

## 1

# A Rhetorical Turn for Argumentation



Alice couldn't help laughing, as she said "I don't want you to hire *me*—and I don't care for jam."

"It's very good jam," said the Queen.

"Well, I don't want any *to-day*, at any rate."

"You couldn't have it if you *did* want it," the Queen said. "The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but never jam to-day."

"It *must* come sometimes to 'jam to-day,'" Alice objected.

"No, it can't," said the Queen. "It's jam every *other* day: to-day isn't any *other* day, you know."

"I don't understand you," said Alice. "It's dreadfully confusing!"

(Carroll 1993, 87)

## ❖ ALICE'S PREDICAMENT

For many people, argument and communication would seem strange companions. When we argue, in the sense of a quarrel or bitter dispute,

## 2 RHETORICAL ARGUMENTATION

communication is the very thing most in jeopardy, often impeded by heightened emotions and a refusal to listen. Yet this book is about argumentation as good communication. In it, I will explore the ways in which arguers communicate with their audiences, and the positive results that emerge from the processes of anticipation, involvement, and response that are integral to argumentative interaction. We must begin by rethinking, or at least greatly expanding, the meaning we give to "argument." As suggested, many of us associate it most readily with quarrelling. We think of it as an activity that defines our disagreements. Sometimes it may promise ways to resolve those disagreements, although our performances on this front have often been less than impressive. More formally, "argument" has been understood in the western academic tradition as having a particular structure with fixed ways of understanding that structure. An argument on these terms has a conclusion and premises in support of it. It is a reason-giving use of language, and its success is determined by evaluating the strength of such reasons and the appropriateness of their connections to the claims they allegedly support, employing notions like "validity" and "soundness." If we have thought of "argumentation" at all, it may have been as an activity in which this structure is embedded: argumentation is the giving, receiving, and assessing of arguments, understood in the terms just presented.

This understanding of "argument" has been seriously challenged by scholars interested in the nature of argumentation and reasoning. In a recent posthumous work, Grice (2001, 8) points out that most actual reasoning does not conform to what he calls "canonical inference patterns." This agrees with the views of those who deem the traditional concept of argument too narrow to account for much of what should pass as argumentation, when we enter debates, negotiate agreements, investigate hypotheses, deliberate over choices, and persuade audiences. Obviously, these ideas considerably expand the notion of argumentation in the previous paragraph. In general, to think of argumentation this way is to appreciate it as an activity that changes how we perceive the world by changing the way we think about things. But if we are going to expand this idea, it is natural to revise the notion of argument at its heart. To do otherwise, to stay with the notion that we have inherited, invites problems of confronting argumentative situations for which our idea is inadequate.

An argumentative situation, as this book will explore, is a site in which the activity of arguing takes place, where views are

exchanged and changed, meanings explored, concepts developed, and understandings achieved. It may also be a site in which people are persuaded and disagreements are resolved, but these popular goals are not the only ones, and too narrow a focus on them threatens to overlook much for which argumentation is a central and important tool.

As a "site," the argumentative situation is a nongeographical space, located in and created by discourse. We inhabit such spaces with different facility, some of us with ease, others with discomfort. Yet they are crucial to our self-understanding and our understanding of others. Exploring these spaces, then, should be a priority and not an incidental by-product of an otherwise specialized education.

Potentially argumentative situations are not restricted to overt disagreements. They include situations in which ideas are reinforced, proposals are introduced and explored cooperatively, and parties struggle to achieve understanding and agreement even when the starting position of each is virtually unrecognizable to others. Communication faces its greatest challenge in these last kinds of cases, particularly where values and the meanings of terms are not held in common.

As an extreme and artificial example of this, but one that will be widely familiar, consider Alice's interactions with the White and Red queens in Lewis Carroll's fantasies. The queens do not view experience and the language that describes it in the way that Alice does, and we share her confusion because of this unfamiliarity. The queens refuse to conform to the rules that govern communication and logic as we understand them. The White Queen, for example, wants Alice to believe impossible things, suggesting she just needs to practice to do so. She wants her to admit the value of punishing people before they commit crimes, on the grounds that Alice has benefited from past punishments. And when Alice points out, reasonably we might think, that she was punished for things she *had* done, the Queen observes how much better it would have been had she not done them and prior punishment would encourage this. When Alice responds to the offer of jam every other day with the remark that she does not want any today, she is told that she could not have it even if she wanted it. Jam every other day means "jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but never jam today." The Red Queen is no easier. She dazzles Alice with exaggerated claims about gardens like wildernesses and hills like valleys, forcing her at last to disagree: "a hill *can't* be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense." But that would be sensible compared to some of the nonsense the Red Queen has heard.

## 4 RHETORICAL ARGUMENTATION

This playful recalling of a childhood favorite has a point: Alice's discourses with the queens in *Through the Looking Glass* are like interactions with intractable people. It is not that they are particularly hostile to her perspective; they simply do not recognize it as significant. Alice cannot get a level foothold in her conversations with them, cannot manage herself in those conversations (really, *have* conversations) because they insist, stubbornly, on seeing things their way, whether it be the language they use or the reality around them, and they don't admit a perspective other than their own. As a potentially argumentative situation, with terms to explore and disagreements to resolve, the tools of traditional argument ill-equip anyone to deal with it.

We may ask of situations like these: What must take place in them for real communication to occur? And what perspective on argument best serves our needs? This book answers these questions by proposing a model of argument that is characterized as rhetorical. This is to contrast it, as we'll see in the next section, with perspectives that are primarily logical or dialectical. As we will see, the rhetorical model is the best candidate for grounding a theory of argumentation that manages both everyday situations and extreme aberrations like those between Alice and the queens.

## ❖ MODELS OF ARGUMENT

Following scholars like Habermas (1984) and Wenzel (1979), those working with theories of argument have been attracted to the divisions suggested by Aristotle's triumvirate of logic, dialectic, and rhetoric. These are three distinct ways of conceiving argument, the first of which, the logical, has been the one to dominate the tradition to the extent that many people are accustomed to the idea that arguments are no more than logical products. In this book, I will challenge such thinking by presenting the case for a rhetorical notion of argument. But in order to better appreciate the benefits of the rhetorical model, we need first to understand what is at stake in the alternatives.

