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More on arguers and their dialectical obligations

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Title: More on Arguers and Dialectical Obligations

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I. Introduction

The issue that I am concerned with here might be called dialectical adequacy, as distinguished from premise adequacy and inferential adequacy, both of which have been much discussed in the theory of argument. Informal logicians have, at least some of us believe the outlines of a reasonably good doctrine regarding adequacy for what I call following Blair (1995) "the illative core." Viz., the premises must be relevant, sufficient, and acceptable. However, as Hitchcock has pointed out in his review of my *The Rise of Informal Logic*, there are significant problems that the RSA account must face.¹ Moreover, the truth-problem still confronts us: i.e., whether truth is a criterion that should be applied to the premises of the argument. (See Allen (1998) and Johnson (1998) for a discussion of this issue.)

Thinking about dialectical adequacy concerns how well the argument deals with objections and alternative positions and is in much less developed state. In her 1997 OSSA paper, Trudy Govier focused on my thesis that arguers have dialectical obligations to be discharged in what I have called the dialectical tier.² Subsequently in a 1998 paper, she further examines this thesis to see whether it is viable. She concludes:

Thus, even though I have made assumptions about alternatives and objections which are generous and lenient towards the conception of the Dialectical Tier, I have not been able to find a satisfactory interpretation of dialectical adequacy. Curiously, what seemed *prima facie* to be a sensible and promising stipulation about argumentation has led to considerable philosophical difficulties and eventually to an unacceptable regress. (13)

In this paper, I intend to discharge my dialectical obligations by responding to her objections and attempting to shore up the thesis. In the next section I state the thesis and offer the justification for it. In Section III, I review Govier's objections. In Section IV, I offer my response. In Section V, I close by reviewing the issues that have arisen on the course of the discussion and directions for future work.

II. Statement and Justification

My thesis is that the arguer has a dialectical obligation to respond to what might be called the "dialectical stuff" that surrounds his argument. I will be more specific about this "stuff" shortly.

To justify this claim, we need to look at The Big Picture.

We need to understand that arguments are products situated within the practice of argumentation. This valuable practice serves many purposes. Argumentation may be used to persuade, to reinforce belief, to inquire, to castigate, and so on. Pre-eminent, in my view, is the function of rational persuasion. The arguer seeks to persuade someone of the truth (or some other desirable property) of the thesis by reasoning, i.e., by producing a set of reasons whose function is to lead the other to accept that thesis on rational grounds. In what follows I shall be concerned with only this function of argument.

In the first instance, then, an argument appears as a premise-conclusion structure: reasons are produced to justify or support a target proposition, which is the conclusion. This nucleus is what Blair calls the *illative core*, and what Willard calls the CRC--claim-reasons complex (1991, p. 77). Now: Does the illative core suffice for an argument? In the words of Blood, Sweat and Tears: "Is that all there is?"

The traditional answer, and the answer of many argumentation theorists, has been "Yes." In Copi's *Introduction to Logic*, the oldest logic textbook in North America, you will find the following definition:

An argument, in the logician's sense, is any group of propositions of which one is claimed to follow from the others which are regarded as providing evidence for the truth of that one. (p. 7, 2nd edition, 1961)

(In later editions, "evidence" is replaced by "support or grounds" (1986, 7th ed., p. 6).) A few line later, Copi adds: "An argument is not a mere collection of propositions, but has a structure" p. 7). In a popular critical thinking text, *Invitation to Critical Thinking*, Barry and Rudinow write:

An argument is a set of assertions one of which is understood or intended to be supported by the other(s). (1991, p.95)

In *Critical Reasoning*, Cederblom and Paulsen write:

When someone gives reasons to support a point of view, that person is usually offering an argument. (1991, p. 13)

The hedge "usually" softens matters here. But the basic idea of argument as reasons offered in support of a view is evident.

