5 Rhetoric and Argumentation

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5.1 Introduction
How is the relationship between rhetoric, on the one hand, and argument and argumentation, on the other, properly understood? That is the question this chapter sets out to answer. Given the historical connections between rhetoric, argument and argumentation, it is fundamental for any understanding of rhetoric.

Why bother with this question? One reason that will become clear is that there are several different, and on the face of it incompatible, conceptions of this relationship in the more or less current literature, so it doesn’t seem that they can all be right. Another reason, as will also become clear, is that how we understand rhetoric and how we understand argument and argumentation depend partly on how we understand their relationship, and conversely.

The concepts of rhetoric and of argument have undergone many changes since their articulation by the ancient Greeks. Rhetoric, said to have originated as the art of successful pleading in the courts of Syracuse (5th c. BCE), was extended by the time of Rhetoric to Alexander (see Braet 1996, 2004) and Aristotle’s Rhetoric (4th c. BCE) to include the art of public persuasion in court, persuasion in political forums and on occasions of public celebration. Cicero (1st c. BCE) introduces the “offices” of the orator: docere (to teach, inform or instruct), delectare (to please) and movere, flectere (to move or “bend”). Following its Ramist (16th c.) relegation for a few centuries to the art of style and embellishment, in rhetoric’s resurgence in the 20th century it was enlarged to, in Burke’s (Burke 1969, p. 43) famous characterization, “the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols,” and beyond that, to the art of symbolic communication, not just persuasion (e.g., Foss, Foss and Trapp 1985, p. 11), and finally expanded to cover the symbolic construction of cultural meaning: “rhetoric usually is seen now as incorporating virtually any humanly created symbols from which audiences derive meaning” (Foss, Foss and Griffin 1999, p. 6). It is possible to see in these changes a progression from the more particular to
the more general, with the term ‘rhetoric’ being promoted each time to designate the more general conception. But as Burke (Burke 1969, Section II) has shown, there have traditionally been several strands in the concept of rhetoric, some of which are emphasized more than others in different conceptions.

The concept of argument or illation too has expanded from its early understanding. Aristotle identified argument with two species of relations of probative support, which we might loosely call “deduction” and “induction” (each having a scientific or theoretical variant, and also a public or popular variant). Today theorists would both introduce a narrower concept of deduction than Aristotle’s (restricted to necessary implication), and also expand the varieties of induction beyond generalizing from examples, to include, for instance, sample-to-population generalizations and statistical correlations. Moreover, many would add such further species of argument as conduction (Campbell 1776, Wellman 1971, Govier 1999, Hansen 2008), abduction (Peirce 1940, Walton 2002, Woods 2008), and more generally presumptive or plausible arguments (Rescher 1976, Walton 1996), and perhaps most generally of all, defeasible arguments (Pollock 2008).

Argumentation, if understood as the social practice entailing at its heart the delivery and exchanges of arguments (but including much else), has seen its spheres expand and contract. For Aristotle, besides its role in rhetoric, it could occur as a student game called dialectic, and more seriously as a method of building and testing philosophical theory. It was also for Aristotle a tool to be used in speeches addressing various kinds of wider audience. In contemporary theory, some restrict its purview to the resolution of disagreements (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004), whereas others regard it as a way of maintaining dissent (Willard 1987), as an instrument for negotiating in public spheres (Goodnight 1982), as a method of investigation (Meiland 1981), and/or as a method of decision-making (Rieke and Sillars 2001, Hollihan and Baaske 1994).

This chapter proceeds by classifying some of the current views about the rhetoric–argument or argumentation relationship, followed by a critical discussion of them, and ending with comments about which might be preferable. There are, to be sure, many more views on these topics than those canvassed here, and that implies a restriction in the scope of this chapter.

5.2 A survey of some current rhetoric-argument conceptions
I have found four different ways of conceiving the relation between rhetoric and argument. In this section I describe these in turn.
According to one, the class of arguments is a member of the class of rhetorical entities or processes. All arguments are rhetorical. Argumentation is inherently rhetorical.