The *logical* emphasizes the product of statements collected in the relationship of premises and conclusions. As its name implies, the logical sense of argument has occupied the attention of logicians, both formal and informal. Minimally, an argument under this definition requires one premise in support of one conclusion, as in:

Premise: Most people believe that incidents of crime in large cities are on the increase.

Conclusion: More money should be put into law enforcement.

Beyond this structure there is a further component: an argument has an intention behind it, namely to convince others to accept the proposition put forward as the conclusion.

The *dialectical* sense of argument focuses attention on the argumentative exchanges within a dialogue and the moves that might be involved. There are several dialogues of interest, such as the quarrel, the negotiation, the debate, or the inquiry. Theorists who study the dialectical sense of argument uncover and devise rules governing the correct procedures by which such arguments can be conducted. Hence, the dialectical focus stresses argument-as-procedure.

The third division is the *rhetorical*, which emphasizes argument as a process. Here attention is paid to the means used in argumentative communications between arguer and audience. Questions are asked about the nature of the audience, what subgroups might comprise it, and what beliefs are involved. The character and interests of the arguer are also important, as are the background circumstances in which the argument arises. Such components contribute to a full sense of the context in which arguments are embedded.

Consider these three perspectives in light of an example that illustrates what each has to offer and the particular power of the rhetorical. Imagine the following argumentative exchange on the justification of the 2003 Iraq-US war.

*Bob:* The United States and its allies were justified in waging a war to free the Iraqi people from a dictator.

*Susan:* If such a war was necessary, it was the role of the United Nations to determine this and act accordingly. Without their endorsement the war was illegal.

*Bob:* That's not my point. I said they were justified in acting, not whether they had anyone's permission. The reasons were there to support the war.

*Susan:* That's consistent with my point. *If* the reasons were there, it was the UN's role to decide so and determine what action was necessary.

## 6 RHETORICAL ARGUMENTATION

*Bob:* But the world couldn't wait forever for the slow wheels of diplomacy to turn while Iraq became an increasing threat to global security.

*Susan:* That's a different point altogether from the one you claimed justified the war. It's not that insecurity leads to war, but that war leads to insecurity.

The logical approach to argumentation would extract the separate arguments of Bob and Susan, lifting them out of the exchange and rewriting them in premise/conclusion form, and then test those arguments for validity and strength (basically internal assessments of the relationships between the propositions). A logical analysis might focus on whether Bob has committed a fallacy by bringing in another point in his last statement.

The dialectical approach to argumentation would test the exchange against procedural rules (which vary according to the dialectical account employed): Are the arguments relevant? Does each of the arguers adequately deal with the objections of the other? A dialectical analysis might focus on whether a fallacy has been committed through the violation of a rule of discussion.

The rhetorical approach to argumentation insists that far more is involved in appreciating this exchange, and that the other two approaches miss what is really happening as communication by failing to attend to these rhetorical features. What is said has to be considered in relation to who is saying it and why (something both other perspectives overlook). We need, for example, to look at the features of the context (insofar as this is available): How has this dispute arisen? What do the participants know of each other, and the commitments involved? What are the consequences of this exchange in the lives of those involved, and how might this affect what is being said? Moreover, how well do these two people reason together in addressing the issue? How might they improve this? That is, what collaborative features could emerge here? How effective is Bob's metaphor of diplomacy progressing like a slow-turning wheel, and how are we to evaluate Susan's refutation by reversal in the antimetabole she provides at the end? More importantly, from the rhetorical perspective, how is this exchange being *experienced* by the participants, and how does that affect their understanding? All this is to rethink what it means to be an arguer, and what it means to have an argumentative situation. Learning about and seeing these features at work provides for both better argumentation

on the student's part and better evaluations of others' arguments, because one can now see much more involved in both activities.

Of course, the focus on the rhetorical does not mean that the other two perspectives can be dismissed. Product, procedure, and process are each important ideas in the understanding of and theorizing about arguments. While they can be discussed and studied in isolation, in actual argumentative contexts we might expect each to be present, and a complete theory of argument will accommodate the relationships among the three. Still, it is the rhetorical that must provide the foundations for that theory, and it will influence how we understand and deal with the logical and the dialectical in any particular case.

The remainder of this section has something to say about the logical perspective that has dominated our tradition of argument and its recognized ineffectiveness for dealing with argumentation in the kinds of situations we are envisaging here. The subsequent sections will consider some recent developments of the dialectical and rhetorical perspectives that provide considerable advances in our understanding of argumentation. Yet, they remain wanting in several significant ways.

In spite of the playfulness of some of his characters, Lewis Carroll was a traditionalist when it came to "argument." He lived in exciting logical times, if such can be imagined. His career coincides with the breakdown of Aristotelian logic and the flowering of Boolean algebraic logic (Carroll 1977, 19), as the discipline went from a period of stagnation to one of serious study and publication with many significant treatises appearing, including the works of John Neville Keynes and John Venn, and Carroll's own *Game of Logic* and *Symbolic Logic, Part 1* (dedicated to the memory of Aristotle). Carroll's work was in the algebra of logic, developing and modifying techniques of Boole and Venn.<sup>1</sup>

While traditional logic was undergoing change, one of its core concepts—that of "argument"—was not. This is reflected in Carroll's own treatment.<sup>2</sup> Simply put, Carroll adheres to the traditional way of viewing arguments merely as premise/conclusion sets. We find fairly standard "logical" appreciations of "argument" and its attendant terms: the standard for an argument is introduced as the Syllogism (1977, 107) and defended against detractors who would argue that "a Syllogism has no real validity as an argument" (128–129). And a term like "Fallacy" is defined in the standard Aristotelian way as "any argument which *deceives* us, by seeming to prove what it does not really prove" (129). Nothing here would help Alice manage her misunderstandings with the queens, because what is needed, beyond an assessment of the

“validity” of the reasoning, is some appreciation of those involved in the exchange, the arguers themselves, their beliefs and backgrounds, their styles and strategies. And once we entertain these ideas, we have already turned to the underlying rhetorical features of the situations.

Resistance to such a traditional way of conceiving argument has come from scholars of varying stripes. Chief among these was the Belgian philosopher Perelman who, along with Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), set the foundations for modern studies of rhetorical argumentation. Their work will be of considerable importance in the chapters ahead. A thinker sharing more of the logical approach is Toulmin, whose *The Uses of Argument* (1958/2003) delivered a tremendous wake-up call.

