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ALL of the SOCIETY of the PRECIOUS BLOOD
Published by the SOCIETY of the PRECIOUS BLOOD

Editorial address: Saint Joseph's College
                    Collegeville, Indiana

Business address: Saint Charles Seminary
                  Carthage, Ohio

MARCH • 1957

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:
United States and Canada $4.00
All other countries $4.50
Single copy $1.25

Volume 1 • Number 1/4
CONCERN for a theory of argumentation can find justification in a tradition as old as that of Greek rhetoric and dialectic. At the same time any theory of argumentation must break with the notion of reason and reasoning which comes from Descartes and has left its stamp upon western philosophy for three hundred years.

No one denies that the ability to deliberate and argue is a distinctive sign of rational being. And still for three centuries the logicians and theorists of knowledge have neglected any consideration of the means which bring a mind to accept an argument. This fact is due to the non-compelling character of arguments which give support to a thesis. Deliberation and argumentation are opposed by their very nature to necessity and evidence. We do not deliberate where the solution is necessary, we do not argue against evidence. The domain of argumentation is that of the likely, the plausible, the probable, to the extent that the latter escapes mathematical certitude. Now it was Descartes' idea, clearly expressed in the First Part of the Discours de la méthode, to hold "almost as false whatever was only probable." Making evidence the mark of reason, he wanted to consider as rational only the demonstrations which, setting out from clear and distinct ideas, extend the evidence of axioms to all theorems, by means of apodictic proofs. Reasoning more geometrico was the model he proposed to philosophers, who wanted to construct a system of thought which could reach the dignity of a true science. A rational science cannot really be content with more or less likely opinions. It has to elaborate a system of necessary propositions which impose themselves on all reasonable beings, and about which agreement is inevitable. Disagreement, then, is a sign of error. "Every time two men make a contrary judgment about the same matter," says Descartes, "it is certain that one of them is mistaken. What is more, neither of them possesses the truth, for if one of them had a clear and precise view of the truth, he would be able to expound it to his opponent in such a fashion that it would force the latter's conviction." (Regulae II)

For the followers of the experimental and inductive sciences, what counts is not so much the necessity of propositions as their truth, their conformity with facts. The empiricist considers as evidence, "not that which the mind does or must yield to, but that
which it ought to yield to, namely that by yielding to which its belief is kept conformable to fact.” (J. S. Mill. System of Logic, p. 370) Although the evidence he acknowledges is not that of rational intuition but of sensible intuition and the method he approves is not that of the deductive sciences but of the experimental sciences, he is no less convinced that the only valid proofs are proofs admitted by the natural sciences.

Only that which conforms to scientific method is rational, in the broad sense of this word. And the works of logic which study the means of proof (works limited essentially to the study of deduction and usually completed by some indications about inductive reasoning, reduced moreover, not to constructing but to verifying hypotheses) rarely venture to examine the means of proof used in the human sciences. The logician, inspired by the Cartesian ideal, feels at home only in the study of the proofs that Aristotle qualified as analytic. No other means presents the same character of necessity. And this tendency is all the more strongly marked after a period in which, under the influence of the mathematical logicians, logic was reduced to formal logic, to a study of the means of proof used in the mathematical sciences. As a result, reasoning which is foreign to the purely formal domain escapes logic, and consequently escapes reason too. This reason, which Descartes hoped would let us solve, at least in principle, all the problems which men face and for which the divine mind already has the solution, has been more and more limited in its competence, so that whatever cannot be reduced to the formal presents insurmountable difficulties for it.

From this evolution of logic, and from the progress it has unquestionably realized, must we draw the conclusion that reason is quite incompetent in areas that escape mathematics? Must we conclude that, when neither experience nor logical deduction can furnish the solution of a problem, we can do nothing but abandon ourselves to irrational forces, to our instincts, to suggestion or violence?

In opposing will to understanding, insight to geometry, the heart to reason, the art of persuading to that of convincing, Pascal already was trying to side-step the shortcomings of the geometrical method that result from the fact that fallen man is no longer solely a reasonable being. Similar purposes are behind Kant’s opposition between faith and science and Bergson’s antithesis of intuition and reason. But whether there is question of rationalist philosophers or of those called antirationalist, all of them continue the Cartesian tradition by the limitation they put on the idea of reason.

