

## Critical Review

### *Groundwork in the Theory of Argumentation: Selected Papers of J. Anthony Blair*

Introduction by **Christopher W. Tindale**

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#### **1. Introduction**

Along with his colleague Ralph Johnson, J. Anthony Blair has spearheaded the development of informal logic as a newly self-conscious sub-field of philosophy devoted to the study of arguments. *Groundwork in the Theory of Argumentation* brings together 23 of his papers in this field from the last 30 years, all but one of them previously published. The papers are organized into four sections: critical thinking (3 papers), informal logic (7 papers), argumentation theory (6 papers), and logic, dialectic and rhetoric (7 papers). Each section starts with an introduction in which Blair says what motivated him to write the papers, continues with the papers in roughly chronological order, and ends with a postscript in which Blair states his present position on the issues they discuss. The papers have been lightly edited, so that for example each of them refers to itself as a chapter. The book has a comprehensive table of contents, a list of Blair's publications up to June 2011, an integrated single list of references, a name index, and a subject index. Taken as a whole, it is a very useful reference work.

One does not associate with Tony Blair any distinctive theoretical contribution to the study of reasoning and argument, except for his collaborative work with Ralph Johnson in developing the criteria of relevance, acceptability and

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<sup>1</sup> The book is available at this price to those who have access to the e-resources of a library that has purchased the Springer ebook collection.

sufficiency (the “RAS” criteria) for a good argument and the associated division of fallacies into irrelevant reason, problematic premise and hasty conclusion. What emerges from the present valuable collection is a pluralist, irenic approach to understanding and evaluating arguments, one that is aware of and sympathetic to a variety of approaches, including those not only of North American philosophers of argument, but also of American speech communication theorists, the Amsterdam pragma-dialectical school, and French, Belgian and Austrian theorists of argument. At the heart of all reasoning and argument, Blair holds, is a “this, therefore that” structure. The “that” can be a doxastic attitude towards a proposition, or an evaluation, or a decision. The structure can be deployed for various purposes, such as the rational resolution of an expressed disagreement, the ascertaining of the truth, or rational persuasion of an addressee. Different theoretical approaches seize on one of these purposes, and each is legitimate in its own terms; they are not fundamentally at odds. In good reasoning and argument, both the “this” and the “therefore” must be adequate; the premises must be individually “acceptable” and jointly “sufficient”. But these terms from the RAS criteria are placeholders for specific criteria that are relative to the use to which the reasoning or argument is being put, and in particular to whether the goal is justification or persuasion. Applied to the claim-reason complex in itself, they are logical criteria; when context is taken into account, they become dialectical. Often these criteria emerge dialectically from an intellectual community engaged with the subject-matter of the argument. And rhetorical criteria are important for identifying arguments and their context. In developing this pluralistic, irenic approach over the 30 years covered by this collection, Blair over and over again makes sensible remarks about the specifics of particular reasoning and argumentative situations, remarks that a summary review like the present one must abstract from. The book deserves to be read for the insightfulness of its many concrete observations.

The introduction by Christopher Tindale, which the present reviewer read only after reading the rest of the book and writing this review, admirably characterizes Blair’s contributions to the study of argument and argumentation. He is, Tindale rightly says, a philosopher of argument, a master of the field, a prophetic voice, and a gatekeeper. Above all, he is an investigator, one who is constantly trying to find out.

## 2. Critical Thinking

In “Is there an obligation to reason well?” (presented in 1981 but not previously published) Blair advances two arguments that human beings have a defeasible moral obligation to reason well. First, reasoning well is a necessary means to the morally obligatory end of avoiding false beliefs and pursuing true beliefs. Second, reasoning well is constitutive of two social goods: an open and politically responsible society, and the growth of the reasoner’s mind. It makes sense to treat reasoning well as a moral obligation, he adds, because it is neither a universal natural inclination nor an overly demanding goal.

In his postscript, Blair takes the edge off his position. He now thinks that our moral obligation is to *try* to reason well, not to succeed at it, and that this obligation is not as weighty an obligation as, for example, the obligation to help others in need. His argument touches only a corner of the debate about epistemic responsibility that has emerged in the decades since he presented his paper. For one thing, reasoning well is but a small part of responsible management of one’s belief system and personal decision-making, alongside being observant, seeking out good sources of information, double-checking one’s sources, and so forth. Further, the prudential reasons for epistemic responsibility are at least as strong as the moral reasons, which arguably apply only when one’s beliefs or behaviour affect the interests of others. Even when moral reasons clearly do apply, as in medical diagnosis, moralizing about bad reasoning may not be as effective in improving it as educating people to recognize their cognitive biases and trigger thought processes that compensate for them (Croskerry, Singhal, & Mamede 2013a, 2013b), if there is already a motivation to reason well.

“The Keegstra affair: A test case for critical thinking”, published in 1986 in a journal for teachers of history and social sciences, draws lessons for teaching critical thinking in history classes from allegations that James Keegstra was teaching his high school history students that there is a Zionist conspiracy to dominate the world, that Hitler’s treatment of the Jews had some justification, and that the Holocaust has been greatly exaggerated. Blair points out the faults in what Keegstra allegedly taught: a self-sealing theory masquerading as empirical, misuse of problematic sources as authorities on historical events, selective appeal to actual historical events, failure to seek disconfirming evidence, use of arguments to convince an audience to accept a pre-determined theory rather

than in an investigative way. He speculates that few students, either in high school or in post-secondary institutions, could provide an appropriate critique of these faults. He proposes as possibly useful remedies for this perceived lack that history and social science teachers learn the outlines of critical theorizing in these fields if they do not know them already, teach students a precise critical vocabulary starting from grade 5, make explicit the model of thinking that they are using or teaching, and give students examples of, and guided practice in, evaluating theories with good judgment.

In his postscript Blair stands by these proposals, but says that he would be inclined now to put them forward more tentatively and less arrogantly. He also expresses more uncertainty about how central argument is to historical method, and he updates his reference to critical thinking tools for history and social science teachers by citing *The Critical Thinking Consortium* (<http://www.tc2.ca>) and the work of Roland Case in British Columbia.

“What is bias?” (1988, revised from a 1985 presentation) addresses the apparent contradiction between one textbook’s statement that everybody who makes a claim is biased in favour of it and another’s that bias is a fault that it makes no sense to attribute to everybody. On the basis of a survey of uses of the term ‘bias’, Blair finds a common meaning of a slant, angle, leaning or perspective—which can be attributed to people, conduct, judgments, reports, and other types of entities. Such bias can be either (1) bad and avoidable or (2) unavoidable and potentially dangerous, but capable of being compensated for, or (3) avoidable and either good or neutral. (1) Bad and avoidable bias, in which Blair includes the technical concept of a biased sample, violates a norm or expectation of impartiality, fairness, neutrality, or non-advocacy; it is harmful whether or not it is intentional. (2) Unavoidable but potentially dangerous bias is exemplified by the necessary selectiveness of news reports and by the worldview that each of us has; in these cases, as also when someone has an opinion on an issue, one can “have a bias” without being biased in the first sense. (3) Although it is rare nowadays to find the word ‘bias’ used of leanings that are avoidable and not bad, Blair reports one such contemporary use.