Toulmin’s primary target is, in fact, formal logic, which he claims is unable to serve as a model of everyday argument. More precisely, he identifies different types of argument in a range of fields, none of which is amenable to the procedures and standards of formal argument. For his own part, he develops a model of argument that makes use of more informal ideas like “warrant” and “backing,” ideas that better account for the complex relations between evidence and conclusions.<sup>3</sup> His general model of “data” leading to a claim, mediated by a “warrant” with any necessary “backing,” has been very influential as a new standard of logical thinking, particularly among scholars of rhetoric and speech communication. He takes seriously the contexts in which arguments emerge and looks to evaluate them in ways relevant to those contexts.

While this model is not without its critics, it stands out as among the first to seriously consider the range of problems with the traditional logical idea of argument and try to ameliorate those concerns. Still, there is here a dependency on the product itself. Insofar as that approach (even in the “updated” version of 2003) lacks a sufficient attention to features of the argumentative situation, Toulmin’s model suffers also.<sup>4</sup>

#### ❖ BEYOND THE LOGICAL

A more recent model of argument that looks to wed the logical with the dialectical is that of Johnson (2000a). Along with his colleague Blair, Johnson is one of the originators of what is called “informal logic,” developing it on both the pedagogical and theoretical levels. Informal logic, as here conceived, attempts to bring principles of logic into

accord with the practice of everyday reasoning. At first this was done through an analysis of the traditional fallacies, but more recently informal logicians have been looking to develop it as a theory of argument. Johnson's book *Manifest Rationality* is a major contribution to that project. In that work, "argument" is defined as "a type of discourse or text—the distillate of the practice of argumentation—in which the arguer seeks to persuade the Other(s) of the truth of a thesis by producing the reasons that support it" (168). This "distillate" is described as the illative core of the argument. In addition to this, an argument possesses a dialectical tier in which the arguer discharges various dialectical obligations.

While he acknowledges the influence that Toulmin has had on the study of argumentation and much of the impetus behind informal logic, Johnson's concept of argument is a considerable advance on that proposed by Toulmin. Most distinctive is the inclusion of the "dialectical tier" wherein dialectical obligations are recognized and met.

This is not an incidental feature in Johnson's mind; the provocative nature of the definition enlivens one of the stronger claims associated with it: that "an argument without a dialectical tier is not an argument" (172). The way in which the dialectical combines with the logical deserves attention, and I turn to it here in part to investigate why Johnson has not taken the further step of explicitly including the rhetorical. This is explained by his more traditional and negative position on the relationship between logic and rhetoric, but in many ways Johnson's account anticipates and requires a rhetorical aspect.

To define an "argument" as, in part, "the distillate of the practice of argumentation" in the way that Johnson does serves to place primary emphasis on the *product*, in turn stressing the logical grounding for this model of argument. In fact, Johnson wants to include more than what has traditionally passed as the product. He invites us to view argument within a practice of argumentation, "which includes as components (a) the process of arguing, (b) the agents engaged in the practice (the arguer and the Other), and (c) the argument itself as a product" (2000a, 154). These are dynamic relations, including the distilled product. Yet to speak in such terms for (c), the product, is to suggest something that is finished, while to place it alongside (a), the process, suggests something that is yet to be completed. This hints at a tension between process and product. As much as Johnson encourages us to see them as interrelated, it is the nature of that interrelation that appears particularly elusive.

Another important aspect of his notion of argument is the aim he assigns to it: "the arguer seeks to persuade the Other(s) of the truth of a thesis by producing the reasons that support it" (168). In various forms throughout his work, Johnson offers two components of this aim. The following statements capture them:

- (i) By the term "argument," I understand an intellectual product . . . that seeks to persuade rationally (24).
- (ii) [T]he fundamental purpose, although admittedly not the only one, is to arrive at the truth about some issue (158).

As (i) suggests, *rational* persuasion is emphasized and valued over any other. This is the feature that will distinguish the better arguments (189). Hence, the *argumentum ad baculum* or appeal to force would not be considered an argument "because here the reasoning is being used to threaten someone" (145). It isn't a matter of it being a bad move in argument, Johnson suggests, it is simply a non-argument.

In this definition of argument and argumentation, rationality is a goal in itself. In terms of the dual nature of the aim identified in (i) and (ii), while (ii) is more evident in the definition, (i) is the larger purpose that Johnson promotes. The *argumentum ad baculum* fails to be simply a bad argument because its attempts at persuasion are not rational to both parties involved. The character of manifest rationality, which is not explicit in the definition of argument, turns out to completely underlie it.

At the heart of Johnson's definition is the illative core<sup>5</sup> of premises and conclusion. But, as we saw, added to this core is the "dialectical tier in which the arguer discharges his dialectical obligations." Because of the underlying project of manifest rationality, the illative core cannot be enough; the best practitioners "always take account of the standard objections" (166). It is this taking account that constitutes the dialectical tier. More precisely, it is the addressing of alternative positions and standard objections.

There seem to be two things to address here: (i) the relationship between the illative and dialectical tiers with respect to the product itself, and (ii) the relationship between the arguer and Other(s) implied by the dialectical tier.

That we should take account of and anticipate objections seems noncontroversial, even if it has not been a feature of the tradition. But

that this should be such an essential component of *what an argument is*, such that its absence excludes a discourse or text from being an argument, is controversial. It must be asked whether this dialectical tier is a part of the product or, rather, is something that arises afterwards, as participants reflect on the initial argument or an evaluator begins to work on it.<sup>6</sup> On the whole, insisting that an arguer complete the argument by showing how he or she intends to handle certain objections is a positive development in theory. It forces the acknowledgment that arguing is a complex activity and that many textbook treatments are inadequate. On the other hand, it appears to have some unfortunate consequences. Chief among these, since one of the things that separates rhetoric from Johnson's approach to argumentation is the requirement of manifest rationality (163), is the slim prospects the proposal projects for the advance of rhetorical argumentation.