My view is that generally speaking this is not sufficient for an argument. For although the arguer has given reasons or evidence for his conclusion, in the dialectical situation, that will not be enough. The practice of argumentation

presupposes a background of controversy about the issue. The argument is the arguer's attempt to initiate the process of rational persuasion, to give the audience reasons that justify the thesis. But they will not easily be won over, nor should they be, if they are rational. For they will know that there are objections to the arguer's position. (Indeed, the arguer must know this herself and so it is typical for the arguer to attempt to defuse such objections within the course of the argument.) They will want to know how the arguer intends to deal with this objection and that criticism. They will rightly not be persuaded until they are satisfied that the arguer can handle these objections. (This may be the origin of the idea that a strong argument is one that can withstand objections.)

My first line of justification, then, is that the obligation is founded on the same constraint of rationality that produced the illative core in the first place. But there is more. There is what I call the constraint of *manifest rationality*. That is, an argument is not merely an exercise in rationality, but is as well an exercise in manifest rationality which means that the arguer must not only operate rationally but must also *appear to be* operating rationally.³ To fail to respond to an objection that is pressed against her argument certainly will not present much of an appearance of rationality. To ignore such dialectical considerations, not to mention them, to suppress them, indeed, not to be aware of them--these do not look like the moves of someone seriously engaged in the practice of rational persuasion. Before completing this phase of my discussion, I need to say more about this dialectical stuff. By this phrase, I wish to refer to the sort of material that gathers in the "space" around the argument when other arguers respond to the argument. I think there at least are four different sorts of material that might be so designated:

The first sort of material that collects around an argument is *objections*. These are considerations directed against some specific part of the argument as presented. I will shortly be taking up Govier's discussion of this matter.

The second would consist of *alternative positions*. If the issue is whether or not there should be capital punishment, the arguer who defends it will find himself confronted with alternatives from those who oppose it on moral grounds, those who oppose it on prudential grounds, etc. Generally, according to Govier and I agree, if C is my conclusion, then the class of alternative positions will consist of those positions

that defend C*, where C* is incompatible with C.

A third sort of material is *criticisms*. It has not been customary to mark any distinction between objections and criticisms, but I think it may be worthwhile to make such a distinction. For example, to criticize the arguer for defending

a weaker version of the argument than he or she should be defending, or to point out that there are stronger objections that the arguer has not dealt with--these are not objections to the illative core but are rather as dialectical considerations.

A fourth sort of material would consist of *challenges* of one sort of another: problems or questions directed at the arguer.

These are typically "softer" and more open-ended than the first three.

I do not intend this as a complete categorization and realize that there is some fuzziness in these categories (I haven't been real clear on the distinction between objection and criticism). All I really need from this discussion is the clarity that I am restricting my focus in this paper to objections.

To conclude this section, I want to show how this thesis applies to my own situation. It seems clear to me that if I were to present a paper here today about the arguer's dialectical obligations without at least acknowledging and responding to Govier's objections, I would have not fulfilled my obligations as an arguer. It would not be rational for me to expect you to accept my thesis, because I have not responded to important objections that have been raised against it. Before granting rational assent, you will rightly want to know how I handle those objections. (It might well be rational for me to ignore her

objections,⁴ but it surely will not seem or appear to be rational.) People will think: "What's the matter with him, that he doesn't deal with her objections?"

Such then is the justification for the thesis. Govier has

pointed out problems with the thesis in the form of objections. I turn to those now.

III. Govier's Objections

The main problem for my thesis emerges in the form of this question: "How are we to specify the obligations that the arguer has? Indeed, can we do so? Govier's (1998) paper is full of interesting and important contributions to the discussion of this issue, as well as specific objections which I need to reply to. In her discussion of my position, Govier devotes about half of her remarks to the problem of how to respond to alternative positions, and the other half with the issue of dealing with objections. What she says about alternative positions, I accept as helpful in clarifying my position. In this paper, then, I limit my attention to Govier's challenges as they pertain to objections. But before discharging my own dialectical obligations, I need to make one preliminary point.

Objections that would subvert my thesis

I want to pause to take note of two possible lines of objection which would subvert my thesis. If I am to be consistent with my own position, dispatch my obligations, I must at least take note of them.

First, it might be argued that the very idea of dialectical obligation is a nonstarter.⁵ It makes no sense to speak about

obligations here. We would be better off just looking at the qualities that make for a good argument.