In his postscript Blair describes his paper as bringing out well, with apt illustrations, the variety of senses of the term ‘bias’. He expresses disappointment that the paper has not been more widely cited. The paper’s value, in the present reviewer’s opinion, lies mainly in distinguishing the first two senses, which

can be clearly separated by considering their respective opposites: to be unbiased in the first sense is to be impartial or fair, whereas to be unbiased in the second sense is to have no pre-conceived opinion. As Blair notes, a person who has a bias in the second sense may, but need not, be biased in the first sense. A strongly held opinion, especially one rooted in a comprehensive worldview, tends to preclude open-minded and fair-minded consideration of relevant evidence and arguments. In particular, there is strong experimental and anecdotal evidence for what cognitive psychologists call “confirmation bias” (not mentioned by Blair): “the seeking or interpreting of evidence in ways that are partial to existing beliefs, expectations or a hypothesis at hand” (Nickerson 1998, p. 175). It is an important pedagogical question what sorts of exercises can help develop open-mindedness, fair-mindedness and even-handed investigation about issues in which a person is deeply engaged or merely has a weak inclination to take a certain position—especially since confirmation bias is typically unconscious. A useful safeguard against such bias is to suspend judgment on a question at issue until all the readily available relevant evidence is in—a practice exemplified in investigations of the causes of airplane and train crashes, in good detective work, and in intelligence work. Another useful safeguard is to avoid a conflict of interest where there is a “reasonable apprehension of bias”—a practice exemplified in the courts and in legislatures.

### 3. Informal Logic

“Argument management, informal logic and critical thinking” (1996) maps the relationship between the three items mentioned in its title. Blair adopts the phrase ‘argument management’ as a term of art for the complex task of argument assessment and construction. Following Ennis (1996), he takes critical thinking to be reasonable reflective thinking about what to believe or do. And he takes informal logic to be the theory of the norms for interpreting and evaluating the illative (i.e. inferential) core of arguments, where arguments are understood to include “such things as one or more sets of reasons considered or offered in support of a proposition; or a verbal exchange in which two or more people trade such reasons, in order to convince one another of a point of view; or a dispute in which two or more people try to refute the viewpoint of others, or to attack their credibility or authority” (p. 44, n. 2). So construed, informal

logic is one aspect of the theory and practice of argument management, which in turn is one element of critical thinking.

In his postscript, Blair underlines the importance of the concept of argument management, about which his chapter has many insightful things to say, but which he has not developed further. He reiterates his view that critical thinking involves more than argument analysis and evaluation, and its corollary that teaching methods of argument analysis and evaluation is not the whole of teaching critical thinking. Without dissenting from this view, we might take his definition of informal logic to be too narrow; the research agenda set out at the First International Symposium on Informal Logic (Johnson & Blair 1980, pp. 25-26), for example, includes topics that go beyond the illative core of arguments, such as the ethics of argumentation and logical criticism. It is only the accidental associations of the oddly chosen term ‘informal logic’ with logic, I suggest, that prompts Blair and others to narrow its scope. If logic is understood as limited to investigation of the illative core of arguments and reasoning, then informal logic is not just logic; it is best understood as the philosophical study of arguments, in all their dimensions.

The next four chapters in Part II discuss the criteria for a good argument. In the mid-1970s, Blair and Johnson worked out a system for classifying fallacies based on the type of mistake committed: problematic premise, irrelevant reason, hasty conclusion. This system formed the framework of their textbook *Logical Self-Defense* (Johnson & Blair 1977, 1983, 1993, 1994, 2006). The criteria for a good argument emerged naturally as the contraries of the main types of flaws—acceptable premises, relevant reasons, sufficient grounds. These criteria have won wide acceptance in both textbooks and scholarly publications. For example, they are the ARG conditions of Trudy Govier’s textbook *A Practical Study of Argument*, now in an “enhanced” seventh edition (2013), and they form the framework for many of James Freeman’s scholarly contributions, including his (2005).

‘What is the right amount of support for a conclusion?’ (1991) seeks a completely general answer to its title question. It rejects two current candidates. Deductive chauvinists who take arguments to be good only if their conclusion follows necessarily from their premises ignore perfectly respectable arguments where the premises merely make the conclusion probable or create a presumption in its favour. The pragma-dialectical theory of van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984), by

making sufficiency depend on the unconstrained agreement of participants in a discussion, counts as inferentially good some arguments with demonstrably insufficient premises and as inferentially bad some arguments with demonstrably sufficient premises. To remedy these deficiencies, Blair proposes instead to appeal to the dialectically tested criteria of the intellectual community to whose field the argument belongs. The argumentative practices of such communities evolve historically, so that for example standards for questionnaire design are more rigorous now than they were some decades earlier.

In his postscript, Blair remarks that he continues to believe that there is no general answer to his title question and that the approach of his 1991 paper is on the right track. He would pay some attention today, he notes, to the so-called “dialectical tier” of his colleague Ralph Johnson (2000)—the consideration of objections to the arguer’s viewpoint and of alternative viewpoints and the reasons for them—incorporated as “global sufficiency” in the third edition of their textbook (Johnson and Blair 1993, p. 61). Blair’s proposal has strong affinities with Stephen Toulmin’s contextual, historical, field-dependent understanding of the legitimacy of subject-specific rules of inference, which he calls ‘warrants’ (Toulmin 1958, 2003). It is superior to it in addressing the strongest objection to Toulmin’s field-dependence thesis: that it baptizes as legitimate the standards of any group of people who set themselves up as experts on some set of questions, such as astrologers or cryptozoologists (Pineau 2013; cf. Habermas 1984, pp. 31-42). Blair requires that the standards of any field be tested dialectically, according to meta-standards of sufficiency: “there must be standards of sufficiency for arguments about standards of sufficiency” (p. 58). If these meta-standards are not themselves the private possession of the intellectual community in question, but are common tender across intellectual communities, there is room to escape the perniciously relativistic aspects of Toulmin’s field-dependence thesis. At the same time, it should be noted that tying standards of sufficiency to intellectual communities makes sense mainly for epistemological uses of arguments, i.e. uses of arguments to establish, justify or prove their conclusion in a way that passes muster in the intellectual community to which they belong. For other purposes, other standards might be appropriate. If an argumentative exchange aims at rational resolution of a dispute between two people (i.e. if it is a critical discussion as conceived by pragma-dialectics), then the appropriate standard is whatever