Critics object that an argument should not be considered incomplete simply because it fails to address all objections and alternatives (Govier 1998, 7). Johnson agrees, but insists that what is important is that an arguer has dialectical obligations (1998, 2). Thus, we might surmise, to be an "arguer" (and so to produce an argument) the fulfilling of one's dialectical obligations must be part of one's practice. Thus, again, an arguer must address *some* obligations for an argument to be complete. Apparently, different understandings of "complete" are in tension here: one sees it objectively in terms of covering all possible objections, the other views it contextually in terms of the arguer's recognition of obligations.

This helps. But we could take things further by observing that the context restricts the possible objections and alternatives to those relevant for the audience in question and so likely to be raised by that audience. That is, insofar as the dialectical relationship between arguer and audience is integral to a specific argument, then the relevant objections should be those internal to that relationship. Possible objections that could be brought against the argument-product dislocated from its dialectical context are not at issue here.

This call for a dialectical tier deserves further support because, if we view it now from a rhetorical perspective, we should see it as part of the essential argument, although not exactly on terms that Johnson proposes. There is a profound way in which the anticipation of the Other's objections informs and *forms* the arguer's own utterances, and in this sense the dialectical tier cannot be divorced from the structure. Understood this way, the line between the two tiers really begins to dissolve.

Johnson accommodates this up to a point. He acknowledges that the arguer is only half the story and that the process is incomplete without the Other, and he gives us a dynamic relationship of back and forth responses between the two (2000a, 157). This, however, still implies a temporally extended process. To better capture and reflect the activity of arguing some compression is required, and Johnson later suggests just this:

Genuine dialogue requires not merely the presence of the Other, or speech between the two, but the real possibility that the logos of the Other will influence one's own logos. An exchange is dialectical when, as a result of the intervention of the Other, one's own logos (discourse, reasoning, or thinking) has the potential of being affected in some way. Specifically, the arguer agrees to let the feedback from the Other affect the product. The arguer consents to take criticism and to take it seriously. (161)

In Chapter 4, I will return to this idea and examine a proposal drawn from the work of Bakhtin. On the terms developed there, an argument is always addressed to someone and that is its most telling feature. The argument is co-authored by the arguer and addressee. This is more than the accommodation of a reply and the anticipation of objections. This is to suggest that a more accurate description of what is involved in arguing sees the anticipated components as influencing the structure of the argument. The dialectical is not something that takes place after the illative is fixed; it precedes the development of that "core" (which ceases to be so core since such terminology is no longer warranted if the dialectical infuses it rather than surrounds it).

In the passage given above, Johnson moves toward this position in the remarks made about the logos of the Other influencing the arguer. But he draws back from it in the final two sentences where the references to feedback and criticism suggest a more traditional separation of opposing discourses.

In the previous few pages, several features of rhetorical argument have been drawn upon in both addressing problems with Johnson's model and offering support for it. The attention to audience and the dynamic relationship between arguer and addressee with its rich sense of context are points more characteristic of a rhetorical approach. Johnson, however, resists too strong a rapprochement with the rhetorical. While his model of argument is notably nontraditional in its

melding of the logical and dialectical, his attitude toward rhetoric is anything but.

Johnson does recognize a working alliance between the new logic he advocates and the new rhetoric that has been ushered in by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), but he is still at pains to stress the differences between the two. Both logic and rhetoric, for example, see argumentation as governed by rationality. But while rhetoric sees considerations of character (*ethos*) and emotion (*pathos*) as important as *logos*, the new logic assigns these only a secondary role.

Of greater concern is the difference in purpose. Rhetoric aims at effectiveness rather than truth and completeness. That is, if there is an objection to the argument of which the arguer is aware, from the point of view of rhetoric he or she has no obligation to deal with it; the argument is effective without it. In other words, rhetoric has no dialectical tier. But from the point of view of logic, the arguer is obligated to deal with it,

[b]ecause even though the audience does not know of the objection, and so the arguer could get by without dealing with it, the argument will be more rational in substance and appearance if it can meet the test of this objection. (Johnson 2000a, 270)

This requires a much stronger interpretation of Johnson's concept of argument because this implies that rational persuasion works by degrees and the *more rational*, the better the argument. However, as suggested above, rather than having no necessary dialectical tier, rhetoric, conceived now in terms of rhetorical argument, subsumes such dialectical features into its very core. This is partly because, unlike the purpose of rhetoric that informs Johnson's discussion, rhetorical argumentation does not aim at effectiveness alone. Chapter 2 will introduce other aims of rhetorical argumentation. As a venture that seeks and requires the cooperation of the parties involved, rhetorical argumentation cannot ignore the dialectical dimension understood in ways that Johnson has presented it. But it subsumes them in a way that addresses any gap between the illative and dialectical.

As we have seen, while there is much to welcome in Johnson's manifest rationality project, in the positive ways that it takes us beyond the traditional logical approaches to argument, there is also a serious question of whether the underlying concept hangs together. Earlier, I noted the tension between the process and the product in the practice

of argumentation. Does the relationship between the illative and dialectical tiers suggest something that is finished or in process? This is never completely answered. Johnson resists a firm reading of “complete,” yet at the same time claims that rhetoric aims at effectiveness while logic aims at truth and completeness. What sense of “complete” is at work here? Especially since the better arguments are the more complete ones. The problem is this: while the dialectical tier captures the dynamic process between those involved, the illative retains much of the fixedness of earlier models. For Johnson, premises are true or false in and of themselves and not in relation to an audience. But this understanding would seem to conflict with the positive reading I gave to the dialectical tier. Rhetorical features like audience and context are indeed at work in this model, but to a degree and at a depth beyond what its author acknowledges. Where Johnson does challenge rhetoric, he addresses it in its traditional guises. While this is useful for bringing out the problems that are inherent in how many people may still understand rhetoric, it fails to appreciate how truly “new” rhetoric can be conceived, particularly in its relation to argumentation.

#### ❖ BEYOND THE DIALECTICAL

A recent model of argumentation that combines the dialectical approach to argument with a refreshing acceptance of rhetorical features is the pragma-dialectical model developed in a series of papers by van Eemeren and Houtlosser.