However, rhetoric is not restricted to argumentation or arguments. "[W]e affirm," writes Perelman, an advocate of this view, "that every discourse which does not claim an impersonal validity belongs to rhetoric. As soon as a communication tries to influence one or more persons, to orient their thinking, to excite or calm their emotions, to guide their action, it belongs to the realm of rhetoric" (Perelman 1982, p. 162). Unless “argument” is defined to be identical with such discourse, the domain of rhetoric must include other things as well as arguments. The color a room is painted, the background music in a shop, the furnishings and lighting of a restaurant — these and countless more examples are clearly rhetorical by Perelman’s definition, but they are not arguments unless that term is so stretched that it becomes too flabby to be useful.

According to some versions of this first conception of the rhetoric-argument relation, logical (that is, deductive) or mathematical or scientific demonstrations, which might look like arguments or argumentation, are excluded on the ground that they claim pure rationality and complete independence from the emotions of the audience or the character of the arguer; they claim objectivity; they claim to hold universally without reference to audience, occasion, situation or historical circumstances. Argumentation, in contrast, occurs over matters on which reasonable people may differ, with particular arguers addressing particular audiences, none of which is true of demonstrations. Thus, on Perelman’s conception, argumentation is by definition rhetorical, and what might look like an argument insofar as there are grounds adduced in support of a claim, if it qualifies as a demonstration, does not count as an argument.

Besides Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958), Meyer (2008) takes this view and Reboul’s (1991) position is similar. Meyer defines rhetoric as “the negotiation of the distance between individuals in relation to a given question” (Meyer 2008, p. 21). I am reminded of once when I was driving in Italy and at a roundabout I inadvertently started to infringe on another driver’s right of way. He responded with an angry blast of his horn. I stopped immediately,

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1 “Le rhétorique est la négotiation de la distance entre des individus à propos d’une question donnée.”
made an apologetic face and held up my hands in surrender. He responded by smiling magnanimously and signaling me to go ahead of him. We had negotiated the distance between my mistake and his indignation – I, by obsequious apology; he, by magnanimous forgiveness. It was a thoroughly rhetorical exchange, by Meyer’s definition, but there was no argument in sight. Yet Meyer affirms that “argumentation traditionally makes up part of the discipline of rhetoric” (Meyer 2008, p. 85). So Meyer belongs among those who regard argument or argumentation as one vehicle of rhetoric, among others.

Reboul has a narrower definition of rhetoric, namely, the art of persuading by speech (Reboul 1991, p. 4). Still for him argument is not identified with rhetoric, but included as part of it. He insists on a fundamental distinction between two means of persuasive discourse, the rational and the affective (ibid. p. 7). The means belonging to reason are arguments; those belonging to affect are ethos and pathos (ibid.). To be sure, these are typically combined and not always easy to distinguish (ibid.). For Reboul the point seems to be not so much that rhetoric includes other kinds of activity besides giving arguments, but that the bare bones of rational argument often needs to be, or in any case is, accompanied by various affective aspects and devices. I will call this first view of the rhetoric-argument relation the class-inclusion view.

(2) A second way of conceiving the rhetoric–argument relationship sees the class of arguments overlapping with the class of rhetorical entities or processes, so while some arguments are rhetorical, others are not, and while part of the domain of rhetoric relates to arguments, part has to do with entities or processes other than arguments. According to proponents of this conception, what makes an argument a rhetorical argument is a matter of its domain – the subject matter it is concerned with. In particular, rhetorical arguments on this view are arguments about choices and actions, either directly, or else indirectly by focusing on the values or norms that govern choices and actions. There can be arguments with other subject matters, such as theoretical matters in general, or more particularly philosophy or science, but they are not rhetorical arguments, for their conclusions are about what is true or reasonable to believe, not about what should be done. To be sure, although these ar-

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2 “L’argumentation fait traditionnellement partie de la rhétorique comme discipline.”

3 “Voici donc la définition que nous proposons: la rhétorique est l’art de persuader par le discours.”
Arguments are not rhetorical, some of the properties that can belong to arguments in the rhetorical domain, such as the intention to persuade, may be found in some of them.