standard of sufficiency the two parties happen to accept. If the author of an argument aims to convince rationally a specific group of readers or writers, then the appropriate standard is whatever standard of sufficiency the intended audience accepts. Then again, standards of sufficiency vary with the practical consequences of drawing the conclusion. In the common law tradition, for example, the standard of sufficiency in a criminal case, where fairly severe consequences attend a finding of guilt, is proof beyond a reasonable doubt; but the standard in a civil case, where the consequences of a verdict for the plaintiff are less severe than those of a criminal conviction, the standard is proof on a balance of probabilities. These standards admittedly apply to the sufficiency of the case as a whole, taking into account the degree of premise acceptability as well as the degree of inferential support, and looking at a whole complex of various arguments, counter-arguments, objections, responses, and so forth. But they imply different standards for the more local sufficiency that is the subject of Blair's paper. To sum up: the requirement of local sufficiency is best regarded as a somewhat empty truism: in a good argument, the premises if acceptable must provide enough support to justify adoption of a specified propositional attitude towards the propositional content of the conclusion. The real work of the theory of argument comes in specifying what counts as enough support for a given type of argument in a given type of context when it is used for a specified purpose with specified practical consequences of taking up the propositional attitude in question. Sufficiency is a placeholder for these specifics.

"Premissary relevance" (1992) takes a premise to be relevant if and only if it belongs to a set that authoritatively warrants an inference to the conclusion. A warrant is authoritative if and only if its associated conditional proposition is true, which Blair equates to being justifiable.

In his postscript Blair confesses his continued partiality to this sort of account of premissary relevance, which he clarifies is the on/off sort of relevance captured by saying that a premise has a bearing on the conclusion, not the scalar property of salience that is sometimes also called 'relevance'; his distinction seems to be the one drawn in law between whether some evidence or testimony is relevant and whether it is material. Despite Blair's continued partiality to his approach, one can see problems with the account in the present chapter. For one thing, as stated, it makes almost any obviously irrelevant premise relevant if the other members of the set warrant drawing the



conclusion. The ancient Stoics used as an example of an argument with an irrelevant premise the argument: “if it is day, it is light; but it is day; and grains are being sold in the market; so it is light” (Sextus Empiricus 8.430; my translation of an emended text). This argument has as its warrant: given three premises of the forms ‘if  $p$  then  $q$ ’ and  $p$  and  $r$ , then you may conclude that  $q$ . Since the associated conditional of this warrant is true (i.e. it is true that, for any propositions  $p$ ,  $q$  and  $r$ , if both if  $p$  then  $q$  and  $p$  and  $r$ , then  $q$ ), then the warrant is authoritative. Hence on Blair’s account it is a relevant premise of the argument that grains are being sold in the market. The example is almost completely generalizable, since almost any true conditional remains true if one adds a conjunct to the antecedent; that is, given the truth of ‘if  $p$  then  $q$ ’, then in general ‘if both  $p$  and  $r$ , then  $q$ ’ is also true. This difficulty can be avoided by adding to Blair’s account the condition that the presence of the premise is necessary for the inference to be warranted; that is, if the premise were removed, the remaining premises would not warrant an inference to the conclusion.

Another difficulty with Blair’s account is that it does not allow for premises to be relevant if they do not belong to a set that warrants drawing the conclusion—i.e. for an argument to have premises that are relevant but insufficient. But clearly there are such cases. Any observed uniformity in the observed instances of some kind is relevant to a conclusion that the observed instances of that kind have the same uniformity (unless there is proof to the contrary). But the universal generalization is often a hasty conclusion, in which case the premise of the observed uniformity is not part of a premise set that warrants an inference to the conclusion. Similarly, a correlation may be relevant to the conclusion that there is a causal relationship, even if there is not (yet) enough evidence to warrant an inference to the causal claim. Again, a consideration or criterion may be relevant to some decision or evaluation or classification without being part of a set of considerations or criteria that warrant drawing the conclusion in question, even presumptively (Kock 2007, Hitchcock 2013). Blair’s account of premissary relevance could be modified to accommodate relevant premises that are not part of a locally sufficient set by allowing a premise to be relevant if it is part of a premise set that *could* be extended so as to provide sufficient support for the conclusion, support for which the relevant premise was necessary. The conception of premissary relevance that emerges is thus similar to the one articulated in (Hitchcock 1992) and recently modified as follows:

... a premiss is relevant to a conclusion for which it is offered as support if and only if there is a set of premisses that (a) when combined with the relevant premiss are sufficient to justify the conclusion, (b) are not jointly sufficient by themselves to justify the conclusion, (c) are at least potentially accurate, and (d) if accurate can be discovered to be accurate without assuming the truth of the conclusion. (Hitchcock 2011, p. 198)

“Premise adequacy” (1995) argues that the conditions under which a supportable premise needs argumentative support (i.e. in which the premise is not by itself adequate but could be supported) vary with the context in which an argument is advanced. In one-on-one argumentative quarrels, for example, support is needed only if a premise is challenged and no other response to the challenge is accepted. But in scholarly publications a premise needs support if it has been challenged by a referee or by argument in accessible technical literature. The criteria are different again in contexts of argumentative persuasion, of hostile advocacy, of neutral curiosity, of an undergraduate essay, of a newspaper or magazine report, of negotiation, and of rational resolution of a disagreement. Despite this variety, there are some general standards of premise adequacy, such as being known a priori to be true, being a matter of common knowledge, and serving provisionally when not known to be unacceptable (Govier 1992, p. 129).

In his postscript Blair reframes his paper as one about burden of proof. He takes his paper to make the unstated assumption, which he would now make explicit and try to defend, that a premise needs to be defended if and only if the argumentative situation imposes a burden of proof that calls for its defence. The paper’s thesis, then, is that the burden of proof varies so much from one argumentative situation to another that no general rules about burden of proof are available. Blair still supports this thesis.

