

The Realm of Argumentation: Basics and History

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Abstract:

Argumentation has a broad, multi-disciplinary scope. Being a point of overlap of diverse spheres of knowledge and sciences makes the study of argumentation so complex an enterprise, which still seeks to determine in precise terms what its object is and how it should be addressed. This paper is meant to offer a concise overview of argumentation and its various approaches. Focus is laid on the fundamental concepts that bear some relevance to the study of argumentation. Further, attempt is made to draw a sketch of its history and an outline of its modern theoretical distinctions.

Keywords: argumentation, argument, dialectic, logic, rhetoric.

Le Résumé:

L'argumentation a une portée large et multidisciplinaire. Le fait d'être un point de chevauchement de différentes sphères de connaissance et des multiples sciences rend l'étude de l'argumentation une entreprise si complexe, qui cherche encore à déterminer en termes précis ce que porte son objet et comment il devrait être abordée. Cet article vise à offrir un aperçu concis de l'argumentation et de ses différentes approches. L'accent est mis sur les concepts fondamentaux qui portent un certain intérêt pour l'étude de l'argumentation. En outre, une tentative est faite pour dessiner une esquisse de son histoire et un aperçu de ses distinctions théoriques modernes.

Mots clés: argumentation, argument, dialectique, logique, rhétorique

الملخص:

يعتبر الحجاج ميدانا واسعا للنطاق ومتعدد التخصصات، إن كونه نقطة تداخل بين عدة مجالات معرفية وعلوم يجعل دراسة الحجاج عملية جد معقدة، حيث أنه لا يزال يحاول تحديد موضوعه و مناهج دراساته بدقة. تم إعداد هذه المقالة لتقديم لمحة مجملة عن الحجاج ومقارباته. وينصب التركيز على المفاهيم الأساسية التي تحمل بعض الأهمية في دراسته. و بالإضافة إلى ذلك هناك محاولة لتقديم عرض مختصر عن تاريخه و الفروق المتواجدة في نظرية الحجاج الحديثة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحجاج ، الحجة ، الجدل ، المنطق ، البلاغة

1. Introduction

To delimit the subject of study in argumentation, one will wander in a number of realms in search of a clear-cut definition of it. These realms do show some conflicting attitudes as regards the nature of arguments, depending on the general lines of vision, but despite the existing clashing views, a common core does exist. To start with, the word **argument**, which is almost used interchangeably with **argumentation**, denotes in most dictionaries, on the one hand, the act of disagreeing or questioning something (a dynamic sense), and on the other, the reason or reasons put forward to prove the truth or falsehood of something (a static sense). In either case, an element of disagreement is present since even in the second sense, no reason is given unless some objection to what one says is present.

In line with this general literal signification of argument, a number of theorists generally agree on regarding argumentation a justificatory attempt. Zarefsky (2001), for example, considers it as “the study of reason giving used by people to justify their beliefs and values and to influence the thought and action of others.

Its central concern is with rationality or reasonableness of claims put forward in discourse” (p.33). It appears in this definition that **reasonableness** is a cardinal element of argumentation, which adds a normative veil to it. In other words, analysing argumentative discourse involves a tacit evaluation of it in accordance with some pre-established criteria of reasonableness. Not far from this statement, Barnet and Bedau (2005) put argument under the

cover term **persuasion** and set it apart from the other forms of persuasion by its being dependent on reason: offering statements as reasons for other statements and not appealing, for instance, to other persuasive tools such as emotions or torture. Further, they distinguish argument from **dispute** by restricting the latter to the dictionary's dynamic sense of it. Finally, in an earlier definition, Baker and Huntington (1905) seem to focus on the same essential features of argumentation. For them "Argumentation is the art of producing in the mind of another person acceptance of ideas held true by a writer or speaker, and of including the other person, if necessary, to act in consequence of his acquired belief" (p.7). This definition alludes to the effect argumentation can produce on the others' thinking and actions, but it does not specify the tools used to achieve that effect.

In a more elaborate and technical discussion of the nature of argument, van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Kruiger (1987) attempt to provide a meticulous analysis of its central elements. In their view, still a broad view, there are seven general features that mark language as argumentation. These are briefly recapitulated below:

- Argumentation is basically a social activity,
- Argumentation is an intellectual activity essentially based on reason,
- Argumentation must involve the use of language,
- Argumentation pertains to a subject about which people hold colliding expressed opinions.
- argumentation has the objective of justifying or disproving an opinion,
- Argumentation comprises a constellation of statements, or *arguments*,
- Argumentation seeks to convince an audience.