Advocates of this second conception include Hauser (2002) and Kock (2007, 2008). Hauser’s definition of rhetoric is strongly Burkean: “Rhetoric, as an area of study, is concerned with how humans use symbols, especially language, to reach agreement that permits coordinated effort of some sort”; or again, “Rhetoric … is concerned with the use of symbols to induce social action” (Hauser 2002, pp. 2-3). For Hauser, rhetoric is a mode of arguing (ibid. p. 33). Rhetorical arguing is based on opinion, where the objective is persuasion, in the realm of the contingent, aiming at probable solutions (ibid. p. 34). Rhetorical argument is to be contrasted with dialectical argument, which is also a mode of arguing, but a different one from rhetorical arguing. Where rhetorical arguing aims at securing agreement of opinion, dialectical arguing aims at securing a transcendent truth (ibid. p. 33). Dialectical arguing occurs among experts discussing their subjects in technical fashion, typically belonging to a specific discipline or domain of knowledge (ibid. pp. 33-34). The objective of dialectical arguing is criticism, working out the necessary conclusions that follow from initial opinions, with results that “can reach the point of virtual certainty” if no counterarguments can be found to refute the conclusion (ibid. p. 34).

Kock (2008) cites favorably George Campbell’s description of rhetoric as being “about that art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end.” With “the ends of speaking … reducible to four; every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will” (Campbell 1776, 1969). Kock agrees with Campbell that some of what Campbell would call discourse, such as poetry, “so far as it aims to ‘please the imagination’, would not belong to the subject matter of argumentation theory” (Kock, 2008). Kock concludes:

Clearly, then, argumentation theory does not cover the entire discipline that rhetoricians cultivate; argumentation and rhetoric intersect, but are not coextensive. Not all rhetoric is about argumentation; [and] … not all argumentation is rhetorical. (ibid.)

Kock (2008) argues that Aristotle also defines rhetoric in terms of the domain of choice and conduct, and Aristotle does seem to allow that there can
also be non-rhetorical arguments (namely dialectical ones), so there is a case that Aristotle belongs to this group as well. I call this second conception of the relation between rhetoric and argument the *class-overlap* view.

The class-overlap view might look almost like the class-inclusion view, just lacking its definitional fiat against demonstrations counting as arguments. If that were the only difference there would be not two but one conception, with two terminological variants. But proponents of the class-inclusion view don’t see arguments and argumentation — all rhetorical — as restricted to the domain of choice and conduct. Reboul, for instance, insists that while argument can be aimed at getting someone to do something, if it is to be rhetorical argument it must do so by getting that person to believe that it is the right thing to do: “Argumentation always aims at causing belief” (Reboul 1991, p. 5). And in the *Traité de l’Argumentation*, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) and Perelman (1982) pretty clearly envisage arguments and argumentation to be about what it is reasonable to believe no less than about what to do. However, for proponents of the class-overlap view even the arguments that are not context-free, definitive demonstrations but are about what is reasonable to believe still do not belong within the realm of rhetoric. For Aristotle, and following him closely, Hauser, dialectic is such a domain and is to be distinguished from rhetoric. So the class-inclusion and class-overlap conceptions, at least as held by these theorists, are distinct.

(3) The third conception of the relation between rhetoric and argument or argumentation seems to understand these concepts in a different way from the first two. According to the class-inclusion conception, arguments and argumentation have features that identify them as rhetorical. According to the class-overlap conception, argument and argumentation can be identified independently of any rhetorical properties, and while some possess rhetorical properties, others do not. According to the third conception, arguments and argumentation are amalgams of three different kinds of properties. They typically have rhetorical properties, dialectical properties and logical properties. These three kinds of properties correlate with three perspectives from which to consider arguments and argumentation. Arguments can be considered as entities or products, in which case their logical properties are salient; or they can be considered from a procedural perspective, in which case their dialec-

— "[L’argumentation] vis toujours à faire croire."
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tical properties are salient; or they can be considered as processes occurring in time and embedded in historical contexts, in which case their rhetorical properties are salient. To look at just their logical, or just their dialectical, or just their rhetorical features is to abstract from argument and argumentation, to focus on one perspective to the exclusion of the others, and thus to misunderstand the essentially complex nature of arguments and argumentation.


Each places the emphasis slightly differently. Although Wenzel himself is a rhetorician and communication theorist, he regards none of the three perspectives as privileged; each has its legitimate uses and provides its distinctive illumination. Wenzel’s conception of rhetoric is quite traditional: “the practical purpose of rhetoric is helping speakers marshal all the available means of persuasion to help people in social groups make wise decisions” (Wenzel 1990, p. 14), for “rhetoric is applied in decision-making situations where people have to make a choice between alternatives and where there may be good reasons on both sides” (ibid. p. 13). His conception of rhetoric seems to line up with that of Kock and Hauser. But he does not, as they do, identify a particular type of argument as rhetorical. “Human judgment,” Wenzel writes, “depends upon argumentation, and argumentation depends equally upon the resources of rhetoric, dialectic and logic” (ibid. pp. 25-26).