Second, it might be argued that while there are dialectical obligations, they cannot be specified, and that we are wrong to think they can be. They cannot be specified because they are highly contextual and governed by numerous features and so cannot be specified in any meaningful manner. Marius Vermaak says:

I doubt whether the dialectical tier can be ordered in such a way that we can offer a workable set of norms to assess the goodness of a dialectically enriched argument. The development of disputes seems to be just too chaotic and open-ended: more like guerilla warfare than like chess.

Rather than reply to these objections here, my strategy will be to go ahead and take up Govier's objections in the hope that if I can handle them, that will open the door to handling the objections stated above.

Govier's objections to my thesis

Govier sees two main problems with my thesis. First, there is *The Discrimination Problem*: How do we select from the myriad objections those the arguer is obligated to deal with? For

a little reflection suggests that the arguer cannot be obliged to respond to all objections which may be raised. How then is it to be decided which objections (or which sorts of objections) the arguer is obligated, in some sense, to deal with? Govier has some enormously helpful suggestions in this regard which I will take up when I turn to that problem.

Second, there is *The Regress Problem*. Govier argues that this follows from my position that an argument is incomplete without a dialectical tier. If, for an argument to be dialectically adequate, the arguer must deal with objections, then the arguer will have to develop a supplementary argument to deal with them. But then the supplementary argument itself will have to be defended against possible objections to its premises, thereby requiring the development of sub-supplementary arguments, and so on. It follows then that no argument can satisfy the demands of dialectical adequacy.

In the remainder of her paper, Govier goes on to discuss the requirements for a good argument (a dialectically adequate argument) which she distinguishes from what would be required for a conclusive argument. I share her interest in formulating conditions for dialectical adequacy, though not her interest

in the matter of conclusive arguments, since I don't believe there are any. (See

me (1995) OSSA paper for my defense of this claim.)

IV. Response to Govier

William James says, somewhat glibly, that when you encounter a philosophical problem, you should make a distinction. In thinking about Govier's objections, it occurred to me that a distinction might well pave the way for a response. That's the intuition at the core of what follows.

A Distinction May Help

I believe that both *The Discrimination Problem* and *The Regress Problem*, particularly the latter, can be dealt with

(I do not say resolved) if we distinguish two different phases

of the argumentative process: (1) the phase in which the arguer is constructing his argument; (2) the phase in which the author is revising his argument in light of objections etc.

The arguer's obligations are, it seems to me, quite different in these two phases. Here is my reasoning. In the construction of the argument, the arguer faces the task of responding to known objections as well as anticipating possible ones, whereas in the revising phase, the task is rather that of responding to actual objections. As these are quite different tasks, we might expect the arguer's obligations to be different. For example, in the construction phase, it seems to me that we cannot reasonably expect the arguer to respond to all actual and possible objections. However, in the revising phase we may reasonably expect the arguer to respond to all actual objections.

In line with this distinction, I intend to argue that *The Discrimination Problem* is chiefly a problem for the arguer in the revising phase and that *The Regress Problem* is chiefly a problem in the construction phase. Corresponding then to this distinction, we need to disambiguate the term "objection."

That is, we need to distinguish between two types of objection:

(1) actual objections directed against the argument as presented;

This type would consist of those objections someone has actually presented to the arguer in response to the argument.

(2) objections the arguer anticipates in the course of constructing his argument;

This type would consist of possible and (some) actual objections. That is, if the argument is to be dialectically adequate, the arguer must anticipate objections that someone might possibly raise to various parts of his argument, as well as

objections that have actually been raised against parts of his argument. For example, the arguer may employ as a premise a statement he knows has already been objected to. Thus, if someone were to include in her argument an division of propositions into analytic and synthetic, I think we might reasonably expect that arguer to at least give us some indication of how she would handle Quine's objection to that distinction.

Let me now apply this distinction to the problems raised by Govier to see how far it goes in helping to resolve them.

