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# Commentary on Carozza

Charles V. Blatz

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# Commentary on Linda Carozza: “Dissent in the Midst of Emotional Territory”

CHARLES V. BLATZ

*Department of Philosophy  
The University of Toledo  
2801 W. Bancroft St., MS 510  
Toledo, Ohio 43606  
U.S.A.  
cblatz@utoledo.edu*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Linda Carozza wishes to move our attention away from the epistemic roles that emotions might play to the ways in which they help to form the world we share.

In dealing with the “emotional” aspects of argument, I [want] to avoid overly philosophical or psychological definitions of the term, mostly because this project is aimed at any individual in the process of recognizing, mapping, analyzing, handling, facilitating, and/or solving emotional arguments. The cognitive or physiological aspects of emotion, for instance, are not that significant for argumentation. What is important to note about emotion is that it is part and parcel to the social sphere. Alison M. Jaggar writes that emotions are ‘...wrongly seen as necessarily passive or involuntary responses to the world. Rather, they are ways in which we engage actively and even construct the world.’ (Carozza, 2007, 6-7)

It is this move from the cognitive to the social, presumably, that Carozza expresses as she acquaints her readers with the Social Styles Model of emotional presentation or presence in communicative contexts of argumentation. This move deserves the expenditure of a bit of time and effort by way of offering some comments on Carozza’s interesting paper. There are some unanswered questions to think about concerning first what this move is, secondly what it might accomplish, and third what commitments it brings.

## 2. LEAVING THE COGNITIVE, FINDING THE SOCIAL IN EMOTIVE ARGUMENT

So then, first, what precisely is this move that Carozza is making? To be sure, on the surface it is a matter of calling our attention to the ways in which emotion has been noted to be part of argument—namely by revealing what the arguers believe or are ready to infer and how strongly they feel about all of this. In addition, emotion plays a central role in generating exchanges of the sort of appeal to pity or of scare tactic. Still, all of this seems only too clearly to be a set of cognitive points about how emotions can reveal the grounds, warrant, qualifications, or patterns of inference involved in an argument. Here “cognitive” means or suggests “bearing on the epistemic aspects of arguments.” And then yes, emotion can give us access to things we must know in order to properly deal with arguments. But that is just the point for here—these are things we must know about what are the evidence, the inference patterns, or else the persuasive forces of an argument

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and as such are not clearly ‘part and parcel of the social’. So let us try again. What precisely is this move that Carozza is inviting us to make?

Maybe the clue is found in Jaggar’s urging that emotions are “ways in which we engage actively and even construct the world”? Carozza would certainly not be the first to think in this way of emotions as having an active role in creating a social world, of interest for the place it affords argumentation. For example, consider a statement by Max Scheler:

On the contrary, there is a type of experiencing whose “objects” are completely inaccessible to reason; reason is as blind to them as ears and hearing are blind to colors. It is a kind of experience that leads us to genuinely objective objects and the eternal order among them, i.e. to values and the order of ranks among them and the order and laws contained in this experience are as exact and evident as those of logic and mathematics; that is, there are evident interconnections and oppositions among values and value-attitudes and among the acts of preferring, etc. which are built upon them, and on the basis of these a genuine grounding of moral decisions and laws for such decisions is both possible and necessary. (Scheler 1973, 255)

And what type of experience would that be? It is the experience of the heart or, that is, the emotions. Could this be what Carozza is hinting at in her attention to the social and not the cognitive? This seems an unlikely prospect since Jaggar’s talk of construction of the world does not rest easily with Scheler’s intended absolutism. Scheler’s reference to the moral order is suggestive however.

There is, of course, a multitude of lines of thought according to each of which the emotions construct moral orders. (Arguably the line stretches from David Hume, to John Stuart Mill, to F.H. Bradley and W.D. Ross, to Peter Strawson and John McDowell, to Henri Bergson, to Gilles Deleuze, and on.) And, it is not at all unusual for part of the claim defining such views to be that in generating the moral order, emotions, to some greater or lesser degree, create the “social sphere.” But while this might put us on the right track, it does not help much to clear up why Carozza should consider this a matter linking emotion to *argument*. Perhaps the answer is close at hand however.