The authors, taking the seven features together, have come up with the following structural definition of argumentation: "Argumentation is a social ^[feature 1], intellectual ^[feature 2], verbal ^[feature 3] activity serving to justify or refute an opinion ^[features 4, 5], consisting of a constellation of statements ^[feature 6] and directed towards obtaining the approbation of an audience ^[feature 7]," (p.7).

This sketchy discussion shows the essential characteristics of the object of study in argumentation theory. It should be emphasized, however, that looking at argument is not that simple on the grounds that a number of theoretical distinctions in approaching argument can be made.

2. Key Concepts in the Study of Argumentation

Discussions of argumentative issues often make use of some terms and key concepts, the understanding of which is vital to apprehend the different aspects of argumentation, especially for a novice reader.

First of all, a central notion is disagreement or **difference of opinion** (explicit or implicit), from which argumentation originates.

Van Eemeren, Grootendorst and Snoeck Henkemans (2002) explain, in this connection, that "A difference of opinion or disagreement always involves two parties.

One party puts forward a standpoint and the other party expresses doubts about it _ or , as often happens, goes a step further and rejects the standpoint" (p. 4).

Also important to this discussion is the notion **point of view**, or the position one takes as regards a certain proposition. Houtlosser (2001) defines it as a statement that other statements (arguments) try to support or rebut, or justify or refute_ in the simplest terms it is "the object of argumentation". Furthermore, he expounds on and compares some relatively equivalent terms to point of view known in the various approaches, such as **thesis, attitude, belief, opinion, conclusion, claim** or **debate proposition**. A focal point is that identifying the

point of view(s) is necessary in the analysis and the evaluation of argumentation, though the methods and cues for doing so differ from one perspective to another.

To talk of a difference of opinion is to allude to two parties involved in argumentation about this difference. Some more restricted terminology is employed with regard to their roles in argumentation: the person (or persons) defending a point of view is the **protagonist** and the one attacking (or anticipated to be attacking) it is the **antagonist** (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al., 1996). The arguments advanced by each party are **pro-arguments** and **contra-arguments** respectively: the former are meant to justify a point of view, and the latter are meant to refute it (van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Kruiger, 1987). The obligation that one has to defend his position is called the **burden of proof**. Another very frequently encountered notion is **premise** (expressed or unexpressed), originally used in logic and expanded to argumentation theory at large. A premise is a statement assumed in advance and used as a reason in an argument (Barnet & Bedau, 2005). Whether the premise is explicit or implicit, it does count as a building block in argumentation. Using logical terms, if two premises are combined to lead to a conclusion, the whole construct is called a **syllogism**.

Moving one step further in accounting for argumentative discourse, two other fundamental concepts merit elucidation on the grounds that they constitute key axes in the analysis and evaluation of arguments. These are **argumentation structure** and **argument schemes**. A cardinal distinction is posited between two complementary approaches to argument: firstly, the examination of the links between individual arguments advanced by a language user and the ways they hang together to constitute a defence (the inter-argument relationships), and secondly, the examination of the links between the components of every single argument, i.e. the premises and the point of view (the intra-argument relationships). In the first case, it is argumentation structure that is being scrutinized; in the second, argument schemes (van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al., 1996).

At last, one further concept is worth considering, that of **fallacy**. Being reasonable is a feature which every arguer should bear so that one manages to convince the other party of one's point of view. In the course of ordinary argumentation, however, the participants in many instances commit aberrations, errors or mistakes of various natures affecting the soundness of their arguments and weakening their tenability but which are at times very convincing for some audiences.

Such transgressions are traditionally termed "fallacies". Using a more technical wording, a fallacy is broadly defined as an imperfect move in argumentative discourse (van Eemeren, 2001). Fallacies have long attracted attention so that logicians, dialecticians and rhetoricians have elaborated various inventories in which these argumentative flaws are classified and labelled. Different conceptions of fallacy have led to the production of dissimilar taxonomies throughout centuries of work.

