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ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Elements For An Argumentative Method Of Interpretation

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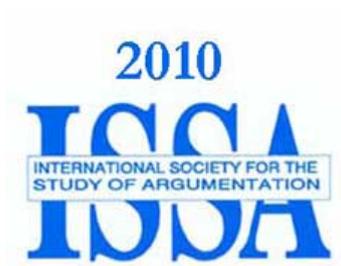
When are we, in fact, arguing? Even one and the same author may offer more than one definition of what he understands by argumentation: this is partly because the problem of argumentation is not confined to a single area of knowledge or of practical life. Definitions of *argumentation* are as varied as the different positions taken on the question of what exactly we do when we argue. Be that as it may, we are struck by the fact that the problem of argumentation (above all in its application to hypothetic-inductive methods) has not been analysed as a problem linked to interpretation.

In this paper the hypothesis that it is in philosophical hermeneutics that the foundations of the so-called speculative theories of argumentation are to be found is presented. To show the consistency of this hypothesis an analysis of concepts (plausibility, dialectic, rhetoric, heuristic reasoning, and reasoning topic) will be presented in order to show the hermeneutical basis of developments in the field of argumentation theories.

The link between argumentation and interpretation is clear for two reasons: firstly, because if 'argumentation is one of the activities characteristic of rational life'(Corcoran 1989, pp. 17), this is owing to the fact that the radical necessity of interpreting the political, social, historical, institutional and personal environment in which our existence takes place (and not only our own environment anchored in the present but the past and future too, whether we know it or not), makes argumentation another means to govern that fundamental and primordial disposition of human existence which avails itself of interpretation as both a means and an end. The second reason is that, from a logical point of view, the application of argumentation to hypothetic-deductive and hypothetic-inductive methods goes without saying, insofar as both methods have conjectural starting points. We can distinguish this second reason, which is logical, from the first one, which points to ontological and historical dimensions.

Defining argumentation as being involved in the reduction of new problems to other old ones which have been resolved, Corcoran (1989) combines the strictly logical and the ontological. But, also according to the same author, neither deductive nor inductive methods are truly methods leading to the discovery of hypotheses.

Consequently, there are auxiliary procedures for discovering hypotheses which could also be used to discover chains of reasoning. These avenues of hypothesis discovery are really heuristic avenues, that is, they form part of an *ars inveniendi* which is rooted in an *ars interpretandi* in contrast to the *ars indicandi,* because unlike the latter they do not conform to demonstrative logic. Thus, for example, the method by analogy is a heuristic procedure.

Applying interpretative or conjectural procedures may lead to the production of proofs when, for example, a heuristic procedure is used that consists of developing, from an originary hypothesis, arguments which are confirmed as true. This is how interpretations and conjectures based on *petitio principii* may become proofs. All of this gives us an idea of the epistemic potential of interpretative processes in their heuristic dimension.

According to Stuart Russell and Peter Norvig, the heuristic function usually estimates the cost of a solution which begins from the state in the node *n*' (Russell and Norvig 2003) and which, no matter how one looks at it, manages to construct a function by learning from experience, since every optimal solution of a given problem provides elements or examples enabling the function *h(n)* to be learnt. In other words, each example is made up of a solved path state, which is why it is said that an heuristic strategy – whether subsequently applied to a piece of reasoning – uses knowledge of a problem in a sense that goes beyond the definition of the problem in itself. This strategy brings into play learning and reasoning modality that is not deductive but rather inductive.

Inductive learning can only take place if information *relevant* (for whatever reason) to the development and description of the problem is offered to the system which is to carry out the calculation. Often, however, when this procedure is deployed, the conclusions obtained do not properly follow from the argumentation. It is also common, when the heuristic and exploratory interpretative procedure is not carried out rigorously, to blame it for logical limitations that do not stem from it, but rather from the logic-discursive procedure with which we conduct the arguments. When this procedure is not carried out rigorously, we invalidate the heuristic procedure (such as extracting from the *petitio principii* other true and conclusive propositions that let us take the *petitio* as a proof), transforming it instead into a mere fallacy or erroneous conclusion – which is due either to an erroneous chain of reasoning or to basing the force of the reasoning on a mistaken interpretation of the implicit sense of that petition of principle.