We construct the world through emotions thereby constructing the social realm. But is this construction a matter of argument or not? Surely it is a construction through forming and articulating reasons and a construction that proceeds through reason giving. But is this reason giving that is itself constitutive of argumentation? As Damasio claimed and Carozza quotes, “—we feel the right responses and act accordingly in a given situation, and at the same time we tend to know when we implement the wrong responses.” (Carozza, 2007, 7) If this is right we are acting for reasons making discriminations in an orderly fashion, and we know in terms of reasons that or when our responses are wrong. Reasons seem to come along with and indeed from the moral sphere. As well, they are somehow marshaled to the determination of right and wrong. Also, this use of reasons comes along with argumentation in which we present and defend ourselves to others as doing or having done right or wrong—thence argumentation. But the question this raises is whether this gives us a different take than the cognitive on “the ‘emotional’ aspects of argumentation”? (Carozza, 2007, 6) I must confess that I am not at all sure that I am still speaking within the spirit of what Carozza intends. But if I am, then perhaps in that spirit I can offer a different take on emotive argumentation than what might be suggested by the cognitive or by what is standardly associated with the cognitive.

### 3. CREATING THE GIST OF THE WORLD, INTEGRATIVE EMOTIVE ARGUMENTATION

The emotions construct the world thereby bringing us to a social sphere. They do this first by making of the world a landscape of saliences. The emotions make the world ours; make it something of significance to us. And in doing so the emotions construct a world in terms of what each of us understands, values, and then makes of it, the world according to ...; the world that is the gist of our personal, continuing experience and the gist of our understanding of what significance lies behind our actions at any and every moment. This world is changeable in some part—as we would expect it to be in so far as it is the construction of our emotions. Further, this world positions us in relation to others and to the gist of their salient experience; and in turn it positions their world in relation to ours. These differing loci of significance are often differing loci of conflicting significance, and then are often the occasions of argumentation in the familiar sense of marshalling evidence on behalf of a conclusion. But this tie of emotions to familiar argumentative exchanges, a tie made through the creation of a social sphere, is not the point. Rather we need to take note of the other, different notion of argumentation just introduced. Creating the gist of things is as much an exercise of thought, indeed as much an exercise of reason in argumentation as is giving reasons for a conclusion in the more standardly “cognitive” notion of argumentation—different forms of argumentation to be sure, but both forms of argumentation nonetheless.

Creating the gist of things is a matter of bringing out the significance and sense we feel of who and where we are and of how things are going, as this is registered through our emotional responses operating as one form of running commentary in our living. But it is more. This sense of who and where we are and how well we are doing is not a matter of several and sundry determinations of the gist of our experience. It is a sense of the whole and of the significance found in the ebb and flow of our actions and experiences. Thus, to bring out the gist of things in our life, or the gist of our world, is not a matter of analysis, or for that matter of a synthesis of separate elements or compartments of our life, or moments of our experience, much less a synthesis of our understanding of several separable objects or the states of these, as we experience them, apart from their environment. The gist of things is rather an overall grasp and intuitive understanding we have; a sense of the significance permeating that world as grasped within the flow of our life. As such, the gist of things is one form of attention we bear on our living in the world. (Koch, 2004, 155, ff.) (The other is what has been called the “flashlight” form of attention in which we focus our attention—no matter how fragile—on some particular aspect set over against an environment or against another event, or thing or state or process.) The gist form of attention is then an integration having a unity that makes sense to each of us as ours alone and as one. We have knit it together by each of our actions, responding as we saw fit in our emerging circumstances.