Tindale, an informal logician initially, has come to see the rhetorical perspective as deserving priority. Rhetoric, for Tindale, “concentrates on the communication process inherent in argumentation, on the means by which arguers make their cases for the adherence of audiences to the claims advanced” (Tindale 1999, pp. 3-4). Quoting Richard Andrews, Tindale understands rhetoric as, “the arts [sic] of discourse’ with all the associations of discourse embedded in social contexts” (Andrews 1995, p. 30, as quoted in Tindale 1999, p. 14). Discussing the effect of rhetorical figures such as analogy, praeteritio and prolepsis, Tindale writes, “It is [the] … rhetorical nature [of arguments drawn from figures] that makes them most effective, not just in persuading an audience, but engaging them at a quite deep, often emotional level, before reason moves in as an organizing force. They relate” he continues, “to a level of engagement that grounds the argumentative situation, and thus” – and this is the point of difference with Wenzel – “they further demonstrate why the rhetorical is the primary, most influential layer in any
model of argument that seeks to integrate the logical, dialectical, and rhetorical” (Tindale 2004, p. 86).

However, both Tindale and Wenzel regard an argument’s or argumentation’s rhetorical properties as just one set of properties that coexist with the other two. And both think that any argument put to use in argumentation, and the argumentation itself, will have rhetorical properties. So the perspектив conception of the rhetoric-argument connection shifts the focus from rhetorical vs. non-rhetorical argument to argument as rhetorical or dialectical or logical.

I turn now to the fourth conception of how rhetoric and argumentation relate. According to it, the rhetorical properties of arguments and argumentation consist of the framing, selecting or formulating arguments or argumentation that can make logically and dialectically good arguments more appealing and persuasive, although it can also be mis-used to cover the blemishes of logically or dialectically defective arguments. Thus this fourth conception of how rhetoric is related to argument might be called the cosmetic conception. Rhetoric is enhancement. This view is Platonic in spirit, and also somewhat reminiscent of the 16th century Ramist position that rhetoric is style and presentation that is also expressed by writers such as Blair (1783) in the 18th century belles-lettres tradition.

I regard Johnson (2000) and Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2000, 2002, 2007 among many others) as contemporary proponents of this view. Johnson thinks a speaker or writer can have different and often incompatible goals. The arguer aims at rational persuasion, the goal of which is to justify truth-claims and in which the logical and dialectical strengths and weakness of the argumentation are made manifest. The rhetor, in contrast, aims simply to persuade the audience of the claim being argued for, where the truth of the premises from which the argument starts and the truth of the conclusion it seeks to establish are not essential and persuasion may consist simply of getting the audience to accept the claim. To be sure, one can try to combine the objectives of arguer and rhetor, but for any arguer, rhetorical dressing should always function as auxiliary to the goal of logical and dialectical manifest rationality.

For Johnson, rhetoric’s aim is persuasion and its norm is effectiveness, so arguments used for rhetorical purposes will be designed for success, even if that means glossing over their weaknesses. “The arguer,” Johnson writes,
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“cannot ignore objections to his argument, even if it is not known how to forestall them … The rhetor is under no such constraint: If ignoring the objection will lead to a more effective communication, and if doing so is rational, then the objection can be ignored” (Johnson 2000, p. 163). Argument is thus contrasted with rhetoric; both are potentially rational activities, but argument must be open and transparent, whereas rhetoric can sugar coat or skip over awkward difficulties that argument is required to raise and confront. Johnson thus sees rhetoric as in principle distinct from argument.