3. The Study of Argumentation: a Historical Overview

Originating in ancient Greece, argumentation studies have a reputable history, and they did throughout centuries amass the zeal of the great thinkers of humanity. Indeed, proficiency in reason-giving, eloquence and persuasion have always been the pursuit of politicians, philosophers, writers, priests and the courtiers of every society. Although the paths followed in earlier works were so diverse and sometimes conflicting and very divergent, the totality of classical works is held to be the cardinal pillar of the modern approaches to argumentation, and most of the current notions are in fact more or less the thoughts that Greek, Roman and other peoples have conceptualised earlier in time.

3.1 The Classical Greek Approaches

The classical approaches of logic, dialectic and rhetoric form a solid background for many of the central theoretical issues raised nowadays in argumentation theory. All of them date back to the Greek philosophical scholarship and are greatly inspired by Aristotle's works¹. In what follows, a brief examination of what the three disciplines are about is given with focus on Aristotle's contribution.

3.1.1 Logic

Logic, formerly called **analytic**, is concerned with the principles of good reasoning and the notion of argument is the central issue in logical discussions (Johnson, 2002). The logical account of argument is originally formulated and elaborated by Aristotle in his outstanding works *Prior analytics* and *Posterior Analytics*. The impact of these works on argumentation theory and modern logic is very remarkable. Indeed, many of the classical constructs of logic are still very popular today (Kneale & Kneale, 1962).

In the logical paradigm, argument is treated as a syllogism. In a syllogism, the conclusion is inferred from the premises. If the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true. Syllogisms are categorised in several ways. According to the types of premises they contain, syllogisms can be **categorical**, **conditional** or **disjunctive**. Another classification divides syllogisms into **inductive** syllogisms, where the conclusion is a general statement that follows from specific cases mentioned in the premises, and **deductive** syllogisms, where what is asserted in the premises must lead to the conclusion. The logical approach revolves around the notion of syllogism as a cardinal model for arguments. This model is essentially an abstract, formal derivational tool, and in its evaluation, emphasis is primarily laid on its **validity**. Validity, as opposed to **soundness**, is related to the inferential relationship between the premises and the conclusion: an argument is valid when the premises are relevant to the conclusion, regardless of their truth or falseness. Van Eemeren (2009) observes that many scholars nowadays find the logical account of argumentation insufficient because it discards many linguistic, contextual, situational and other pragmatic variables that affect argumentative communication.

3.1.2 Dialectic

The term *dialectic* designates a form of argumentation typical of metaphysics. It is a derivation of the Greek verb "διαλέγεσθαι" which means "discuss" (Kneale & Kneale, op.cit. p.7). As a form of reasoning, it originated in the Greek philosophy. Socrates and Plato did contribute to shaping this philosophical trend, but thanks to Aristotle's insights in the *Topics*, it developed into a more intricate model of argumentation (Smith, 1999). In essence, dialectic is a dialogical method of argumentation that employs critical questioning between two interlocutors for the purpose of resolving disagreement between them (Zarefsky, 2006). The procedure starts, as Walton (1999) explains, by the questioner first posing a controversial problem for discussion and the respondent assuming a position vis-à-vis that problem. The questioner then goes on to trying to refute this position using logical inferences in order to show its falsity. The exchange continues by advancing arguments for and against the given position, building in each time on the previous answers.

The discussants use logical reasoning and ultimately aim at finding the truth. In this sort of reasoning, the premises are "generally accepted" opinions, and this regulated procedure attempts to pinpoint contradictions and logical problems in such kind of opinions in order to refute them. According to van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al. (1996), the Aristotelian view of dialectic, which is well-articulated in the *Topics*, specifies the exact course of action that the interlocutors have to take during the discussion.

¹ Aristotle's writings were collected by his followers in the *Organon* in 322 B.C. It consisted of six parts: The *Categories*, the *Topics*, *Sophistical Refutations*, *On Interpretation*, *Prior analytics* and *Posterior Analytics* (Kneale & Kneale, 1962).

Overall, Leff (2000) observes that arguers in dialectic appeal to rationality, formality and abstractness in an interactive context. There is a focus on inference per se and a close connection with reason, starting from what is generally accepted and moving towards a logically justified truth.

3.1.3 Rhetoric

Like logic and dialectic, the discipline of rhetoric has Greek roots. The word “rhētorikē” itself was first used in Plato’s *Gorgias* (written 380 BC) in which it signifies the art of public speaking and good oratory, and it was Aristotle’s work *On Rhetoric* that could expand this discipline into a respected educational branch of knowledge (Kennedy, 2001).

