooses to *argue with*.

The support element is graphically connected to the common ground in the model. This illustrates that the common ground serves as the source of the support. If, for instance, the arguer has chosen an economic point of view as common ground, the support will be of the economic kind. The arguer, e.g., can choose to include figures of market values or inflation rates, to cite financial experts, or to calculate the consequences for an average household economy. In that sense, the support element is at once constrained by the choice of common ground and serves to confirm it. The support element provides argumentative material that shows the relevance of the chosen common ground as justification for the standpoint. At the same time, the support element draws its content from the outer world—what Gabrielsen and Juul Christiansen (2010, 80) refer to as "external sources of evidence". This is illustrated by the exterior placement of the support element in the model.

Throughout the history of rhetoric, we find different concepts that illuminate the argumentative function of the support element. Hermogenes employs the Greek term "ergasia" to describe how one "confirms", "works" and "elaborates" an argument (Kennedy 2005, book 3, ch. 7; Kock 2005). With reference to the Greek term "auxesis" and the Latin term "amplification", Kock (2003, 169) emphasizes the rhetorical significance of "enhancing the weight of an argument". Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, §29, 129) employ the term "presence", stating that "all argumentation is selective. It chooses the elements and the method of making them present." Terms stemming from forensic rhetoric like 'testimony', 'evidence', 'witness', and 'documentation' provide concrete examples of the kind of material the arguer is hunting for to confirm, amplify, and create presence.

At this point in the argument-building process, the arguer must ask herself: How can I confirm the importance of the chosen common ground? How can I make the chosen perspective present? Where can I find information that shows the chosen common ground as a relevant interpretation of the case?

The model shows that there will be more than one available support, more than one place to generate persuasive material, in relation to each common ground. As Kock (2013, 454) states: "Just as rhetorical argumentation, given its status as practical reasoning, will include appeals to a plurality of value dimensions, so also will it employ an open set of argumentative means and devices." Once again, the arguer is faced with a choice.

As was the case with the two first steps in the argument-building process, the rhetorical tradition provides the arguer with compilations of topoi to help make a deliberate choice of support. In Chapter 23 of Book 2 of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle supplies the arguer with a catalogue of 28 'universal' or 'common' topics that can be applied across subjects and genres. The catalogue of common topics includes, for example, the more and the less, definition, division, induction, analogy, precedent, consequence, cause, and contradiction.[9] A similar catalogue is found in the second book of Cicero's *De Oratore* (166). In Book I of his earlier work *De inventione*, Cicero presents, in relation to *confirmation*—"the part of the oration which by marshalling arguments lends credit, authority, and support to our case" (34)—a less abstract topoi catalogue of attributes of actions: the action itself, its purpose, cause, effects, place, time, occasion, manner, and facilities (37-38). This catalogue is presented as "a general store of arguments" that Cicero considers to be "raw material for general use from which all arguments are drawn" (34). If we add agent to the list, this catalogue resembles the 'hexameter of

9. It is noteworthy—and somewhat confusing—that the general topics are general in the sense that they can be used to search for argumentative material in all subjects and genres, while the special topoi are special in the sense that they relate to specific subjects and genres. The result of the search, however, is the opposite: The general topoi result in concrete argumentative material, while the special topics result in abstract values.

invention', or the well-known seven *wh*-questions: who, what, where, by what means, why, how, when (Kienpointner 1997, 227-228).[10] This list still works as an efficient procedure of invention for the modern arguer searching for support.

More modern catalogues of common topics include Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's list of quantity, quality, order, the existing, essence, and the person (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 85). Brockriede and Ehninger, in their introduction to the Toulmin model, present a list of six types of "substantive arguments": cause, sign, generalization, parallel case, analogy, and classification (Brockriede and Ehninger 1960, 48-50; cf. Jørgensen and Onsberg 2008, ch. 3). Eriksson (2012, 212), with reference to the rhetorical *progymnasmata* exercises, presents a list of four topoi: the contrary, example, analogy and witness from other persons. And Gabrielsen and Juul Christiansen (2010, 81) present a list of just three topoi that they name "topoi of evidence": investigations, experience, and general assumptions. Whether the arguer chooses to go *ad fontes* to the classical catalogues of Greek topoi or Roman loci or to consult contemporary catalogues is irrelevant to the design of the rhetorical-topical argument model. What is important is that the arguer clearly sees that there are several available places to search for support for a given standpoint in relation to each common ground.

Once again, we witness a change in the meaning of topos and the place metaphor. A place is no longer a content-defining 'problem space', 'perspective', or 'horizon'. This has made some argumentation theorists conclude that this type of topoi describes the form of the argument— comparing the universal topoi to modern times argumentation schemes (Rubinelli 2006, 2009; Braet 2005; Garssen, 2001; Warnick, 2000; Kienpointner 1997; Wodak et al. 2009, 36-42). Gabrielsen (2008, ch. 1) refers to this understanding of the topics as "inferential". This understanding

10. Kienpointner sees the catalogue as an example of "specific/circumstantial topoi"—probably because they are "less abstract" than the catalogue in De oratore. Drawing on Cicero's own introduction to the list as a "general store", I treat it as a catalogue of common topics to be consulted in the last step of the argument-building process, where the arguer searches for confirmative material.

stresses the formal character of the general topics and draws rhetoric towards a dialectical reading of the universal topics as "warrants which guarantee the transition from argument to conclusion" or as "inferential sources, on which the inferential-logical premises of arguments are based" (Kienpointner 1997, 226; Rigotti and Greco, 2019, 17). This idea of topos as a form of warrant that guarantees an inference clearly resembles Toulmin's logical understanding of the topics.

It makes sense, therefore, that some authors in the rhetorical tradition have problematized the 'argument scheme' reading of the common topoi. Conley (1978, 94) states that "from a heuristic standpoint it would be inaccurate to conceive of a *topos* as a *form of inference*". Miller (2000, 136, italics original) remarks: "When a *topos* is thus conceptualized as a part of an argument, rather than as a source for an argument, the spatial metaphor begins to weaken, and the generative use of the *topos* is traded for a structural one." And Tindale concludes that there is "value carried through the metaphor of place essentially attached to the concept of a *topos*; a value threatened if we think only of *topoi* as argumentation schemes" (Tindale 2007, 10). Seen from the productive point of view of rhetoric, the general topics do not provide a 'scheme'—or more generally the *form*—of the argument. Rather, the repository of universal topoi—example, authority, definition, contradiction, consequence, cause, and the like—guides the arguer in a methodical search for concrete *content* to the argument. The design of the rhetorical-topical model clearly shows this, as the support element is not placed between the standpoint and common ground element as a logical link between the two (as is the case with Toulmin's warrant), but 'outside' the common ground element connecting it to the outer, material world. The function of the support element is not to establish a logical *relation* between standpoint and common ground but to establish the *reality* and *relevance* of the chosen common ground.

To the convinced vegetarian, the value of the common topics is that they point out different places to go and dig for material support. With a catalogue of general topoi, she will be able to engage in a systematic search for what experts say about meat

and vegetables (authority), what concrete persons experience (example), how vegetarianism resembles other lifestyle choices (analogy), how eating meat contradicts established norms and values (contradiction), how the production of meat has negative effects (consequence), or how present environmental problems call for radical changes (time).

No doubt, it will be relevant for an arguer to know the typical counterarguments against each general topos to measure the weight of each available support. Cicero in *De Oratore* (117) encourages his students to "keep ready and prepared" about what can be said "in support of deeds and against them, for and against evidence, for and against examinations by torture … in general and abstractedly, or as confined to particular occasions, persons, and cases." Likewise, Zarefsky (2020, 302) states that an audience is more willingly persuaded if the presented arguments "satisfy the critical tests associated with the particular argument schemes." For the modern arguer, therefore, it might be worth familiarizing herself with the critical questions that Walton, Reed and Macagno (2008) catalogue in connection with each argument scheme, to choose the most persuasive type of support. Essentially, however, the function of the universal topoi in relation to the rhetorical-topical argument model is not to critically examine an inferential move, but to creatively explore different types of support that has the potential to move the audience.

From Separate Places to Topical Paths – Arguments in the Danish Debate on Ritual Male Circumcision

Up to this point, the three elements of the argument model have been treated as isolated steps in the argument-building process exemplified with the fictitious vegetarian. Before concluding, I will show how the three elements are connected in real arguments.

The following examples of full arguments are taken from the Danish debate about ritual male circumcision. This is a recurrent and often quite heated debate in Denmark, where a ban on ritual circumcision of boys under the age of 18 has been proposed

several times. The debate is illustrative as it is characterized by topical diversity on both sides, showcasing a plurality of places. The point here, however, is not to give a full-fledged rhetorical argumentative analysis of the debate but to illustrate different points in relation to the rhetorical-topical argument model.

I have chosen four different arguments, two from the proponents' side and two from the opponents' side in the debate. The arguments are anonymized and slightly modified to best serve the illustrative purpose. The four arguments are displayed together in the rhetorical-topical argument model to show how the connection of different topical places form a coherent argument and how each argument competes with alternative arguments derived from alternative places. The arguments from the proponents of ritual male circumcision are placed on the left side (argument 1 and 2), the arguments of the opponents are placed on the right side (argument 3 and 4) of the argument model:

Argument 1
STANDPOINT: Ritual male circumcision is about protecting the freedom of religion and the rights of minority groups.

COMMON GROUND: (Ritual male circumcision should be understood as a juridical matter of rights.)

SUPPORT: According to article 30 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child "children and young people who belong to a minority group have the right to share their culture, language and religion with other people in that group."

Argument 3
STANDPOINT: Ritual male circumcision involves the risk of physical complications and sexual dysfunction.

COMMON GROUND: (Ritual male circumcision should be understood as a matter of health.)

SUPPORT: According to a report from the Danish Ministry of Health 2,2 percent of circumcised boys must be reoperated, 2,9 percent experience acute complications in the form of bleeding and infection in relation to the operation, and 5,1 percent experience non-trivial complications later in life.

SUPPORT
SUPPORT   SUPPORT
COMMON GROUND

Authority   Authority
SUPPORT   SUPPORT
Law   Health
SUPPORT   SUPPORT
DEFINITION   FACT
STANDPOINT
FACT   EVALUATION
SUPPORT   SUPPORT
Culture   Ethics
SUPPORT   SUPPORT
Com-parison   Contrast
COMMON GROUND
SUPPORT   SUPPORT
SUPPORT

Argument 2
STANDPOINT: Ritual male circumcision is no different from other culturally accepted irreversible operations on children.

COMMON GROUND: (Ritual male circumcision should be understood as matter of cultural practices.)

SUPPORT: Ritual male circumcision corresponds to correcting protruding ears, aligining crowded teeth and performing joint toes or tongue-tie surgery on babies.

Argument 4
STANDPOINT: We should be ashamed to see mutilation and ritual amputation of boys as upbringing.

COMMON GROUND: (Ritual male circumcision should be understood as an ethical matter.)

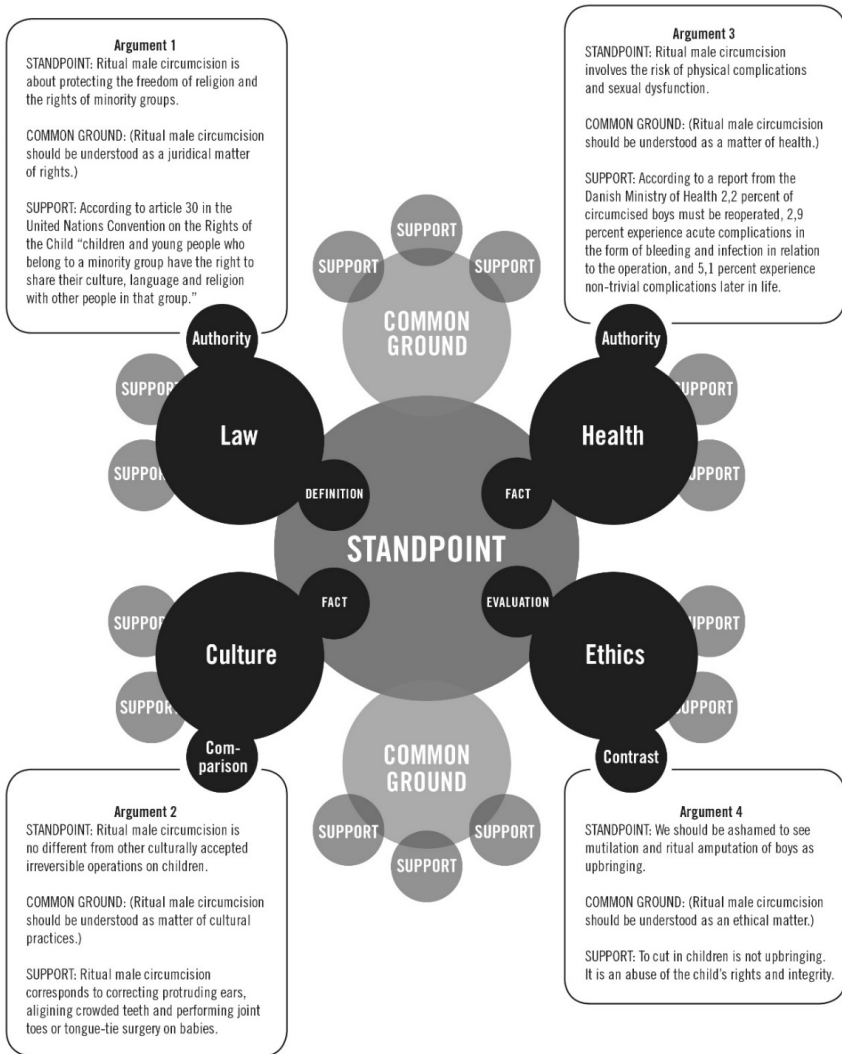SUPPORT: To cut in children is not upbringing. It is an abuse of the child's rights and integrity.

Figure 2: Arguments from the Danish debate about ritual male circumcision

If we read figure 2 inside out, we see how each of the four arguments shows its own unique combination of topoi. I call this the *topical path* of the argument. Argument 1, e.g., combines a *standpoint of definition* with a *common ground of law* and a *support by authority*, while argument 3 on the opposing side combines a *standpoint of fact* with a *common ground of health* and a *support by authority*. The two arguments share authority

as support, but the authority is derived from different common grounds—law and health, respectively—and, hence, display two different topical paths. The same goes for argument 2 and 3, which share fact as standpoint but are connected to different common grounds—culture and health, respectively.

The common ground is not stated in any of the displayed arguments (as indicated by the parenthesis), but it serves as the hermeneutic link between the standpoint and support elements in the arguments. In each of the four arguments, the common ground provides a normative interpretation of ritual male circumcision that is reflected in one or both of the other two elements. In argument 1 and 3, the chosen common ground is reflected in both the standpoint and support element in words like "rights", "convention", "physical complications", and "health", whereas in argument 2 it is reflected in the standpoint ("culturally accepted"), and in argument 4 in the support element ("abuse" and "integrity"). In that sense, each of the arguments is combined and controlled by the common ground. As an authority, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child supports an interpretation of circumcision as a matter of law, while a fact about physical complications supports an interpretation of circumcision as a matter of health. The argumentative use of experts and facts—like definitions, comparisons, and contrasts—are always 'founded on' and 'found within' the chosen common ground.

The interpretative act involved in the arguments becomes even clearer when we read the figure from above. From this angle, the connection revealed in the topical paths of each argument is replaced with a multidimensional topical landscape of contrasting and competing common grounds. It becomes clear that the common ground element in the model is the home of what Fogelin has described as "deep disagreement". According to Fogelin (2005, 8): "We get a deep disagreement when the argument is generated by a clash of framework propositions". Kock (2011, 88) refers to this clash as "incommensurability", which "implies that it cannot be objectively determined whether one or the other norm should have priority because the relevant norms belong to different dimensions". Whether ritual male circumcision is understood and

debated as a matter of law, culture, health, or ethics is a result of the individual arguer's normative choice.

When used analytically like this, the rhetorical-topical argument model becomes a tool for "mapping" existing arguments in a debate. For the analyst, it provides a rhetorical-topical picture of the complex "polylogical" (Lewiński and Aakhus, 2013) nature of public debate that shows arguers' competing persuasive efforts to control audiences' topical orientation. For the arguer, the mapping of existing arguments in a debate provides a valuable overview of what places are already occupied in a debate and what places constitute virgin argumentative land. This analysis can be a fruitful first step before engaging in the process of systematically inventing a persuasive argument in recurring debates.

Conclusion: The Rhetorical Place(s) of Argument Invention

Coming to an end, I hear a possible objection: Isn't the rhetorical-topical argument model just a more complex version of the Toulmin model, consisting, essentially, of the same main elements? When I, over the years, have presented the rhetorical-topical model, I have met the inclination to compare the three elements of the rhetorical-topical argument model with the elements of the Toulmin model—comparing standpoint with claim, common ground with warrant, and support with data. I understand the inclination. It is only natural to compare the new to the known. The differences between the two models, however, are fundamental. Apart from the most obvious differences in the reordering, multiplication, and naming of the elements, there are two major differences between the Toulmin model and the rhetorical-topical argument model. The two differences are mirrored in the two possible readings of the headline for this conclusion—the singular and the plural version of the word place. The two readings, at the same time, sum up the double purpose of this chapter.

The first purpose concerns *the rhetorical place of argument invention*. This emphasizes the difference between Toulmin's

logical approach to argumentation and a rhetorical approach to argumentation. As we know from a famous passage in Cicero's *Topica* (6): "Every systematic treatment of argumentation has two branches, one concerned with invention of arguments and the other with judgement of their validity". As a logical argument model, the Toulmin model is designed to evaluate the validity of arguments, whereas the rhetorical-topical argument model is designed to invent them. The Toulmin model is a tool for the critic; the rhetorical-topical argument model is a practical tool for the arguer. The Toulmin model focuses on argument as a product containing an inference; the rhetorical-topical model focuses on argument as a process of invention to create adherence. Hence, the rhetorical-topical argument model stresses that the unique place marked out for rhetoric in argumentation theory is a place of argument invention.

The second purpose of the chapter concerns *the rhetorical places of argument invention*—in the plural. This emphasizes the *topical* difference between the Toulmin model and the rhetorical-topical argument model. When, in 1982, Toulmin claimed that he "had rediscovered the topics of the *Topics*", he implicitly admitted to a narrow understanding of the topics. What Toulmin found in Aristotle's dialectical work on argumentation was a catalogue of acceptable inferences—a list of ways to guarantee the transition from data to claim. Thereby, topical thinking becomes a matter of inference related to the warrant element in the Toulmin model. This differs from the pluralistic and productive understanding of the topics found in the rhetorical tradition. The rhetorical-topical argument model makes visible what is hidden by the Toulmin model: the series of strategic choices between different places involved at each step of building a persuasive argument. These choices are guided by different understandings of what a place is, compiled in different kinds of rhetorical topoi catalogues. The rhetorical-topical argument model exploits and synthesizes the conceptual richness of the metaphor of 'place' found in the rhetorical tradition by relating different meanings and different topoi catalogues

to different steps in the process of argument invention—from formulating a standpoint to establishing common ground and finding compelling support. When the topics are understood heuristically as a productive method for argument invention it is possible to embrace the multifaceted nature of the topical method and the language of places.

I do not claim that the rhetorical-topical argument model represents the correct reading of the rhetorical topical tradition. My reading of the topics, like every reading of the topics, is eclectic and driven by a purpose. I have wished to present a techne-rhetorical reading of the topics that approaches argumentation from the point of view of the arguer and treats the topics as a heuristic tool to invent persuasive arguments. From this particular perspective, the model offers *one* possible way to combine different understandings of the topics found in the rhetorical tradition.

The rhetorical-topical argument model does not render the Toulmin model—or any other logical argument model—irrelevant to rhetoricians. The Toulmin model will still be a useful tool for critical "dissection" and "testing" actual arguments—as Brockriede and Ehninger suggested. But since "the invention of arguments is by nature prior to the judgment of their validity" (Vico 1709/1990, 14), the rhetorical-topical argument model precedes Toulmin's model. We must build the argument before we can evaluate it.

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II

Empirical Applications: Prostitution, Roars, and (Other) Persuasive Figures

5.

The Danish Debate About Prostitution: Some Characteristics

Merete Onsberg

Abstract

The most recent public debate in Denmark about prostitution took place in 2009, inspired by the Swedish and Norwegian legislation to ban prostitution by criminalizing the client. The debate was fierce but had no legislative outcome. The corpus of texts examined in this article comes from major Danish newspapers. These texts are examined to ascertain their rhetorical potential and argumentative quality. The article was originally published in *Rhetorica Scandinavica* vol. 59, 2011, pp. 84-93.

"Representative democracy and the deliberative system make rhetoric necessary. But its well-known hazards remain. So we still need some way to sort defensible uses of rhetoric from undesirable uses" (Dryzek 2010, 327). With these words, political theorist John Dryzek introduces his discussion of norms for deliberative debate. It is interesting that Dryzek, a leading scholar in the field of *deliberative democracy*, explicitly acknowledges rhetoric's role—and that he at the same time presents a normative differentiation between good and bad uses of rhetoric. To him, a defensible rhetoric must be non-coercive communication which nonetheless makes one's opponent think, and which furthermore is able to subordinate specific interests to more common principles. In accordance, Christian Kock, from a pragmatic standpoint, values productive disagreements as long as they serve society as a whole: "To have a meaningful political debate requires

disagreement about the governing values, i.e., which direction to take, whereas it requires agreement about the facts, i.e., where we are" (Kock 2011, 54). What is of interest to us and what decides our choices is our notion of values, says another rhetorical scholar, Karl Wallace: "values sustain interest until the decision is made and the problems resolved. After the decision has been taken, they endow it with significance." But the rhetor must submit the discourse to certain standards, among other things "decide whether or not he is technically equipped to act. Often he is confronted with the simple yet profound question: Do I know enough about the act to do well?" (Wallace 1970, 80, 94). Like Dryzek, I find that the notions of public deliberative debate and rhetoric are closely connected. Rhetorical discourse must, moreover, communicate the necessary knowledge about the issue, given the situation, as Kock and Wallace suggest.

The public deliberative debate about prostitution in Denmark is an example of a debate which only inadequately fulfills the requirements for a meaningful debate as outlined above. Indeed, the debate about prostitution displays examples of ignorance, misinterpretations and a long line of argumentative vices.

As will become clear, prostitution is evidently a subject which tempts experienced as well as inexperienced debaters to argue without sufficient knowledge about the facts of the case. The general impression of the Danish debate about prostitution is that debaters often speak from values and feelings without considering their audiences; they simply need to air their feelings and opinions. In 2009, 1,674 newspaper articles dealt with this subject. When the number is corrected for a certain celebrity lawsuit about procuring, there was a weekly average of 19 pieces about the subject (Servicestyrelsen 2010, 24). If these numbers are compared with the small number of prostitutes and clients directly involved, one gets a good impression of the broad and heated engagement this topic gives rise to.

In what follows I will outline some general characteristics of the Danish debate about prostitution, based on articles from the written media, mainly the major Danish newspapers from May through September 2009. Shorter texts, such as letters to the editor,

are for the most part not included. All translations are mine. Throughout, my analysis is based on information about prostitution supplied by agencies under the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs. But first a few words about the Danish context.

Law and Numbers

In Denmark, prostitution is legal, but not fully recognized as an occupation. This places prostitutes in a peculiar situation. On one hand, they earn a legal income on which they must pay taxes. On the other hand, they cannot, e.g., obtain unemployment benefit and receive early retirement pension (Rasmussen 2007). As mentioned several times in the debate when prostitution as a legal occupation is discussed, a schoolgirl is never sent to a brothel as part of her school's trainee program. (In Denmark, we most often replace the word "brothel" with "massage clinic".) Neither is an unemployed woman asked to take this kind of work. The article on procuring in the criminal code says that nobody is allowed to benefit from another's prostitution. This means in principle that nobody is allowed to own a massage clinic where others rent a room, a law that also leaves hotels in a grey area. It is furthermore discussed whether a well-known tabloid's many prostitution ads "induce sexual immorality", which is also a criminal offence.

Among the different kinds of prostitution, the debate predominantly deals with prostitution in the streets and in the clinics where most prostitutes probably work—in 2008-2009 their number was estimated to be 1,141 and 3,317, respectively. In addition, a significant dark figure must be reckoned with; the total number of prostitutes is difficult to calculate. The estimated numbers here stem mainly from prostitution ads in newspapers. As many male prostitutes prefer internet ads, only female prostitutes are considered in this article.

Among both street and clinic prostitutes one finds a considerable number of women from other countries. The proportion in registered clinics was found to be 23% Danish, 37%

Thai, and 29% from other countries e.g., the former East European countries; 11% are not accounted for. (Servicestyrelsen 2010).

Debaters and Their Communicative Choices

Who are the debaters? They are ordinary people, as well as professionals (sex workers) with specific knowledge of the subject, and what may be called professional debaters, e.g., politicians. In my material, both elected politicians and political candidates for upcoming elections are represented. The pending elections for the EEC Parliament on June 7, 2009, and for municipal councils on November 17, 2009 are perceptible in the debate, where campaign promises with strong pathos appeals and far-fetched analogies abound.

   One robust example is found in connection with the Social Democrats' party conference on September 25-27. When it became known that they intended to put forward a resolution to fight prostitution by criminalizing prostitution clients, the debate intensified. Most of the texts in my corpus deal with this proposal. Candidate for the Social Democrats, Pernille Rosenkrantz-Theil, and deputy chairperson in Young Social Democrats, Cæcilie Crawly, introduce their joint contribution to the debate thus:

> On quite an ordinary day when your lunch bag is eaten and dinner is prepared, 5,500 women will sell their bodies. On quite an ordinary day one more prostitute will be assaulted. On quite an ordinary day 90% of the prostitutes will regret they ever started. On quite an ordinary day former prostitutes will live with physical and mental scars on their souls.

This is followed by an argument from analogy: Just as some do not get permanent health damage from having worked with asbestos, some do not get permanent damage from having been prostitutes. Nevertheless, we should legislate against prostitution just as we have by law secured the work environment against asbestos. (Quote from *Jyllands-Posten,* July 27, 2009. The

resolution to criminalize prostitution clients was adopted by the conference.)

The number of prostitutes mentioned in the quote might be a likely estimate, but to my knowledge no research backs the alleged 90% who regret being prostitutes. The statement can be seen as an example of what Gutmann and Thompson call *moralism* and *paternalism*; their topic is surrogate mothers, but as they themselves point out, many of the statements they have collected may be applicable to prostitution. Moralists think that being a surrogate mother is degrading and dehumanizing; in plain terms, it is not morally right to allow surrogate mothers. Paternalists think the use of surrogate mothers is morally reprehensible out of consideration for the woman who lends her body to surrogacy (Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 230-272). The paternalists tell prostitutes who claim to be content with their occupational choice that they do not know what serves them best.

Content working prostitutes themselves define prostitution as work comparable with other occupations like being a hairdresser or a physiotherapist. In contrast, opponents of prostitution, especially those of a paternalistic orientation, juxtapose prostitutes with slaves and other victims. The prostitutes' analogy is based on seeing 'service' as a common denominator, while the paternalists' argument especially argue that the prostitute succumbs to the client by selling her body and thereby loses her right to decide for herself. Douglas Walton says about the power of arguments from analogy:

> Arguments from analogy are often extremely powerful forms of persuasion to a particular audience because they can compare an issue to something the audience is very familiar with or has very positive feelings about. Arguments based on analogies are a form of plausible reasoning. Two situations may be similar or dissimilar in indefinitely many respects, which could be cited. But if a relevant similarity is cited, it may be used to shift the burden of proof in an argument (Walton 1989, 256).

Normally it is the responsibility of the party who wants to change the *status quo* to argue her or his case—here, the proponents

of criminalizing prostitution clients. Walton, however, draws our attention to the situation where arguments from analogy can shift the burden of proof because it becomes the task of the supporter of *status quo* to rebut the analogy advanced by the opponent. An argument from analogy often heard in the prostitution debate states that prostitutes are like slaves, and since slavery is banned, sex purchase too should be banned. If the other party were to acknowledge the slave/prostitute analogy, this would shift the burden of proof: The supporter of the *status quo* must now argue for the standpoint that no new law against prostitution be implemented. In reality, the other party would hardly accept the analogy and instead maintain, e.g., freedom of choice as a relevant warrant.

Among the professionals with specific knowledge of the subject, a new voice is heard in the debate: Susanne Møller, the chairperson of the Sex Workers' Organization. The organization's 2009 annual report declares to have 85 members at the end of 2009. In a newspaper in late 2010, Susanne Møller reports the number to be 167. Susanne Møller is an active debater, and in contrast to most of the debaters she is extremely well-informed about the facts of the issue. For example, a left-wing political candidate for the Copenhagen City Council based her argumentation on the information that nine out of ten prostitutes suffered from osteoarthritis in back and elbow as occupational injuries. Her source was a report from the government's Administration and Services Agency, she told a newspaper (*Jyllands-Posten,* August 5, 2009). A couple of days later, in the same newspaper, Susanne Møller informed the readers that this information had been withdrawn by the Agency (*Jyllands-Posten,* August 8, 2009).

Typically, Susanne Møller tones down the inherent *pathos* appeal of prostitution by using *logos* argumentation. In one debate, for example, she protested against different modes of prostitution being treated in the same way: It is one thing to go after pimps, quite another to deal with legally working prostitutes (*Randers Amtsavis,* June 23, 2009). Furthermore, Susanne Møller is one of the few debaters who seems aware of her audience. Dryzek

differentiates between *bonding* and *bridging* rhetoric is relevant here. You *bond* when you address an audience holding the same opinion, excluding people of other opinions. You *bridge* when you try to include people of other opinions than your own (Dryzek 2010, 328). Susanne Møller bridges. She has become a remarkable voice in the debate because she sticks to facts, and her argumentation is both low-key and insistent.

In the group of professionals, in addition to the prostitutes themselves we find experts with a specific insight into prostitution. One such expert is gender studies scholar Kenneth Reinicke from Roskilde University. He is one of the few debaters who deal with the prostitution clients. He calls for their voice in the debate, focusing on the following question that is seldom asked: "Well, why does women's and men's right to sell dominate men's right to buy? Admittedly, most sex buyers are men. This is an important issue." Reinicke continues: "Even though men provide the condition of existence for the prostitutes, men are generally absent in the debate about prostitution. It seems culturally inadmissible to focus on men's sexuality, especially on men's sexuality in connection with buying sex. It is a big challenge to turn the debate in that direction" (*Politiken*, August 28, 2009). As a whole, Reinicke's contributions to the debate are of a rare well-balanced quality.

Apart from strong affective appeals and arguments from analogy gone askew, the debate about prostitution also has examples of ascribing distorted views and intentions to opponents. One debater, presented as belonging to the category "ordinary people", states, e.g., that sex is a primitive urge, but not a human right; she refers to a study of prostitution clients that shows that they "are not poor single men who cannot find an outlet for their appetite in other places. On the contrary, they are married men who just to pass the time find it acceptable to buy another human being's body from time to time" (*Berlingske Tidende* September 30, 2009). Here one might ask: How does she know that married men go to prostitutes just to pass time?

The debate about prostitution is one in which it is difficult to display nuances. Claus Lautrup, a sociologist working as a

consultant, points out that it is difficult to be against criminalizing prostitution "without being seen as one who condones prostitution, misogyny, and violence against women" (*Politiken,* July 3, 2009). Lautrup does not think that criminalizing prostitution will make it disappear. As an analogy, he suggests the shutting down of the cannabis market in the "freetown" of Christiania (a large commune in a squatted former military area, centrally located in Copenhagen). This did not stop people from smoking pot—just as making prostitution illegal would not stop it but make it a shady business and the women dependent on thugs.

The argument that Denmark will become "Scandinavia's brothel" if we do not follow the other Nordic countries' lead and criminalize prostitution clients is not tenable. Though the numbers from Sweden are not totally clear-cut, there does not seem to be fewer prostitution clients there. In a later debate piece in the same newspaper Lautrup rebuts the argument that the Northern part of Jutland has experienced an increase of Norwegian prostitution clients following the Norwegian ban of prostitution; the increase occurred well before the ban (*Politiken,* September 25, 2009).

The chairperson of Young Social Democrats predicts that Copenhagen will turn into "Scandinavia's Bangkok, a mecca for creepy men and their flagrant exploitation of young women" (*Politiken*, July 1, 2009). This argument can be called either a *slippery slope* argument or a *domino* argument. The first type means that if you have said *A* you will also inevitably say *B*; things go from bad to worse and nobody knows where the slope stops. The 'domino' type exhibits a chain reaction with a terrible end result (Walton 1989, 263-269, and van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, 164). In the case at hand, it is argued that if Denmark does not criminalize prostitution as Sweden and Norway have done, Copenhagen will end up as Sin City. No plausible evidence is given for this to happen, and the argument seems rather like an attempt to intimidate the other party—an example of an argumentative vice.

Like Reinicke, Lautrup calls for the clients to join the debate. It distorts the debate, he holds, that the clients stay silent. They must speak if the debate is to qualify as public deliberative discourse

where all parties are heard. According to Lautrup, one reason why Swedish and Norwegian clients seem insensitive to the ban is that they have always felt criminalized. Lautrup advocates a change of people's attitude towards prostitution instead of making it illegal, and he calls for a rational tone in the debate, i.e., appeals to *logos.* However, some of his own statements are quite pathos-laden. He attacks the well-educated women who support a ban and finds it "disturbing that the Social Democrats, especially the party's young female members, let their feelings govern them instead of their good sense" (*Politiken*, July 1, 2009).

The last example shows that the debate about prostitution, quite legitimately, makes use of all three rhetorical forms of appeal. The problem only arises when they are imbalanced, most often because pathos dominates. The debate on prostitution is not one where we should require or expect consensus. Its goal is rather for the parties to understand and respect each other's standpoints. Often respect is missing. Lautrup's numbers concerning prostitution clients are completely distorted by the director and the chair of the board of *The Nest*, a sanctuary for street prostitutes: "But must an undesirable phenomenon like prostitution be upheld because 14 % of Danish men celebrate the thought of their right to have sex with another human being? And if she does not give in voluntarily, they just buy her for 20 minutes" (*Politiken,* July 9, 2009). What Lautrup's research in fact showed was that 14% of Danish men had experienced some kind of purchase of sex, but only a third of these men were regular clients. The people from *The Nest* ridiculed Lautrup's attempt to nuance the debate, saying that he now wanted to see the clients as victims. Their attack looks like an absurd *slippery slope* argument, and it represents the vice of imputing to others far more extreme arguments than they have in fact advanced.

Trafficking As an Example of a Question Sidestepped

Trafficked women are a special group of the foreign prostitutes in Denmark: They are women who have been sold to prostitution.

Some of them are here against their will, others in this way voluntarily provide for their families back home.

Debaters ought to know that in Denmark it is a criminal offence to procure paid sex from trafficked women. Nonetheless, the debate about prostitution is marked by great confusion in this area. Some politicians are preoccupied with trafficked women because trafficking is a topic with international resonance and thus an appropriate issue for a candidate for the upcoming election to the European Parliament. It is also a topic that boosts a politician's ethos. Klaus Kjøller enumerates five virtues politicians want to demonstrate in their public communication: honesty, idealism, technical savvy, intra-party unity, and ability to self-criticism (Kjøller 1980, 85). Politicians in this debate especially strive to exhibit the first three virtues, but as they lack solid information, their communication cannot be said to demonstrate technical savvy. Thus, an EU candidate from the Liberal party said: "In our party we believe in all people's right to freely shape their own lives. Accordingly, it is a heartfelt pain when African and East European women are sold to prostitution, incapacitated as slaves of our time" (*Jyllands-Posten,* June 6, 2009). At first glance, this statement seems compassionate and well-meaning, but considering that it deals with a criminal and complicated state of affairs it becomes void of substance. The politician *feels* where *action* is needed.

Conservative EU candidate Bendt Bendtsen promises to strengthen the fight against trafficking of women. He mentions that the estimated number of foreign prostitutes in Denmark is about 2,500 (*Berlingske Tidende,* May 14, 2009). In the context, he manages to give the impression that all 2,500 are trafficked women, but in reality the number comprises all foreign prostitutes in Denmark at the time. Many of these women, incidentally, are legal residents in Denmark.

In this connection, it is important to notice that the UN recommends letting prostitution be legal for the sake of migrant prostitutes (Ditmore 2007, 170-186). This, however, does not reduce the confusion between prostitution and trafficking because most people consider trafficking a serious problem and pity

trafficked women. Some trafficked prostitutes evidently see their situation differently; in a study they told researchers that they "did not see repatriation as a better or real alternative to prostitution in Denmark" (Servicestyrelsen 2010, 13).

What also adds to the confusion is that the police seldom acts to stop prostitution involving trafficked women, and that some clients have been heard to say that they will continue to buy sex from these women no matter what.

What one could wish for is that debaters knew that trafficking is a special and illegal part of the prostitution market. When trafficking of women is part of the prostitution issue, the debate is easily derailed because this special category is mixed up with other kinds of prostitution that are legal. For example, two left-wing EU candidates challenge the right-leaning Bendtsen to advocate criminalizing prostitution clients in all EU countries, obviously forgetting that when it comes to trafficked women it is already illegal to buy sex from them in Denmark. Finally, it is important to remember that trafficking also occurs in other areas than prostitution, e.g., forced labor and slavery.

The Frontlines Are Drawn

In what follows, I consider different types of arguments and argumentation material and positions.

Often in the debate on prostitution, all kinds of dubious motives and characteristics are attributed to the other party. From a rhetorical point of view, *ad hominem* arguments in debates are not by themselves argumentative vices. Walter Minot (1981, 228) notes: "The key to evaluating the soundness of *ad hominem arguments* is context, which is a rhetorical concern rather than a strictly logical one. One must judge whether an *ad hominem* argument is relevant within its context." In the present text corpus, however, examples of misuse of this kind of argument abound. One target was Mette Frederiksen from the Social Democrats. (At the time of the present publication, Mette Frederiksen has been Denmark's Prime Minister since 2019.) It should be noticed

that though she supported the motion to criminalize prostitution clients, she was not among its proposers. But as a young upcoming politician with broad coverage in the media, she was made the party's spokesperson. One opinion piece in a newspaper says: "Good intentions are what counts. In her young life, this has always been her political motto in addition to another motto: If only I scream the loudest, I will get my way" (*Jyllands-Posten*, September 9, 2009). Her sympathizers are called "Mette Frederiksen's feminists" (*Jyllands-Posten*, July 25, 2009). A ridiculing comment pronounces her, sarcastically, "one of the country's leading intellects" (*Berlingske Tidende* July 6, 2009). Dan Tschernia, the director of a TV channel, who is believed to have favored a ban on prostitution, is advised "to tie his private parts into a knot if prostitution troubles him so" (*Ekstra Bladet*, July 4, 2009).

A general tendency to distort the other side's standpoints and goals is prevalent. One example is 'straw man' arguments taken *ad absurdum*: "Next time, the Social Democrats will ban butter and beef because they are fattening" (*Ekstra Bladet* July 4, 2009). The same piece also says that one "might think from all their prohibition motions that the Social Democrats wish for a Big Brother society."

A good deal of the supporters of a ban on the purchase of sex admit that a ban will not put an end to prostitution, but they maintain that it will be an important *signal*. As a result, further social initiatives might be called for, but only very seldom are the costs of such initiatives discussed. Accordingly, debaters *against* a ban maintain that it will not help prostitutes but only be an example of 'symbolic politics' of the worst kind—an empty gesture because prostitution will continue to exist. A ban would furnish moralists and paternalists with the satisfaction of having acted, but in reality, no problems will be solved. According to Gutmann and Thompson, it is the responsibility of moralists and paternalists to show that a legislative proposal they support will not, among other things, cause "greater social harm" (Gutmann and Thompson 1996, 255). As I see it, it is exactly this principle that is invoked when a ban is called symbolic politics: A ban will not have the

effect wished for. On the contrary, it is argued, it will make prostitutes' conditions worse.

As already mentioned, argument from analogy is a prevalent type of argument. Debaters in favor of a ban argue that uncontested bans on other misdemeanors and offences have not made them disappear either, like theft or murder. The other side finds analogies in dangerous phenomena that are *not* banned, like certain sports and adventure activities.

Occasionally, both sides argue from *isolated cases*, such as autobiographical accounts by former and present prostitutes. These accounts are selected so they only say what the respective sides want them to, and when used in actual arguments, they form, to my eye, an inductive fallacy, a hyper-generalization. Also, *references to authorities* are used. Those in favor of a ban typically refer to the other Nordic countries, the other side to Germany and The Netherlands. Interestingly, both sides see prostitution as a choice: The side against a ban see prostitution as the prostitutes' free choice, the side for a ban do not see a free choice, but a "choice under coercion".

Conclusion: The Quality of the Debate Is Essential

It is a hallmark of the Danish public debate about prostitution that so many participate in a debate about a topic involving so few agents. In principle, it is a *non-coercive deliberative* debate, where, however, one party is rarely represented: the clients. People who are so inclined have easy access to airing their opinions since the newspapers, the primary sources of this article, seem willing to publish a wide variety of articles venting these opinions. In itself, this is a positive trait from both a democratic and rhetorical point of view, but as suggested in this article's initial pronouncement by John Dryzek, it also poses a risk of unproductive argumentation marked by ignorance and argumentative vices.

As we have seen, the quality of the argumentation varies considerably. Especially among the professionals—the debaters with knowledge of the topic—we find the best arguments,

characterized by their invitational attitude towards their opponents' points of view. However, communicating information about the facts of the case does not seem to have the intended results. Ordinary people and politicians tend to sound off without sufficient knowledge of the topic and are often oblivious of their audience. Lack of knowledge leads to lack of focus, among other things, and lack of communicative awareness leads to soliloquy.

Prostitution is obviously a topic that elicits strong feelings, and appeals to pathos permeate the debate. This is not a problem *per se*, but when pathos is favored over logos and factual knowledge sound judgement is at risk, mainly because debaters then lose sight of the other side's arguments *and* of the audience. This means that a deliberative balancing of points of view is hampered, depriving citizens of the basis they need for deciding in an informed way for or against a ban on prostitution.

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6.

The Roar in the Comment Section: How Journalists Mediate Public Opinion on the Danish Online Newspaper politiken.dk

Rasmus Rønlev

Abstract

This article was originally published in 2018 in *Journalistica*, a Danish journal of Scandinavian journalism studies. It showcases how the 'Copenhagen school' conception of argumentation has been adopted and adapted to analyze how digital media affect the function, format, and form of public debate. The article presents a case study of an intense debate on the Danish online newspaper politiken.dk in 2012, triggered by a young university student's op-ed piece about her tight economy. A rhetorical analysis reveals how the coverage of the debate in Danish media simplified the public opinion that manifested itself in the online newspaper's comment section: The polyphonic choir of arguments uncovered in the analysis was, in Danish media, reduced to a monophonic criticism of the student and her piece. The study shows how journalists' role as privileged interpreters and mediators of public opinion may not only be sustained online, but amplified. In this sense, the study continues the Copenhagen school's tradition of combining analysis of public debate with constructive criticism of news media and journalists.

Introduction

With the spread of digital networked media, observers have raised questions about journalists' traditional role as gatekeepers in political debates between citizens and power holders (Bro and Wallberg, 2015: 99). In light of the media development, several rhetoricians have advanced the hopeful hypothesis that citizens' online vernacular rhetoric will challenge the authority of traditionally privileged communicators such as journalists (Hauser, 2007: 338; Howard, 2010: 256-257; Ingraham, 2013: 17-18). For example, Gerard A. Hauser has pointed out that the internet makes it possible for citizens to influence public opinion and ultimately political decision makers quickly and effectively, not only without interference by journalists, but occasionally as a manifestation of a direct destabilization of journalists' privileged position as moderators of public opinion formation (2007, 338). In principle, the news media's own digital platforms can also support a more direct communication flow from citizens to power holders. In op-ed pieces, citizens can share their experiences and opinions; in turn, other citizens can do the same in comment sections, and by reading, sharing and commenting, citizens can draw attention to an issue and initiate a dialogue with power holders. With online newspapers as a supporting intermediate, citizens can ideally set the political agenda and achieve influence.

In this study, however, I argue that digital networked media like online newspapers and the communication between citizens and power holders they facilitate have not made journalists superfluous as interpreters and mediators of public opinion—on the contrary. The way journalists summarize debates on online newspapers can still be vital for the *rhetorical agency* of the citizens who partake in the debates. Agency is here understood as the dialectic interplay between citizens' individually conditioned abilities and structurally conditioned opportunities to act rhetorically and achieve influence (Gunn and Cloud, 2010; Hoff-Clausen, Isager

and Villadsen, 2005; Isager, 2009).[1] My analysis will demonstrate that when journalists cover debates on online newspapers and interpret and summarize what the central topics and viewpoints among debating citizens are, the journalists have considerable influence on the citizens' opportunity to attract attention and achieve influence on political opinion formation in the broader public.

Previous research have shown that in line with scholars, journalists also see great democratic potential in inviting citizens to comment on news and views on online newspapers: In that way, news media can strengthen their ideal function as channels for public debate and contribute to democratizing public opinion formation by letting more and new voices speak out (Braun and Gillespie, 2011: 386; Robinson, 2010: 132; Singer, 2010: 134, 138; Singer and Ashman, 2009: 13, 18). This view is so widespread among journalists that journalism scholar David Domingo has called it a strong, socially constructed *myth* (2008: 682-683). However, this myth has proven difficult to realize in practice. According to journalists, reader comments are generally of low quality (Bergström and Wadbring, 2015: 143; Chung, 2007: 56; Diakopoulos and Naaman, 2011: 136; Singer, 2010: 133; Winsvold, 2009: 47, 51) and full of personal attacks, not only among citizens but also on the journalists' sources (Braun and Gillespie, 2011: 388; Canter, 2013: 612; Diakopoulos and Naaman, 2011: 136; Loke, 2012; 239). Many journalists therefore think that journalists should maintain the role as gatekeepers, also in debates on online newspapers (Hermida and Thurman, 2008:

1. Joshua Gunn and Dana L. Cloud have argued that after two decades of discussion among rhetoricians, there exists at least three understandings of rhetorical agency and the relation between subject and structure to which the concept refers: a critical post-humanistic understanding that emphasizes structure; a conservative humanistic understanding that emphasizes the subject; and finally a pragmatic dialectic understanding that emphasizes the reciprocal conditional relation between the two (2010: 52-57). When I follow Gunn and Cloud in this article and draw on the dialectical intermediate position (2010: 71), I align myself with recent Danish rhetorical critiques that all have agency as their conceptual focus and explicitly or implicitly draw on this understanding of the concept (Berg and Juul Christiansen, 2010: 10-11; Hoff-Clausen, 2013: 429; Isager, 2009: 271-272; Villadsen, 2008: 27).

350-351, 353-354; Singer, 2010: 138). However, owing to the potential volume of reader comments, moderating online debates and finding and highlighting possible moments of quality in them can be very resource demanding (Braun and Gillespie, 2011: 386-389; Chung, 2007: 56; Diakopoulos and Naaman, 2011: 141; Robinson, 2010: 135; Thurman, 2008: 147, 152; Winswold, 2009: 47-48, 52). Despite these negative practical experiences, journalists still claim that comment sections in online newspapers can be a journalistic resource, for example as sources for new stories and angles, expert knowledge, and criticism that may lead to professional self-discipline and self-development (Diakopoulos and Naaman, 2011: 140; Graham and Wright, 2015: 320, 328-332; Hermida and Thurman, 2008: 349, 352; Loke, 2012: 238-239; Singer, 2010: 135).

   All the cited studies of journalists' experiences with, and viewpoints on, the use of comment sections in online newspapers are based on interviews, surveys, and observations. Some of the studies supplement such methods with content analyses of reader comments and compare journalists' impressions of comments with the actual content of comments (Canter, 2013: 606; Graham and Wright, 2015: 321-323). None of the studies examine journalists' texts, for example journalists' summaries of debates on online newspapers, and how these texts are related to citizens' texts, for example op-ed pieces and reader comments. However, a basic assumption in this article is that public opinion formation is a dynamic process that manifests itself in public rhetoric; if one wants to know how journalists affect citizens' opportunity to achieve public attention and influence via online newspapers, one has to look precisely at *texts* and their intertextual interplay in communication flows across media types and forms of communication (cf. Hauser, 1999: 84-85, 272-277). I therefore use the interplay between citizens' and journalists' texts as my point of departure and present a case study of debate among citizens on an online newspaper and journalists' coverage of it. The key question is how journalists ascribe rhetorical agency to citizens in the debate.

The study's case is an extended, intense debate in Danish media triggered by an op-ed piece by university student Sofie V. Jensen (SVJ) about her tight student economy, published both in the national newspaper *Politiken*[2] and the paper's online version politiken.dk[3] on January 7, 2012. Within a few days, the piece received close to 2,000 reader comments on politiken.dk, and the debate quickly spread to other news media, blogs, and online debate forums. As the piece attracted a record number of comments on politiken.dk[4] and created debate across Danish web media, journalists, politicians and others joined in. The following week, the widespread online attention was converted to attention in traditional mass media. SVJ appeared on the front page of national newspapers *Ekstra Bladet*[5] and *Kristeligt Dagblad*[6] and on national television, first the morning show *Go'morgen Danmark*[7] [Good morning, Denmark] on TV2 and later the news program *Deadline*[8] on DR2, both national public service television stations. In the media coverage, journalists typically started by mentioning how many had read and commented on SVJ's op-ed piece on politiken.dk and pointed out that the majority of comments were negative, even hostile towards her. The dominant story in the Danish media was that while SVJ may have put students' economy

2. Sofie V. Jensen, "Myten om det fede studieliv er falsk" [The myth about the phat student life is false], *Politiken*, January 7, 2012, 2.

3. Sofie V. Jensen, "Jeg er træt af at have en dårlig dag hver dag" [I'm tired of having a bad day every day], January 7, 2012, http://politiken.dk/debat/ECE1501598/jer-er-traet-af-at-have-en-daarlig-dag-hver-dag/ (accessed January 19, 2012).

4. Annelise Eskesen, "Studerende sætter rekorddebat i gang" [Student ignites record-breaking debate], *Politiken*, January 12, 2012, 2.

5. *Ekstra Bladet*, "Du er ikke fattig, Sofie" [You are not poor, Sofie], January 10, 2012, 1.

6. Ida Skytte and Ulla Poulsen, "De værdigt trængende er kommet i høj kurs" [The deserving have become very popular], *Kristeligt Dagblad*, January 14, 2012, 1.