The Discrimination Problem

Here we are supposing that the arguer has constructed his argument and now is faced with actual objections. (One must not assume that this will be so. Many arguments generate no response whatever, fall on dead ears. Thus the arguer faces a dilemma: If there is no response, the author feels rejected and unheard. If there is a critical response, he feels misunderstood.) The problem is: Which objections is he obligated to respond to? How do we specify them? Govier has made some very helpful suggestions which I want to incorporate.

To begin with, I want to say that the arguer has a *prima facie* obligation to respond to *all* objections lodged against his argument. But: do I really mean "all objections"? Searle once said (private e-mail communication) that "if I responded to everybody who objected to my views I would have time for nothing else." (That's the price of being Searle, I guess; on which more below.)

I think there are two ways to scale down this requirement.

We begin by making the obvious distinction between an *objection-type* and an *objection-token*. It seems clear that the obligation is to be understood in terms of responding to types, not tokens. So that if we have O1 from Chomsky and O2 from Quine and they are "the same objection," the arguer need not respond to Chomsky and then turn around and respond to Quine. One response is sufficient. This will scale down the list.

We can go further. Among objections, we can anticipate that there will be a range from serious objections to more trivial ones. (From here on I will simply say objections rather than objection-types.) It seems to me that the arguer has a *prima facie* obligation to respond to all serious objections.

To say that the obligation is "prima facie" is to say that

the burden of proof is on the arguer to respond, but that the arguer may be able to give a reason for not doing so; the qualifier "prima facie" acknowledges that possibility.

Now let us move to the question of what constitutes a serious objection. Before we can answer this question, we must first have a clear picture of what counts as an objection.

Govier offers us both a definition and a classification. Here is Govier's definition.

... an objection is (a) any claim alleging a defect in the argument or its conclusion; (b) which, insofar as it does not compete for the same intellectual space as that conclusion, does not constitute an alternative position to the conclusion; and is either (c) raised by the audience to which the argument is addressed or (d) might plausibly be raised by that audience; or (e) might plausibly be raised by a rational person to whom the argument might plausibly be addressed.

(Aside: So far as I am aware *this is the first definition of an objection to be found in the literature.*) I will be dealing with her more economical statement:

An objection is an argument, a consideration put forward, alleged to show either that there is something wrong with the conclusion or that there is something wrong with the argument put forward in its favor. (6)

Next Govier offers us the following classification of objections. There are, she says, five types of objection:

1. Objections raised against the conclusion;
2. Objections raised against the argument in support of that conclusion;
3. Objections raised against the arguer;
4. Objections against the position of the arguer (that is, qualifications, personal characteristics, and circumstances) of the arguer;
5. Objections against the way in which the argument and conclusion are expressed.

I think Govier's definition and classification is very helpful. For one thing it is "generic" in the sense that

it does not seem to presuppose the validity of any particular theory of argument analysis. Though presented in terms of

conclusion (and implicitly) premises, it could be used by someone who wishes to use a Toulmin scheme. In other words, part of the value of her classification is that it is not theory-laden.

My next observation is to emphasize what I believe is implicit in Govier's account--that to qualify as serious, the objection must itself take the form of an

argument. A question, "a consideration put forward", a simple observation, these, it seems to me, are incipient or undeveloped objections or possible lines of objection. The objector may not simply assert that a particular premise is false or that the conclusion does not follow. This must be shown to be true. Why? Because the objector, as a participant in the process, is also bound by the constraint of manifest rationality. In my view, then, until an objection is supported by a line of reasoning, the arguer does not have any obligation to address it. (He may do so, but is not under any obligation to do so.)

Within this categorization, Govier suggests that we can distinguish between *strong objections*--"those which allege that the defective feature indicates that the case is false, wrong, incorrect" (7)--and *mild objections*--suggesting that the position may need qualification. According to this typology, there would be 10 sorts of objection because there would be strong and mild forms in each of the five categories.

In my view, serious objections will be found in the class of strong objections. Some further thoughts on this aspect of the problem follow.

First, I suspect that Type-1 objections will turn out not to be really objections to the argument, but rather will turn out to be alternative positions. Since I am restricting my focus here to the problem of dealing with objections, we can eliminate them. I am not entirely clear on what exactly is intended by Type-3 and Type-4 objections, but they do not strike me as likely to yield what I call serious objections, nor does anything that belongs in Type-5.