All these factors seem to call into question the appropriateness of the linear model based on mechanical reasoning and learning and even on conceptions of language as a mere instrument for representing knowledge. These conceptions of heuristic and hermeneutic reasoning are highlighted, for example, in the design of intelligent environments, which requires us to investigate the cognitive processes involved in reasoning – a highly topical field in Artificial Intelligence. In this field, logical agents are no longer designed with regard to language programmes based on prototypical reasoning patterns of propositional logic (for example, following the development of patterns of inference that can be applied to derive chains of conclusions to lead us to a desired objective). On the contrary, nowadays more complex models are taken into account, such as, for example, those that consist of the description of actions for carrying out calculations and interpretations of situations in which a possibility axiom is given (which gives an idea of when it is possible or necessary to carry out a determinate action) and an effect axiom (which gives an idea of what happens when an action is performed or of what changes are possible as a result of carrying out an action).

In spite of these connections between heuristic and hermeneutic reasoning, the history of hermeneutics, insofar as epistemic procedure is concerned, has taken the connection as a case of simple misunderstanding (a somewhat blunt way of expressing the problem we referred to above). The function of hermeneutics (clearly epistemic, in my opinion) has been said to be simply that of a preliminary study for arriving at a correct interpretation or understanding in cases where there is something confused, unclear, unintelligible or misunderstood – and that 'something' generally had to be made intelligible, clear and perceptible.

However, the very fact of asserting that heuristic procedures – in one way or another always interpretative – are linked with argumentational ones weakens the idea that perhaps there are arguments that give rise to cogent reasoning *per se*. Normally a piece of reasoning is considered cogent *per se* if its conclusion follows logically from the premises it has provided. But this requisite may be present and yet appear in such a context that people do not recognise the consistency of the conclusion, either because they do not accept the premises used or because they are simply ignorant of them. This should give us an idea of how far the interpretative and the strictly logical processes converge in practice and to what extent they are indistinguishable and undifferentiated due to the fact that, in effect, in practical life they are not distinct or differentiated. So, in spite of logical accuracy in the chain of reasoning, an argument may not be a proof for one person or group of persons in a specific context, and will in such a case be judged simply as a petition of principle. Sometimes this phenomenon (a logical one, in which the pragmatic elements inherent in reasoning play a part) is confused with a problem relating to the use of erroneous interpretations. In other words, a petition of principle is confused with a mere interpretation lacking epistemic or logical value. In my opinion, this phenomenon, which occurs so frequently in communication in our shared everyday life, stems from this reason: a correct argument is not merely the result of an inferential process; thus, even an adequate interpretation does not always appear in the form of a cogent argument.

Our expectation of being successful in our interpretations is logical. This can be appreciated when we consider how annoying it can be when our interlocutor formulates interpretations that are manifestly erroneous on the basis of events, texts, stories, etc. which ought to give rise to different interpretations. We are used to linking interpretative processes with logics or, at least, with certain aspects of logic which, although we treat them somewhat flexibly in casual conversation or, in general, in our shared everyday life, we cannot nevertheless refrain from demanding or assuming in all our speech acts.
Moreover, it must be pointed out that the fact that we discredit our interlocutor by saying: 'That's just *your* interpretation!', merely underlines what was said above, namely, that the reason why this is precisely a form of discrediting or reproach comes from the fact that a question whose elucidation ought to lead to some kind of reasoning communion has been made to depend on the interlocutor's subjectivity. When this happens, we speak of erroneous interpretations, that is, interpretations that fail to fulfil their heuristic function adequately and which are, for that reason, as illogical as they are personal or subjective.

We maintain, all things considered, that one of the key arguments concerning the connection between interpretation and argumentation lies in the fact that the existence of both premises and conclusion(s) has a purely functional character in argumentational processes. This is precisely because arguments have an interpretative scope and other propositions, conclusions or interpretations are induced from them, which means they are all, from this point of view, provisional.