7. Morten Bruno Engelschmidt, "Klynker de fattige studerende?" [Are poor students whining?], January 9, 2012 http://finans.tv2.dk/nyheder/article.php/id-47317257:klynker-de-fattige-studerende.html (accessed January 31, 2013).

8. Deadline, "11/01: Fattig eller bare klynk?" [Poor or just whining?], January 11, 2012, http://www.dr.dk/DR2/dead-line2230/2012/01/08/151901_1_1_1.htm (accessed January 31, 2013).

on the public agenda, her fellow citizens thoroughly put her in her place. Nevertheless, SVJ managed to attract attention from several political power holders, including MPs[9] and not least Minister of Education at the time, Morten Østergaard, who conceded "that Danish students (…) [did] not live a life of luxury."[10]

The case is interesting as a prototypical example of how digital networked media, including online newspapers, can support not only political communication from power holders to citizens, but also from citizens to power holders. *Politiken*'s debate editor, Per Michael Jespersen, called it a "bottom-up debate",[11] and the newspaper's editorialist Kristian Madsen saw it as "a strong manifestation of the distinct Danish debate culture that also gives 'ordinary' people access to newspaper columns".[12] However, Madsen also thought that the debate illustrated the difference between being heard and being understood: "It is an undisputed positive thing about the Danish public debate that even a young student can set an agenda. All we need now is that professional debaters also try to understand what they [i.e., non-professional debaters] write." Many of the "professional debaters" Madsen criticized were journalists. As his critique implies, the case also illustrates that online debate among citizens may set the public agenda, but journalists may still play the role of interpreters and mediators of what the agenda is and which arguments prevail among the citizens who take part in the debate.

My analysis of the debate consists of three steps: I analyze SVJ's op-ed, the approximately 2.000 reader comments it received on politiken.dk, and the Danish media coverage of the op-ed piece and the comments. By comparing my analyses, I assess how fairly

9. *Ekstra Bladet*, "Du er ikke fattig…".

10. Jakob Sorgenfri Kjær, "Studerende lever i fattigdom" [Students are living in poverty], *Politiken*, September 3, 2012, 1.

11. Per Michael Jespersen, "Domineres medierne af røv og nøgler?" [Are the media dominated by stupidity?], January 28, 2012, http://politiken.dk/debat/profiler/ permichael/ECE1521869/domineres-medierne-af-roev-og-noegler/ (accessed January 31, 2013).

12. Kristian Madsen, "Fattig? Næh, da jeg var ung, du …" [Poor? Let me tell you about when I was young …], Politiken, January 14, 2012, 7.

the journalists who covered the debate interpreted the questions and opinions expressed in both the original op-ed piece and the subsequent reader comments on politiken.dk. Based on this, I discuss the journalists' role as rhetorically privileged interpreters and mediators of public opinion online. However, before I embark on the analysis, I will more thoroughly explain the study's underlying theory and method.

Journalists' Rhetorical Privileges in Public Opinion Formation

In an article about political communication in mediated mass-democracies, Jürgen Habermas claims that society can be viewed as a *communicative hierarchy* (Habermas 2006, 419; see also Rønlev 2014, 43-46). According to Habermas, the stratification in this hierarchy is based on an unequal distribution of *power*, be it political, social, financial, or media power (2006, 418-419). From a rhetorical perspective, this means that some communicators enjoy rhetorical privileges in the public sphere that other communicators do not. For example, it is generally easier for journalists, due to their affiliation with the press as a societal institution, to speak out and be heard in public than it is for most citizens. What Habermas implies, in other words, is that there exist *institutionalized differences in rhetorical agency* in the public sphere (see also Rønlev, 2014: 47-49). Not in the sense that journalists necessarily have better rhetorical *abilities* to act compared to most citizens, but in the sense that they have better rhetorical *opportunities*.

Traditionally, journalists have thus had privileged opportunities to exert influence on *public opinion*. Rhetorician Gerard A. Hauser has argued that a public opinion emerges in society's ongoing *multilogue*, by which he means a network of conversations among engaged citizens, not only in the public sphere but in all societal spheres. Here, practical argumentation—or rhetoric, if you will—is decisive for publics to reach a common understanding and assessment of a societal issue and based on that to express

an actual public opinion (1999, 65, 74 and 93-108). Therefore, if you want to know what a public thinks and how it arrives at a public opinion, you have to study public rhetoric and, importantly, both the formal institutional rhetoric of privileged debaters, for example journalists, and the more informal vernacular rhetoric of less privileged debaters like most citizens (1999, 85).

Although public opinion formation is not, according to Hauser, limited to a small elite's discussions in institutional forums like the press and parliament, he recognizes that journalists assume a rhetorically privileged position in the multilogue he describes, exactly because of their access to the media (1999, 275, 277). As *debaters*, journalists not only have easier access to disseminate their views; their profession as news providers (Bro 2009. 382) also gives them special access to the political power holders and thus greater insight into the background of political proposals and the proposers' motives. Consequently, political commentators and editors enjoy a natural attention in the public that most citizens do not. In addition, journalists enjoy special privileges as *moderators* of the multilogue (see also Hansen 2015, 104-105). Via their access to news media as platforms for public debate (Bro 2009, 382), they have influence on what is debated, which contributions are published, and on how the debate, including the public opinion, is interpreted.

As discussed, media developments have put these traditional privileges up for debate. As media scholar Klaus Bruhn Jensen (2012, 186-189) has shown, the spread of digital media has changed societal *communication flows* fundamentally, e.g., flows of information across media types and forms of communication. Earlier, these flows were dominated by interpersonal one-to-one communication and mass mediated one-to-many communication, but now, according to Jensen, a third step has been added, namely many-to-many communication in digital networked media (Jensen, 2009: 335-336, 2010: 64; Jensen and Helles, 2011: 528-529; Jensen 2012: 188). As I mentioned in the introduction, this development has been seen as a potential democratization of public opinion formation: Digital networked media may afford more citizens to gain attention and exert influence as public

debaters (Hindman, 2009: 6). Moreover, the more direct communication between citizens and power holders, which digital networked media apparently facilitate, may make journalists superfluous as mediators of public debate (Bro and Wallberg 2015, 99).

However, studies indicate that journalists' rhetorical privileges in public debate are sustained, perhaps even amplified in digital networked media. In a frequently cited study, social scientist Matthew Hindman has shown how journalists affiliated with established news media attract by far the most attention in the political blogosphere in the US (Hindman 2009, 116-117, 122). In other words, online journalists still have better opportunities to speak out and be heard as debaters. Likewise, in a study of the Danish national newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*'s journalistic project *Forbrydelsen* [The Crime] from 2008, rhetorician Christine Isager has shown how journalists maintain a privileged role as moderators of public opinion formation online (2009, 287). How journalists manage this role is precisely what I focus on in this article.

The following case study is a *rhetorical critique* (see Isager 2015, 6; Lund and Roer 2014, Villadsen 2009) based on a close reading of texts and the intertextual reactions they trigger (see Ceccarelli 2001; Hauser 1999, 275-277). I examine the extended debate launched by SVJ's op-ed piece in three steps: First, I analyze the op-ed, then its reader comments on politiken.dk, and finally the coverage of both in Danish media. In this step-by-step analysis, I first focus on the arguments SVJ used in her piece, then the (counter-)arguments in the reader comments, and finally which of the arguments in the piece and the reader comments were disseminated by journalists in the media coverage. In the analyses of the reader comments and the media coverage, I supplement my qualitative analyses of which arguments were found in the analyzed texts with quantitative analyses of how widespread those arguments were. This way, I map which arguments dominated in different steps of the communication flow and finally demonstrate a conspicuous discrepancy between the public opinion expressed

in the comment section on politiken.dk and how that opinion was conveyed in Danish media.

From One Citizen to Many: What Did Sofie V. Jensen Write?

When SVJ's op-ed piece was published, it was already a hot issue in Danish media how to define poverty in a welfare state such as Denmark, and, in continuation of this, what the responsibilities of citizen and state, respectively, ought to be in relation to poverty.[13] A triggering factor was another heated debate a few months earlier in November 2011 about "Poor Carina", a single mother on cash benefits whom Özlem Cekic, MP for the Socialist People's Party, used as an example of a poor Dane in a confrontation with Joachim B. Olsen, MP for Liberal Alliance.[14] However, this previous debate alone cannot explain why SVJ succeeded to the extent she did in attracting attention to herself and to her case. The op-ed piece she sent to *Politiken* is another part of the explanation for all the fuss.

First and foremost, the piece did not have one *purpose*, i.e. a clear overall claim (cf. Pontoppidan, 2013: 21). Rather, the piece contained two purposes and, in turn, addressed two different *rhetorical audiences*, i.e., mediators of change (Bitzer 1968, 7-8). The fact that both purpose and audience were unclear may help explain the great disparity in the reactions the piece triggered.

The primary purpose in SVJ's piece was to express frustration that her surroundings showed "no tolerance and understanding" for her being poor, which in her words made her feel "excluded" and "lonely". According to her, the media claimed that "you [could] live in luxury on a state education grant" and that young people were "rich, drunken fashionistas [going] to expensive parties on the weekends and [drinking] latte at lunch". Against this

13. Allan Larsen, "Fattig-Carina fik danskerne op af stolen" [Poor Carina got the Danes up from the armchair], December 18, 2012, http://www.ugebreveta4.dk/fattig-carina-fik-danskerne-op-af-stolen_14183.aspx (accessed May 23, 2014)

14. Anne Sofie H. Schrøder, "Fattigdomsdiskussion raser hos kontanthjælpsmodtager" [Raging poverty discussion at the home of cash benefit recipient], November 28, 2011 http://www.b.dk/politiko/fattigdomsdiskussion-raser-hos-kontanthjaelps-modtager (accessed May 23, 2014).

background, she appealed to "more solidarity and understanding among students" and called for her surroundings to consider her situation in connection with, for example, student parties, family Christmases, or media stories about student life. "What happened to potlucks and BYOB?", she asked rhetorically. This purpose appeared as the most important in the piece, not least because SVJ finished by saying that it was "okay" that she could not afford a latte, but that it was not okay that others could not tolerate or understand this. The rhetorical audience for this message was a relatively broad group, namely SVJ's fellow students, her family and "society at large", as she put it.

The secondary purpose in SVJ's piece was to express frustration over being poor, a claim she substantiated by showing that her disposable monthly income—excluding student loans—was DKK 329 (approx. 49 USD). She was "tired of being … forced to beg her parents to pay for travel to visit them during vacation" and "not being able to afford birth-control pills and vitamin supplements", but also of "waking up with cold sweat and palpitations", "being tired and in low spirits" and just simply "having a bad day every day". It was not clear what exactly SVJ was advocating for with this. However, she wrote, among other things, that she was "fed up with the fact that it [was] … a cliché to fight for higher state education grants", and that she felt "despondent" when she saw "how little the educational system [took] into consideration that you [had] to earn money alongside your studies". The rhetorical audience for this second, less developed purpose was a more narrow but not less vaguely defined group of students who, like SVJ, wanted a reform of the state education grant (SEG) and educational system, and politicians who could make this happen.

The ambiguity of the piece in terms of purpose and audience was further substantiated by its style. The most characteristic stylistic element was the anaphora "I'm tired of …". It first appeared in the middle of the second period and subsequently introduced 18 of the 24 periods in the piece (which contained 34 periods in total). As the things SVJ was tired of gradually accumulated, the text's content, i.e., SVJ's descriptions of being overwhelmed, was enacted by its repetitive form (Leff & Utley

2004, 42-43). Moreover, all the sentences starting with the anaphora were equal-ranking, which meant that all the things SVJ was tired of also appeared as equal-ranking. The anaphora thus introduced periods that were related to the primary purpose of the piece as well as periods that were related to its secondary purpose: SVJ was simultaneously "tired of feeling excluded, even among [her] co-students" and "tired of being told that [she] [could] not call [her]self poor". Typical for anaphora, the repetition contributed to making the text appear as a piece of agitation with bombastic emphasis (cf. Albeck 2000, 165); likewise, the many equal-ranking periods starting with an anaphora contributed to maintaining the dual purpose and audience.

From Many Citizens to Many: What Did Debaters Write on politiken.dk?

In the next step of the analysis, I analyze the 1,971 reader comments to SVJ's op-ed piece on politiken.dk.[15] When I quote from the comments, I indicate with a number in parentheses which comment I quote. The number 1 refers to the first comment published on politiken.dk, and the number 1.971 refers to the last comment published.

I have used the nine categories in Table 1 to describe how the many reader comments on politiken.dk related to SVJ's piece. The nine categories are exemplified with quotes from the comments, and below, I supplement these examples with a detailed description of recurring arguments in each of the nine categories. Overall, the categories and descriptions provide an overview of the reader comments to SVJ's piece.

Horizontally, the categorization in Table 1 is based on *topic*. Based on my analysis of SVJ's op-ed piece, I have categorized the comments in terms of whether the debater commented on SVJ's argument that poverty was a question of exclusion (the primary

15. My analysis is based on a version of the comment section dated January 19, 2012, which I have archived as pdf files. Since the debate had subsided by then, there is reason to believe that this is the complete corpus of comments generated by the piece on politiken.dk in 2012.

purpose), her argument that poverty was a question of definition (the secondary purpose), or something else.

Vertically, the categorization in Table 2 is based on *attitude*. Again, I have taken my point of departure in the analysis of SVJ's piece and categorized the reader comments based on what attitude the debater expressed towards her arguments. Did the debater express agreement or support, was s/he in doubt or neutral, or did s/he express disagreement or criticism?

Table 1. It is worth noting that the categories nine categories I have used are not mutually exclusive. They are illustrated by quotes from the comment section.

Attitude expressed by the debater	Topic addressed by the individual debater		
	Primary purpose	*Secondary purpose*	*Something else*
Agreement/support	"I just think you are looking for more solidarity and understanding of when you can't afford to participate in things as a student, and then you're looking for potlucks and cheap BYOB, and I couldn't agree more" (118)	"I totally understand you. The SEG just isn't enough, and people shouldn't come out and say that it's enough. (…) Often, just one book costs a quarter of the SEG. If we have to take an education, we have to be able to live on the grant" (31)	"Thanks for sharing your story with us. That takes courage! I really understand what you're saying because I'm a poor student myself" (155)
Doubt/neutral	"You are tired of being poor, OK. But what is the point of telling us that? Is it because you want help with something, e.g. more money? Or is it just to get sympathy and understanding?" (2)	"http://www.findbolig.nu/ (search for roskilde, sort based on price. Now it's only DKK2794, + you live closer to RUC [i.e., Roskilde University], and then you can drop the student travel card (…) Incl. student grant, you now have approx. 4000 at your disposal. That's pretty OK? Without the loan: 1500. That's OK too?" (187)	"Personally, I've never been a member of any political organization, but when I read your piece, what comes to mind is primarily that you should do that … That is, join a political youth organization" (178)
Disagreement/criticism	"Your biggest problem is (1) that your family apparently doesn't recognize your money shortage (…) and (2) that you care WAY too much about your co-students who (…) [e.g. have] student jobs (…) These are battles that you have to fight with yourself and them" (88)	"I am a student. And I disagree that we should feel sorry for students. My fixed expenses are also around 4800 (…) [I can] take an SEG loan (…) (the cheapest loan in the world?), which I can easily pay off when I get a job (…) And finally, I can of course get a student job" (6)	"OMG, it wore me out to read your piece – and that was just one poor sentence!" (92)

The reader comments that addressed the primary purpose of the op-ed piece contained some recurring arguments. In general,

the debaters who agreed with or supported SVJ confirmed that some students were excluded because they had no money and agreed that there were many prejudices about students' economy and consumption patterns. They recognized "the frustration that the school Christmas party is once again held at a nightclub that charges DKK 45 (approx. 7 USD) for a beer" (474) and also found that society sees students as "latte-drinking spoiled consumer monsters" (1,830). According to the debaters in this category, friends and family should become better at factoring in students' economy in relation to social gatherings. One debater wrote: "I think (…) that we as students have to become better at doing things that don't cost money when we want to be social" (941).

However, some of the debaters who also commented on the primary purpose but disagreed with or were critical of SVJ challenged the idea that students were excluded due to their economy; that was not their experience. One debater objected: "My experience is precisely that I'm 'the poor student', and everyone around me is almost too considerate" (361). In general, these debaters thought that SVJ could solve her problem by dialing down consumption, talking to friends and family and moreover initiating cheap gatherings—of course, if her friends and family were not quite as "monster unpleasant" (522) as they sounded. If they were, SVJ should reassess these relations: "Drop your spoiled RUC [i.e., Roskilde University] friends" (460) and "Get a new family" (552) were some suggestions.

Among the comments that concerned the primary purpose, only few expressed doubt or were neutral. In the example in Table 1, a debater meta-commented that SVJ's piece contained two purposes and asked whether SVJ was angling for support for one or the other, but did not explicitly take a stance.

In the comments concerning the secondary purpose, there were also several recurring arguments. In general, the debaters who disagreed with or criticized SVJ thought, among other things, that she should be grateful for her free education, her free SEG and cheap student loan, and that she should take responsibility and do something like get a job, take a loan, move somewhere cheaper or drop out. "[W]hy don't you get a student job so that you can afford

the latte … I actually think you should be grateful for everything you a getting", one debater wrote (1,305). Several debaters wrote about their own experiences to illustrate that it was possible to complete an education under the same conditions as SVJ. They described how they had managed, and the following argument was a recurring theme in these comments: "We HAVE tried living under these conditions, and you know what? We are still here, we survived!" (314).

Conversely, the debaters who agreed with SVJ or supported argued that it was not quite that easy to find a student job and cheap housing or drop the television license and monthly travel card. Again, personal experiences were used widely: "Am also on SEG and can't even stretch it to cover my housing—which I picked out of necessity", wrote one debater who signed herself as "Another Sophie" (807). In addition, these debaters thought that SVJ and her parents paid for her education and SEG themselves. Comments such as "[E]d. is certainly not free in Denmark we ALL pay dearly for it via taxes" (327), and "It is MY parents who paid for my SEG via their taxes" (25) were some examples. Finally, the debaters in this category thought that it was important to remember that not all students had the same (economic) support from home, the same preconditions for studying and learning, or the same energy to both study and work. As one debater put it: "[S]tudents are different and have different abilities and resources, they do not all have equal strength and coping skills" (1,955).

Other comments about SVJ's secondary purpose expressed doubt or were neutral. As the example in Table 1 shows, SVJ received a lot of economic advice in the comment section. However, by simply advising her on how to adjust her expenses and in turn increase her disposable income, the debaters did not explicitly take a stance to the argumentation in the op-ed piece. In other comments in this category, debaters who were or had been students shared their budgets or experiences but notably without explicitly stating whether they agreed or disagreed, supported or were critical of SVJ and her piece. In principle, these budgets and stories could prove both that you have little money as a student and that it is still possible to manage. Others questioned SVJ's

budget or clarified information in it but remained neutral. For instance, one debater asked how SVJ's budget would look if she included her student loan (1,530), while another specified that the income from SEG SVJ had indicated in her budget was what was left after taxes (1,590). Finally, some debaters in this category indicated that they were in doubt about what to think, for example: "I am somewhat divided" (998), and "Am I the only one who is divided?" (1.099).

The comments that addressed something else besides the two purposes in SVJ's piece addressed several aspects. As the examples in Table 1 illustrate, some expressed support or criticism without explaining which specific parts of the piece they supported or criticized. The negative debaters described SVJ's piece as "whining" (261) and "moaning" (338). The positive debaters criticized the many negative comments, often with reference to their tone, and offered more or less explicit support to SVJ. They saw the comments as a symptom of widespread lack of empathy and solidarity in Denmark. One debater said: "[T]his debate (…) will remain as a glowing pillar of shame of how low the Danes' empathy could go" (1,263).

Other comments in the "something else" category expressed doubt or were neutral. Besides ideas like the stray thought shared by a debater in Table 1, these comments contained, among other things, uncommented links to other web pages and meta-comments that deplored the tone in the commentary track or in named debaters' comments, notably without indicating agreement or disagreement with SVJ. One debater stated, without elaborating: "Wow, there are so many bitter assholes judging by the comments" (872).

When we look at how the comments were distributed in the nine categories, two points stand out as central for the further analysis. First, far more debaters commented on SVJ's point that she was tired of being poor than on her tiredess of no one showing understanding or tolerance of her condition. 75 % comments addressed the secondary purpose, whereas only 11 % addressed the primary purpose. In other words, the majority of the debaters

were more interested in SVJ's definition of poverty than in her experience of exclusion.

Second, more debaters expressed agreement with or support of SVJ than disagreement or criticism: 45 % against 38 %. However, there were differences relating to whether the comments regarded the primary or the secondary purpose. Among the comments addressing the primary purpose, 69 % expressed agreement or support, 24 % disagreement or criticism. Among those addressing the secondary purpose, 44 % expressed disagreement or criticism, 40 % agreement or support. As the next analysis will show, this result stands in sharp contrast to the media's coverage of the debate.

From Few Journalists to Many: What Did Journalists Write about the Debate?

In the final step of the analysis, I analyze the media coverage of SVJ's piece and the debate it triggered based on a corpus of 15 texts published in *Politiken* and on politiken.dk and 13 texts from other news media. I found these by searching on combinations of the words "Sofie", "Jensen", "fattig" [poor] and "SU" [SEG] on Google and in the newspaper database *Infomedia* for January 1, 2012—January 1, 2013.

Three days after its publication, SVJ's piece reached the status as the most read and commented piece ever on politiken.dk.[16] When *Politiken*'s journalists followed up on the debate at this early stage, they seemed impressed by the volume of reactions and highlighted, for example, that the piece "so far [had] triggered more than 1,000 reader comments",[17] and that "more than 1,000 readers [had] commented on politiken.dk".[18] Based on these initial

16. Eskesen, "Studerende sætter …".
17. Katrine Jo Andersen, "Der er ikke meget sympati for den fattige studerende" [Not much sympathy for the poor student], January 8, 2012, http://politiken. dk/debat/ ECE1501942/der-er-ikke-meget-sympati-for-den-fattige-studerende/ (accessed January 31, 2013).
18. Peter N. Christensen, "Ringe sympati for fattig studerende" [Limited sympathy for poor student], *Politiken,* January 9, 2012, 2.

media mentions, it was not completely clear what the debate was actually about. In an article on politiken.dk the day after the piece was published online, a journalist stressed that SVJ was "fighting for the right to call herself poor"[19] and thereby emphasized its the secondary purpose. In contrast, a journalist in *Politiken* stressed that SVJ thought "the lack of money [was] directly excluding", and that "she misse[d] understanding from both society and co-students",[20] thus emphasizing the primary purpose.

While the two journalists may not have agreed what the piece was about, they agreed on what a majority of those who had commented on it online meant: "[T]here is far between those who express sympathy with the poor student",[21] said the former article, while the latter said that "even though some declare that they agree (…), the majority strongly disavows her".[22] This interpretation was in both cases backed by examples: "Embarrassing piece. We need to confront the entitlement mentality in DK" (96), and "Wake up, Denmark! Look at the super-spoiled children the welfare monster has created!" (119).[23] This interpretation was nuanced somewhat at the end: "The sympathy is in minority, but it is there", the journalist wrote under the subheading "A bit of sympathy".[24] Again, this was backed by a quote: "I am ashamed of the people who just discredit a young student's plea for help. I am ashamed of where we Danes have ended up: In eternal bashing of each other and others' circumstances" (47).[25] Although the comment exemplified that not everyone in the comment section was against SVJ, it nonetheless confirmed the journalists' overall interpretation, namely that the majority was "bashing" the student.

The two news stories were symptomatic of how *Politiken*'s journalists covered and interpreted the debate in the weeks and months that followed. Both the quantitative fascination and the

19. Andersen, "Der er ikke meget …".
20. Christensen, "Ringe sympati …".
21. Andersen, "Der er ikke meget …".
22. Christensen, "Ringe sympati …".
23. Andersen, "Der er ikke meget …".
24. Andersen, "Der er ikke meget …".
25. Andersen, "Der er ikke meget …".

qualitative understanding that characterized the initial coverage continued. 11 of the 13 articles published after the first two mentions emphasized how many times the piece had been read and commented on. The piece has "so far"[26], [27] resulted in "hundreds and hundreds"[28], "over 1,000"[29] and even "more than 2,000 comments"[30] on politiken.dk, and it was the the online newspaper's "most discussed and most read op-ed piece ever".[31] In 4 of the 13 articles, the journalists stressed the specific numbers of readers and page views for SVJ's piece: "270,000 readers read her article in the debate section, and 100,000 (new record!) clicked online".[32]

In 8 of the 13 articles following the first two mentions, *Politiken*'s journalists commented on the views expressed in the many reader comments, and in all cases they established that the majority of comments were negative. Over the next six months, this interpretation was repeated in different wordings in the coverage of the debate: After a few days, a journalist wrote that even though the student did not personally think "that her piece [was] all that controversial", "the readers thought (…) that Sofie [should] get her act together"[33]; after one week, this turned into

26. Andersen, "Der er ikke meget …".

27. Mette Højbjerg, "Fattig eller forkælet" [Poor or spoiled], *Politiken*, January 14, 2012, 8.

28. Annelise Hartmann Eskesen, "Studerende efter vild fattig-debat: Måske skal man bare lade tabu være tabu" [Student after wild poverty debate: Maybe we should just let taboo be taboo], January 11 2012http://politiken.dk/debat/ECE1504039/studerende-efter-vild-fattig-debat-maaske-skal-man-bare-lade-tabu-vaere- tabu/ (accessed January 31, 2013).

29. Christensen, "Ringe sympati …".

30. Politiken, "Tyskere undrer sig over dansk studerendes "luksusproblemer" [Germans puzzled about Danish students' 'luxury problems'], February 3, 2012, http://politiken.dk/debat/ECE1528508/tyskere-undrer-sig-over-dansk-studerendes-luk-susproblemer/ (accessed January 31, 2013).

31. Eskesen, "Studerende efter vild…".

32. Per Michael Jespersen, "Kære læsere, vi siger nitten tusinde tak" [Dear readers, we thank you 19,000 times], Politiken, December 29, 2012, 7

33. Eskesen, "Studerende efter vild…".

"most debaters disagree[d] with Sofie's case"[34]; after a month: "the great majority of the readers who commented were unsympathetic towards the self-proclaimed poor student's problems"[35]; after six months: "comment upon comment called her spoiled, criticized her (…) and offered quite specific advice"[36]; and finally, after nine months: "the large majority criticized her for being spoiled and demanding".[37] In other words, the media organization mainly responsible for enabling SVJ to attract as much attention as she did was also responsible for advancing a specific public understanding of the reaction she received, namely that the great majority scolded her.

In the days after SVJ's piece was published on politiken.dk, the debate spread to other media, online as well as offline. 9 of the 13 texts where the debate was covered in other media than *Politiken* and politiken.dk referred to the original comment section on politiken.dk. In 7 of the 13 texts, journalists and debaters employed at news media started by establishing that SVJ's piece had received a record-breaking number of reader comments on politiken.dk, and 9 of the 13 claimed that the majority of the comments were critical. Just as in *Politiken*'s coverage, it was emphasized, in lmost identical phrases, that the piece "so far"[38] and "just now"[39] had received "more than 1,500"[40] and "several thousand"[41] comments on politiken.dk, which made it the "most discussed and most read op-ed piece in Politiken ever".[42]

34. Højbjerg, "Fattig eller forkælet …".
35. Politiken, "Tyskere undrer sig …".
36. Jacob Fuglsang, "Da Sofie fik fattigrøven på komedie" [When Sofie had her poor bottom spanked], Politiken, July 1, 2012, 6.
37. Kjær, "Studerende lever i …".
38. Deadline, "11/01: Fattig eller …".
39. Anne Sophia Hermansen, "Sofie-orkanen – succes som fiasko" [Hurricane Sofie – success as failure], January 12, 2012, http://annesophia.blogs.ber-lingske.dk/2012/01/12/sofie-orkanen-succes-som-fiasko/ (accessed January 31, 2013).
40. Tom Jensen, "Sofies verden" [Sofie's world], January 9, 2012, http://tomjensen.blogs.berlingske.dk/2012/01/09/sofies-verden/ (accessed January 31, 2013).
41. Hermansen, "Sofie-orkanen …".
42. Deadline, "11/01: Fattig eller …".

Politiken's interpretation of the dominant attitude in the comment section was repeated: SVJ had launched a "hurricane",[43] "an avalanche"[44] and "thousands (…) of subsequent comments",[45] and it was a "mainly furious",[46] "massive and negative and one-sided",[47] "predominantly negative",[48] "overwhelming" and "furious"[49] as well as "intense (…) criticism that [had] been heaped on"[50] her. In the TV coverage of the debate, the news program *Deadline* on the public service station DR2 reported that SVJ's piece "caused so much resentment that more than 1,800 readers so far [had] responded",[51] and the financial news on the public service station TV2 concluded the same: "The op-ed piece has attracted widespread debate, and most reactions have been critical".[52] Whether these summaries were based on the journalists' own assessments or simply reproductions of *Politiken*'s interpretation of the debate is unknown. However, although the journalists' and debaters' own opinions about the debate varied—some agreed, some did not—they certainly confirmed that the sentiment in the comment section on politiken.dk was generally against SVJ.

What the debaters on politiken.dk reacted so strongly against was not always clear in the ample media coverage. But judging by the way journalists initiated debate on news websites and in

43. Hermansen, "Sofie-orkanen …".
44. Morten Mærsk, "Fattig-studerende: Jeg kræver ikke flere penge" [Poor student: I'm not demanding more money], January 9, 2012, http://www.bt.dk/danmark/fattig-studerende-jeg-kraever-ikke-flere-penge (accessed January 31, 2013).
45. Sofie Rye, "Er fattigdom noget, der kun findes i Afrika" [Does poverty only exist in Africa], *metroXpress* Aarhus/Vest, January 10, 2012, 13.
46. Jensen, "Sofies verden …".
47. Rye, "Er fattigdom noget …".
48. Jensen, "Sofies verden …".
49. Sebastian Gjerding, "De provokerende fattige" [The provocative poor], *Information*, January 14, 2012, 14.
50. Camilla Paaske Hjort, "Hadet til de produktive klasser" [The hatred of the productive classes], January 16, 2012, http://www.b.dk/kronikker/hadet-til-de-produktive-klasser (accessed January 31, 2013).
51. Deadline, "11/01: Fattig eller …".
52. Engelschmidt, "Klynker de fattige …".

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public agenda—not only across online news websites, blogs and debate forums but also via traditional mass media like newspapers, TV and radio. And because many of the media mentions covered the reader comments to the op-ed piece and not only the piece itself, the debate among citizens who participated in the debate on politiken.dk also received broad media attention.

As such, this case seems to confirm the hypothesis that digital networked media like online newspapers contribute to the democratization of public opinion formation by facilitating more direct communication between citizens and power holders, thereby making journalists superfluous as moderators. However, my analyses cannot confirm this hypothesis. On the contrary, they illustrate how journalists' traditionally privileged position as interpreters and mediators of debate among citizens is not only sustained but amplified online. In the end it was journalists' simplified interpretation of the dominant topic and attitude in the debate on politiken.dk that prevailed in the mediated public, as manifested in the texts studied in this article (cf. Hauser, 1999: 64, 97).

As mentioned, the initial coverage of SVJ's piece and the subsequent debate on politiken.dk showed the same ambiguity as the piece itself in terms of what its central purpose was. Without commenting on it, *Politiken*'s journalists disagreed on whether the piece and the debate concerned its secondary purpose, i.e., that SVJ was tired of being poor, or its primary purpose, i.e., that she missed understanding and tolerance of situation. However, as coverage of the piece and the debate spread to other media, and media coverage bred more media coverage, the second purpose conquered the headlines: The interpretation of the topic of the debate increasingly lost its ambiguity and became one-sided: The basic question was now whether SVJ was "[p]oor or spoiled".[58]

Whereas the journalists' interpretation of the debate topic changed, they were sure in their interpretation of what the dominant attitude of the citizens who participated in the debate was. My analysis shows that a small majority of debaters on

58. Højbjerg, "Fattig eller forkælet …".

politiken.dk were positive, while a large minority was negative. However, the dominant media story was that the large majority of readers on politiken.dk disagreed, were critical or downright hostile. Not only did the media coverage portray the public opinion in the comment section on politiken.dk as more unanimous and less nuanced than it actually was; it disseminated a directly misleading interpretation of the reader comments as dominantly negative and critical towards the citizen who initiated the debate and her opinions.

As the debate and the coverage evolved, the nine categories in my analysis were thus reduced to one: The debate concerned whether or not SVJ was poor, and the verdict of the debaters on politiken.dk was clear: She was *not*. In other words, the polyphonic choir of arguments uncovered by a close rhetorical reading of the reader comments was portrayed in the media coverage as a monophonic roar (to turn the journalists' hyperbolic jargon against themselves).

Their self-assured interpretation was conspicuous considering *how* many comments the journalists actually summarized. At the time, the design of the comment section on politiken.dk forced one to click through 100 pages of reader comments in order to read the comments SVJ's piece triggered just within the first 24 hours. As reflected in the journalists' own fascination with the volume of reactions, it was overwhelming bordering on unmanageable. Thus one might think that journalists would be more hesitant to offer such a one-sided interpretation of the public opinion manifested in the comments. As mentioned in the introduction, several studies show that journalists who work with online debates are highly aware of how difficult it can be to moderate and summarize what citizens write in online comment sections, not least because citizens at times write so many comments that individual viewpoints drown in the huge volume of viewpoints.

As my case illustrates, however, reader comments on online newspapers may affect public opinion formation due to their sheer volume. Even though Danish media offered a misleading interpretation of the dominant public opinion in the many reader comments on politiken.dk, the comments nevertheless, owing to

their large numbers, created attention around SVJ and her piece, not only during the initial days when the debate peaked, but also in the following months. During the summer break, SVJ once again appeared in *Politiken* in a large interview in a series titled "What ever happened to …?"[59] As universities were about to start again after the summer break, she was vindicated on the front page as a consumer economist agreed that students were indeed poor.[60] And by the end of the year, *Politiken*'s debate editors highlighted her as someone who "defined the agenda in the previous year".[61] Each time, it was mentioned how many comments her piece had triggered on politiken.dk back in January. Over time, the many comments thus became a platform for SVJ to repeat her views. And as my analysis has shown, the majority of those who commented on her piece actually shared those views.

Conclusion

Since digital networked media facilitate many-to-many communication on an unprecedented scale (Jensen, 2012, 187-188, 2013, 25), the potential number of both recipients and senders is larger online. However, the more who speak out, the fewer are heard, also on online newspapers (Hindman, 2009: 142; Winswold, 2009: 52). Instead, public attention tends to focus on those communicators who already enjoy attention, not least journalists (Hindman, 2009: 116-117, 122). The case study presented here illustrates how journalists enjoy special rhetorical privileges, not only when they express themselves online but also when they interpret and summarize online debates between less rhetorically privileged citizens. In light of the quantitative scope of debates among citizens online, the public's understanding of the

59. Fuglsang, "Da Sofie fik …".
60. Kjær, "Studerende lever i …".
61. Mads Zacho Teglskov og Per Michael Jespersen, "Vi diskuterede voldsofre, fattige studerende og sexovergreb i 2012" [We discussed victims of violent crime, poor students and sex sexual abuse in 2012], January 3, 2013, http://politiken.dk/debat/ECE1854738/vi-diskuterede-voldsofre-fattige-studerende-og-sexovergreb-i-2012/ (accessed January 31, 2013).

qualitative meaning of those debates will likely rely on journalists' interpretation and dissemination. In other words, the potentially unmanageable nature of comment sections revitalizes journalists' right to interpret the public opinion expressed in them.

A key challenge to journalism as both education and profession is therefore to strengthen journalists' ability to 'read' what online publics mean (cf. Hauser, 1999: 92-93). As Hauser points out, this is a *rhetorical competence* that requires insight and skills in practical argumentation (1999, 33, 93-94). Being able to present one's own arguments and to interpret others' are closely related activities (1999: 92), so becoming better at one makes you better at the other. On the more basic level, Hauser pleads that interpreters of public opinion should understand public opinion formation as polyphonic, even cacophonic (1999: 67, 92, 97, 100-101). Public opinion is rarely as clear-cut and definitive as, for instance, opinion polls and the widespread use of them in news media may indicate; on the contrary, public opinion, according to Hauser (1999: 67, 91-92, 278-279), is often ambiguous and fickle,. Such an understanding of public opinion may be difficult to unite with journalists' focus on *conflict* as a news criterion. As critics have pointed out, abuse of this criterion sometimes leads to simplification, reinforcement and even distortion of conflicts in society (Kabel, 2014: 427). If journalists are to be better prepared for the role as interpreters and mediators of online public opinion, it requires that journalists, both in journalism programs and editorial rooms, critically reflect on their understanding of what public opinion actually is, how one should 'read' it, and with what expectations. Strengthening journalists' agency in this sense also strengthens their possibility of providing agency to citizens who participate in public opinion formation online.

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7.

Affecting Argumentative Action: The Temporality of Decisive Emotion

Marcus Lantz

Abstract

This paper explores the interrelations between temporality and emotion in rhetorical argumentation. It argues that in situations of uncertainty, argumentation affects action via appeals that invoke emotion and thereby translate the distant past and future into the situated present. Using practical inferences, a three-fold model for the interrelation of emotion and time in argumentation outlines how argumentative action depends on whether speakers provide reasons for the exigence that makes a decision necessary, the contingency of the decision, and the confidence required to act. Experiences and choices from the past influence the emotions experienced in the present and inform two intertemporal mechanisms that allow speakers and audiences to take the leap of faith that defines decision-making under uncertainty: retrospective forecasting and prospective remembering. Retrospective forecasting establishes a past-future-present link, whereas prospective remembering establishes a future-past-present link, and together the two mechanisms provide a situated presence that transcends the temporal constraints of uncertainty. Finally, the applicability of the model is illustrated through an analysis of a speech delivered by Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a time where the need for decisive, yet argumentative action was crucial.

1. Introduction: "What You Do Today Makes a Difference"

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, leading politicians around the world to advocate for decisive action. In Denmark at 8:00 p.m. CET that same day, the Danish Prime Minister and leader of the Social Democratic Party, Mette Frederiksen, thus began what politicians, industry leaders, and commentators shortly after dubbed "a historical press conference" (Schulz 2020), stating: "What I will say tonight is going to have major consequences for all Danes." She then went on to announce the most drastic lockdown of Danish society in peacetime.

Forty-four minutes later, an opposition member of the Danish Parliament, Mette Abildgaard of the Conservative People's Party, tweeted: "Good press conference by the Prime Minister. Will possibly hate myself for this tweet at the next election, but I trust her as prime minister in these very serious times."[1]

Abildgaard's tweet illustrates that while emotions may exist and change across time (present trust, future hate), they also shape opinion and agency in the present. To make decisions under uncertainty is to feel one's motives well up inside oneself and then act upon them (Helm 2009). While the safest bet for any decision maker might be to hold out for more data and their tantalizing promise of predictability, novel and uncertain situations amplify the dilemma between an epistemic waiting game and a prudential willingness to act incisively. Existing argumentation research suggests deliberation about *choice of action* (Kock 2017) under uncertain circumstances (Walton 1990; Tindale 2018) defines rhetorical situations and rhetorical argumentation, essentially, as "The Realm of the Uncertain" (Kock 2020, p. 288).

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1. Unless otherwise stated, I have translated all quotes. Where necessary, I explain the reason for using a specific word. In this case, Abildgaard used the Danish word "tryg", which in this context translates as "trust". "Tryg" stems from Old Norse, "tryggr," and German "true," underlining the etymological connection with trust (Den Danske Ordbog 2020). One could also translate "tryg" as confident, because confidence stems from the Latin confīdere, that is "to put trust in, have confidence in, be sure" (Merriam-Webster 2020).

Uncertainty has both epistemic as well as practical character in rhetorical argumentation (Zarefsky 2020), which emphasizes the critical importance of time because a practical choice has prospective outcomes, whereas demonstration leads to true conclusions, independent of the passing of time (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2010). Indeed, emotions are inevitable, especially in situations of uncertainty, but a person's decision-making capacity also depends on them (Damasio, 1994). Building on Damasio's groundbreaking work, Barrett underlined: "Affect is not just necessary for wisdom; it's also irrevocably woven into the fabric of every decision" (2017, p. 80).[2]

The rhetorical tradition has always embraced emotion in persuasion (Katula 2003), just as it recognizes the centrality of time to persuasion (Miller 1994; Tindale 2018, p. 182). Although Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca hinted at the emotional nature of temporality in argumentation (2010, p. 319),and emotion scholars mentioned the past and future orientations of emotion (e.g., Helm 2009; Lerner et al. 2015), the temporality of appeals to emotion in argumentation studies remains largely unexplored.[3] Scott has recently encouraged further research "thematizing the essentially temporal idea of ethos" (2020, p. 35), but he and other argumentation scholars appear silent about the need to connect pathos and temporality in relation to decision making. This paper seeks to shed light on this blind spot by exploring the connection between emotions and time in argumentation.

This aspiration begins with Micheli's call to further examine "the discursive constructs of situations and their emotional

2. In line with a well-established distinction within emotion research, I rely on affect as an umbrella term covering mood and emotion, in which emotions are discrete and intense but short-lived experiences, and moods are longer, more diffuse experiences that lack an awareness of the eliciting stimulus (Elfenbein 2007).

3. In a recent special issue of Argumentation on time and place (Tindale, 2020), emotions play an insignificant role despite their role in practical argumentation that focuses on the future (e.g. Walton 1992; 1996; Tindale 2018, chapter 8; Kock 2017). However, see Cigada (2006) for a valuable exception as well as Macagno and Walton (2014, p. 68) for a brief mention in addition to Walton's work on emotional appeals in relation to traditional fallacies (1997; 2013).

orientation" (2010, p. 15). Such discursive constructs of situations involve not only the present situation but also future projections, which argumentation may affect, acting as grounds for choosing one option over another. Given that decisions happen in the now, one must understand how speakers successfully make the future—which their decisions will affect—present, using the past as a central resource. My main argument in this paper is as follows: In uncertain situations, argumentation affects action via appeals that invoke emotion and thereby translate the distant past and future into a situated present. Emotions make arguments about the future appear present, creating an opportunity for action that enables people to believe in and act on them.

I seek to contribute to rhetorical argumentation in two respects. Theoretically, understanding the temporality of emotion can strengthen our appreciation of the *logos of the passions* (Brinton 1988a; Waddell 1990; Micheli 2010), which, I argue, is necessary in any deliberation about choice where emotions and incommensurable values render a common yardstick for reaching a "true" conclusion futile (Kock 2017, p. 60). Societally, the year 2020 marks the outbreak of a global pandemic and the rise of a social movement against systemic racism, not to mention an ongoing climate crisis. Such consequential global crises stir the emotions, and emotions must be harnessed rhetorically to engage citizens in both the necessary decision-making and to mobilize support for solutions. Now more than ever, it is apparent that emotions inevitably influence decision making (Vohs et al. 2007); the question is how to harness them rhetorically in a way that enables such decision-making to be wise.

In terms of making a conceptual contribution, a three-fold model for interrelating emotion and time in argumentation can illustrate how speakers must provide reasons for (i) the exigence that makes a decision necessary, (ii) the contingency of the decision, and (iii) the confidence required to act. Experiences and choices from the past influence the emotions experienced in the present and inform two intertemporal mechanisms that allow speakers and audiences to take the leap of faith in decision making: *retrospective forecasting*, which establishes a past-future-present

link, and *prospective remembering,* which establishes a future-past-present link.

To investigate the connection between temporality and emotion in argumentation, I first review the roles of time and emotion in argumentation, and then combine insights from the two strands of argumentation theory to substantiate my synthesis and propose a conceptual model of temporality and emotion in rhetorical argumentation. To illustrate the empirical import of the theoretical work, I have focused on the COVID-19 pandemic, for this sudden and dramatic development has already profoundly affected societies, putting humanity on an impending "tightrope walk to recovery" (OECD 2020). As such, the coronavirus crisis also provides a pertinent lens through which to understand how people interact and reason about which decisions to make and how to act in a situation marked by high uncertainty. To illustrate this applicability, I briefly analyze Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's opening speech at the March 11 press conference.

2. Temporality and Emotion in Argumentation

Argumentation is an unfolding process in which the audience is an active participant, not a "mere passive receptor" (Tindale 2018, p. 30). Although I emphasize this aspect of audience agency because of its prevalence in contemporary rhetorical theory (Hoff-Clausen 2018), I also stress that creating adherence in decision-making contexts depends on whether people are committed to carrying out the (future) actions they decide on in the very present (Scott 2020). The uncertain nature of rhetoric makes time an essential factor (Zarefsky 2020, p. 301). Humans do not deliberate about matters where their words have no power, but a rhetorical situation (Bitzer 1968) implies an exigence, an urgency-laden imperfection that the audience, here defined as a mediator of change, possesses the agency to resolve, despite the existence of various constraints that reflect uncertainty about the outcome of the decision. Largely because of this uncertainty, emotions play an important role, as they emphasize salient agentic clues about what to do (Pfau 2007).

The following sections briefly present contemporary conversations on temporality and emotion in argumentation to provide a foundation for developing the subsequent synthesis.

2.1 Temporality in Argumentation

Time and temporality are not synonymous. Rather, temporality is the "negotiated organizing of time" (Granqvist & Gustafsson 2016, p. 1009) that establishes "ongoing relationships between past, present, and future" (Schultz & Hernes 2013, p. 1). This definition stems from organization studies but clearly resembles that used in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's seminal paper on rhetorical argumentation, in which temporality is "the intervention of time"[4]:

> The oppositions that we notice between classical demonstration, formal logic, and argumentation may, it seems, come back to an essential difference: time does not play any role in demonstration. Time is, however, essential in argumentation, so much so that we may wonder if it is not precisely the intervention of time that best allows us to distinguish argumentation from demonstration (2010, p. 310).

I emphasize that the "intervention of time" plays an essential role in distinguishing argumentation from demonstration and stress that rhetorical argumentation revolves around practical choice (Kock 2017). Furthermore, where demonstration leads to true conclusions, independent of the passing of time, argumentation is an action one performs with words when seeking adherence to a proposal. Seeking adherence concerns influencing an audience to make a decision that will impact the shape of an unknown

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4. It is worth noticing that it does not, under all circumstances, hold true that demonstrations are out of time. When scientists (or lay people, for that sake) compare two valid demonstrations for the same problem, the shorter one is preferred in general because of Hjelmslev's empirical principle in scientific discourse, which should meet, in that order, self-consistency, exhaustiveness, and simplicity (Garvin, 1954), and an application of the Maxim of Relation (relevance) (Grice 1989, p. 27). I thank one of the reviewers for highlighting these important language philosophical aspects to me.

future. Hence, the notion of "argumentative action" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2010, p. 316) underlines the dynamism of persuasive symbolic action, which provides compelling reasons both for taking action and for the very action that stems from such argumentation.

A key aspect here is the question of *how* the concept of temporality, as a constituent part of argumentation, is capable of "translating" or moving the past and future into the present: "Argumentation confers simultaneity on elements that normally would be distant in time, a simultaneity that derives from their integration in a system of ends and means, of projects and obstacles" (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 2010, p. 329).

This simultaneity exists when an audience comes to understand that the decisions it makes have future consequences, vague though such distant futures might seem when viewed from the present: the future simply lacks presence, one could say. The ability to invoke *presence*, a key term in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's theory of rhetorical argumentation (1969, p. 115), is crucial in argumentation involving future considerations. Persuasion hinges on the question of how imagination of the future becomes present in the moment of deliberation. As a rhetorical ability, then, creating presence revolves around the choice of certain salient elements and their presentation to the audience, as persuasive appeal arises from the importance with which a speaker endows these elements simply by choosing to focus on them (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 116).

When a speaker focuses on certain elements, creating a salience in the presence anticipating what is yet to come and how choices can impact such a foreseen future, the concept of *prolepsis* is worth mentioning, as it "allows our attention to be directed to particular deliberative ends" (Mehlenbacher 2017, p. 246). Stemming from the Greek word *prolambanein*, to anticipate (Walton 2008, p. 144), proleptic argumentation can be understood as both a rhetorical figure anticipating a premise yet-to-happen and a subsequent consequence (e.g. 'If you tell mom, I will never help you again') and several argument tactics distinguished by their varying certainty of future outcomes. Prolepsis can namely be both i) an

anticipation and rebuttal of an opponent's argument, ii) a certain prediction of future events, and as iii) presage, a forewarning of a potential future (Mehlenbacher 2017, p. 235); the latter being highly relevant to the current paper, and an aspect which I shall return to in section 3.1.

To summarize, although people exchange arguments in the ongoing present, rhetorical argumentation aims at the future, yet draws on the past. Given the foundational role of emotions in decision-making (Damasio 1994; Barrett 2017), we ought to also ask how emotion and argumentation are related.

2.2 Emotion in Argumentation

When time is limited and outcomes are contingent on decisions, emotions affect decision-making (Pfau, 2007), but such decision-making is therefore not irrational. A key assumption is that reasonable grounds for an emotion can exist, so emotion can hence function as a legitimate reason for action (Greenspan 2004; Nussbaum 2015).

Emotions are "adaptive responses to the demands of the environment" (Elfenbein 2007, p. 316), and since antiquity such responses have figured in reasoning about actions because "emotions are all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgements, and are accompanied by pleasure and pain" (Aristotle 2005, 1378a20). Speakers may argumentatively describe and construe such environmental demands as establishing a connection between the situation, the audience's values, and the need to react to those values. To assess a situation as 'good' or 'bad' and hence worth approaching (pleasure) or avoiding (pain), an audience must have a system of values that provide reasons to desire and act in ways that achieve the goals or avoid the threats corresponding with those values (Macagno & Walton 2014, p. 65).

The inclusion of emotion in decision-making is a source of long-standing dispute between rhetoric and ethics because emotions can indeed prompt one to act with affect without considering the ramifications. The challenge is to distinguish well-

grounded emotional appeals from manipulative trickery. As Villadsen aptly noted:

> Persuasion may as well be used to inflame passions and cloud judgment as it may speak to reason and justice. With rhetoric there is always the threat of deterioration into deception and manipulation, but it is accompanied with the possibility of insisting on sound reasoning and relevant emotional and moral appeals (Villadsen 2016, p. 48)

As emotions and values are necessary and unavoidable in rhetorical argumentation about practical choice, below I describe how the rhetorical tradition has conceptualized appeals to emotion *(pathos)*.