For Van Eemeren and Houtlosser, the rhetorical aim is to win; and in the use of arguments to resolve a difference of opinion it is to use arguments to resolve the disagreement in one’s own favor:

People engaged in argumentative discourse are characteristically oriented toward resolving a difference of opinion … – maintaining certain standards of reasonableness … . This does, of course, not mean that they are not interested in resolving the difference in their own favor. Their argumentative speech acts may even be assumed to be designed to achieve primarily this effect. There is, in other words, not only a dialectical, but also a rhetorical dimension to argumentative discourse. (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2000, p. 295)

While the arguers can be presumed to maintain … critical standards, they can at the same time be presumed to be out for an optimal persuasive result. In their efforts to achieve this result, they will resort to what we have called strategic maneuvering, directed at diminishing the potential tension between the simultaneous pursuit of critical and persuasive aims. (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002, p. 290)

On their view, “Rhetoric is the theoretical study of practical persuasion techniques” (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2000, p. 297). Since, in their view, argumentation is a dialectical activity, which means that it lies under the constraint of rationality, and since the whole point of argumentation is to use reasons to resolve a difference in a reasonable way or on the merits, it follows that the result can be a conflict between the rhetorical objective of winning and the dialectical constraint of being reasonable. Rhetoric’s influence on arguments makes them subject to derailment. “If a party allows its commitment to a critical exchange of argumentative moves to be overruled by the aim of persuading the opponent,” they write, “we say that the strategic maneuvering has got ‘derailed’” (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002, p. 290):
The rhetorical aspect of argumentation manifests itself in our view in the strategic attempts to direct the resolution process effectively toward the acceptance of one’s own position. As the word goes, effective persuasion must be disciplined by dialectical rationality. (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2000, p. 297)

It is dialectic that keeps the rhetorical components of the discussion on the tracks.

Although Johnson’s and Van Eemeren and Houtlosser’s theories differ in many respects, they both treat rhetorical objectives as in potential conflict with fully manifest rationality. Rhetoric consists of strategies to win or persuade, and while it can thus enhance the attractiveness of a dialectically or logically reasonable argument, there is always the risk that it will mask dialectical or logical subterfuge. So on both views, rhetoric has the properties of a cosmetic designed to make merits more appealing but subject to being used to conceal flaws.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 The class-inclusion position

My reservation about the class-inclusion conception is its acceptance of the positivist identification of logic with formal deductive logic. This conception of logic is open to challenge.

On Perelman’s view, logic is restricted to formal deductive systems. Deductively valid arguments in natural language are relegated to the status of “quasi-logical” arguments. Presumably that would also be the fate of materially valid deductive arguments in natural languages. (Example: Question: “Did Fred have any siblings?” Answer: “Didn’t you know that he was Julia’s uncle?”) It would thus exclude from logic proper what Ryle (1936) termed “informal logic,” by which he meant the entailment relations among concepts that map their structure, for example that the concept of fear entails the apprehension of danger. It also relegates to extra-logical or quasi-logical standing the “logic” of presumptive inferences, and in general of defeasible reasoning and arguments. To be sure, one can use terms any way one likes as long as one is consistent, but restricting the scope of logic to formal deductive logic banishes to a conceptual limbo various kinds of reasoning and arguments that don’t clearly have a home anywhere else than under the rubric of logic. And if the term ‘logic’ is to denote the norms of good reasoning or
good inferring as such reasoning and inferring are exhibited in or invited by arguments used in argumentation, it certainly must include other norms besides deductive validity, let alone formal validity.

If the term ‘logic’ is given the wider denotation I suggest it ought to have, then it becomes permissible to speak of the logic of arguments in argumentation without relying on the qualifier ‘quasi,’ and to see logic as a tool of rhetoric. Since logically good arguments in fact tend to be effective arguments (see O’Keefe 2003), the class-inclusion conception of the rhetoric-argument relation, at least as it is defended by the kinds of arguments Perelman makes, seems to restrict unduly the nature of rhetorical argument.

5.3.2 The class-overlap position
The class-overlap conception of the rhetoric-argument relationship regards arguments about what is true or reasonable to believe as lying outside the domain of rhetoric. Rhetoric is to be restricted to arguments about what to choose or do. According to Kock, this is because rhetoric deals with what cannot be settled definitively, about issues on which people may reasonably disagree because these issues are decided on the basis of people’s values, priorities and weightings, all of which are subjective. Presumably, then, the tools of rhetoric are the only reasonable resource to use to move people to choose or act in a certain way; objective arguments cannot settle disagreements here. For example, there is no way to establish by impersonal argument that everyone should rank liberty more highly than security – that it is true that liberty is preferable to security – should the two conflict, whereas rhetorical arguments stand a chance of getting a person who is willing to sacrifice some liberty in exchange for greater security to shift his perspective.