“Relevance, acceptability and sufficiency today” (2007) gives a qualified endorsement to the RAS criteria for a good argument in the light of criticisms in the 30 years since Johnson and Blair (1977) first advanced them. Blair notes that they did not clarify at the time how they understood the concept of a good argument, but reconstructs it as that of an argument worth taking seriously, i.e. one that should prompt its recipients to

consider changing their mind in the way proposed by the argument's conclusion. On the criterion of relevance, Blair considers three criticisms. He concedes that the concept of relevance is vague and resists analysis, but argues through an example that even so one can justify a claim that a premise is irrelevant. The ambiguity between the local relevance of a premise to the conclusion drawn from it and the global relevance of an assertion to the issue under discussion is not a decisive objection, he claims, since the relevance in the RAS criteria is local relevance. The third criticism, that relevance is a superfluous criterion, since sufficiency presupposes relevance, prompts some adjustments to the relevance criterion. Since any arguer intends their premises to be probatively relevant to their conclusion, the criterion of relevance first comes into play as a criterion for deciding whether a piece of discourse is an argument at all. It comes into play in evaluating an argument only when it is clear that an arguer has advanced a set of reasons in support of a claim but there is a question whether one of them has any probative bearing on the claim.

The word 'acceptable' is ambiguous between 'accepted' and 'worthy of being accepted', and sometimes the acceptability criterion is taken to cover both meanings (Johnson 2000, pp. 194-195; Blair 2012, p. 52). In this chapter, however, as in the original articulation of the acceptability requirement (Johnson & Blair 1977, pp. 7-8, 22-29), Blair restricts the meaning to the second sense of being worthy of acceptance, glossed as being reasonable to accept. It is disputed whether truth is a requirement for acceptability in this sense (Johnson 2000) or whether mere acceptance, either by the addressee alone (Hamblin 1970) or by both addressee and arguer (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004), is sufficient. Blair analyzes this dispute as due to disagreement over the proper use of arguments. Advocates of acceptance take the proper use of an argument to be that of getting a dialogue partner to change his mind. Advocates of truth take the proper use of an argument to be that of justifying something: a doxastic attitude to a proposition, or a choice, or a decision. Blair himself takes each use to be legitimate in its place; he defends justification against Popperian attempts to reduce it to persuasion, and persuasion against charges that mere persuasion is not rational. Criteria of acceptability vary not only with the two uses, but also with whether the perspective is that of the arguer or the addressee, as well as with such circumstances as what hinges on being correct about the conclusion. Acceptability, he concludes, "has some content, but the concept is largely a place holder." (p. 95)

As with relevance, there is an ambiguity between local sufficiency and global or dialectical sufficiency. And, as with acceptability, the amount and type of evidence required for local sufficiency depends on whether the argument is being used to justify or to persuade. With justificatory arguments, the standards of dialectical sufficiency depend on the field to which the argument belongs as well as on what depends on the claim at issue. For justificatory arguments, Blair concludes, sufficiency “is best seen as a placeholder for whatever version and standards of sufficiency are appropriate for the particular situation in question.” (p. 97)

More fundamental objections to the RAS criteria hold that arguments should be evaluated dialectically or rhetorically rather than logically. Dialectical criteria, Blair holds, are appropriate for persuasive but not for justificatory uses. But the dialectical perspective indicates a need to broaden the sufficiency requirement from local sufficiency to global sufficiency, with the result that the unit of evaluation becomes typically not a single one-inference argument but the case for a claim. As to the rhetorical perspective, championed for example by Tindale (1999), Blair concedes that rhetorical analysis is important to understanding discourse, but holds that the evaluation of the argumentation uncovered by the analysis depends on logical and dialectical considerations to which the rhetorical dimension is irrelevant, except for sensitizing the evaluator to features of the argumentative that might bias the evaluation.

Blair sums up his review of the RAS criteria as follows:

In a nutshell, the three “criteria” remain useful as ways of organizing our thinking about the qualities of a good argument, but in the light of 30 years of research and reflection, they must be hedged with qualifications and supplemented by an appreciation of the complexities of arguments and their uses. (p. 100)

In his postscript, Blair confesses himself persuaded by arguments of Christopher Tindale (2007) that the RAS criteria are an unstable basis for a theory of fallacy. Tindale points out in his article that Johnson and Blair interpret each of their main types of fallacy sometimes as a local problem with a single premise-conclusion complex and sometimes as a global or dialectical problem with the relationship of such a complex to its

context. An obvious way out of the difficulty is to adopt a two-level theory of the characteristics of a good argument, one level having to do with its intrinsic characteristics and the other with its relationship to the context in which it is deployed.

Derek Allen (2013) has raised important objections to the acceptability criterion of premise adequacy. He argues that a theory of argument could hold both that for an argument to be a good argument its premises must be true and that, for it to be a good argument relative to its audience, the audience must be epistemically justified in accepting its premises as true. In particular, he maintains that both the relevance requirement and *a fortiori* the sufficiency requirement are met only if the premises are true; a false premise does not count in favour of the truth of the conclusion. Thus there is both a “logical” and an epistemological perspective on arguments; an argument would be “logically” good if it had true premises that were relevant to and sufficient for the truth of the conclusion, and it would be epistemically good if its intended audience had good reason to believe that the “logical” conditions were met. The RAS criteria awkwardly combine an epistemic criterion for premise adequacy with an ontic criterion for connection adequacy.

“The ‘logic’ of informal logic” (2007) compares a number of proposals for good premise-conclusion connections that are neither deductive entailments nor quantitative probabilifications: Wisdom’s case-by-case reasoning (1991), Toulmin’s warrants (1958, 2003), Wellman’s conductive reasoning (1971), Rescher’s plausible reasoning (1977), defeasible logics of various sorts (described in Koons 2009), and Walton’s presumptive reasoning (1996). All the proposed connections are defeasible, in the sense that information compatible with the premises can rebut the conclusion or undercut the inference to it. All but Wisdom’s take the premises of argument or reasoning with the specified type of connection to establish a presumption in favour of the conclusion, and all are implicitly or explicitly dialectical, in the sense of presupposing roles of proponent and critic and interaction of argumentation pro and con. For many of these types, a test of connection adequacy is whether the inference withstands criticism. The proposals differ with respect to whether the type of connection is thought to have its own logic and to whether it is restricted to certain types of conclusions. Blair takes the number and variety of such proposals to establish that there are legitimate premise-conclusion connections other than deduction and induction. The research agenda, he thinks, is now to formulate for them validity criteria and conditions of appropriate application.

“Informal logic and logic” (2009) traces a dialectical trajectory from the early rejection by informal logic of formal logic as a tool for the analysis and evaluation of natural language arguments, via the use of a fallacies approach or of the RAS criteria or of argument schemes as possible replacement tools, to the synthesis of formal logic and argument schemes in contemporary work in artificial intelligence. The return to formality has in Blair’s view the advantage that it is coupled with both a primary focus on natural language arguments and recognition that many good arguments have defeasible inferences.