Although Aristotle underlined that the speaker should put "the audience into a certain frame of mind" (2005, 1356a2), several scholars (Lee 1939; Brinton 1988b; Micheli 2010; Welzel & Tindale 2012) have pointed out his telling vagueness on exactly *how* a speaker stirs an audience's emotions. However, as Brinton explained: "Generally by *pathe* Aristotle means (in the *Rhetoric* at least) feelings which influence human judgment or decision-making and which are accompanied by pleasure or pain" (1988b, p. 208). Yet, when a speaker presents an argument capable of stirring, say, confidence within an audience (confidence, according to Aristotle, being the opposite of fear), but uses factual grounds to do so, logos and pathos seem difficult to separate. Simply put, "logos and pathos interact in that emotional appeals are generally built on a rational foundation; conversely, logical appeals generally have an emotional component" (Waddell 1990, p. 383). This type of interaction echoes another ancient scholar, namely Quintilian and his advice on making facts come alive before the eyes of an audience in order for them to 'feel' their relevance to a given case (see also Katula 2003, p. 9):

> It is a great gift to be able to set forth the facts on which we are speaking clearly and vividly. For oratory fails of its full effect, and does not assert itself as it should, if its appeal is merely to the hearing, and if the judge merely feels that the facts on which

he has to give his decision are being narrated to him, and not displayed in their living truth to the eyes of the mind (Quintilian 1922, p. 245).

Brinton labeled such interaction of logos and pathos a *pathotic* argument, understood here as a "drawing of attention to reasonable grounds for the passion or emotion or sentiment in question" (1988a, p. 79). Hence, a pathotic argument includes a dimension of reason-giving for why a certain emotion (or combination of emotions) is appropriate, and these reasons allow one to examine emotion as lending an argument acceptability, relevance, and adequacy (Gilbert 2004).

Still, emotions have several functions in argumentative contexts (Carozza 2007) and a variety of normative roles. The dominant view within argumentation and logic has seen appeals to emotion as fallacies. Take, for instance, fear appeals that impose a threat on an audience and function as an *argumentum ad baculum* (Walton 1996). However, as Govier (2010), O'Keefe (2012) and Walton (1992; 2013) have all argued, appeals to emotion such as fear are not necessarily fallacious and are thus not per se unreasonable, because they "invoke consequences of an action as a basis for justifying performing or not performing that action" (O'Keefe 2012, p. 27).

According to Micheli (2010), in a 'traditional' view, emotions function as adjuvants to argumentation, meaning that speakers can appeal to emotions to support a conclusion and thereby promote a judgment, decision, and potentially action. In the convergence between judgment and emotion, I should underline, both are equally important. Emotions affect people's cognitive judgments, as Aristotle recognized, for "when they feel friendly to the man who comes before them for judgement, they regard him as having done little wrong, if any; when they feel hostile, they take the opposite view" (Aristotle 2005, 1378a35). However, cognition can also affect emotion, because the emotions that affect decisions arise from grounds pertaining to "the role of judgment in the formation of the passions" (Micheli 2010, p. 6).

This dynamic understanding, in which emotions have not only cognitive *effects* but also cognitive *origins,* provides an important bulwark for assessing emotions as legitimate reasons. For the present purposes, I focus on argumentation that enables an emotional experience to be rooted in the Aristotelian cognitive understanding of emotion (Morreall 1993, quoted in Pfau 2007). In relation to arguments, emotion is defined as a specific state of mind directed at others and based on the grounds on which the emotions arise and thereby lead to persuasion.[5]

If the grounds for an emotion are reasonable, then such an emotion can also be a legitimate reason for judgment and action (Greenspan 2004). Because beliefs and cognition can both function as grounds for emotions and give rise to them, it can be helpful to distinguish between evoking and invoking emotion (Brinton 1988b). Evoking emotion is an appeal *toward* emotion, an endeavor to arouse that emotion in the audience and thus *cause* an action, but not per se to provide a reason for taking it, as in 'reflex emotions' defined as "fairly quick, automatic responses to events and information" (Jasper, 2011, p. 287). Invoking emotion is an appeal *to* emotion that involves a reason on which to base an action, which is to say the speaker gives the audience a reason to feel a certain way on which it can act. In short, to *invoke* emotion reflects how reasoned emotion can prompt responsive action. As such, adhering to a cognitive theory of emotion enables one to view emotion as reasonable in the dual sense of its providing reasons and being grounded in reasons. Having described the roles of temporality and emotion in argumentation let me unfold my main argument.

3. The Temporality of Emotion in Argumentation

Argumentation affects action via appeals that invoke emotion in order to translate the distant past and the anticipated future

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5. For further in-depth theorizing on the role and nature of emotion in argumentation, which the scope of the current paper does not allow for, see also Ben-Ze'ev (1995), Gilbert (2004), and Carozza (2007).

into the situated present. Such appeals function more than simply persuasively when a speaker appeals to a specific emotion, for an argument that succeeds in invoking an emotional focus can impel an audience to commit to action because of the expected consequences vis-à-vis past experiences (Walton, 2002). As such, an argument has *import* to those making the decisions, thus motivating them to take action (Helm, 2009). For example, to invoke patience persuasively, one must illustrate—that is, provide reasons in support of—that an impending mission is of a magnitude requiring a long, sustained effort, yet is both possible and worthwhile—and, hence, merits patience.

The temporality of appeals to emotion remains underexplored in argumentation studies. However, there are notable exceptions: Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca hinted at the emotional nature of temporality in argumentation when referring to "the insistent [appuyé] style, meant to provoke emotions, mainly aims to frame thought" (2010, p. 319). Macagno and Walton underlined that "emotions are both the result of past choices and past experiences, and evaluations of present and future state of affairs" (2014, p. 68), further underscoring the temporal dimension of emotions in relation to decision-making that in the case of for instance fear often involve "a choice between long-term safety and immediate gratification" (Walton, 2013, p. 23). Mehlenbacher pointed to the underlying emotional nature of reasoning based on anticipation (prolepsis), in the sense that an anticipation of uncertain but imaginable outcomes "allows us to determine our current position in terms of desires, reason, and emotion for deliberation about prospective outcomes in terms of current actions or choices." (2017, p. 246). Scott (2020) explored the "internal temporality" of argumentation, understood as the temporal unfolding of the involved actions associated with argumentation, such as speaking, listening, doubting, and judging (p. 33), although he only briefly tied temporality to emotion in argumentation. In fact, the following passage is the only place in Scott's paper where he explicitly mentioned affect (neither *pathos* nor *emotion* appear in the paper):

The concept of adherence is essentially temporal—in the same way that something like a promise cannot be understood without a

temporal reference to a possible future where it is either honoured or broken. With respect to adherence, this is to say that what a person is intellectually and affectively committed to at a given point in time cannot be reduced to any particular "present." (Scott, 2020, p. 31)

Indeed, adherence depends on both intellect and affect. Moreover, as should be evident by now, a logos of the passion and a passion of the logos converge (Waddell, 1990). The notion of adherence, which Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, p. 1) stressed as fundamental in rhetorical argumentation, is highly relevant in a decision-making context of uncertainty. To *adhere* to a proposal—say, deciding to keep physical contact to a minimum—is to accept intellectually and affectively that the grounds on which the proposal rests are sufficiently convincing at the time the proposal is made, its building on existing knowledge and experience. By drawing on the past and imagining the future to inform the present in which a decision takes place, the temporality of argumentation gives presence to this moment, but how can one fully grasp such a presence without considering emotions and their temporal orientations?

The rest of this section proceeds as follows: First, a synthesis of temporality and emotion shows how temporal orientations of emotions affect rhetorical argumentation. Second, a conceptual model provides two temporal mechanisms for invoking presence. Third, a brief analysis of the speech in which Mette Frederiksen announced the Danish lockdown illustrates how the model works and may aid future theorizing of the temporality of decisive emotion.

3.1 The Temporality of Decisive Emotion

Emotions are "energy for action" (Plantin 1998, in Cigada 2006), and decisions made under uncertainty require a willingness to act on arguments despite a lack of sufficient data. As such, the temporality of argumentation touches upon the ontological duality of rhetoric (Bitzer 1968; Vatz 1973). When a speaker discursively

makes the present moment appear to be the right moment in which to act, she draws on the mutual interconnectivity of the past and the future (Miller 1994). To make a decision in the present that will affect the future is to argue why the very targets to which people react with emotion warrant attention and action (Helm 2009, p. 250).

An Appeal to Emotion Appeals to Time

Before unfolding the temporal orientations of emotions, I would like to highlight why *import* is central to a theory of rhetorical argumentation. Something has import when it is worthy of attention and action, thus leading a person to be "reliably vigilant for circumstances affecting it favorably or adversely and be prepared to act on its behalf" (Helm 2009, p. 250). Feeling the motivational "pull" of emotions is an aspect of evaluating how to respond to surroundings that impose meaning on humans. One can therefore view appeals to emotion as appeals that invoke an emotional focus of *import* to decision makers and therefore resonate with the cognitive evaluations (appraisals) arising in the immanent situation and affecting the experience of emotion, which in turn motivates a person to decide and act. As Micheli wrote, such cognitive criteria of evaluation involved in experiencing emotion "offer interesting cues for the study of the *discursive and emotionally-oriented constructs of events and situations* " (2010, p. 15). Of particular importance to a rhetorical understanding of emotion are the appraisals by which a person evaluates the environment and interaction with other persons (such as the speaker or the deliberating audience), motivational action tendencies, and the subjective experience of feelings (Moors et al. 2013, p. 119). Appraisals could encompass goal relevance (I must act to protect what I value), agency (my actions matter), certainty (amidst uncertainty, some signs give me a degree of faith), and coping potential (I have the means to withstand an enemy that initially frightened me).

These are all felt evaluations that undergird *how it feels* to be in a situation illuminating that the "discursive dimension of emotions appears with a particular clarity when emotion is in debate" (Plantin, 1999, p. 4). In other words, to feel an emotion like anger, a person will perceive negative events as being predictable, under their own human control (agency), and brought about by others, which may lead that person to engage in riskier behavior because she perceives little risk (Lerner & Keltner 2000). Here, agency comes to the fore in terms of whether audience members feel they can actually do something about the matter at hand. From a *temporal* perspective, human agency is

A temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment) (Emirbayer & Mische 1998, p. 963).

Considering that rhetorical agency is defined as "the relative capacity of speech to intervene and affect change" (Hoff-Clausen 2018, p. 287), I would like to stress the link between the inherent temporality of agency and the role emotions play in rhetorical argumentation. If a speaker is to convince decision makers to decide and even act, and this commitment requires some assessment of agency, several emotions may arise and exist simultaneously. "In short, to feel one emotion is to be rationally committed to feeling a whole pattern of other emotions with a common focus" (Helm 2009, p. 251). Crucially, these patterns of emotions—arising from appraisals of the situation—stand in relation to the temporal orientation of the emotional focus, and the reasonableness of such practical emotional patterns depend exactly on their past (and expected) reason-giving capabilities:

Emotions serve to 'mark' practically significant thoughts with bodily (and hence affective) indicators of past experience. According to an evaluative account, characteristic thoughts have come to be contents of emotion—and part of what identifies them as the types of emotion they are: fear, anger, joy, pride, and so forth (Greenspan 2004, p. 208).

To summarize, appeals to emotion can invoke an emotional focus of import to decision makers, and when such import resonates with cognitive evaluations of the past, present, and future, emotion becomes timely and potentially reasonable.

Temporal Orientation of Emotion in Argumentation

When one includes the passing of time and events, the multidimensionality of emotion, which rarely exists independently, becomes part of rhetorical argumentation. For instance, a well-grounded fear of COVID-19 will tend to change as time progresses and events unfold, turning into relief or joy if people avoid becoming sick, disappointment or even grief if they do not, or anger if someone (un)knowingly endangers others, thus making all physical distancing efforts seem worthless. The temporal aspect of accumulating evidence will, then, help determine whether initial fear turns out to continue to be well-grounded as new information, experience and knowledge either harness the robustness of that emotion, hereby underlining the rational (cognitive) structure of emotions (Micheli 2010, p. 6), or lead the rational actor to acknowledge that she did act in good faith but with time should abandon her continued commitment if there eventually is a lack of support for an anticipated future emotion. To continue along this path of commitment, one can view an initial well-grounded fear as a rational strategy of pre-commitment, prompting action, that (should) only hold as long as there are sufficient reasons in favor of supporting continued commitment:

In such cases [where wished for outcomes only materialize after a long investment period], the rational entrepreneur would not ignore sunk costs. But she would not be too highly swayed by them either, and would only base her calculations on commitment to realistic prospects of future success or failure, judged by practical reasoning (Walton 2002, p. 499).

Emotions have temporal orientations enabling us to make a preliminary distinction between future- and past-oriented emotions

in argumentation by drawing on Helm (2009), Baumgartner, Pieters, and Bagozzi (2008), and Cigada (2006). Notice that the above emotions are bound together by a common focus of import to the people experiencing them. This binding allows one to view appeals to time as appeals to the interaction between past- and future-oriented emotions and how these make the present worthy of attention and action.

Helm (2009) discussed eight such emotions, distinguishing between positive and negative past and future orientations; for example, satisfaction has a positive past orientation, and fear a negative future one. In a study on emotive communication in the political aftermath of World War II, Cigada (2006) further distinguished between the near-past and distant-past positive (euphoric) and negative (dysphoric) emotions. She underlined that *pride* in a historic tradition of working to ensure freedom and human rights functions as a particular argument in favor of *hope* about a future political situation; for example, if we won our freedom in the past, we can re-win it. This perspective emphasizes the dual argumentative understanding of emotion as both providing reasons to support a conclusion and functioning as a conclusion (Micheli 2010). Emotions can draw their reasonableness from the re-presentation of shared past events—which function as cause for, say, pride—and from imagined future events, which in turn support a focus on the action proposed in the present.

However, future-oriented emotions are both anticipatory—that is, felt in the present—and anticipated, in other words, to be felt in the future (Baumgartner et al. 2008). Anticipatory emotions such as hope or fear arise in the present at the prospect of a desirable or undesirable future event, whereas anticipated emotions stem from an imagined sense of how experiencing certain emotions will feel once future events have occurred. From an argumentative perspective, both forms of emotions function to provide an affective component when the consequences of an action are rhetorically deployed as a justification for taking or not taking that action. The interplay between instilling beliefs about *anticipated* (future) emotions and arousing *current* anticipatory emotions
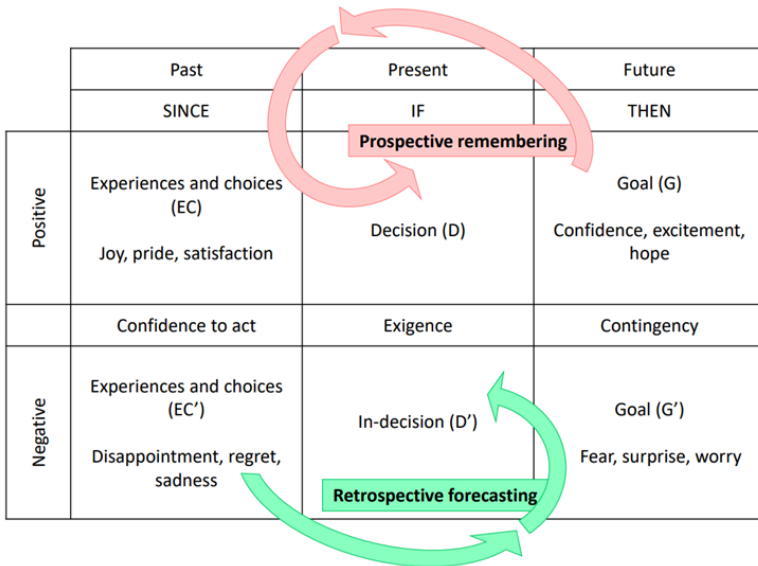
revolves around both the prospects of the subsequent diminishment or fulfillment of those very emotions and the *reasons* why they arose or are expected to arise (O'Keefe 2012, p. 28).

The temporal orientations of and relation between emotions brings me to the importance of balancing competing emotions. Sheer terror, for example, can be paralyzing. Pfau (2007) provided an elegant account of how fear and courage interact in what he labels "civic fear", or fear that leads one to deliberate on, recognize, and ultimately respond to or confront contingent events that decision makers find reasons to deem worthy of fear. Similarly, Mehlenbacher's account of the practical inference linking anticipated (proleptic) future outcomes and present action underlines that the issue at stake has to be proximal, have implications to the lives of the decision makers, in addition to "uncertain but imaginable outcomes" (2017, p. 246). When those conditions are established, first, the speaker must be able to portray a dangerous target as a spatially and/or temporally proximate threat to decision makers, for if it will have no apparent impact on their well-being, no action is required. Second, and equally important, one must convey that the object of fear is contingent rather than inevitable, to ensure that decision makers *believe* that taking action could enable them to avert the threat that constitutes their fear. Third, the speaker must encourage decision makers to believe that they are, in fact, capable of taking worthwhile action.

In summary, emotions have temporal orientations and become interwoven as time unfolds. In other words, they do not exist independently of each other, but depend on their temporality and the appraisals with which speakers situate emotions in moments of time. For instance, a person experiencing fear in the present might soon experience the past-oriented emotion of relief if the source of fear proved not to inflict the anticipated pain (Clore & Ortony, 2000).

3.2 Model: Affecting Argumentative Action

Building on the idea that emotions have temporal orientations as described above, a three-fold *pathotic* argument outlines how a speaker must present her specific reasons for a decision in a way that convinces an audience to make that decision. The argument must therefore express (i) the exigence that a decision is necessary, (ii) the contingency of the decision, and (iii) the confidence to act. The pathotic argument enables us to present the following conceptualization of temporality and emotion in rhetorical argumentation (see figure 1):

	Past	Present	Future
	SINCE	IF	THEN
Positive	Experiences and choices (EC) Joy, pride, satisfaction	**Prospective remembering** Decision (D)	Goal (G) Confidence, excitement, hope
	Confidence to act	Exigence	Contingency
Negative	Experiences and choices (EC') Disappointment, regret, sadness	In-decision (D') **Retrospective forecasting**	Goal (G') Fear, surprise, worry

Figure 1: The temporality of affecting argumentative action

In the following, I explain the concepts and mechanisms of the model. Argumentatively, the model reflects two interacting practical inferences (Walton 2006, p. 300) entailing (a minimum of) two temporally linked scenarios. I build on Mehlenbacher's suggestion to distinguish between "prolepsis-with-negative-future and prolepsis-with-positive-future" (2017, p. 246), and therefore distinguish between two scenarios (broadly depicted as positive or negative, although I also acknowledge that this distinction may not hold when being exposed to empirical scrutiny and complex causal

chains) that follow from either making a decision or continuing with the status-quo (in-decision). Nonetheless, for conceptual purposes, one scenario involves a future goal, G (worth achieving), which the audience can help realize if making the present proposed decision, D. The goal, G, reflects positive future-oriented emotions. The other scenario involves a goal, G', deemed worth avoiding, which maintaining the status quo—an in-decision, D'—will most likely lead to (hence, the negative emotions). In both scenarios, experiences and choices from the past influence the emotions experienced in the present (Macagno & Walton 2014, p. 68) and inform the two intertemporal mechanisms of *retrospective forecasting*, which establishes a past-future-present link, and *prospective remembering,* which establishes a future-past-present link. Although figure 1 only depicts retrospective forecasting as negative and prospective remembering as positive, both mechanisms can rely on positive and negative valences as well as interact; that is, (reasonable) fear of negative future goals (G') can lead to a decision (D), which eventually leads to positive future outcomes (G) exactly because of that decision.

Epistemic and practical uncertainty mean that the inference linking a present decision with a future goal will never be conclusive. The inference is quasi-logical (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 193), and adherence depends on whether the audience accepts the temporal interval between decision and consequence, that is, "the indeterminate wedge between cause and effect" (Bolduc & Frank 2010, p. 313). Even in cases where the consequences are near-certain, or what Mehlenbacher refers to as *Prolepsis as future anteriority,* an argument that anticipates and establishes a future fact (2017, p. 244), incommensurable values still guide decisions (Kock 2017, p. 68). Hence, the model seeks to illustrate how a speaker might use experiences and choices and thus accumulated knowledge of the past (EC/EC') to inspire confidence in making a decision (D) in the present by invoking futures worth achieving (G) and/or avoiding (G'), all as part of the process of making those very outcomes contingent on the advocated decisions. The concepts of the rhetorical situation (Bitzer 1968; Vatz 1973) and Pfau's (2007) "civic fear" framework

for providing a constructive way of urging an audience to deliberate and take action guide the following conceptualization.

Exigence or the Need to Make a Decision

First, the speaker must diagnose the current situation as one requiring a decision. In situations characterized by high uncertainty, the existing data might dictate that inertia is the only 'logical' choice, as nothing in the existing circumstances warrants change (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, p. 106). Yet the speaker is convinced that action and thus a deviation from the known path are required. In rhetorical terms such a need to act presents an exigence defined as an "imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be" (Bitzer 1968, p. 6). However, both situation and discourse may constitute such urgency (Vatz 1973; Leff & Utley 2004), especially if a speaker encourages present decisions whose consequences remain to be seen—economic reform policies, for example.

Therefore the question remains; how does a speaker "prove" a specific action is necessary, let alone argue in favor of taking it, when she lacks hard evidence? Although uncertainty prevents her from making reliable predictions, affect is based on predictions from existing knowledge and past experience (Barrett 2017, p. 78) and on the projection of scenarios revolving around futures worth avoiding or approaching. Since convincing an audience that departing from the status quo is worthwhile, or at least marginally better than inertia, the speaker may diagnose the ongoing present as worthy of action by describing how maintaining the status quo—which naturally stems from the past overlapping with the present—can lead to dismal futures worth avoiding (G'). Like loss-framing, such a diagnosis emphasizes the negative consequences of noncompliance (O'Keefe 2013, p. 123). Similarly, the speaker may emphasize how taking steps towards better futures worth attaining (G) depends on making this decision. Such depictions may then lead to appraisals of goal relevance,

including concerns for the well-being of the decision maker, thus prompting experiences of emotions such as hope, fear, and anger (Moors et al., 2013). A key aspect is *how* a speaker then credibly gives the future presence.

Retrospective Forecasting

I suggest that an argument by example works by invoking a known recent past, which then functions as an analogy of an anticipated near future worth either avoiding or approaching. Plantin argued that an analogy can help construct various types of feelings rhetorically-argumentatively and thus transfer emotions from the past to the present or an anticipated future because the analogous situations appear similar and within close proximity temporally and/or spatially (1999, p. 11-12). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca distinguished between three approaches taken by a speaker seeking to establish a conclusion through a *particular case*: argument by example, illustration, and model/anti-model (1969, p. 350). Illustration is intended to increase adherence to a well-accepted rule, whereas example is aimed to establish a rule, temporally working by drawing on a particular case sufficiently probable to be one of general principle and thus helpful in avoiding or achieving future outcomes in the present case. I suggest labeling this mechanism *retrospective forecasting*, as it allows a speaker to give presence to what people in the invoked example did in a comparable case, but with the knowledge that currently exists in the situated present. Accordingly, such cases allow for both imitation and avoidance, thus warranting appeals to positive and negative consequences, respectively (Walton 2006, p. 106).

When we view an argument by example through a lens of retrospective forecasting, it is worth mentioning Quintilian's notion of 'vivid illustration'. Especially, such illustrative representations may function persuasively because of both their appeal to the imagination and ability to make a 'transference of time': "Nor is it only past or present actions which we may imagine: we may equally well present a picture of what is likely to

happen or might have happened" (1922, p. 399). In emphasizing the imaginative (and hence temporal) aspect of vivid illustrations, Quintilian underlined the interaction between facts and how a decision maker (judge) feels when assessing them hereby mirroring the ongoing convergence between cognition and emotion that I have emphasized throughout this paper.

Such vivid illustrations enable a decision maker to "imagine to himself other details that the orator does not describe" (Quintilian 1922, p. 247), but equally important, in relation to the concept of retrospective forecasting, I suggest that the vivid projection of future (imagined) outcomes and goals, whether worth avoiding or approaching, draws its presence from existing cases: the more recent and more familiar, the greater impact. Such a transference of time may only provide answers about decision outcomes by virtue of being temporally situated in the crux between the past and the ongoing present, that is, by being temporally compared to the situated present in which a decision is to be made. Examples give credibility to an inherent claim about a future projection made by appraising aspects of certainty even though logical demonstration is futile. This might sound paradoxical when it comes to dealing with decision-making under uncertainty. However, there is a point: if a speaker projects a future worth avoiding, but the scenario seems unconnected to existing phenomena and thus unrealistic to the audience, the credibility decreases, and the projection may cease to function as a vivid (and hence credible) future scenario worth avoiding. This is the fate of so-called empty threats, not only because the threatened consequences might not come about, but also because the causal mechanism appears either completely unlikely or is unknown to the audience.

In sum, the first dimension is to argue that a decision is necessary. To do so, I propose, a speaker must show how the exigence demanding a decision is temporally close, as in an imminent threat or a passing opportunity. The next task is to show the audience that outcomes are contingent on the proposed decision—in other words, that its decisions matter.

Mediators of Change (Must) Have Agency

To show the above contingency, the speaker must present reasons why the decision makers are "mediators of change", thus enabling them to acknowledge and accept that they possess the agency to actually affect the situation. Humans only deliberate about things within their power to change (Pfau 2007, p. 227; Kock 2017, p. 35). Accordingly, if an audience has no belief of such power, it will have no reason to care, in which case the speaker runs the risk of unwittingly convincing the audience to be utterly indifferent (lethargy) or give up before it even starts (despair). The speaker has to instill an agentic belief in the audience that it can cope and make a difference that leaves open an avenue of hope (Nussbaum 2018, p. 206).

Prospective Remembering

Another mechanism included in the model is the use of anticipated emotion to support the perception of the agency needed to make decisions in the present. I call this *prospective remembering*, which entails how it feels to be a person imagining herself situated in the future and looking back at the present in which she is to make her decision.

In general, decisions function as attempts to achieve positive future feelings, such as pride, and avoid negative emotions, such as guilt and regret (Lerner et al., 2015). Therefore the anticipation of an emotion like regret can provide a reason to eschew excessive risk-taking. Notably, anticipated emotion does not appear to function independently of anticipatory emotions like fear and hope, just as the re-presentation of a past-oriented emotion like pride may support a presently experienced anticipatory emotion of hope (Cigada 2006), which in turn enables one to anticipate a future emotion of relief at overcoming a burdensome challenge.

Acting now in order to avoid feeling regret in the future can be a rational decision; that is, committing in the present to achieve or avoid the anticipated emotion related to future outcomes can

indeed be rational. Although traditional economics textbooks have viewed sunk cost as a fallacy, the fallacious nature depends on whether one views rationality as utilitarian (cost-benefit) or deontological (commitment), leading to two distinct views of decision-making: respectively a cost-benefit model and a model of practical reasoning and commitment (Walton, 2002, p. 492). In short, if an actor bases a decision and action on a central personal principle (e.g., honesty), that act has value in and of itself regardless of a calculation of its consequences on a cost-benefit scale because it helps her reason and navigate practical uncertainty "where exact calculation of costs and benefits is not possible, or would not be realistic" (Walton 2002, p. 494). In relation to the current conceptualization of a temporality of affecting argumentative action, Walton's point that precommitment can be a rational strategy (2002, p. 495) is helpful because it helps bridge understandings of practical reasoning as a process involving sunks costs (in the past) and appeals to anticipatory and anticipated (future) emotions such as pity and fear (Walton 1997; 2013). To be precise, emotions do not exist independent of the passing of time, and appeals to emotion (such as fallacious fear-appeals that rely on misinterpreted or false premises) gain their persuasiveness from how they evolve in light of new knowledge and experience.

Although certainty is a key difference between anticipatory (uncertain) and anticipated (certain) emotions (Baumgartner et al. 2008), anticipatory emotions experienced in the present may indeed directly relate to decisions and a pre-factual imagination of future states in which anticipated emotions arise. When decision makers make assumptions about the future occurrence of desired or undesired events and anticipate emotions, they still base these forecasts on both uncertain data and the potential *contingencies* of their own decisions. As such, fear might arise when one faces a dangerous threat like COVID-19, and uncertainty means that no one knows precisely how to avert disaster without jeopardizing democratic freedom. At the same time, however, one experiences a wide array of anticipated emotions, such as relief and joy, if the fear-inducing threat is successfully eliminated, and regret and disappointment if not. Similarly, anticipated emotions can help

one stick to long-term goals by, for example, imagining future emotions of accomplishment.

Nonetheless, as with the mechanism of *retrospective forecasting*, which achieves a presence by establishing a past-future-present link, an emotional mechanism of *prospective remembering* still needs presence to affect a decision and, to invoke presence, a speaker must appeal to the audience's existing experiences (Tucker 2001). Therefore prospective remembering also draws on the past, but in the reverse order, thus achieving presence by establishing a future-past-present link. A speaker must draw on existing experiences and values from the past to enable decision makers to imagine how it feels to regret a present failure to make a decision that could have precluded undesirable consequences.

Argumentative Action

Third, despite the constraints of a present situation, a belief in the contingencies of one's decision is insufficient. As such, Pfau (2007, p. 224) applied the virtue of courage—which lies between the extremes of fear and confidence—to explain how an audience might move from being inclined to have sufficient confidence to actually making a decision. This movement from civic fear to contingency and a confidence to act on the arguments presented echoes Nussbaum's (2018) point that faith must bolster hope to be worthwhile. She says that if we think "our efforts are a waste of time, we don't embrace hope" (p. 214). The connection between hope and faith illuminates how faith relates not only to the emotion of hope, but also to aspects of confidence and processes of trust (Khodyakov 2007). Temporally, the dimension of faith is past-oriented, gathering its reasons from past events in order to qualify whether there is reason to believe in the advocated course of action.

Positive anticipatory emotions like hope rely on some degree of belief that one's decision (D) might enable better outcomes (G) than if one refrained (D') from engaging in a given activity

involving a worse outcome (G'), all of which again reflects decision makers' appraisals of agency and coping potential. Nussbaum wrote: "We need to believe that the good things we hope for have a realistic chance of being realized through the efforts of flawed human beings" (2018, p. 213).

Thus, the synthesis of temporality and emotion in argumentation that adheres to a suggested proposal in the present transcends the temporal constraints of uncertainty. Such a commitment arises both because emotions experienced in relation to past events are re-interpreted and because emotions that may arise at future events are re-imagined. Scott (2020) underlined how adherence exists because of its relation to the past and future:

> On the side of the past, what we presently adhere to can be understood as a kind of personal precedent, as the past weighing on the present as a constraint on what we will consider to be argumentatively reasonable (coming from myself and from others). On the side of the future, we will find that adherence makes reference to a number of possible futures where, under certain conditions, we would be committed to acting in certain ways given our current configuration of value commitments (Scott 2020, p. 31).

To this, I should add that such adherence depends on the present emotional experience, which stems from the negotiation of how emotion constitutes the willingness to decide under uncertainty.

3.3 COVID-19: It Is Better to Act Today Than Regret Tomorrow

I now use the conceptualized model to illustrate how Mette Frederiksen on March 11, 2020, portrayed two possible scenarios to show her reasoning in support of her proposal to the Danish population to practice physical distancing.

During her speech, Frederiksen introduced what became a familiar catchphrase of the Danish coronavirus response: "Now we must stand together by keeping a distance." In this instance, a 'principle of caution' underlies the main practical inference

(Walton 2006, p. 300), in which the goal was to protect "the most vulnerable people in our society" (Frederiksen 2020a). She presented the action of physical distancing as the means of slowing the spread of the virus and thus realizing this goal. Indeed, she emphasized the need to take action today in order to *avoid regret* in the future:

> It is better to act today than regret tomorrow. We must take action where it has an effect. Where the disease is spreading [. . .] Therefore, the authorities recommend that we shut down all unnecessary activity in those areas for a period. We are adopting a principle of caution.

While Frederiksen's argument rests on acceptable scientific knowledge, four days after the March 11 press conference she underlined that the decision to lock down much of Danish society was ultimately political: "If I have to wait for evidence for everything in handling the coronavirus, then I am certain we will be too late" (Frederiksen 2020b). Although the science says that close physical contact spreads the disease, the consequences of mandating a societal lockdown to avoid such contact are far more political in the sense that "any action that promotes one good or value tends to counteract others" (Kock 2017, p. 58). Frederiksen stressed: "We must minimize activity as much as possible. But without bringing Denmark to a halt. We must not throw Denmark into an economic crisis" (2020a).

Using the developed argument model (figure 1), I can show how Frederiksen constructed two decisions: either citizens decide to follow and support the recommended proposal of physical distancing, D, leading to a desirable future state of flattening the curve, G, or they do not distance, D', which will lead to an undesirable future state worth avoiding at almost any cost, G'. The movement from D to G appears consequential despite the uncertainty of a novel disease. Equally important from a temporal and emotional perspective, an allusion to the distant and recent past makes the consequences of deciding to show public spirit and comply with physical distancing more credible, while the

argumentative force of the outlined consequences depends on the emotions they invoke (see figure 2):

	Past	Present	Future
	SINCE	IF	THEN
Positive	**Pride** in tradition of public spirit and helpfulness (EC) "I would like to thank citizens, businesses, organizers, volunteer organizations—everyone who until now have shown that public spirit is exactly what we have in Denmark."	Show public spirit by keeping physical distance (D) "Now we should stand together by keeping a distance." **Prospective remembering**	**Hope** of overcoming the threat and protecting Denmark (G) "There will be major *consequences* for all Danes. There will be difficult situations for many citizens. We are going to need to help each other (…) We must do everything we can to protect Danes, Denmark, and each other."
	Confidence to act	Exigence: COVID-19	Contingency
Negative	**Regret** of not acting incisively (EC') "Italy is locked down. In the hospitals, there is a need for respirators and personnel. I would like to underline: It is not a scare story. It is not a fancifully conceived future scenario. It is the reality in a country that most of us know."	Physical contact and increase in the spread of disease (D') "We have moved towards the next phase of the epidemic, in which the spread of disease not only comes from travelers. But where we have started to infect each other in Denmark." **Retrospective forecasting**	**Fear** of uncontrollable epidemic (G') " We must *avoid* too many people becoming infected at the same time. As it has happened in Italy."

Figure 2: An illustration of the temporality of affecting argumentative action

In the following sections, I detail how Frederiksen sought to connect the threat that COVID-19 posed, while also instilling a degree of belief that following government guidelines could make a difference. As such, she established the threat as contingent and invoked an element of courage that spurred decisive readiness.

Exigence

Frederiksen sought to establish the danger of COVID-19 and demanded action at a time when global news stories abounded and the disease was becoming serious in Denmark, but as of March 11, any Dane infected with the virus had yet to die (Sundhedsstyrelsen 2020).

> When I stood here yesterday, there were 157 Danes infected with corona. Today, we have 514. That is more than a tenfold increase since Monday, where it was 35. The coronavirus spreads extremely fast.

The rapid increase in cases supported Frederiksen's claim that the disease was not only dangerous but also spreading swiftly through Danish society, bringing an inevitable future threat ever closer. Urgent action was required, with the accent on urgent.

At the press conference, Frederiksen used Italy as an argument by example, stressing what Denmark should avoid. The Italian example enabled her to use the temporal mechanism of *retrospective forecasting* by drawing on the known recent past as an analogy for an anticipated near future worth avoiding and therefore as a present reason for physical distancing. Interestingly, Frederiksen rebutted a potential objection that the Italy reference was a scare example, emphasizing its "reality". In doing so, she defined a scare example as a "fancifully conceived future scenario", stressing that in contrast to the recent past, Italy served as a real example, one that could warn a Danish audience of the possible future consequences of present inaction against COVID-19. In the week leading up to her March 11th press conference, the Italian government had placed several of its northern provinces under lockdown, and on March 11th the cumulative death toll in Italy reached 827 (Remuzzi & Remuzzi, 2020). In this context, Italy served as a well-grounded example capable of warning and potentially scaring a Danish audience because Danes know the country and can thus more easily accept the comparison as relevant and worth avoiding.

Contingency

While the numbers of infected citizens and the speed with which the virus was spreading could indeed support the severity of the situation, the target deemed dangerous and therefore worthy of fear could not be so overwhelming as to cause people to believe that no matter what they did, the crisis would strike (Pfau 2007). Frederiksen tried to inspire confidence in the potential of action by emphasizing that citizens should act in the present instead of waiting and regretting their inaction, underlining that physical distancing is precisely the measure to hinder the virus in spreading.

Although regret is a past-oriented emotion, Frederiksen contrasted taking action now (present) with a *prospective remembering* of regret. Although regret may stem from both following non-beneficial advice and ignoring beneficial advice (Tzini & Jain 2018), Frederiksen's appeal to act in order to prevent a future feeling of regret draws its argumentative force from the certainty of physical distancing vis-à-vis the uncertainty of inaction, thus leading to an anticipated regret of how it generally feels to ignore the certainty of beneficial advice. In sum, in this instance adherence depended on an inference stating that sacrificing present freedom was worthwhile to avoid a greater future loss, such as life itself. One can view Frederiksen as attempting to bridge the uncertainty of navigating a "situation that does not look like anything we have tried before" with the certainty of anticipated regret, as this quote illustrates: "But the alternative—not to do anything—would be far worse. I hope there will be an understanding for that. I am convinced that there will be."

In addition to regret, Frederiksen emphasized the opportunity for agency that lay ahead and reinforced such statements by highlighting what was already taking place in the recent past and ongoing present:

> We must help each other. Show strength—think about others. Especially about those who are vulnerable. I would like to thank everyone in our health sector for the great contribution you are making. Thank you for your contribution now. And thank you in advance for your contribution in the coming days, weeks, and months. I am going to tell it like is. It is going to be tough. This situation puts great demands on all of us.

By speaking directly to essential workers, who were far more exposed than other parts of the population that could work from home or had been sent home, Frederiksen acknowledged both the work taking place and what lay ahead.

Confidence to Act

Lastly, while decision makers (e.g., healthcare professionals) must acknowledge the unfolding of events as contingent on their own actions, one needs the confidence to act to avoid the paralysis of what could be labeled well-informed hopelessness. Despite the "extraordinary situation", Frederiksen encouraged citizens to stand up for Danish values when it mattered, underlining the goals of acting with an eye to the common good: "Let us now show what we are capable of when it matters. The Danes are already at it. We are showing public spirit. That is what works."

By emphasizing what was already taking place (drawing on the recent past and ongoing present), Frederiksen stressed that agency and coping potential ("a huge responsibility") were possible if one transcended the future and past into the present. While 'proving' the future is inherently impossible in argumentation (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2010), adherence to a proposal of, say, physical distancing, as Frederiksen advocated, depends on whether there are any compelling reasons to believe the future worth achieving will be realized (Nussbaum 2018). Ongoing action from civil society, drawing on a legacy of public spirit, may well have increased the felt probability of success in protecting the weakest citizens, even though predictions for specific measures were unreliable.

To summarize, I have illustrated how Mette Frederiksen sought to gain support for her proposal to maintain physical distancing as a means of stopping the spread of COVID-19. Above all, emphasizing negative future consequences worth avoiding, she translated these futures into the present by drawing on both the recent past (the Italian experience and lack of decisiveness) as an argument by example and by addressing the need to act now in order to avoid a future feeling of regret.

4. Conclusion: Taking a Leap of Faith

On March 11 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told the Danish population that this would have serious ramifications in the near future. Globally, the consequences of the pandemic have varied greatly, in terms of both fatalities and restrictions on freedoms. Two pertinent questions concern, first, the speed with which different governments responded and, second, the reasoning government leaders of democratic societies applied to their preemptive proposals aimed at mitigating the yet unseen consequences.

To understand how such argumentation under uncertainty functions, this study has combined two strands of theorizing within the argumentation literature: temporality and emotion. Starting from the premise that rhetorical argumentation is practical reasoning about *choice of action,* I have argued that in situations of uncertainty, argumentation affects action, such as decisions, via appeals that invoke emotion and thereby translate the distant past and future into the situated present. Building on a dynamic understanding of emotion as having not only cognitive *effects* but also cognitive *origins,* I have suggested a model of affecting argumentative action and identified two intertemporal mechanisms—*retrospective forecasting* and *prospective remembering*—as means of explaining how the distinct temporality of emotion enables argumentative action. For instance, an argument by example functions persuasively in situations marked by high uncertainty through the emotional analogy it makes. This does not happen because an example provides full epistemic certainty about future consequences, but rather because it minimizes the gap between an epistemic waiting game for certainty and a prudential willingness to act decisively, thus allowing a decision maker to *commit* herself and take the leap of reasonable faith that is a defining characteristic of human choice.

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8.

Persuasive Figures: Harnessing Stasis Theory for Rhetorical Criticism

Sine Nørholm Just and Jonas Gabrielsen

The theory of the stases is an established part of the rhetorical tradition. As such, most rhetoricians will recognize the fundamental categorization of the contestable issues of a case, not just as a historical phenomenon, but as a tool for rhetorical invention and practical argumentation (Fulkerson 1996; Jørgensen and Onsberg 1987; Kock 2011). Nevertheless, theoretical discussions of the stases are usually limited to the question of the proper interpretation of the classical texts, and stasis theory rarely appears in rhetorical criticism (but see Fahnestock and Secor 1988; Gross 2004). In what follows, we will seek to demonstrate the critical potential of the stases, beginning with a discussion of their theoretical foundation. What is the underlying rationale of stasis theory? Is there one consensual interpretation of the stases or are there several competing definitions of them? And how do notions developed in the classical context of production apply to conceptually guided criticism today? In considering these questions, we arrive at the underlying argument of this chapter, namely that the rhetorical use of stases shapes meaning formation and decision-making alike. Thus, understanding the stasis is not just an exercise in rhetorical classification, but practical prerequisite for advocacy—and a key crtical resource.

In making this argument, we zoom in on three theoretical issues: First, the number of stases and their exact definition. Are there three or four? And can the classical definitions of each stasis be applied directly to contemporary cases? We will advocate the

use of four levels and the direct application of the first three classical stases to contemporary phenomena. The fourth stasis, however, must be reinterpreted to fit our analytical purposes. Rather than a literal relocation to a different court, we view *status translationis* as a change of scenes in the metaphorical sense. Thereby, the fourth stasis becomes a matter of discursively 'staging' or 'framing' the issue anew.

Secondly, it is necessary to discuss the application of stasis theory. What is its precise function? Is it to identify the point of contestation within a dispute? Or is it to designate possible rhetorical responses to the contested issue? In our presentation of the theory of the stases, we will advocate a broad understanding that embraces both options. When harnessing stasis theory for rhetorical criticism, the determination of the level used within an utterance is imperative, but it is equally important to situate different responses at the various levels. By doing so, one will understand what the speaker advocates as well as the arguments that support the advocacy. To tease out this duality, we link the stases to the conceptual pair of strategy and tactic, seeing each stasis as a strategy with a variety of tactical options.

Thirdly, we discuss the relationship between the four stases. Is it static? That is, a question of finding the stasis that fits a given case? Is it an evolutionary development from stasis to stasis, changing as the case evolves? Or is it, perhaps, combinatory—meaning that the stases can be selected and conjoined freely, even within specific utterances? Here, we will recommend the latter view. Processes of meaning formation do not develop as linear movements from one stasis and on to the next or as iterations back-and-forth between the stases. Rather, rhetors have opportunities to combine and activate the stases in many different ways—at any one moment in time and across the course of an exchange.

We believe that these transformations and adaptations of the classical theory of the stases make it an apt tool for rhetorical criticism of the rhetorical process of shaping public opinion as it occurs in contemporary contexts. In what follows, we will illustrate this claim using two cases: one concerning the

developments of the Danish housing market in the immediate prelude to the global financial crisis of 2007-2008; the other having to do with the Danish response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021.[1] While the former case will hardly need much introduction for years to come, the second might merit some contextualization—beyond the coincidence that one byproduct of the pandemic has been a tendency towards overheating of the housing market that has led experts to warn about a repeat of the events of 2005-2007 (Bitsch 2021).

To explain our choice, recall that what the pandemic now is to global health, the financial crisis was to the health of the global economy. As such, we illustrate the applicability of the stases as explanations of Danish public responses to two of the main global crises in recent years. Or, more precisely, the case of the housing market indicates various actors' complicity in creating a crisis, as key participants in this process of meaning formation were eager to maintain and fuel the momentum of the market, which eventually crashed. As opposed to this development, the case of the pandemic illustrates how central actors use the stases to define and resolve a crisis, as key stakeholders in this process seek to understand and defuse the spread of the virus.

In addition to aptly illustrating the parallel uses of stases before and after a *krisis* in the classical sense of a turning point (Millar and Beck 2004), the two cases share the significant rhetorical

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1. For the housing market, we collected newspaper coverage from two broadsheets (Berlingske Tidende and Jyllands-Posten) and one specialized business periodical (Børsen) at four different points in time during the two years leading up to the financial crisis. Thus, we cover four months at six-month intervals: October 2005, April 2006, October 2006, and April 2007. For the pandemic, we conducted a similar data collection, but focused on two broadsheets (Jyllands-Posten and Politiken) and a tabloid (Ekstra Bladet). Due to the vast amount of coverage, we restricted the collection to one week at each point in time: 9th-15th March 2020, 14th-20th September 2020, 15th-21st March 2021, and 13th-19th September 2021. The first week marks the beginning of the first lockdown in Denmark, and the three others are located at six-month intervals, meaning we span a period of a year and a half (as is the case for the coverage of the housing market). We abbreviate the five sources BT, JP, Bør, Pol, and EB, respectively, providing in-text references using source and date, which allows identification of the full reference in the appendix.

feature of seeking to persuade with figures, understood both as 'numerical fact' and 'linguistic fiction'. The stases, we will seek to show, are uniquely suited to unpacking this duality, indicating how 'the facts of the matter' are never just 'matters of fact', but rather offer a set of rhetorical opportunities that can, themselves, be shaped rhetorically. Thus, establishing the point of dispute and building one's argument may shape one's rhetorical advocacy, but this establishment is, in itself, a persuasive process. In what follows, we build this cross-cutting point gradually as we move through the three theoretical issues and involve our illustrative cases at each turn.

The Classical Roots of Stasis Theory

As is the case for many other classical rhetorical concepts and systems, the roots of stasis theory are unknown, and the various elements of the theory are debated. In a text that has now perished, Hermagoras was supposedly the first to articulate the theory of the stases in the form that is now typically presented to us—namely as a system for determining the central issue of contestation in a given case and for systematizing the ways in which the case can be discussed at four distinct levels, corresponding to the four stases (see inter alia Andersen 1995, 161; Hohmann 2001, 741; Braet 1987, 79). This does not mean, however, that Hermagoras invented the theory of the stases, since we can find various traces of it in texts that are even older than his lost examination.[2] As Hans Hohmann (2021, 742) concludes, "it can […] be surmised that Hermagoras systematized and elaborated a fairly rich vein of traditional rhetorical materials." Undoubtedly, stasis theory owes a great debt to Hermagoras, but the fundamental insight—that any case can be discussed at different levels, which can be described systematically seems to pervade rhetorical thinking from its very inception.

2. Thus, less developed approaches to the doctrine of stasis can be found in earlier works; see, for example, Aristotle 1417b and the pseudo-Aristotelian work Rhetoric to Alexander, 1427a.

The etymology of the concept offers a good starting point for the further examination of what, exactly, is at stake in stasis theory. The Greek word *stasis* can be directly translated as 'position' or 'strife', which can be clarified as the 'state of a case' (Andersen 1995, 161). This points us to a central feature of stasis theory: its categorization of rhetorical issues is not thematic, but rather introduces a number of *levels* across which any theme can be discussed. That is, we are not dealing with a list of potential rhetorical topics, like issues of war, political problems, and questions of love or law. The starting point is not simply that there are many different types of issues, but the more sophisticated observation that in any case dispute may arise at different levels—corresponding to the stases.

The typology that is at the heart of stasis theory, then, is, in principle, applicable to all cases, but it is *internal* to the case at hand in the sense that it deals with mapping the different levels of contestation within the case. It is about determining the character of the dispute, which changes according to where disagreement arises: does it concern the existence of something, its definition, the value of the matter, or how to rightfully settle the dispute? Within any topic and case, determining the point of disagreement will fundamentally shape the rhetorical response and the ensuing debate and, hence, how rhetors will seek adherence to the positions they advocate. This is basically what stasis theory helps us understand—and do.

In the literature, there is some discussion as to how many levels to include and how to define them, and we will attend to these matters shortly. For now, however, we will present the four possible stases schematically (see table 1). Here, it should be noted that the stases are given different names by different scholars, modern as well as classical, and we follow Øivind Andersen's (1995, 161) designation of their Latin names.[3] The table contains a description of each level, a classical example, and examples

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3. For the sake of distinction, however, we use the Greek 'stasis', pluralized 'stases', whenever we do not specify which one we refer to.

extrapolated from Danish public debate on the housing market and the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively.[4]

Three or Four Stases?

As has been pointed out by several commentators, the debate concerning the number of stases and their content is divided into two camps (Nadeau 1964; Hohmann 1989, 2001). The Greek tradition, on the one hand, begins with Hermagoras and is carried forward by Hermogenes. Here, it is assumed that a case can be discussed in four ways, corresponding to *four distinct stases*: the case can be discussed *factually*, according to its *definition*, in terms of how it should be *evaluated*, or one can look at the *process* of the debate as such (Hohmann 2001, 741). In the Latin tradition, on the other hand, as primarily represented by Cicero and Quintilian, the number of levels is reduced to *three distinct stases* (Cicero 1942, 113, 1993, 82ff; Quintilian 1969, book III, 6.68ff).[5]

The discrepancy relates to the fourth and last stasis, which deals with due process, and the reason to exclude this stasis primarily seems to be a concern for the universal applicability of stasis theory. The processual level was originally tied to the legal genre and the question of where to try a given case—a matter that did not seem immediately relevant to the other genres. The exclusion of the fourth stasis, therefore, aimed to broaden the theory to make it applicable to all rhetorical processes (Hohmann 2001, 742-743).[6]

4. In this first presentation, we generalize common arguments, as found in newspaper coverage of the two themes. In what follows, we will offer authentic quotes to substantiate the initial extrapolation.

5. Cicero's early work De Inventione marks an exception to this rule. Here, explicit reference is made to Hermagoras and Hermogenes and their system of four stases is applied.

6. However, it has been reported that Hermagoras developed a deliberative as well as a forensic version of the four stases (Gross 2004), and in the Topica Cicero mentions that the stases can be applied to both legal, political, and epideictic argumentation. Still, later discussions have typically limited the fourth stasis to the judicial genre. An important exception to this rule, however, is Christian Kock's approach to statis theory, as Kock argues for its general applicability in various public settings as well as

in court. He states: "The status system offers a typology of potential problems in correlating facts and norms, and as such it is just as useful in political and ethical debates as it is in legal argument" (Kock 2012, 369; see also Kock 2011).