As its name implies, pragma-dialectics is a dialectical perspective that melds an approach to language use drawn from pragmatics with the study of critical dialogue. Advanced by Dutch theorists van Eemeren and Grootendorst, it has developed into a comprehensive theory of argumentation, alert to the exigencies of everyday argument and accommodating a full range of features, including a theory of fallacies as violations of rules that govern critical discussions. Within certain limits, it is a powerful model of argumentation that promises to become stronger still as more people turn their attention to the eclectic program of its research agenda.<sup>7</sup>

Pragma-dialecticians conceive all argumentation as part of a critical discussion aimed at resolving differences of opinion. They approach this through the identification and clarification of certain procedural rules, hence conforming to the dialectical perspective’s interest in

argument as procedure. For example, one rule requires someone who has advanced a standpoint to defend it if requested; another forbids regarding a standpoint as conclusively defended if it has not involved the correct application of an argumentation scheme (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, 208–209). These rules govern four stages of dispute resolution: a confrontation stage, an opening stage, an argumentation stage, and a concluding stage.

In recent years, van Eemeren, now working with Houtlosser, has tried to strengthen pragma-dialectical analysis by drawing on the insights of rhetoric. This “rhetorical turn” seems born of a recognition that the model itself was incomplete without such an accommodation. As they write,

Until recently, pragma-dialectical analysis tended to concentrate on reconstructing primarily the dialectical aspects of argumentative discourse. It is clear, however, that the analysis and its justification can be considerably strengthened by a better understanding of the strategic rationale behind the moves that are made in the discourse. For this purpose, it is indispensable to incorporate a rhetorical dimension into the reconstruction of the discourse. (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 1999a, 164)

There is no question, however, about the appropriate relationship here—rhetoric is the handmaid of dialectic, and rhetorical moves operate *within* a dialectical framework (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 1999c, 493). This contrasts markedly, as they note, with rhetorical theorists Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, who bring elements of dialectic into rhetoric (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 1999a, 165). The preference should be unsurprising since it seems a natural extension of the commitments already made in the parent project. There are also explicit reasons for this position. Dialectic, they indicate, deals with general and abstract questions, while rhetoric concerns itself with specific cases (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2000a) and with the contextual adjustments required to convince specific people (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002, 15). It seems natural, then, that the specific should be embedded in the general. Furthermore, theoreticians have characterized rhetoric’s norm as that of effectiveness, while dialectic embraces the idea of reasonableness. Although van Eemeren and Houtlosser insist there is no incompatibility between these norms (2002, 15), they do not resist this traditional characterization of rhetoric and so, again,

it seems natural to ground effectiveness in reasonableness. As they remark, "effective persuasion must be disciplined by dialectical rationality" (2000b, 297).<sup>8</sup>

For van Eemeren and Houtlosser, the main way in which the rhetorical affects argumentation is the way people's own interests direct and influence the resolution of a dispute. Here, rhetorical strategies are used to achieve the outcome people desire, while still fulfilling their dialectical obligations. "[T]hey attempt to exploit the opportunities afforded by the dialectical situation for steering the discourse rhetorically in the direction that best serves their interests" (2000b, 295). Thus the real rhetorical aspect of argumentation for van Eemeren and Houtlosser comes through in the strategic attempts to personally influence the resolution process. This can take place at each of the four stages as the arguer exploits opportunities made available to advance her or his own interests.<sup>9</sup> At each stage, strategic maneuvering may involve three distinct aspects or dimensions, and these are important for the combined role they play in deciding the completeness of rhetorical strategies.

The first dimension involves the selection of topics from those available. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser call this the *topical potential* of each discussion stage. That is, arguers will select materials from those available according to what they believe best advances their interests. At the confrontation stage, the speaker or writer will select or exclude in an attempt to dictate how the confrontation is defined. In a dispute over foxhunting in Britain, for example, the key idea might be defined in terms of maintaining rural traditions or in terms of cruelty to animals (2000a). At the opening stage, participants attempt to create the most advantageous starting point. This may be done by establishing agreements and winning concessions. At the argumentation stage, the best "status topes" will be selected from those appropriate for the type of standpoint at issue. And at the concluding stage, attention will be directed to achieving the best outcome for a party by, for example, pointing to consequences (1999a, 166).

The second dimension involves adapting to *audience* (auditorial) *demands*. In general, this will amount to creating "empathy or 'communion' between the arguer and his audience" (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2000b, 298). But this adaptation works in specific ways at each stage, depending on the issue and the nature of the audience involved. For example, in their analysis of an advertorial defending Shell's actions in Nigeria, they show the adaptation to audience at the

argumentation stage by the employment of two types of maneuvering that address the audience's expectation (2001, 21).

The third dimension involves exploiting the *presentational devices* appropriate at each stage. Here, rhetorical figures are used to impress moves upon the mind, thus compounding their effect. In their case study of William the Silent's discourse, for example, van Eemeren and Houtlosser see *praeteritio* being used as the confrontation stage, effectively making a point while claiming to pass over it (1999b, 169).

The key criterion for assessing whether a rhetorical strategy is "being followed" (1999a, 166; 1999b, 170) in any stage is that of *convergence*: the selection of materials, the adaptation to audience, and the use of rhetorical devices must all converge.

But "being followed" is inherently vague. It is not clear whether this is merely an identification criterion to determine that a rhetorical strategy is fully present, or a measure of quality by providing a criterion of success. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser suggest the latter of these. With respect to the foxhunting case, they observe: "Strategic maneuvering *works best* when the rhetorical influences brought to bear at each of the three levels are made to converge" [*italics added*] (2000a). The pro-hunting lobby, they argue, has fused the three dimensions of topic selection, audience adaptation, and device presentation in the tradition of a treasured past. In doing so, the lobby has more than just strategically maneuvered, it has "displayed a genuine rhetorical strategy" (2000a). In the same paper, the authors speak of a rhetorical strategy being "optimally successful" when such a fusion of influences occurs.

We might ponder the nature of this success. In rhetoric, it is usually tied in some way to effectiveness of persuasion, according to van Eemeren and Houtlosser's own understanding. But success in terms that they have now set out may mean no more than being able to match one's own rhetorical interests with one's dialectical obligations through strategies that exploit (in a neutral sense) the opportunities in an argumentative situation.