Corcoran has referred to this problem, pointing out that it is particularly striking that many sceptical philosophers or even epistemological nihilists have concluded that no proposition is known to be true in itself. However, few of them have shown, on the basis of this assertion, that what it really indicates is that no reasoning is known to be valid if we think that in order to establish the validity of an argument it is necessary to hold other arguments to be valid, which would imply that there would always have to be some necessarily valid argument, in order for the rest to be considered valid. Every argument is specific and singular, that is, there is no outline or *a priori* of argumentation. This implies that every inductive process is based on specific arguments and, consequently, supported by heuristic procedures of a hermeneutic kind. If this is true, it seems reasonable to widen the investigative domain of the discipline of logic to include the strictly hermeneutic problem.
On the basis of what has been said above, we believe that Corcoran (1989) gives another tentative definition of argumentation more consistent and complete than the previous one. It incorporates all the problems

mentioned up to now as it considers that an argument is a system of three parts: a group of propositions called the group of premises, a single proposition called the conclusion and a discourse called the chain of reasoning.

At this point we must recognise that the formulation of arguments, both by hypothetico-inductive and hypothetico-deductive methods, employs premises that are taken as valid or other arguments whose validity is taken as demonstrated. In general, these are the plausible arguments and propositions which Aristotle considered worthy of consideration or trust – to the extent that they had a good reputation. In this sense, Vega has defined the *endoxa* as 'dialectic propositions which are more or less accepted or acceptable' (Vega 1993, p. 6)[i].

As we shall see later, an argumentation theory in the philosophical sense cannot be applied to political, epistemological, ontological, ethical, etc., problems without being fully integrated into the specific topic. It is this consideration that reveals the close connection between the argumentational and interpretative processes because, in simple terms, the interpretative procedure begins where deductive reasoning is not applicable, that is, where measurement exists only in terms of degrees of plausibility. Vega expresses this problem in the following terms:

In other words: for an argument $< \{\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots \alpha_k\}, \alpha_n >$ to be truly a proof, its power of acceptability or plausibility must be greater than that of the bare proposition α_n in the given discursive framework[ii]. (Vega 1993, p. 14)

Whether an argument is plausible or not is a problem that depends on discursive frameworks, that is, on pragmatic and historical contexts whose meaning can be defined as the final, but provisional, product of the complex logic of interpretation. Schnädelbach expresses the thesis that we are attempting to sketch out in the following terms:
If discursive rationality is essentially a matter of the faculty of judging (…), the context of criticism and justification can never be bound completely by rules, even when it must follow (…) certain fundamental rules (for example, those of grammar or logical consistency). Consequently, a logic of argumentation as a purely axiomatic-deductive theory will never be possible (…)[iii]. (Schnädelbach 2000, p. 409)

Marafioti, Zamudio and Rubione (1997) consider that some of the main approaches to the problem of argumentation have taken insufficient account of aspects such as the influence social institutions exert upon argumentational discourse, suggesting that a sociology of argumentation is needed. It is equally important that the construction of argumentation theories acknowledges the value of studying argumentation from a psycholinguistic standpoint in which the subjects under investigation would include problems such as the psychogenesis of argumentational competence and the shared contextual assumptions that give rise to inferences.

The definitions of argumentation presented in the previous paragraph have been developed in the history of argumentation theories by approaches such as that of Anscombre & Ducrot, for whom argumentation is a communicative act in which an utterance is presented with the aim of supporting a conclusion and the application of other utterances may contribute to its argumentational force (a property of exclusively discursive argumentation, since not all arguments used have the same force or the same argumentational weight). These other utterances are aimed at supporting the same conclusion or another one which, appearing more obvious in a determinate context, could strengthen, or even appear as a proof of, the conclusion to be debated. Victoria Escandell (1999, p. 109) has expressed this well, pointing out that with respect to the problem of argumentation, in contrast to the English pragmatic tradition, which is more interested 'in emphasising the character of action underlying all linguistic communication' the French tradition (which

includes Anscombre & Ducrot both in their individual work and in their collective work) has paid more attention to the principles which determine the argumentational effects of utterances than to the linguistic context itself in which these take place, since it is true that, in communicative practice, utterances that can be characterised as arguments deviate from the classic discursive laws of logic.