Substantially, rhetoric is one line which arguers can track having the “persuasion of a real audience about a real case” as an objective. Unlike logic and dialectic, which appeal to rationality and seek the truth, rhetoric is the art of eloquence and cogency without necessarily bringing reasonable tools into play. Rhetors consider the audiences the primary focus during their argumentation. Thus, rhetorical argumentation is context-sensitive and is tied to particular circumstances. Ryan (1992) explains that the majority of members in an audience are people who show incapability of connecting logical conclusions in arguments or grasp several things at once. For this reason, orators do resort to other persuasive means alongside sound arguments to win their audience’s assent.

Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric* sets the basic guidelines of the discipline. Divided into three parts, the source contains a full account of what rhetoric entails. In the first place, according to Kennedy (op. cit.), Aristotle is renowned for his intricate cataloguing of the means of persuasion. By and large, he divides them into **nonartistic** (extrinsic) and **artistic** (intrinsic) means. The former, as van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al. (op.cit.) explain, do not hinge on the speaker’s skill but rest on pre-existing material such as laws, documents, statements by witnesses or confessions.

On the other hand, the latter are conditional on the speaker’s artistry and talent and are designed to persuade their audience of a given point of view. **Ethos**, **pathos** and **logos** are three artistic means of persuasion in persuasive discourse.

On Rhetoric, in the second place, provides a theory of genres (or rhetorical species) according to the type of audience. Aristotle divides them into the **judicial** species, the **deliberative** species and the **demonstrative** species. For each sort, he discusses matters of style such as word choice, rhythm and so on. On the whole, Aristotle’s work is by far a very influential account on which many modern courses of rhetoric rely.

In this brief outline of the essentials of the three classical approaches to argumentation, two points need to be stressed. Firstly, throughout the long path which each of the three disciplines has taken, the marked disparities in perspective between them have always existed. In spite of this, close affinities have also been detected. However, it is important to emphasize the fact that they are not regarded as mutually-exclusive right from the very outset of their existence. Secondly, as Zarefsky (2006) maintains, each of the three intellectual traditions did contribute to the refinement of argumentation studies in a particular way, but each has failings as well. This urged some argumentation theorists now to make cross-disciplinary borrowings of insights to bridge the theoretical gaps in each area.

3.2 Later Developments in Argumentation Studies

Influenced by the Greek heritage and across long centuries, the ramified issues of argumentation continued to evolve and flourish in the works of a number of Roman and later European philosophers.

In Rome, two outstanding figures excelled in the pedagogy of public speaking, hence giving rhetoric in particular a giant boost. Most remarkably, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC _

43 BC) had an unparalleled impact on the entirety of the European rhetorical tradition. In his *De Oratore* he elaborates on the theory of public speaking and persuasion by picturing the ideal statesman. Cicero did leave finger prints on dialectic as well, and he considers it a stream of rhetoric (Conley, 1999). Later, Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (35 AD_96 AD) pursued the lead of Cicero in critical practice and philosophical perspective (Mendelson, 2001). Stimulated by the Emperor's concern about education and public careers, he composed his renowned work *Institutio Oratoria* (The Education of the Orator), which develops the technicalities of rhetoric with an unprecedented thoroughness about oratory and style (Kennedy, 2001).

In the Latin Middle Ages, Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (475 AD_ 526? AD), as Marenbon (2013) observes, was distinguished in the intellectual landscape of that era. Through his writings on various issues, he has been considered a fundamental author for philosophy and theology in general and argumentation theory in particular. His most influential work was *De Differentiis Topicis* where he accounts on logic, rhetoric and dialectic, taking Aristotle and Cicero as his authorities; but unlike Cicero, he holds rhetoric to be dependent on dialectic. In his conceptualization, dialectic “governs the genus of argumentation, and rhetoric becomes a subordinate part of dialectic because it is a species of that genus” (Conley, *ibid*, p.80).

During the Renaissance, a significant flourishing took place in Europe in all scholarly spheres. Advances were made in every intellectual field, and argumentation was no exception, taking rhetoric and dialectic to the fore. An ardent interest of humanists in the classical texts of Cicero and Quintilian marked the scene at that time (*ibid*), and seminal works were written by Lorenzo Valla (1406–1457) and Rudolph Agricola (1443–1485). Valla's main philosophical contribution was *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* (Reploughing of Dialectic and Philosophy), a criticism of the main precepts of Aristotelian philosophy. Agricola as well was one of the leaders of the rhetorically oriented logic through his book *On dialectical invention* (*De Inventione dialectica*, 1515). According to Valla and Agricola, since language is firstly an instrument for communication and debate, arguments should be assessed in terms of their effectiveness and usefulness rather than in terms of their formal validity (Casini, 2012). In the sixteenth century, many works in logic bore in their titles the term dialectics instead, such as the three works of Philip Melancthon (1497-1560), *Compendiaria dialectics ratio* (1520), *Dialectics libri quattuor* (1528), and *Erotemata dialectics* (1547) as well as the works by Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) and Petrus Fonseca (*Conley, ibid*).