Latin name	Status conjecturalis	Status definitivus	Status qualitatis	Status translationis
Level	The factual level.	The defining level.	The evaluative level.	The transcending level.
	At this level the facts themselves are disputed; what did and did not happen?	At this level the dispute concerns the definition of the facts; how can we rightfully name them?	At this level the dispute is about the quality of the facts: how should they be assessed?	At this level the process for settling the dispute is disputed: is this the right way to decide on the facts?
Classical example[7]: (a man is caught burying a body and is accused of murder)	Did he kill the person?	Was it murder?	Was it a justified, honorable, and/or appropriate murder?	Is the case being tried at the right court?

7. We draw this example from Conley (1990, 32), who credits it to Cicero.

Examples from debate on housing market	Are prices rising/ falling?	How should we interpret the price developments? E.g., 'an emerging bubble', 'a stable market', 'a soft landing', 'seasonal adaptation'	How should we evaluate the price developments?	Is price the right framing for deciding on how to act in relation to the real estate market?
			E.g., it is positive[8] that prices are adjusted because 'a collapse is avoided', 'more people can enter the market'	E.g., price is not the central factor, but 'psychology', 'national economy', 'long-term developments'
Examples from debate on COVID-19 pandemic	Are infection rates rising/ falling?	How should we interpret the infection rates indicate? E.g., 'a global health crisis', 'a controlled development', 'an invisible enemy', 'a mere flu'	How should we evaluate the infection rates?	Are infection rates the right framing for deciding on how to act in relation to the pandemic?
			E.g., developments in infection rates indicate that the strategy for handling the pandemic is in/appropriate[9]	Infection rates are not the central factor, but 'compliance', 'economy', 'other illnesses'

8. It is indicative that in the debate on the real estate market, all developments are predominantly evaluated as positive; we will return to this point below.

9. In the case of the pandemic, developments are, indeed, interpreted as both positive and

Table 1: The four stases

For classical rhetoricians, then, establishing the number of stases was closely linked to delimiting the reach of stasis theory. If the theory was to be applied beyond the judicial genre, the argument went, then the fourth stasis had to be omitted. This position is partially maintained in current research that deals with the applicability of stasis theory in relation to different topics and cases. However, modern contributions tend to generalize the use of stasis theory *and* maintain the four stases, redefining status translationis instead of omitting it altogether (see e.g. Kock 2011, 2012).

While everyone seems to agree that stasis theory must be revised to be useful today, there are many different suggestions as to what such revision should consist of. When focusing on public meaning formation, we believe, a version of the theory that closely resembles the classical one is apposite. Thus, the first three stases can be applied without further ado, but *status translationis* only becomes applicable by widening the question of physical court of trial to a matter of change of scenes in the metaphorical sense. In other words, *status translationis* is useful as soon as one stops seeing it as a matter of changing the judicial body (which court?) and, instead, makes it a question of the criteria used for judgment (which context? For instance, long vs short time horizon or personal/social needs vs economic considerations).

As redefined here, *status translationis* covers the rhetorical activity that modern scholars have termed 'framing'. In their study of news media, Cappella and Jamieson (1997, 39-40) explain that "news frames are those rhetorical and stylistic choices, reliably identified in news, that alter the interpretations of the topics treated and are a consistent part of the news environment". It is the applied frame, and not the case itself, that guides interpretation of the case, and this is exactly what framing and our redefined version of fourth stasis have in common: as we use it, *status translationis* is the attempt to change public opinion on a matter by framing it

negative, as there is general agreement that falling numbers of infections is good and rising numbers is bad. The real dispute, as indicated here, concerns the appropriate intervention.

anew (Gabrielsen, Just and Bengtsson 2011). That is, rather than offering a view on the facts, the definition or the evaluation of an issue, it changes the very context from within which the issue should be established, defined, and evaluated—and, hence, offers a new foundation for advocating the appropriate resolution of the matter.

In our view, the critical application of stasis theory to modern processes of meaning formation may begin from the first three stases, as originally defined, and the redefined fourth stasis. Thus, the first step is to identify the stases that are used in the process or processes one is studying. In what follows, we illustrate this step by identifying the four stases in our two select cases of Danish public debate about the housing market in 2005-2007 and the pandemic in 2020-2021. Subsequently, we zoom in on utterances that belong to the redefined status translationis in order to show its particular applicability.

As mentioned, *status conjecturalis* is used when it can be debated whether or not something is, indeed, the case. For the housing market and the pandemic, respectively, the classical example—did he do it?—becomes a question of the direction of price developments and infection rates: rising, stabilizing or falling? In both cases, all three positions can be expressed as pure propositions with no further backing. Rising prices: "'It's still moving very fast. We're seeing a very intense increase in prices, no matter how you twist or turn the numbers,' says Steen Bocian, head of department in Danske Bank" (*BT*, 181006A). Rising infections[10]:

> When the director of the Danish Health Authorities, Søren Brostrøm, spoke at the authorities' press conference yesterday, he made it clear that the situation is very serious: "If we look at the developments day-to-day, Europe has the largest growth now, it is

10. Notice the recurrent use of the evaluative phrase 'worrying' in this example, which indicates how short the distance is from a statement of facts to the evaluation of them—and, further, to a recommendation of action ('If Denmark is a risk area, then we must act to mitigate the risk'). We will have much more to say about the combination of stases later.

> not just Italy, but also a number of other large countries in Europe that have a worrying development. There is a worrying rise in Denmark in just the past few days. All of Europe is a risk area. Denmark is a risk area." (*POL* 130320)

Market stability: "In the Council for Mortgages, head of section Lars Blume-Jensen says: 'We believe that the flattening price curve, which we have witnessed in the second half of 2006, will continue, meaning prices will remain stable and there will be zero growth'" (*JP* 080407). Stable infection rates: "The epidemic is following the expected development, says Viggo Andreasen, associate professor in mathematical epidemiology at Roskilde University: 'The number is a bit higher than in the preceding days, but it is what we can expect from statistical chance" (*EB* 200321). Decreasing prices: "Chief analyst Johnny Bo Jakobsen in […] Nordea predicts an actual drop in prices: 'We believe that a general fall in prices of five to 10 percent is very realistic, particularly in the larger cities and especially the capital area, where we cannot rule out drops of more than 10 percent'" (*JP* 080407). And fewer infections: "All the scenarios for corona that a group of experts have calculated show a decreasing or stagnating epidemic in the coming week, the State's Serum Institute concludes, based on the experts' evaluations" (*JP* 280921). Thus, it is possible to identify the factual level in its classical form in modern debates about matters as diverse as the housing market and the pandemic. Meaning, we can explain some statements about these matters in relation to whether or not something—in these cases the developments of housing prices and infection rates, respectively—is, in fact, the case.

Status definitivus is used to move from the facts of the matter to a determination of what type of matter one is actually dealing with—to not only state but define the case. The classical example of this stasis—was it murder?—is, in the meaning formation about housing prices and pandemic developments, turned into the question of how facts and figures should be interpreted. What is, for instance, the meaning of not only the sales prices, but also the number of houses for sale, the average sales time, and the

bidding price versus the sales price? How do all these figures define the housing market? And, for the pandemic, in addition to the infection rates, what should we make of contact numbers, number of hospitalized, the spread of virus variants, etc.? What factual events hide behind the different numbers and what do the different interpretations of them mean for the public opinion of the market or the pandemic? Seeking to answer such questions, definitions often offer specific visualizations. For instance, price developments can be 'price parties', 'bubbles', 'natural corrections', and 'soft landings'. Similarly, infection rates can be seen to indicate diverse developments, e.g., 'a global health crisis' or a 'situation under control', just as the corona virus itself can be defined in very different terms, e.g., as 'an invisible enemy' or 'a mere flu'. Thus, it appears that the question of how to define a case can also be transferred directly to modern processes of meaning formation. More specifically, *status definitivus* is particularly suited to explaining the interpretation of facts, as we will detail in the next round of analysis.

Status qualitatis is used to evaluate the matter at hand. The classical example takes up the question of the value of a well-defined and agreed upon case—yes, the man is guilty of murder, but might the murder be justified? Similarly, modern uses of this stasis accept a certain situation, but dispute its value. For instance, while a fall in prices might intuitively be understood a problematic development, it is possible to argue that it is a positive development, which creates new market activity: "'Fundamentally, we want first-time buyers to be able to enter the market for apartments, as this may snowball positively on to the market for houses […],' [says] Niels H. Carstensen [head of communications in the realtor Home]" (*Bør* 040407). In the case of the pandemic, it is difficult to view an increase in infection rates as anything but problematic, yet it is possible to argue that it could be worse or that the developments in Denmark are positive when compared to other countries. Thus, what is being evaluated is, typically, the Danish strategy for handling the pandemic:

> "We are through the winter, the sun has begun to shine, more and more Danes are being vaccinated, and it is phenomenal that we Danes are so good at holding on to what needs to be held on to in order to get out of this crisis. And if we continue to do so, the prognosis for continued reopening is looking good," stated Mette Frederiksen [the Danish Prime Minister] (*POL* 210321).

Just like *status conjeturalis* and *status definitivus*, *status qualitatis* can be found in its classical form in current processes of meaning formation, and the question of the value of an issue can be applied directly in the analysis.

In the classical sense, *status translationis* concerns the issue of whether the case is being tried at the appropriate court; in relation to the study of processes of meaning formation, we have argued that this stasis can be reinterpreted as the question of the internal scene of the dispute: Is the case being placed in its proper context? Are arguments premised on the right assumptions? In short, how is the matter framed? Whereas the classical strategy was about moving the case physically, uses of it in contemporary public debate aim to change the rhetorical setting of the case. In the case of the housing market, this takes the form of breaking with the economic presuppositions that form the basis of the three other stases. Thus, it is argued, the case is actually not about housing prices at all, but about a number of other issues. As for the pandemic, a similar shift occurs when the exclusive focus on infection rates is supplemented by or substituted with attention to other matters. In both cases, various alternative framings are offered; let us look at some examples.

One use of *status translationis* in the context of the housing market aims at challenging the judgment of sellers: "'Some sellers still believe they can get a high price, even if all indicators show that the price is too high. We are seeing cases where the sellers' price deviates from what the real estate agent has advised,' says Christian Brydensholt, director at Kim Rose A/S" (*Bør* 040407). The problem is not the prices, but the sellers' inflated expectations of them. Thus, developments of the housing market are reframed;

they are not about actual economic fluctuations, but about people's lack of judgment and unrealistic expectations.

Similarly, Danish public debate about pandemic developments is rife with contestations of who might appropriately interpret these developments and, particularly, with the question of who is acting appropriately. Criticism of the official advice of the government and the health authorities flourishes in various counter-publics of vaccine skeptics and conspiracy theorists: "'Corona virus has acted like a match which has set fire to something that was already smouldering. There has been a rise of new conspiracy theories and there are theories that have resurfaced,' says Rikke Alberg Peters [researcher at HistorieLab]" (*POL* 170920). But there is also, especially in the latter stages of the period studied, a growing criticism of the pandemic response among established political actors and experts: "At Christiansborg [the Danish Parliament], the blue parties are pushing for a bigger and faster reopening. […] Venstre [the liberal party, in opposition to the social democratic government] has already argued that the country should be opened completely when everyone above 50 is vaccinated" (*JP* 200321). Here, then, the question of who should judge the matter of pandemic developments turns directly into the question of who should decide what is the right way to handle the pandemic.

Regarding the housing market, the perspective can also be shifted from price developments to buyers' psychology:

> "We see huge exposure of this market. It's something people talk about over the hedge and at family parties, which means the psychological factor hits harder than we've seen before. These different forecasts about market developments that we've seen over the summer confuse buyers and especially first-time buyers and make them hit the brakes. But the buyers are waiting behind the scenes, and they will enter the market again," says Torben Jastram [head of communications in the real estate chain Home] (*JP* 191006).

In this example, the psychological tendency to react to public attention replaces the economic factors that usually explain market developments.

Such attention to citizens' psychology is also a common reframing of the pandemic: "'The worst thing is the fear that the epidemic causes, because fear is just as viral as the pandemic', he [French psychiatrist Serge Hafez] emphasizes" (*POL* 150320). Just as fear in this quote is labelled 'viral', so it is common to talk of an 'infodemic'.Meaning, questions of citizens' fears and desires are tied to the issue of the relevance and quality of the available information, shifting attention from the pandemic itself to the meta-level of how it is communicated.

Finally, *status translationis* can be used to change the temporal and spatial frames of meaning formation. When applying the temporal factor to the housing market, the argument is that one should not view the market as a snapshot, but in a longer perspective:

> "The current drop only takes us back to the level of prices in the first half year of 2006 in Greater Copenhagen," says Christian Heinig [analyst in Danske Bank], who also mentions that home owners traditionally make money when owning their house for a longer period of years, no matter whether the prices were high or low when they bought (*Bør*, 130407).

The same argument is common in the meaning formation about the pandemic:

> Denmark needs a more long-term strategy in the fight against corona rather than coming up with new restrictions and guidelines recurrently. […] This is the reaction from two experts after the health authorities Friday presented a number of new restrictions (*POL* 20920).

The argument, here, is that the predominant perspective is too short-sighted and that the matter changes significantly when applying the longer—and correct—temporal lens.

The spatial argument shifts from an emphasis on housing in isolation to a focus on national economy as a whole:

> Senior economist in Jyske Bank Peter Skøttegaard Øemig believes that we can look forward to a moderate price party. "The interest rate has increased. But we are not expecting a drop in prices. As long as employment levels are high, and the Danish economy stays on track, there is a solid safety net under the housing market." (BT 181006B).

This spatial move is very common in the Danish coverage of the pandemic as emphasis is shifted from national to European or global developments, from a matter of physical health to societal health in a number of senses (most notably, social trust and economic growth), and, as in the following example, from the case of corona to a more holistic view of public health:

> "We need to look at covid-19 in conjunction with other diseases. We need to look at the combined burden on the hospitals. There will be an interrelation with the flu and other serious respiratory infections," says Kåre Mølbak [professor at University of Copenhagen, former head of Statens Serum Institut, the state's agency of disease control and reasearch] (*JP* 180921).

Here, the premise is that we should see the housing market and the pandemic, respectively, as parts of larger contexts rather than as isolated matters. In sum, when *status translationis* is used as a matter of time and space, a specific focus on the situation here and now is exchanged for a broader perspective that enables other conclusions than those implied by momentary conditions.

In the debates about housing and COVID-19, we find a number of statements that are neither explainable as *status conjeturalis*, *definitivus* or *qualitatis*, but still are decisive for the processes of meaning formation. These statements can be explained in terms of our expanded definition of *status translationis*, which does not just refer to the external context of a case, but to its internal framing as well. That is, to the form and content of the process of meaning formation as such. What is its baseline, which premises

are taken for granted, and how is the case framed? As we have seen, contributions to the debates, especially that concerning the pandemic, even turn explicitly to these matters and do not just offer a reframing, but actually discuss how the case is framed. The redefined *status translationis* helps us unpack such moves, which are decisive for understanding processes of meaning formation as well as the decisions they elicit.

The Two Levels of Stasis Theory: Strategy and Tactics

Despite disagreements as to the number of stases, the basic insight of stasis theory is quite unambiguous: any matter can be discussed at different levels. However, it is not entirely clear what that insight might be used for. This is because the theory of the stases is, in fact, two-dimensional, as is clear from Hohmann's (2021, 741) presentation: "the theory of stasis develops a system designed to assist rhetors in *identifying the central issues in given controversies*, and in *finding the appropriate argumentative topics* useful in addressing these issues" (our emphasis).[11] If one zooms in on the first half of the quote, the theory is mostly a *tool for analysis* in the sense that applying the different stases will help a rhetor determine the core contested issue of a given case: for instance, this might be the realization that the crux of the matter is, in fact, not whether something happened (*status conjecturalis*), but how to understand what happened (*status definitivus*). Here, stasis theory is a catalogue of strategies, which might be thought of as the gateway to the *inventio* process. It is about *understanding and categorizing* a dispute, not about formulating specific arguments.[12]

If one considers the second half of the quote, however, the theory of the stases is pulled in the direction of a *heuristic, productive tool*. Against the backdrop of the levels of the stases,

11. The duality of stasis theory is also highlighted by Conley (1990, 32) and Carter (1988, 99).

12. We find examples of this emphasis in Cicero's De Oratore and in Hermogenes' On Stases. In fact, Hermogenes makes the point explicitly, as he distinguishes between the stases and the process of inventio, treating the two in separate books. Malcolm Heath (1994, 116) reproduces this distinction in his treatment of the stases.

the process of finding and choosing specific rhetorical *tactics* can be systematized. We find an illustration of this use of the stases in the pseudo-Ciceronian work *Rhetorica ad Herennium,* which applies the different stases as part of the *inventio* process. For instance, the author lists three specific ways of establishing/ refuting a given fact (*status coniecturalis*). Viewed thus, stasis theory is not limited to the initial analysis of a problem that leads to a general strategy. Instead, the stases are also tools for *making and responding to arguments,* basing the development of rhetorical expressions on the specifically available tactics.

In attending to this duality, we do not wish to advocate one understanding and reject another, but rather to suggest that the two levels of stasis theory—the strategic and the tactical level—are equally important.[13] As such, they should supplement each other in the production of rhetorical utterances—and in rhetorical criticism thereof. It is a central feature of stasis theory that it contains both an analytical level for determining the overall persuasive strategy and a productive level that draws on different argumentative and stylistic tactics. Both levels can be transferred from practical to critical work, enabling the rhetorical critic to not only identify the strategy of a rhetor, but also to explain how the strategy is expressed in and as specific tactics.

Following this division, the second analytical step of stasis-oriented rhetorical criticism is a consideration of the specific expressions of the stases within the process of meaning formation. What tactics are used in the context of each of the strategies that were identified in the first round? We have already foreshadowed this step in our unpacking of the uses of *status translationis*, and

13. Contrary to current usage, which tends to conflate 'strategy' and 'tactic', the two concepts referred to qualitatively different types of consideration in classical military theory. The role of the strategist was to read the enemy and make long-term plans, whereas the tactical officer's role was to decide where to engage in battle. Today, when a distinction is made at all, the two concepts may refer to various pairs; e.g., long- and short-term planning or ethical vs unethical actions. Therefore, we do not contend to be presenting the 'actual' meaning of the pair, but use them to conceptualize the dual function of stasis theory. In our usage, 'strategy' is a general course of (rhetorical) action and 'tactic' a specific (rhetorical) act.

in what follows we will provide another illustration of the strategic and tactical levels by detailing the uses of *status definitivus* in Danish public meaning formation about the housing market in 2005-2007 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. We focus on this stasis because explanations and interpretations of various conditions and inclinations are central to both cases. Thus, *status definitivus* is, indeed, definitive, not only to the matters at hand, but the processes of forming opinions about them, and the centrality of the strategy is underscored by rich and varied sets of tactical expressions.

The general strategy of *status definitivus* may be captured by the simple formula of A = B, which is what happens when developments on the housing market are presented as 'a slump', 'a bubble' or 'a natural correction' and when the pandemic is labelled 'a global health crisis', 'an invisible enemy' or 'a mere flu'. Further, the strategy is expressed through a number of distinct tactics, of which we will unfold three that serve to interpret contested matters by defining their meaning, their scope, and their value.

The first tactic is the dissociative definition, which functions as a reaction to existing interpretations—it is a re-definition rather than a new definition (or, to return to the formula, here, A ≠ B). Based on the dissociation, the correct definition of a concept or phenomenon can be offered as opposed to the definition commonly used (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 444). In the context of the pre-financial crisis Danish housing market, this tactic is typically used to show that circumstances that seem to point towards a certain development—often a fall in prices—are, in fact, indicative of something else—a stabilization, a flattening of the price curve, etc. The tactic usually consists of the presentation of these circumstances, followed by an assertion of their real interpretation:

> Chief economist John Madsen from Nykredit also points out that the turn-over is retracting, that bidding prices are lowered in many places, and that the number of houses for sale is increasing.

"The market is preparing for a soft landing. The long-awaited deceleration is now in sight" (*BT* 181006B).

The three circumstances mentioned in this example are interpreted by means of the metaphors of the soft landing and the deceleration; thereby, the circumstances are dissociated from the category of falling prices, within which one might otherwise tend to place them.

In the context of the pandemic, the dissociative definition is used to redefine a situation, which might otherwise look uncontrolled and uncontrollable, placing it within the bounds of the manageable. Here, the recurring tactic is to posit other figures (e.g., number of hospitalized, number of dead) as alternatives to and more important than infection rates. It is, however, also possible to find dissociative definitions of the infection rate itself: "'At 50.000 antigene tests a day, 250 will statistically be false positives. Thus, it depends on the specificity of the test and the number of tested people how many false positives there will be', [the Statens Serum Institut] says in a written answer" (*JP* 180321). Here, the real number is dissociated from the stated number through the introduction of "false positives", which is an inversion of another frequent tactic that states the number of infected is really bigger than what is being reported because of the 'dark number' of those who are infected without knowing it or without being tested (and, hence, are not counted).

The second tactic involves splitting a whole into its parts (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 234). In the case of the housing market, this involves pointing out how only some parts of the market (some areas, some types of housing) are affected by price drops and other tendencies[14]:

Chief analyst Thomas Kyhl from Nykredit agrees that the arrow is pointing downwards, especially when one looks at apartments

14. The use of the expression "natural correction" is both reminiscent of the dissociative definition, as already presented, and of the persuasive definition, as will be established below. In the third round of analysis, we will return to the question of the combination of stases, but focus on the combination of strategies rather than tactics.

in Copenhagen, houses in Northern Zealand and other expensive areas. "The places where prices have gone up the most in recent years are now also the places where prices are falling the most. So, this is a natural correction. But at the national level prices are more or less unchanged," says Thomas Kyhl (BT, 210407).

The exact same tactic is used in the case of the pandemic in order to change the scope of the crisis by pointing out that only some areas of the country (often big cities) or some groups of the population (the elderly and other people at risk) are severely affected, just as only some types of people and events are very problematic, often labelled "super spreaders" and "super spreader events". When this tactic is used, the goal is not to change the meaning of the conditions one is defining (as in the dissociative definition), but to delimit their relevance. Here, the scope of the mentioned phenomena is redefined to acknowledge the fall in prices/rise in infections while maintaining that this development does not pertain to the entire market/population.

The third tactic is the persuasive definition, in which the interpretation turns evaluative (Jørgensen and Onsberg 1987, 41). Here, the prevalent understanding of a phenomenon is accepted and it is acknowledged that this understanding pertains to the entire field, but one argues that the situation is actually in keeping with one's own position—turning the definition into an argument in one's favor. Thus, it becomes possible, for instance, to argue that earlier price hikes were exceptional while the current situation is normal: "'The deceleration of the housing market is first and foremost due to a normalization after a number of years with unusually big leaps in prices […]', he [chief economist Jacob Graven, Sydbank] says" (*JP* 250407).

While it is difficult to argue that accelerating infection rates are actually a good thing, there are plenty of other persuasive definitions involved in the meaning formation about the pandemic. This tactic was especially prevalent in the early stages, during which the pandemic response had to be established, and later in reaction to the decision to redefine the pandemic as no longer

"critical to Danish society".[15] Here is an example of the latter in which the observation that all restrictions have been lifted leads to the argument that the pandemic is not over: "For those who are old enough to remember the cold war or the war against terror there is an element of déjà vu: the war against covid-19 is also this time a constant. The goal is to survive without causing society too much harm" (*JP* 180921). Thus, the persuasive definition reinterprets the value of the mentioned circumstances while establishing an alternative context of interpretation.[16]

Pointing to different argumentative tactics through which the general strategic function of *status definitivus* can be realized enables a deeper understanding of differences and similarities between specific utterances. A full analysis would, of course, detail the relations between the strategies of all stases and their tactical expressions, but with the analysis of *status definitivus* we hope to have illustrated the usefulness of viewing stasis theory as a tool for dividing matters of contestation into levels, which are themselves operative at different levels. Further, the three definitional tactics, as identified in this analysis, point towards a certain connection between the stases. As such, the dissociative definition with its emphasis on the meaning of the articulated circumstances is closely related to the determination of whether something is the case or not that is the domain of *status coniecturalis*. The persuasive definition, with its interpretation of the facts and their value, is almost entirely merged with *status qualitatis*. And the division of a whole into its parts seeks to re-frame the discussion in a manner that is not very different from our reconceptualized version of *status translationis*. Taking our cue from these indications, let us turn to the issue of how the strategies of stasis theory relate to each other.

A Static or a Dynamic Concept? Stasis Theory as an Arsenal

15. This decision was enforced on the 10th of September, 2021, just a few days prior to our last week of data collection.
16. As such, it folds the stases of evaluation and transcendence into that of definition, as will be the topic of our third round of analysis.

of Arguments

The dominant classical view of the relationship between the stases is that each case can be categorized according to one of them. That is, there is, for any situation, one central issue of contestation, which may, however, contain sub-questions, drawing on other stases that are secondary in relation to the primary conflict of the case (Heath 1994, 122).[17] In opposition to this view, practical argumentation is, today, often presented as a dynamic process in which the stases are positioned as the phases that a case must go through before coming to a final conclusion (Jørgensen and Onsberg 1987).[18] In principle, this process begins with the first stasis and moves linearly through each level. In practice, however, one does not have to begin with *status coniecturalis*, and in the course of the argumentation one may have to move back and forth between the stases. Still, the dynamic has a particular direction and a typical order because the purpose of practical argumentation is the realization of a recommendation.

When stasis theory is applied to the study of the genre of apology, the theory also becomes a dynamic tool. This dynamic is, for instance, the basis of Kramer and Olson's (2002) study of the different strategies that Bill Clinton used during the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Here, the process is even further removed from the classical understanding, as it is not limited to the linear movement towards a recommendation. Instead, the study reveals how a rhetor can jump between stases as some opportunities are closed and others opened in the process of public meaning formation.[19]

17. While the passage is not entirely clear, Cicero's De Oratore (1942, I.X.14) does mention the possibility of using more stases at once, thereby prefiguring the position we will develop here.
18. Although Jørgensen and Onsberg link the stages of a discussion to the notion of Topics, the inspiration from stasis theory is evident; the three first stages are identical with the three first stages and the fourth is replaced with the question of what should be done.
19. Specifically, these authors show how Clinton first used status coniecturalis, then status translationis and status definitivus, ending in status qualitatis.

The question of whether the stases should be conceptualized as static categories or dynamic processes may be tied to the focus of the rhetorical criticism. When a study is centered around one particular rhetorical utterance, it is usual to assume that the rhetor has picked one stasis and stuck to it. Here, the theory presents the categories that the rhetor can choose from when designing the utterance and that the critic can subsequently identify in the utterance. When the aim is to study the stases at the levels of the utterance as well as of the process of which it is part (thus, introducing yet another layering of the theory), it becomes clear that processes of meaning formation are never restricted to one and just one stasis. Here, one can point to a chronological movement from stasis to stasis, as in practical argumentation, or one can, as do Kramer and Olson, suggest a more contingent process in which the order of the stases depends on the particular case and the specific developments of the debate about it.

We adhere to the dynamic view, generally, but believe that this dynamic is neither linear nor contingent. Instead, it may best be understood as a combinatory potential. Meaning that it is not just the context that conditions the use of one stasis or another at any given moment, but also a choice the rhetor makes. In the course of a process of meaning formation, different stases may become dominant at different times, but this is as much an expression of the involved rhetors' choices as it is an indication of situational demands. The choice between the stases and the decision to combine them is always at the discretion of the rhetor—just as some choices will always prove more apt than others. As such, the possibility of combining the stases is both present at the level of the utterance and the process. At the level of meaning formation, this implies that several stases can be present at the same time, but in different utterances. At the level of the utterance, this means that more than one stasis can be applied *within* it.

This reinterpretation of stasis theory involves a shift in the understanding of the stases. They are not more or less exclusive levels, which one has to decide between or run through in some order. Instead, we believe, the stases are best understood as an

arsenal of argumentative strategies and tactics that are, in principle, always available. This does not mean that we should stop talking about levels altogether, but it does mean that the levels are not mutually exclusive—to the contrary, they condition each other. Thus, one must have some understanding of what 'it' is (*status definitivus*) to be able to ascertain whether it is the case or not (*status coniecturalis*), and the definition of a case often contains an evaluation (*status qualitatis*), just as the three other stases are dependent on and can be reconfigured through a certain (re-)framing of the case (*status translationis*). In sum, the levels can be combined; there are no barriers between them. Rather, they are in lively interaction. We seek to capture this potential for simultaneous, successive, and singular uses of the stases through the notion of an arsenal of arguments, understood as a potential to choose from and combine various strategies and tactics.

When the dynamic of the stases is expressed as an arsenal of arguments, the role of the rhetor is emphasized. Seeking to influence the process of meaning formation, each rhetor makes choices at the strategic as well as the tactical level, choosing one or several stases and how to articulate them. Accordingly, the critic's task is to examine these rhetorical choices, and the third step of rhetorical criticism involves interpreting the interrelations of text and context, based on the involved rhetors' choices of strategies, tactics, and combinations. Following the three steps—identification, analysis, and interpretation—the rhetorical critic may evaluate the appropriateness of the uses of the stases in the course of the studied process(es) of meaning formation. To what extent is the involved rhetors' use of the stases persuasive? To what extent is it proper? In what follows, we will sketch the combination of the stases in the cases of the housing market and the pandemic, and in conclusion we assess whether the central rhetors of these cases have used the stases in ways that are apposite to them.

In the course of 2005-2007, the price developments of the housing market were reflected in processes of meaning formation as a series of openings and closures of rhetorical opportunities. For instance, it became increasingly difficult to deny the imminent

fall in prices, implying the impossibility of continued use of *status coniecturalis* in its pure form. As consensus arose on the direction of price developments, however, this did not rule out contestation of other facts and reinterpretations of market developments in light of these newly elevated figures. Conversely, in the 2020-2021 developments of the pandemic, infection rates fluctuated, causing constant negotiations of what was, in fact, happening—and, more importantly, how to interpret the unfolding events. As facts constantly changed, so did policy recommendations, but, more importantly, over time the same facts led to different recommendations (i.e., when Denmark opened up entirely in September 2021, terminating the national state of crisis, the daily number of newly infected was similar to the total number of infected when the country closed down entirely in March 2020), leading to constant negotiations of what to make of and do with the available information. Thus, even if the tendency is for the stases to be used differently at different times, this is not an evolutionary process. Rather, all four stases are available all the time, and it is a fundamental task for any rhetor to assess which strategy/-ies to use at what time.

The option of using different stases simultaneously is not just theoretical, but has the practical implication that it is, for instance, possible for one rhetor to redefine what might seem like a fall in prices as a "natural correction" at the same time as another rhetor uses *status qualitatis* to explain that the drop they take for granted is actually a positive development, which will 'kick-start the market'. Similarly, one rhetor can use the infection rate as a reason to maintain restrictions at the same time as another uses the number of hospitalized to argue that restrictions can be lifted—and a third suggests that it is time to focus more on economy and less on health and open up the country entirely. These examples show how different stases can actively and simultaneously shape meaning formation concerning the same circumstances.

When the stases are combined, they often build on each other, but there is no necessary order or end-goal to such combination, as definition may, for instance, just as easily lead to a statement of facts as to an evaluation. Further, a rhetor may counter another's

use of the stases with a different combination—or use the same stases to make a completely different point. As such, current mediatized meaning formation is very unlike the ideal typical case of the criminal trial of classical rhetoric in so far as, today, it is the exception rather than the rule that any rhetor listens, let alone responds, to another's arguments, whether delivered in mediated political debate or on social media (Hall 2018, Reinemann and Maurer 2005). This makes the combination of arguments an even freer endeavor, but also one that has even more difficulty in making an impact.

What is common to all these potential combinations, then, is the type of meaning formation they lead to. It is not the individual utterance, but the process of meaning formation that prevails. In the case of the housing market, the tendency of this process is to support the market by establishing any development as both the right time to sell and to buy. That is, the particular price is not paramount; rather, the drive is towards continued market activity at any cost. As for the COVID-19 pandemic, the general direction of the meaning formation is, to the contrary, towards ending the pandemic as each contribution takes aim at what may most effectively stop the continued spread of the virus.

These underlying purposes (maintaining the housing market, ending the COVID-19 pandemic), it should be noted, are closely aligned with the type of actors who take center stage in the mediatized arena for meaning formation as we have studied it here. For housing, the studied news media usually give voice to the views of realtors, banks, and mortgage brokers. These actors are not all involved in the market in the same way, but none are neutral observers, and they all have a stake in ensuring the stability of the market. As such, they seek to shape processes of meaning formation in such a direction as to establish an image of a healthy market into which both buyers and sellers may safely enter. For the pandemic, a similar situation arises around the public health professionals and experts, who are, along with cabinet members and other politicians, the persons most frequently quoted. Even when individual experts are employed by independent research institutions (e.g., universities) rather than health authorities, they

have an interest in advising the government and ensuring the success of the chosen policy measures, as they are, generally, involved in limiting the effects of the virus as much as possible.

Whether aimed at maintaining market stability in the face of potential price drops or societal stability in the face of rising infection rates, the stases are used to shape central figures and tendencies in ways that, potentially, make the message of stability more persuasive. When facts and figures point uniformly towards a state of—health or economic—crisis, rhetorical work becomes more intense, and the full arsenal of stases is applied and combined in the attempt to redefine, re-evaluate, and re-frame in order to, ultimately, re-figure the facts.

When interpreting the combinations of the stases that are used in our two cases as persuasive attempts aimed at increasing the public's sense of stability, it is important to recognize that our case material covers a selective fragment of the meaning formation process. The housing market is not only debated in broadsheets and business newspapers, but also in popular television programs like "Flip that House" and "Designed to Sell". Further, the content paid and owned by realtors is central, as are the conversations of neighbors, colleagues, and friends, whether off- or online. In the same manner, social media and other informal (communication) networks are central to the meaning formation of the pandemic—even as, during lockdown, many Danes turned to the traditional news media for the latest updates from press conferences, for communal singing, and for other substitutes to physical social gathering and information sharing. Thus, we have only investigated small parts of the widely branching processes of meaning formation, and we are keenly aware that the general directions of persuasive attempts differ in various sub-publics. Still, the news media are one central arena of mediation as well as mediatization (Jensen 2013), as they refer to other sources of meaning formation in their coverage of events and are, in turn, circulated onwards on other platforms. Thus, there is an argument to be made that while news media may not be entirely reflective of the process of public meaning formation as a whole, they remain central to it.

A complete evaluation of the appropriateness and consequences of the rhetorical work carried out by the actors in focus here as well as other participants in the meaning formation processes would, of course, demand both a deeper analysis of the material we have covered and the inclusion of different materials. Nevertheless, we will offer a tentative conclusion to our analytical sketches. Our readings of the two cases have resulted in the view that in both of them, figures are used to persuade and are, in turn, shaped persuasively in the effort to ensure economic and societal stability. The entire arsenal of arguments—the general strategies of the stases and their various tactical articulations and combinations—is used to establish the positions that the market/the population is healthy. While in 2005-2007 and 2020-2021, respectively, evidence was mounting to the contrary, in argumentative terms this remained the dominant position. No matter what argument one might present to indicate the severity of the economic/health crisis, the rhetors in our material have a counter-argument at hand—or, we might say, a rhetorical cure at the ready.

What is particularly interesting is that some of these arguments should, in principle, exclude each other, but do not do so in practice. Rather, the same rhetor can claim that there is no fall in prices, that the fall should be redefined (e.g., as a 'soft landing'), that falling prices are a positive development, and that the market should not be dictated by prices. And, for the pandemic, one can admit that infection rates are out of control and still suggest that the right measures have been taken—and vice versa. All in support of the common goal of ending the pandemic.

Admittedly, one will rarely find all four stases used as explicitly—and in as explicit opposition to each other—as in these stylized examples, but the tendency to maintain one's preferred position no matter what the counter-arguments are is clear and pervasive. Hence, we can conclude that the stases are applied persuasively by those who seek to establish the position that the Danish housing market/population is healthy. Whether that has the desired effect on individual citizens' behavior as buyers/sellers and subjects of the public health regime, respectively, is another matter. In the case of the housing market, we now know that a full-

blown meltdown proved unavoidable; in the case of the pandemic, the persuasive figures seem to have had the desired effect of widespread support of and compliance with the authorities' changing pandemic response.

The Critical Potential of Stasis Theory

Providing theoretical reasons for and analytical illustrations of how to apply the stases to rhetorical criticism, we have shown how the stases are used in statements on market/pandemic developments. In conclusion we offer the hypothesis that rhetorical strategies and tactics are co-constitutive of not only the meaning formation concerning such developments, but the developments themselves. The meaning formation does not only react to economic/health tendencies, but is constitutive of the relationship between supply and demand/restrictions and compliance. In sum, there is a close connection between economic/ medical figures and figures of speech, as numbers are used in and shaped by persuasive processes.

Our theoretical argument concerning the critical potential of the stases is more well-developed than our empirical illustrations; we have argued that the classical definitions of all four stases remain relevant, although the fourth stasis must be widened to include the internal argumentative framing of meaning formation as well as its external physical setting. On this basis, we have discussed the classical understanding of the stases as a clarifying and productive tool. Here, we suggest that these two dimensions of the stases can be better understood by distinguishing between strategies and tactics, just as we have shown that both the strategic and the tactical levels can be applied in analyses of rhetorical artifacts. Finally, we have advocated the view that the classical understanding of the relationship between the stases must be reformed when advice on how to produce specific utterances is turned into rhetorical criticism of meaning formation processes. In this new context, the stases must be understood as dynamic developments rather than specific choices. However, there are still

insights to be gained from the classical idea that the individual rhetor makes strategic and tactical choices.

Thus, we do not believe that the dynamic understanding of the stases should lead to the view that only one stasis or the other can be used at any given point in a process of meaning formation. To the contrary, all stases are, in principle, available all the time as an arsenal of arguments from which rhetors choose their strategies and tactics, thereby contributing to the larger process. This enables an understanding of the process of meaning formation as a combination of the stases applied in particular utterances and linked together across them—meaning that the rhetorical critic must attend to both the level of the utterance and that of the process. The three analytical steps, as sketched here, focus on particular utterances, but on this basis, one may offer a joint criticism of the process of meaning formation in which the analyzed utterances partake. Such criticism, we hope, may continue to detail and explain how numerical figures persuade and are, themselves, the products of rhetorical figuration.

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9.

The Second Persona in Political Commentary

Mette Bengtsson

Abstract

This article offers a critique of the genre of political commentary, as found in a Danish context. Based on 90 specimens of political commentary from national newspapers published during the parliamentary election campaign in 2011, I present an analysis of the implied audience of the genre, using the analytical procedure proposed by Edwin Black (1970) in three steps: Frist, I analyze the dominant claims and stylistic tokens in the corpus to be able to draw a profile of the implied audience. Next, I relate this profile to various conceptions of democracy, including their conception of the role of the citizen, and I argue that the profile of the audience thus discursively implied coincides with a conception of the citizen's role in a democracy centered around competition. Finally, I offer a moral assessment of this construction of the audience, and on that basis, I discuss the implications of this construction with reference to two studies of mine, each of which presents an impression of an authentic audience's response to this construction of the audience. The article could be a point of departure for comparative analyses still to be undertaken in the rhetorical community in Scandinavia, and it could contribute to broader discussions of the role of the mass media in a democracy.

Within the last decade, the media genre 'political commentary' has expanded to such an extent that today, it occupies a central place in political journalism. The graph below shows how the

genre has grown from around 2005, with peaks around the parliamentary elections in 2007, 2011 and 2015.[1]
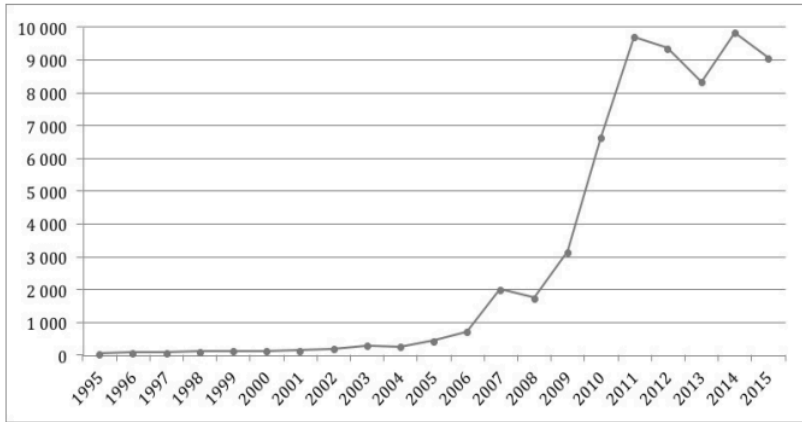
Graph showing the number of hits on the phrase 'political commentator' across all print and online media in the media base *Infomedia*, done on February 15, 2016. I interpret the role of "commentator" as an index of the establishment of the genre, since it is highly person oriented. In the present text I alternate between referring to the role (commentator) and the products of the commentators (commentaries).

When a journalistic genre expands to this extent, that in itself is a reason to show it some attention. Another reason is that there has been a certain amount of criticism of the genre in public debate,

1. In a study presenting a content analysis of 2,022 articles published around Danish parliamentary elections from 1994 to 2007, David Hopmann and Jesper Strömbäck (2010, 951-952) further show how the political commentator has been increasingly used as a source during this period.

but at the same time, there has only been a scant treatment of it in research and scholarship, with almost none in rhetorical research.[2]

Existing Research on Political Commentary

Existing research on the genre comes mainly from media studies, which offer various explanations for its growth. As for its initial phase in the late 90s, media scholars primarily see the rise of political commentators as a reaction against the accelerating professionalization of political communication (Blumler and Kavanagh 1999; Negrine 2008). The commentators are considered key figures in political journalism, which Blumler (1997) see as 'fighting back', while Brian McNair (2000) talks about 'counter-spin'. Similar explanations are also notable in the metacommunication from media and commentators themselves in their defense of the genre. For example, Anders Krab-Johansen, political editor at the national TV channel TV2, says this:

> Politicians have learnt to talk a certain way in the media that puts them in a favorable light, and that's why it is nice to have some political commentators who can explain why they suddenly change positions. After all, not all viewers are able to follow that (quoted from the daily *Information*, "DR and TV2: Politiske kommentatorer er uundværlige", October 6, 2007).

In an English report, a commentator is quoted as saying: "There are hidden laws in politics just as there are in, say, physics. Our job is to explain how those laws work, bring them into the open" (Hobsbawm and Lloyd 2008, 21). In the first decade of the millennium, cable TV spread, and in many countries, 24-hour news channels appeared; as a parallel development, commentators became an increasingly central factor in political journalism, while research began to explain the genre with reference to changing

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2. About the public meta-debate on this genre, see Bengtsson (2011); about the limited attention given to it in research, see Bengtsson (2015).

structural and production patterns.[3] Journalism professor Peter Bro, for example, sees commentators as cheap labor that can quickly deliver content of a certain quality, and he explains how commentators are increasingly used as sources because, unlike academic experts, they can deliver pronouncements across a wide range of subjects (Bro 2008; Bro and Lund, 2008). Meanwhile, a contribution from media studies has been a revised interpretation of roles. While many see the political commentator as a recent, media-generated role for a set of selected figures who comment, primarily on national politics, based on insider knowledge, Sigurd Allern (2010) presents a diachronous study covering three Norwegian election campaigns (1965, 1989 and 2010) and shows that there have always been personalities who have commented on politics, but also that their roles have changed from being ideological front figures representing political parties to being an elite of independent interpreters who function as billboards for their respective media. Characteristically, the approach taken by media scholars to commentators is primarily descriptive. Media research offers explanations for the rise and dominance of the genre and challenges assumptions about the understanding of roles, but it is extremely reticent in making normative assessments of the genre from a critical angle.[4]

In rhetorical studies, there is not a similar reticence in this regard, and there have been several criticisms of aspects of the commentary genre. For example, Christian Kock (2011) criticizes the way the genre focuses on spin and strategy, arguing that commentators push substantive political discussions to the rear. In a similar vein, Eirik Vatnøy (2010) takes the Norwegian parliamentary election in 2009 as a point of departure for questioning the way media select commentators, their privileged speaker positions, and the often-dubious qualifications of the commentators, who seem at times to have covert partisan motives. Both Kock and Vatnøy point to interesting aspects of the

3. In a Danish context, this development took off markedly with the advent of the first 24-hour news channel on TV, *TV2 News*. DR, the long-established public service channel, followed suit in 2007 with *DR Update*.

4. Lars Nyre (2009) has pointed to this as a more general tendency in media research.

phenomenon, but their criticism consists of short passages in books that aim to offer more general criticisms of political journalism. Thus, it would seem that rhetorical research still owes a contribution to a more sustained, critical analysis of the genre of political commentaries as seen on a background of civic and community-oriented values.

Genre-oriented Criticism Invoking the 'Second Persona'

First, I will analyze the substantive claims and the stylistic tokens of the genre to be able to describe its implied audience, its 'second persona' (Black 1970). I choose the 'second persona' as a key notion because it allows for a critique of the influence which, as I argue, is potentially exerted by the commentators through their rhetoric. In dealing with the commentary genre, I apply an understanding of genre derived from the theory of Carolyn Miller (1984), in which genres are seen as typified rhetorical acts through which people act together. Genres help identify urgent problems and types of social needs, and, on that basis, they also engender expectations concerning the roles of senders and receivers of the commentaries; in particular, expectations regarding the receiver role are central in the present context. As the analysis will make clear, and unlike Black, I have no ideological purpose in doing this but am inspired by the idea that texts and genres imply an audience as their second persona—which, in turn, has the potential to influence receivers.[5] The analysis will thus offer an example of how to look at discursive audience constructions from a genre perspective in contemporary political journalism.

Choice of Corpus

As mentioned, the analysis is based on a selection of texts representing the genre. The selection includes 90 political commentaries written by nine political commentators in the six

5. Others, too, have applied Black's ideas in this way. See, for example, Lund (2014).

largest national newspapers during the parliamentary election campaign in Denmark in 2011.[6] I chose texts published during an election campaign with the expectation that during such a period, we would see the genre practiced with particular intensity. By including all political commentators in the six largest national newspapers, I sought to establish a corpus based on clear criteria, where no examples were selected or deselected based on any particular features. This was an attempt to get a reasonably broad sample of the genre, but not broader than would allow for close reading. As for comparative analysis across national borders, media systems or time periods, this article lacks space for it. Also, analyses of differences between the individual commentators' texts must wait for later studies. The focus of interest is the genre as a whole—i.e., commentators as one uniform type of experts and their capacity for discursively influencing receivers (readers).

Commentators Explain, Evaluate and Advise on Strategic Action

We now turn to the analysis, beginning with the substantive claims made in the commentaries. A subdivision of these may either be based on themes or types of speech acts; I have tried to combine these two criteria.[7] The majority of the claims in the texts concern politicians' actions, which are primarily understood strategically;

6. The selection covers the period from August 26, 2011 (the day the election was called by the Prime Minister) to September 17, 2011 (two days after the election. The nine commentators are Mette Østergaard (*Politiken*), Peter Mogensen (*Politiken*), Kristian Madsen (*Politiken*), Ralf Pittelkow (*Jyllands-Posten*), Thomas Larsen (*Berlingske Tidende*), Niels Krause-Kjær (*Berlingske Tidende*), Hans Engell (*Ekstra Bladet*), Helle Ib (*BT*) og Søs Marie Serup (*Børsen*).

7. In regard to speech act theory, I rely on the classification in Searle (1975), which distinguishes between five types of illocutionary acts: "[W]e tell people how things are, we try to get them to do things, we commit ourselves to do things, we express our feelings and attitudes, and we bring about changes through our utterances" (1975. 29). His five terms for these five types are representatives ('assertives' in an earlier version), directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives (performatives in earlier versions).

the claims mainly constitute components of explanations (representatives), evaluations (expressives) or pieces of advice (directives). If we relate these speech act types to types of argumentative claims as treated in rhetorical theory, we have to do with claims regarding strategy of constative, evaluative and advocative types, respectively.[8]

A typical example of a strategic explanation is this, offered by Ralf Pittelkow in *Jyllands-Posten*:

> While there is uproar in the blue block, the reds are silent. They have learnt to manage their disagreements, but then again, there's more to it than that. Helle Thorning-Schmidt and Villy Søvndal have made a deliberate political strategy of silence. They know that their chance of winning the election rests more on disaffection with the VK government than on their own policies (…) 'Shut up and win the election'—that has been their battle cry."[9]

When politicians act—in this case by not saying anything—the commentator claims their acts are strategically motivated.[10] In almost every one of the 90 commentaries, we find examples of this kind of interpretation. It is close to becoming a type of standard theory, where commentators explain most actions by politicians by returning to the same motive: Politicians' actions are attempts to retain or obtain power for themselves or their party.

An example of a claim that is similarly strategic but which at the same time is more evaluative may be seen in the financial daily

8. More on claims of fact, value and policy in classical theories of argument, see Jasinski (2001).

9. In Denmark and in Europe generally, the use of the color terms blue and red is switched around compared to the US, so that 'red' means left-leaning, whereas 'blue' means right-leaning. The quote from Pittelkow also assumes the knowledge that Thorning-Schmidt and Søvndal are leading figures on the 'red' side of the aisle, both determined to defeat the incumbent coalition government of two 'blue' parties ("VK").

10. Aalberg et al. (2011) suggest distinguishing between a *strategy* frame and a *game* frame. I have decided against applying this distinction because these two frames are often intertwined. In the quote we just saw, for example, the explanation based on speculation about motives represents a strategy frame, but at the same time, the concept of "winning" is invoked, which represents a game frame.

Børsen, where Michael Kristiansen criticizes the Socialist People's Party and the alliance they have formed with the Social Democrats before the election: "As expected, the Socialist People's Party has turned out to be the weakest link. Obviously, their insistence that they would not extoll their attractions at the Social Democrats' expense could not be maintained in an election campaign" (September 7, 2011). I read this as an expressive speech act, among other things, because the commentator uses the evaluative adjective "weakest", the qualifier "obviously" and the ironical phrase "their own attractions"; but a reader could also read the claim as a representative speech act by focusing on the verb phrase "has turned out to be". This kind of ambiguity is typical of many assertions in the corpus: One has a sense of reading the expression of an opinion, yet the commentator rarely steps forward by adding a clear subjectivity marker to the assertion. Another circumstance also places the commentators' claims in a gray area between representatives and expressives, making it hard for a reader to know how to interpret them: There is a striking lack of illocutionary markers like 'I believe' or 'I think'. In the 90 commentaries, the phrase 'I believe' only appears eight times and 'I think' four times. One might argue that such illocutionary markers are implicit, and since these texts belong to an opinion genre, any pronouncements must be interpreted as opinions. On the other hand, it is remarkable that the commentators, in large measure, use phrases that give their pronouncements an air of pure reportage or summary.

