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Arguing or reasoning? Argumentation in rhetorical context

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ABSTRACT: If dialogue is a necessary condition for argument, argumentation in oratory becomes questionable, since rhetoric is not a dialogically structured activity. If special norms apply to the 'solo' performances of rhetoric, the orator's activity may be more appropriately described as reasoning than as arguing. By analyzing in what respect rhetorical texts can be interpreted as dialogue-based and subject to criteria of Informal Logic, the virtues of rhetorical argumentation in contrast to logic and dialectic emerge.

KEYWORDS: acceptability, audience, dialectic, dialogue, oratory, reasoning, relevance, rhetoric, solo performance, sufficiency

1. INTRODUCTION

Alongside the two main schools of pragma-dialectics and informal logic, in recent years rhetoric has established itself as an independent third approach to argumentation theory. Yet rhetoric is a discipline originally devised for speeches, that is for larger sequences of uninterrupted one-way communication from an orator to a passive audience. If, on the other hand, dialogue is assumed to be a necessary condition for argumentation, as indeed it is by many theoreticians, the question arises if there can be any such thing as argumentation at all in the practice of rhetoric itself, which by definition is not a dialogically structured communicative activity, and consequently if oratory does at all qualify as an argumentative activity type in the pragma-dialectical sense; or else, if we wish to save its argumentative character, we will need to investigate in what way rhetorical argumentation can be considered dialogical.

In the following, I will first briefly sketch the advancement of rhetoric to a major theoretical field in argumentation theory; next I will discuss the problem of a basic dialogical structure of all argumentation over against the apparently non-dialogical character of rhetoric. In a second part, I will address the question whether it may be nonetheless legitimate to speak of argumentation in a rhetorical context by asking how much intrinsic dialectic and dialogical structure there is in rhetoric, how complicity of audience and relevance of context inform rhetorical arguments, and whether the dialectical criteria of relevance, sufficiency, and acceptability of informal logic are equally applicable to rhetorical argumentation.

2. THE RHETORICAL TURN IN ARGUMENTATION THEORY

For a long time, from the point of view of logic and dialectic, rhetoric was not regarded as a peer, let alone cognate discipline in the study of argumentation, but rather disdained as an art of deception, fraud and beguilement. Platonic prejudices against rhetoric had a long-lasting effect in philosophical circles.

Even if as early as 1958 Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca made a case for a closer association of rhetoric with argumentation, the real ignition for what can be called a sea change seems to have been sparked in the 1980s by Joseph Wenzel's theory of the three perspectives on argument: logical (argument as product), dialectical (argument as procedure), and rhetorical (argument as process) (Wenzel, 1980, 1987a, 1987b, 1990). Here rhetoric was for the first time put on equal terms with the other two disciplines.

Following in Wenzel's footsteps, and much like Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) or Nicholas Rescher (1998; see Leff, 2002, pp. 60-61), Christopher Tindale (1999; 2004) even takes the position that rhetoric should have priority over logic and dialectic in argument analysis: He argues that a "fuller picture requires all three perspectives, with none reducible to another. In that full model, though, the one which is both fundamental and most indispensable is the rhetorical." (2004, p. 180). In his more recent book he explicitly advocates a "rhetorical turn for argumentation" (2004, pp. 1-27) and mutually interprets both "argument as rhetorical" and "rhetoric as argument" (2004, pp. 29-57; 59-87). From the 1990s, informal logicians began to discover the argumentative function of rhetorical elements of persuasion such as *ethos* and *pathos*; Michael Gilbert for instance developed the notion of "coalescent arguments," which alongside those two included also non-verbal elements of communication (Gilbert, 1997).