More clearly identified is a negative requirement governing appropriate strategies. Being persuasive would not be sufficient to count rhetorical strategies acceptable if they are not also reasonable (2000b, 297). And the key way in which they must meet this condition, as with pragma-dialectical assessments generally, is by avoiding fallaciousness (1999c, 485). Fallacies in pragma-dialectics involve violations of one or more rules that govern critical discussions. In the view of van Eemeren and Houtlosser, it is "possible to identify specific 'types' or 'categories'

of strategic maneuvering that can be pinned down as fallacious for their correspondence with a particular type of rule violation in a specific discussion stage" (2001, 24). The requirement of reasonableness represented by the rules for discussion serves as a check on the arguer simply having her or his own way. Such would occur should the arguer's commitment to proceeding reasonably be overruled by the aim of persuasion (in other words, when the correct relationship between the dialectical and the rhetorical is inverted). When this happens, van Eemeren and Houtlosser say that the strategic maneuvering has been "derailed," and hence a fallacy committed. Clearly, this is a point they wish to fix in the minds of their readers, because they adopt the figure of antimetabole (reversal of pairs) to present it: "All derailments of strategic maneuvering are fallacious, and all fallacies can be regarded as derailments of strategic maneuvering" (2001, 23).

The success of pragma-dialectics as a model derives to a large extent from the way it conceives of argumentation in terms of a critical discussion. As its proponents present it, pragma-dialectical theory gives us just the right model for testing the acceptability of a standpoint by dealing with all the doubts and criticisms that might be brought against it. Thus whether argumentation is private or public, whether it has the form of a dialogue or a monologue, and regardless of its subject matter, it can be described as if it were aimed at resolving a difference of opinion (2000b, 294). But doubt has been cast on whether all argumentation can be fruitfully addressed this way (Crosswhite 1995; Woods 1988, 1994), and we may question whether our evaluations strive to do no more than test the acceptability of standpoints. Once we see argumentation as representing more than a critical discussion, whether its goal is consensus, persuasion, or understanding, we find more to say about rhetoric's role. Beyond this, some of van Eemeren and Houtlosser's own case studies used as vehicles to demonstrate rhetorical maneuvering seem hard to cast as critical discussions involving conflicts of opinion. In the cases of the fox hunt and Shell in Nigeria the conflicts of opinions are evident. But other cases, like that of the R. J. Reynolds tobacco advertorial (2000b), are less convincingly expressed in such terms. The tobacco company advertorial aims to give advice to children on the issue of smoking. The discourse is rhetorical in force and aims to be persuasive. But the "opposing opinion" is by no means clear. In fact, we might expend considerable energy debating what actual conflict exists in this case, if there is one at all.

This is not to suggest a problem with the account per se, and the task set for this book of identifying and elaborating the *fundamental* importance of rhetorical features to argumentation can benefit from several components of van Eemeren and Houtlosser's work. For example, the choices speakers and writers make in selecting the terms and structures of their statements are aimed at giving their ideas *presence*. That is, statements are designed to capture the attention of the audience so that specific ideas stand out in their minds. Even the first dimension of selecting issues has this intent (1999b, 168). But it is with the use of rhetorical figures as presentational devices that this becomes most apparent, as they "make things present to the mind" (1999a, 166; 1999c, 485). This is an important echo and acknowledgment of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's stress on the way rhetorical figures attract attention (1969, 168).

The second point of interest is the argumentative role suggested for figures of speech. These figures have their own distinct structures and effects such that they can appear and act very much like types of argument. In fact, Chapter 3 will explore the proposal that we should go further and understand some of them as actual arguments when they are employed in specific ways.

#### ❖ RHETORIC AND RHETORICAL ARGUMENTATION

Perelman (1963, 195) conceived of rhetoric constructively as "the study of the methods of argument" and saw in it the potential to clarify diverse areas of human thought. This contrasts noticeably with some of the more popular, but negative, uses of the term. We are exhorted to get beyond the rhetoric to what is real, to what is serious. And the reference is often to a rise in incendiary language, where emotion and reason have lost their natural relationship of balance and special interests have given vent to provocative invective. The chapters ahead echo Perelman's constructive understanding of rhetoric insofar as approaching argumentation in this way encourages us to view it as fundamentally a communicative practice. But as a *practice*, as a central human activity, argumentation is essentially rhetorical in ways that far exceed methodology alone. Bitzer (1968, 4), in a seminal essay on the rhetorical situation, comes closest to the way I am conceiving of rhetoric here when he describes it as "a mode of altering reality . . . by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and

action.” Whether we see the aims of rhetorical argumentation as leaning towards persuasion, deliberation, or inquiry, the ways in which it helps us change our point of view and directs our actions reflect this understanding.

Rhetorical argumentation draws features from the rhetorical tradition and mixes them with newer innovations. For the core of what the tradition provides, another Aristotelian triad is useful: that organization of the rhetorical that distinguishes *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. The processes of rhetorical argumentation meld together these three bringing into relief, and inextricably wedding to one another in the argumentative situation, the arguer, audience, and “argument.” To understand argumentation is to understand the interactions of these components; to evaluate argumentation is to do the same.

Rhetorical ethos, or the consideration of character, has been given serious consideration by several argumentation theorists (Brinton 1986; Walton 1996a). In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle introduces a basic sense of *ethos* with respect to the speaker who wants to establish credibility and demonstrate positive character traits (1.2.1356a; 2.1.1377b). Of particular value to Aristotle were the qualities of practical wisdom (*phronesis*), virtue (*areté*), and goodwill (*eunoia*), character traits essential to the virtue ethics he develops elsewhere. Ethotic argument, as it has developed, is not necessarily restricted to the character of the speaker or writer (the arguer, in our terms), but can involve any argumentation that deals with matters of character generally. Leff (2003) stresses the importance of *ethos* by relating it to three special dimensions: embodiment, enactment, and evocation. Embodiment involves the arguer embodying the correct values for a relevant audience. The rhetorical problem for Martin Luther King, Jr., in the *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, was not to embody the civil rights movement, since this was already clear in the public mind, “but to establish a persona that embodied the values and interests of his target audience” (Leff 2003, 261). King accomplished this by associating himself with core American values of freedom and independence, and situating himself within the Christian faith. There are echoes here of van Eemeren and Houtlosser’s dimension of adapting to audience demands to create “communion” between arguer and audience. In Chapter 3, we will also meet an earlier instantiation of this in the rhetorical effect that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, 172) refer to as “communion.”