All of this reveals the existence of argumentational operators and connectives so subtle or complex that they may be present in texts whose function, in principle, is not argumentational but rather poetic, narrative, descriptive, etc. And this is true without even taking into account the Habermasian standpoint regarding speech acts as triggers of the pragmatic units; in certain social and political contexts, these units animate the argumentational power of texts independently of semantic content originally established with the aim of obtaining determinate levels of validity. If I am not mistaken, all of this strengthens Ducrot's standpoint regarding the pre-eminence of the argumentational function of language over the other functions, to the extent that it underlies all the rest.

The works of Anscombre & Ducrot are relevant in this respect, above all in relation to the following point: although utterances can be argumentationally oriented by means of formal procedures (their contribution being a complex semantics that embraces pragmatics), their interpretation seems to depend on specific formal means. Thus, in communicative processes, interpretation represents the other side or inverse argumentation and can be explained as the cognitive process by means of which the receiver distinguishes the argumentational connectives and operators and so comes to establish a final value in the equation of meaning. However, this definition is still excessively semantic, since it is true that in most cases we find that both the arguments and the conclusions are implicit, and therefore the task consists generally in knowing how to interpret the argumentational orientation of a discourse in pragmatic and semantic terms rather than in meticulously distinguishing its operators and connectives in formal terms.

One could derive a corollary regarding the research hypothesis of the authors: namely, that the interpretative processes realise other dimensions of discursive reasoning such as a comprehensive discernment of the situation, an appropriate assessment of the *topoi* explicitly and/or implicitly employed, as well as rhetorical techniques and the dialectic limits used to orient the discourse or utterance in an argumentational way, in order to show, at one time, the probability of a particular argument or, at another time, to argue against it, etc. Anscombre & Ducrot's standpoint is notably summed up in this passage:
Our thesis is that in language there are restrictions that determine this presentation. For an utterance E_1 to be able to count as an argument in favour of E_2 (conclusion) it is not enough that E_1 actually does give reasons for accepting E_2. The linguistic structure of E_1 must also satisfy certain conditions that make it suitable, within a discourse, to constitute an argument for E_2. (Anscombre & Ducrot 1988, p. 8).

The conditions which the linguistic structure, E_1, must satisfy in order to be (discursively) suitable as reasoning are given by the type of argumentational trigger that links them. For Anscombre & Ducrot, just as rhetoric was for Nietzsche, the sense of the linguistic unit does not depend on properties denoted by it in a world situated, in a naively realist way, in the exterior. Nor does the linguistic unit depend on thoughts, but rather upon the discourses that can be associated with such a unit: it is in virtue of these discourses that a determinate argumentational trigger can be given.

Consequently, these points of view broaden the definition put forward above, because they present argumentation as a situational problem by maintaining the existence of argumentational situations and argumentational fields *per se*. Sometimes these situations are more direct in relation to the construction and reconstruction of argumentational schemes, and sometimes they are more indirect.

Brown and Yule's proposals have paid more attention to that other side of the problem of argumentation,

which here we understand as the problem of interpretation, which concerns not only arguments in themselves but also argumentational situations, argumentational force and its degree of relevance in a communication context, argumentational operators and connectives, as well as implicit or, on the contrary, manifest *topoi*. This approach reaches conclusions about the presumption of coherence in the process of interpretation of meaning, which is divided into several stages, namely: calculation of the communication function, including not only understanding of the meaning of utterances, that is, a semantic focus, but also understanding of utterances as actions, that is, a pragmatic focus, and the deployment of prior knowledge and the production of inferences.

One of the most valuable contributions to the understanding of utterances as actions is, in my opinion, that of Labov (1975). From the sociolinguistic standpoint, there are clearly rules of interpretation that are used to establish an inference not only from what is said, but from what is said in the light of what is done given that actions are realised by means of utterances. If we think about it, it will quickly strike us that most of our communicative exchanges are coherent only if we assume a strongly shared hypothesis, namely: that the structure of linguistic interaction is not fragmented or dissolved by the fact that utterances are unconnected; discursive continuity is already a reason for assuming a logic-discursive connection. In this sense, one may say that one of the fundamental problems for every argumentation theory is that of inference, since it is through inferential processes that validity is conferred on an assumption and, in general, on an argument.