At about the same time, the Dutch pragma-dialectical group began to acknowledge the legitimacy of rhetorical aims and strategies of participants in a critical discussion. After the dialectical phase associated with co-authors van Eemeren and Grootendorst, under the new team of co-authors van Eemeren and Houtlosser the pragma-dialectical approach was extended so as to incorporate also rhetorical elements by way of the concept of strategic maneuverings (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999; 2002b; 2006; 2009; van Eemeren, 2009a; 2009b; 2010; see also Snoeck Henkemans, 2009). The relationship of dialectic and rhetoric was newly defined and, by 2002, in a collection of essays, they were already described as the "warp and woof of argumentation analysis" (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002a). Looking back in 2009, van Eemeren could thus rightly state: "In the last two decades, […] serious efforts have been made to overcome the sharp and infertile division between dialectic and rhetoric" and "to bridge the gap between dialectic and rhetoric" (van Eemeren, 2009a, p. 82).

Meanwhile, rhetoric has become an integral part of argumentation theory, and many theorists will nowadays probably join J.A. Blair in deploring the fact that they have "neglected the importance of rhetoric for argumentation theory," and in beginning "to appreciate how woefully ignorant [they] have been of the rich rhetorical tradition in Western thought" (Blair, 2012a, p. 228).

3. ARGUMENT AS DIALOGUE VS. RHETORIC AS 'SOLO PERFORMANCE'

Despite the fact that rhetoric is by now fully accepted as a theory of argumentation of its own right both in informal logic and pragma-dialectics, the predominant conceptions of argument available are still to a large extent based on dialectical and dialogical structures. The pragma-dialectical model, as developed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984; 1992; 2004), for instance, proceeds from the dialogical concept of a 'critical discussion', aimed at the resolution of a basic disagreement between two arguers. According to this model, any process of argumentation unfolds in multiple dialectical moves between the two parties, governed by certain procedural rules. In the pragma-dialectical view, thus, argument typically and essentially takes the shape of an exchange of speech acts between two parties in the context of a dialogue. Even if the pragma-dialectical model in its most recent version acknowledges rhetorical aims and elements in the form of strategic maneuverings as used by participants in a critical discussion, precisely by insisting on their employment in a *discussion* the model as such continues to be essentially dialectical, which is why Blair has called this conception of the relationship of rhetoric to argumentation a "cosmetic" one (Blair, 2011, pp. 103-104; 106-107).

In informal logic, Blair and Johnson, in an attempt to distinguish, as they deemed necessary, argumentation from logical demonstration, emphasized the fact that argument had important dialogical properties (Blair & Johnson, 1987). Johnson's later concept that every argument must, besides its "illative core," necessarily also have a "dialectical tier," since argumentation happens within a field of controversy and every arguer must hence respond to real or possible objections or criticisms (Johnson, 1996; 2000; 2003), appears to have its origins here. But most distinctively Douglas Walton, in a series of monographs and articles, has promoted the idea (borrowed from van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984) that dialogue is a necessary condition of argument (see, e.g. Walton, 1989; 1996; 1998). Similar views, however, can already be found in many of the contributions to Barth & Martens (1982). Walton most closely links argument to dialogue:

> An argument [...] is typically a sequence of subarguments used in a larger, goal-directed unit of dialogue. Although arguments occur in a dialogue, often a dialogue can best be seen as one large argument. The core of the argument is always a set of inferences or propositions, but the argument is determined by how those inferences are used in a context of dialogue. [...] in any given case, they always occur as used in a context of dialogue. (Walton, 1996, pp. 40-41).

Walton distinguishes various types of such dialogues (such as "persuasion" or "critical discussion" dialogues, but also "inquiry" dialogues or "eristic" dialogues), not all of which are aimed at the resolution of a disagreement (Walton & Krabbe, 1995, p. 66; Walton, 1998, pp. 30-34; 2007, p. 60).