Leff’s second dimension, enactment, arises from what a text *does*, rather than what it says. A text is not something that is inert, but it

constructs representations and relationships as it develops. We will explore such a dynamic view of argumentative texts in Chapter 4. In the case of enactment, the text constructs the persona of the author (Leff allows that enactment and embodiment overlap in well-designed texts). Again, King's text illustrates this. To have the appropriate effect on his audience, King must escape the view that he is a radical whose ideas contrast with American society. The text works to accomplish this.

Finally, evocation involves the representation and apprehension of a situation as a whole in which everything else makes sense. Evocation makes evident "suppressed or undetected inconsistencies that block genuine argumentative engagement" (Leff 2003, 257). Thus, in King's text, the audience is brought to recognize a gap between their beliefs and the discriminatory practices of their society. Evocation here expresses rhetorical *ethos* in the way the text presents King as a prophetic voice, operating from among his audience rather than beyond them. Evocation also presupposes embodiment and enactment.

What Leff demonstrates is that an arguer is not a simple predetermined author of argumentative texts in which he or she is uninvolved. The arguer is implicated in, and in ways constructed by, the text. Thus attention to *ethos* is important for appreciating the full nature of argumentative situations and for recognizing the importance of rhetorical argumentation over and against its logical and dialectical cousins. More will be said about rhetorical *ethos* in later chapters.

The role of *pathos*, or the psychology of the emotions, in argumentation, will be seen in this book through the attention paid to the rhetorical audience. Aristotle defines *pathos* as "disposing the listener in some way" (*Rhetoric*, 1.2.1356a). While this directs us to attend to emotional appeals, it more importantly brings the audience into the picture and leads us to ask about the nature of audiences and their role in the argumentative situation.

The rhetorical audience is a complex and fluid idea. Audiences change, even in the course of argumentation. In fact, the very conception of audiences may "always be modified" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1989, 44). This refers to more than the composition of the audience—it includes its attitudes and adherence to positions: "We must not forget that the audience, to the degree that speech is effective, changes with its unfolding development" (Perelman 1982, 149). The emphasis on change indicates a further important feature of the rhetorical audience: it is not a passive consumer of arguments but plays an

*active* role in the argumentation. The nature of the audience sets the terms of the premises, which are formulated in light of theses accepted by those to be addressed. The audience also contributes assumptions to the reasoning. And the audience can interact with the argumentation in the mind of the arguer or in dialogue with the arguer and become a co-arguer. Here "audiences can . . . take these arguments and their relation to the speaker as the object of a new argumentation" (49).

An interest in the assumptions and beliefs of audiences leads us to consider the environments in which audiences assess arguments and make their judgments. The crucial idea of interest to us here is that of a "cognitive environment," drawn from the work on relevance by Sperber and Wilson (1986). Suspicious of such catchphrases as "mutual knowledge" and "shared information," Sperber and Wilson observe that although we may share a physical environment, our differences seem to preclude any further generalizations about us: we represent the world differently and our perceptual and inferential abilities vary; we possess different belief structures through which we understand the world, and quite different sets of memories. So our *cognitive environment* would be different for each of us (38). Several things about this idea need to be understood for the discussions in this book.

A cognitive environment is a set of facts manifest to us. This idea involves an analogy with our visual environment. That environment comprises all the phenomena in our visual field at a particular time, even though we may not notice them. Likewise, we can imagine a cognitive field composed of all the facts manifest to each of us, which we could potentially perceive or infer. However, while our visual abilities may be fairly common, our cognitive abilities will differ, and hence so will our cognitive environments. One consequence of this is that we will differ in our ability to infer other facts from those we directly perceive. Memory will also come into play here, since knowledge previously acquired affects our ability to work with new information.

Where our cognitive environments overlap, they will give rise to a shared cognitive environment. This idea replaces that of "mutual knowledge" or "shared information." The same facts and assumptions can be manifest in the cognitive environments of two people. Insofar as their cognitive environments intersect, then that intersection is itself a cognitive environment. Where it is clear, manifest, which people share a cognitive environment, then this is a *mutual cognitive environment*. Texans, for example, share a mutual cognitive environment. As individuals they are essentially different, but there is an overlap in that

certain facts and assumptions, within a shared physical environment, are manifest to them. They may not make the same assumptions, but it is possible for them to do so. Mutual manifestness, then, is weak in the right sense, since a claim that an assumption is mutually manifest will not be a claim about actual states or processes but about cognitive environments.

The last of the three core ideas important to rhetorical argumentation is *logos*, or the “argument.” This introduction will have less to say about this concept because, even though it has a rich history, as we saw in the opening sections of the chapter it is one of the key ideas that will be developed throughout the book. The next chapter begins exploring the kinds of discourse that will qualify as rhetorical “argument.” While the succeeding chapters will show that it is not a case of “anything goes” when it comes to what qualifies as argument, it is the case that we cannot anticipate the range of things that may be deemed to count. Our focus on the argumentative situation, with its necessary components of arguer, audience, and argument, creates a structure in which the last of these three terms is determined by the other two even more than they are each determined by the other components.<sup>10</sup> In a very general sense, an argument is the discourse of interest that centers, and develops in, the argumentative situation. The detailed discussion of “context” in Chapter 4 will further our understanding of the relationships between these three components.

Woven throughout contemporary discussions of traditional rhetorical ideas like *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* in the book are contemporary features of rhetorical argumentation, or notions that arise from it, that serve to fill out the account.

Of principal interest here is the idea of an “argumentative situation” that has already been mentioned a number of times. This is the dynamic “space” in which arguer and audience interact, but interact in a way that makes them coauthors. To understand this we will need to explore concepts like “addressivity”: the way that a speaker addresses an audience already anticipating a reply in the very words that are used. Again, we will understand this further in a later chapter by exploring how we are always “in audience” to some degree, and hence able to appreciate what it means to be addressed by argumentative speech. Connected to this idea is the way that rhetorical argumentation is singularly concerned with how argumentation is experienced and how it invites collaboration. This means that the argumentation of interest to us is an invitational one. Rather than persuasive discourses

that impose views on an audience, rhetorical argumentation, through the situation it enacts, invites an audience to come to conclusions through its own experiencing of the evidence. This idea, too, will be developed in the pages ahead.