In this respect, relevance theory holds that the numerous inferential processes are a consequence of the ostensive dimension of communication, and that they are therefore usually a means for manifesting something. And the intention behind trying to manifest something makes inference an auxiliary process of the ostensive dimension of communication. Sperber and Wilson's theory of relevance turns, precisely, on the problem of assumptions in the light of inferential processes because, depending on the degree of force of an assumption and/or several assumptions, in general these will produce more or less appropriate inferences. Here we start from the fact that heuristic reasoning is not completely falsifiable or verifiable and that, nevertheless, it is this type of reasoning that we use to construct a hypothesis with which to discern, in the most productive and pertinent way possible, the communicative intentions of the transmitter (using the term 'transmitter' in a loose sense here). The notion of relevance refers, in short, to the production of contextual effects.

The generation of relevant contextual effects has a close relation with inductive reasoning in its abductive modality. In this modality, induction and interpretation offer aspects which are characteristic of each and also common to both without distinction. We should consider the problem of relevance together with strong and weak implicatures: two of the most suggestive aspects of Sperber and Wilson's theory of relevance. In short, a theory that emerges in opposition to the code model based, according to Tusón (1984, p. 28) on the idea that

a transmitter, in accordance with a determinate code, transmits a sign whose referent lies outside the communication process (an event, a mood, a scientific truth, etc.). The transmitted signs travel through a channel and reach the receiver who will, if in possession of the relevant code, carry out decoding[iv].

In his introductory study to writings on Nietzschean rhetoric, Santiago Guervós (2000, p. 22) wrote: 'As epistemology operates – like philosophy – by means of language, and language is essentially rhetorical – in other words, persuasive -, all questions referred to language and philosophy are rhetorical questions'. So, paraphrasing Guervós, we hold that since epistemology operates – to some extent the same as philosophy – by means of reasoning (and language is essentially reasoning, that is, persuasive expression), all questions referred to philosophy and epistemology are rhetorical, dialectic and argumentational questions.

However, this approach would not be enough in itself, as it presents problems which are difficult to deal with without assuming the standpoint of linguistic ontology, which emphatically insists that language is not an instrument of representation but rather pre-forms our horizon of comprehension, being conditioned by our

experience of the world. Consequently, the speculative dimension that gives it life also inclines it to the ceaseless production of utterances with a suasive or dissuasive function.

For our part, we maintain here that what leads us inevitably to the problem of argumentation and interpretation is the linguistic medium, which is therefore, one of the most important criteria for examining the philosophical legacy of both traditions. As I see it, the different theories of argumentation constitute a strand (among others) of continuity within the historical time line.

The research of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1989) on the new rhetoric was classified by the authors themselves within the discipline of logic. In a way, this research may be divided into two fundamental problems: on the one hand, the value of arguments; on the other, their structure. The second question stems from the analytic tradition of philosophy and leads to a careful and meticulous examination of argumentational techniques.

In the context of continental philosophy, analysis of the kinds of argumentation and of its structure have also been conceived from the standpoint of the tradition of transcendental philosophy, resulting in avenues of inquiry such as that of Apel (1984, p. 656), which might be described as a transcendental reconstruction of the linguistic-pragmatic conditions of possibility and validity implicit in all argumentation[v].

There is an innate contradiction in this application of the linguistic turn to the tradition of transcendental philosophy: viewing the rhetorical tradition and theories of argumentation in the light of the Kantian problem of an ultimate foundation of objective knowledge on the basis of the philosophy of consciousness.

