

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Linguistically Sound Arguments: Part II: Eloquence And Argument



At the 1998 International Conference on Argument, Ziegelmüller and Parson proposed a perspective on what constituted linguistically sound arguments. While those positions are surely memorably familiar to the listener or reader, it is possible that four years has dimmed recollection of these insights. Thus this paper will first summarize the positions taken in the 1998 paper presented here in Amsterdam; then it will focus on the one area which received but scant attention. In a word it will look at the possibilities of eloquence and argument; stated another way, it will return to the divorce between lexis and logos, and propose a settlement. That settlement will start with an awarding of the first of children involved, the lexical strategy with the name of “metaphor.” The awarding of the subsequent three children will await future conferences.

The earlier paper began by surveying a series of definitions of Good Argument, which included its reasonability - reasonable argument is that in which “the form of inference is free of obvious defects, and the underlying assumptions of the argument are shared by the audience” (Zarefsky, 1981: 88). Other definitions featured an argument’s “soundness”. An argument is sound, Farrell argues, if it:

1. is addressed to an empowered and involved audience,
2. conforms to the consensual standards of the specific field, and
3. is consistent with social knowledge (Farrell, 1977).

After surveying differing perspectives on Good Argument, we concluded that Good Argument is one that is *linguistically sound* and proposed three characteristics of linguistically sound arguments:

A linguistically sound argument:

1. conforms to the traditional field invariant standards of inductive and deductive argument,
2. is based upon data appropriate to the audience and field, and
3. is expressed in language that enhances the evocative and ethical force of argument (Ziegelmüller and Parson, 3-5).

Without reviewing the reasoning or data involved in establishing these characteristics, the purpose of this paper is to develop the third characteristic of linguistically sound arguments: the problem of language.

That lexis and logos have been divorced should come as no surprise. From the early applications of Aristotle to the present, the view of arguments as valid – when determined by a mathematical account of validity – have dominated the view of argument. Toulmin’s comments on the problems of the mathematical model and the need for a substitute model are well known (Toulmin, 3-10). Similarly, Chaim Perelman sees modern logic becoming increasingly removed from argument in discourse, being content to set up its own systems: “In modern logic, the product of reflection on mathematical reasoning, the formal systems are no longer related to any rational evidence whatever. The logician is free to elaborate as he pleases the artificial language of the system he is building, free to fix the symbols and combinations of symbols that may be used” (Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca, 13).

1. Presence and argument

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca discuss in *The New Rhetoric* (1969) the centrality of the concept of “presence” to argument. They see presence as an “essential factor to argumentation” because “through verbal magic alone,” a rhetor can “enhance the value of some of the elements of which one has actually been made conscious” (1969, 116-7). Presence becomes the quality arguments possess to varying degrees, endowing them with a sense of urgency. Presence is the featuring of the important, the focusing on the issues to be decided. One of the links he suggests is through the imagination and he quotes Bacon’s view of rhetoric as applying reason to the imagination. Their comment makes the link clear: “Bacon is expressing, in the philosophical language of his day, an idea not far removed from ours: presence, at first a psychological phenomenon, becomes an essential element in argumentation (Perelman/ Olbrechts-Tyteca, 117). Another way of talking about presence is to say that presence, among other things, is the clothing of argument. Presence is primarily a product of lexis.

While the importance of presence is stressed in their work, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca say little about the means by which arguments acquire presence. In their discussion of producing presence, they mention repetition, evocation of detail, the use of tense, definite pronouns, synecdoche, amplification, and metaphor. Their treatment of metaphor, however, is typically classical; in their

words, “We cannot better describe a metaphor than by conceiving it as a condensed analogy” (Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca, 399). This study contends that metaphor is a primary vehicle - though certainly not the only vehicle - which can both evoke and even suppress presence in discourse.