In the following centuries, there had been a general rise and fall and an unceasing rivalry between the classical approaches of rhetoric, dialectic and logic in the European scholarship. The chief hallmark then was always the close affinities to earlier philosophical works in the form of elaborations, additions or at times even criticisms. Van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al. (1996) argue that this situation persisted until the first half of the 19th century with primacy given to rhetoric and logic. Then, the theoretical study of argumentation in ordinary language with practical goals emerged in some public speaking and writing courses at the American schools and universities only in the second half of the century at the departments of rhetoric and speech communication. Important textbooks also appeared with focus on logical thinking. By and large, it is stated that the cardinal broad lines and perspectives of modern argumentation theory were only drawn in that phase of history without making “an absolute break with the classical tradition” (van Eemeren, Grootendorst & Kruiger, 1987, p. 110).

3.4 Late 20th Century Argumentation Theory

In the late nineteen fifties, the classical rhetorical perspective attracted a new interest on the part of some argumentation theorists who sought to investigate the factors that influence the efficacy of argumentation, giving birth to what has come to be known as new rhetoric. Conley (op.cit) refers to four chief figures who have been involved: McKeon, Toulmin, Perelman and Habermas. The two most influential works in new rhetoric appeared independently in 1958: the first by Stephen E. Toulmin in *The Uses of Argument* and the second by Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca in *La Nouvelle Rhétorique*. Van Eemeren (2009) equates their weight on modern scholarship to that of Aristotle in antiquity and considers them the “cradle” of modern argumentation theory. By and large, the two approaches disapprove of the syllogistic model and see that it is inapplicable to ordinary argumentative practice.

Toulmin proposes a model of rhetorical argumentation in which an argument comprises six elements. **Claims** are the beliefs which one attempts to convince the audience to accept. The **grounds** are the assumptions which underlie the claim. **Warrants** are the type of reasoning that permits the inference operation or the link between the grounds and the claim. The **backing** refers to the support given and the **modality** to the degree of certainty the arguer has about the claim. Finally, the **rebuttal** is the exception to the claim.

Conley (op. cit.) observes that Toulmin’s model first looks at arguments not as inferences but as justifications. Secondly, and most importantly, the model emphasises the notion of **argument fields**. That is, sound arguments are said to be so only in a given field. Soundness is far from being universal; it is in fact dependent on the field in which argumentation occurs. However, Toulmin argues that his model follows the procedural form which is field-independent: the same steps are always pursued in a procedure; what varies from context to another is the kind of backing (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). Zarefsky (2001) shows that Toulmin’s model gained a wide acceptance for many decades and was the basis for a number of courses of argumentation.

Perelman and Olbrecht–Tyteca, in turn, are representatives of rhetorical neoclassicism. In *La Nouvelle Rhétorique: Traité de l’Argumentation*, focus is put on the techniques employed by people in practice to persuade an audience.

This work is taken to be a highly regarded contribution to the development of the theory of argumentation that departs from formal logic. Firstly, these theorists argue that in argumentation the target audience determines the soundness of an argument. In more explicit terms, for an argument to be assessed as sound, it should comply with the force values held by the addressees intended. Van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al. (1996) thus assert that arguers ought to have sufficient knowledge of their audiences’ preferences which can be exploited to convince them to accept a certain point of view. At this point, an important distinction is made in Perelman and Tyteca’s account between a particular audience and a universal audience. Secondly, *La Nouvelle Rhétorique* presents an insightful typology of premises. Last but not least, Perelman and Tyteca also suggested important distinctions as regards argumentation schemes.