#### 4. Argumentation Theory

“Walton’s argumentation schemes for presumptive reasoning: a critique and development” (2001) identifies and addresses theoretical gaps in Douglas Walton’s ground-breaking *Argumentation Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996). How do such schemes relate to the distinction between argument and reasoning? On the basis of an analysis of the components of argumentation, conceived as a complex interpersonal speech activity, Blair argues that Walton’s argumentation schemes are schemes of both reasoning and argument, but more basically of reasoning. Into what broad types should argumentation schemes be classified? Blair takes Walton to be on the right track in classifying schemes at the highest level by the strength of commitment to which a reasoner is entitled, given the premises. Thus the basic distinction is between deductive, inductive and presumptive schemes. But Blair takes issue with the use of degree of justified confidence as the distinguishing principle, on the ground that there are presumptive inferences in whose conclusions we can rightly put great confidence. The difference, he holds, lies rather in whether the conclusion is in principle defeasible, given the premises. How are we to distinguish between descriptive schemes that merely describe how people argue and prescriptive schemes that characterize good ways of arguing? Blair notes that the mere fact that people use a scheme is not enough to give it prescriptive force. How then do we account for the prescriptive force of prescriptive schemes? Blair proposes that it derives ultimately from a type of inconsistency involved in accepting the premises but refusing to accept the conclusion of an argument fitting the scheme. With presumptive schemes, it is inconsistent to accept the premises but refuse to

accept the conclusion when one is not aware of a rebutting circumstance; the force of the critical questions associated with such a scheme is to check whether there is such a rebutting circumstance—a fact that explains and justifies them. To establish a presumptive scheme as prescriptive, then, is to bring out how the connection between the premise set of the scheme and the conclusion makes it unreasonable, in the absence of rebutting circumstances, to deny the conclusion while granting the premises. How abstractly should the scheme of a given argument be described? Blair raises this question, but offers no answer.

In his postscript, Blair notes that the theory of argumentation schemes has continued to develop since his 2001 paper, and cites in particular the comprehensive monograph of Walton, Reed and Macagno (2008). In response to a challenge to the normative status of such schemes, he concedes that some merely describe how people reason and argue, but takes others as characterizing reasonable ways to reason and argue. Despite the extensive body of work since 2001, Blair's paper continues to set a valuable agenda for research on reasoning schemes. Some of his answers in this paper are however open to challenge. Some prescriptive schemes have variable inference strength; for example, both inductive generalization and analogical reasoning can be conclusive as well as defeasible, as can appeals to relevant considerations or criteria (Hitchcock 2013). Hence the top-level classification of prescriptive schemes cannot distinguish them by strength of inference. As to the source of the prescriptive force of schemes, accepting the premises while declining to accept the conclusion is better described as unreasonable than as inconsistent, since inconsistency in this context means commitment to a flat contradiction of the form ' $p$  and not  $p$ '. As to critical questions, those in Walton's list are in fact of three types: questions about the truth of the stated premises, questions about conditions that the proponent in a dialogical situation is obliged to show are present, and questions about possible rebutting or undercutting conditions that the critic in a dialogical situation is obliged to show are met (Walton, Reed and Macagno 2008, pp. 272-273). On the issue of the level of abstraction at which schemes should be described, a useful check on needless proliferation of schemes is to refuse to subdivide a scheme if the species so created all have the same critical questions associated with them. In other words, the point of distinguishing a scheme is to provide a trigger for a specific set of critical questions.

“A theory of normative reasoning schemes” (1999) proposes as the basis for the normative force of a prescriptive reasoning scheme what Blair calls a “warranting condition”. He illustrates this proposal with reference to the highly generic scheme of accepting a position on someone’s say-so: Source *S* asserts position *P*, so *P*. (Blair follows Walton (1996) in including in schemes a covering conditional and in qualifying both the covering conditional and the conclusion by words like ‘normally’ or ‘probably’ or ‘presumably’. However, these additions give all schemes the form of defeasible *modus ponendo ponens*, which makes them purely formal and removes the distinctiveness of one scheme from another. I therefore follow Kienpointner (1992) and Hastings (1962) in taking any such covering conditional to be the statement of the scheme’s rule of inference and not of one of its premises.) What warrants the scheme of appeal to a source, according to Blair, is the social practice of truthfulness: in our society, people generally don’t assert something unless they believe it and think that they have good grounds for believing it. But there are exceptions. Further, the source may be mistaken in thinking it has good grounds for its position, or the position may be false even though the source has good grounds for it. Further, it makes a difference whether the position in question is a straightforward factual claim or a judgment call, how much expertise is required to determine whether the position is correct, how important it is for it to be correct, how much time there is to check the source, whether the source has a vested interest in getting the addressee to accept the position, whether the position is implausible, whether another source puts forward an incompatible position, and so forth. All these complications give rise to “critical questions”, which probe for circumstances that rebut the conclusion of an appeal to a source or undermine the inference. Blair concludes that “we can’t make perfect lists of critical questions, because situations differ in unpredictable ways (so no exhaustive list of all the possibilities is possible), but also because different situations may call up factors that don’t apply universally”. (p. 157) He extends this analysis to other schemes. In particular, the warranting condition of reasoning from *a priori* analogy is the principle of fairness: like cases should be treated alike. As in the previous chapter, he takes a sort of consistency to be the warranting condition of many reasoning schemes.

Consistency, however, becomes a warranting condition only when the covering conditional of a reasoning scheme has been accepted. The ultimate warranting condition of any



reasoning scheme is the support for the covering conditional, what Toulmin (1958, 2003) calls a warrant's "backing".

"Towards a philosophy of argument" (2003) articulates a pluralistic conception of argument according to which there are many uses of arguments and many perspectives on argument, with consequent variations in the norms for good argument. An atomic argument offers a reason for taking some attitude towards something. The reason can consist of more than one proposition, and need not be linguistically expressed. The attitude may be epistemic or practical or affective. Its object may be a proposition or an action or a policy. Atomic arguments can be assembled into complexes that make a case for an attitude. People use arguments for intrinsic, associated and extrinsic purposes. Intrinsic purposes make argument part of the user's goal; examples are conveying knowledge and its grounds, trying to change someone's opinion, demonstrating one's own knowledge, persuading an audience, exploring pros and cons, and resolving conflicts. Associated purposes go along with intrinsic purposes; examples are maintaining the addressee's friendship, making them amenable to future persuasion, and impressing them with one's erudition. Extrinsic purposes are those for which arguments are not particularly designed, such as filibustering, intimidating, distracting, boring, or insulting. Different proposals for norms of good argument need not be competitors, since each may fit a specific use of argument. Further, it makes a difference to norms whether one takes a logical, a dialectical or a rhetorical perspective—each of which is legitimate in certain contexts. For these various reasons, there can be no single theory of fallacies.