2. *Lexis and the metaphor: back to Aristotle*

The search for a way to link lexis productively to argument takes us back to Aristotle, and of ways in which his interpreters have framed and reframed him. In fact, the various definitions given to lexis reveal some of the problem: in retracing definitions of lexis, Ricoeur observes Hardy’s focus on “elocution” in 1932; most English translations tend to follow EM Cope’s 1877 definition as “style.” While Ross (1949) and Bywater (1985) use “diction,” the dominant translation appears to be “style”; Lucas comments that “lexis can often be rendered by style but it covers the whole process of combining words into an intelligible sequence” (Ricoeur, 370). There are two problems (at least) in Aristotle which have given rise to differing accounts of at least one particular of lexis - the metaphor. The first is that Aristotle wrote of the metaphor in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*; probably the *Poetics* was written first, and contains the definition: “Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.” (*Poetics*, 1457b6-9). In both treatises, as Ricoeur observes, “Metaphor is placed under the same rubric of lexis” (Ricoeur, 328). Thus we have metaphor discussed in both works, briefly in the *Rhetoric*, and the question arises to whether it is the same thing in both, or performs the same function. Ricoeur’s analysis is most instructive on this point:

The duality of rhetoric and poetics reflects a duality in the use of speech as well as in the situations of speaking. We said that rhetoric originally was oratorical technique; its aim and that of oratory are identical, to know how to persuade. Now this function, however far-reaching does not cover all the uses of speech. Poetics - the art of composing poems, principally tragic poems-as far as its function and its situation of speaking are concerned does not depend on rhetoric, the art of defense, of deliberation, of blame, and of praise. Poetry is not oratory. Persuasion is not its aim; rather, it purges the feelings of pity and fear. Thus, poetry and oratory mark out two distinct universes of discourse. Metaphor, however, has a foot in each domain. With respect to structure, it really can consist in just one unique operation, the transfer of the meaning of words; but with

respect to function, it follows the divergent destinies of oratory and tragedy. Metaphor will therefore have a unique structure but two functions: a rhetorical function and a poetic function (Ricoeur, 327).

Aristotle comments that metaphors will occur in ordinary use of language, so are appropriate in rhetoric:

In the language of spoken prose, only the current term, the distinctive name, and metaphors can be used to advantage; we so infer because these, and these alone, are what every one uses in ordinary conversation. Every one does use metaphors, as well as distinctive names and current terms. So it is plain that good composition will have an air of novelty (*Rhetoric*, 1404b49-55).

They have specific demands for appropriateness, however. The metaphor must have a “correspondence” or proportion between the metaphor and what is signified; “otherwise the impropriety will be glaring... If you aim to adorn a thing, you must take your metaphor from something better in its class; if to disparage, then from something worse” (*Rhetoric*, 1405a14-20).

One of the problems understanding the value of metaphor in Aristotle is that he appears to take conflicting positions on it. In the *Topics*, he seems clear that the metaphor works against meaning: “everything is unclear that is said by metaphor.” (*Topics* 139B34). Given this position and his view of perspicuity as a virtue of style in the *Rhetoric*, we may have a problem. But as Richard Moran comments, “his attitude is not always so dismissive, not even in philosophical contexts, and he often makes explicit mention of particular metaphorical transfers that are not harmless but are seen as actually instructive” (Moran, 387). Even within the *Rhetoric* itself there is some ambivalence about the use of metaphor. When it is linked to style in Book III, there is the attitude of regret, due to the nature of the audience. In a more perfect world, as Moran comments, “those in public debate would concern themselves only with the facts of the case, and seek to give neither pleasure nor offense” (Moran, 387). While Aristotle’s comments on lexis do not focus specifically on the metaphor, it seems a dubious use of lexis, and he even makes a disparaging comment about actors, who use style to overwhelm substance.

On the other hand, he seems most positive at times about the use of metaphor. “We learn above all from metaphors” (1410b12) when Aristotle discusses them as ways to see the relationship between proportional figures, such as genus and species. In fact, in explanation, Aristotle even introduces a metaphor of his own:

Men feel toward language as they feel toward strangers and fellow citizens and we must introduce an element of strangeness into our diction because people marvel at what is far away and to marvel is pleasant. (*Rhetoric*, 1404b9-12)

Aristotle describes the criteria necessary for producing effective metaphors: they must be pleasing, contain lucidity, and also strangeness (1405a8). While his comments on lucidity are similar to those in the *Topics* and *Categories*, his statements that they must please and contain strangeness emerge from his discussion of lexis, and from metaphor specifically.

If Paul Ricoeur is correct, that the metaphor functions differently in poetics than it does in rhetoric, then we might stop to ask how the metaphor functions in rhetoric. The argument here is that the metaphor functions enthymematically, and to the extent it does, lexis becomes a key component of argument. Without revisiting all the previous visits of the enthymeme from McBurney in 1937 to the present, I would like to borrow Conley's summary of its essential characteristics since he has surveyed the previous visits.