The creation of the significance of our world as a matter of the gist it has for each of us is then a matter of integrating it as we live through our history and into our future; it is a matter of creating one whole of a life, at any moment, as we proceed along. What counts as what fits together and as flowing aptly out of and into our history and future is very much a matter of the emotional responses we make as we proceed along; responses to situations and developments we find ourselves confronting. Thus here is a different

form of reasoning—not a matter of marshalling evidence but a matter of fitting together into one integral whole a life of events and choices and undertakings personal to each of us; an integral whole our emotions regulate and have arranged as acceptable to us. Here, checked and regulated by our emotional responses we create a meaningful flow and set of integrated moments and priorities. Instead of a claim we have a gist or sense of our life at any moment, on the fly, as we proceed from history to future. Instead of grounds and a warrant we have the history that we are accumulating and the sense of aptness, or integrality that our emotional response affords us to unfolding circumstances. *Here emotion is the gatekeeper of the future of the gist and significance of things in our life, just as cool reason is portrayed as the gatekeeper of claims cogently reached in our inferences.* Just as we can easily imagine intellectual virtues and vices at play in drawing inferences, so too we can easily imagine intellectual virtues and vices at play in drawing together a life, or in achieving a sensible integrality in our life. Just as it is an oversimplification to see being a critical thinker as merely behaving in certain ways so as to draw conclusions cogently, so too, it is an oversimplification to see being a good integrative thinker merely in the form of achieving a coherent, but perhaps overly simple form of life. (Siegel, 1999, 320,ff.) And, just as we can see critical thinking, at the core of its practice and character, as social, so too we can see the appropriate integrative creation of the gist of our life as social in its root and branch.

Thus emotion serves to integrate and regulate our lives, including our relations with others. But, of course, in saying this I am only hinting at a suggestion of how emotion might play a pivotal role in a form of reasoning different from inference. None of this is intended to do more than suggest that emotion and the social spheres into which it draws each of us is a source of rationality—though a source of a very different form of rationality than that achieved in critical thinking. And, finally, none of this is intended to do more than hint at one thing Linda Carozza could be getting at by directing our attention away from the cognitive aspects of emotion in argumentation and toward emotion being *part and parcel of the social sphere as it serves each of us in constructing the world.* Emotion as integrative must arrange not only the life each of us is living but also the life each of us is living with others. And further, in our various interactions with others, for example in articulating our interests or intentions in discussion with another, we can come to better integrate our own life and relations with our interlocutor as well as with others. Emotion plays as crucial an integrative role by lending assent or withholding it from a particular future with other centers of emotional integration as it does in lending assent or withholding it from a future emergent upon some personal undertaking or set of circumstance. In either case, emotion is the gatekeeper to the gist of the future of our lives.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Might Carozza welcome these suggestions about emotion's tie to a non-inferential form of argumentation? Or is her concern solely with the social device of using ideal types of social style to analyze and interpret standard argumentation through emotionally revealed commitments? I prefer to end with a different question: is the suggestion of emotion as integrative one that does justice to an underlying aspect of Carozza's paper? There is much to be made of setting aside the cognitive and emphasizing the social in getting at

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“the emotional aspects of argument.” (Carozza, 2007, 6) Also, there is much to be learned by turning to social psychological schemata of emotional style in order to understand the arguments of others (or even of self). Indeed, I suggest that the point of invoking such schemata is made clear by understanding emotion as crucial to integrative argumentation. *Social styles are ideal types of how lives are integrated.* It is because of this that knowing these types lets us understand more of the epistemic commitments of those in standard, public, argumentative exchanges. That is, the hidden integrative function of emotion explains how and why such devices as the social styles model “work” and are important to understanding standard argumentative exchanges. Emotion as integrative explains emotion as cognitive in argumentation. Thus, I believe, there is a single point in both setting aside the cognitive in favor of the social, and, of looking to what we might learn about the emotional organization of the life of those involved in argumentation. Carozza’s fundamental lesson for us seems to concern the radical departure we need to make in our understanding of emotive argumentation generally, if we are to understand the roles of emotions within inferential argumentation more particularly.

Finally, with Carozza, I have said nothing meant to challenge the progress many have given us in understanding the cognitive roles of emotion in argumentation. But that said, what I have claimed and perhaps Carozza intends raises yet another set of problems and possibilities. We need to think about the complementarity of the cognitive or epistemic roles of emotion in argumentation that seems inferential, with the roles emotion plays in argumentation integrating our lives together.

[link to paper](#)

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