In his postscript, Blair expresses puzzlement that the discipline of philosophy, which is supposed to be supremely self-reflective and which uses argument as its main method, has not taken on the study of argument as a central task. He describes his chapter as a "modest contribution" to a neglected topic. The chapter strikes the present reviewer as an eminently sane corrective to many misconceptions about argument, both in philosophy in general and among argumentation theorists. It deserves to be read by every scholar who takes seriously the understanding of arguments.

"Argument and its uses" (a keynote address at a 2005 conference) argues against making the goal of persuasion part of the definition of argument, as many theorists do. Arguments have other uses, such as quasi-persuasion, inquiry, deliberation, justification, collaboration, rationale-giving, edification, instruction, and evaluation. An argument, Blair proposes, should

be conceived as a reason supporting a proposition, where the “proposition” could be a belief, an emotion, an attitude, or a decision. If someone adduces as support for a proposition something that in fact offers no support to it, that person has not produced an argument, just a proposed argument. Blair defends this abstract normative conception of argument against the objection that it ignores features of arguments in use that are important for their analysis and evaluation. These features, he says, *should* be taken into account, but they have to do with the particular use of an argument in a particular situation, not with the concept of argument as such.

In his postscript Blair reports that he is inclined to accept the present reviewer’s criticism (Hitchcock 2006, p. 119) of the chapter’s requirement that the reason in an argument must be relevant. It is just as counter-intuitive, Blair writes, to hold that an argument with an irrelevant reason is no argument as it is to hold that an unjust law is no law. But reworking the chapter to accommodate the criticism is “unfinished business”. One direction that Blair could take, consistent with his view that one and the same argument might be used for very different purposes, would be to define it as an abstract structure with an inference from a reason to a “proposition”, without building in a requirement that the inference have any merit. Someone can then be identified as advancing or considering or otherwise dealing with an argument if their discourse or thinking contains such an inferential structure, whose presence can be signaled by such devices as inference indicators even in the absence of a relevance relation. Evaluation of the merits of an argument so identified would then depend on the use to which it was being put. An alternative approach, adopted for example by Lilian Bermejo-Luque (2011), is to take as primary the complex speech act of argumentation, defined as having an internal purpose, such as justification of a point of view. On this alternative approach, claim-reason complexes are abstractions from such acts, and the varied uses of which Blair writes are regarded as extrinsic uses of the speech act of argumentation, parasitic on its intrinsic purpose. However, it is not clear that all the uses of argument to which Blair points presuppose a fundamental use of justifying a point of view.

“A time for argument theory integration” (2005) proposes to dissolve several apparent disagreements among different theories of argument. It depends on one’s interests, Blair claims, whether one includes in one’s definition of an argument (in the sense of a claim-reason complex rather than an extended verbal

disagreement) intention only, intention plus communication, or neither. Similarly, it depends on one's theoretical interests whether it is appropriate to define argumentation as focused on rational agreement or truth or manifest rationality. Further, there does not need to be a choice between deductive logic and argument theory, especially since deductive logic has adapted itself to accommodate such concerns of argument theory as the defeasibility of many arguments. Again, one can argue for the primacy of either a logical or a dialectical or a rhetorical perspective, but the arguments for primacy each reflect a different perspective; in fact, all three perspectives are needed. Again, proponents of the pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion must agree with theorists in the informal logic community that the extent of this model's applicability is a question to be investigated. And logic can accommodate appeals to emotion and intuition.

In his postscript, Blair expresses some doubt about whether 'integration' is the correct term for compatibilities between apparently different theories of argument. But he reports himself as still convinced that it is useful to get clear on which theories or parts of theories are actually incompatible with each other.

"The possibility and actuality of visual arguments" (1996) argues with reference to actual cases that there are visual arguments, in the sense of the claim-reason complexes that O'Keefe calls "argument<sub>1</sub>". Such arguments are not different in kind from verbal arguments, since they too have a propositional structure. Not all communication by non-verbal visual means is argument; in particular, visuals in advertising typically influence viewers in ways other than the presentation of an argument. Visual arguments typically have greater evocative power than verbal arguments, but are one-dimensional, vague and ambiguous.

In his postscript, Blair notes that a subsequent chapter in the book amends the present chapter's treatment of visual arguments. The main revision he would make to the present chapter, he writes, is to speak about visually expressed or communicated arguments rather than visual arguments, and analogously about arguments that are purely verbally, or both verbally and visually, expressed and communicated. He leaves open the possibility that there are other ways of expressing and communicating arguments.

## 5. Logic, dialectic and rhetoric

“The limits of the dialogue model of argument” (1998) challenges a claim by Douglas Walton that all arguments occur in a context of dialogue. Blair understands arguments as claim-reason complexes, and dialogues as extended verbal exchanges between two (or more) people in which they turn responding to what the other said. Dialogues range in complexity. In simple question-answer dialogues like those in Plato’s early writings, the argument is due entirely to the questioner; the dialogue form is inessential, serving only to make it explicit that the acceptability of the argument to the answerer requires acceptance of each premise and each step of the reasoning. In somewhat more complex dialogues, like the permissive persuasive dialogues of Walton and Krabbe (1995), an interlocutor can advance a simple argument in one turn, but support for any of its components depends on a challenge from the other party and takes place in another turn. These first two types of dialogues are “fully engaged” dialogues in which what each party says at a non-initial turn is a direct response to what the other party said at the previous turn; the arguments of such fully engaged dialogues are like duets. Dialogues become more complex when a single turn can consist of one or more lines of argument for some proposition, so that the ramifications from the initial simple argument for that proposition are no longer a response to what the other party said. They become even more complex when a single turn can also include such dialectical material as refutations of alternatives to the proposition argued for and responses to objections to components of the lines of argument advanced for the proposition—in other words, the entire case for the proposition. The last two types of dialogues are not fully engaged, and the arguments in them are solo performances. Solo arguments differ from duet arguments in that the argument’s author is not responding to actual challenges, the identity and opinions of the other party may be unknown, and the norms for engaged dialogues do not apply. Norms for non-engaged or quasi-engaged dialogues will differ according to the characteristics of the supposed interlocutor; for example, the norms for a presentation on some topic in an introductory undergraduate course will differ from those for a presentation on the same topic in a scholarly journal. For the development of such norms, the study of the types of engaged dialogues that Walton and Krabbe (1995) distinguish will not be of much use.

In his postscript, Blair concedes that it is possible to model any argument as if it were taking place in a dialogue, but continues to be sceptical about the value of doing so when an argument is addressed to a non-interacting diverse audience.