It would seem, thus, that the existence of the context of a dialogue is generally taken to be a necessary prerequisite for argumentation. But if this is so, what about the argumentative capacity of rhetoric and oratory? As stated above, the system of rhetoric as a discipline (notwithstanding the fact that some of its individual features can also be employed in dialogical context) is first and foremost

aimed at the production of non-dialogical texts to be performed in a one-way communication situation, and addressed to a distant, passive, imagined or heterogeneous audience. Can argumentation be said to take place in such a context? What role does or can argumentation actually play in oratorical practice itself under these circumstances? On the other hand, in an everyday sense everyone would probably agree that of course there is argumentation in rhetorical texts. Otherwise, they would make no sense, since the predominant aim of rhetoric is to bring about a change of opinion on the side of the listeners in an original situation of dissent. Hence, either this intuitive perception is mistaken, and rhetoric achieves its goals entirely by non-argumentative means (which would take us back to the Platonic view), or else something must be wrong with the dialogical concept of argument.

If the dialogue-based definition of argumentation holds in a strict sense, it might indeed be questionable whether there can be argumentation proper in the context of rhetorical communication. Certainly, a good and reasonable speech will employ logical inferences to persuade the listeners and will appeal to their intellectual capacities in following or drawing such inferences. But since the listeners cannot enter into a real dialogue with the speaker, and the speaker will not have to react to unforeseen moves on their side, this procedure may perhaps not be called argumentation. It might be argued that such a speech consists of a chain of inferences drawn and presented by the speaker alone, and that such an activity may perhaps be more appropriately described as reasoning than as arguing. For, as Blair has recently defined it: "Reasoning is inferring, or the drawing of inferences or implications" (Blair, 2010, p. 189), or, more elaborately:

> 'Reasoning' can mean the activity of reasoning, an event that occurs over time; it can mean a record of that activity, an expression of it in some linguistic or other communicable form; or it can mean the abstract entity that is the propositional content of the linguistic expression. (Blair, 2010, p. 190)

An orator's activity could well be described as an expression of the activity of reasoning in linguistic form, and hence as 'reasoning' in Blair's second sense. Would it be a reasonable solution to our problem to refer to an orator's activity as 'reasoning' rather than as 'arguing'? Yet Blair himself seems undecided, since in the same context he also states: "Argument is the expression of inferences, that is, of reasoning" (p. 189). The "expression [...] of reasoning", exactly what he is going to call 'reasoning' in the second sense one page later, is here called 'argument'. Blair is obviously reluctant to sacrifice the idea that *any* expression of inferences or reasoning (and here we add: be it dialogical or not) may be called an argument.

In fact, back in 1998 Blair had taken the opposite tack when he pointed to "the limits of the dialogue model of argument" (Blair, 1998). After a review of van Eemeren & Grootendorst's and Walton's views on the fundamental dialogicity of argument, Blair takes up Walton's distinction of types of dialogues, but modifies it to represent a distinction of dialogue types of increasing complexity, beginning from what he calls "fully-engaged argument-dialogues" of simple question-and-answer structure, in which "what is supplied by each participant at each turn is a direct response to what was stated or asked in the previous turn" (Blair, 1998, p. 329), and leading up in twelve steps to the most complicated type (12) of "non-engaged

dialogues," in which the respondent is not immediately present, and in which we even "have the possibility of a whole case for a position presented in a single turn" (p. 331). Such non-engaged dialogues of maximum complexity Blair calls "solo performances" or "solo arguments" (p. 333) as opposed to the engaged and truly dialogical "duet arguments" of the lower types. He observes that many of the properties of 'duet arguments' (engaged dialogues) are not found in 'solo arguments,' especially that "[t]he respondent is typically physically absent, and [...] the argument must be developed without direct questioning from or interaction with the respondent" (p. 333), and that some of the norms appropriate to the former do not apply to the latter, especially that not all of the pragma-dialectical rules do apply (pp. 335-336; see also Govier, 1999, pp. 188-189). Instead, Blair notes, other norms would be needed to assess what in that context makes an argument qualify as a good argument. Yet, he remarks, because of the great variety of types "the search for a single set of norms" may be "misguided" (Blair, 1998, p. 336), since different virtues of argument may come into play; he explicitly distinguishes rhetorical and logical virtues. He also seems to indicate that in the interplay of those different virtues, questions of normative priority may arise, for the settling of which context and situation will be decisive (see also Blair, 2003, pp. 129-130).