Kock’s reason for confining rhetoric to arguments about choices is a meta-ethical position known as non-cognitivism. According to non-cognitivism, sentences expressing normative judgements of values, prescriptions, and so on have no truth conditions and are not susceptible to knowledge. In taking this position, Kock joins a respectable tradition in philosophy, but it is one that is far from universally shared. The modern debate between cognitivism and non-cognitivism arose in earnest in the 1930s, with people like Ayer (1936) and Stevenson (1944, 1963) raising the non-cognitivist banner, but the issue remains undecided in the philosophical literature to this day (see van Roojen 2008). So accepting Kock’s rationale requires at least relying on a promissory note that non-cognitivism will win out over the cognitivism.
Even if Kock is right that prescriptions cannot have truth conditions, it does not follow that they cannot be objectively evaluated on other grounds; for instance, as being practical or impractical, wise or foolish, short-sighted or far-sighted, and so on. And a good many such judgements are liable to a very high degree of inter-rater reliability. I do not mean to suggest that these properties take arguments about choices out of the realm of rhetoric. On the contrary, my view is that arguments that can have a degree of objectivity should not therefore be excluded from rhetoric. A good deal of what we argue about even when the ideal is to establish the truth of the matter cannot be settled beyond doubt or controversy. For example, predictions constitute a huge class of such arguments. Think of predictions about the weather, or the economy, or the adult traits a child will develop, or the success of a student, or the effects of human actions upon the environment, and so on and on. These are judgements about what we hope to be true and think to be reasonable to believe. Arguments for and against various alternative cognitive positions are thus in many cases no less subject to dispute than are those about prescriptions or commendations. So if disputability is the password of rhetorical arguments, then all of such disputatious topics in which any position is a candidate for knowledge, or reasonable belief will be topics for rhetorical arguments and argumentation no less than decisions or choices.1

I conclude from these considerations that the class-overlap view of the relation between rhetoric and argument, at least as defended using the arguments that Kock offers, unduly limits the realm of rhetorical arguments and argumentation. But if matters of belief no less than matters of action can be topics of rhetorical argumentation, then the class-overlap view seems to become the class-inclusion view.

5.3.3 The cosmetic position
According to the cosmetic position, rhetoric’s inherent objective is persuasion, its overriding norm is effectiveness, and its design and deployment of arguments, although capable of increasing their success and in principle compatible with logic and dialectic, is also liable to conflict with rationality or reasonableness. There is reason to think that this view saddles rhetoric with

1 I won’t mention another argument that is too controversial to take up here, namely that philosophical claims – those that Kock contends are about truth – are all conceptual – that is, all about how we should conceive of the world – and as such, are all normative.
the reputation cast upon it by those who abuse it, and that seems to subject rhetoric to a double standard. After all, a clever logician or dialectician can use equivocation, vagueness, flawed analogy, improper appeal to authority and other fallacies to trick his audience, but logic and dialectic have managed for the most part to avoid being tarred with the brush of fallacy mongering. It seems unfair that the possibility of rhetorical trickery should be due to the essence of rhetoric any more than logic or dialectic should be deemed guilty by association with those who trade in logical or dialectical fallacies. Braet (1996, 2004) has contended persuasively that from the earliest surviving handbooks rhetoric has included the use of legitimate argument schemes as central to its persuasive devices. In addition, the Roman tradition of forensic rhetoric advised finding and using arguments that would result in rational persuasion. At least part of the aim of rhetoric, traditionally, has been to make rational arguments effective, not to make arguments effective at the expense of rationality.

So it seems that the cosmetic conception of the rhetoric-argument relation relies on an understanding of rhetoric that takes more from its popular reputation than from its historical record, viewing rhetoric as requiring the discipline of logic or of dialectic.

5.3.4 The perspectival position
I have left discussion of this position to the end because it seems to avoid the shortcomings of the other three. It leaves open the possibility of arguments that count as logical even if they are not formal demonstrations. It also puts no restriction on the domain of rhetorical argument. And it does not seem to require identifying rhetorical argumentation with the goal of mere persuasion. Yet a question can be raised about it just the same.