One last category of claims concerned with strategy is the pieces of advice that commentators offer to politicians. They cast themselves in a role as advisers, telling politicians what they *ought* to do—a kind of consultancy for the entire world to witness. In other words, these directives are not addressed to the reader but the politicians, pushing the reader into a position as an onlooker. For example, Hans Engell—himself a former party leader and Minister of Justice—writes a whole commentary attempting to answer the questions "What Should Helle do?" and "What is Løkke's best bet?" ("Løkke" being the Prime Minister and "Helle" the leader of the opposition) (*Ekstra Bladet,* September 8, 2011). The

commentator advises Helle, the Social Democratic contender for the Premiership, to "be engaged, show emotions and enthusiasm", while Løkke, the Liberal Prime Minister, has to "get much better at conjuring up people and images before the voters' eyes. Less numbers and stats. He must be capable of communicating directly with people: What do the things he says mean to my family and me?"

Like the explanations and the evaluations, the pieces of advice offered to politicians involve a cynical view of politics, where voters' preferences are regarded as fixed and where political communication is viewed as a strategic means to accommodate those preferences. Others have offered such an analysis concerning political journalism in general; for example, Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1997) speak of a 'spiral of cynicism', while Christian Kock (2009) refers to a 'cynicism syndrome'. Similarly, Aalberg, Strömbäck and de Freese (2011) have presented an overview of research about the understanding of politics in news journalism, noting the growing literature documenting how strategy framing gains ground in relation to issue framing. The present reading of the commentary genre concurs with this general tendency, but it also supplements it with other themes which seem to be more specific to commentaries; more on this below.

Commentators Predict Potential Alliances and Politicians' Futures

Commentators not only make claims about strategy as components of explanations, evaluations and advice; they also make claims as to what will happen in the future—about such subjects as what political deals will be struck or what possible alliances will emerge between parties, as well as what the future will bring for the individual politician or party. For example, Niels Krause-Kjær writes:

> Regardless of left-right orientation, a new government will have to cut back and economize everywhere. This practice is one at which the Social Democrats have nearly 90 years of experience. They will have no problems with it. The Socialist People's Party has never tried it before, and much seems to suggest that they will find it hard (*Berlingske Tidende*, September 6, 2011).

Explanations and advice-giving typically involve arguments in which the warrant has to do with strategy, whereas predictions are not based on warrants that invoke such themes. At times, commentators argue for their predictions with reference to the past—which we see in the example—but often enough, their predictions are more like postulates. Commentators are sometimes sarcastically referred to as oracles, which may be because of their unsupported predictions; I will return to this under the heading of 'stylistic tokens'. The media scholar Stig Hjarvard, in his characterization of the commentators, emphasizes their predictions and their oracle-like posturing: "Today, journalists and political commentators have evolved into fortune-tellers who can predict the future and read politicians' thoughts" (Hjarvard 2010, 32).

Commentators' Coverage of Current Affairs and Politicians' Positions

Finally, a portion of the commentators' output is their coverage of selected current events, including topical debate issues and the general positions that various parties and politicians take. This category has not until now drawn much attention as a significant ingredient of their output, but it is interesting in relation to the implied audience construction. For example, Hans Engell writes in *Ekstra Bladet*:

> Yesterday was not exactly Pia Kjærsgaard's day. Yesterday was the day her proposal for a tightening of the much-debated border control and for placing reception centers for asylum seekers in the geographical regions from which refugees come rather than in

Denmark was shot down by the Liberals and the Conservatives seconds after they were presented. After ten years of close collaborations, with these two parties responding to ideas from Kjærsgaard's People's Party by intoning, 'That looks interesting, we'll look at it,' the tune they played this time was very different: Kjærsgaard's ideas were instantaneously gunned down (*Ekstra Bladet,* August 30, 2011).

Helle Ib writes:

The mumblings from the Socialist People's Party's Villy Søvndal about the rule that prohibits family reunification if one spouse is less than 24 years old has probably delighted some in the party rank and file, but apart from that, the current signals on immigration policies cannot possibly bode well for the leftist opposition's chances of winning the election. First, Søvndal said his party was against the controversial rule and wanted it canceled after the next election (…) Then, however, he backpedaled somewhat. But the past leader of the Radicals, Marianne Jelved, whose respect for international conventions is as great as her flair for bad timing, managed to help make old wounds bleed again. Yesterday, she stated that the Socialist People's Party had been unwise in allying themselves with the Social Democrats on the issue of family reunifications, and she also found that Søvndal's maneuvers completely gave his game away. 'Now Søvndal makes a small concession. Let's see where that gets him in a negotiation,' Jelved said yesterday (*BT*, September 3, 2011).

The commentators cover conflicts in the dealings between the parties and how their pronouncements are dictated by the alliances they have struck. Also, they give us a picture of the parties general positions and of how the other parties respond—often in combination with selected quotes from those politicians to whom the commentators pay special attention. But it is significant that the commentators in their coverage of the general stances hardly ever mention the reasons and considerations underlying the politicians' views. Only the resulting standpoints of the various parties are outlined. In the last example, we also find clear evaluative signals from the commentator, who disparages Søvndal's and Jelved's

utterances—an example of how different types of speech act are often mixed in the commentators' texts.[11]

Commentators Postulate

After considering the types of claims found in the texts, we now turn to the stylistic tokens in them. So far, I have referred to *claims* to preserve Black's terminology. However, using that term in the sense current in argumentation theory is primarily relevant to explanations and pieces of advice since this is where we tend to find actual argumentation that justifies talking of "claims"; where evaluations and predictions are concerned, on the other hand, the commentators tend to resort to postulates.

An example of a postulatory style that involves evaluation and prediction in equal measure is found in Hans Engell, who writes as follows about one of the so-called TV 'duels' between the two main contenders for the premiership:

> Last night, Helle Thorning-Schmidt nearly floored Lars Løkke Rasmussen. But the leader of the Liberals was saved by the bell and several liters of water. He will probably get back on his legs before the next round, but Løkke was far from fit to encounter the blonde machine gun (*Ekstra Bladet*, September 12, 2011).

Here the commentator acts as a referee, evaluating the confrontation between the two rivals the day before. He declares Thorning-Schmidt to have done best but does not support that judgment. He finds her to have been the winner, thereby assuming such a claim to be of interest to the reader. Likewise, the assertion that Løkke will get back on his legs again before the next round is unsupported. Although this is a prediction and thus does not have the same status since it cannot be supported with observable facts alone, Hans Engell might easily have explained why he

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11. The commentators' speech acts include explanation, evaluation, advice, prediction and reportage—a preliminary typology that is not necessarily exhaustive but covers the dominant type of speech act in the corpus. Also, the present analysis offers no quantification—an obvious task for further studies.

thinks this will happen. In the prediction by Niels Krause-Kjær quoted above that it will be hard for the Socialist People's Party to be represented in the government, he similarly offers no data in support; he simply says, vaguely, that "much seems to suggest" it. The commentator may have good reasons to think this, but he chooses to omit them in his text. Thus, the commentators tend to demonstrate a postulatory manner, casting themselves in an authoritarian and omniscient role: When they explain, they have the ability to see what the politicians think and what their motives are; when they predict, they can see into the future and offer confident pontifications about it; and when they opine, they assume that they do not have to offer supporting reasons. In these respects, their status as experts alone will have to function implicitly as a supporting reason for what they are saying—an implicit argument from authority.

Commentators Blur the Source

An element of the commentators' postulatory manner is blurring the source's identity in various ways. One form of blurring happens through what we may call *undocumented, unspecified arguments of quantity*, in which commentators use grammatical subjects involving quantifiers like *several, numerous* or *none*. For example, Hans Engell refers to Helle Thorning-Schmidt's tax case, in which her husband, Stephen Kinnock, has been accused of tax evasion: "No one understands why Helle did not present all this formation openly last year" (*Ekstra Bladet*, September 10, 2011). Who exactly are the people who don't understand this? A majority of the commentariat or the population? And what is Engell's view? Such quantifying arguments add to the postulatory nature of the commentators' manner, as quantity is made to substitute for more substantial reasons. Engell might instead have used a real argument by saying: "I think it would have been smarter for Helle to have presented this information last year; that way, it wouldn't dominate so much now."

Another form of blurring is caused by the use of *passive verb forms*. Ralf Pittelkow writes: "Løkke is felt to be the most competent of the two, Thorning as the most human" (*Jyllands-Posten*, August 28, 2011). Here too, the commentator exalts himself to the role of interpreter and reporter of general attitudes whose holders are, however, blurred and where the substantial evidence for the claims is absent. As in the first form of blurring we saw, the reader may well wonder about the commentator's own view and attitude. What principle underlies the selection? Why does the commentator choose to give particular views special attention? Do the selected perceptions cover the commentator's own attitude? One gets the impression that the commentators prefer to advance something as prevalent views rather than stand by them openly as their own.

One last form of blurring happens through vague source attributions. For example, Mette Østergaard writes: "That is why we are beginning to hear conversations *internally in the Liberal party* about the possibility of a one-party Liberal government" (*Politiken*, September 3, 2011). Similarly, Thomas Larsen writes:

> *Distinctly without attribution*, several supporters of the Social Democratic leader are venting some relief that the yield from the curtailment of the early retirement program will make it much more doable to make the economic ends meet under a new Social Democratic government (*Berlingske Tidende*, September 11, 2011; my emphasis).

Here, the commentator reports statements that apparently can only be reported if they are attributed to a larger and more indistinct group rather than the actual source(s) in question. The practice of referring to well-informed, anonymous sources is a respected journalistic principle, but instead of using it with care and with a professional assessment of the source's credibility and the circumstances, political commentators seem to take it to excess. One explanation might be that commentators like to dramatize and create an illusion that the reader gets confidential information (thus Loftager 2004, 189). The genre rests precisely on the assumption

that the reader needs the benefit of the sender's knowledge to make sense of the political world, and the form of blurring we see here helps assure the reader that the commentator has access to the inner circles of power and thus possesses intriguing inside knowledge. Another explanation could be that it is a time-saving method since commentators in this way need only use themselves as sources and present their generalizing impression of the situation, thereby avoiding comprehensive research and actual journalistic interviews. The resulting problem is that the commentators often use phrases that make the status of their pronouncements opaque: Is this a *bona fide* claim or mere guesswork by the commentator? Also, avoiding specific source attribution makes it difficult to detect and document possible distortion. Who is to react? And where should one go to test the claims? When this practice is allowed to expand, commentators are given an ever-wider space to maneuver.

Commentators Speak in Unison

Another significant feature, besides postulatory style and a blurring of sources in various forms, is that commentators seem given to speaking as a *unified block* with one shared view of things rather than discussing with each other. For example, during the 2011 election campaign, several commentators declared that it was all about the economy: "This election is about money" (Hans Engell, *Ekstra Bladet*, August 30, 2011); "Take the economy—the main theme of the election" (Helle Ib, *BT*, September 4, 2011); "For more than a year it has been known that the economy would be the totally dominant issue in this election" (Søs Marie Serup, *Børsen*, September 8, 2011); "The paramount theme in this election campaign is the economy" (Mette Østergaard, *Politiken*, August 28, 2011); "Today, politicians' battle is about three things: economy, economy, economy" (Thomas Larsen, *Berlingske Tidende*, September 13, 2011). Are the commentators here reporting their impression that many people—in which case, who?—are talking about the economy, or will the election be

about the economy because the commentators talk about it as a unified block? In media, one finds from time to time headlines beginning 'the Commentariat' or 'Commentators' followed by a colon—which implies that readers should be persuaded by the fact that the commentators say something in unison. Exemplifying this implication, Mette Østergaard writes: "The election campaign will be dirty, as politicians themselves and commentators have said for a long time" (*Politiken*, September 15, 2011).

In connection with the first presidential debate between John Kerry and George W. Bush in 2004, Paul Hitlin (2005) documented the same tendency for American commentators to speak in unison. He shows that there was great diversity in what the 'television pundits' were saying during the day after the debate, but after just a few days, the assessments are harmonized. In Norway, Sigurd Allern sees this consensus-seeking practice as a way for commentators to win power: "commentators have limited power when alone, but they become influential when standing together, for example by 'declaring a political leader dead' after a scandal" (*Morgenbladet*, September 11, 2009). Likewise, Pia Wold (2013) notes the same tendency in a study of references to the Conservative leader Erna Solberg in Norwegian media, where a sudden, unsupported, collective change of attitude is in evidence and gains weight thanks to its collective nature—hence the title of Wold's article: "A Pack of Watchdogs". In particular, I would point to how the commentators' collective actions strengthen an unreflecting assumption that they can persuade their audiences by postulating something in unison. It becomes their consensus *as such* that is to persuade their readers, rather than substantive arguments.

The Implied Audience—and How It Coincides with the Idea of the Citizen in a Competitive Democracy

Given all this, what is the image of the implied audience in the commentators' texts? Based on the dominant types of claims found in them, the implied audience member is primarily a person (or

a *persona*) interested in the people who do politics and how they maneuver strategically to gain power. It is a person who doesn't care about substantive discussions about specific political proposals but is satisfied with a general idea of what topics are being discussed and the positions that politicians and parties take to them. When debated issues are commented on, the arguments for the positions are not presented, which implies an assumption that the reasons for the different positions are irrelevant to the audience. Based on the stylistic tokens, we may imagine a reader who is extraordinarily given to accepting authority and who will uncritically believe opinions and statements about the world when they come from an expert. This suggests an asymmetrical communication situation in which the sender has knowledge superior to the addressee's and where nothing invites a discussion or critical reflection on the claims that are made. The addressee is an onlooker to the political debate; politicians and commentators are the agents, while the reader watches more or less passively. Christian Kock is among those who have noted that the genre's typical pronouncements passivize the addressee; the present analysis shows that this passivity is brought about by a dual mechanism in which stylistic tokens also help fixate the reader in a passive role.

While Black in his criticism (1970, 112-115, 119) sees the discursively fashioned second persona as defined by ideology, it seems more obvious to see it as involving different conceptions of democracy, including the roles assigned to citizens. What we see may not necessarily be an unequivocal picture. Still, in many ways, the construction of the audience in political commentaries seems to coincide with the conception of the citizen in a competitive democracy.[12] In a competitive democracy, elections are central, and the focus is on politicians and their acts. Also, the agency

12. Modern democracy theory distinguishes between various understandings of democracy. Some of the most debated conceptions or models of democracy are, respectively, competitive democracy, participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. See, for instance, Held 2006. See also Strömbäck 2005, 334-338. Strömbäck includes procedural democracy as a fourth, somewhat less debated model of democracy.

of citizens is limited to voting in elections.[13] Strömbäck sums it up: "It is the political elites that act, whereas the citizens react" (2005, 334). The citizen needs to know the political candidates and their positions on fundamental issues, but not to be more actively involved in specific political discussions or to participate in public life. That commentators hardly ever present the reasons for the politicians' positions on various issues is because it is considered unimportant. The citizens at the receiving end of political discourse only need to know the politicians' positions, and then they can react accordingly. The implicit assumption is that voters have fixed preferences. Thus all that matters is that their knowledge of the political candidates is sufficient to find one whose attitudes they share and who will be a suitable representative for them.

If one searches in the commentaries for explicit terms referring to the citizen, it is not surprising that one primarily comes across terms like *voter*, *audience* and *observer*. For example, Hans Engell writes: "With several hundred thousand *voters* as the *audience*, everything is at stake for them both" (*Ekstra Bladet*, September 8, 2011); also: "But the most important factor is surely *the voters*? Yes, absolutely. And we don't really know how they will *react*" (*Ekstra Bladet*, September 10, 2011). Likewise, Thomas Larsen writes: "The crux of the matter will be *the reaction of the voters*" (*Berlingske Tidende*, August 30, 2011), and a week later: "In short, the *voters observe* the candidates, and they are not beside themselves with enthusiasm" (*Berlingske Tidende*, September 7, 2011). Mette Østergaard writes along the same lines: "Before that materializes, the *voters* have to cast their votes, and we have still to see how they *react* to the new alliance, which seems to have resurrected the middle in Danish politics" (*Politiken*, August 29, 2011) (all italics in these quotes are mine). These formulations help confirm the assumption that the commentators consider voting at elections to be a citizen's primary act; in fact, the citizen's agency is more or less limited to that act. While the

13. See Schumpeter 1975 [1942]. Giovanni Sartori (1987) uses the term 'election democracy'.

pronouncements and stylistic tokens noted in the commentaries implicitly convey certain conceptions, the quotes we have just seen directly express certain expectations of the citizen's role. In that connection, it is obvious seeing the commentators' rhetoric as a form of what Maurice Charland (1987) calls 'constitutive rhetoric'. In their texts, the commentators fashion an identity for citizens that offers them rather few opportunities for agency. The example in Charland's article is the *people québécois*—an audience that did not previously have any agency because it is only the discourse that constitutes this *peuple* as a group in the first place; in our case, the commentators' rhetoric may be seen as constitutive if we use that term in a wider sense. Here, the emphasis is on a certain conception of the citizen's role; it coexists with other citizens' roles, but the discourse invites readers to assume that role and act accordingly.

Assessing the Commentators' Discourse

Existing evaluations of the genre have considered partial aspects of it, for example, in criticizing commentators for their failing predictions.[14] Based on the audience *persona* drawn by the discourse, one may go further and question the genre's underlying view of democracy and its conception of the citizen's role. Seeing the citizen as a spectator to the political debate whose agency mainly involves voting in the next election is not easily reconciled with a notion of a rhetorically well-functioning democracy—a notion which recent scholarship has coupled with the concept of rhetorical citizenship and which places itself in close alignment with the idea of deliberative democracy (Villadsen and Kock 2012, 1-2). In that perspective, the citizen cannot be satisfied with an involvement that consists of casting a vote but would want to be more actively involved, for example, by engaging in selected debates on civic issues, in public and private. In a deliberative democracy, the default assumption is not that a person has fixed

14. See, e.g., "Politiske kommentatorer sigter godt – men rammer skidt" ["Political Commentators Aim Straight—and Miss"]. *Mandag Morgen*, November 26, 2001.

preferences but that humans are susceptible to argumentation and may, in principle, change their attitudes to things if they encounter new, persuasive arguments (Loftager 2004, Kock 2009, Nielsen 2012). For a society to have cohesion, it is required that citizens have an ongoing debate on the common good—on the norms and values that should guide their decisions. This process will not necessarily lead them all to agree. Still, the process is crucial because it provides an opportunity to hear arguments—also for positions that one does not necessarily share. If, as a citizen, one must live with decisions with which one disagrees—and that will happen for most people—then the deliberative process will hopefully have contributed to one's acquiescence with them. In the deliberative understanding of democracy, citizens' trust that there is a deliberative process in which it is possible to hear and be heard is quite central to a well-functioning democracy. It is precisely this process that political journalism can help facilitate. The postulatory manner of the commentators is highly problematic in a deliberative democracy because citizens should not be encouraged to postulate but to argue. Good grounds for one's views are central, and in that regard, the commentators are poor role models.

Audience Responses to the Second Persona in Commentaries

In conclusion, I will report on two studies showing how an authentic audience reacts to the audience construction implied in commentaries. In this context, it is worth noting that Black, in his article on the second persona, speaks of "actual auditors" and explains that an actual audience will look for signs in a discourse telling them how they are to view the world (1970, 113). Referring to a debate about integration in schools, Black asserts that even if auditors disagree with the claims made, they will still be influenced by the ideology of the discourse, an effect that Black designates, e.g., "vector of influence" and "the pull of an ideology" (1970, 113). In media scholarship on political journalism, one may

see studies of media effects as falling into two camps: There is, on the one hand, a pessimistic camp offering studies that show how citizens accept the strategic framing of the media, which again results in a cynical view of politics among citizens. In this category, we find, among others, the experiments by Joseph Cappella and Kathleen Hall Jamieson mentioned above (1997). On the other hand, in a more optimistic camp, various studies show that this is not always the case. For example, Kim Schrøder and Louise Phillips (2005), in a study in which they compare the discursive conception of politics in the media and among citizens, question the defining power ascribed to the media. They conclude that the power of definition is not a one-way process but that the media and the citizens negotiate power in a complex discursive game.

If we maintain a focus on the potential influence of the commentators rather than on political journalism in general, one might point to a study by Sigge Winther Nielsen *et al*. (2011), in which some 2,000 respondents, drawn from a representative panel of voters, were asked to associate freely on the open question "What comes to your mind when you think of a political party?" The conclusion is that the voters reflect the commentators' way of talking about politics. In the answers, many respondents embark on their own analyses of the parties' handling of given issues and their actions in Parliament. The authors introduce the concept of the 'second-order voter'. This voter understands politics as spin and strategy and primarily approaches politics by observing how others observe it to imitate their stance. Nielsen *et al*. explain this by pointing to the voter's need for a viable approach to the complicated political sphere: "The population learns from elite discussions and integrates it in their understanding of the political landscape. This implies that many voters become political commentators themselves searching for a way to create some order in a complex political reality" (2011, 19).

While the study by Nielsen *et al*. offers evidence for the influence of commentators' rhetoric on citizens, a more nuanced conclusion emerges in a qualitative receptions study of my own, in which eight respondents read aloud from political commentaries.

The study is influenced by protocol analysis but has an unique design that I refer to as *think-aloud-reading*, combined with qualitative interviews in which respondents stop reading at given markings in the texts and think aloud about their immediate responses to it.[15] In these readings, it becomes evident, both how respondents accept the audience construction inherent in the texts and also how they respond negatively to it. For example, two of the respondents begin to assume the commentator role during the reading, offering explanations and advice. There are examples of respondents imitating the commentators' stylistic tokens; for example, one respondent uses an undocumented, unspecified argument from quantity, saying: "*There has been* talk that there might be a rivalry between Mette Frederiksen and Helle Thorning-Schmidt, so it is probably more likely that …" (respondent 3; my emphasis). On the other hand, some respondents react by distancing themselves from the claims made in the commentaries and the stylistic tokens in them. For example, one respondent very distinctly decries the commentators' claims about strategy: "They should focus on some of the issues and what happens—not so much the political game in Parliament … Of course, they are trying to put each other down all the time … I damn well couldn't care less." Also, seven out of eight respondents take a skeptical attitude toward the commentators' postulates, in varying degrees. For example, one of them says: "He [the commentator] is not very good at making an argument for why this should be the case. It's like, this is just his opinion, and it's kind of without support of any kind … and that's not good enough." Jay Blumler talks about commentators 'fighting back' at politicians; my study may be seen as an example of how citizens, in turn, begin to fight back at commentators.

15. On protocol analysis, see Ericsson and Simon (1993 [1984]). In developing the method into think-aloud-reading, see, for example, Lewis (1982).

Future Research Perspectives

In this analysis, I have drawn a picture of the second *persona* in the commentary genre, and I have questioned it critically with reference to various understandings of democracy—keeping the norms and ideals in deliberative democracy as a yardstick. In future research, it would be natural to move from considering generic features of the genre towards looking at individual commentators and their different ways of enacting the genre. One might assume that although the view of democracy as competitive characterizes the genre generally, there might be individual commentators who enact the genre differently. These different enactments of the genre might then function as a point of reference for a qualitative evolution of it.

The rhetorical scholarship also seems to have something to offer journalism research regarding discursive audience constructions. While much media scholarship looks at the reception in isolation, the rhetorical scholarship might contribute to studies that integrate reception *and* text.[16]

In their work on pundits in the USA, Dan Nimmo and James Combs wrote that *punditocracy* is a significant threat to democracy. They used the notion of a 'surrogate democracy', in which elite conversations replace a democratic conversation among citizens (1992, 171). As I see it, one of these conversations need not exclude the other, but the elite should realize what a view of democracy they serve, including what an understanding of the citizen is implied. Furthermore, they should be aware of how they manifest all this in their rhetoric, potentially influencing their audience of citizens.

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16. Jens E. Kjeldsen has repeatedly called for rhetoricians to integrate reception studies into rhetorical research. See, for example, Kjeldsen (2008, 2015).

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III

Novel Contributions: From Arguing Against Argumentation to Scientist-Citizens

10.

Arguing Against Argumentation in Science: Paul Feyerabend's Polemical Scholarship in "Against Method" and its Lasting Queer Effects

Frederik Appel Olsen

Introduction

In the preface to the fourth edition of Austrian philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend's classical work *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*, first published in 1975, Feyerabend's fellow philosopher of science and friend Ian Hacking (2010) describes the work as "more than a book: it is an event", as well as "the Woodstock of philosophy" (p. vii). According to Hacking, the book was such a powerful and historically important piece of philosophy that it makes little sense to consider it as merely a collection of pages with words on them. Feyerabend himself, in his 1995 autobiography, described *Against Method* as "not a book", but "a collage" (139). *Against Method* was initially intended as a correspondence book with another colleague and friend, Imre Lakatos, who passed away unexpectedly in 1974 and to whom the book is dedicated. The book is thus a summing up and stitching together of Feyerabend's general critique of rationalist philosophy of science, many of its passages are versions of earlier articles and essays. Feyerabend (1970) also famously, when contemplating writing his ideas in book form or as a letter to Lakatos, referred to it as "the stinkbomb" (211). In the book itself, Feyerabend (1975) testifies that he enjoys "leading people by the

nose in a rational way" (32), and in the autobiography he confesses that he "loved to shock people" (Feyerabend 1995, 142). Feyerabend seemed determined to wreak havoc within philosophy of science with *Against Method*.

An event, a festival, a collage, and a stinkbomb; *Against Method* seems to have had impact not only as a philosophy book but as something else. Why is this so? If *Against Method* was initially received with so much dismissiveness, repulsion, and ridicule as many Feyerabend scholars – and, indeed, Feyerabend himself – have suggested, why has it endured as an important work within the philosophy of science? If next to no philosophers agreed with Feyerabend's radical philosophy of science when it came out, to what does it owe its place in the canon of philosophy books in this field?

In this essay, I turn primarily to the first chapter of *Against Method*, where Feyerabend not only introduces his main reasons for an anarchist theory of scientific progress but also comments specifically on the role of argumentation to the growth and development of science, basing a textual-intertextual close reading on these pages. First, I present how Feyerabend rejects the role of argumentation in science altogether. In doing this, he employs a rhetorical strategy that I characterize as polemical in the sense that it constructs an enemy audience, consisting of rationalist philosophers of science. Second, I look to reviews of *Against Method* from the years following its first edition to see how the audience of philosophers of science actually reacted to the book. I find that the reviews, while often hostile, also in some cases recognize that the book's provocation might be fruitful to the philosophy of science field. Taking my que from Erin Rand's (2008) work on polemics, I argue that this is evidence of how the queer effects of polemics can unfold within scholarship. Finally, I argue that dynamic theories of rhetorical argumentation can better account for the workings of these effects than a static sense of argument as it might often be found within the analytical philosophy community that Feyerabend himself was addressing and stirring up with *Against Method*. While the book does not necessarily provide a compelling argument according to traditional

criteria of formal logic and other classic schools of argumentation studies, it can be considered a forceful, and even valuable, *rhetorical* artefact that works its lasting influence exactly as something else than a classic argument. I argue that this shows that polemics might be valuable, and even desirable, not only to political debate in the public sphere but also within more specialized communities in the technical sphere, and that polemical performances might be exactly what accounts for the lasting effects of some scholarship. I speculate that within these spheres, something like Robert Ivie's (2002) rhetorical "tricksters" can perform a vital role to scholarly, not just public, conversations and debates. We can view Paul Feyerabend in this light: a trouble-maker with a productive function within his field.

The 'Copenhagen School' of rhetorical argumentation studies—the loosely structured network of scholarship within which this essay situates itself—offers a productive theoretical and normative framework for thinking through the role of polemics in technical spheres as this school tends to recognize that dissensus plays an important role in public debates; arguably more so than reaching consensus, which is the ex- or implicit goal of many other theories or schools of argumentation. With this essay, I aim to broaden the perspective on this line of thought to investigate and critique arguments in technical spheres.

The Relevance and Effects of Polemics in Public and Scholarly Debates

Deriving from the Greek *polemos*, 'war', polemics is a form of discourse closely associated with eristics: the endeavor to thwart one's interlocutor—in this case, one's opponent or even enemy-using any verbal means necessary. Thus, the general meaning and usage of this word tends to be negatively loaded. However, in a recent publication, Ruth Amossy (2021) defends the role of polemics in democratic discourse. Polemics, she argues, are "an *argumentative modality* among others" (45, emphasis in original), which often has the function of aiding, not obstructing, "the

construction of a public sphere and of democratic deliberation" (145). Like Amossy, this essay disagrees with the standard view that polemics is solely a problematic form of rhetoric. This is not to say that polemical rhetoric is only and always *good*—far from it. However, we should hesitate to write it off as unproductive at all times merely because its production might not work in accordance with consensus-oriented theories of argumentation. Where this essay goes a different direction than Amossy is in the sense that she examines cases from disputes in wider public spheres "and not from scientific or philosophical controversies which obey other rules" (25). In treating the philosophical controversy of *Against Method* as a case of potentially productive polemical rhetoric, I challenge this view and seek an even wider perspective on the nature of polemics.

In order to gain a theoretical framework for understanding the rhetoric of a text such as *Against Method* as more than a problem for consensus-reaching, Erin J. Rand's 2008 article "An Inflammatory Fag and a Queer Form: Larry Kramer, Polemics, and Rhetorical Agency" is highly illuminating. According to Rand, "polemics are apt to be put to unexpected uses and to have unpredictable effects. Instead of viewing the unpredictability of the polemical form as a limitation to its usefulness, I understand it as the source of the polemic's productive possibilities to create change" (298). Thus, the polemical form is "productively excessive and provocatively queer" (ibid.). Here, "queer" does not refer to sexual or gender identity narrowly but to a much broader category of social life. Queerness, in this case, is the fundamental unpredictability of the effects of discursive practices such as polemics. Thus, Rand argues that in the case of the rhetoric of AIDS activist Larry Kramer, his polemical style of speech found an unexpected uptake in academic circles that Kramer neither seemed to intend nor could have predicted. What was *productively* queer about this surprising effect of Kramer's rhetoric was that scholars in the field of queer theory were able to utilize it as material for analysis; they were able to form their research field's academic identity through intellectual criticism of Kramer's polemics (311).

I find Rand's insights into the queer effects of polemical rhetoric in a scholarly context pertinent in the case of Feyerabend's *Against Method*. By almost any account of the polemical form or style, there is no doubt that Feyerabend can be deemed a polemicist – and he was often labeled exactly so. As I will show, Feyerabend is not only against method in *Against Method* but constructs an enemy audience of fellow philosophers of science within his text. According to Rand, "polemics always function in opposition to another persona, point of view, or ideology, the construction of the audience takes place in conjunction with the construction of an *enemy* (after all, it is difficult to imagine a polemic that does not rail 'against' someone or something)" (306, emphasis in original). She elaborates: "What is fascinating about polemics, then, is that the enemy and the audience are not only related, but closely aligned, if not barely distinguishable factions of the same groups" (307). This sets the audience of the polemical text, in Rand's sense, apart from Edwin Black's (1970) influential concept of the second persona. In the second persona, we look for features of the text that are "enticements not simply to believe something, but to *be* something" (119, emphasis in original). To be sure, the polemical text can, like any other rhetorical artefact, be examined and critiqued in a second persona perspective. However, polemical rhetoric, as I read and employ Rand's concept, seeks first and foremost to specifically construct the audience as enemy to the text's own point of view, and not, as such, to attain this audience's identification and adherence.[1]

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1. This does not mean, of course, that there might not be other audience constructions, second personae, in a polemical text that are not the enemy but are supposed to align with the views put forward. This aspect of polemical rhetoric brings to mind J. C. Meyer's (2000) treatment of humor and satire as a double-edged sword, or even Michael Billig's *Laughter and ridicule* (2005), where the rhetor makes one group the bud of the joke while inviting another to share this view. However, polemics cannot be juxtaposed completely with such accounts of humor and satire (although humor and satire often appear in polemical texts, *Against Method* included). We can, at least theoretically, imagine a polemical text addressed solely to the enemy audience, with no joke for a third party to recognize and react to.

Other rhetoricians similarly deal with concepts closely related to polemics. In her essay on "provocative style", Marie Lund Klujeff (2012) contends that "provocative style, mordant irony, and caustic sarcasm are not simply violations of deliberative ideals but vital elements of debate, helping to shape *presence*, structure argument, form opinion, and constitute an engaged and reflective audience" (101, emphasis in original). As Klujeff shows with her example of the controversy around Jostein Garder's condemnation of Israeli aggression in Lebanon in 2006, debate carried out in provocative style might not meet the usual criteria of "good" public debate but can still bring salience to certain politically relevant topics. Here, Klujeff, like Amossy, is talking about deliberative ideals of public debate as it appears among contestants in the wider societal debate, among politically engaged citizens in the public sphere. Similarly, Rand suggests that "polemics produce the public space that enables democratic struggles and political disputes" (308). However, I would argue that provocative style and polemics have an even wider application, being able to shape presence, structure argument, form opinion, and constitute an engaged and reflective audience – and, using Rand's terms, constituting enemies, audiences and publics – in, and around, *technical* spheres as well: that is, in arenas of argumentation "where more limited rules of evidence, presentation, and judgment are stipulated in order to identify arguers of the field and facilitate the pursuit of their interests" (Goodnight 2012, 202).

Some paths into this have already been shown within the rhetoric of science field. The most direct example might be John Angus Campbell's 1975 article, in which he argues that Charles Darwin was "a polemicist of the first order" (376), who navigated successfully in the larger debate on evolution by employing "conventional language, the conventional religious categories of popular thought and his own credibility to explain and lend credibility to his ideas" (377). Campbell's conception of what a polemicist does in order to gain that label, however, I find wanting. Speaking in a common language, appealing to popular values of one's time, and using one's own credibility seems to me like more general rhetorical strategies, and are often things we ask of a

"proper" rhetorical practice that seeks to produce common ground with its audience in order to persuade, even within technical fields. A more compelling account of polemics within scientific controversies is offered by Helen Constantinides (2001). Although ethos, not polemics, is the central concept driving her analysis of a specific controversy over the adaptationist programme in evolutionary biology, Constantinides does offer an explanation of how rhetorical moves inconsistent with traditional norms of scientific discourse within a technical sphere can play a productive role. In much the same way that I aim to show that *Against Method* did not turn out to be a success on the narrow criteria that his fellow philosophers accepted his arguments as valid but still ended up playing an important part to the field because of its polemical nature, Constantinides argues that "Gould and Lewontin's article [against adaptationism] was not successful in convincing readers of the narrow-minded dogmatism of adaptationists", but their "rhetorical stance was successful" (68) nonetheless. Constantinides attributes said success to biologists Richard Lewontin and Stephen Jay Gould's ability to balance their dual scientific ethos by arguing for the scientific contestability of adaptationism on a "deep structure" level, while employing an "ethos more consistent with humanism" on a "surface structure" (69) level, i.e., in their stylistic choices in the text. What unites my textual-intertextual reading of *Against Method* with Constantinides' reception-based reading of Lewontin and Gould is that the latter not only diverge in surface and deep structures of scientific ethos but employ strategies similar to Feyerabend's: "They flout the stereotypical neutral and objective language of the scientist using wit and sarcasm" (p. 66), Constantinides writes, referencing Gay Gragson and Jack Selzer's critique of the text.[2] Thus, not only does Constantinides show that a 'non-scientific' rhetoric is used at the surface level of scientific ethos, but also that Gould and Lewontins's sarcastic and witty – although, perhaps, not exactly polemical – prose had something to do with their successful rhetorical stance.

2. See also Gragson and Selzer 1993.

However, my sense of polemics is, on the one hand, and following Rand, somewhat stronger than Campbell's and, on the other, takes a different approach than Constantinides. What I am getting at is not the question of different dimensions of scientific ethos, nor of whether a rhetoric diverging from more traditional norms of scientific discourse can play a productive role in science or other scholarly environments. As I will develop in a bit more detail, I take this to be a fundamental assumption of the Rhetoric of Science field already. I am specifically applying Rand's idea of the queer effects of polemics to the field of scholarly work. On my account, the polemical scholar is polemical not because they employ rhetorical strategies challenging classical norms of scientific discourse as such within a technical sphere of argument but because they *construct an enemy audience in their text that can be assumed to fall in line with a large part of the text's actual audience of academic peers*. To construct an enemy audience is different from using wit and sarcasm in a scientific debate; the polemical rhetor emphatically—in direct and indirect ways—rejects the position and even the identity of their audience. In the case of *Against Method,* it is the intellectual positions and scholarly identity of Feyerabend's peers who become targets, not only of criticism but of ridicule and even malice. The *enemy* aspect of polemics stems largely from this source: Not only is the polemical text very much against something; it is *violently* against it in the sense that ridicule, malice, or, in perhaps a more contemporary language, *burns, roasts,* and *take-downs* are the discursive tools used to argue a given case. When we talk about argumentation, we often employ military of more general fighting metaphors: We "shoot down'" arguments, we "defeat" our opponent, etc. The polemical rhetor takes these metaphors not literally, but to heart. This rhetorical warfare and weaponry, I claim, can, surprisingly (and certainly not in all cases), be a way of advancing knowledge in a specialized field and is not necessarily a hindrance to the progress of knowledge. As my textual-intertextual reading shows, Feyerabend's "intellectual warfare" can indeed be seen as productively queer: In the ruins of the battle, a space is created for further discussions and developments within the

philosophy of science which might not have happened had Feyerabend not shaken the territory. I will attempt to clarify how he did so in the following.

'Anything goes': Against Method's Arguments against Argumentation in Science

Paul Feyerabend (1924-1994) was a unique and odd character within 20th century philosophy. Austrian-born, he participated in World War II as a lieutenant in Hitler's armed forces. On the Russian front, he was shot in the face, hand and spine during battle, leading to life-long disability (Motterlini 1999, 406). After the war, he drifted left politically – indeed, he would often "dismiss the war as something of an interruption of his previous life", in which he was mostly interested in physics, astronomy and mathematics as well as opera and theater – swinging back and forth between liberalism, Marxism, anarchism, and other systems of thought, never quite settling with any of them due to an intense aversion to dogmatism (ibid.). Having flirted with the idea of a career in acting, he subsequently pursued one in philosophy instead, getting his PhD in 1951 under the supervision of rationalist philosopher Viktor Kraft, former member of the Vienna Circle. His early philosophy was therefore heavily influenced by the Logical Positivism of this community of thinkers, but also of one of its opponents, Karl Popper, whom Feyerabend initially admired (Feyerabend 1978, 115). Later, however, Feyerabend would break decisively with Popper as well as with the heritage of the logical positivists. Working as a professor at the University of California, Berkeley, he became an infamous dissident within the philosophy of science, known primarily for his "anarchist epistemology" – which he also referred to as "Dadaist" epistemology. He developed this philosophical framework through the '60s and '70s, often in heated discussion with friend and philosopher colleague Imre Lakatos, and possibly influenced by the student revolts at Berkeley in the 60s (Martin 2019). *Against Method* was Feyerabend's first full-length book publication and was initially intended to include

a second part where Lakatos replied to Feyerabend's arguments, with the title *For and Against Method*.[3] However, Lakatos' untimely death in February 1974 obstructed this project, resulting in Feyerabend publishing his part alone at New Left Books the following year, teasingly dedicated to Imre Lakatos, "*Friend, and fellow-anarchist*"—the latter label being one that the rather conservative Lakatos would surely have rejected. Despite the friendship between the two (which, on the surface, would seem to contradict my claim that Feyerabend constructs an audience of enemies), Feyerabend does not go soft on his late friend and colleague in the pages of *Against Method*. Lakatos' response lacking, other philosophers of science had to engage in the rejoindering work instead.

As we shall see, the initial reception of *Against Method* was as stormy and many-sided as the life of its author. However, the legacy of the book lives on and *Against Method* has a close-to-canonical status within philosophy of science today. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* regards Feyerabend as "one of the twentieth century's most famous philosophers of science" (Preston 2020), and Ian James Kidd, in a positive review of the fourth edition in 2015—the publication of which is in itself a testimony to its endurance—contends that the book "was very much ahead of its time, sketching an account of the nature of science, and of its contested authority, that is very much in line with contemporary developments in the philosophy of science" (344). But this positive view of the philosopher Feyerabend and his *magnum opus* has not been shared by all in the more than four decades since its publication. Apart from many negative reviews and responses within the more specialized philosophy of science community, which I shall attend to later, Feyerabend also gained a reputation in broader technical and public spheres. In *Nature*, he was described as the "Salvador Dali of academic philosophy" (Theocharis and Psimopoulos 1987, 596), and *Scientific American* even did a

3. A work of this name was subsequently published, after Feyerabend's death, containing lectures and writings by Feyerabend and Lakatos, including the written correspondence between the two from the years 1968-1974. See Lakatos, Feyerabend and Motterlini, *For and Against Method*, 1999.

profile on Feyerabend, crowning him "The Worst Enemy of Science" (Hogan 1993).

When reading *Against Method*, it is not difficult to see why Feyerabend acquired the image of a philosophical dissident. The book's title is to be taken literally: Feyerabend completely denies that subscribing to any one method, or even a small set of methods, is fruitful to the development of science or human knowledge in general. In fact, he argues that scientific progress is more likely to come about when methodological prescriptions are *violated,* whether intentionally or by accident. Not only is Feyerabend highly skeptical as to whether a universally true method for science would ever come about; he also uses a large part of the book's pages to show how the history of science proves that a lack of method is productive. Many of these pages are preoccupied with the example of Galileo's arguments (or lack thereof) in favor of a heliocentric astronomy. According to Feyerabend (1975), "the Copernican view at the time of Galileo was inconsistent with facts" (55) and even "philosophically absurd" (64)—even though this view would later come to be understood as true compared to geocentrism. Galileo had to introduce an entirely new observation language to make credible the idea, preposterous at the time, that the earth was moving. In order to do so, he, according to Feyerabend, resorted to "*propaganda*" and "*psychological tricks* in addition to whatever intellectual reasons he [had] to offer" (81, emphasis in original). Thus, scientific knowledge progresses in large part *counterinductively*: by the willingness to introduce hypotheses inconsistent with known fact and theories, often by help of what Feyerabend regards as non-argumentative strategies such as propaganda. The political consequences of this view are briefly touched upon towards the end of the book. According to Feyerabend, there is nothing inherently special about science, and it should be regarded as an ideological framework among others. Thus, science and the state should be separated in the same way that religion and state are separate (in a US context): "While the parents of a six-year-old child can decide to have him instructed in the rudiments of the Jewish faith, or to omit religious instruction altogether, they do not have the similar freedom in the case of the

sciences. Physics, astronomy, history *must* be learned. They cannot be replaced by magic, astrology, or by a study of legends" (301, emphasis in original). From such comparisons it should be clear why this book had such a potential for causing grievances–at least if one holds science to be paramount to knowledge production and of unique cultural value.

So much for a general outline of *Against Method*. In what follows, I will focus its first chapter. Here, Feyerabend tells us why he thinks argumentation as such is counterproductive to science. Not only do I find this chapter fitting for a volume about rhetorical theories of argumentation—also, this is an opportune part of the book to close-read as a "microscopic study of [a] particular work" (Ceccarelli 2001b, 6) because *Against Method*'s central themes are laid out here and because this part of the book quite clearly shows how Feyerabend polemically provokes his audience of rationalist philosophers of science. Furthermore, a focused reading is better suited to the length available in this essay.

In this chapter, we become acquainted with one of Feyerabend's philosophical slogans, indeed his most famous one: *anything goes*. According to Feyerabend (1975), this is the only principle that can be sustained in science over time that will not at any point hinder the progress of scientific knowledge. The primary philosophical idea targeted by Feyerabend is "[t]he idea of a method that contains firm, unchanging, and absolutely binding principles for conducting the business of science" (23). He sets up two main arguments against this idea. The first is that the history of science shows us that all such rules and methods will be violated at some point or another (indeed, this is often exactly how progress is made) (ibid.). The second argument denies that in principle such firm, unchanging, and absolutely binding principles could even exist. In making both of these points, Feyerabend suggests that argument itself is often a hindrance to science, not a productive and necessary component, as is often assumed. Feyerabend is frequently lumped together with another, arguably more widely known philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, who famously viewed the growth of scientific knowledge not as a product of logic but of "argument and counterargument" and "persuasion

rather than proof" (Kuhn 1962, 152). However, Feyerabend seems to go a step further in dismissing arguments' productive role as such.[4]

As in any instance of human learning and thinking, science progresses, according to Feyerabend, not by careful and intentional reasoning by which an idea is deduced and *then* introduced to external reality, but by a process of *growth*. This growth has very little to do with arguments, and "where arguments do seem to have an effect, this is more often due to their *physical repetition* than to their *semantic* content" (Feyerabend 1975, 24, emphasis in original). What follows from this is that in order to apply rationalist thinking to science, this very idea of how to think must have come about by non-rational means in the first place, since rationalist philosophers have the relation between idea and action backwards (25). All kinds of external events precede and constitute one's faculty for thinking, forming ideas through a process of growth, not deliberate arguing and rational thinking. Thus, "[e]ven the most puritanical rationalist will then be forced to stop reasoning and to use *propaganda* and *coercion,* not because some of his *reasons* have ceased to be valid, but because the *psychological conditions* which make them effective, and capable of influencing others, have disappeared" (ibid., emphasis in original). Feyerabend then goes on to ask rhetorically (in more than one sense): "And what good is the use of an argument that leaves people unmoved?" (ibid.). Here we see that the "puritanical rationalist" is framed as the figure most opposed to Feyerabend's idea of natural scientific progress. We also meet more specific characters such as Karl Popper, and Lakatos' concept of research programmes is implicitly identified as an adversary position as well (26). However, it is a more general persona in, and audience to, the text that interests me here. After all, *Against Method*

4. The philosophy of science of Kuhn and Feyerabend, both working at Berkeley in the early 1960s, had many differences bot also important overlaps and similarities. According to Paul Hoyningen-Huene (2005), both can be seen as the first authors to take the concept of incommensurability (the treatment of which is outside of the scope of this essay) from the domain of mathematics and apply it to the philosophical study of scientific development.

addresses an academic community as a whole and was, as we will see, picked up by a number of philosophers strongly objecting to Feyerabend's anti-rationalism. I trace in this chapter, and throughout the book as a whole, a polemical strategy designed to invite Feyerabend's peers to identify with the text's rationalist philosopher persona, which he at the same time ridicules: implying that the rationalist is developmentally beneath a child (at least when it comes to the understanding of science and thinking). I call this strategy *hyper-infantilizing the rationalist*.

Hyper-infantilizing the Rationalist

In arguing against argumentation in science, and method more broadly, Feyerabend accompamnies his theme of growth-based scientific progress—as opposed to the idea of a 'rational' development—with several comparisons where the rationalist is deemed less than immature. The first I quote at length:

> Nobody would claim that the teaching of *small children* is exclusively a matter of argument (though argument may enter into it, and should enter into it to a larger extent than is customary), and almost everyone now agrees that what looks like a result of reason – the mastery of a language, the existence of a richly articulated perceptual world, logical ability – is due partly to indoctrination and partly to a process of *growth* that proceeds with the force of natural law (24, emphasis in original).

According to Feyerabend, it follows that this must also be true for adults and larger societal structures and institutions, including science: "We certainly cannot take it for granted that what is possible for a small child (…) is beyond the reach of his elders" (ibid.). It may seem at first that this is merely an opportune analogy or a way of describing, not rationalist philosophers, but merely their wrongheaded ideas about scientific development and progress. However, something more is at stake. Reading further, we learn that the rationalist himself (and it is a him, both throughout Feyerabend's text and in the academic environment of

the time) is unable to intellectually grow in a healthy way and only responds to indoctrination, much like pets[5]:

> Just as a well-trained pet will obey his master no matter how great the confusion in which he finds himself, and no matter how urgent the need to adopt new patterns of behavior, so in the very same way a well-trained rationalist will obey the mental image of *his* master, he will conform to the standards of argumentation he has learned, he will adhere to these standards no matter how great the confusion in which he finds himself, and he will be quite incapable of realizing that what he regards as the 'voice of reason' is but a *causal after-effect* of the training he has received. He will be quite unable to discover that the appeal to reason to which he succumbs so readily is nothing but a *political manoeuvre* (25, emphasis in original).

The rationalist is, in this humiliating analogy, unable to recognize the fundamental immaturity of his position. He is unable to develop naturally in his interactions with the world and can only repeat what his masters have told him, completely prey to "political manoeuvres". Again, with reference to the Popperian idea of starting any investigation with a defined problem, which you then attempt to solve or act upon in some way:

> Yet this is certainly not the way in which small children develop. They use words, they combine them, they play with them, until they grasp a meaning that has so far been beyond their reach. And the initial playful activity is an essential prerequisite of the final act of understanding. There is no reason why this mechanism should cease to function in the adult (26, emphasis in original).

Here, the theme of playing is introduced, the implication being that the rationalist 'pet' is simply too tamed by the 'voice of reason' to have the fun required to actually fulfil the "act of understanding". Feyerabend thus concludes the chapter, contrasting the attitude of

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5. Recall again here Feyerabend's remark about his enjoyment of leading people "by the nose". This metaphor brings to mind cattle being dragged by a nose ring. A pretty upsetting remark, comparing his readers to dumb animals. (I express here my gratitude to Leah Ceccarelli for bringing this interpretation to my attention.)

his philosophical colleagues and adversaries sharply with his own famous slogan:

> It is clear, then, that the idea of a fixed method, or of a fixed theory of rationality, rests on too naive a view of man and his social surroundings. To those who look at the rich material provided by history, and who are not intent on impoverishing it in order to please their lower instincts, their craving for intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, 'objectivity', 'truth', it will become clear that there is only *one* principle that can be defended under *all* circumstances and in *all* stages of human development. It is the principle: *anything goes*. (27-28).

The rationalists, then, are 'naïve', but not in a productive and playful sense. They seek 'intellectual security', instead of playing around, in order to "please their lower instincts". Truly, these thinkers are not even half as smart as children because they refuse to free themselves from the constraints of reason.