That leaves us with Type-2 objections, within which we may want to distinguish between those that concern premise-adequacy from those that concern inferential-adequacy. The most common forms of objection are to reject a premise as not adequate on the grounds that it is false or misleading or unproven. Or, to claim that the conclusion does not follow from the premises, hence does not meet the test of inferential adequacy. In what follows I shall be concerned only with objections that concern premise-adequacy.

With this apparatus in place, we are now ready for Govier's answer to *The Discrimination Problem*. She takes the position that the arguer is obligated to respond to the most salient objections, which she defines as "those objections that, if granted, would demonstrate either that the conclusion, C, is false or unacceptable, or that the argument put forward on its behalf is not cogent" (8). Govier claims, and I tend to agree, that the salient objections would be the strong objections

(objections of Type-1 and Type-2).

With the above emendations, Govier has come close to formulating what seems like a *prima facie* necessary condition for the arguer's discharge of his obligations. That is, if the arguer does not respond to the most serious/salient objections (as understood above), then the arguer cannot be said to have discharged his dialectical obligations.

I see two problems. First, it seems to me that salience is an inappropriate factor in this setting. For salience refers not so much to the strength of the criticism as to its prominence in argumentative space. It seems quite possible that an objection might achieve salience, even though it is not a strong objection. I propose to set aside the question of salience and return to it later when we deal with *The Regress Problem*. Second, Govier's account has an element of questionable subjectivity. An objection is strong if the objector "alleges" that the objection indicates that the argument is incorrect. There are two ways this creates a problem. (1) If the objector failed to make this allegation, then even if the objection were "strong," it would not be strong according to this definition. (2) Suppose the objector has over-rated the objection, and is alleging incorrectly that it shows the argument to be wrong. We can block this by building into the definition "correctly alleges." But then we seem to have raised other difficulties. For if we so define a strong objection, then

we remove the possibility that the arguer can correctly claim that the objection does not establish what it claims to establish.

Consider in this vein Russell how deals with Strawson's objections to his theory of definite descriptions. Among other things, Strawson claimed that Russell fails to distinguish an expression, the utterance of an expression and the use of an expression, and that if he makes this distinction, his theory becomes redundant. Is this a strong objection? It certainly seems to be. But Strawson doesn't make this claim or allegation; and Russell doesn't treat it as such, in fact he ignores it altogether (unless we construe his remark on egocentricity as such a response). Yet the objection appears, in some sense, to be a strong one. For it certainly seems to have the potential to undercut Russell's argument. Hence my suggestion would be that we define a strong objection as one which creates the appearance that the argument is false, wrong, or incorrect.

One more distinction is needed. For, particularly

in complex arguments, not all the premises are of equal importance. Some will be more "crucial" to the success of the argument than other. [6](#) Objections raised against these crucial premises will have a more pronounced effect on the argument and hence would be more serious.

I am ready, then, to propose that an objection is serious if it satisfies three conditions: (1) the objection is supported by a line of argument; (2) the objection is a strong one, as outlined above; and (3) the objection is directed to a crucial premise. With these limitations, we may have scaled the class of objections down to manageable proportions, and so also the arguer's obligations.

Two further suggestions before I conclude my discussion of this problem. First, a *typology of objections* would be very useful. Second, in future work on this problem, it would serve us well to draw some enlightenment from practice. I

had hoped to have more to say about this, but for now I will content myself with two illustrations drawn from argumentative practice.

How Not to Deal with Your Dialectical Obligations: Searle's Response

Let me now cite an example where I think it is clear that the arguer failed to satisfy his dialectical obligations. It involves Searle and Speech Act Theory. Searle, as many of you will know, is a well-known advocate of SAT--an approach to the analysis of language that stems from J.L. Austin. One of the basic doctrines of SAT is the idea that there are "illocutionary

forces." In "Do Illocutionary Forces Exist?" (1958) L. Jonathan Cohen attacks this doctrine in great detail. He raises a series of objections, but they really gather around one fundamental objection, which is that the doctrine of illocutionary force is

indefensible. He argues that with the notions of meaning and implication on board, the idea of illocutionary force becomes unnecessary and indeed is problematic.