It seems to us, on the contrary, that this is an undue and quite unjustified limitation of the domain where our faculty of reasoning and proving comes into play. Indeed, Aristotle had already analyzed dialectic proofs alongside analytic proofs, those concerned with the likely alongside those which are necessary, those employed in deliberation and argumentation alongside those used in demonstration. The post-Cartesian notion of reason, however, forces us to bring in irrational elements every time the object of knowledge is not evident. Whether these elements are obstacles to be overcome — such as imagination, passion or suggestion — or suprarational sources of certitude — such as the heart, grace or Bergsonian intuition — this view introduces a dichotomy, a distinction of the human faculties, that is wholly artificial and contrary to the real processes of our thinking.
It is the notion of evidence as characterizing reason that must be challenged if we want to make room for a theory of argumentation which admits the use of reason to direct our action and influence the action of others. Evidence is thought of as the force before which every normal mind must yield and at the same time a sign of the truth of whatever imposes itself because it is evident. Evidence would bind the psychological to the logical, and allow passage from one of these levels to the other. Every proof would be a reduction to evidence, and what is evident would have no need of proof: this is the immediate application, by Pascal, of the Cartesian theory of evidence. (Pascal, "Of the art of persuasion. Rules for demonstration." Oeuvres, p. 380, Pléiade Edition)

Leibniz already objected to such a limitation being imposed on logic. It was his wish that "one might demonstrate or give the means of demonstrating all the axioms which are not primitive, without distinguishing the opinions men have of them, and without caring whether or not they give their assent thereto."

Now the logical theory of demonstration developed along the lines traced by Leibniz, not those of Pascal, and did not admit that what was evident had no need of proof. In the same way, the theory of argumentation cannot be developed if every proof is conceived of as reduction to evidence. The object of this theory is the study of the discursive techniques that allow one to bring about or increase the adherence of minds to the theses that one proposes for their assent. It is characteristic of the mind's adherence that its intensity is variable. Nothing makes us limit our study to a particular degree of adherence that is characterized by evidence. Nothing permits us to think a priori that the degrees of adherence to a thesis are proportional to its probability, and to identify evidence and truth. It is good method not to confuse at the outset the aspects of reasoning relative to truth with those relative to adherence, but to study them separately. Preoccupation about their interference or their eventual correspondence might come afterwards. Only on this condition is it possible to develop a theory of argumentation that has a philosophical bearing.

2.

In the last three centuries there have appeared works of ecclesiastics preoccupied with the problems raised by preaching. And the twentieth century can be called the century of publicity and propaganda, devoting many works to this matter. Yet modern logicians and philosophers have remained totally disinterested in the subject. An authentic study of this matter would call for a return to the preoccupations of the Renaissance, and still further to those of the Greek and Latin writers who studied the art of persuading and convincing, the technique of deliberation and discussion. Such a study could rightly be called a new rhetoric.

Aristotle examines certain proofs in his Topics and shows how they are used in his Rhetoric. He calls them "dialectical" — a terminology that might justify a rapprochement of the theory of argumentation with dialectics, which was conceived by Aristotle himself as the art of reasoning in which commonly accepted opinions (ἐλαχογος) are the point of departure. (Topics, Bk I, Ch 1, 100a) But a number of reasons make a rapprochement with rhetoric preferable.
In the first place, there is danger of confusion coming from a return to Aristotle. For even though the word “dialectics” served for centuries to designate logic itself, since Hegel and under the influence of the doctrines he inspired, the term has acquired a meaning far removed from its primitive one and now generally accepted. The lot of the word rhetoric is quite different. It has so fallen out of philosophical use that it is not even mentioned in A. Lalande’s vocabulary of philosophy.