This rhetorical strategy of hyper-infantilizing the rationalist, then, contains a lot of the polemical potential of *Against Method*. This strategy, on my reading, serves to constitute an enemy audience for *Against Method*, and ridicule it in the same movement. Being no better than the superstitious dogmatists that their 'reason' and 'rationality' is supposed to set them apart from, Feyerabend's fellow philosophers of science are intellectually beneath young children in their clinging to principles of reason and logic. Whereas children usually know how to live and grow, and how to get acquainted with the world in an unafraid manner, the puritanical rationalist is not so brave, nor so experienced. This is the reason that I use the prefix *hyper*: For rationalist philosophers to become more authentically infantile, more akin to children, would, to Feyerabend, be an *improvement* in their thinking. In this way, *Against Method* casts its audience as even less mature than children. It would be good if rationalists, and many scientists as well, would learn how to play. But even this they cannot do.

The strategy of placing the rationalist mind developmentally beneath a child's, or similar to a pet's, is evident in *Against Method*'s first chapter and is a recurring theme throughout the

book. For instance, the critique of the critical rationalism associated with Popper is reiterated later on when Feyerabend states that science "often *does not start from a problem* but rather from some irrelevant activity, such as playing (…)" (175-176, emphasis in original). In some passages, this comparison between rationalists and children become less stable. In the book's last pages, for instance, Feyerabend laments the dogmatic rationalism of contemporary science education, saying that the "mature citizen is not a man who has been *instructed* in a special ideology, such as Puritanism, or critical rationalism" (308, emphasis in original). Here, Feyerabend seems to be privileging *maturity*, not the playful qualities of the child. It seems here that the mature citizen is more like a child, which must then, considering the hyper-infantilizing in chapter one, somehow be mature in the sense that it knows how to play around and create knowledge naturally. The analogies become somewhat muddled, but no less polemical at that.

Thus, the provocations inherent in *Against Method*'s arguments against argumentation in science runs throughout the work, even when Feyerabend is not directly concerned with argumentation. (This is one of the reasons that I have chosen the book's first chapter as the textual 'microcosm' for my close reading—this pervasive strategy is set out most strongly and directly here.) This is of course not the only rhetorical strategy employed in *Against Method*. It is a rhetorically rich text, using arguments from example, graphical illustrations, the common logos appeal of the prose of analytic philosophy, etc. Nevertheless, I regard the strategy of hyper-infantilizing the rationalist as central in the polemical construction of an enemy audience in *Against Method*. It is a pervasive and recurring strategy designed to demean the epistemic authority of the main portion of Feyerabend's peers.[6] As my reading has shown, it differs from the many other criticisms of specific rationalists throughout the book in that it lies at the heart

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6. Feyerabend does target specific philosophers also in *Against Method*, of whom his former mentor Karl Popper is repeatedly ridiculed, but this hardly makes for the construction of an enemy *audience*; at least not as comprehensive an audience as to gain notoriety in the field and to trigger as vehement a push-back as *Against Method* turned out to do.

of Feyerabend's general argument in favor of the 'anything goes' attitude, in itself provocative.

So far, I have shown the polemical *potential* of *Against Method*—how an enemy audience of Feyerabend's peers is constructed at the heart of the text's central argument. In the following section, I look into this audience's reception of *Against Method* in order to qualify whether and how these peers were, in fact, provoked by Feyerabend's polemics.

A Clowning Conman or a Master of Profitable Confusion? Reviewers' Receptions of Against Method

If we are to consider *Against Method* "the Woodstock of philosophy", as proposed by Hacking, it was not one in tune with the 'peace, love and harmony' ideals of the hippie movement that one might associate with this event, at least if we are to understand most commentators of the work. As John Preston (1997) puts it, "the reviews went way beyond what normally counts as bad press in academic circles" (170). Feyerabend's ideas were already hotly contested, and his first full-length book publication only seemed to bring more wood, if not petroleum, to the bonfire of criticism. Although Feyerabend himself seemed to have anticipated this outcome, he was nevertheless hit hard by the negative response and, in turn, responded with even more wickedness (a term he himself used about his writings on several occasions[7]), including a third and final part of his 1978 follow-up *Science in a Free Society*, titled "Conversations with Illiterates" (123-217). It is curious that Feyerabend seemed to have wanted to provoke rationalist philosophers of science but then reacted so poorly to the push-back this provocation set off. Feyerabend (1995) himself indicated that he was deeply troubled by the negative reception of his "stinkbomb", often even wishing that he "had never written that fucking book" (147).

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7. The Subject Index of the book event containing a directory for where to find "wicked remarks", of which 22 such instances are listed (Feyerabend 1975, 339).

What did all this bad blood in philosophy of science circles look like? And was it really *that* bad? The overwhelmingly negative reception of Feyerabend's work is often referenced, but rarely, to my knowledge, analyzed more systematically. In the following, I will supplement my own reading of Feyerabend's polemics with an intertextual reading of a number of academic reviews of *Against Method* following its first publication. Here I draw on Leah Ceccarelli's textual-intertextual close reading approach as laid out and applied in her *Shaping Science with Rhetoric* (2001b). Ceccarelli, too, is interested in the impact of scholarly works and uses reception texts to qualify her reading of works by Theodosius Dobzhansky, Erwin Schrödinger, and Edward O. Wilson, suggesting that Dobzhansky and Schrödinger were able to inspire new interdisciplinary alliances within scientific communities, while Wilson was less successful at this. A major innovation of this book is Ceccarelli's methodological approach of expanding the close reading praxis to reception texts. Thus, she urges the rhetorical critic to "conduct a close textual analysis not only of the primary text, but also of the intertextual material produced by audience members who were responding to it", which can provide "a more reliable connection between internal form and external function" (8) of a rhetorical artifact. I find that this approach is not only instructive in determining the effects on audiences that the close reader of the primary text can only hint at; it is also useful for determining whether conventional understandings of the reception of a text hold up to scrutiny. In the following, I aim to do both of these things. While a textual-intertextual reading is no universal key to understanding 'what the audience thought' of a text, it does provide qualification on the text's reception, especially with audiences like academics, who are a highly 'textual' community, often discussing issues in their fields in publicly available writing. In reading the reviews of *Against Method,* then, we can qualify how Feyerabend's polemics were actually picked up by other philosophers of science. We can then better determine how these philosopher colleagues reacted to the polemical nature of *Against Method* specifically—regardless of whether they ended up subscribing to Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism or not.

This, I claim, tells us something essential about the effects of Feyerabend's polemical scholarship; we gain insight into whether the audience was completely pushed away or if something more productive happened too.

As a fundamentally intertextual genre, the academic journal review article seeks to discuss and evaluate the validity and durability of claims put forward in what will usually be a recent work by (an)other scholar(s) within a disciplinary community. As such, the journal review inserts itself in a vast and open-ended web of texts in the specific area under consideration. As Charles Bazerman (1993) puts it, scientific and scholarly "[r]epresentation of intertext" is "a strategic site of contention, for it is the site at which communal memory is sorted out and reproduced, at which current issues and communities are framed, and dynamics established, pushing the research front towards one future or another" (20).[8] This makes the journal article especially relevant to the study of the reception of the ideas put forth in *Against Method* (adding to the fact that Ceccarelli's approach lends itself well to a community expressing itself in written form, as well as the more practical reason that journal reviews are relatively easy to find and access).

I restricted my material to English language reviews in academic journals between 1975 (when the first edition of *Against Method* was published) and 1978 (when Feyerabend responded to his critics in *Science in a Free Society*).[9] I surveyed Google Scholar, Proquest, Ebsco, Jstor, and WoS and was able to access and read a total of 18 such reviews. I regard this to be a sufficient number to gain an understanding of how other scholars and philosophers of science reacted to *Against Method,* even as I recognize that there might be more reviews I was not able to find. The reviews I did find were not selected on any other terms than that they reviewed this specific book.

8. See also Bazerman 1988.
9. A more lengthy investigation of the "polemical case of Paul Feyerabend" could include his responses to his critics published in this work; and *then* look at the reviews of *this* book, and so forth. This is work for another time.

My first discovery was that the common impression that the contemporary reception of *Against Method* was less than favorable is not unfounded. This is not surprising in light of my reading of how Feyerabend constructs an enemy audience by hyper-infantilizing the rationalist philosopher of science. It is hard to see how any philosopher who even remotely identifies with the rationalist position would take up the philosophical position in *Against Method* when this very position is ridiculed not only in wicked remarks in the footnotes but at the heart of the philosophical argument. Thus, many reviewers evaluate Feyerbend's dismissal of scientific method and rationality negatively and find his defense of epistemological anarchism/Dadaism unconvincing, if not downright appalling. Feyerabend is accused of arguing against a straw man position (Cantor 1976; Nagel 1977), of "posturings and misplaced trendiness" (Harré 1977, 295) and of "spouting *enfant terrible*-ish pseudo-radical rhetoric" (Curthoys and Suchting 1977, 338). His arguments are deemed "entirely bogus" (Worrall 1978, 281), "a tremendous blunder" (Lieberson 1977, 490) and Feyerabend's "cognitive claims" are judged "nonsensical", but also "incompatible with just about every action in which we must engage to survive"(Nagel 1977, 1134). Some reviewers take issue with Feyerabend's extravagant and provocative style. Thus, John Watkins (1978) states: "Feyerabend often complains that he is not read properly. I say that he often writes so that he cannot be read properly" (339). Likewise, John Worrall (1978) charges that even when Feyerabend does make good points, they are "obscured by the engaging rhetoric which accompanies them" (286). The generally polemical nature of the book is also commented on in most reviews. *Against Method* is described as "provocative" (McGill 1976, 126; Agassi 1976, 173), and "written in the form of a saucy challenge to the friends of Reason, a style the reader is certain to find captivating or pretentious according to his tastes" (Wilson 1978, 108). Some reviews are so strongly dismissive that I suspect that some of the scolding passages in them are responsible for the impression that the reception of *Against Method* was bad *overall*. But as I will

show, not even these reviews were without praise. First, however, the scolding:

Joseph Agassi's 1976 review ranks in the very top of "bad press" reviews of *Against Method*, starting out by simply asking: "How do you read a book which extols lies? Do you at least admire its author for his excessive honesty and take literally what he says? Or do you consider him a mere con-man?" (165). Agassi seems thoroughly displeased with Feyerabend's insistence on a playful Dadaist attitude to science, which he finds so ambiguous and shallow that it hardly makes any sense: "Feyerabend only plays the clown; he is not the clown; what he really is I cannot say; he may just happen to be a defender of the Established Order" (166). The review is sarcastic and mocking in what seems like an attempt to mirror Feyerabend's own polemics. Agassi refers to Feyerabend's alleged division of "Bad Guys" and "Good Guys" within philosophy and even degenerates into deliberate childish language and exclamations: "But why this pooh-pooh?" (170), "Tut tut" (171), and in a questionable passage mocking Feyerabend's engagement with Asian practices of science and politics: "Ban-zai!" (ibid.) and "Let a thousand flowers bloom!" (172), Agassi clearly takes issue with Feyerabend's attack on his audience of fellow philosophers who are deemed dogmatists: "Even some of Feyerabend's best friends are bloody dogmatists: This volume is dedicated to, and was planned to be written in collaboration with, Imre Lakatos who was, alas! a mafioso (210) and a sheer terrorist (181, 200)". (Ibid.) He goes on to consider whether *Against Method* "should be dismissed as a bad joke" (173). Just about as dismissive as Agassi, Ernest Gellner (1975) considers *Against Method* to be "a rather idiosyncratic book" (331) in which "Feyerabend has invented a game at which he cannot lose" (337). Consistently referring to Feyerabend's philosophical endeavors as "clowning", Gellner mockingly mimics the author: "I, Paul Feyerabend, am fooling and clowning for all I'm worth, at this very moment, and all the time" (333). These gestures suggest a push-back to Feyerabend's hyper-infantilizing of the rationalist position where the accusation is turned around on Feyerabend. To Gellner, Feyerabend is guilty of "Dadaist trumpet-blowing" (340)

in which "a melange of truisms and extravagances (hedged by self-characterisation as deliberate provocation) is presented as a recipe for our liberation" (341). *Against Method* is labeled a "hysteria of protest", and Gellner confesses that he is "just embarrassed at seeing someone make such an exhibition of himself" (ibid.). Once again, he levels the accusation of infantilism back at Feyerabend: "This motive seems to drive the author to any position of supposed maximum outrage, in accordance with the well-known internal mechanics of tantrums, when the child looks round for the most potent verbal missile that may be to hand" (342). It all ends up being simply too much for Gellner, whose conclusion to the review is worth quoting at length:

> The trouble is that clowning only has charm if it is good-natured and has an element of humanity and humility. This clowning is persistently rasping, boastful, derisive and arrogant; its attitude to what is rejected is aggressive and holier-than-thou, and opponents are not allowed to benefit from the all-permissive anarchism; the frivolity contains a markedly sadistic streak, visible in the evident pleasure taken in trying (without success) to confuse and browbeat the 'rationalists', i.e. people who ask questions about knowledge in good faith. This is why what might otherwise seem a harmless piece of Californian-Viennese *Schmalz* leaves such a disagreeable taste in the mouth (ibid.).

Similarly, in a stormy accusatory passage, Rom Harré (1977) takes issue with what he reads as the political implications of Feyerabend's philosophy of science:

> Indeed, though the rhetoric is radical most readers of a radical persuasion will not find the underlying exploitative ideology far to seek. […] Indeed, Professor Feyerabend seems to insist on the idea that success or power must go to those who have the least respect for consistency and truth in the pursuit of some kind of exploitative paradise of pleasure (295).

Reading these reviews—their take-downs so severe that they seem like character assassinations—it is tempting to conclude that *Against Method* was simply a philosophical failure. But however

harsh these reviewers are, they are not entirely dismissive (except, perhaps, for Gellner). Harré (1977), so appalled by Feyerabend's pursuit of an exploitative paradise of pleasure, nevertheless recognizes that the examination of the case of Galileo "lifts [Feyerabend's] book into a major contribution to the philosophy of science" (295-296). Agassi (1976) surprisingly ends his review on a positive note: "[*Against Method*] is annoying but full of delights too. It looks as if the author tries to be impish and get away with anything. I confess my sympathy is with the author, and this review is simply an expression of regret over the loss of an ally to the forces of irresponsibility and irrationalism" (173). Agassi even ends up, after all his sarcasm and ridicule, conceding that the 'crime' of *Against Method* succeeds: "What is my verdict? In my opinion for what it is worth, does Feyerabend get away with murder? I think, yes." (p. 177) In a similar vein, John Worrall (1978), although declaring that method will survive Feyerabend's attack, recognizes the effect of the attack nonetheless: "But so far as its central negative arguments are concerned, it does seem to me that although 'rationalist methodology' does not escape from Feyerabend's attack entirely unscathed, it receives no mortal wounds. 'Method' lives!" (295). The theme of attack and survival of the rationalist position is recurring in these reviews, sometimes with gothic overtones: "But [Feyerabend] does drive yet another stake and this time a formidable one, through the heart of the vampire of logicism" (Harré 1977, 298). Worrall even asserts that *Against Method* "is *essential reading* for all those interested in the problem of status of scientific knowledge. It will (I trust) win few serious converts, but non-anarchists will benefit from reading it because they will find in it much to challenge their own ideas" (294, emphasis added).

Some reviewers, again contrary to the 'bad press' conception, actually give entirely positive reviews. One reviewer, Andrew Lugg (1977), makes the curious move of ascribing to Feyerabend an approval of rationality in science after all—just not a *special* rationality preserved for science only. According to Lugg, "[t]his enables us to see his writings as something other than a slew of aphorisms, jokes, and *bons mots,* interspersed with acute (or not

so acute) historical sketches" (774, emphasis in original). Another claims that Feyerabend on certain points "turns out to be right in spite of himself" (Finnochiaro 1978, 239, underlining in original). Still others have no need for this kind of charitable reconstruction. Husain Sarkar (1978), playing along, says that he "profoundly agree[s]" with much of what *Against Method* says and that he has a "deep appreciation" of the book, but that the review will be written in a "negative tone"—from the point of a rationalist who is faced with the challenge of defending methodology in science (35). David R. Topper (1975) thinks that *Against Method* is a "brilliant and exciting book" (394) with which he mostly agrees except for the concluding pages about epistemological anarchism's political implications. Ian Mitroff (1976) is thoroughly delighted with *Against Method* and shows no desire to "look beyond" Feyerabend's polemical rhetoric:

> Paul Feyerabend is not the kind of man who inspires one to remain passive. He does not merely "write a book" in the conventional sense but he literally assaults his readers in his attempt to reach them and to engage them. As a result, he inspires passion. You either passionately like him (and not just his book), or, you detest him. Let me therefore start with a confession. I am a passionate enthusiast of Feyerabend. I not only like the content of what he says but the honest and emotional way in which he says it (346).

The polemical expression of *Against Method* is thus applauded by several reviewers. It is deemed a "highly entertaining book" (Cantor 1976, 272), "a lively and spirited discussion" (G.B.O. 1976, 127) and an "exciting work" (Sarkar 1978, 35). Jonathan Lieberson (1977) acknowledges that Feyerabend "writes very well" (483), and V.J. McGill (1976) appreciates the "good humor which prevail [sic]" (130). More importantly, however, some of the more negative reviewers still see the value in *Against Method*'s attacks on reason as more than entertainment, which we saw in Agassi's, Harré's and Worrel's acknowledgements above. Thus, Tomas Kulka (1977):

> Leaving aside the fact that there are many interesting ideas and some nicely wicked attacks on contemporary scientism, the chief value of the book lies, in my opinion, in its unmitigated radicalism. (…) Feyerabend seems to be the first to take his relativism seriously and to follow it out all the way (286).

This aspect is key to understanding the potential of polemical scholarship as manifest in the case of *Against Method*: Many reviewers indeed recognize that this provocative book, while not philosophically 'correct', is useful to the field. M.J. Scott-Taggert (1976) describes the book as "noisy, polemical, and designed to irritate" and at the same time "a powerful challenge to those philosophers of science who, perhaps taking refuge in the alleged denial that we can argue from facts to values, say how the scientist ought to proceed while ignoring the ways in which he does proceed, and proceed successfully" (294). Lieberson (1977), who is very much against *Against Method*, concludes that:

> "even if (…) an initiation into 'Epistemological Anarchism' affords, like skepticism, but a transitory dislocation and reprieve from the confrontation of pre-existing problems of knowledge, Feyerabend's striking defense of it seems to me to fulfill the task set to all good philosophy of crystallizing complacently held opinions into an absorbing and profitable confusion" (491-492).

The same recognition is evident in the positive reviews. Thus Mitroff (1976):

> *Against Method* is a good book, possibly a great one. It is full of contradictions, over and understatements, and enough ad hominem statements to give even the most liberal student of rhetoric apoplexy. This is not to condemn Feyerabend. Indeed, I applaud him all the more for breaking through the hypocrisy, dullness, and triviality of so much of contemporary academic philosophy (347).

So is it true that *Against Method*—"the most radical theory of scientific methodology yet proposed" (Topper 1975, 394)—was unilaterally rejected and/or misunderstood? I think this widely accepted conclusion is simplified and misleading. While few of

Feyerabend's peers ended up accepting his arguments against argumentation in science and his motto of 'anything goes', it is obvious to me that *Against Method* still had a lot to contribute in the ongoing discussions within philosophy of science, with its noisy, polemical, irritating intervention in the field. Reviewers recognize Feyerabend's ability to entertain and cause profitable confusion, even driving stakes through logician vampires' hearts and getting away with murder. Gellner (1975), perhaps the reviewer least impressed by *Against Method,* even at one point recognizes it "as a phenomenon rather than a serious position" (334), opening the door for it to be useful in some sense. It seems that here we find the book's event-like quality, as put forth by Hacking: Through its polemical form it was able to seriously challenge prevailing ideas and dogmas of its time, opening up a space for heated defenses and discussion for decades to come.

Rhetoric as Obstacle to or Driving Force of Against Method?

I have argued above that Feyerabend's polemical scholarship, while receiving violent push-backs, was able to open up a space for productive debate within philosophy of science. However, there seems to be a widespread assumption that the content of *Against Method* should be scrutinized only regarding the 'clarity' of the text, or lack thereof. In this rather traditional view in analytic philosophy, Feyerabend's text can only be more or less clear, either read correctly—as intended by the author, that is—or *mis*read. This becomes evident when consulting the few major works on Feyerabend's philosophy. Here, Feyerabend's contrarian philosophical voice is often regarded as nothing more than a regrettable source of confusion. Eric Oberheim, who in his 2006 *Feyerabend's Philosophy* makes an admirable attempt to rescue Feyerabend from the label of being simply anti-philosophical, and hence not worth taking seriously, sees the rhetorical side of Feyerabend as a hindrance to understanding the greatness of his thinking. As he puts it, "Feyerabend often complained bitterly

about being misread, but it was at least partly his own fault. His texts are filled with rhetoric, polemic and intentional provocations" (2). He goes on to say that Feyerabend's rhetoric *should* be appreciated but what he seems to mean by this is that it should be detected in order to be overcome: "A little more attention to detail and a better appreciation of Feyerabend's rhetoric's [sic] could have prevented at least three decades of a perpetuating misunderstanding" (p. 34). Another full-length work on Feyerabend's philosophy of science, Robert P. Farrell's *Feyerabend and Scientific Values* (2003), similarly suggests that the "popular conception of Feyerabend's later philosophy [including *Against Method*] is a completely misleading one" (1). However, Farrell does not touch upon Feyerabend's own rhetoric but focuses his book's section "Feyerabend's Rhetoric: Propaganda, Irrationality and Subjective Wishes" (39-43) on Feyerabend's idea that Galileo used propaganda to hammer home his Copernicanism in astronomy. Thus, Feyerabend being a rhetorician *himself* is often either seen as a regrettable aspect of his academic career, or bypassed altogether. Viewed differently, however, one might say that these 'perpetual misunderstandings' are exactly *what is rhetorically engaging about Feyerabend's thinking in the first place*. That is, the agency of *Against Method*—understood as its potential to effect changes in the community of philosophy of science and beyond—may reside in its polemics. *Against Method* might be valuable to philosophy of science not necessarily because it can be *deciphered* once and for all, its true arguments *revealed* and then critiqued on objective terms (an idea that much of Feyerabend's thinking strongly objects to), but because it *resists* such deciphering and revelation and instead sets the field alight. That the lasting effect of *Against Method* is, at least in part, caused by its polemics is supported by its reviews. As I hope to have shown, reviewers rarely agreed with Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism and were often hostile to his arguments. But this is not the end of the story. Many reviewers were delighted with and/or intrigued by Feyerabend's contrariness and provocations. Indeed, some of them viewed this as a valuable aspect of the work itself. So, *Against Method* was received with

not only repulsion but also philosophical curiosity.[10] I suggest that it is in this tension between rejection and interest, made possible by Feyerabend's polemics and provocations, that the queer effects of *Against Method* reside.

I do not claim that this settles the matter of *Against Method*'s sustained relevance to and canonical status in the philosophy of science field. The discussions of this particular work, and of Feyerabend's philosophy in general, have of course been continued on multiple fronts in the four decades following the work's first publication and the immediate reactions of its reviewers—a discussion that has outlived Feyerabend himself. Even its first publication's contemporary effects cannot be reduced to the reviewers' reactions; the work itself and its influence is bound to be far more complex. Still, I think that the immediate reactions inevitably provide a hint of the potential for endurance that inhabits this particular book. If all aspects of *Against Method* were so universally rejected at its publication as is sometimes claimed, it is hard to see how it was able to survive and thrive to become a classic.

I also do not claim that philosophers are so myopically obsessed with abstract argument structures and that they never consider wider contexts and philosophical ideas. Indeed, context is a considerable part of the work within the history of philosophy. For instance, in his brilliant 2019 article "'The Battle is on': Lakatos, Feyerabend, and the Student Protests", Eric C. Martin points to the fact that "Feyerabend composed [*Against Method*] in the heart of America's student protests" (21) at the University of Berkeley and suggests that this might have had important implications for his thinking. Martin also, like other commentators on Feyerabend, brings attention to his "philosophical voice", which he characterizes as "ultra-contrarian" (18), and he points to the pleasure such contrariness gave him. According to Martin, then,

10. Here I should add that even repulsion can end up being valuable in the larger picture. The bromide 'any press is good press' holds in a lot of instances, and it is hard to deny that the 'bad press' for *Against Method* was 'good' in a publicity perspective in the sense that Feyerabend got the attention he did partly because of the provocative style in which he wrote.

we cannot fully understand *Against Method* without considering the social and political context that Feyerabend found himself in when he was assembling his stink bomb: "It is an understatement to say the book resonated with a counter-culture that was critical of established authority" (31). However, it seems to me that the philosophical community, historians or otherwise, has had a tendency to miss the value of *Against Method*, simply because it was not a success according to narrow criteria of philosophical argumentation but instead worked its effects queerly through polemics.

Polemics and Rhetorical Argumentation in Technical Spheres

In courses on rhetorical argumentation at the University of Copenhagen, students will likely become familiar with Charlotte Jørgensen and Merete Onsberg's (2008, 101-115) four criteria for evaluating arguments in public debate: Is the argument correct, effective, fair[11] and interesting? These criteria, the authors claim, are different from criteria of formal argumentation. Formal arguments need not be effective nor interesting; their paramount criterion for success is *soundness*. The logician, when assessing real life arguments, will first and foremost ask: Is it possible that the argument's premises are true but the conclusion false? If not, the arguer should be more or less home safe as far as the logician is concerned. Other schools of argumentation theory are more pragmatic and base their theory on an ideal of dialogue. The Pragma-Dialectic school famously considers the general function of argumentation as a discursive endeavor to resolve differences of opinion (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984; 2004). Rhetorical conceptions of practical argumentation, however, ask for something more, and sometimes for something else entirely. Jørgensen and Onsberg's (2007) criterion of *interesting* seems to set itself apart the most. An interesting argument is an argument in

11. For a specification on what fairness is to denote in this context, see Jørgensen 2007, p. 170.

which "the speaker presents the audience with something *new* or *controversial*" (107, my translation). An audience has no need for self-evident statements, platitudes, and clichés, however soundly crafted they may be. Furthermore, a bored or indifferent audience cannot be persuaded, in either a narrow or broad sense of this term. We may here reiterate Feyerabend's rhetorical question: What good is an argument that leaves people unmoved? That is, this essay's reading of *Against Method* is informed by what I take to be central tenets of the Copenhagen School, which takes it in a direction that many, if not most, other schools of argumentation studies could not. In looking mainly for 'correct' inferences and not effective arguments, philosophical conceptions of argumentation overlook the extent to which whether something is true or false is not the issue—or, at least, not the whole story (Kock 2009a).

Furthermore, I take the idea that dissensus is not necessarily something to be avoided or overcome but is integral to democratic deliberation as another central tenet of the Copenhagen School. With Christian Kock (2009b), the rhetorical argumentation scholar can acknowledge that "dissensus may persist indefinitely because values differ, and this is legitimate" (106). Granted, Kock is here (like Jørgensen and Onsberg above) talking about practical argumentation, which rhetoricians often contrast not only with informal logic, pragma-dialectics, Habermasian public sphere theories of rational deliberation, etc., but also with *scientific* argumentation. I will argue, however, that Copenhagen School ideas have a lot to contribute to the study of argumentation in scientific/technical spheres.

The ideas that arguments should be interesting and that dissensus can be legitimate, even necessary, in argumentation broadly considered open the door to polemics in ways that other theories of argumentation do not. When considering the value of polemics and provocative arguments in the case of *Against Method*, Christopher Tindale's (2017) distinction between static and dynamic senses of argument is useful. Following Tindale, we may refer to theories of argumentation that are merely concerned with formally correct/incorrect arguments as the *static sense of*

argument. This sense of argument has a *dynamic* counterpart more suitable to rhetorical situations of real life arguing. I quote Tindale at length:

> The static sense of argument sees arguments as products with no essential connection to the argumentative situation from which they arose. They are inert pieces of discourse, connected statements that can be judged "good" or "bad" merely in terms of their structures. (This is clearly the case with the traditional model and still the case generally with informal logic models). By contrast, a dynamic sense of argument sees arguments as social events, personalized by those engaged in them. They are alive with meaning and movement, and should only be judged "good" or "bad" in light of consideration of the entire argumentative situation (including the participants) (25).

I think that such a dynamic, rhetorical sense of argumentation, where we do not only seek out *sound* arguments but also *interesting* ones, accounts much better for the canonical status of *Against Method* than does its static counterpart. Indeed, as made evident by the reception from the reviewers, the fact that Feyerabend's arguments against argumentation in science were *interesting* might be what made them *effective*. The dynamic sense of argument explains the value of *Against Method* in ways that a static sense never could: We can view the book as a 'social event'. *Against Method* became an event to participate in, whether by arguing vigorously against it or by enthusiastically appreciating its challenge to the philosophy of science. This, I claim, accounts for the lasting influence of the book, its event-like quality; its 'Woodstocky' hype and importance to the field. This, I would argue, is interesting in and of itself and a welcome nuancing of ideas about Feyerabend's philosophical influence. But more importantly, it also tells us something about the role and function of polemics within more specialized areas of debate. I think that *Against Method* and its immediate reception shows us that a dynamic sense of argument, where arguments should also be interesting and where polemics can play a legitimate role in advancing debates, showing itself to be productively queer, also

plays a part in constructing "a social space" (Amossy 2021, p. 159) in technical spheres of argument, like it can in public spheres.

Further, it seems to me that the static sense of argumentation described by Tindale is more or less what Feyerabend is arguing against in his rejection of argumentation in science. For Feyerabend (1975), the dynamic sense is less problematic to science as he is using the word 'argumentation' to mean formal and informal (static) senses of argument, and "interests, forces, propaganda and brainwashing techniques" (p. 25) to mean rhetorical (dynamic) senses of argument. (Although 'rhetoric' is edited away in subsequent editions of *Against Method*, the first edition's Subject Index does include "rhetoric" at pages "1-309" [p. 337].)[12] This is not to say that rhetoric is reducible to the dirtiest tricks in the communication toolbox, although these, too, are of course highly rhetorical. I merely suggest that a dynamic view of argumentation both accounts best for the quality and effectiveness of *Against Method*, and, interestingly, falls somewhat in line with much of what Feyerabend had to say about the progress and development of scientific ideas.

Of course, I am making no novel claim in stating that actors in technical fields like science and the academic world employ rhetorical strategies broadly among each other; this is a basic assumption of the Rhetoric of Science field as a whole (See Wander 1976; Ceccarelli 2001a; Miller and Ceccarelli in press). It is a common understanding in Rhetoric of Science that scientists *do* argue rhetorically, even among peers (Overington 1977), and that they *should* make a greater effort to construct arguments in accordance with rhetorical criteria when communicating to the wider public (Fahnestock 2020; Pietrucci and Ceccarelli 2019). However, texts in this field have tended to focus on how the rhetoric of scientists and scholars generates its credibility and rhetorical effectiveness first and foremost in its appeal to

12. Indeed, there may be a connection, so far underexplored, between Feyerabend's ideas about 'rhetoricity' in his own work, its bearing on scientific progress, and movements in rhetorical argumentation studies around the same period. Famously stating that "rhetoric is epistemic" in 1967, Robert L. Scott asserted that rhetoric, not formal modes of argumentation, is the driving force of knowledge.

logos—what Joseph Gusfield (1976) has called a "windowpane" theory of scientific language (16) and Alan P. Gross (1990) has called science's "useful illusion: for scientists, the results of science depend not on argument but on nature herself" (32). Moreover, audience studies of scientific discourse have tended to highlight accommodation to the target audience's beliefs and values as a basis for positive evaluation of a given text's argumentation and effects. Indeed, Ceccarelli's 2001 book, from which this essay draws much inspiration, ends up negatively evaluating Edward O. Wilson's attempt to inspire interdisciplinarity because he failed to "demonstrate an appreciation for the intellectual work" of humanities and social science scholars and instead provoked them by casting them as "ignorant, misguided, lazy, or primitive" (151). While this may claim be true in the case of Wilson, my study of *Against Method* suggests that there may be times when scholarship, aimed, harshly and directly, at an audience of peers, can be productively queer when employing polemical rhetorical strategies of argumentation. In other words, polemical scholarship like Feyerabend's, to work its effects, need not be broadly accepted by its intended audience in accordance with the intention of its author; it may produce them in roundabout ways by pushing its audience *away*. Instead of becoming an accepted and recommended philosophy, Feyerabend's epistemological anarchism became an event in the philosophy of science, a space wherein and against which other philosophers could and did develop their arguments and identities. Though I am not 'against method' in Feyerabend's radical sense, I agree with him that a little chaos can be profitably confusing in some cases—*Against Method* itself being an example.

Tricksters in the Technical Sphere

Kenneth Burke (1973) used the metaphor of a parlor conversation to describe the ongoing rhetorical development of intellectual life and ideas (110-111). The Burkean parlor is a familiar picture within rhetorical and composition studies: Ideas about the world

are not created 'from scratch' by the individual thinker but are developed within a heated discussion that preceded the individual and will go on after the individual has left the parlor. It is the steady stream and substitution of interested and engaged interlocutors over time that moves thinking forward within a field. One might also imagine, however, that the interlocutors in a parlor would suddenly—by coincidence or design—constitute a combination of people who mostly agree on the subjects under consideration, or at least do not disagree enough to summon any resistance to a point put forward. Differing views would be politely recognized and attention would turn to something else: the match on TV or the exchange of harmless small talk. Might the entering of a rather rowdy guest, slamming the parlor doors wide open upon entry, be what was needed to get the talk going again?

In line with my reimagining of Burke's parlor metaphor above, I will draw a final parallel to a rhetorical concept relating to criticism of debates in the public sphere that might prove useful in technical spheres as well: Robert Ivie's (2002) concept of the rhetorical trickster.[13] In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks in New York City, Ivie cautions against ideals of democratic deliberation that seek to exclude the 'rowdy' rhetoric of actually existing political debate. "[A] strictly rational model of deliberation," Ivie contends, "masks elite privilege and power" (284), as was seen in the years following the 9/11 attacks where dissent to the subsequent war efforts was largely silenced. Ivie introduces the concept of the rhetorical trickster, inspired by the myth of Old Man Coyote, whose role it is to make space for dissent, performing "a needed service by engaging in 'dirt work' that muddies clear waters and confounds reified conceptions by crossing established boundaries, stealing symbols back and forth, embodying ambiguities, and ambivalence, speaking freely and tactlessly, and so on" (280). The existence of such a water-muddying character enables a pluralistic democracy, in the here and now, allowing protesting voices to inform the debate in a positive way. Indeed, the crossing of boundaries and the inherent

13. See also Ivie 2005.

ambivalence of the trickster bears resemblance to Rand's notion of the queer effects of polemics, which, I have argued, are at play in the case of *Against Method*. Thus, I want to suggest that the trickster can be valuable not only to public deliberation on policy questions but also in scholarly discussions in technical spheres. What was Feyerabend if not a rhetorical trickster, doing philosophical 'dirt work' by speaking freely and tactlessly?

The event of *Against Method* seems to me to be a form of polemical trickster—an event in and around which philosophical discussions of science could, and did, take place for decades. I believe that studies in rhetorical argumentation could benefit tremendously by investigating polemics, and other 'rowdy' strategies and expressions, within technical spheres in the future, not least because there is no guarantee that tricksters in the technical sphere will be an unequivocally good thing for the 'democratic' development of a given disciplinary field. The right trickster at the right time in one corner of the technical sphere may be productively queer, in the sense that I argued that Feyerabend was (or in some other, unpredictable way). The *wrong* trickster at the *wrong* time in another corner, however, might produce more troubling effects. This is important to keep in mind as the epistemic authority of science is increasingly diminished or set aside in areas that are vital to society—to the thriving of human civilization, even. Here, it might be wise to revisit Feyerabend's (1975) final words in the introduction to *Against Method*: "There may, of course, come a time when it will be necessary to give reason a temporary advantage and when it will be wise to defend its rules to the exclusion of everything else. I do not believe that we are living in such a time today" (22). One cannot help but wonder what Feyerabend would have made of our present day where "the ramblings of mad men" (68), viewed favorably by the anarchist Feyerabend five decades ago, seem to have taken roots so comfortably in our uncertain times.

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11.

Sniff the Air and Settle In: Bullshit, Rhetorical Listening, and the Copenhagen School's Approach to Despicable Nonsense

David R. Gruber

The long history of rhetoric being branded 'the harlot of the arts', often denigrated as manipulation or mere ornamentation, is so potent to rhetorical scholars that it has certainly been useful in helping them—I should say 'us'—to resist treating 'bullshit', so called, as mere uninteresting lies. Generally taken to mean, as Harry Frankfurt (2005, 34) says, speech with "(an) indifference to how things really are", bullshit reminds rhetoricians immediately of the ancient sophists who would construct a winning argument on any side of a question, often for profit (See: Poulakos, 1995, 13-14). Bullshit also likely reminds of just how often contemporary scholars celebrate the sophists' pragmatic and constructivist impulses, agreeing that arguments should be tailor-made for audiences and that the truth of a case is often relative or unclear (See: Frankfurt 2005, 23). Yet bullshitting also riles the rhetorician because it stands often opposed to good faith deliberation between two parties trying to negotiate and find a solution. Given these intimate resonances with the history of the field—not to mention the sheer amount of public bullshitting by political officials that one encounters today—bullshit requires careful rhetorical consideration.

James Fredal (2011) has recognized just how common bullshitting can be and how important it is that rhetorical scholars think more about it. He goes so far as to sound like he might be bullshitting us when he says that "the analysis of bullshit will

clarify the identifying features of rhetoric" (243). I am not so hopeful about this especially strong assessment, since 'rhetoric in my view cannot be thought as a discursive production alone nor its "identifying features" containable to a specific situation where "bullshit" reigns. Rhetoric must be thought—for reasons I have described elsewhere (See: Gruber, 2020)—as much more than words; I think of the rhetorical as an ecological coming-together, a happening and a worlding, emplaced and embodied, not to be separated in any case from the suasive powers of things like weather systems, lightbulbs, and gut bacteria. Nevertheless, Fredal's enthusiasm for elucidating verbal bullshit and seeing it as an exposé of the rhetorical attunes to the rhetorical tradition traditionally focused on speech as itself a social action with motivation and some utility. That is not to rule out the idea that bullshitting may take other forms, such as the gestural or a stage setting. Trump's twisty faces in debates, for example, often strike me as a form of bullshitting. I equally suspect that some might well see the (in)famous parade with a bible in front of St. John's Church in Washington D.C. as a bullshit material and performative claim about Trump's high morality and/or love of Jesus (Douthat, 2020). Anyhow, despite not clearly delineating how bullshit, per se, can be a material expression, Fredal does strike at what rankles most of us about bullshit: the intent of the speaker to trick the listener in some capacity. Fredal says it this way: "a speaker might be (and I would argue, most are) motivated by other factors in addition to a commitment to the truth" (244). Amid the discussion, Fredal recognizes that multiple, well-known ancient philosophers, Plato as prime example, were seriously disturbed by speakers disregarding truth in favour of effectiveness, yet Fredal argues ultimately for not doubling down on a Platonic truth-appearances dichotomy that would condemn bullshitting to eternal hell—thankfully for him and for us. Rather, Fredal argues for the *interactional nature* of bullshit, which is to say that when bullshitting happens, audiences and interests are coming together. Bullshitting happens in a context and for a reason (250-255).

A review of the literature on bullshitting reveals a tendency to focus on the 'why' of bullshitting with many scholars getting

caught up in the 'how bad is bullshitting, really?' discussion. Few, it seems, have much to say about how rhetors might actually respond–which is where I aim to go in this paper. A few examples will suffice.

Consider Christensen and colleagues' (2019) work. For them, bullshitting is functional and a means of strategizing. Bullshit works, at least in some cases, to establish authority and the directionality of a speech by delivering what is 'more or less true' or likely to be seen as true to an audience (1588). So bullshit is not all bad but, as they say, 'often accepted—sometimes encouraged—in social interaction" (1589). Thus, the 'why?' of bullshitting comes down to the 'why?' of communication; it is a way "to celebrate shared perspectives, reduce uncertainty, learn about the world, maintain relationships, express feelings, pass time, and influence or manipulate" (1590). Christensen and colleagues do not, of course, overlook the way that bullshitters distort and disrespect facts, but they merely point to commonality amongst the functions of communication and the functions of bullshitting to help scholars understand why bullshitting is sometimes overlooked and often (enough) effective. Also important is the way that their depiction keeps us from assuming that a rhetor's intention when bullshitting is to deceive. That is to say, bullshitting can take on at least two forms: "Bullshit as Deceptive Misrepresentation", as noted in Frankfurt's original definition (2005, 6-7), but also "Bullshit as Unclarifiable Unclarity", per Christensen and colleagues' viewpoint (1590-1591).

We can find scholars in both camps. Kelly (2014), for example, emphasizes willful misrepresentation. He states:

> When we call bullshit, suspect someone is bullshitting, or label someone a bullshitter, we are noting that what appears to us is really an absence, an emptiness, a kind of phoniness in the communication from an agent who knows what his audience is willing to let him get away with and what they are not willing to let him get away with (166).

Heffer (2020), as another example, remains so concerned with "the facts" and an "irresponsible attitude toward truth," that he develops an elaborate framework for identifying bullshit (i.e., the opposite of truth) through investigations of "word-to-world relationships" and discursive analyses of justifications and qualifications (57-60). In contrast, Phinn (2005) recognizes that:

> there is no actual ground-floor agreements amongst all participants on the parameters of honest and ethical banter. The endeavor to detach the false from the true (or the willful exaggeration from the plain spoken) has been a global one, and has had, predictably, a lackluster history of temporary consensus salvaged from the wrecks of previous years' much-vaunted paradigms (24).

Maes and Schaubroek (2006) say something similar. They note an "evaluative complexity of bullshit" noting that some audiences will see the shit as positive even when realizing the rhetor's disinterest in precision (3). The rhetor may, instead, be signalling the fun of being bombastic or the ethics of standing in opposition to a hated opponent.

Needless to say, constructing a neat, clean retort to bullshit confronts an elusive criterion for what entails an honest, pure confession and also battles a melodrama of social fancies infused with degrees of sympathy and competing interests. Seen in that light, Fredal is right: rhetoric is what is being produced when bullshit reigns, and the *interactional nature* of bullshit does reveal how rhetoric is not an art independent of social relations and lived realities. The question however remains: how can we respond to steaming piles of bullshit that sticks to the shoes, smells disgusting, and cannot be washed off hearts or minds very easily? There is nothing very clean and neat about bullshit, so if we are to believe Fredal's emphasis on bullshit being rhetorical, then we must also say that rhetoric as a mode of critique and as an artful practice should be able to respond to it/itself.

Despite the fact that numerous scholars understand bullshit as a rhetorical production or as a communicative act, we do not really get a good answer regarding what to do about bullshitters. We

could, of course, give this pat advice: *be equally as savvy, equally rhetorical.* But we may feel hesitant to do so. Can we recommend being equally as cunning, snide, distracting or disinterested? What can we recommend?

Fredal does not leave us with zero opinions on the matter. He suggests that some scholars might find promise in comedic replays of the bullshit (2011, 251). Treating the bullshit like a joke might work if the matter is able to be conformed into a joking one. But in so many cases, bullshit is about legal infractions, land rights, hospitals, battlefield progress, and other difficult and horrific topics. Overall, in my estimation, Fredal seems largely content to fall back on the old adage that language "is phatic" and not only for composing truth claims, so therefore we can use the rhetorical toolbox to deal with cases of bullshit when we encounter them, in-situ (255-257). As for me, I want a little more. Maes and Schaubroek turn back to logics. They conclude that identifying the "fallacious reasoning" and blatant obscurity of bullshit will probably out the bullshitter, even though they recognize that audiences may not care. So there, we get some hope that the audience will indeed recognize the bullshit as such, but we remain somewhat flummoxed as to how to change an audience's feelings about it. Christian Kock (2019) takes a similar position on bullshitting, stating that the audience probably does not even believe former US President Donald Trump when he says that Trump Tower has "the best taco bowls" but, rather, that Trump merely wants the American people to see him as a hell of a guy, or the kind of guy that does not actually despise Mexican immigrants because the evidence is, of course, taco bowls (153). In this assessment, bullshitting can be—or often is—another way to communicate an impression, reframe an exterior argument in one's favour, or build ethos. But the lingering question that sticks to me like shit on the shoe is, of course, how to respond? What to do? If all bullshitting was so banal and non-hurtful as Trump saying that "Trump Tower has the best taco bowls", then I doubt that anybody would be concerned and writing about it. The problem is that bullshit is often much messier than that.

Jenny Rice (2015), the editor of a special issue in *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* on bullshitting, offers a much stronger and yet depressingly dismal assessment regarding what to do. She states that "any attempts to question, engage, or respond to the bullshit's claims are obstructed", by which she means *necessarily obstructed* by bullshitters. Her idea is that bullshitters reject upright deliberation and, therefore, will never answer to bullshit nor recognise it as such. Thus, she suggests responding with "tactics that are largely aesthetic (revulsion, disgust, gagging)" (471). Her recommendation, however, derives from the belief that bullshitting is a way to close-off personal or political exposure and to avoid unwanted facts to such an extreme extent that opponents can only make a show of the other's rhetorical manoeuvre (471).

Foroughi et al (2019) take a different approach. They understand bullshitting to be flatly a form of lying "bolstered by fantastical forms, such as nostalgia or conspiracies" (18); accordingly, they argue that opponents of bullshitters must tackle it by motivating "empowered citizens to get out on the streets and engage in a much-needed social critique to counteract today's post-truth politics" (17-18). This advice sounds inspiring enough, but it lacks the necessary specificity. It is not really a recommendation for an embedded context nor for a specific kind of rhetor or situation. I read it mostly as a statement serving to build rhetorical solidarity against recent bouts of far-right bullshit. But suggesting that the best response is solidarity with the likeminded folks with good hearts seems to be counter-rhetorical with respect to rhetoric's call to engage everyone every day, especially with those who see the world differently than we do.

Reviewing this work, I have concluded that more must be said about how to respond to bullshit. If we give up the Aristotelian obsession with universalizing categorization for a moment and try to think more organically about the shit that we see, then whatever bullshit is, we can trust that we will want to respond when we recognise it. And when we do, we must notice how wildly varied bullshit can be. Despite Fredal's recognition that bullshitting could be a form of light phatic communication including even politeness—we might here imagine the "ugly baby" scenario

(251)—ideas about bullshit in rhetoric still tend to see it as threatening, and scholars emerge mostly disgusted by its stank. I believe that this is why the recommended approaches are thin. What Rice and Foroughi and colleagues suggest with respect to responses is revealing as well because they all seem to imagine bullshitting as *pure shit*. Bullshit does not therefore need be engaged, as the presumption is that bullshit is something outright offensive amid a (mean) rhetor's carelessness about pitching what is fake. As noted, Fredal, Maes and Schaubroek, and Kock have a more nuanced take, but they do not always seem sure where to go next. I hope to convince the reader that crafting an elaborate Venn diagram of types of bullshit, each with a savvy rhetorical response, will not be the profitable path in-situ. For me, rhetoric happens too suddenly for that, is too located in a context, too creative and responsive to the immediate.

In my view, bullshitting is a creative act of communication having multiple manifestations and endpoints. Accordingly, there must be so many interesting approaches to it. Bullshit is simply not as singular or always as intractable as rhetoricians sometimes seem to believe. And this may be because Rice and others imagine, I think, that they will be arguing *against a rhetor* who spouts bullshit or against *the bullshit itself.* But what the Copenhagen School of Argumentation (CS)—the driving force of this book—recommends is not *arguing against rhetors* but *crafting arguments with and for our own audiences.* In this way, I hope to extend the conversation. I aim not to be very content with recommendations highly ambiguous— *fight bullshit in the streets!*—or singular—*call it out as despicable and make twisty faces of disgust!* Ultimately, in my view, both of those are too disbelieving about what the rhetorical tradition offers and what rhetoric can do.

In what follows, I argue that rhetorical argumentation from a CS point of view suggests a great many possible responses to bullshitting. My presentation here is rooted in the idea that relegating bullshit to the trash bin of the unacceptable right out of hand pretends as if it is not the case that, in the words of George Carlin (2009), "bullshit is rampant… everyone is full of shit", at

least sometimes, a little bit, say, when explaining why the rent is late or begging for a good deal at the car lot ("Advertising"). Drawing strong lines of separation between good rhetors with worthy arguments, on the one hand, and bullshitting rhetors, one the other, strikes me as too invested in a traditional truth-appearances dichotomy, a way of pretending that utterances are or can be outside of a situation and objectively enrolling 'the truth'. Putting up one's nose to bullshit (because it can stink to those who do smell it— nobody denies this!) is a rhetorical performance, certainly, but one that pretends too much that truth and rhetoric are two absolutely separated entities. Most scholars accept as a matter of course that language does not objectively describe an exterior situation, as Phinn (2005) noted, but makes it come alive as *a type* of situation, which is selected and shaped—and involves audiences and what they accept already (See: Lanham, 1993, p. 154-159; Fleming, 1998). The articulated truths, stated claims, and good reasons *construct* the situation, at least alongside an ecology. We can recall Tindale (2017) here when he says that a "narrative rationality" infuses arguments at their base of formulation because we must present our discourse as a story about the known world and make it sound coherent and realistic enough to fit preconceptions (16). Thus, when a bullshitter misrepresents, describes a situation to play to her interests, inflates, aggrandises, solidifies, and touts, she is still a rhetorician, still addressing audiences; a politician's bullshitting about the state of the Union, greatness of the party, or *huge* personal achievements, for example, never sit outside of an audience's own broad narrative rationality about the rightness of the underlying values inscribed, even if the details are notably tweaked.

None of this is to say that bullshitters deserve an easy pass for being rhetorical. Likewise, levelling the constructivist playing field does not mean that bullshitters deserve our sympathy. Rather, bullshitting and responding to it, as *rhetorical tactic*, needs greater attention in the field of rhetoric because bullshit itself is part of everyday argumentation just as bullshit is nuanced and often geared precisely to make a claim appear more seductive. To cut to the point: I argue that some—and I suppose many—cases of

bullshitting are "unconcerned with the truth" because they *must* direct attention away from the concrete case and ignore certain facts, even in the face of proof and obviousness, in order to underscore a different stance or value, which is *designed for*, *known by*, or *coming from* the audience/s addressed.

If I am correct, then bullshit comes in many forms probably too numerous to number; it also would manifest within the scope of other rhetorical terminologies, such as false equivalency, ad hominem, or hasty generalisation, etc. Some of those would be what Ángel Gascón (2021) calls "argumentative bullshit", or arguments without concern for the truth of the evidence. Other instances would appear as additional justifications for otherwise evidence-able claims. Yet others would be throw-away bullshit phrases meant as a joke or a hyperbole. However, outside of simply noting that bullshit should be an umbrella term, a core starting point is that bullshit strikes somewhere, even if smelling like utter shit. Fredal (2011) makes a similar statement, noting that bullshit always draws out "*audience sensitivities*" (252, italic in original). I like that phrasing, but it gets us no closer to identifying bullshitting against other rhetorical manoeuvres since, of course, most rhetorical performances mark out or draw out audience sensitivities. And that is precisely the point. Bullshit, to really *be bullshit* and live up to its name, is going to be intent on doing what it needs to do and, thus, be chuffed with its own creative definitional boundary breaking.