Here is the problem. If, from the perspective of rhetoric, the aim of the use of arguments and argumentation were rational persuasion, then, since logic is the custodian of some of the norms of rational arguments, the rhetorical perspective must include the logical perspective. Furthermore, since dialectic is the custodian of the norms of reasonable argumentation, then the rhetorical perspective must include the dialectical perspective. In sum, if rhetoric’s use of arguments is to persuade rationally or reasonably, then logic and dialectic must be tools of rhetoric. But if the rhetorical perspective is conceptually distinct and separate from the logical and the dialectical – which is what the perspectival position requires – then the norms of rhetoric would seem to be independent of those of logic and dialectic. And if that is so, then
it will be possible for an argument to be good rhetorically but weak logically and/or dialectically. Thus the door is opened to the position that rhetoric’s telos is after all mere persuasion. In other words, it appears that the perspectival position implies the cosmetic position.

5.4 The upshot
If these last speculations are correct, then we seem to be faced with the following dilemma. Either rhetoric as it relates to arguments and argumentation is to have rational persuasion as its goal, in which case the rhetorical commitment to reasonableness means that the norms of rhetoric imply those of logic as applied to arguments and of dialectic as applied to argumentation. Or else, rhetoric represents one analytic and normative perspective on arguments and argumentation independent of those of logic and dialectic, in which case there is no commitment to logical or dialectical norms from the perspective of rhetoric, and the rhetorical reasonableness of arguments and argumentation becomes purely instrumental – whatever works.

It could be that we can talk and think either way. That is, theorists might be free to adopt whichever conception of how rhetoric relates to arguments they prefer. However, there are risks in overlooking the insights of tradition. The class-inclusion and class-overlap views build in no commitment on this matter and so offer us no guidance. The cosmetic view of the relation between rhetoric and argument seems to over-emphasize in its conception of rhetoric the goal of winning over or persuading the audience or interlocutor. Whether the perspectival view shares this defect depends on what conception of the rhetorical perspective one builds into it.

In appealing to the tradition of rhetoric, I am guided by the arguments of Michael Leff in a paper discussing the relation between rhetoric and dialectic, arguments which have a bearing on the rhetoric–argument relationship. Leff draws attention to the fact that historically there was a difference even for Aristotle “between using the art [of rhetoric] properly and achieving a specific outcome” (Leff 2000, p. 244). Leff continues:

Rhetoricians in the Latin tradition make much the same point when they differentiate the end and the duty of the orator. The end is to persuade through speech; the duty is to speak in a manner suited for persuasion. (ibid. p. 245)

The point is that rhetoric is subject to normative standards of its own.
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In the tradition that stretches from Isocrates to Cicero and from there to the Renaissance humanists, content and style, words and thoughts, the aesthetic and the rational are regarded as interconnected parts of eloquence. Rhetorical argument is not simply decoration added to logic. It is a fully embodied expression of reason that is at once accommodated to and also capable of intervening in public situations. Rhetoric, then, imbricates style and argument to achieve evocative and emotional force, and while rhetorical argumentation often uses dialectical principles, it does not add a linguistic veneer to them so much as it transforms them into instruments for public action. (ibid. p. 246)

If this understanding of rhetoric is correct, then the relation between rhetoric and argument and argumentation is more complex than what has been suggested by the views canvassed above, although three of the four are consistent with it.

The class-inclusion conception, at least with a broadened notion of logic, leaves room for independent and non-instrumental rhetorical norms to apply to arguments as well as to other forms of discourse. The class-overlap conception, if extended to envisage arguments about contentious matters of belief as well as prescriptions, is also consistent with independent rhetorical norms. The perspectivalist too is at liberty to understand the rhetorical perspective as bringing to bear on argument and argumentation standards of suitableness to audience and occasion that go beyond, and thus can override, the goal of winning over the audience.

It is only the cosmetic conception that shortchanges the rhetorical tradition, on Leff’s expansive reading of it. For the cosmetic conception of the rhetoric-argument relationship relies on a narrow, merely instrumentalist conception of rhetoric. While it is no doubt a virtue of the cosmetic conception that it emphasizes that the goal of winning the argument or persuading by argument can conflict with dialectical or logical norms, it is also a shortcoming of this view that it leaves out of account in its conception of argument and argumentation the broader rhetorical norms that the rhetorical tradition cited by Leff assigns to them. This broader role allows rhetorical insights about how new possibilities for thought and action can be brought to public consciousness to shape our arguments and our argumentation, while continuing to respect people’s capacity for reasoned and reasonable belief and conduct.6

6 My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for many corrections and helpful comments.
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