The ideas of the last paragraph are presented with only the merest sense of what they involve, unlike the more detailed features of rhetorical argumentation elaborated in the previous pages. But this is because these are the innovations being brought to the study and developed here. Their details and justifications await us. As we proceed, fleshing out the ideas involved and showing how fundamental rhetoric is to actual argumentation, we will address arguments in all their diversity, from the traditional sets of premises and conclusions to the frustrating interactions demonstrated by Alice's encounters with the White and Red queens. In the process, ways will be suggested for both understanding and dealing with the full range of contemporary argumentative situations.

#### ❖ THE PATH AHEAD

This chapter has already indicated a number of the discussions that are to come and the chapters in which they take place. Generally, the treatment of rhetorical argumentation proceeds from an investigation of its roots in the ancient Greek world, through several chapters that explore some of its central features and detail the core of the account, to chapters that take up questions of assessment and appropriate criteria for the evaluation of arguments from a rhetorical point of view.

The study begins in Chapter 2 by addressing the basic questions of how argument can be rhetorical and how exactly we are to understand "rhetoric." For answers to both questions we explore the emergence of rhetoric and argument in the ancient Greek world, not principally as these ideas came to be employed by Aristotle or even Plato, but prior to them in the writings and practices of the Sophists. This move necessitates a rehabilitation of Sophistic argument, demonstrating its variety and multiple goals, and thus challenging the traditional view that sees it trading only in eristics and aimed only at persuasion. The constructive model of argument drawn from these early practitioners sets the standard for what is to come.

Chapter 3 reverses the question of the previous chapter and asks rather how rhetoric can serve as argument. The particular devices of

interest here are rhetorical figures like the antimetabole and prolepsis. Drawing on Fahnestock's provocative study of figures in scientific argumentation, we can see not only how figures facilitate argumentation, but actually serve as arguments in some contexts. Important here is the way in which such regular patterns of discourse are experienced by audiences, as arguers make certain things "present" to them to encourage the movement from the evidence of the premises to the conclusions.

The discussions of arguers and audiences in Chapters 2 and 3 raise the question of how such parties can best communicate argumentatively. Chapter 4 provides the heart of the current account in the way it addresses this question by drawing from the work of Bakhtin. A Bakhtinian model of argumentation, as developed from the suggestive discussions scattered throughout his works, is dialogical in the surest sense. The argumentative situation, as it is revealed here, encompasses a dialogue characterized by anticipation, involvement, and response, in which the arguer and audience become defined by the presence of the other party and co-construct the "argument." This model is illustrated through a traditional and a contemporary text.

With Chapter 5, attention shifts to how argumentation ought to be evaluated and judged. Such questions arise from the account of audiences developed in the preceding chapters. If the success of rhetorical argumentation is accounted in some way by the appropriate audience response, then what makes the choices of a specific audience reasonable? More importantly, from where do we get any standards for making such evaluations ourselves? Chapter 5 begins to discuss what is at stake in such questions by exploring some of the ways in which allegedly "objective" standards of reasonableness have been employed. In particular, we look at the so-called Martian standard, which represents a perspective quite foreign to our own point of view. In seeing why this standard fails, we begin to appreciate what is at stake in pursuing standards of reasonableness and the direction in which we should go in such a pursuit.

That direction takes us in Chapter 6 to a staple of rhetorical argumentation—the universal audience, as this notion was put forward by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. In revisiting again this idea and reconsidering some of the problems that have been associated with it, we see how it can be developed to address the problem of the previous chapter. The universal audience is the source for our standard of what is reasonable. Rooted in real audiences, this idea represents the moving

face of reason over time and human communities. Latter parts of the chapter show how a universal audience can be used both in constructing argumentation and, importantly, in evaluating it.

The evaluation of arguments leads to the final substantive investigation of the book: from a rhetorical perspective, what criterion best serves us, truth or acceptability? The challenge comes from a logical perspective on argumentation that specifically rejects rhetoric because of its abandonment of a truth criterion. In showing instead how acceptability not only avoids the problems associated with truth, but better meets the requirements of argument evaluation and communication, the chapter offers once again a defence of rhetorical argumentation as the one best suited to form the foundation of any comprehensive model of argument.

Chapter 8, in summary, recalls the principal features of the account that has been developed, and shows how they address the questions left unanswered by logical and dialectical accounts of argument. While there is much we can conclude about the rhetorical, in bringing form and substance to this sometimes inchoate force, ultimately it escapes firm conclusions. Like the argumentative situations it reflects, its boundaries are unclear and its components always undergoing change. What we can say about it is only part of an ongoing discussion that will enrich as much as it challenges.

## ❖ NOTES

1. For an assessment of Carroll's logic and its place in history, see William Warren Bartley III's *Introduction to Lewis Carroll's Symbolic Logic*, 1977.

2. The difference between the two "logics" is reflected in the types of exercises offered in the textbooks. In the traditional textbooks the problem is to test syllogisms for validity, or, where the example is not in syllogistic form, to reduce it to that form. This kind of exercise is missing from post-Boolean logic, including Carroll's text. There, the problem is to determine what information propositions provide for any given term or combination of terms.

3. For a more detailed assessment of Toulmin's model see Tindale 1999a, 24–25; 28–30.

4. For detailed appreciations of the problems involved see, for example, van Eemeren et al. (1996) and Johnson (1981).

5. The term is taken from Blair (1995).

6. Trudy Govier suggests as much when she writes that "an argument is one thing; objections to it, another; responses to those objections yet another" (1998, 7).

7. For details on the model, see van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984, 1992; and van Eemeren 2002.

8. They note more than this, however: there is an intersubjective reasonableness prevalent in rhetoric and this is “one of the pillars of the critical reasonableness conception characteristic of dialectic” (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2000a).

9. Available strategies abound. At the confrontation stage, for example, an arguer may employ evasion; at the opening stage, perhaps “smokescreen”; at the argumentation stage, “knocking down” an opponent could be used; and at the concluding stage, one may force an opponent to “bite the bullet” (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 1999a, 166).

10. Of interest here is one of Feyerabend’s (1967) occasional remarks on argument. In discussing how arguments are observed in theatre, he noted that “an argument is more than an abstractly presented train of reasoning, for it involves the behavior, strategies, and appearances of the disputants and onlookers” (Preston 1999, 10).