As examples of such 'solo arguments,' *inter alia* Blair lists political addresses, encomia, convention speeches, and sermons, but also scholarly books and papers, any books with a message, or lectures (p. 336). His list obviously contains many of the typical genres of rhetorical texts. Yet he continues to call them arguments, even argument-dialogues. This, he admits, was only possible by stretching the concept of dialogue "badly out of shape to try to fit into it all of the types of so-called 'argument-dialogues'" (p. 337). He seems unwilling to ultimately sacrifice the dialogue model of argument (exactly this, however, appears to be Trudy Govier's response to the problem, see 1999, p. 198: according to her, in that case, "we are not in dialogue."). Blair rather complains that expressions such as 'dialogical' and 'dialectical' are used interchangeably and expresses his ("hopeless") desire that the former be "reserved for the properties of all arguments related to their involving doubts and disagreements", and the latter "for those belonging exclusively to turn-taking verbal exchanges" (p. 337). Nonetheless, Blair's concept of solo arguments might be a good stepping-stone for assessing the special qualities and virtues of argumentation in a rhetorical context.

4. THE DIALECTICAL / DIALOGICAL TIER IN RHETORICAL TEXTS

With respect to rhetoric, one should be careful to distinguish between monologues and solo performances. In a monologue, there is no audience at all, or else the speaker functions as his or her own audience (whether it is possible to persuade oneself is a controversial issue among rhetoricians). Rhetorical texts are clearly not monologues in that sense. They always have an audience. But they may be called solo performances, since they are addressed to a non-interactive audience. The audience may be physically present, but passive and silent; or it may be distant in space or time (as in the case of a broadcast speech or a written message); or it may

be massive, anonymous, variable, and heterogeneous (as in a speech before a vast audience, an effect that is multiplied if transmission by mass media is involved).

One could be tempted to say that, since there always is an audience or addressee, solo performances are just one half of an overarching dialogue, which would save their argumentative character according to the dialogue model. This would seem most plausible in cases such as judicial oratory, in which as a rule a speech by the prosecution is balanced by another one by the defense, or also in political oratory, in which quite often opposed sides each get their say on a controversial issue. This construction would seem to suit all kinds of well-regulated debate, in which two parties are granted the opportunity to present their position, such as for instance in a scholarly conference format in which presenter and commentator reply to one another. It may even be assumed to hold for scholarly writings in general, in which scholars engage in a long-term dialogue with their colleagues on certain issues of scholarly interest. But two objections must be made: First, this cannot be extended to hold for all kinds of rhetorical texts: Many speeches are left without a reply (such as for instance a campaign speech delivered on the hustings by a presidential candidate, a sermon given by a priest, or a commercial advertisement on TV). Nonetheless they are assumed to be arguing for something. And second, even if there is a responding speech, the situation is lop-sided, since the first speaker will not as a rule know the second speaker's arguments, while the second will know those of the first and will be able to reply to them directly.

Rhetoric as a communicative activity type, it would seem, cannot simply be reduced to dialectics. Aristotle, however, as is well-known, was of the opinion that dialectics and rhetoric were twin arts, and rhetoric was the "counterpart" to dialectics (*Rhetoric* I 1, 1354 a 1). In his view, the same kinds of arguments would be used by both arts, both would have to build their arguments on what was conceded by the addressee, the main difference being that dialectics took place in a dialogical frame, whereas rhetoric worked in one-way communication. A second major difference, however, would be that in dialectics the addressee is immediately present and intellectually on a par, whereas the orator's audience is of a more diffuse and variegated character, partly unknown to the orator, and of unreliable intellectual grasp. The orator's challenge in adapting his or her arguments to the audience, to believe Aristotle, is thus much more difficult than that of the dialectician.