This objection certainly satisfies all of the criteria

listed above. First, it is carefully reasoned. Cohen supports his point with careful attention to the text and to Austin's position. Second, it is a strong objection because it is a type-2 objection. Third, it is directed against what would certainly be a crucial premise in Austin's argument for his analysis of speech acts. Hence the objection is serious, and by my principle Searle has an obligation to respond to the objection.

Here's what Searle says (private e-mail communication)[7](#):

I did not think that Cohen's article was worth answering directly. I answered indirectly in an article you have obviously not read called "Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts" (e-mail communication)

In fact, Searle's indirect response occurred in a footnote

on page 408 of that (1968) article, which reads as follows:

Cohen unfortunately seems to conclude that there are no such things as illocutionary forces. This conclusion seems unwarranted.

Full-stop, that's it. I suppose we can say that Searle has met his dialectical obligation here, but Searle's response falls way short of being adequate. We want to know on what grounds Searle holds that the conclusion is unwarranted. But that question leads to another part of the terrain.

The Cartesian Response

The other extreme, perhaps, is what Descartes does in his *Replies & Objections*. This is nothing less than an entire book

devoted to handling 7 sets of objections raised against Descartes's *Meditations*. Gassendi's objections (the fifth set) take up some 70 pages (133-203) in the Haldane-Ross edition. Descartes has met his obligation, to be sure.

Somewhere between Descartes' voluminous response and Searle's non-response lies the healthy ground. We have made some progress, I believe, in coming to understand how to delimit the

arguer's dialectical obligations as far as his responses. Obviously more work is needed, not only to become clearer on

those obligations but also to address the more important issue: when has the arguer succeeded in meeting the objections. But these are problems which must await another day, or another book!

I turn next to *The Regress Problem*.

If my conjecture is correct, this problem chiefly concerns

the dialectical obligations of the arguer in the construction of the argument?⁸ How shall we understand his obligations in that context so as to avoid the regress problem? What objections may we reasonably expect the arguer to deal with in the formulation of his argument?

In some ways this problem is more vexing. For now we are in the realm of possible objections which is a much larger and more amorphous class. I want to suggest that to understand the arguer's obligations here, we will have to take into account the epistemic limitations and capabilities of the arguer as well as the rhetorical factors: the expectations of the audience.

Epistemic factors. What are the epistemic factors that determine the arguer's responsibility in constructing his argument? The arguer cannot be expected to know **all** of the positions and lines of thinking that may surround the issue that he is addressing. And the arguer cannot be expected to respond to objections he is not aware of. On the other hand, there is some expectation that the arguer will have briefed himself on the issues and positions. But what can reasonably be expected on the arguer? Hitchcock has suggested the following condition:

The arguer is expected to deal with all those objections which it may be reasonably supposed his audience will expect him to deal with.

I believe this stipulation is correct, which leads to the next dimension.

Rhetorical factors. As rhetoricians are fond of pointing out, for the arguer to construct the argument in the first place, he needs to know who he is trying to persuade. Who constitutes his audience? The arguer must have some sense of the expectations of his audience. Which objections will they be aware of? Which objections have been taken seriously? Here again we have a host of questions, and very little by way of sustained reflection on them.

These two factors might be seen as coming together in the fairly obvious idea that the arguer has a responsibility to address *The Standard Objections*. Johnstone Jr. suggests a view like this when he wrote:

But associated with any philosophical statement is a class of criticisms and questions more or less relevant to the statement and with these we must deal. His critic is naturally under a similar obligation. (1958:14)

It is tempting to think that anyone familiar with the issue will also know the variety of positions and will have heard the various objections and criticisms, some of which will have achieved greater prominence than others. "The Standard Objections" then would refer to that class of **salient** objections typically or frequently found in the neighbourhood of the issue that have achieved this prominence. For the arguer to fail to deal with, or to respond to, one of these standard objections means that the arguer has failed to satisfy his dialectical obligations.