But there is a much more important reason for our preference: it is the very spirit in which antiquity dealt with dialectics and rhetoric. Dialectical reasoning was considered as parallel to analytical reasoning, but it treats probable instead of necessary propositions. The very idea that dialectics is concerned with opinions — theses to which one adheres with a variable intensity — is not exploited at all. You might say that the status of opinion is impersonal, not relative to the minds adhering to them. By contrast, the idea of adherence and of minds to which a discourse is addressed is an essential ingredient of all the ancient theories of rhetoric. Connecting argumentation with rhetoric in this way underlines the fact that it is in relation to an audience that all argumentation is developed. In this framework the study of opinion in the Topics can be given its proper place. It goes without saying, of course, that a modern study of argumentation would go far beyond the limits of certain aspects of the ancients’ rhetoric, while at the same time it would pass over certain aspects which held the attention of these masters of rhetoric.

The object of the ancients’ rhetoric was above all the art of speaking persuasively in public. It concerned the use of spoken language, of discourse, before a crowd gathered in the market place, seeking its adherence to a thesis presented to it. Evidently then the goal of oratorical art, the adherence of minds, is the same as that of all argumentation. But there is no need to limit oneself to the spoken word or to limit one’s audience to a crowd in the market place.

Rejecting the first of these limitations opens up a more philosophical horizon: the logician wants to understand the mechanism of thought, while a master of eloquence desires merely to form practitioners. We have only to cite Aristotle’s Rhetoric to show that this way of looking at rhetoric has the support of some famous examples. What is more, the modern role of printing makes it important to lay special stress today on printed texts. On the other hand, the study of mnemonics and oratorical delivery can be passed over in the modern logician’s approach to rhetoric. Such problems belong rather to schools of dramatic art. Any study of argumentation must be conceived in the broadest terms. It need not be a one dimensional thing, limited to discourse as we commonly think of it. Discussion between two individuals or even personal deliberation belongs to a general theory of argumentation. The scope of modern rhetoric will go far beyond that of classical rhetoric.

What must be retained from traditional rhetoric is the idea of audience, which immediately comes to mind when we think of discourse. Every discourse is directed to an audience; and too often we forget that the same is true of all writing. A discourse is conceived of in terms of an audience. But the material absence of readers can make a writer think he is all alone in the world, while as a matter of fact his text is always conditioned, consciously or unconsciously.

THE NEW RHETORIC • • • •
ly, by the persons whom he means to address.

Among the ancients, rhetoric was the study of a technique to be used on the common herd, impatient to get to conclusion quickly, to form an opinion, without taking the trouble of making a serious investigation beforehand. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Bk I, Ch 2, 1357a)

It is this aspect of rhetoric that explains why Plato in the *Georgias* (455, 457a, 463, 471) fought it so vigorously and contributed to its falling into disfavor in the opinion of philosophers. But here again, why not admit that argumentation can be addressed to any kind of audience, and not just to an illiterate mob? True, if an orator is going to fulfill his function he must adapt himself to his audience. Understandably, then, the discourse that is most effective with an incompetent audience is not necessarily the one that will beget conviction in a philosopher. When Plato in his *Phaedrus* (273e) dreams of a rhetoric worthy of a philosopher, what he recommends is a technique that could convince the gods themselves. When the audience changes, the argumentation changes too, and even though the goal at which it aims is always to act efficaciously on minds, in judging its value one cannot but take account of the quality of these minds it succeeds in convincing. For this reason particular emphasis should be given to the analysis of philosophical arguments, which are traditionally considered as the most "rational" — since they are presumably addressed to readers over whom suggestion, pressure, or special interest hold the least sway. But the same techniques of argumentation are found on every level, whether it is discussion around the family table or debate in a very specialized circle. If the quality of the minds which adhere to certain arguments in highly speculative domains presents a guarantee of their value, the common structure they share with arguments used in daily discussion shows how and why those arguments are understood.

Argumentation itself is concerned only with discursive means for obtaining the adherence of minds, with the technique that uses language to persuade and convince. Such a limitation in no way implies that this is the most efficacious way of acting upon minds. Quite the contrary. The most solid beliefs are those which are not only admitted without proof but which are often not even made explicit. And when there is question of obtaining adherence, nothing is more certain than internal or external experience and calculations that agree with rules previously agreed upon. But recourse to argumentation cannot be avoided when these proofs are discussed by one of the parties, when there is disagreement about their meaning or interpretation, their value or their connection with controverted problems.