“Relations among logic, dialectic and rhetoric” (2003) considers the conceptual, empirical, normative and theoretical relationships among logical, dialectical and rhetorical perspectives on argument. A logical perspective examines whether the grounds offered in support of a position make it rational to accept the position, a dialectical perspective whether objections have been suitably answered, a rhetorical perspective the argument’s communicative effectiveness. Conceptually, logical goodness and dialectical goodness overlap, but rhetorical goodness is independent of either. Their empirical relationship needs study. Which norms should take priority depends on the purpose of the communication and the perspective of the evaluator. None of the three perspectives should take theoretical priority over the other two, although differences of interest imply differences in emphasis.

In his postscript Blair expresses himself more convinced than ever that there are necessary relationships between logic and dialectic, as well as (he now writes) between rhetoric and dialectic, and he suspects that there will turn out to be necessary relationships between rhetoric and logic. He continues to think that none of the three has normative priority.

“The rhetoric of visual arguments” (2004) describes what makes visual arguments persuasive: drama, immediacy, verisimilitude, concreteness. In a broad sense, rhetoric is the art of persuasion, and persuasion in turn is causing conscious changes in attitudes or conduct that the addressee is free to resist. The means of persuasion is an argument if it has a structure of reasons being presented for making such a change, reasons that are propositions with a truth-value. Visual persuasive devices (such as cartoons, television commercials, movies, and sculptures in medieval cathedrals) can have this inferential structure. Many however are not plausibly interpreted this way, and so are not arguments. The power of visual persuasive devices lies in the involuntariness and power of the reactions that they evoke. Visual arguments in particular are powerful but one-sided; their structure is necessarily simple, and cannot include dialectical elements.

In his postscript, Blair describes as “rather thin” his treatment in this chapter of the value added by arguing visually, the reasons for doing so, and genres of visual arguments, and expresses the hope that others will enrich his “programmatically”

account. Despite this modest self-appraisal, there are valuable detailed discussions of several diverse examples of visual persuasion, both argumentative and non-argumentative, all of which strike this reviewer as accurate, sensitive and sensible.

“Pragma-Dialectics and *pragma-dialectics*” (2006) identifies Pragma-Dialectics, the theory of argumentation due to Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst (1984, 1992, 2004), as a species of *pragma-dialectical* approach to the study of argument. Generically, a *pragma-dialectical* approach is pragmatic, dialectical and normative. It is pragmatic in taking functional, interactive and contextual features of argumentation as relevant to its analysis and assessment. It is dialectical in analyzing argumentation as involving shifts: between points of view, between challenges and responses, between supporting reasons and criticisms. It is normative in taking argumentation to be a rational activity. Pragma-Dialectics in particular embraces a critical rationalist epistemology due to Karl Popper, an ideal model approach concretized in the ideal model of a critical discussion, and the conception of argumentation as a complex of speech acts. Alternative versions of Pragma-Dialectics could be produced by varying specific rules for the conduct of a critical discussion, specific analyses of various fallacies, and the taxonomy of argumentation schemes. This three-level distinction between genus, species and variety opens room to change Pragma-Dialectics, in response to objections, in ways that preserve its more important insights. Some objection can be accommodated by varying Pragma-Dialectics, others by adopting another *pragma-dialectical* approach. Approaches that focused exclusively on logical, rhetorical or linguistic features of arguments would not be *pragma-dialectical* at all.

In his postscript, Blair makes clearer than in the chapter his allegiance to a *pragma-dialectical* approach to argumentation. He thinks that Pragma-Dialectics is capable of enrichment both logically and rhetorically—in the latter case even more than with the extended version of Pragma-Dialectics that incorporates the concept of strategic maneuvering (van Eemeren 2010). Blair’s chapter provides a useful hierarchization of what is central and what is peripheral in Pragma-Dialectics, and points the way towards variants that retain the spirit of the Amsterdam approach. For example, the understanding of argumentation as involving an interaction between a proponent and a rational critic opens the way to an understanding of some forms of argument as having merely presumptive validity, in which case the burden of proof switches to the critic to rebut the

conclusion or undermine the inference. Pragma-Dialectics thus has so far untapped resources for modelling argument that falls short of demonstration.

“Investigations and the critical discussion model” (2007) argues that the specific Pragma-Dialectical theory and its ideal model of a Critical Discussion do not apply to investigations, but that a generic model of a critical discussion does apply. By an investigation Blair means an exploration by one or more investigators of whether some judgment about a proposition is justified, where the proposition may be factual, evaluative or action-guiding. He takes such explorations to be germane when there are competing considerations relevant to the proposition, and to be focused on arriving at truth or correctness. The investigators have no initial commitment on the issue under investigation. Thus the exploration has different starting-points and goals than the goal of rational resolution of a difference of opinion postulated by Pragma-Dialectics. Nevertheless the consideration of arguments for and against various hypotheses, and of objections to them, should follow the prescriptions of the model of a critical discussion (lower-case because abstracted from the specific approach of Pragma-Dialectics). Stripped of the specific goal of rational resolution of a difference of opinion and of Popperian critical rationalism as its underlying epistemology, the model of a critical discussion plausibly applies to all argumentation, where argumentation is conceived as the exchange of arguments with a view to their critical assessment.

Apparently inadvertently, Blair adds no postscript to this chapter. It is hard to imagine that proponents of Pragma-Dialectics will be led by it to concede the limited scope of their theory, which they present as a comprehensive theory applicable to the analysis and evaluation of all argumentative discourse, spoken or written, interactive or not. In contrast to the hegemonic approach of Pragma-Dialectics, Walton and Krabbe (1995) identify critical discussion as one type of dialogue, persuasion dialogue, distinct from such other types as inquiry dialogues, deliberation dialogues, negotiations, information-seeking dialogues, and quarrels. Pragma-Dialectics on the other hand treats the ideal model of critical discussion as an *a priori* optimal way of resolving differences of opinion on the merits, and regards such phenomena as Blair’s investigations and the dialogue types of Walton and Krabbe as “communicative activity types” (van Eemeren 2010, p. 145): conventionalized communicative practices whose argumentative aspects the ideal model of a critical discussion can help to analyze and evaluate.

In his (2010), van Eemeren unfortunately does not respond to Blair's challenges in this chapter and the previous one to Pragma-Dialectics and the ideal model of a Critical Discussion.