Notice that I have used the metaphor of argumentative

space⁹--one that I find attractive and suggestive. The idea is that an argument may be thought of as a particular location in argumentative space, and that around that location will have developed a set of objections and criticisms. These could be pictured as vectors pointing toward the conclusion. The Standard Objections could thus be mapped as those objections that are in the neighbourhood and salient, because they have a certain magnitude (though not necessarily force).

Even supposing that we can tidy up the many loose ends in this account, it will not suffice to allow us to specify the arguer's dialectical obligations, because though it is necessary for the arguer to respond to standard objections, this cannot be sufficient. Why not? Suppose that the arguer knows of an objection which however is not known to others because it has not been publicly expressed. Suppose further that this objection is a serious objection and the arguer recognizes it as such.¹⁰ Now this is the sort of objection the arguer has an obligation to respond to, even though it cannot be included in The Standard Objections, because, *ex hypothesi*, it has not achieved salience.

In thinking further about these matters, we might benefit from what I call The Empirical Turn.

The Empirical Turn

What do I mean by "The Empirical Turn"? I mean that we might profit from Wittgenstein's advice: "Don't think but look. Look and see." In other words, we should look at the history of argumentative practice to see whether it contains anything that may enlighten us. I have already made one nod in that direction above when I referred to Searle and Descartes.

We know that there have been good arguments.¹¹ If, in order to be a good argument, the arguer must have satisfied his dialectical obligations, then we may conclude that some arguers have been successful in discharging their dialectical obligations. Hence the problems that have been emerged in our pursuit of this idea must be faced off against the successful practice. We should approach this question empirically by looking to the best practices of the best arguers to learn what we can about how they have handled this matter. We can look to their example to find out how they did it.

Philosophers and others for whom argumentation is the principal methodology routinely include in their own arguments a section in which they voice and then deal with objections to their position. Indeed, if we take it that argumentation is the central practice of philosophical reasoning, and if we further acknowledge that philosophical reasoning is inherently dialectical, then we can understand how it is that philosophical practice so typically illustrates this idea.

One strategy for dealing with this question then would be to look to the practice of the great philosophers, among whom I include Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, and Mill (for starters) in each of whose practice we can discern some consciousness of what I call a dialectical obligation and from whose handling we may hope to find leads for answer to our question. (Note the qualification.) In the remainder of this paper I want to share with you what little I have learned from my own research.

Let's look at what is perhaps the most famous article from *Summa Theologiae*, No.3: "Is There a God?" Aquinas begins by considering two objections to the thesis that he is defending. The first is the objection that if there were a God, there would be no evil. The second is the objection that there is no need for a God, we have adequate accounts. Next Aquinas next cites Scripture and now replies to the objections by presenting the five so-called proofs ("*viae*") for the existence of God. Having presented these *viae*, he then responds to the objections raised at the beginning to show how they may be met.

A great deal has been written about what the illative core of Aquinas's argument, but here the issue is whether Aquinas has met his obligations? According to the position developed here, the answer is yes, provided Aquinas can be said to have dealt with the objections which he ought to have dealt with. But which are those? To answer this question, we would need to know that objections-types has been articulated. In other words, we would have to know what material was in the dialectical environment. Related to this, it would be useful to know what factors determined Aquinas's actual selection.

I don't have the answer to these questions but I am convinced that we can learn a lot by investigation of the best practices, nor merely of philosophers but others who are skilled arguers.

V. Conclusion

I have attempted to defend the claim that the arguer has dialectical obligations against Govier's objections by distinguishing between the obligations in the phase of construction and those in the phase of revision. I have sought to discharge some of my own dialectical obligations, though it is for others to judge the adequacy of my response. I hope it is clear why, in spite of the difficulties raised by Govier, I continue to think of this topic as a fruitful area for further inquiry.

Just look at the range of issues have been seen to be implicated in this discussion:

Regarding objections:

What exactly is an objection and what form may objections take?

What is a strong objection?

What is it for an objection to be salient?

Can we develop a typology of objections?

How are we to understand the idea of "The Standard objections"?

How can we understand the idea that an argument is strong

if it can withstand strong objections?