The contradiction arises from the fact that the concept of consciousness has definitively lost the status whereby it guaranteed objective knowledge precisely in this area of problems, because the validity conditions of argumentation refer to fundamental inter-subjective frameworks, whose status as guarantors of the objective validity of any knowledge obtained depends on public argumentational processes. In these processes, neither the structure of arguments nor their value (epistemic, moral, legal, aesthetic, etc.) may be conceived along the metaphysical lines of Kantian transcendental philosophy, as long as rational conviction (once objectively sufficient) and persuasion (once rooted in the particular kind of subject and, therefore, objectively sufficient) are analysed as two interdependent phenomena in line with the rehabilitation of Aristotle and Plato effected in the 1950s by the new rhetoric and the rise of argumentation theory.

Our position may be observed, for example, in the defence mounted by the new rhetoric of the so-called *principle of inertia*, which postulates that something accepted up until now may not be rejected without a rational reason. To some extent, it may be said that the principle of inertia is a defence of the important place occupied by the topic in argumentational processes, since argumentation cannot begin without assuming something. Gadamer's defence of the notion of prejudice rests upon the very same reason.

Gadamer emphatically rejected the view that intersubjective agreements based on a quasi-transcendental idea of argumentational logic could give rise to an idea of agreement guaranteed by an unimpeachable normativity that would stamp the structure of argumentation upon the controversial or polemical processes, remarking that there cannot be universal criteria for establishing argumentational validity. Both arguments and interpretations are historically located. The generalisation of universal validity of a rule cannot be guaranteed rationally by the fact that, in a universal audience, everybody could agree with it.

The Gadamerian defence of the concept of universality is, as we saw, confined to the universality of a medium, the linguistic medium. In this we see that what governs is the principle of the speculative dimension of language – a principle that we find expressed in the famous Gadamerian formula that asserts: 'the being that can be understood is language'.

The universal validity of any rule or norm arising from general assent can only be derived from the nature of the linguistic medium, even if this were to be conceived – hypothetically and, nevertheless, definitively – as a result of the universal validity of the rule's content.

For this reason, it should be stated that prejudices or the principle of inertia modulate and orient the argumentational processes, leading them towards forms of consensus in which the modality of validity cannot any longer be established in relation to the universality of the semantic content expressed in the proposition, but rather on the basis of criteria regarding the value of arguments. These criteria do not deal with the contingent character of arguments, that is, their interpretative dimension, with which they increase the number of principles of inertia available to an epoch for reflecting on arguments in general – one of the most important tasks being to distinguish between eristic reasoning (based on apparently accepted premises) and reasoning in which there is, at least, a dialectic dimension (based on accepted premises, and with which possible contradictions are explored).

When we examine his philosophical conception of hermeneutics, it becomes clear that the degree of contingency Gadamer attributes to the validity of all argumentation is greater than that estimated by, for example, Apel. I refer to the fact that he does not seem to allow that argumentational premises concerning what is real (divided by Perelman into facts and truths as opposed to argumentational premises that are assumptions) can attain universal validity in a hypothetically universal audience. Gadamer does not allow this because he does not conceive the argumentational validity of the premises of argumentation to be separate from the *topoi* and the characteristic principles of linguistic ontology which we referred to above.

Therefore, in relation to the problem of the structure and validity of arguments, I maintain here that philosophical hermeneutics implicitly proposes once again a notion of argumentation in which propositions appearing in arguments cannot be dissociated from the structure of the latter because, as laid down in the classical hermeneutical tradition, they belong to the text as a whole or, as expressed by Toulmin's organicist metaphor[vi], they are greater than the sum of their parts (Toulmin 1958, p. 29).

The 'whole' (mentioned a few lines above) is formed linguistically, that is, in a universal medium, but it cannot provide a universal condition of validity thanks to transcendental instances reformulated within a logic-linguistic paradigm, above all if we accept that all propositions can be conceived as actions and cannot be extracted from the pragmatic contexts in which they are uttered and by virtue of which they signify and connote. This is why Gadamer often understands it to be a characteristic of hermeneutic philosophy to give fuel to the dissolution of the modern dichotomy between philosophy and rhetoric or new rhetoric, within which he would situate the developments of argumentation theories.

So the connotations of an expression do not obscure their comprehensibility (as they do not univocally designate their reference), but rather increase it insofar as the nexus to which they refer becomes more comprehensible as a whole. It is the whole that is constructed here with words [arguments, interpretations, etc.], and it is only given in them.