Aristotle developed his program of dialectics in his *Topics* before he first tackled rhetoric. So, how much of dialectics is there in rhetoric? Do rhetorical texts have a hidden dialogue structure after all? In what sense and on what level of complexity can they be interpreted as dialogue-based?

The idea of a hidden dialogue structure of rhetorical texts might even be reconcilable with the pragma-dialectical model, which in its more flexible revisions allows for a differentiation between ideal argumentation (i.e. the critical discussion as theoretically devised, regulated dialectical interaction) and actual, contextualized argumentation (the actual verbal practice situated in various communicative activity types, one of which might well be rhetoric, notwithstanding its outwardly non-dialogical appearance) (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2005; van Eemeren,

Houtlosser, Ihnen, & Lewiński, 2010; see also van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, & Jacobs, 1993).

Rhetorical argumentation indeed seems to have such a hidden dialogue structure. This dialogical structure is again of two different kinds: extrinsic and intrinsic. How is rhetorical argumentation extrinsically dialogical? To begin with, rhetoric, like dialectics, proceeds from a basic situation of dissent. Without dissent, persuasion, the central aim of rhetoric, would make no sense. But dissent presupposes at least two parties. Hence there is always necessarily an "other side." A rhetorical text is always in dialogue with some other party, be it an opponent in court or in politics, an undecided assembly or jury, or a hesitant customer. This other party may be either the immediate audience or a third party at which the speech is implicitly aimed.

A second possibility of extrinsic dialogicity has already been mentioned above. When a speech is part of a sequence of speeches focusing on the same subject, it enters into an external macro-dialogue with those other speeches, and there will be an exchange of arguments, even if, as we remarked, with certain disadvantages on the side of the initial speaker.

This takes us directly to the more important point of intrinsic dialogicity. A solo speaker, or, for that matter, the initial speaker in a macro-dialogue, does not have the other party's arguments and objections openly at hand to deal with them. Yet nonetheless he or she will have to tackle them in order to persuade efficiently. Hence the orator must to the best of his or her ability anticipate possible counter-arguments the other party may be likely to raise. This of course involves a great deal of psychology and empathy. An orator must develop the ability to assess as accurately as possible the overall character and the momentary mood of his or her audience, so as to react to them appropriately. When drafting a speech, the orator will thus enter into an imagined dialogue with his or her audience and try to anticipate their reactions. The more heterogeneous and diffuse an audience is, the more demanding this task will become for the orator (see Blair, 1998, pp. 333-334). In the case of mass audiences, Govier is exceedingly skeptical about the mere possibility of such anticipation (Govier, 1999, pp. 196-197), understandably so from the point of view of a philosopher and logician. Perelman's concept of the 'universal audience' may in fact be a kind of liminal case. But from a rhetorical perspective this is one of the great virtues of rhetorical argumentation; it is what makes an orator a good orator. This art of anticipation, by the way, plays a great part in the earliest treatises on rhetoric such as the so-called *Rhetoric to Alexander*, a treatise roughly contemporaneous with Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.

But not only will the orator have to foresee possible counter-arguments, but in constructing his or her own arguments he or she will be careful to select the premises from the set of commitments the audience can reasonably be expected to share. It is a lesson to be learnt from Aristotle's theory of dialectics (and from the Ten Commandments of pragma-dialectics) that arguments may only be built based on premises accepted by the other party. This holds for rhetoric as much as it does for dialectics. The difference, however, is that in the case of dialectics these premises will have been openly and explicitly agreed on, whereas in rhetoric they must again be anticipated by the orator by way of an imagined internal dialogue. It is clearly not

by accident that "audience adaptation," the framing of one's moves in a perspective that agrees with the audience, is one of the pivotal aspects of strategic maneuvering as acknowledged by the pragma-dialectical school (see van Eemeren, 2009a, p. 82).