On the other hand, anything done to win adherence falls outside the field of argumentation to the extent that language is not used to support or interpret it. The man who preaches by his example without saying anything or the person who uses a caress or a slap can obtain considerable results. But such procedures are of interest to argumentation only when they are revealed by means of language, when there is recourse to promises or threats. There are cases when language is used, not as a means of communication, but for direct action, as a blessing or a curse. These instances pertain to rhetoric only when such action is integrat-ed with argumentation.
One of the essential factors in propaganda is the conditioning of the audience by means of the numerous and varied techniques that make use of anything that can influence behavior. This sort of conditioning has been developed especially in the twentieth century, but the usage was well known from antiquity. The Catholic Church has turned it to advantage with incomparable skill. These techniques exercise an undeniable effect in preparing an audience, in rendering it more accessible to the arguments that will be presented to it. But here again we have a viewpoint that escapes the field of argumentation, which restricts itself to conditioning done through discourse.

Finally, what Aristotle calls “extra-technical proofs” — proofs which do not arise from oratorical technique — enter argumentation only when there is disagreement about the conclusions that one can draw from them. (Rhetoric, Bk I, Ch 2, 1335b) Incidentally, the ancients’ term “extra-technical proofs” is a happy reminder that our civilization, characterized by its extreme ingenuity in techniques for acting upon things, has almost completely forgotten the theory of acting upon minds by means of discourse, which the Greeks considered, under the name of rhetoric, as the ρατητίαν παρ excellence.

3.

Since the theory of argumentation is concerned with an efficacious action on minds by means of discourse, it might be considered a branch of psychology. If arguments are not compelling, if they do not necessarily convince but possess a certain force which can vary according to the audience, could one not judge them by the effect they produce? The study of argumentation would thus become one of the objects of experimental psychology: various arguments would be tested before various audiences sufficiently well known to draw from these experiments conclusions having a certain general validity. American psychologists have not failed to develop such studies, whose interest cannot be questioned.

But a philosophical approach is different. It seeks to characterize the various argumentative structures, the analysis of which must precede any experimental proof for testing their effectiveness. Moreover, we do not think that the laboratory method could determine the value of argumentation used in the human sciences, in law and in philosophy, for the very methodology of the psychologist already constitutes an object of controversy.

We likewise reject the approach adopted by philosophers who strive to limit reasoning power in social, political, and philosophical material by taking their inspiration from models furnished by the experimental or deductive sciences, which reject as valueless anything that does not conform to schemes previously imposed. Rather, we would seek inspiration from the logicians, imitating the methods which have been so successful for them for the past century.

Let us not forget that in the first half of the nineteenth century logic enjoyed no prestige, either in scientific circles or among the public at large. Whately could write, about 1828, that if rhetoric no longer enjoyed the esteem of the public, logic enjoyed its favors still less. Logic has sprung into life brilliantly during the last hundred years, when, instead of rehashing old formulas, it set out to analyze the means of proof really used by mathematicians. Modern formal logic was set up as the
study of the means of demonstration used in the mathematical sciences. But as a result its domain is limited, for whatever is ignored by the mathematicians is foreign to formal logic. The logicians should complete their theory of demonstration by a theory of argumentation. They face the task of analyzing the means of proof which the human sciences, law, and philosophy make use of. They must analyze the argumentation presented by publicists in their journals, by politicians in their speeches, by lawyers in their briefs, by philosophers in their treatises.


3. For a bibliography, cf. Lasswell, Casey and Smith, Propaganda and Promotional Activities (Minneapolis 1935. Also Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion by the same authors (Princeton 1946).

NEWMAN

THEOLOGISCHE QUARTALSCHRIFT

COMING TO GRIPS WITH the spiritual dangers of his time, Newman felt called to oppose excessive emphasis on the formally logical and the trust in mechanically manipulated syllogisms. He felt called to give the pursuit of knowledge back to the living, responsible person. Yet in his treatment of the often overlooked personal moments in the concrete life of knowledge there is never question of a denial of the value of formal logic or abandoning knowledge to feeling or caprice. Rather he establishes the validity of knowledge consciousness as opposed to the perfunctory independence of formal calculation. He had, furthermore, a special interest in defending the faith from the charge of subjectivism.

As opposed to abstract knowledge, concrete knowledge is treated by New-