1. The enthymeme is a deductive sort of argument....
2. One must be careful not to reduce 'enthymeme' to a formalist conception ...
3. If an enthymeme should be expressed as a truncated syllogism, it is to be expressed for practical reasons, not for formal reasons....
4. The premises of an enthymeme are probabilities, not certainties....
5. If there are missing premises in an enthymeme expressed as a truncated syllogism, they are supplied by the audience to fill out the argument....
6. Finally, the premises of enthymeme are not simply statements of probable fact, but reflect values and attitudes as well....

(Conley, 169)

Our purpose is not to make all metaphors into deductive enthymemes. However, the process by which these attitudes and values (which can be expressed in metaphors, and surely are) are appropriated by audiences is similar to the way it would appropriate a metaphor. Now the metaphor, Aristotle says, "conveys learning and knowledge through the medium of the genus" (1410b13). This learning is most often produced by understanding the *substitution* of one term for another (and the substitution in Aristotle is of the singular noun). So while there was a logical order, as Ricoeur comments, in the relationship of terms, the metaphor becomes a deviation from that relationship. The metaphor, as Ricoeur continues, "destroys an order only to invent a new one" (Ricoeur, 334) But the

invention must be recognized to create that knowledge; each metaphor contains the new information; it either re-describes or recreates a new reality.

The creation of this new reality is a joint project between the rhetor and poet and the audience involved. Hence Lloyd Bitzer's now famous definition of the enthymeme fits the process of metaphoric understanding. Bitzer defines:

The enthymeme is a syllogism based on probabilities, signs, and examples, whose function is rhetorical persuasion. Its successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of speaker and audience, and this is its essential character (Bitzer, 408).

The creation of the metaphor is similarly a joint effort of rhetor and audience; it may use the name of signs, probabilities and examples, for it is the substitution of nouns. A metaphor may then occur as part of an enthymeme and may be negotiated in the same way aspects of an enthymeme are negotiated. For a metaphor to function as a comparison, the grounds on which the comparison is based must be "available" to audiences. When it is, the use of the metaphor will be rewarded much as one would reward an rhetor's enthymeme; one pleases oneself by either understanding the new reality created by the metaphor or by completing the chain of the enthymeme. Richard Moran makes the implications clear:

Such imaginative activity on the part of the audience contributes directly to the rhetorician's aim of persuasiveness.... But the crucial advantage here is not simply the surplus value obtained by having others work for you, but rather the miraculous fact that shifting the imaginative labor onto the audience makes the ideas thereby produced infinitely more valuable rhetorically than they would be as products of the explicit assertions of the speaker (Moran. 396).

He also believes the ideas would be less subject to suspicion if worked out by the audience themselves. If the rhetor is covert, Moran believes that suspicion may be aroused. In fact, he argues that one of the reasons Aristotle is ambivalent about the metaphor is that "both its value as a vehicle of understanding and the dangers of its rhetorical use stem from the same features of its 'live' imagistic power" (Moran, 396). In sum, Moran's description of the use of the metaphor and its value to the rhetor are strikingly similar to Bitzer's description of the possibilities of the enthymeme:

Presenting a picture whose full meaning is yet to be worked out gains the speaker many of the advantages of assertion without all the costs of reason giving,

commitment to logical consequences, and so on. And it is because the implications of the image are developed through the imaginative activity of the audience themselves that the ideas elicited will borrow some of the probative value of personal discoveries, rather than be subjected to the skepticism accorded to someone else's testimony (Moran, 396).

Thus an audience may gain pleasure from completing a rhetor's enthymeme; it may gain both pleasure and knowledge from understanding a rhetor's metaphor. Hence one can "double their pleasure" by understanding a metaphor that functions enthymematically. In Aristotle, the metaphor would function as part of an enthymeme; however as we broaden the definition of metaphor, especially in the last century, there is no reason a metaphor could not become an enthymeme. All of the previous discussion of the possibilities of the metaphor to function within argument - and perhaps as argument - use Aristotle's perspective on metaphor - that is, the substitution of a particular noun into a disparate context. Paul Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* makes the argument that Aristotle's view - this semantic view of the word - is far too limited a view of metaphor, and would argue for including larger units of discourse - the sentence, the statement, perhaps even the enthymeme (though here I am putting words in his mouth). Ricoeur's massive work on the metaphor presents a telling argument for viewing metaphor not as substitution of a single word but the exchange of larger discourse.