Regarding obligations:

How are we to understand the notion of an "obligation"

in this context?

What are the arguer's dialectical obligations?

What is dialectical adequacy?

This is, I believe, quite an impressive list. I continue to find it astounding that the whole issue of dialectical adequacy has been so little addressed. My sense is that this area remains a rich and neglected one in theory of argument--one that for its solution will require the best efforts of all of us who investigate and take seriously the practice of argumentation.

Future thinking on these matters therefore stands to benefit enormously from research done in both rhetoric and speech communication. Such co-operation seems an entirely fitting prospect for the study of argumentation at the turn of the century.

ENDNOTES

1Forthcoming in **Informal Logic**.

2A brief history of the thesis. In my paper for the First International Conference on Argumentation (1984), I put forth the idea that the arguer has an obligation "to address himself to opposing points of view and show why his is superior. To fail to do this is to fail to discharge a fundamental obligation of the arguer in the dialectical situation" (1996, 81). In our 1987 paper, Blair and I take the view that the arguer has "dialectical obligations" (1996, 100) which include meeting objections that one might anticipate from one's audience. (The phrase "dialectical tier" does not appear in this paper.) This was in the context of our discussion of the sufficiency requirement for arguments. We then itemized the type of objections that might be raised. We claimed that an argument was incomplete if it did not meet its dialectical obligations, and we proposed that the concept of the community of model interlocutors could deal with the crucial questions. In "Informal Logic and Politics" (1992), I argued that in addition to the first tier, arguments needed to have a second tier, which I called the dialectical tier. There I also attempted to develop a set of criteria to appraise the dialectical tier, a set of criteria for dialectical adequacy. In 1994, I again discuss the idea of a dialectical tier but here it is defended by reference to a feature of the argumentative process which had not hitherto appeared--the requirement of manifest rationality. In "Arguments and Dialectical Obligations" (1996) presented to the Ontario Philosophical Society, I again presented the idea that arguer's have dialectical obligations that must be discharged and examined four possible answers to the question: which objections must the arguer respond to?

3The notion of manifest rationality as the organizing construct for understanding our practice of argumentation is explained in much greater detail in my *Manifest Rationality* (forthcoming).

4Suppose that Govier were to contact me and request that I not take up her objections, saying that she has found some very embarrassing mistake in them and wishes to withdraw them for the time being. It seems to me rational to grant her request.

5Something like this view may be attributed to my colleague, R. C. Pinto.

6For more on this see *Logical Self-Defense* (1993), pp. 236-242.

7Thanks to my former student, Kosta Calfas, for obtaining this information. He

contacted Searle via his Web-site, asked Searle whether he had responded to Cohen's objections (which we were taking up in our Philosophy of Language class) and received the response printed here.

8 Some logic textbook authors, when they turn to the task of teaching students how to construct an argument, advise that they should consider possible objections. Thus Meiland (1980), Solomon (1989) and Johnson and Blair (1993) all advise the arguer to consider possible objections. The interesting point is that while their instruction about how to construct arguments may be seen as making at least implicit reference to these dialectical obligations, their official theories of evaluation do not acknowledge this obligation. For example, Solomon advises the student to "anticipate objections to your position and your argument and take the offensive against rival positions" (xiii). Later when discusses the standards of argument appraisal, Solomon is content to repeat the orthodox position (true premises plus valid argument) and makes no mention at all of the arguer's need to satisfy his or her dialectical obligations.

9 Govier herself uses the metaphor of space several times in her paper. On page 1, she talks about "logical space" and later on page 4 she refers to "the same intellectual and social space occupied by C" (the conclusion). See also my (1992) in which I explore Barth's notion of a dialectical field.

10 This was the case with, for example, Wittgenstein's criticism of Russell's theory of judgement, a criticism which Russell says "paralyzed" him. If the arguer does not know how to revise the argument over the objection, or how to defuse the objection, then, from the perspective of manifest rationality, this is very important and must be acknowledged.

11 When I say there have been good arguments, I do not mean that there have been sound arguments. Soundness, as is well known, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for a good argument. I mean that there have been arguments which satisfied the requirements of both illative and dialectical adequacy.