Gadamer has a Platonic standpoint when he states that dialectics is a more suitable medium than rhetoric because it offers the possibility of counter-argument.
The dialectic model of counter-argumentation cannot be compared to rhetoric if we take the latter to be a medium for showing that the orator's skill may turn his position both towards defence and attack of what has already been stated, that is, when we have a concept of argumentation in which it has no specific function and, therefore, can be used to defend a tendentiously unlimited variety of theoretical viewpoints, or even a no less limited variety of intentions and goals in action.

This is not the case with the argumentational model that prevails in the interpretative processes based on the

dialectic method of questioning, in which the dialectic is presented as a medium for pragmatically and speculatively resolving and explaining the thesis before us[vii]. This method is probative rather than demonstrative; nor is it a method comparable to the persuasive processes as such, because it is not strictly aimed at persuasion, and it may only be applied, according to Aristotle, to those philosophical issues whose obviousness one wishes to reveal.

On the basis of these first distinctions between dialectic, rhetoric and topic one may state that philosophical hermeneutics, while it does not analyse the concepts of argumentational validity and structure (although it did address the validity and structure of interpretation in the classical period), provides the model of a linguistic ontology in which theories of argumentation are held.

If we adopt a prescriptivist, descriptivist or instrumentalist standpoint to clarify whether a normative theory of argumentation is possible, that is, if we can conceive, and in what terms, the legitimacy of the rules that govern the action of arguing (in respect of the structure of arguments and the argumentational value of reasoning), there remains a prior question, namely: the question of linguistic ontology after the linguistic turn.

For example, it could be maintained that the semantic content of the concept of *argumentational normativity* is the product of conventions or, on the contrary, that it is not, *sensu stricto*, a product of conventions. But if we accept the assumptions of a linguistic ontology, we may still take an adjacent position. Given that the concept of argumentational normativity refers to argumentational value in the most general way, the hypothetical conventions on which the norm or the rules for arguing would have to be based – according to the conventional position – would become resolvable. In spite of that, at a certain point these conventions would not be negotiable, because their argumentational value would be closely linked to the epistemic condition of being an act of showing an argument by means of one or several propositions.
The convention of the rule – even if we hold a conventional conception regarding the foundation of logical laws – would end up acquiring a normative dimension because it forms part of the argumentational activity. Therefore, by virtue of an exploration that is not so much 'reproductive' as 'constructive' in order to bring Gadamerian thought up to date, we maintain here that linguistic ontology is the implicit model in the development of argumentation theory for two reasons. Firstly, because language is where the action of arguing is carried out; and secondly, because it is by virtue of language that a complex allocation of the historical *logos* is achieved. In Gadamer's thinking, this formula combines the Greek concept of natural rationality and the Hegelian concept of reason in history – ultimately, it is neither the one nor the other, because the general formulation of the historical *logos* is expressed in principles.

Consequently, as it is a modality of rationality inconceivable outside of the historical time line(s), it does not provide models of normativity compelling enough to elevate itself into even an instant of historical time nor, strictly speaking, into the concept of a Hegelian absolute spirit, but rather perhaps into models whose normativity depends on (the being of) language as a form of mediation between:
(1) the shared consciousness of an epoch,
(2) the development of reasoning characteristic of what Gadamer called the social consciousness (which is why there is a modality of shared virtue rhetoric in every epoch or, at least, a logic, or a civil rhetoric, as well as a psychology and a sociology of reasoning),
(3) experience of the verisimilar,
(4) experience of normative value (logical, ethical and legal) of world interpretations – construing 'world' not only in the sense of 'world view', but rather as a group of codes, theories, traditions, etc., which constitute a knowing; these interpretations could give rise to, or even in some cases, form or pre-form argumentational values.

The definition of argumentation and interpretation has semantic boundaries that are both subtly and eloquently permeable, taking into account the fact that in the final analysis all forms of knowledge cannot but approach

and construct their object or topic by means of argumentational and interpretative processes. This accounts for why the latter may be characterised as the new *koine* of our time (Navarro 2009).

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