"Perelman today on justice and argumentation" (2008) examines Chaim Perelman's "new rhetoric" in the light of subsequent developments. Perelman's dictum that the strength of an argument is to be judged by the rule of justice, the formal principle that relevantly similar cases are to be treated similarly, gets material application once some degree of strength is claimed for one argument. His claim that relevance is to be determined according to the rules and criteria of the various disciplines and their methodologies (Perelman 1967, p. 83) turns out on examination to be as similar as it seems to Toulmin's position (Toulmin 1958, 2003) that the backing for the warrants that license inferences depends on the field to which the argument belongs. Despite the name chosen for his approach, Perelman regards argumentation as both rhetorical and dialectical: arguers should adapt their arguments to their audience and should respond to the audience's expressed views related to the arguer's position. Perelman's idea that the justification given by argumentation is a justification of behaviour (e.g. one's adherence to or endorsement of a proposition) anticipates similar recent claims by Robert C. Pinto and Robert Brandom. But, contrary to Perelman's claim, this feature does not distinguish argumentation from proof, since proofs too justify a claim, i.e. behaviour. Nor do three other features proposed by Perelman as distinguishing argumentation from proof: the possibility of reasonable disagreement, a subjective character, a conclusion without a truth-value. What distinguishes Perelman's paradigm proofs from arguments is their non-defeasibility: unlike an argument, a proof cannot be supplemented with information that points to the contradictory of its conclusion. If defeasibility is the mark of the argumentation about which Perelman wrote, then argumentation has a broader scope than he envisaged.

This chapter being recent, Blair has no further comment on it in his postscript to part IV. His remarks about the difference between proof and argument need two modifications. First, the non-defeasibility of an inference should be defined as its continued validity when the premises are supplemented with new information *consistent* with them, for even in non-defeasible arguments addition of information inconsistent with the premises can point to the contradictory of the conclusion. Second, there is more to being a proof than having a non-



defeasible inference. Even callers to radio or television talk shows sometimes use non-defeasible *modus ponendo ponens* or *modus tollendo tollens* reasoning, and we would not be inclined to call their reasoning a proof. What distinguishes a proof from other arguments, aside from its non-defeasible inferences, is that its premises and rules of inference either are axioms and rules taken to be self-evident (or definitive of an abstract reality, such as Euclidean space) or are derived ultimately by non-defeasible reasoning from such axioms and rules.

“Rhetoric and argumentation” (2011) finds inadequacies in four current positions on the relation between rhetoric and argument. The class-inclusion position of Perelman, Meyer and Reboul, according to which all argument is rhetorical but rhetoric deals with non-arguments as well, unreasonably restricts logic, whose scope it takes to be disjoint with the scope of rhetoric, to formal deductive logic. The class-overlap position of Christian Kock, according to which rhetoric has a broader scope than arguments but deals only with arguments about choice and conduct, relies on a disputed non-cognitivism about values and unreasonably excludes from the scope of rhetoric arguments about disputable matters of belief. The cosmetic view of Johnson and of van Eemeren and Grootendorst, according to which rhetoric’s focus on effective persuasion can conflict with norms of logical and dialectical reasonableness, relies on a popular narrow understanding of rhetoric that distorts its historical record. The perspectival position of Wenzel and Tindale, according to which any argument can be conceived from either a rhetorical or a logical or a dialectical perspective, in construing the rhetorical perspective as concerned with rational persuasion rather than mere persuasion, makes logic and dialectic tools of rhetoric. All but the cosmetic position, however, are consistent with Michael Leff’s characterization of the rhetorical tradition as including both instrumental and non-instrumental norms of good argument (Leff 2000).

In his postscript, Blair notes that one’s position on the relation between rhetoric and argumentation depends on how one conceives each of them. He finds the concluding section of his chapter its weakest point, and acknowledges that he has not worked out a position on the relation between rhetoric and argumentation that satisfies him. Readers are thus invited to explore the relationship for themselves. As to rhetoric, one needs to distinguish the popular use of the term ‘rhetoric’ for the flourishes of presentation that can influence hearers and viewers independently of the merits of a message (as when one dismisses an impassioned speech as “mere rhetoric”) from the

use of ‘rhetoric’ to name the art of creating persuasive messages, and its underlying theory, as they have developed in the western tradition. Understood in the latter sense, rhetoric includes in its scope all arguments that are designed to influence the thinking of an audience—that is to say, virtually all arguments. Scientific and scholarly disciplines, for example, have their own rhetoric: the conventions governing the way in which issues are to be framed, the current state of discussion is to be registered, sources are to be cited, the parts of an article are to be organized, authors are to refer to themselves, and so forth. But not all persuasive messages are arguments, so argument is not the whole of the scope of rhetoric. Rhetoric can take into account in its theorizing logical and epistemological considerations about the strength of support that adduced reasons give to a position, as well as dialectical considerations about the adequacy of responses to alternative positions, to their supporting arguments, to objections, and to criticisms. For rhetoric as an art is not obliged to treat persuasion as a single goal unconstrained by norms about the means; further, effective persuasion may depend on cogent reasoning, or at least the appearance of it. But it is not the business of rhetoric to craft epistemological, logical and dialectical norms. The study of such norms is the business of epistemology and logic, construed broadly. Thus the class inclusion view is largely true, but it makes rhetoric applicable to proofs as much as to less compelling kinds of argument. It does not follow, however, that arguments are to be judged only by rhetorical norms. Logical (including epistemological) and dialectical norms are relevant too, depending on the purpose for which an argument is being used or the perspective from which it is being appraised. Thus the perspectival view of the relation between rhetoric and argument is correct; the rhetorical perspective on argument is one perspective among others, all of which have their own legitimacy and sphere of application. We can thus accept both the class inclusion view and the perspectival view.

## 6. Conclusion

Looking back over these chapters after summarizing and commenting on them, one is struck by the comprehensiveness of Tony Blair’s engagement with contemporary scholarship on arguments and argumentation. More than any other scholar in this interdisciplinary field, he has taken the trouble to read and

reflect on what thinkers of various stripes have to say: rhetoricians and linguists as well as philosophers, writers in French and German as well as writers in English, proponents of rhetorical and dialectical approaches as well as proponents of logical approaches. Along with this catholicity of coverage goes a catholicity of outlook, one that tries to appreciate and appropriate what is of value in each contribution, while at the same time registering the limitations of an approach that falsely claims comprehensiveness. The result is no mere pastiche. It is a coherent position. Arguments have at their core a ‘this, therefore that’ structure; they are reasoning from some basis to a conclusion. The conclusion is an attitude towards a proposition, where a proposition can be factual or evaluative or action-guiding. Such conclusions can follow necessarily or with quantifiable probability or presumptively from the support given for them. People use arguments for many purposes and in diverse contexts with diverse practical consequences of their acceptance. Norms for constructing, evaluating and criticizing arguments vary according to those differences. In particular, a rhetorical focus on what is persuasive for an intended audience is often appropriate, as is a dialectical concern with arguments for alternative positions and with objections and criticisms. Logic, rhetoric and dialectic each have their place in the construction and assessment of arguments.

This reviewer for one finds nothing to disagree with in this position.

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