5. COMPLICITY OF AUDIENCE AND RELEVANCE OF CONTEXT

But is an orator's audience all that inactive and non-interactive? In fact it is not. For, if it were, it would fall asleep and the speech could never be persuasive. Besides proceeding from the audience's own beliefs and convictions, it is another major virtue of rhetorical argumentation that the audience is actually invited to actively participate in its construction. A rhetorical enthymeme is not only characterized by its premises being selected from the audience's previous commitment store, but also by its leaving substantial parts to the audience's own imagination.

In rhetoric, in contrast to dialectics, but in accordance with everyday usage, arguments are not fully laid out on the table in all their parts for logical examination, since such a procedure would quickly bore and tire out a non-expert audience. In fact, a good orator will rather provide the listeners with just as much information as they need to draw their own conclusions, supply implied premises and thus complete the argument by themselves. This typically rhetorical practice will not only keep the audience's attention awake and prevent them from drifting off from the argumentative core to rather peripheral routes of information processing, but it also greatly flatters the listeners by relying on their own intellectual capacities in arguing, which will in turn enhance the speaker's trustworthiness on the ethical side. To put it in pragma-dialectical terms, the speech acts of a rhetorical text can never be successfully completed without the active complicity of the audience. This implies that, in listening to a well-constructed speech, the audience, too, enters into a constant dialogue with the speaker. Certainly, hidden premises may be a source of potential misguidance, if the audience does not supply them in the way the speaker has anticipated. It is thus part of the skill of a good orator to maintain, monitor and steer this subtle dialogue with his or her audience by permanently being attentive to the audience's reactions.

Because of this essential dialogue, and because audiences may vary, the same speech may not have the same effect on different audiences. But audiences are only part of a bigger-scale factor that typically affects argumentation in rhetorical texts, namely context and situation. Blair has already hinted at that point (1998, pp. 336-337; 2003, pp. 129-130). The same text may not appear equally appropriate when delivered as a paper at a conference, or when printed in a journal, or when read as a lecture in a lecture hall, let alone when delivered as a birthday address. The rhetorical features of the text, the complexity of its arguments, etc. must be adapted not only to the audience, but also to context and situation. Different norms will have to prevail in different locations and on different occasions. Arguing well in a rhetorical context also means to be aware of these differences in register, accuracy and complexity, and to be able to adapt one's arguments to the particular situation. Responding appropriately to the requirements of audience and context is one of the specific virtues of rhetorical argumentation. This is in fact a highly complex and demanding challenge for which the ancients had one very simple term: *aptum*.

6. RELEVANCE, ACCEPTABILITY, AND SUFFICIENCY

Now that we have established that argumentation in a rhetorical context is not a *contradictio in adiecto*, that it can even be saved on the basis of a dialogical concept of argument, we must finally ask if rhetorical arguments meet standard criteria for good argumentation from a logical point of view. In principle, an orator may of course use just as good or as bad arguments as anyone else. But since we have seen that special problems of completeness and complexity apply to arguments used in a rhetorical context, the question may still be worth asking.

In 1977, Johnson and Blair formulated the famous three criteria of relevance, acceptability, and sufficiency for the premises of a good argument (Johnson & Blair, 1977/2006, pp. 54-55; 58). In 2007, Blair revisited the three criteria and introduced some modifications (Blair, 2007).

With respect to arguments in rhetorical context, the easiest question to answer seems to be that of acceptability. For rhetorical arguments, by definition, select their premises from what is accepted by the audience. Even so, since the audience is silent, there is a danger that the orator may make mistakes in assessing their convictions (or that these may be indiscernible within a mass audience; see Govier, 1999, p. 186). But Blair also rightly warns that 'acceptable' is a normative term, and that the question is not what *is* accepted, but what *should be* accepted by the audience (Blair, 2007, p. 39). This, however, puts a heavy burden of moral responsibility onto the orator's shoulders. He or she will actually have to persuade the audience to accept what he or she as a moral authority finds worthy of acceptance, which can be accomplished by using supporting arguments, or by finally grounding the chain of arguments of the complex 'solo argument' on a fundamental value he or she can be sure of the audience being committed to. In that respect, Blair makes the crucial observation that the "standards to which premises are held in fact vary with the circumstances of the argument, and that is appropriate" (p. 41). So here again, as always in rhetorical argumentation, context and situation are decisive parameters. No universal standard for all cases may be established.