In his discussion of Aristotle, Ricoeur seeks to distinguish between the poetic and rhetorical use of metaphors. He comments that "rhetoric does not develop in some empty space of pure thought, but in the give and take of common opinion. So metaphors and proverbs also draw from the storehouse of popular wisdom - at least, those of them that are 'established'" (Ricoeur, 30). He believes it possible to "sketch a truly rhetorical theory of lexis, and consequently of metaphor, since metaphor is one of its elements." (Ricoeur, 30). And a rhetorical theory of lexis is necessary because of the auditor; as Ricoeur comments, "when the proof itself is the only thing of importance, we do not bother about lexis; but as soon as the relationship to our hearer comes to the foreground, it is through our lexis that we teach" (Ricoeur, 31).

But as Ricoeur moves from Aristotle through later writings on the metaphor, he maintains the distinction between poetics and rhetoric. "In service to the poetic function," Ricoeur continues, "metaphor is that strategy of discourse by which language divests itself of its function of direct description in order to reach the

mythic level where its function of discovery is set free" (Ricoeur, 247). However the problem is that Ricoeur sees a more limited function for rhetoric, and metaphor seems resigned to the world of description. While "the function of discovery" is not present in every rhetorical metaphor, and may be limited by an audience's ability to learn, there is no reason to deny rhetoric the possibility of using metaphor "to divest itself of direct description" assuming that the strategy does not prevent the learning of the audience.

3. Perelman and presence revisited

One can easily praise Perelman for his efforts to make *lexis* a necessary component of argument. His concept of presence, if somewhat ambiguous, is an opening for reuniting the nature of *logos* with *lexis*. But, strangely, his view of metaphor is limited, and limiting. Basically he returns to Aristotle's conception of the metaphor, but borrows only one of its classes: that of analogy.

Perelman also seems to set up a duality between figures of style and figures of argument, without drawing a clear distinction between them; presumably there would also be metaphors of style (poetic metaphors?) and metaphors of argument. Perelman comments, "A figure which has failed in its argumentative effect will fall to the level of a stylistic figure" (Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca, 170). This statement suggests that argumentative metaphors will rise above stylistic metaphors, but neither sets a hierarchy nor reasons why this should be the case. He does observe that "because it is possible to adhere to the argumentative value it contains it may properly be regarded as a figure, though not as a figure of style" (Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca, 170). How metaphors move from being figures of style to being figures of argument is not developed.

While one can praise Perelman for extending *lexis* to argument and focusing on metaphor as a key ingredient of *lexis*, his discussion raises several problems:

1. there is no need to limit the definition to but one of Aristotle's categories, that of analogy;
2. there is no need to limit the functioning of metaphor to that of single word substitution;
3. there is no need to set up to categories of metaphor and then arrange them in a hierarchy. Paul Ricoeur's damaging comment, "A purely rhetorical treatment of metaphor is the result of the excessive and damaging emphasis put initially on the word, or, more specifically, on the noun or name, and on naming, in the theory of meaning; whereas a properly semantic treatment of metaphor proceeds from the

recognition of the sentence as the primary unit of meaning” (Ricoeur, 44)

What is important to recognize is that Ricoeur’s view of rhetoric – insisting on the single word and its substitution as necessary to a view of metaphor in argument – need not be maintained. The broadening views of metaphor, views established through argument by Ricoeur can easily inform our study of argument – thus broadening both the scope and materials argument as well as Perelman’s productive concept of presence.

Hopefully at least two things have been demonstrated by this discussion. First, lexis is a vital, necessary part of argument. Second, the first born child of the relationship between lexis and logos has been the metaphor, and it should be accorded some proprietary rights in the consideration of argument, and that application within a broadened view of metaphor.

Kenneth Burke argued that we need to see tropes not as ornaments but as perspectives on human symbol using. In the *Grammar of Motives*, he proposed four master tropes: synecdoche, metonymy, irony, and metaphor. We have explored the function of the perspective of metaphor – as a perspective, as a way of seeing – in the function of argument. Whether the younger children, synecdoche, and irony, should be included as major components of lexis in argument, will have to await future conferences (Burke, *A Grammar of Motives and a Rhetoric of Motives*, 503-29).

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