In the decades following the work of the new rhetoricians, the modern theory of argumentation has undergone marked developments in a variety of directions which have turned it into one of the most heterogeneous scholarly fields. However, a universally established standard theory of argumentation has not been reached yet. The recent works have in general the tendency to rectify the limitations of the existing approaches, but in essence most of them build either on the ancient rhetorical tradition or the on the dialectical one. Attempting to present a brief overview of the state of the art of argumentation theory, van Eemeren (1995) distinguishes six principal paradigms: Formal Dialectics, Informal Logic,

Radical Argumentativism, Communication and Rhetoric, the Formal Analysis of Fallacies and Pragma-dialectics.

Modern argumentation theorists who look at argumentation as a dialogic exchange aimed at resolving a difference of opinion have given birth in the 1980's to a neoclassical dialectical stream. This trend in argumentation theory appeared under the name of Formal Dialectics. The first to use the term was Charles Hamblin. Formal dialectics derives its primary building blocks from the works of two dialogue logic philosophers, Paul Lorenzen and Kuno Lorenz from the Erlangen School, and also from the insights of the argumentation theorists Rupert Crawshaw-Williams and Arne Naess. But the completed version of this perspective was given shape in *From Axiom to Dialogue* in 1982 by Else Barth and Erik Krabbe.

Growing out of dissatisfaction with the contents and methods followed in the introductory courses to logic, a multi-dimensional trend appeared in argumentation studies by the 1970s in Canada and the USA called Informal Logic. According to Blair and Johnson (1987), the first insights to this discipline originate from Toulmin, Olbrechts-Tyteca and Scriven, known for their stance against formal deductive logic. Add to that, they allude to another major contributing stream to the field, i.e.

C.L. Hamblin's distinguished study on informal fallacies. Indeed, for them the theory of fallacy is held to be the most "comprehensively cultivated" land of informal logic. Informal logicians attempt to distance themselves from the formal models to argument and get closer to real language practice.

In their account of Radical Argumentativism, van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al. (1996) place it within a larger non-English context of research which is generally language-oriented. Developed in the early 1970s by the French linguists Oswald Ducrot and Jean-Claude Anscombe and having purely descriptive non-evaluative purposes, the theory looks at argumentation as a trait that pertains to all language use, not to one form of it, hence the term "radical". It is concerned with the argumentative interpretation of sentences with regards to their syntactic and semantic content, for example, the words and expressions that add an argumentative dimension to a sentence. Within the same descriptive stream, they mention the natural logicians' work in the 1960s, led by Jean-Blaise Grize in Switzerland, which has a logical rhetorical bench, and the argumentative grammar model developed by the Italian-born Lo Cascio with its Chomskyan generative form.

As for the Communication and Rhetoric line, van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al. (op. cit.) trace it to the US debate pedagogy emerging in the late 19th century in such domains as law, government and politics. Central to this province of argumentation scholarship is the desertion of the formal logical tools of reasoning and the adjustment of argumentative practice to audiences. Here again argumentation proceeds in the traditional rhetorical path. Further, van Eemeren (1995) explains that in *Communication and Rhetoric*, the rhetorical interest in persuasiveness in a given social context is intertwined with the dialectical conception of argument as dialogical and interactional. The works of Charles A. Willard and those of Jackson and Jacobs on the rhetoric of conversational argument exemplify this movement. The approach, therefore, seems to have normative as well as descriptive dimensions.

Concerning the Formal Analysis of Fallacies, the well-renowned account of it is provided by the Canadian logicians John Woods and Douglas Walton in the late seventies and the early eighties. It globally centres on the role formal logic plays in the study of fallacies. Chiefly, they make use of the structures and terminology of logical systems and consider argumentation in a dialogical context, hence giving their approach a dialectical bent (van Eemeren, *ibid*). The chief impetus to this approach was the work of Hamblin on fallacies.

Pragma-dialectics, developed by Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst in the 1970s up to the present decade at the Speech Communication Department of the University of Amsterdam, has been gaining ground among the most recent and popular approaches to argumentative discourse. It is characterised by a binary perspective which unites normativity and description as regards its data, and it is built in essence on the speech act theory on the one hand and the procedural dialectical conceptualisation of argument on the other. The pragma-dialectical approach derives its methodology of analysing argumentative discourse from four meta-theoretical principles, as developed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984), aiming at handling argumentation more adequately than earlier researchers. This embraces the **externalisation, functionalisation, socialisation and dialectification** of the object of study. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (ibid) give a thorough discussion of how speech act theory is applied to the analysis of argumentative discourse. The whole thing is embedded within a postulated framework called the **ideal model of a critical discussion**.