Of course, as Fredal argues, bullshit is usually rife with an attitude, arising "from arrogant gestures of disregard" (256), but I also doubt that disregard is the end of the story, since the statement once again presumes self-awarenesss and intentionality. Indeed, in making the statement, Fredal uses the example of a police officer who dismisses a driver in a pat way to show superiority. For me, that example demonstrates how much 'bullshitting' is actually pluralistic and can be a product of tropes of interaction or of underlying power relations not always consciously recognized as a discursive strategy. Indeed, it is a good example of someone (the officer) underscoring a social structure using other words but not necessarily doing anything out of the norm for the job. The

officer says, *"Get that taillight fixed, or else… Have a nice day now."* Here, Fredal identifies the cop as delivering an un-truth with disregard, since the officer never really wanted the person to "have a nice day". However, the pat usualness of that phrase should stand out, as should the affective power and social import of what hangs between the lines for audiences. That is to say, the police officer may be hammering out a hierarchical order and hit home doing it—*"Have a nice day now"*—but the fact that the cop said it is not necessarily "arrogant disregard" since any cop may well say that line thirty times per day. More importantly, once the phrase is read from the position of being in the submissive, vulnerable posture of the one being interrogated by the cop, we see that the audience will almost certainly read the statement as some kind of jab: '*Your fucking day is ruined— I am in control here.'* I am not sure that is bullshit. It is not as much "arrogant disregard" as it is an implicit power exercise and warning. That gets me to my point.

Bullshitting, at least sometimes, operates a mode of suggestion that the audience 'fills in', and in that respect, bullshit might be an as-yet unrecognized enthymematic expression. Note here that I did not say bullshit is necessarily a way of *making an argument*; the bullshitter might well slip bullshit into any number of thin-lipped lines or squirmy arguments. In the face of this pluralism, what matters more is bullshit's *suggestive quality*—because this means that we cannot respond to bullshit with shouts of outrage nor concoct any moralistic retort in advance of hearing it. That simply would be putting the cart before the horse. In fact, standardized responses, especially of revulsion in the face of bullshit, would ignore what the audience does—fills in the meaning. We cannot set aside why the audience absolutely hates or loves to hear that (bull)shit.

As an approach or way of thinking about argumentation more generally, CS proves useful when confronting rhetors happy to rattle off lines of bullshit precisely because CS suggests listening, reflecting, and responding to the *anticipated* or *enthymematic component* while thinking from the audience's point of view. Reflecting on how and why bullshit seduces is one viable path for productive engagement that does not attempt to fight bullshit

with outrage or with more bullshit. On the face of it, CS might not sound very radical, especially to rhetoricians trained in the 'New Rhetoric' tradition that takes Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1966) now well-worn call to attend to audiences most seriously. But CS challenges us, I believe, to focus on the action that we want to take and to take the difficult road to doing so: to listen, really listen, to the most despicable, potentially harmful lines of bullshit spouted by the loudest, most unabashed politicians and then step back, pause, and look directly at the audience.

To move forward, I first detail how I understand CS, describing it with four distinguishing characteristics. I then apply CS to a variety of bullshit statements about the Covid-19 pandemic delivered by the Governor of the US State of Florida, Ron DeSantis. The discussion aims to show just how much CS reorients rhetorical scholars toward audiences who consume bullshit from rhetorical opponents. Despite obvious bullshitting in the speech that manifests across various rhetorical manoeuvres, what one hears when listening to Governor DeSantis with the CS lens is *another concern*, one held by the audience and one about emotional experiences and values and not about facts.

In the conclusion, I offer recommendations for rhetoricians who still hold out hope for engaging a big pile of stinky bullshit. And I think that we should have this hope, at the least for the sake of our audiences. But we should champion this hope also because rhetoric is an event, a happening, diverse in its articulations, as Nathan Stormer (2016) tells us, often expressive out from an affective and bodily atmosphere and not stuck in the muck by any necessity. Rhetoric, Stormer says, has a "polythetic ontology", meaning a flexible, fluid, and multiple Becoming not confined to logical boundaries or even human ones (302-303). The rhetorician approaching bullshit does not approach the words of the bullshitter alone. So much is approached. Once emplaced and engaged, a rhetor adopting the CS point of view might well find that a sensible, slow approach to bullshit is productive, even if it does prove to require a creativity that comes from sniffing the air—and then, despite any instinct to throw up or throw the bullshit away, we must keep our stomach, stay put and respond.

What is The Copenhagen School of Argumentation?

CS, like all 'schools' is going to be varied across those involved—because if we agreed all the time, then we wouldn't have studies of argumentation or schools of argumentation. My first encounter with CS came as I was tasked with taking up the course on argumentation in 2019, a course that Professor Kock dutifully and by all accounts expertly taught for fifteen years. We sat down over coffee to review the list of readings and the history of the course. Over the next hour and a half, Professor Kock delivered to me personally a lecture on his view of rhetorical argumentation. Despite what the reader may think here, I took this 'lecture' to be an honor—because I quickly realized that he was learning and sharing-in his deepest convictions. He had something important to say about rhetoric. He did not rattle off a string of facts nor show his wealth of knowledge on the history of argumentation. Instead, he explained that argumentation as taught in Copenhagen has always responded to everyday concerns; it emphasizes the audience's local values; thus, it is not taught as a subject about structures or ways to judge formalisms; it is always focused on decisions and on actions. Over the following year or so, I formed a better idea of what CS meant, and I admit that my own conception at this stage is probably influenced by Professor Kock most directly yet peppered with my rhetorical dispositions and background. Despite me bringing something of North America's material-centricity and rhetorical expansionism into CS, I do think that my orientation to CS resonates with what students in Denmark have been taught, not only by Professor Kock by others represented in this volume as well.

I currently view CS as an approach to argumentation with four basic tenets or shall we say emphases. To my mind, they are as follows:

1. CS emphasizes paying close attention to a specific, situated domain of action. This means that cases are of some definable domain and approaches only work or matter to the extent that they fit the 'domain'. Now

Professor Kock has elucidated this idea of 'a domain' in his book titled, *Deliberative Rhetoric: Arguing About Doing.* There, he states that the domain concerns those who are actually affected by the debate in question within a context, "typically in the civic sphere", and rhetoricians, accordingly, must think about domains of civic action (2017, 27). I imagine a domain as a kind of circle where the rhetorician finds the 'who', 'when', and 'where' of the 'who, what, when, where, and how' quintet.

2. CS remains more concerned with questions about action, or concrete proposals, than with abstracting and trying to formalize the 'truth' of a case. This is perhaps the most important of all tenets, tied directly to the previous tenet. Unlike other 'schools' of argumentation that follow from analytic philosophy, CS does not think about argumentation as a way necessarily to decide what is true or false, nor does it recommend even trying to craft fully sealed or philosophically valid claims that nobody can oppose—because people, we must admit, can oppose always them regardless. Further, CS does not so much aim to resolve divergent views between parties but to decide next steps. The CS perspective here does not mean that arguments should not be cogent with meaningful and reliable premises nor that matters of truth and falsity do not come into play when debating in a social or political context. Instead, the avoidance of the obsession with truth-guarantees cuts to the core of a rhetorical tradition about specific events as compositions and social phenomena. In Kock's (2017) words, "argumentation about actions has characteristics that differ significantly from argumentation over the other main type of issues: those concerned with how something 'is'" (31), and this matters to the extent that no matter how something 'is', it is always what collectivities and environments come together to

believe and see at a moment such that they act. Thus, arguing about the 'is', should a rhetor ever do such a thing, fits mostly within a framework of ultimately arguing about what we should do.

3. CS also asks rhetors to prioritize and address the actual, lived concerns held by various local stakeholders in-situ. In that sense, CS proponents are not intent to bring in an outside not comprehensible to the audience/s but works out from, and sometimes must work fully within, the ideas and values being heard. Here I am reminded of Fredal's (2018) work on the enthymeme; specifically, Fredal argues that enthymemes, according to Aristotle's recommendations, were always using what the audience already knew but also, crucially, making use of the opposing rhetor's own words to craft a narrative where the opponent is exposed as being deficient or wrong. Fredal gives the example of the lawyer saying that a family's claim that they refused entry to an official who arrived to confirm a will was ultimately ludicrous because everyone in the jury knows that nobody would call this official except to change a will, and the will would greatly benefit the family (32-34). The enthymematic emerges then at the combination of what the opponent said—'We called him ourselves just to confirm the will'—and what everyone presumes about the situation, i.e., nobody calls a lawyer to confirm and then refuses entry. Surely, the lawyer actually came to the house because the old man called him right before passing with the intent to change the will. The enthymematic, like CS, works through and within the existing context.

4. As a compliment to the third point above, CS focuses not on 'how to win' an argument, per se, but on how to find a way through to a next step, which is understood as a relevant next possible action. 'Finding a way through' should be a guiding mantra, something

between a dedication and a challenge but without the presumption of 'a solution'. By 'finding a way through', I highlight any number of needs in a debate, such as: find a way to unstick the talk; find a way to prepare for a next engagement; find a way to identify with the audience; find a way to move forward. I adamantly do not mean 'to win'. To focus on 'winning' is what philosophical argumentation aims to do when logic teaches students to try to design valid, full-proof structures. The problem, of course, is that those are not *fool*-proof just as those who do end up viewing them as missing the point, as empty, or as ludicrous are not always necessarily fools. To me, to focus on 'winning' is like focusing on hunger. To focus on 'finding a way through' is more like focusing on a building a good diet for one's self. CS seeks a long-term engagement, always wanting something that will keep the body (politic) going.

Overall, CS is pragmatic argumentation geared to get things done democratically, but it is also kind. That is, the rhetor must be willing to listen to what others are saying no matter what they are saying. The rhetor must only proceed from attention to the specific concerns at hand. Sometimes, these are not vocalized but simmering beneath the surface, appearing at the corners of the mouth, lingering in lines of suggestion and exaggeration. Sometimes, speech contains slurs and silences simultaneously. In that respect, I see clear alignments between how CS hopes to orient students of rhetoric to argumentation and what Krista Ratcliffe's (2005) calls "rhetorical listening," namely, "a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to *any* person, text, or culture" (17, italics in original). The two key words there are 'choose' and 'any', meaning that a rhetor consciously stops and listens for values and positions as well as for commonalities, identifications, and connections, especially from those most foreign, reviled, and difficult. To my mind, CS takes seriously the closeness and the attentiveness that rhetorical listening advocates.

CS then then tries to find a way forward without trying to erase the other's differences or to dominate everything. CS tries to infuse this ethos into all aspects of teaching argumentation, and that, of course, includes listening and responding in kind to bullshit. To separate bullshit as not worthy of response is to undermine our very reasons for studying rhetoric and to appear self-contradictory insofar as a rhetorical pedagogy is prototypically founded on the democratic call to engage difference, not to disregard it when we decide it is *just 'bullshit'*. The democratic direction aims to give more voice to all, not to silence those who are doing (apparently well) what communication itself does (Christensen et al., 2019, 1590) while seeking also to discover next best actions, not dominating the course of those actions. We cannot avoid engagement with what undoubtedly resonates with some if it so riles others.

Case Study: Bullshitting Covid-19

Given bullshit's variety of forms—blow-off phrases, snipes, false promises, exaggerations, self-serving generalizations and more—nobody really can be surprised to hear public figures bullshitting about even the most palpable, evidently real phenomena. In recent times, I am thinking of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a global health crisis responsible for near five and a half million deaths at the time of writing this chapter (See: "Covid-19"), there is nothing funny about bullshit regarding Covid's effects, spread, or outcomes. In such cases, a rhetor might well find it irresistibly compelling to take up Rice's suggestion to respond to such bullshit using "tactics that are largely aesthetic (revulsion, disgust, gagging)" (471). That would be understandable. In fact, I aim to briefly examine claims about the pandemic here because I want to examine a case that leads rhetors to engage stank smelling, stomach-churning bullshit. In that respect, bullshitting about the pandemic for political gain raises an especially tough challenge to CS and its orientation. How can CS not argue about the truth, and how can it stay so focused

on the next best action for a community? How can CS resist trying to 'win' the argument? How can CS listen, no matter what, to find a way through to lasting engagements—with bullshitters? The reader will wonder if CS can be recommended. Indeed, CS sounds nice but only when applied to the easier topics, say, differences of opinion about tax laws. But even there, it risks sounding naive or too generous.

Importantly, CS does not ignore ethics nor necessarily dismiss dangerous lies just because it focuses on listening and on crafting arguments for actions. CS offers another approach, another consideration in the broader context. CS aims to give a response in every case and to lead to more than cycles of opposition and outrage. If CS slows down the process of argumentation, makes rhetors more prone to listen between the lines for values and hidden suggestions, then perhaps it helps to mitigate divisive retorts or responses that are so easily construed by lovers of bullshit as hurtful or vicious. But CS does, I admit, take patience and a certain calm. It takes a belief in the audience—at least some part of it—that they do display values and commonalities that can bridge a distance and ultimately realign a conversation maligned with bullshit.

To my mind, the US Governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, provides an interesting example of how CS might help rhetors to engage the most political, most ridiculous sounding, yet potentially dangerous bullshitting. Specifically, I examine DeSantis' opposition to a 'mask mandate' in Florida schools, and I aim to articulate why some of his stated reasons are good candidates for bullshit. I then pivot to discuss CS and explore how a rhetor adopting the CS approach might invent means to respond.

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Between July and August of 2021, Governor Ron DeSantis held numerous public forums and press conferences decrying regulations regarding face masks and rejecting the efforts of President Joe Biden's administration to install restrictions designed to slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus in the public school system. As a result, DeSantis became a prominent figure

and flashpoint. His often strident opposition and public lambasting of President Biden's recommendations follows stylistically, at least, from former President Donald Trump's general political playbook (See: Gankarski, 2021; Skoneki, 2021). Ultimately, I argue that DeSantis' specific rhetorical responses against the mask mandates at that time offers a good example of bullshitting. This is not to say that everything he said in those sessions was bullshit. Often, bullshitting slips in like butter to make other claims taste more delicious. However, to see why DeSantis' reasons for not requiring mask mandates have entailed at least a little bullshit, it is important to detail his reasons and to note that they are not reliant on mask wearing studies or on scientific claims about Covid-19 or how it can be mitigated. The reasons he offers are instead 1) exaggerative of the trouble that masks cause and 2) often embedded within a story that reframes the conversation to be about a federal government that intentionally imports migrants who spread the virus and cause infection rates—despite the ridiculous falsity of a claim that the government actually 'imports' migrants or that the migrants are the ones responsible for spreading Covid-19; further, DeSantis argues that mask mandates over-step parental rights, ignoring other well-known school-related regulatory requirements in Florida that bear on the question of individual freedom and parents' choice to a much greater extent. Noticing these slips and dismissals helps to bring the bullshit to the surface as such.

Using quotes from DeSantis' own press conference, I hope to accurately summarize his rhetorical manoeuvres, but I encourage the reader to watch the press conferences as well. What is important as far as CS is concerned is that I try to hear him even though he bullshits, which means that I can point out his logical fallacies and dismissals but still make an effort to understand more basically what he is saying and to read between the lines; I am looking for the *enthymematic or anticipated arguments* that help the embedded bullshit appear to local Florida audiences to be relevant and appealing. It may help that I am from Florida, went to high school there, and keep friendships there, including with people who interact on a regular basis with Governor DeSantis.

However, I do not think that my familiarity with the domain of situated action is special with respect to CS as an approach, since CS presumes that the rhetor knows or can get to know the specific civic domain and pay close attention to it. Ultimately, I hope to show that rhetors can think about CS and then more generally invent ways to respond to bullshit, appealing to the audiences in the situated case and crucially not focusing on the bullshit but on what the bullshit means to those who are enticed by its production.

With respect to the specific bullshit around mask mandates: Governor DeSantis first promotes the idea that state-wide mask mandates should be rejected because the federal government and Joe Biden in particular is 'importing more virus' by allowing migrants to cross the US-Mexico border. This is DeSantis' first point in an August 4th press conference where he responds to President Biden's frustration with the State of Florida's lack of action on the issue. In DeSantis' words:

> People are pouring through, not only are they letting them through, they're then farming them out all across our communities across this country, putting them on planes, putting them on buses… so he's [Biden] facilitating— who knows what variants are out there—But I can tell you, whatever variants there are across the world, they're coming across that southern border. ("DeSantis", Aug 4, 2021, 0:30-0:38 sec)

Although one might presume that this fact would therefore certainly mean that people in the state of Florida should be required to wear masks, it is used instead as evidence that any covid mandates are not going work. In essence, DeSantis argues that the expansion of a harmful virus is the migrants' and the federal government's faults. Given DeSantis' own position against masks, the comment seems to offer a 'might as well not try anything' attitude in the face of a federal government painted as conspiratorially and strategically shipping migrants around the country. From a perspective in argumentation studies, raising the topic of migrants and the US southern border is a distraction to a separate argument about mandating state measures to control Covid's spread or not. Bringing migrants into the discussion

effectively distracts, and it also demonizes the migrants while functioning to entrench the views of those who already despise migrants. The reader can note that the subject in DeSantis' sentences is pointedly the 'migrants' with repeated emphasis on "letting them through… them… them"; the focus is not on 'migration' as a policy, much less on masks, or even more specifically, masks in schools.

Second, DeSantis tends to argue concurrently that 1) kids suffer when they wear masks and 2) that the federal government forcing masks is a kind of suffering, presumably a suffocation. These dual ideas—suffering and suffocation—may get conceptually overlaid onto each other insofar as it is difficult to know what kind of 'suffering' DeSantis is referring to in his press conferences. Since he never details the type or nature of the suffering, the audience is left to fill it in, and one can only imagine a child that cannot breathe. DeSantis says, "His [Biden's] solution is that he wants to force *kindergarteners* to wear masks in school" ("DeSantis", Aug 4, 1:05-1:10) with the implication being that the idea is absolutely outrageous and sad. A few days earlier, he stated, "I know they're [lawmakers] interested in coming-in even in a special session to be able to provide protections for parents and kids who just want to breathe freely and don't want to be suffering under these masks" ("Ron", July 29, 0:35-0:42). The focus on kindergarteners here, as opposed to high school students, heightens the feeling of undue 'suffering' and victimisation. Although it is fair for the government to consider suffering amid any legislation, the idea that kids 'suffer under these masks' borders on the ludicrous if suffering, as a term, is to mean more than feeling uncomfortable or being inconvenienced. He offers no evidence of suffering and delivers the line as if it is obvious; my guess is that this happens not because it is actually obvious to everyone but rather because the line allows audiences to fill-in the gap with their own frustrations and troubles with respect to kids during covid times. Indeed, what probably does not sound ludicrous to the American sensibility amongst Republican supporters is the idea that government should not require much of anything of citizens, whether they live or die, fall into abject poverty or become

billionaires—it's up to them. That may be over-stating it, but it is fair to say that once any restriction—whether for the sake of public health or not—becomes framed as 'a mandate', then DeSantis and the Republican Party likely already secured the upper hand in a debate for Republican hearts and minds; 'suffering' in this context can therefore become rhetorically admissible, even sensible, as an emotional descriptor in the face of top-down mandates. 'Suffering', or masks by association and default, becomes a synecdoche for Big Government Evils.

DeSantis then argues that parents should be the only ones to decide if their individual child should wear a mask in school. Positioning himself directly opposed to President Biden—and presumably thereby staging his own Presidential run in 2024—DeSantis states, "He [Biden] doesn't believe the parents should have a say in that. He thinks that should be a decision for the government. Well, I can tell you in Florida, the parents are going to be the ones in charge of that decision" ("DeSantis", Aug 4, 1:10-1:20). Just as it sounds silly that kids suffer under masks, it also seems unrealistic to suggest that the parents know when a virus is going to actually be dangerous for others or know how to contain such a virus. In like manner, given that children in Florida must have multiple vaccines to attend school at all—with the government even providing 'school shots' info-sheet for parents on shots ("School Shots")—the idea that a simple mask would be an unacceptable suffering or a restriction on parental freedom sounds a lot like bullshit. In addition, when realizing that kids in public schools in Florida cannot wear 'vulgar' t-shirts, cannot alter their clothing, must cover their chests from "armpit to armpit", cannot have skirts too high above their knees, and all of the parents must follow "state grooming guidelines", then DeSantis standing so strongly and emotionally against masks looks more and more like bullshitting ("OCPS"). Those other clothing rules and restrictions, one might also note, are specifically set as "promotions of health and safety" and intended to protect others, yet masks worn in school during a global pandemic is framed as an unacceptable, outrageous form of suffering ("OCPS").

Fourth and finally, DeSantis argues that there is no good scientific evidence for the effectiveness of masks. Yet, there is quite a lot of data on masks from the CDC and on Covid-19 infection numbers in states that required masks versus those that did not when accounting for adherence rates and time, leading anyone reviewing the data to immediately recognize the bullshit (See: "Science Brief"; Fischer et al. 2021). Nevertheless, amid the discussion, DeSantis tries to turn the table on Biden, saying, "He [Biden] rejects science because he denies the fact that people that recover from Covid have long-lasting immunity. And that's been proven time and time again and the data is very clear" (Aug 4, 2:12-2:20). Again, a distraction fallacy is evident at this point, as the idea of a mask mandate in schools—which is at the center of this controversy between DeSantis and Biden—is designed to avoid a situation where the government forces everyone to recover from Covid-19 with hopes of achieving what DeSantis describes as "long-lasting immunity". It is likely also self-evident to the reader here that "long-lasting immunity" can fall under question, as vaccination offers "higher, more robust, and more consistent level of immunity" (Sun and Achenbach, 2021) while the University of Nebraska researchers in their Covid-19 summary report just simply say, "The data is clear. Natural immunity is not better… More than a third of COVID-19 infections result in zero protective antibodies" ("Covid natural"). If cutting through the bullshit or avoiding any bull at all, then one might rather have expected DeSantis to say something more like this: "For those who survive Covid infection and can achieve a natural immunity, some will have a long-lasting form, but it likely won't be as reliable as the immunity that vaccinated people have."

DeSantis then closes the press conference by saying, "So I think the question is: we can either have a free society or we can have a biomedical security state. And I can tell ya', Florida, we're a free state… If you're trying to deny kids a proper in-person education, then I am standing in your way" ("DeSantis", Aug 4, 2021, 3:00-3:10). Of course, the question for Biden was how to keep schools open in Covid times so that kids could, in fact, get a "proper in-person education" and was never about "denying kids"

an education. The bullshit here is thick. The bullshitter bluffs his way into the rhetorical high ground. And the audience cheers and nods along.

Upon Hearing So Much Bullshit: Recommendations for Rhetoricians

One perennial difficulty in thinking through bullshit is the way that it pops up, often quickly, embedded in a longer discourse, snappy, a confident-seeming way of adding a little faux solidity to a broader case. A second difficulty follows. The rhetor who hopes to respond may feel a need to be certain that the bullshitter, as Frankfurt says, has "(an) indifference to how things really are". Knowing the extent to which DeSantis, for example, has an "indifference" might weigh on a response yet seems to vary across statements. In the case of the August 4th press conference, what one hears first are distractions paired with exaggerations. We hear about migrants and then about suffering kids. We then hear some half-truths, such as the "long-lasting immunity" line, followed by lie-injected reframing, such as when DeSantis says that Biden is "trying to keep kids from getting a proper in-person education". What is a rhetor hoping for honest deliberation on the reasons for the precise question of requiring masks or not in schools supposed to do?

The above line keeps a focus. The question is not: what is a rhetor supposed to do to combat all that bullshit? For that, one would need to catch the bullshit in action, but bullshit is fast and slippery, like a wet ball (of poo) flying through the air. Like the ball, one might miss it as it flies past or just get hit in the face. So the question, from the CS perspective, remains much more focused: how is the rhetor to respond, not to the shit, but to the case circumstances and the audience's feelings about those circumstances?

In my view, CS challenges us, as a first order, to think through what the bullshit implies about how local people see the case and what they are feeling when confronted with bombast and

bluster of a dishonest sort. The rhetor need not spend much time formally categorizing the bullshit to get a sense of where the audience finds it appealing. The rhetor standing opposed usually hears the audience's applause, stands in the midst of the action and notes the stresses in the bullshitter's lines—*The Government, Kindergarteners,* and *Suffering.*

Rhetorical listening proves useful here. One of Ratcliffe's (2005) core ideas is that we can miss what others different from us are really saying when we listen only with ears to agree or not and think always in advance of their speech about the many ways to re-inscribe our own position. Ratcliffe challenges us to listen ''for the exiled excess and contemplate its relation to our culture and our selves'' (25). The word "excess" resonates. In some ways, bullshit is always an excess and a type that we find particularly disgusting. But when we stop to think of our own self as embodying "the dominant logic", then we better understand the point as Ratcliffe says, "the unacceptable excess [is] being exiled from the dominant logic" (24). And in a bullshitting case, it certainly should be exiled, one might think, right? Bullshit deserves exile, doesn't it? Well, from my point of view and for CS, the excess cannot only be about the perceived truth of a case but also about an excess spanning a diverse and embodied rhetoric. In other words, CS as an approach follows Ratcliffe's lead by implying a need for inward reflection, a space to turn around and ask ourselves about bodies' internal actions and ruminations: what are we exiling that makes such rank bullshit sound disgusting to us but like delicious dessert to others?

Reviewing DeSantis' statements, which I have unambiguously detailed as bullshit, I can still come back more attuned to his audiences once turning the inquiry back onto bodies and embodied feelings. I can, for example, consider how the vocal stress that DeSantis uses on the word *Kindergarteners* points toward parents' care for and very present worries about their kids in this pandemic time. The most subtle micro-expression on a kid's face can be felt in the gut of parents. Underscoring the smallest and most vulnerable kids, *kindergarteners,* puts an emphasis on frailty; the focus on the small versus the big helps, on the one hand, to pave the audience's enthymematic action, which is to say that

the 'Big Government' concept can more easily be filled-in by the Republican audience as an evil nemesis in greater contrast when the little kids are situated as the victims of the proposed policy. On the other hand, the focus on the smallest-as-victims also helps to reach parents obsessed with their child's discomfort and, of course, with their own in/sanity as the children are locked down at home with them while they all try to work online. The kids, we also need to remember, do not often understand what is happening to them and to their parents. Many do not know why they must wear a mask. It must be difficult for them to keep it on, not only because they are young, but also because it has not previously been acceptable in American culture to wear one; mask wearing is, in fact, read as a sign of weakness or of fear unacceptable to display in public, more often we can say for American men. As Alisha Haridasani Gupta (2020) says, "From the beginning of the pandemic, there has been an aversion to basic common-sense protections—wearing masks, observing social distancing and embracing government-imposed lockdowns—that has done a poor job at concealing its entwinement with male insecurity" (para 10). Indeed, there is a masculinity performance around the refusal of the mask; watching Trump and DeSantis, much less our own friends and family members, can we believe otherwise? Can we doubt that kids see this too or, at least, feel the awkwardness? In addition, when the parents talk so much about the trouble of wearing masks and the anxiety that the sickness raises, they themselves waver back and forth between a paralyzing fear of illness and the need for a catharsis of free living; the kids pick up the signal and might well be expected to be seriously confused.

All of this is cause for self-reflection. If I am sometimes lost on a wild emotional rollercoaster over the course of the pandemic, how much more are they? And if I pause and think back to being young and how strikingly emotional it was for any teacher at school to yell at me when I was five or ten years old, I can start to imagine how kids whose masks slip off their faces or break must feel when they are quickly pulled aside and chided—for what? 'What did I do', they must think to themselves. My dominant logic that kids are not suffering overlooks something about those kids'

experiences just as it fails to give good attention to the parents and their emotional lives—and they are the audience members.

Working through these connections and internal dialogues provides the means for a response. Indeed, such ruminations are the start of a response, in this case one addressing what bullshit about kids and masks is tapping into. It's a male insecurity born of cultural identities tied to America's history of promoting self-reliance and individual decision-making; it's an exploitation of well-meaning parental feelings, a kind of frustration with uncertainty and a worry about developmental damage being done to children who, we might tend to think, should always feel unburdened by nature and by life. Listening to DeSantis, we can hear bullshit but, at the same time, we can hear a call to present fears about harsh immediacies; we can then articulate what we hear in a kind and passionate way, just as we notice how bullshit acts as a reaction to the ways that the world does not suddenly align with what one believes about themselves, the nation, the manner of how things *should be*.

Bullshitting, in this case in Florida, may well be an effort at recuperation and reclaiming, a rhetoric operating with a conservative function, namely, to reinstate values and simultaneously blame the shift in a global reality on an opponent that the audience already dislikes. When everything suddenly cannot be free from government control and freedom of movement cannot be unimpeded, DeSantis seems to want his audience to believe that he can resuscitate their values. What results is a lot of hot air being blown around but also, crucially, a lot of warm, comforting air to the families that can't catch a breath under those fucking masks.

Again, for me, CS does not ask us to respond to the bullshit itself; it asks that we, as rhetors, understand it better and then pivot toward honest questions about why audiences prefer certain frames and actions at the heart of the deliberation. Once one articulates shared compassion and gets a better sense of why the opposition feels the need to bullshit or feels that bullshitting is in its interests, then rhetoric's ways and means are allowed to emerge. Rhetorical training, I suspect, will pave the rest of the way. But

it starts with the connection. Whether a rhetor subsequently tells the audience what bullshitters like DeSantis should have said or comically replays what he did say or insists on the overlooked benefits of a different policy and how it, too, is compassionate and attuned to them, the rhetorical manoeuvre must leave audiences stunned by how well the rhetor hears their underlying concerns. It must not leave the audience wondering about the distance between them and the rhetor.

At this point, perhaps the reader is wondering: yes, but will a CS motivated rhetorician actually emerge victorious? Bullshitters bullshit because they win. It is a bullying, a form of domination. And here you are suggesting the opposite?

The obsession with winning in the face of bullshitting might well grow more intense than usual. Recognizing bullshit does seem to bolster the inner desire for justice, and winning the argument might then secure a sense that truth really does prevails. Everything will be okay. However, rhetorical argumentation provides no assurances. No rhetor can ever guarantee that her views will be adopted. The domain of rhetoric is not so clean and neat as to instigate the belief that the perfectly valid claim, nor the moral or ethical one, will always win the day. We can hope that our arguments do succeed in the end, but argumentation was always messier than do X and win the vote.

Taking Professor Kock at his word, rhetorical training is designed for the polis, which means for people's collective decision-making. Even the simplest of questions—such as deciding whether or not a city will be better off with or without an underground sewer system—is not properly a question of truth when before the polis. For the man who gets sick from rats climbing through the sewer—as millions did in Europe's fourteenth century plague—the sewer system was certainly not better, despite an obvious 'truth' to the contrary. After the plague, the family of the man may well go into the streets and cry and shout, proclaiming that they were told the sewer would improve their lives. Were they better off in some ways, perhaps yes, but is the man dead, yes. Now what? People must come together and argue about next steps. In the course of this example, of course,

there are questions of truth. The man is dead; the rats infected the man, and so on. But the argument in the polis is not about whether the man is dead, and the argument about whether or not the rats are responsible is not itself free from public reason or rejection; it, too, will hinge on the locally suitable and the admissible evidence, only then to lead once more to a question about what to do next. In brief, CS suggests not that truth does not matter but that thinking about action helps to orient the rhetorician to the domain of action—and from there, the argument becomes how a certain proposal ties to interests and values.

In different words, keeping the focus on the audience is by far the best approach to bullshitting when the rhetor is tasked with a response—since rhetors answer audiences, not abstractions. A rhetor adopting this approach finds the concern and applies it to the opposite suggestion for action. The rhetor in the process does not necessarily let the bullshitter get away with the bullshit. At any point, a rhetor might say flatly that the opposition is lying and might even roll the eyes when hearing the outrageous, but the two questions should always be: will the audience respond to this technique, and will I (as rhetor) successfully move through the bullshit to get at the question at hand, a question almost certainly about action and one whose decision must pass through the audiences' value alignments and embodiments?

The CS approach has benefits reaching beyond an 'aesthetic' show of disgust with bullshitting. Principally, CS does not automatically assume bullshit is singularly unethical or unanswerable because it is one way to bolster a position or block an opposition. CS also does not address the bullshit except through discovering new attunements to the audience's own views and preconceptions, taking some of the power of the bullshit away. Further, CS invests in what Ratcliffe (2005) calls "rhetorical listening," following a mode of argumentation that takes the form of a reply to underlying concerns, staying true to the 'new rhetoric' tradition of audience attention while understanding just how much the emotional life participates in thinking. And finally, CS fits with the structure of a democratic forum, namely, the pursuit of joint decision-making.

If CS is seen as lacking value when confronting bullshit, then perhaps the rhetor is totally outraged and maybe for good reason. But when the bullshit is piled there by an opposition to try to ensure the success of a party or a policy, then I am not convinced that outrage as a response will move audiences who love that (bull)shit over to another table. They are too busy eating up what they got and clinging to what they hold dear. We cannot forget: bullshit smells good to those who consume it. We must, therefore, take some time to listen, anticipate, and make our way through its implications, as ugly as it can sound, as painful as it may be. That is the very nature of argumentation. We should expect argumentation to be this way. It is an experience of upheaval as much as of intimacy.

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12.

Paper Tigers in the Clinic? Rhetorical Argument Fields in Health Policy Implementation

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Abstract

In this chapter, I explore the relation between argumentation and health policy implementation. More specifically, I explore how persistent issues around the implementation of policy can be elucidated by rhetorical argumentation theory, namely from the perspective of argument fields theory. Argument fields theory accounts for why some forms of argumentation gain acceptance in some settings and less so in others. To explore this in practice, I take up a case of risk communication between medical authorities and healthcare practitioners as a case study of communication between two different argument fields. The authorities regularly send practitioners clinical safety advisories (i.e., new policies), but, as I show in a read-aloud text response analysis, clinical physicians read the advisories with a good deal of skepticism. They question the authorities' justifications for the new policy from within their medical practice with questions such as 'Why would this be relevant to me?' I provide a sketch of argument fields theory to suggest that unresolved issues about the definition and scope of argument fields may limit its value to rhetorical analysis. Finally, reflecting on the risk communication case study, I offer some perspectives on how literature on rhetorical policy studies and the materiality of rhetoric can provide new insights

into how the material constraints and commitments of arguers shape argumentation and their evaluation of arguments.

Introduction

Although rhetorical argumentation is often associated with public deliberation and dissociated from legal and technical spheres (e.g. Goodnight (2012)), this chapter aims to show how a rhetorical approach to argumentation may also contribute to technical spheres of policy. In some subfields of rhetoric, like rhetoric of science and rhetoric of health and medicine, argumentation in policy and policymaking is an established theme of research (Meloncon and Scott 2017; Asen 2010). Likewise, since the early 1990s, the field of policy analysis has taken an 'argumentative turn' of its own (Fischer and Forester 1993). Whereas conventional policy analysis has a more decisionist focus on empirical measurement of inputs and outputs based on abstract rational choice principles, proponents of the argumentative approach to policy recognize normative pluralism as the basis of policy work and highlight that policies and their implementation are expressions of values and preferences. As Majone argued in his seminal book from 1989: "Good policy analysis is more than data analysis or a modelling exercise; it also provides standards of argument and an intellectual structure for public discourse" (1989, 7). Reconsidering the relation between rhetoric and policy may also unsettle the established separation of policy and politics. 'Politics' is conventionally associated with interest formation, electoral public discourse and public opinion and 'policy' with technical substance and operative terms like planning, instruments, problem-solving, choice architectures, organizational structures. An argumentative approach based on rhetorical theory may elucidate how decisions in policy—like decisions in politics—are contingent, marked by uncertainty and informed by ideology.

This chapter examines argumentation about *policy implementation*. The implementation of a new policy in an existing practice raises important questions about the relation between

argumentation and practice, and between multiple forms of rationality and claims of expertise. If we understand policy to mean an intent to achieve specific outcomes accompanied by new guidelines for decision-making to reach those outcomes, argumentation is central to policy implementation: How is a policy argued for and justified at the sites where it is implemented? How are claims about objectives and changes to practice justified? What does it matter who is responsible for implementation (citizens, professionals etc.)? The impetus for this chapter is a study I conducted with Danish primary care physicians about their perception of safety advisories for medicines from medical authorities (Møllebæk and Kaae 2020, 2022). Informed by the 'read aloud' method in rhetorical audience research (Bengtsson 2018), I asked them to read aloud and react to a safety advisory they had received from regulatory authorities regarding an anti-coagulant medicine. Interestingly, I found that they intuitively engaged in argumentation about their clinical practices and the different conditions of their work. For example, they instantly provided counterarguments to the authorities' risk assessments; they speculated about the intended audience for this specific letter; and they attempted to reconstruct the rhetorical situation that caused this letter to be distributed. These findings illustrate the foundational rhetorical point that texts, such as safety advisories, are not merely vehicles of information or propositions but also have generative effects on their readers: 'Why are they sending this? What do they want from me?' That is, receiving the text serves as an exigence for generating new arguments and a medium for engaging in some form of conversation with counterparts in which argumentation and justification are key activities.

In this chapter I argue that scholarship on rhetorical argumentation has insights to contribute to policy research, particularly in terms of how policies are justified and evaluated in different manners across different social and institutional settings. Part of that contribution is the concept of argument fields. Stephen Toulmin's introduction of the notion of argument fields in *The Uses of Argument* (Toulmin 2003 [1958]) instigated a new interest in how argumentation unfolds differently across social and

institutional settings and how interlocutors may evaluate argumentation differently according to their social and institutional setting. More than merely recognizing the variation of argumentation in different social contexts, Toulmin propelled a rhetorical understanding of argumentation by promulgating the position that the soundness of arguments was not certain nor universal across situations. Instead, Toulmin argued, argumentation was contingent and dependent of the 'field' in which it was articulated. Two arguments belong to the same field, he argued, when their conclusion and data follow the same type of logic, and conversely, two arguments do not belong to the same field if their conclusion and data follow different types of logic. This lead Toulmin to argue that some features of the form and merit of arguments are *field-invariant* and others are *field-dependent*. Toulmin's work spawned scholarship that both refined and challenged his original ideas. Some have challenged Toulmin's view to suggest that fields emerge around practices, social groups, or fields of discourse in which argumentation is central.

This chapter revisits argument fields theory from a rhetorical perspective and makes the case for an empirical, audience-focused approach that delineates and characterizes the practices and arguments about them that make up argument fields. I provide a sketch of argument fields theory, and then I take up Zarefsky's (2011) suggestion that an empirical approach to argument fields is needed to the further development, and I draw on recent work on empirical material from my interview studies with Danish physicians (Møllebæk and Kaae 2020, 2022) to argue that by taking a more empirically informed approach to argumentation and argument fields we may get a deeper understanding of the differences between fields, of how arguments 'move' between fields, and of how transition from one field to another impacts the evaluation of an argument or a mode of argumentation. In the final section of the chapter I reflect on role of material concerns in argumentation and its implications for argument fields theory.

Rhetorical Argument Fields

The responsibility to develop and decide on public policy is delegated to elected officials who draw on experts for knowledge on the subject matter as well as ways to frame and argue for a policy. After the adoption of the policy, it must be implemented in the real world of public services. It is a given that the institutional setting of policymaking is different from the institutional setting of policy implementation. Argument fields theory explores why some forms of argumentation gain acceptance in some settings (i.e. argument fields) and less so in others. I contend that focusing on the forms of argumentation and the fields that emerged may offer new ways of the understanding how the upstream of policymaking differs from the downstream of policy implementation. Rather than an exhaustive review, this section provides a sketch of the literature on rhetorical argument fields to highlight its potential uses and limitations for research on policy implementation.

Rhetorical approaches to argumentation are characterized by their focus on argumentative practices of social agents in situations marked by uncertainty, and argument fields theory takes aim at the social nature and diversity of these contexts. More specifically, a rhetorical approach to argumentation is socially oriented in the sense that argumentation from this vantage point is always addressing an audience; that they are about possible courses of action (i.e., practice); and it entails expression of values and preferences that may render different arguments incommensurable (Kock 2020). For scholars interested in the everyday practice of argumentation the idea of argument fields support inquiry into the diversity of how argumentation in real-life settings.

Argument fields and the distinction between field-invariant and field-dependent factors of argumentation facilitated the dislodging of a universalist 'one-size-fits-all' form of argument analysis. So, instead of asking whether an argument was valid as predicated by the analytical ideal, scholars identifying with rhetorical tradition of argumentation turned their attention to how argumentation unfolded in practice by asking 'Sound for whom?' and 'Sound in

what context?' (Van Eemeren et al. 2013; Kock 2020). A major part of the attraction of the 'argument field' as a concept was its normative potential to stake out middle ground between "the absolutism of formal logic and the implications of vicious relativism" (Zarefsky 1982). The vision was that scholars of argumentation could delineate between different fields of argumentative practices and thereby explore and explain how and why some forms of argumentation proved successful in some contexts but not in others.

While argument fields may have more or less disappeared from journals and conferences on argumentation, the usefulness of argument field theory and related concepts, like argument spheres and argument communities, remains. As James Jasinski notes, rather than a sign of the obsolescence of the concept, the decline in explicit interest in argument fields may indicate that the concept has become ingrained in the disciplinary consciousness for rhetorical scholars to become an almost taken-for-granted component (Jasinski 2001). On a more critical note, Prosise, Miller and Mills argue that while the argument fields have heuristic value for scholars, scholarship in argument fields have not yielded a descriptive or a critical method to support inquiry. This component is crucial, they argue, because any engagement with the diversity of argumentation as it unfolds in everyday practices needs to consensus on nomenclature for students (1996). Reassessing the history of argument fields, Robert Rowland attributes the waning interest in argument fields not to fragmentation, as some have argued, but rather to undue amplification of the diversity of approaches. Rather than mutually exclusive approaches, the different approaches to argument fields demonstrate the multiple aspects to be taken into account and existing theoretical work and the clear relevance for the field invites future collective efforts to continue work on argument fields theory (2008). Rowland provides a useful inventory of the approaches to argument fields:

    1. Ontological: *Fields are subject matter domains*

    2. Anthropological: *Fields are communities of arguers or*

audiences

  3. Linguistic: *Fields are domains of discourse*

    a. Epistemological

      i. Logical

  4. Sociological / Psychological: *Fields are (a) sociological or (b) psychological categories*

    a. Disciplinary

    b. Symbolic structures

      i. Purely psychological

  5. Pragmatic: *Fields are practices* (2008)

Nonetheless, the general perception in the discipline is that a central problem has been the unresolved need to define argument fields in a way that accounts for both the internal characteristics of argumentative utterances and the social structures that constrain and afford those utterances. Part of this tension may stem from Toulmin's own shift in the definition of an argument field from being "a logical type" (2003 [1958]) to being a "rational enterprises outside the sphere of natural sciences", i.e., analogous to academic disciplines (Kraus 2011). Foregrounding the propositional content of argumentative utterances, fields organize around the patterns in how discursive agents employ epistemic authority in a social arena. By describing the difference in argumentative content, then, differences between fields emerge. However, critics of this approach have argued that this is likely to lead to little more than idealized typology-building and the kind of formalism that Toulmin's model argumentation originally was a reaction against. And because more formalistic accounts of argumentation tend to disregard more everyday contextual and social aspects of argumentation from view, they are likely to limit the explanatory power of the social factors that initiate and shape argumentation and justification.

The immediate alternative to defining argument fields on the basis of logical types of propositional content is to define argument fields as formally organized arenas or systems of discourse. Much research on argument fields has focused on how "rational enterprises" modeled on academic disciplines are not a good model for real world discourse because they are too formalized to account for dynamics of social spaces. A central issue in this approach is the role of power and epistemic authority. Prosise, Miller and Mills argue that although Toulmin recognized the role of argumentative conflict in establishing authority, his explanation of how argumentation develops and is sustained rests on a evolutionary model which asserts that the best warrant of a field will become the accepted one (1996). However, what constitutes the standard for legitimate argumentation is the object of intense discursive contestation. Symbolic practices of agents invest logical types with authority. Field theory sensitive to social space may describe these practices better.

In sum, the definitional issues confronting arguments fields theory resembles the impasse of the agent-structure binary of much social theory: Whereas a focus on argumentative utterances as logical types tends to overdetermine the agency of the linguistic agent, a contextual focus forms may overdetermine environmental aspects at the expense of the employed strategies. One way forward may be a more empirical approach that emphasizes the practices of arguers. Pointing specifically to the empirical work of van Eemeren, Garssen and Muffles (2009), Zarefsky suggests that "empirical research and analysis of how actual arguers identify and define the argument communities in which they participate" (2011) has driven the research on argument fields forward recently. For Zarefsky, this work demonstrates that the goals and standards of argumentation are upheld in the practice of arguing and, hence, not something that is superimposed retrospectively by argumentation theorists.

A Social Theory of Argument

Charles Willard has put forward a social theory of argument including a perspective on argument fields that is relevant for the purposes of this chapter because it connects relevant issues regarding argumentation, practice and sociality and because it provides a set of operative terms that allows us to empirically articulate the complex social structure of the argumentation in policy implementation. Willard's position departs from approaches based in formal and informal logic in terms of the definition of an argument, the scope of argumentation studies and nature of the social context of arguers. Instead of focusing on arguers' claims and their justification of them, Willard foregrounds the social process of articulating arguments, emphasizing argumentation over arguments. Argumentation is what occurs in situations where people construe "incompatible propositions". Thus, arguments are emergent and contextual; they take place over extended time and place, as arguers collaboratively create, shape, and change events by "interpreting their options and strategically adapting to the expectations and actions of others" (Willard 2003, 67). Therefore, a social theory of argument takes as its object the creation and change of communities of practice that are held together by deliberation and argumentation (Willard 1989). Argument fields, then, are real social entities, and the concept is similar to concepts like 'rhetorical communities', 'domains of objectivity', 'communities of discourse', and 'social frameworks of knowledge', although with notable differences (Willard 2012).

In a "bare-bones sketch" of social theory of arguments Willard (1989) outlined three dimensions. First, a social theory on argumentation seeks to account for the complexity of specific communities of arguers and how that complexity shapes argumentation. Whereas rationalist theory of argumentation seeks to account for "the intellectual progress" in the succession of ideas in a texts and propositions, a social theory emphasizes to a community's "practices and preferences to explain stability and innovation of ideas" (Willard 1989, 161), including the internal

deliberation and ebb and flow of consensus in the field as well as interfield discourse.

Secondly, the object of a social theory of argument is communication modalities, not argumentative propositions. That is, not the expression of communicators' internal states nor the validity of arguments as predicated by normative criteria of argumentation, but rather the modes in which people engage others in justifications about practice. Such a mode of communication may be a *conventional* activity; institutionalized methods for cooperative activity, working agreements and definitions and arguers' ability to create, refine, sustain and contest rules, roles and relations. In this sense, argument fields are not academic disciplines or discourse communities. Rather they are "traditions of practices, inferences we make about recurring themes in a group's practices; they are generalizations we make about unifying threads uniting particular activities" (Willard 2012, 439).

Third, a social theory of argument emphasizes the dynamic between a field's key concepts or epistemic concerns and their utility in specific situations. Around practices emerges a vocabulary and a set of concepts that can make issues practices subject of argumentation. Justification and argumentation are inherently tied to foundational concepts and epistemic concerns. Willard works from the assumption that that social activities are recurring comparison processes in which individuals check their thinking against the views of others. This is key for the epistemic status of ideas because people seek to objectify their thinking by checking it against the standard of a given community or argument field . That is, "a person turns to a field…in order to firm up subjective interpretations. Thus, to study [argument fields] is to study the ways actors deal with the problems of interpersonal relativity, their attempts to wrest order and security from events, their efforts after *objectifying*" (Willard 2012, 440).

The Policymakers: The Argument Field of Regulatory Authorities

The case for this chapter is a form of safety advisory used by medical authorities in the European Union called Direct to Healthcare Professional Communication. It represents a case of how health policy is implemented by health policy makers communicating practice recommendations to health care practitioners, or what we might call policy-adopters. As a type communication that seeks to change practice, honing in on the argumentation of the letter and the policy-adopters' responses to it allows us to study two argument fields that, on the one, hand can be perceived to belong to the same social system of healthcare (with patient care and public health as their ultimate objectives) but, on the other hand, are also shaped by different professional and epistemic communities with different norms and values of practice, namely in terms of patient care, knowledge production and healthcare governance.

To understand how physicians evaluated the letter and its risk argumentation, we need to understand what they were arguing against, namely the form of argumentation in the drug safety advisories. That is, we need to characterize the argument field of the authorities who distribute it and approximate how they conceptualize this kind of risk communication. Unfortunately, we don't have original empirical data for this approximation but the official EMA guidelines for evaluating drug safety communication and the theoretical models that underpin them may act as a useful proxy source of information.

The social actors involved in the argument field of drug regulation (mainly EU and national authorities and drug manufacturers) operate in a tightly organized social system circumscribed by legal, scientific, commercial, and medical concerns. For example, there are significant legal constraints on what can be included in the safety advisory letter. For example, any mention of therapeutic qualities of the drug in question or mention of other drugs that clinicians could prescribe as

alternatives could be considered advertisement and thus a violation of EU competition law standards. Moreover, the advisory must be based on solid scientific assessment, but it also needs to be timely and respond the potential harm to patients as quickly as possible which ultimately requires regulators to strike a balance between expediency and strength of evidence. The process from detection of potential harm to effective dissemination of a letter may take years. The decision to require a safety advisory is based on extensive data analysis and external review that takes 10.5 months on average (Farcas et al. 2020). When the decision to distribute a safety advisory has been taken, the drug manufacturer and the EMA initiate the often lengthy and legally convoluted process of preparing and phrasing the letter (Boskovic, Møllebæk, and Kaae 2020). After the distribution the manufacturer is required to evaluate the mitigating effect of the letters using surveys that, for example, test how well recipient remember or understand the key messages of the letter (European Medicines Agency 2014). In sum, the multiple counterposing concerns of the EU regulatory system significantly complicates the process developing and articulating argumentation in the letters.