Sufficiency, too, may be ambiguous between the sufficiency of the immediate argument and what Blair calls "dialectical sufficiency" (in relation to any objections that might reasonably be raised) (p. 41). For rhetorical arguments, immediate sufficiency should usually be satisfactory. As for the sufficiency criterion, Blair further distinguishes between persuasive arguments and justificatory arguments. While for the latter a higher degree of confidence in the evidence presented may be required, the standard for the first (more properly rhetorical) category may be lowered and adapted to the individual situation: "In persuasive arguments with a non-interacting audience, the arguer must try to judge how much evidence the audience will need to be convinced" (p. 41). It is needless to say that this is in itself a thoroughly rhetorical position.

Relevance, finally, may be a greater problem, since rhetoric is often accused of using irrelevant arguments for imposture's sake. In a dialectical situation, the relevance of an argument that is advanced is simply taken for granted unless it is challenged by the interlocutor. Yet this will never happen in solo arguments. "The respondent's absence means that the solo arguer has choices not available to the

duet arguer," as Blair notes (1998, p. 333). The solo arguer (or orator), it would seem, is free to bring forward any argument he or she wishes to, be it relevant or not. But is he or she? Since sufficiency in a way presupposes relevance (an irrelevant argument does not add anything to sufficiency, see Blair, 2007, pp. 35-36), the same criteria may apply to relevance as to sufficiency: It will be up to the silent dialogue going on between speaker and audience to determine which arguments will count as relevant; in other words: in order to be persuasive, the speaker will have to assess very carefully which arguments will reasonably appear relevant to the individual audience. No responsible orator may pile up arguments that are clearly irrelevant in the eyes of the listeners, lest he or she jeopardize credibility. A final problem may be that relevance is often ambiguous and multifaceted. What is irrelevant to one argument may be relevant to some other argument. Hence a clever speaker may indeed make use of his liberty as solo arguer to introduce arguments that seem plainly irrelevant in the immediate context, but will later turn out relevant in a different or higher sense.

With respect to argumentation in a rhetorical context, it has turned out that all three criteria of a good argument formulated by Johnson and Blair will be dependent on the hidden background dialogue between arguer and audience, and consequently also on context and situation.

7. CONCLUSION

It has been the aim of the present paper to resolve the apparent contradiction between a fundamentally dialogical concept of argumentation and the presence of argumentation in rhetorical texts, which on first sight appear to be non-dialogical, so that an orator's rational activity seems to be better referred to not as 'arguing', but as 'reasoning'. Yet J.A. Blair's concept of 'solo arguments' helped bridge the gap. Based on this concept, it could be established that rhetorical texts have a hidden dialogue structure both extrinsically, because every speaker talks to an audience, and intrinsically, since the orator anticipates possible counter-arguments from the audience and premises potentially acceptable to the audience. It has further been noted that the audience also actively enters into that dialogue, inasmuch as it needs to complete the argument by supplying missing components. The maintenance of this delicate dialogue should be regarded as a special virtue of rhetorical argumentation. The complex solo arguments of rhetorical texts were thus found to be completely in line with a dialogical concept of argument and even to comply with the normative criteria of relevance, acceptability, and sufficiency in a special manner with constant respect to this dialogue and to audience, context and situation.

J.A. Blair shall have the last word. In a postscript to his collected papers, he writes: "A satisfactory account of how rhetoric relates to logic and dialectic in arguments and argumentation still escapes me" (Blair, 2012b, pp. 323-324). Even more so in my case, I am sure; but perhaps this paper can at least be a small step towards a better understanding.

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