Other less elaborate methodologies characterise the scene in modern argumentation theory and are also discussed in van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans et al.'s (1996) survey. On the whole, such approaches have origins in various disciplines and are the product of non-Anglophone studies. The inventory of these swiftly progressing investigations includes the philosophically oriented works of the Erlangen School scholars and Jürgen Habermas theory of communicative rationality, the rhetorical approaches appearing in France, Germany and especially Italy with focus on stylistic aspects of argumentative language used in various domains and genres, and finally the linguistically inspired studies of the German researchers in speech act theory, conversational analysis and discourse analysis, which are fundamentally descriptive and empirical in perspective.

4. Distinctions in Approaching Argumentation

Broadness of scope and diversity of perspectives, the hallmark that characterizes modern argumentation scholarship, prevents the analysis of argumentative discourse from being systematic and comprehensible. Thus, it is important for the analyst to delineate in precise terms what perspective(s) is/are pursued. In the literature on modern argumentation, several acknowledged divisions are encountered. They set the main lines along which the study of argumentation proceeds. Bearing such distinctions in mind, one can approach any aspect of argumentation with more vigour and lucidity.

4.1 The Process, Procedure, Product Distinction

Wenzel (1992) distinguishes three basic conceptualizations of argument that originate from the antique spheres of human intellectual inquiry: rhetoric, dialectic and logic. Wenzel's tripartite classification, though more elaborate, has its seeds in Maurice Natanson's discussion of argumentation movement. Basic to the distinction is to view argumentation as a process, a procedure or a product respectively. The three perspectives differ in the purpose to which the argumentation is put, the situation in which it takes place, the rules to which it should adhere, and the speakers and audiences who take part in it.

The first (rhetorical) account of argumentative behaviour is to view it as a process. An arguer is a social actor striving chiefly for the others' persuasion. Thus, studying argumentation equates with probing into the intricacies of persuasion. Arguers seek out influencing audiences, and "fine-tuning" discourse to attract particular audiences remains a major purpose of argumentation in this outlook. Concerning the situation, it is a real construct with tangible components, and argumentative behaviour is an act of adaptation to this factual construct following social rules that are implied in nature. The participants in argumentation as a process are "naïve social actors" addressing "particular" persons.

On the whole, this outlook conceives of argument as a concrete act of persuasion fully implanted in factuality.

The second (dialectical) perspective conceives of argumentation as a procedure. To “conduct” an argument here is to try cooperatively to achieve joint decisions or understanding by complying with overtly agreed upon rules of discussion, or regulative conventions. As opposed to the first view, arguments here are aimed at fostering critical scrutiny. As for the situational factor, this perspective locates arguments not in the concrete world, but in a “contrived” context of hypotheses and abstractions, “an arena for discourse that is created for the purpose of facilitating a critical process” (Wenzel, op. cit., p. 129).

The rules of argumentation in this view are explicitly expressed, for the act itself is regarded as a well-defined critical procedure whose success is determined by its **candidness**. Further in this perspective, a speaker is an advocate who is aware of his role in the discussion, while a receiver is not considered as a person as such, but rather an individual typifying a universal audience, a particular person “straining for universality”(Wenzel, ibid, p. 133). By and large, the second perspective emphasises the fact that argument is a strictly guided procedure of criticism where the participants, assuming precise roles tend to embody some universal abstract matter.

In the third (logical) perspective, argument is conceived of as a product that can be subjected to rational judgement. Removed from actual communication, an argument is a set of statements liable to logical analysis and evaluation. The purpose in that case is to attain **soundness**. Good argumentation, then, is one that conforms to the canons of correct inference. The contextual considerations are out of the scene because in this perspective argumentation is completely detached from reality. What counts in the evaluation of argument is just the “logical context”: The ideas and their interrelatedness within a specific field of argument. The fields themselves can be loose or can be highly structured. A critic is not so much concerned with rules of effectiveness or candidness, but rather with the rules of soundness, for the focal point is the set of statements seen as a product, not as a process or procedure. The third perspective tends to “de-humanise” the participants: the speaker is construed as an impersonal explicator addressing a universal audience because the argument per se is absolute and timeless in nature.