A dominant epistemic concern in the argument field of EU drug regulation is risk. Or more specifically, issues of risk tolerance, responsibility for risk, risk-benefit ratio and so forth. From the perspective of the regulatory authorities, risks are objective, external and unrelated to social processes and thus identifiable, measurable, and controllable objects of intervention and management. And more importantly, risks are tied to individual medicines. That is, a medicine has a risk-benefit profile that is refined continuously through scientific studies, but the risk tolerance of individual patient is not a part of the equation nor is the expected function of the single medicine within an extensive treatment program with multiple medicines. Furthermore, risks are discovered through a scientific process. For instance, surveillance of adverse event reports may have revealed that patients who used a particular an anti-coagulant drug were more prone to serious bleeding in certain situations than what the clinical trial data indicated when the drug was authorized for the market. Once

signals of this new risk are reported and scrutinized through EMA's referral procedure, the new risk are part of objective reality.

Mainly due to the complex governance context of drug safety communication and the prevalence of objectivist notion of risk, the EU regulatory system works with communication as an instrument for behavioral change. Regulators are critically aware that physicians work with patient care as their primary responsibility with notable discretion in decisions about care and prescription of medicines. But there is also an observable expectation that clear argumentation based on recent evidence and instructions on clinical procedures will generate changes in behavior which may, in turn, result in a reduction in adverse reactions to medicine (European Medicines Agency 2014). This expectation is illustrated in the use of the Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior (KAB) (see e.g. (Gridchyna et al. 2014)) communication behavior model that underlies the evaluation methodology that European Medicines Agency advises drug manufactures to use when evaluating whether drug safety advisories have the expected effect (European Medicines Agency 2014). The KAB model sets up a sequential causality relation between its three elements: knowledge, attitude and behavior. The underlying logic is that with the provision of new knowledge, an attitude towards a behavioral change emerges, and from that a behavioral change takes place. The research insight here is that parsing out the steps in which behavioral change occurs allows intervention designers to focus their efforts on specific elements of the process. This model follows a rationalist dictum that places knowledge as a prerequisite of behavioral change, particularly in the case of prescribers' adoption of new drug safety recommendations. However, while the three constructs have arguably been useful in the analysis and evaluation of health communication to wider populations (Marcinkowski and Reid 2019), important aspects are disregarded and undertheorized. 'Knowledge' is this model primarily refers to 'information' or 'evidence' in need of being 'translated' into clinical knowledge, a construct which has been widely criticized in healthcare implementation studies (Greenhalgh and Wieringa 2011). An idealist definition of knowledge risks reducing the complexity of

clinical judgment to algorithmic risk-benefit calculations, despite copious amounts of research demonstrating that physicians rely many forms of knowledge beyond risk analysis and statistical inference (Braude 2009).

In sum, the risk argument field of drug regulation authorities is characterized by the social complexity of developing and articulating argumentation due to counterposing economic and legal concerns, its main epistemic concerns of objective, rationalist risk and the behaviorist communication modality based on the presumption that dissemination of risk information produces risk awareness.

The Target Population: The Argument Field of Clinicians

As mentioned, in their reading aloud of the safety advisories from the drug regulators, the clinicians who received the advisory spoke from a different argument field, and they articulated a different understanding of risk. One of the recurring responses was that the case-letter I showed them (and by extension other safety advisory letters of this kind) was clinically irrelevant. In other words, in the situations where physicians make medical assessments of a patient's condition and prescribe medicines, the information in the letter was unlikely to factor in. The risks to patient safety mentioned in the letter were not something that the physicians were likely to encounter with the patients they see, physicians told me. One physician emphasized that he felt that the risks this letter presented were outside his area of responsibility: "These are all people who have been in contact with the hospital … I would assume that the responsible specialist made an informed decision about the anticoagulants. I mean, it's not something that we GPs should be juggling with."

In the interview, it became clear that for this physician the main problem with this kind of letter was not merely clinical irrelevance, but the risk of information overload specifically. Receiving what he believed was clinically irrelevant communication increased his awareness of the risk of information overload. The risk was accompanied by a frustration with what was perceived as a completely unrealistic expectation from healthcare policy-makers and healthcare administrators about the level to which physicians

are able to stay up-to-date on recent developments in medicine. Information overload has been a growing concern among clinicians with the emergence of so-called evidence-based medicine (Hall and Walton 2004; Smith 2010), a practice that seeks to incorporate of the best available scientific evidence in clinical decision-making. The effort to bring scientific evidence to clinical decisions have produced an exorbitant number of clinical guidelines for physicians to follow. Moreover, while proponents of evidence-based medicine have emphasized the need for evidence to improve quality, safety and consistency of healthcare delivery (Sackett et al. 1996; Guyatt et al. 1992), critics have worried that practice may be reduced to a 'cookbook' medicine by overestimating authorized guidelines and underestimating the importance of tacit clinical knowledge and the importance of individual engagement with the patient (Greenhalgh et al. 2014; Malterud 2002).

Other physicians saw the letter more directly in relation to tensions in the organization of healthcare governance in the era of evidence-based medicine. For example, the first warning in the letter I had the physicians read aloud was that "active clinically significant bleeding" should be considered "a contraindication", i.e., an indication that should cause the prescriber to stop the use of the medication. In three of the interviews physicians responded very negatively that "active clinically significant bleeding" was so broad a contraindication that it was meaningless in practice. Upon reading it, one physician shook her head.

> Interviewer: You are shaking your head?
> GP: What is this? Is it bleeding from the gums, when I was brushing my teeth this morning? That is an active bleeding. Is it significant? – How would I know? … I mean, this is authorities' crap, right, or academic crap!

The reference to the letter as "authorities' crap" articulates clearly how knowledge produced centrally in healthcare organizations maybe be evaluated differently at local clinical levels. It is widely established that there is ongoing contestation of the epistemic authority in healthcare governance systems between central, regulatory bodies and local clinical practitioners

(Timmermans and Angell 2001). Despite the epistemic authority of the evidence base behind this warning and the regulatory authority of the EMA which required the company to distribute the letter, three of the physicians are not inclined to accept the claim that patients with "active clinically significant bleeding" should be taken off the drug, because that is clinical judgment call that requires a much more complex assessment of the patients overall condition and medical history.

Rather than an informational capacity issue as noted above, this response captures a physician's experience of authoritative overreach. It questions healthcare governance and the centralization of epistemic procedures, and it illustrates how the difference in argument fields may revolve around epistemological difference. One physician explained that this is the way 'the reverse epidemiology' of general practice works.

> You have to remember that in general practice, reverse epidemiology is the rule. Namely that in the hospital they see all these cases, and they say 'wow, we're seeing a lot of people with this kind of bleeding'. [In general practice] we don't see many of them. That all happens centrally and in [patient] registers. We can't see that people with bleedings are pouring into hospitals, because we see that everything is fine. But if you're in a hospital, you're thinking 'wow, that's a lot' because you're getting cases in from everywhere

We can see how the feeling of authoritative overreach expressed by the first physician may be a result of these epistemological conditions. As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have argued (1969), adherence to arguments depends of the *presence* of the proposition or issue. That is, the ability of bringing the audience to the point of 'seeing' the issue clearly or 'experiencing' the proposition as true, is crucial to argumentation. In this case, the inability to 'see' the patient who suffers from this adverse drug reaction may reduce the physicians' sense of urgency regarding the risk.

Rhetoric, Materiality and Policy Implementation

When new policies require on-the-ground practitioners to change their practice, argumentation and justification is a key

concern. Particularly in policy settings that involve health risk and care for citizens, practitioners may have strong expectations for adequate and explicit justifications about the need for changing practice. In this chapter I have approached this issue from argument fields theory by exploring how justification of the policy and its implementation can be considered an argumentative process that unfolds between two argument fields. To get at this issue more empirically, I have taken up the case of a safety advisory from a regulatory authority to healthcare practitioners. But rather than looking at the specific safety advisory text and its argumentation in a rhetorical close reading, I followed the interviewee participants' responses to the advisory and their reflections on whether or not to comply with the safety advisory. That also lead me to analyze the conditions for writing and distributing the safety advisory in the first place, namely the institutional constraints and capacities of the issuing authority, the European Medicines Agency. Taking a cue from Willard's social theory of argumentation, I characterized the argument fields more in terms of their practices and the material complexity than reasoning and types of logic. So, rather than focusing on the text I focused on the institutional capacities and arrangements that composed the text and the values and associations that attaches to it.

   I found that whereas regulatory authorities consider safety advisories a matter of providing new information to guide physicians' prescription decisions, for the physicians the letter was a persuasive symbolic action that exceeded that of merely providing of new information. For the physicians, the distribution of letter, its style and its argumentation go beyond the risk of the particular drug because it resonated with larger social and political issues sociotechnical system of drug regulation and clinical pharmacology. On the one hand they acknowledged the importance of getting up-to-date information about the safety of the drugs they prescribed, and they acknowledged the need for relying on medical evidence in clinical practice to the greatest extent possible. They believed that their decisions regarding patient health and well-being generally improved when they

incorporated evidence-based guidelines for rational pharmacotherapy. On the other hand, it was also clear to them that the letters were not mere vehicles of risk information. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a key difference to the evaluating of arguments is the proximity to clinical patient care. Primary care physicians provide clinical care for patients directly in clinical settings. Medical authorities, in contrast, are at a remove from clinical care and have administrative responsibilities for healthcare provision, namely the safety, effectiveness and quality of pharmaceutical products.

I think this suggests something important about argument fields theory and especially the relevance it may have for policy analysis and implementation research. Argumentation fields theory presents important ideas to policy analysis to understand the relation between the empirical and the normative, policy and politics, policy judgment and policy narratives (Fischer 2013). However, while aspects related to discourse have long been central in this tradition, the material concerns that go into institutional arrangements and differences in sources of authority sit somewhat uncomfortably in argument fields theory. Some contributions to argument fields theory have indirectly addressed or hinted at questions related to material concerns. For example, Prosise, Miller, and Mills (1996) argue that argument fields constitute arenas of discursive struggle that involve measures of power and authority, but they do not directly consider the material determinants or aspects of such struggles. Relatedly, Zarefsky's response to Kraus's review of argument fields theory and his call for a more empirical approach to argumentation also hints at more direct attention to material concerns, although without specifying so (Zarefsky 2011). Based on the brief sketch of argument fields theory in this chapter I contend that for argument fields theory to shed new light on persistent issues related to the practice of argumentation, such as justification of policy implementation, two further considerations should be made. First, theories of argumentation need to be attuned more to social and practical circumstances of actual argumentation, and secondly, the material

concerns of the argumentative practice should be theorized more explicitly.

While the role of materiality in argumentation may not be a concern in all corners of argumentation studies, it is key concern in research on argumentation in public policy. Robert Asen has suggested that rhetoric is central to the construction of policy problems, to crafting policy solutions and to promoting them to citizens (2010). In an effort to theorize the relation between rhetoric and public policy more explicitly, Asen has characterized public policy as a mediation of rhetorical forces (including argumentation) and material forces. In doing so, he emphasizes the constitutive and performative function of rhetoric, but he also contends that the influence of material factors, policy processes and institutions cannot be excluded from view. That is, a rhetorical account of public policy must exceed a textual, symbolic perspective on rhetoric to include material conditions for rhetorical argumentation. Public policy provides goods and services to specific populations to achieve particular outcomes, and as such it unfolds in the material everyday life of citizens and those who provide public services for them, such as primary care physicians.

Asen's proposition to situate public policy as the mediation of rhetoric and materiality is important because it connects rhetorical theory more explicitly to public policy and calls to further such work. However, in Asen's outline, public policy is understood as something to be decided on and promoted and thus closely tied to policymaking and the realm of politics. That is, Asen primarily explores public policy and rhetoric as an interface between government-based policymaking and the citizenry. However, although public policy includes both government institutions with mandates to make decisions and the citizenry at large, the life cycle of a public policy is crowded with many more communities and perspectives, including policy-adopters, independent policy experts, commercial beneficiaries of policy and civil beneficiaries of policies etc. My focus in this chapter has been on the down-stream process of implementing what has been decided. Despite the unresolved questions noted above, argument fields theory provides a valuable literature to further investigations into the

nature and variety of communities involved in the policy life cycle because argument communities are likely to form around policymaking or be subject to implementing processes. I consider Willard's point that arguers collaboratively create, shape, and change events by "interpreting their options and strategically adapting to the expectations and actions of others" (Willard 2012) a useful starting point for thinking further about rhetorical argumentation and policy implementation.

Although Asen connects public policy to both the constitutive and material dimensions of rhetoric and argumentation, the discussion does not extend to the material concerns that emerge when the rubber of policy meets the road of real-life settings. How, then, do we account for the material concerns and affordances of policy implementation that were described in the case study above? In rhetorical theory, the term 'materialist rhetoric' refers to a variety of different theoretical accounts of the relationship between rhetoric and the world that it inhabits, and this has animated lively debates in the rhetorical studies for over four decades (McCann 2018). These debates take up core theoretical questions like whether rhetoric is representational or constitutive, what characterizes the material world external to rhetoric, and what characterizes rhetorical agency? While Marxism has been the most influential intellectual tradition in these debates, approaches from other intellectual traditions have also emerged. These approaches generally reject the claim that materiality of rhetoric is limited to antagonistic class relations by arguing that rhetorical materiality takes up every dimension of human affairs.

Specifically, Greene and Hayes' offer a rhetorical materialist perspective on argumentation that disregards the notion of argumentation as the symbolic means by which people influence other people's beliefs, values and action (2012). The rhetorical materialist perspective they advance approaches argumentation less as a representational act of reasoning and more as a socially productive and contingent "human technology" (2012, 191). Argument is socially productive in the sense that argumentation gives shape to communities of arguers (similar to Willard's claims above). But more importantly argument is also socially productive

as a form of communicative labor. One of the main accounts of communicative labor is the need to manage disagreement, contention, and difference, also in public policy and in more technical spheres of argument. However, predominant 'dialogical' theories of argumentation imply a cognitive division of labor in which the labor of persuasion is assigned to the speaker (in the form of argument production) and the labor of becoming informed is assigned to the audience (in the form of argument evaluation). In other words, 'dialogical' theories of rhetorical argumentation posit the speaker as the producer of arguments designed to persuade an audience, counter objections, and to some extent justify decisions. A rhetorically materialist perspective, alternatively, frames all components of the rhetorical context (speaker, text, audience, exigence, change) as socially relevant. That is, argumentation participates in "a material constitutive process of world making" by composing these element as an argumentative context (2012, 191). One significant implication is that any purpose or intention that is inferred from an argument is thus socially produced by a argumentative context and not a property of the argument producer.

Greene and Hayes provide new perspectives on what I characterized as a theoretical impasse for argument fields theory above, although their critique of dialogical theories of argument does not fit squarely on argument fields theory. Argument fields theory (in the multiple variations I have noted above) does not posit a cognitive division of labor between argument production and argument evaluation. Rather, argument fields theory, broadly speaking, emerged out of the recognition that multiple communities of arguers produce and evaluate arguments in distinct, incommensurable ways. Nonetheless, the bifurcation of argument production and argument evaluation is an attribute of much of the argument fields literature.

A rhetorical materialist approach to the relation between argument fields as a product of argumentative labor opens new perspectives on the social process of argumentation and the institutional arrangements and capacities that shape it. Recognizing that rhetorical agency should not be limited to the

argumentative context but also include material constitutive dimension may bring into focus institutional arrangements and capacities that characterize the argumentation within an argument field. For example, while medical authorities issue safety warnings on the basis of their legal and scientific authority, policy-adopters should not be conceived as passive recipients. Policy-adopters such as healthcare professionals may hold significant informal authority due to their ethos as on-the-ground practitioners and their capacity of organization. That is, while the medical practitioners may be considered passive recipients of safety advisories, they have considerable rhetorical agency in circulating arguments about clinical practice within their community. My research suggests that clinical guidelines developed by medical professionals themselves carry more argumentative weight in some aspects of clinical decision-making than policies from the medical authorities (Møllebæk and Kaae 2022). Thus, the distinct organization of internal policy in the healthcare professional communities and the institutional arrangement that support justifications and decisions are important determinants of the argument field.

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13.

Muzzling Science? Cultivating Scientists' Rhetorical Awareness in the Public Communication of Expertise for an Era of Pandemic Fatigue

Pamela Pietrucci

The Italian Pandemic Context

Rome, December 3, 2021 — **The Italians and the irrational.** Next to a reasonable and wise majority of national citizens, we saw the emergence of a wave of irrationality. It showcases a fatuous sleep of reason, a fatal escape into magic, witchcraft, shamanic thinking, claiming to decipher the occult sense of reality. 5.9% of Italians (around 3 million people) believe that Covid-19 simply doesn't exist. 10.9% believe the vaccines to be useless and ineffective. 31.4% believe the vaccine to be experimental and those taking it to be acting as guinea pigs. 12.7% of Italians believe science causes more damages than benefits. We observe an irrational tendency to believe pre-modern superstitions, antiscientific prejudices, groundless conspiracy theories and speculations. From the techno-phobias: 19.9% of Italians believe 5G to be a sophisticated tool to control people's minds. From the historic-scientific *denialism*: 5.8% of Italians believe the earth to be flat and 10% believe man never landed on the moon. The conspiracy theory of the 'great replacement' has infected 39.9% of Italians that are convinced of the dangers of 'ethnic replacement': for them, national culture and identity will disappear because of immigrants bringing into the country a dynamic demographic in

opposition to national Italians that are not having children any longer. All this happens allegedly for the will of presumed and opaque globalist elites. The irrational has infiltrated the social fabric not only in individual skepticism but also in social movements, which this year have inflamed public squares. It also permeated a good portion of public discourse, where this attitude has gained visibility through social networks trending topics, through escalating the rankings of book sales, and through occupying a staggering amount of space on television networks - ("La società irrazionale" 2021).[1]

    This media excerpt, describing a rather worrisome picture of Italy during the second year of the pandemic, has been published in 2021 by CENSIS (*Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali*, the "Italian Institute of Studies on Social Investments") (Censis 2021b). CENSIS has been conducting research on the social and economic Italian situation since 1964 and it is regarded as a leading national authority by local and national administrations that regularly utilize its reports on economic, social, and cultural trends in processes of policy-making and cultural interventions. This striking summary, and the broader CENSIS report including a staggering amount of data about Italy in 2021, does not come as a surprise to anyone who has been living through the pandemic in the Italian national context. While the presence of a 'reasonable and wise majority' of citizens is evidenced by the high vaccination rates and by the sustained national collective efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19 infection through everyday acts of civic responsibility, it is also important to recognize and better understand the sense of unrest circulating in the nation's citizenry.

    The trends described by CENSIS deserve careful scrutiny to better contextualize their emergence and to better understand their consequences in the Italian public sphere, precisely because they do not just describe irrational convictions deeply rooted in the extreme anti-scientific fringes of the population. Rather, if we look at the numeric data reported by CENSIS, we can see that these

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1. N.d.a. All translations from the original sources in Italian have been done by the author.

antiscientific positions seem to be subtly spreading also among larger publics together with 'pandemic fatigue' and a loss of optimism for a return to life as we knew it before March 2020. Equally concerning is also the fact that some of those extreme fringes of anti-science and irrationality champions have representatives in institutional and governmental seats, thus contributing to popularize those anti-science positions in everyday political and public discourse and generating public confusion and skepticism also within the larger and "wise" part of society.

In 2021, in this context of rising public unrest, for instance, we also saw a rise in public protests and rallies targeted against, in turn: the mask mandates, the vaccines, the national lockdown, the Covid-19 vaccine pass (called 'Green Pass' in Italy) or the government policies *tout court*. Some of those protests not only endangered those in attendance, causing Covid-19 outbreaks among the un-masked protesters, but in a few cases they turned violent, putting other citizens and public health workers at risk. One notable example, from October 2021, was when a crowd of 'No Green Pass' protesters guided by the far-right extra-parliamentary party leaders of *Forza Nuova* (that were later arrested and charged) decided to attack and trash the headquarters of the Italian labor union CGIL in Rome and also the nearby ER of the hospital Umberto I (where one of the protesters had been checked in), whose doctors and nurses were attacked and beaten after the protesters stormed the place. Episodes of violence like this one have often been championed by extreme fringes of the political and ideological spectrum that during the pandemic have worked consistently to co-opt and exploit the pandemic public health issues to their advantage, framing them as issues of personal freedom and freedom of speech and turning them into political and ideological problems to capitalize on. However, the political exploitation of public health topics is not at all limited to cases as extremes as this one or to political groups and figures as extreme as the neofascist *Forza Nuova*. As it has been correctly highlighted in the CENSIS report, the turn towards irrationality in Italy has cultivated fertile grounds for the politicization of public health and

the progressive polarization of national publics in their views of the pandemic situation.

Different manifestation of public 'irrationality' and antiscientific attitudes have taken different forms over time, and one of the most concerning facts that emerged from reports like the one published by CENSIS is that—in many cases—they seem to have emerged, in part, as a reaction to some of the mediated modalities of public communication of science circulating nationally since the beginning of the pandemic. If, on the one hand, the public uncertainty about scientific topics during the pandemic encouraged the explosion of public attention to scientific and expert discourses and their migration into the public sphere and public media, we have also, on the other hand, witnessed a growing political exploitation and co-optation of those topics and on occasion, political attempts to 'muzzle' the scientists and to shift the voice of experts outside of public sphere conversations and back into the exclusive realm of the technical sphere.

In this chapter, I explore some anti-science attitudes in the Italian public sphere vis-à-vis the peculiar, mediated context for expert and science communication that has characterized the Italian communication of Covid-19 during the pandemic. By reconstructing the events that led to a failed political attempt of muzzling the public communication of expertise in Italy, I argue that the pandemic highlighted a need, for experts engaging in public communication of science, to develop a rhetorical awareness of the contexts, platforms, and constraints of the media in which they are invited to speak to general publics. Developing this enhanced awareness of the rhetorical and argumentative contexts that they enter when they cross over from the technical and into the public sphere will help prevent the scientists' exploitation or silencing by politics or even worse, being misunderstood by their publics—especially when they enter the public sphere via traditional mass media (like Italian TV or radio) that thrive from spectacularizing their content, or social media with its complicated attention economies. In other words, by reading this failed political attempt to muzzle the scientists, here I re-center the importance of public communication of science on

the media in our contemporary democratic context and emerging post-pandemic world.

However, as I will illustrate in this chapter, this increased importance of science communication in the public sphere in times of Covid-19 has also created a pressing exigence for scientists and experts to enhance their rhetorical understanding of the public platforms in which their science communication appears. Learning to avoid the argumentative traps of contemporary media ecologies and knowing how to navigate mediated communication is one way the scientists can work to prevent future proposals that block their access to public media, like the one I will analyze in this chapter, and most importantly it is one solution to improve their public communication of expertise *tout court*. In what follows, I start by reading this Italian political proposal of regulating public science communication in context, in order to better understand the rationale for its emergence and start thinking about what scientists and experts can do, in the first person, to contribute to improve the public debate about scientific expertise.

Public Science under Attack?

The political attempt of "muzzling" the Italian scientists that I mentioned above consisted in a proposal brought for discussion in parliament by Giorgio Trizzino, a former member of the 5 Star Movement party, and a former surgeon and doctor. On the 21st of September 2021, Trizzino's daily agenda in parliament included a debate about the need to demand that scientists and experts ask authorization to their employers before any occasion of public communication (like TV or radio interviews or any other appearance to discuss their expertise in the public sphere). Essentially, by leveraging the concerning findings in two CENSIS reports about Covid-19 communication in Italy, this doctor turned politician suggested a strict regulation of the public communication of science in Italian mainstream media and in the public sphere. This policy idea was meant as an intervention to improve the current situation described by CENSIS in their

report cited at the outset of this chapter and in an earlier one (cited directly by Trizzino in the debate proposal): because of the negative effects of the expert communication in mainstream media during the pandemic—which, according to CENSIS, generated more confusion than clarity in terms of public understanding of science and more insecurity and skepticism than confidence in the government's pandemic policies—regulating and aligning the public communication of the many experts entering the public sphere was proposed as a possible solution to improve the nation's problems related to emerging antiscientific attitudes in response to confusing public messaging about science or the politicization of experts' public statements. In order to ensure a more united front in the communication of science related to the pandemic, the policy debate proposal drafted by Trizzino specifically suggested that experts and scientists affiliated with public universities or other public and private institutions should have to request authorization from their institutions in order to speak to the public via the media. This authorization would also entail an approval of the message to be communicated via the media in advance, and it would ensure that any message conveyed by scientists would be monitored in advance for accuracy and approved to represent the official voice of the institution employing the expert/communicator before the dissemination of it via mass media like television or newspapers.

In practice, in the Italian context, this would make it almost impossible bureaucratically for a lot of experts to actually ever speak to the public, which of course ensued a massive reaction from the world of Italian science, which read this proposal as an attempt of politics to 'silence science' for political reasons. The angered and dissenting reaction to this proposal has been homogeneous in the world of science and medicine, bringing together in dissent the voices of experts from many fields and different sides of the political spectrum against this attempt to 'censor' their public communication of science, an act of service to the Italian public. If Trizzino encouraged a "full stop to the media trumpeting" of the experts, in order to defend his proposal, various high-profile doctors and scientists responded by defining the proposal as "pre-historic", "fascist", "ridiculous", and a form

of "absurd censorship" (Santarpia 2021). Trizzino's rebuttal to the unified criticism coming from the world of science and medicine was a quote from Umberto Eco saying that "a cultured man is the one who knows where to find good information in the exact moment when he needs it" (*Informazione – Notizie a Confronto* 2021), implying that his proposal for regulating the public communication of science via mass media had to do with the quality of information that can be communicated in those platforms and with the necessity to improve public science communication and the related public debate by managing its messages before their appearance in public sphere platforms, rather than with silencing or censoring anyone.

Preventing science communication from happening freely in the media by imposing strict regulations for experts to be allowed to engage in public communication, or having them agree in advance on the precise message to communicate, seems like an undemocratic solution that encourages an unfeasible restriction of the freedom of speech of experts not only *qua* experts but also as citizens. However, despite the controversial solution proposed, it is important to recognize that Trizzino correctly identified some of the Italian contextual problems of public communication of science via the media, hinting at the fact that the mass media platforms like radio and TV, especially with local debate formats that routinely encourage controversy and polarization as public spectacle, are not ideal venues for those entering them without careful preparation and training that ensure an effective communication of a specific message. Perhaps Trizzino's own personal move from medicine to politics enabled him to identify some core issues that have to do with communicating across technical and public spheres and deserve to be discussed more in depth. Jumping from his acknowledgement of an existing problem to a political proposal of carefully regulating the experts' interventions on the media, however, is a slippery slope, and a dangerous one in a time of pandemic crisis. The public communication of experts is a key factor during a public health crisis, and its unnecessary restriction could lead to an even worse

outcome than the presence of contrasting and occasionally confusing voices in the public sphere.

In a study conducted by Bucchi et al. (Bucchi, Fattorini, and Saracino 2022) and published in the *International Journal of Public Health*, the authors explain how Italian scientific experts during the pandemic have contributed to research that generated insights and solutions (including vaccine development), advised and shaped policy agendas, and communicated extensively across a wide variety of media platforms (TV/radio/daily news, social media) in a number of ways. Experts' communication and visibility, in particular, have been shown to be critical to improve the public perceptions of COVID-19 immunization, for instance. The public willingness to get vaccinated, specifically, is influenced by people's trust in scientific professionals and by their perceptions of their communicative role throughout the pandemic: when it comes to public expert communication, the more it is viewed as clear and consistent, the more it is associated with willingness to get vaccinated; the more it is perceived as confusing and contradictory, the more it is associated with vaccine hesitancy (Bucchi 2021).

The results of thoses studies, thus, confirm two points that are important to make when analyzing Trizzino's proposal of regulating public science communication on the media: because this proposal would risk reducing dramatically the public communication of science on the media, it is likely that it would consequently affect negatively the public understanding of science, science literacy, and consequently, in a pandemic situation, the public confidence in vaccination campaigns and other good and science-based advice. In other words, less communication is never a good thing because lay citizens orient themselves to science and make decisions on key behaviors to adopt by engaging with the public communication of experts that is often mediated by mass and social media. Hence, 'muzzling' the scientists by restricting their access to the media is a potentially dangerous reaction that not only does not solve the problem (increasing the public understanding of pandemic issues), but which would likely make the problem worse, as implied by the

findings of scholars working in the public understanding of science, in Italy and elsewhere. And yet it is also important to recognize that in the Italian national context, a problem does exist in the public communication of experts. Trizzino identifies this problem correctly, even though his proposal jumps to the wrong conclusions to solve it. Bucchi et al. highlighted that public trust in experts increases when their public communication about specific issues is "clear and consistent" (Bucchi, Fattorini, and Saracino 2022). In the debate agenda presented to parliament, contextualizing his proposal as a part of a future improved national pandemic-preparedness plan, Trizzino wrote:

> Risk communication is the punctual exchange of information and advice between authorities and experts, people and communities at risk, and it is an essential part of the intervention of public health authorities in the context of any outbreak; information that is accurate, timely, and consistent —in the formats, languages, and channels that people use for information and that they trust—will enable communities to understand the health risk that they are facing and it will make it easier to foster correct actions and behaviors geared towards prevention, such as for instance, vaccinations ("9/ 03264-A/078 : CAMERA – ITER ATTO" 2021.).

In this passage in particular, he defines risk communication to be a key element in connecting experts, publics, and policymakers. Communicating about risk, then, is an essential activity for experts and scientists, who are the sources of the information that both publics and politicians need in any context of emergency. This focus on risk communication, for instance, aligns with Carolyn R. Miller's argument that separating risk analysis from risk communication "is   a false distinction" because "risk analysis *is* a form of communicating about risk" (Miller 2003, 201). For Trizzino, risk communication is a "punctual" exchange of information and advice between experts, authorities, and the communities at risk. This exchange needs to be "accurate", "timely", "consistent", and it should happen in "the formats, language, and channels" that people use and trust. In short, Trizzino recognizes that risk communication is an activity that

aims to bridge experts, publics, and policy-makers, and it should do so through the language, forms, and channels that are functional to connect the stakeholders, and which should ideally happen in a timely, punctual way.

Once we analyze this premise for the discussion of regulating science communication on the media, a few contradictions emerge: how can risk communication be timely and punctual once it is so strictly regulated and filtered through norms and rules of Italian bureaucratic processes, which take considerable time and risk delaying or sabotaging entirely the timeliness and punctuality of the information exchange required in this situation? If risk communication is an activity that, by definition, crosses the technical and public spheres, what is the benefit of restricting/regulating the access to the public sphere to the key experts that hold the expertise that needs to be timely communicated in public? Finally, if risk communication happens in the "formats, languages, and channels" of our daily life, then what is the benefit of keeping a strict separation between the sphere of arguments where stakeholders can freely communicate and regulating the moment of cross-over from technical to public sphere that is so essential for a timely management of the pandemic?

Trizzino focuses on finding a solution to one side of the problem, the one that recognizes that a clear and coherent communication would be needed to improve the expert-public-policy debate in a time of crisis, but then his proposed solution jeopardizes public communication *qua* public activity by restricting and regulating access to it in order to monitor messages for accuracy and consistency. This type of monitoring seems problematic for a variety of reasons, but here I want to highlight, first, the reasons why it is primarily not a good solution to the problem Trizzino sees in the Italian public sphere. This I will do by closely reading his words in the proposed solution to the dilemma of fragmented and not carefully crafted public science communication:

In order to guarantee appropriate and uniform information, the Plan (n.d.a. the "pandemic plan") highlights how it is essential, for any

pandemic prevention plan, a training activity that is organized and attended at the national, regional, and local levels. This is to foster a common/univocal approach of methods, of responses and actions. Among the general objectives of the training program there is also that of developing the communicative-relational competences to intervene in the management of the emergency ("9/03264-A/078: CAMERA – ITER ATTO" 2021.).

This controversy can teach us one thing about the public communication of science and expertise: that it can't be improvised. Politicians know this fact well, and they are well-prepared and well-trained to speak on the media, in order to reach their audiences and stay on message. Trizzino, as a former doctor turned politician, knows this well, and he is not wrong in advocating for media training in his controversial proposal for parliamentary debate. However, when he does so, he seems to be convinced that public science communication, in order to be "appropriate", needs to also convey uniform information and a "univocal approach of methods, responses, and actions". This notion of the need of a uniform or "univocal" approach to public science communication, in theory to achieve a type of clear and coherent public communication of science, is misleading and inherently anti-scientific in and of itself. There is a big difference between, on the one hand, encouraging media-training to allow a better and free public communication of science, and, on the other hand, advocating for a type of state-controlled, uniform, and strictly regulated science communication that can become not only non-timely because of the burdensome process of seeing authorization suggested, but most of all, not free or representative of the diversity of perspectives in the various approaches, fields, and individual scientists' work. A "uniform" and "univocal" approach to public science communication, in short, is an idea that erodes academic freedom and freedom of speech and fails to reflect the ideals of the scientific method in its attempt to achieve coherence and clarity, which is the advisable outcome to reach in public science communication in a pandemic.

Therefore, here, while condemning Trizzino's proposal as essentially undemocratic and even anti-scientific, echoing the united front of criticism voiced by the Italian experts in the public sphere, I find it useful to think about alternative solutions to improve public science communication in the Italian public sphere. Muzzling the scientists or aiming to achieve a "uniform," state-controlled public science communication is not only unfeasible, but also not recommendable. So, what can we learn from this controversy? What other ways can we envision to achieve a better communication of science in the public sphere, while leaving the scientists free to do their job and free to debate, as is appropriate in a democratic environment? The first lesson experts might need to learn from this controversy might be inspired precisely by Trizzino's proposal, but taken in a different direction: perhaps experts should familiarize themselves with the constraints of public-oriented communication, and, just like politicians, do some work to prepare and train for entering conversations constrained by the platforms, frames, and context of media spectacle. Doing so as part of their own professional development can help them manage their communication in a better way and can also help resist the politicization or exploitation of expert interventions by non-scientific stakeholders like politicians, journalists or media figures invested in fostering spectacle and not science, or any other contextual constraint not conducive to solid public discussion of expertise.

Politicizing Science and Expert Opinions

Along with the unpacking of Trizzino's proposal, I will add an additional layer of contextualization about the Italian media landscape that during the pandemic has opened up the spaces for the public communication of science. I do so because the public platform in which scientists have been called to speak during the pandemic has deeply influenced not only the public reception of their science/risk communication but also the ways of

communicating their expertise, the arguments made, and the ethos of the experts as well.

This specific placement of public science communication has deeply influenced the reception of the messages conveyed by the scientists. However, my argument here is that it has not influenced enough the crafting of those messages for the public sphere by the experts. This will be one point of intervention when the experts encounter future communication situations similar to the one we have experienced during the pandemic: when crossing from technical to public sphere, especially when entering the public sphere via mass media and in TV or radio formats that encourage spectacle and not depth, much attention is needed not only to adapt the messages to communicate across the technical and public spheres, making them accessible for general publics, but also it is necessary to know how to navigate the communicative and argumentative modes that are common to those platforms, which tend to leverage speed and foster polarization more than careful unpacking and depth in conveying information.

The public platforms that suddenly became available to the scientists and experts during the pandemic (mass media like TV and radio and all their re-mediations on digital and social media) have greatly expanded their public outreach by giving them the opportunity to speak directly to large national audiences of citizens. However, in order to do so, the experts had to enter the spectacular contexts of TV and mass media infotainment, with all the constraints entailed by these frames entail, which are not necessarily conducive to good science communication or to good public communication *tout court*. The scientists who entered the Italian public sphere during Covid-19 also had to do so in a moment of emergency and likely without the time and space to carefully reflect on how to engage in public and communicate science while immersed in the inescapable constraints of the mass media spectacle and in the frantic engagement with pandemic science. If we think about the peculiar characteristics and the obviously flawed media dynamics of Italian mass media, we can quickly realize some reasons that did not help set the experts up for success in their public science communication attempts: we

know Italian media is characterized by an emphasis on polarized public debate, an unbalanced public representation of different societal or expert voices designed to enhance conflict for the sake of spectacle, following the logics of political infotainment, and we know that there is a widespread tendency towards the politicization of all public topics and issues (Mazzoleni and Sfardini 2010). When scientists and experts entered the Italian public sphere by appearing on mass media during the pandemic, they were likely not fully prepared to understand how to deal with media questions that demanded the constant oscillation between discussing technical matters of expertise and their own personal opinions on pandemic policies, which resulted in a quick politicization of the experts and a constant muddling of science/risk communication with political and policy topics. This, in turn, resulted in the confused and partisan public reception of science highlighted by CENSIS.

One important way for scientists to improve their communication, then, is to learn to explicitly shift the stasis while communicating via the media, to differentiate their interventions when speaking about science as scientists and speaking about policy, opinions, or values as citizens. In her "Manufactured Scientific Controversy" (2011), Leah Ceccarelli suggests that experts "explicitly shift the stasis from questions of fact, definition, and cause to the questions of value and policy that are the driving force behind the public debate" (Ceccarelli 2011, 217) when it's relevant to do so in order to maintain a clear differentiation between the scientific information they convey to the public as experts, and the expert's civic and personal opinions about policy, values and public concerns. This is essential to avoid a politicization and polarization of science that, as we have seen in the Italian context, does not serve neither the experts nor the public well. In the next section, I elaborate on this context of spectacularization and politicization of science communication in Italy, before concluding with a call for rhetorical awareness for public scientists in our emerging post-pandemic age.

Public Communication of Science in Italy during the Covid-19 Pandemic

On Italian mainstream media, discussions about the pandemic emergency and Covid-19 have occupied a lot of space: experts and scientists have become routine guests for any type of TV show (news, talk shows, entertainment, infotainment) and have acquired a sort of star status; over time, their repeated appearances have generated ongoing public controversies in the Italian public sphere about everything related to the Covid pandemic. The controversies among experts and public figures appearing in this emerging television genre encouraged the development of type of 'fandom' or public following for specific expert figures that gradually started to represent not just science or expertise, but also specific stances regarding pandemic policies. Very quickly, as a consequence, the communication of science became politicized and often spectacularized: experts were pressed to answer questions about policy disguised as questions about science and they were often placed in contexts where they had to debate political or laymen public figures in some cases, and in other cases experts from different fields or "renegade" experts representing minority positions (for example vaccine-skeptic doctors), thus opening the stage to a series of confusing public debates where manufactured controversies, political debates, or just instances of infotainment have appeared in national public television and radio in the guise of serious debates about science and medicine.

The emergence of this peculiar genre on Italian mainstream media, which I will here call the 'Covid-19 manufactuversy', attracted public attention in a moment of dire need of good science communication, but it failed to provide an appropriate platform and frame for the expert communication that the public deserved to hear and the experts had to offer. Specific experts started to be associated with specific political positions, and their public appearances and public engagement over time made them recognizable as politicized experts or scientists and doctors speaking from a particular political standpoint, expressing public

opinions based on their expertise, but filtered through their political leanings.

One interpretation is that the attempt of muzzling the scientists discussed above emerged not only from CENSIS' findings but also from a perception that science had become part of a flawed public debate, with experts joining politicians in polarizing controversies that often conveyed all but good public science communication. In an article that traces this evolution of the experts' public rise as part of the Italian mass media spectacle, discussing the phenomenon of "virologists turned TV stars" and published in the Italian newspaper *Il Giorno*, Mauro Cerri describes the situation in these terms:

> From unknown experts, virologist and doctors turned into TV stars, very sought-after by journalists and TV personalities in need of a quick analysis of pandemic data. Inevitably, virologists have become the oracle-via-ether of this difficult year defined by numbers, terms, and projections about Covid and its consequences. […] Doctors and scientists are the absolute protagonists, undisputed masters of their topics and of the scene, so much so that their fights confuse the public. Prudent, reflexive, alarmist or optimist, confident or unscrupulous, depending on the expert in turn. From the tv screen to those of our tablets, experts entered our homes, and we learned to know them along with their reports on the daily numbers of infected-and-recovered victims of Covid-19. Every face has become a name, every name an opinion, every opinion a belief. As good Italians, we have not missed the opportunity to take a side, to become fans of one or the other, and to make ours scientific ideas that we don't quite understand, but that we can remember and repeat to our friends, adding 'he said that'. And it's enough. (CERRI 2021)

In another report from CENSIS, published in April 2021 and titled *Disinformation and Fake News During the Pandemic: the Role of Communication Agencies* (CENSIS 2021a), we can also read a variety of data that evidences this situation in which the mainstream media focus on pandemic themes, including the communication of science done by experts and the discussions of the Covid-19 management and policies not only did not help the wider public acquire clarity on scientific and medical information

related to the pandemic, but in fact detracted heavily from it. This second CENSIS report, in addition to the other one cited at the outset of this chapter, clearly illustrates how mainstream media platforms generated confusion, anxiety, and lack of trust in authorities and science. In the paragraph dedicated to the effects of mainstream media communication during the pandemic, CENSIS defines this worrisome national trend as a 'communicative infodemic', a sort of information epidemic in the mainstream media coverage of Covid-19. This 'infodemic' in Italy, says CENSIS, is characterized by a significant increase in the air time spent on pandemic topics, but not necessarily in the quality of the messages offered. In this case, more science communication does not equal more or better public information or public confidence in science, and this is precisely because of the peculiar problems highlighted thus far in the Italian rhetoric of science during the pandemic. In the report we read:

> The information disseminated on the media consisted of messages that– even from the most structured sources—in most cases appeared contradictory, negating each other (it is enough to think about the doctors and virologists that asked for new lockdowns in opposition to those that could not see their necessity, or the presidents of the various regions that one day wanted to open up the society and the next asked widespread school closures), not clear, anxiety-inducing, if not willingly mystifying. Rather than reassuring and orienting Italians towards appropriate behaviors, too much information with little clarity ended up generating confusion, alarmism, fear, and sometimes even not recommended or wrong behaviors. Paradoxically, thus, so much communication did not manage to create clarity for the Italians: since the beginning of the pandemic emergency, instead, we noticed the lack of useful information fluxes, and above all of coherent and secure information on the virus, contagion, testing practices and all appropriate preventive behaviors, and also, if not more, on the resources to utilize to receive accurate and clear answers on all Covid-19 questions (CENSIS 2021a, 14).

If we look at the claims made by Cerri above, it's easy to connect them with the controversy about the muzzling of science that we traced thus far. Case in point: Cerri mentions all the virologists

and doctors appearing on TV, producing information characterized by contradictions and by messages negating each other. This is in line with the description made by CENSIS in both reports cited, and also in line with the claims made by Trizzino in his infamous proposal analyzed above.

The interesting part that we notice in the short quote from Cerri, and which can give us a valuable insight in how this could happen, points to the idea that the problem with pandemic communication lay more in mass media as communication platform than in the sources of the messages (virologists and doctors). However, he highlights the fact that we see the "doctors and virologists" cited as the source of confusion because they "asked for new lockdowns in opposition to those that could not see their necessity" (CERRI 2021) as a typical example of the information contradictions happening on mass media that contributed to create anxiety, confusion, and public distrust. Now, this is only one example, but from careful observation of the Italian public debate and public science communication over time, it became evident that this example is typical and part of larger pattern of dysfunctional public communication of science that led both to the politicization of science in Italy during the pandemic, and to the rising distrust towards science in the national public. This distrust emerged when people started assimilating scientists with politicians, transferring the typical distrust in politicians over to the scientists that, like politicians, had suddenly become TV stars during the height of the pandemic and had started expressing polarizing public statements that were more akin to public or policy opinions than to science communication. In this case, Cerri notices how it is so confusing that one scientist would support a lockdown, while the other did not, thus creating a puzzling loop of contrasting positions that were perceived as based on science, when in fact it is clear that those positions concerned policy and value more than scientific facts.

In short, what has happened far too often in what is generally defined as public communication of science in Italy is that the questions asked to the experts were more often questions about policy and value than questions about science, facts, or definition. When the scientists started responding to those arguments without

explicitly differentiating the shift of stasis from questions of fact, definition, and cause to the questions of value and policy that are always at the center of public sphere conversation, they sabotaged their scientific credibility in the eyes of a public in dire need of clear scientific information more than political or policy opinion.

This is not to claim that scientists should not as a rule express their policy or political or value-based argument. However, when they are prompted to do so on mainstream media, where they are framed as the voice of science in charge of communicating about science, then the public perception and reception of their messages can get derailed because of the shift from the realm of science to the realm of what is perceived as policy. The consequence of this is that the scientists' credibility erodes, not just because of the public's exposure to contradictory messages, but also because of the association, in the public eye, of scientists/experts with politics and politicians (in Italy politicians generally enjoy low public trust).

So, on the one hand, asking scientists about lockdowns and policy is not the best frame for public communication of science. On the other hand, scientists letting themselves be dragged into policy/value-based discussions without explicitly shifting the stasis and acknowledging when they talk as regular citizens rather than in the name of science, have damaged the ethos of science and the overall public understanding of science. IN CENSIS' report we can learn more about some of the consequences of this problematic conflation of stasis in the public discourse of science on mainstream media, and the lack of preparedness of the scientists to intervene on those platforms in a more productive way:

> […] the communication problems remained over time, feeding false expectations, unjustified alarmism, and equally unjustified relaxation. The result has been a perverse entanglement of an excess of general information fluxes, most of the time providing contradictory and anxiety-inducing information, and a lack of specific fluxes, of useful service to guide people on the proper choices to make in situations of risk or on symptoms to evaluate and decisions to make: the lines at the ER in the first months of the

pandemic and those for testing in the following phase are just the outcome of the unfolding bad communication (CENSIS 2021a, 15).

Over time, during the pandemic, we have seen an intense communication flow, including science communication, but this flow has entangled matters of fact and matters of concern in ways not so easy to recognize or decipher for the Italian public, which was often left without the scientific information they needed and with an excess of policy positions and contradictory information that they could not disentangle on their own. Hence, the confusion and anxiety and distrust described by CENSIS:

> Therefore we saw a lot of communication, but poorly organized, about cures, vaccines, rules to follow, all accompanied by a lot of confusion about what could and actually should have been done…An immediate feedback on the effects of this type of communication comes from the Italian population, which defined the communication about the Covid pandemic, both social and mainstream, as confusing (49.7 %), anxiety-inducing (39.5 %, rising to 50.7 % among the younger generations), excessive (34.7 %), generic (20.5 %). Only 13.9 % of the population believes the communication to be balanced—a percentage that goes up to 19.6% among the elderly—and 12.5% found it clear (15.2% among the over 65). Among the younger generations, many believe that the communication was wrong (14.1 % for 18-34 years of age, 3.7 % for the over 65, average 10.6 %), and even terrible (14.6 % among millennials, 3.2 % among the elderly). (CENSIS 2021a, 15).

The specific mainstream media environment in Italy —characterized by infotainment, spectacularization, and polarization—contributed to erode the national trust in science by effectively routinely turning scientific voices against themselves in a variety of ways. In conclusion, a couple of the problems I noticed as recurring in everyday television, newspapers, and radio, are:

1. Fostering a frame of constant manufactuversy (where virologists were often called to debate vaccine skeptics or Covid deniers), or sterile controversy (where virologists and doctors were often invited to debate

each other or debate laypeople), all this most likely for spectacle and entertainment value rather than for public service.

2. Entangling science with misleading political/policy or opinion and value questions, ultimately contributing to increase public confusion and polarization around pandemic issues, while also decreasing the public understanding of science, scientific credibility (virologists started to be seen as 'TV stars' and perceived as appearing on TV to further their own interests and visibility, just as politicians do), and the overall quality of democratic public discourse in Italy.

Conclusion: Scientist-Citizenship in Times of Pandemic Fatigue

This case illustrates another perspective to improve the public communication of science across the technical and the public spheres, and it thickens an argument that I have supported previously about the need of *scientist-citizens*: experts equipped to communicate efficiently both as scientists and as citizens when they exit the technical sphere of science and enter the public sphere (Pietrucci and Ceccarelli 2019; Pietrucci 2019). When I first conceptualized the figure of the *scientist-citizen* with Leah Ceccarelli in the study of the case of L'Aquila 7, we noted how the purification of technical and public spheres over time had fostered the alienation of scientists and experts from their role as citizens (Pietrucci and Ceccarelli 2019). We made the case that because scientists are part of a larger public collective, that is, because they are citizens too, they have a duty to communicate clearly what they know to be essential information coming from their technical scientific expertise to those who need to know it but do not have the same type of expertise. The L'Aquila case showcased the failure of the earthquake experts to recognize and enact their civic duty of communicating clearly to the non-experts what they knew during the infamous meeting of the *Major Risk Committee*

of March 31, 2009, and within the larger rhetorical ecology of L'Aquila during the period of crisis before the earthquake of April 6, 2009. Because they saw their conversations as belonging only in the technical sphere, the experts in L'Aquila did not engage, neither directly nor indirectly, with the public communication of science before the destructive earthquake in Abruzzo, thus failing to enact scientist-citizenship in that context.

The sudden overflow of public science communication in the Italian public sphere during the global Covid pandemic showcases the opposite: even when there is a massive influx of science communication in the public sphere, it is a good idea for experts and scientists to think of their *scientist-citizen* ethos as a guide to their public rhetoric of science. Being a *scientist-citizen* also means understanding that the spheres of argument where one communicates present different exigences and constraints. While the 'L'Aquila 7' had not understood that their duty was also to step into the public sphere and correct misinformation about their findings, in the case of Covid-19 communication in Italy scientists and doctors did clearly see the need to enter the public sphere, but they did so in ways not necessarily conducive to good public science communication.

While they might have communicated *as-citizens* (by expressing their opinions on Covid policy), and *as-scientists* (by committing to communicate and explain their expertise about pandemic science), thinking about this case has showcased that they did not integrate these two positions well—either by letting one take over the other, when the communication of their own opinions on preventive policies detracted time and space from the actual communication of science, or by not understanding how to differentiate and alternate between the two by communicating the science and the facts clearly, and then shifting the stasis explicitly to express personal opinions on policies, politics or values.

The examples brought up in this chapter, together with the analysis of their troubling consequences—in this case the rising public distrust and the anti-science tendencies linked to the feeling of confusion, anxiety, and uncertainty about the pandemic that I discussed, citing the CENSIS reports—illustrate that there is a

need for scientists and experts to become more rhetorically savvy and to become aware of constraints and opportunities of the contexts and platforms that they enter in the public sphere in order to communicate to lay publics.

Learning to recognize and manage those constraints—such as the limitations to the possibility of good public communication of science when hosted on TV infotainment or talk shows that rely on spectacular content to attract their audience share, or the misleading framing of questions by journalists and TV hosts who ask about policy but with questions that are disguised as science-based—in short, developing a rhetorical awareness of the contexts in which they speak to different publics *is* another good way of enacting *scientist-citizenship*. And it is a mode of citizenship that we direly need in a time of global pandemic and climate crisis, and one that is only available to experts and scientists.

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