4.2 The Normative/ Descriptive Distinction

A further outstanding division in approaching argumentative discourse is drawn between the descriptive trend and the normative (or critical) trend. Descriptivists call for an empirical examination of the actual use of language. Van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, et al. (1993) clarify that social scientific research, such as in linguistics and discourse analysis, is usually descriptivist in nature. It is interested in the characteristics of real argumentation. They also assert that humanistic research, such as in modern logic and rhetoric, is normative, for it takes an evaluative attitude as regards argumentative practice. It tries to assess the way people argue by reference to some predetermined norms or models. Van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans, et al. (1996) argue that the two perspectives are apparently separate, but combining them constitutes an interesting outlook on which they establish their own theory of pragma-dialectics.

4.3 The “Emic/ Etic” Distinction

The third distinction that influences and directs research in argumentation theory is the “emic / etic” classification of approaches. The terms are originally borrowed from the work of the American linguist Kenneth Pike, and they are basically employed to study linguistic data but are extended to analyse culture and human behaviour at large. The distinction holds in argumentation theory. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004) state that “emic” approaches to argumentative discourse are interpretive: taking an insider perspective, they aim at depicting the interpretive procedures which are employed in actual practice by the users of language in a given community. “Etic” approaches, conversely, are analytical: they take an outsider

outlook and aim at analyzing argumentative discourse systematically with no reference to the perceptions of the language users. It is shown that the neutrality of “etic” approaches makes them so comprehensive that they subsume the “emic” ones (van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans, et al., op. cit.).

4.4 The Conceptualization of Reasonableness Distinction

At the theoretical plane, the conceptions of reasonableness differ among argumentation scholars, depending on their philosophical orientations. In line with Stephen Toulmin’s analysis in *Knowing and Acting* (1976), van Eemeren (1992) and van Eemeren Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans, et al. (op. cit.) distinguish and expound on three philosophical conceptualizations according to which reasonableness is assessed: the geometrical perspective, the anthropological perspective and the critical perspective. They see that for the geometrical philosopher, the rationality of an argument is weighed in formal logical term. That is, the argument is regarded as a case of logical inference whose validity can be tested by referring to the truth value of the constituent premises and the formal layout of arguments. Indeed, this approach is said to be an absolute and context-free account of reasonableness. The anthropological perspective, by contrast, is more relative as it treats arguments within their cultural context. In other words, an argument is reasonable if it complies with the norms of a given community as regards its persuasiveness. This outlook considers the cultural context as a determiner of rationality; thus, it is said to be inter-subjective. Finally, the critical perspective focuses on argument schemes and the efficiency of the argumentative procedures. What counts for the philosophers in this trend is whether the arguers succeed in complying with the discussion rules to attain a resolution for the dispute under question.

4.5 Other Distinctions

In addition to the preceding distinctions, the study of argumentation varies also in scope and focus. It is observed, according to Zarefsky (2001), that some studies of argumentation take a micro conception of it, considering a single argument as a unit of investigation and assessing its internal texture and strength. On the other end of the scale, macro studies are much more “discourse level” approaches, in the sense that they are interested in the dynamics of interpersonal controversy, even that which extends across time. Between the first and the second positions, a third perspective takes midrange stretches of discourse such as speeches and essays as a focal point and attempts to pinpoint the persuasive tools employed in them as coherent wholes.

It is also possible to have another axis on which argumentation studies can be located, depending on the nature of text under scrutiny. In this connection, some analysts regard the object of study as a self-contained discourse type, as opposed to the other types of description, exposition and narration. Argumentation is designated as such on the grounds that it has peculiar textual features that set it apart from the other text types (Hatim & Mason, 1990). Other analysts consider argumentation as a communicative function underlying the various discourse types by examining their persuasive dimension.

5. Conclusion

Argumentation theory is not as homogeneous as it may be reckoned, and its exploration is indeed the exploration of the most knotty types of communication. Argumentation is primarily concerned with reasoning and persuasion, which had long been attributed to the intelligentsias of every society_ though for the current language oriented theorists, argumentation is thought to be a daily practice of every user of language. This very nature of the realm undoubtedly underlies the interest of the ancient thinkers in argumentation issues. In fact, the traditional disciplines of logic, rhetoric and dialectic did set the foundations of modern argumentation theory and have supplied it with a rich constellation of concepts and a

medley of approaches that reflect a laborious work to account for it in systematic and standardised terms. Later and along many centuries, studies in the field took an extended path with unceasing flourishing at each stage. With the advent of more scientific approaches to language, culture, society and communication in the twentieth and the twenty first centuries, more innovative perspectives emerged and added to the evolution of argumentation theory, and the goals have become more wide-ranging.

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