ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Dissociation And Its Relation To Theory Of Argument

1. Introduction

According to Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, 190), association and dissociation are the two schemes of argument. While argumentation scholars have researched association through the study of analogy, causal arguments, and arguments from authority, to name a few, they have not conducted so much research on dissociation. Given this situation, study on dissociation is urgently needed. In section 2 of this paper I will offer a short description of dissociation from what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca stated. In section 3, I will lay out some issues surrounding dissociation that should be dealt with. In section 4, I will redeem dissociation as a scheme of argument by replying to the issues raised in section 3. Section 5 is the conclusion.

2. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca on dissociation

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca classified argumentation schemes into association and dissociation. In association, an arguer assembles what are thought to be different into a unity. Examples of association are causal arguments, and arguments from authority. In dissociation, an arguer dissembles what are originally thought to be a single entity into two different entities, by introducing some criteria for differentiation (1969, 190). Using dissociation, the arguer creates a new vision of the world, and persuades her or his audience to accept it. If the audience accepts the new vision offered by dissociation, then a new reality will be established. In short, dissociation attempts to establish a conceptual demarcation in what is believed to be a single and united thing.

3. Dialectical materials surrounding the conception of dissociation

Although Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca advanced a claim that dissociation is an argumentation scheme, argumentation scholars have questioned their claim for different reasons. One argument denies the claim that dissociation is a scheme, and another advances a claim that it is a technique. Still others address its less systematic nature and its dubious presuppositions. These arguments constitute

dialectical material in Ralph H. Johnson's sense (2000b, p.7). In other words, they are objections, alternative positions, challenges or criticisms to the position advanced by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. Since any person who seriously investigates into the nature of dissociation should treat these dialectical materials to fulfill her or his dialectical obligations**(i)**, it is worthwhile to summarize what these scholars say in questioning or denying dissociative schemes of argumentation. In the following I will describe claims directly or indirectly introduced by Rob Grootendorst, M. A. van Rees, and Edward Schiappa.

In his article published in the last ISSA proceedings, Grootendorst (1999, 288) introduced to us three non-English works that problematized dissociation**(ii)**. First, Schellens is quoted as saying that it is not clear what argumentation schemes use dissociation and that the association-dissociation dichotomy is not practicable. Here Schellens seems to assume that dissociation as well as association is an overarching notion within which argumentation schemes are used. Since dissociation is a parallel of association, Schellens seems to be right in arguing that dissociation needs specific argumentation schemes, for association has its own specific argumentation schemes, such as causal arguments and arguments from authority. Although his position does not eliminate the possibility that dissociation is in itself an argumentation scheme, it seems to change the status of dissociation in some way. Second, Kienpointner is quoted as saying that little analysis is given on dissociation in his book because of its lower systemicity. I agree with Kienpointner that there are some conceptual weaknesses in the original description of dissociation, but I do not think that his position completely denies the framework of dissociation. Third, Garssen is quoted as saying that because acceptance of the premise does not increase adherence to the conclusion, dissociation is neither an argumentation scheme nor any specific type of argumentation. If Garssen's position is true, then dissociation may not be relevant to theory of argument. It may have a bearing on something – communication, knowledge-making, attempt to classify things, but not on argumentation. To recapitulate, of the three, Garssen's position seems to be the strongest in that it denies the claim that dissociation is an argumentation scheme. Schellens' position is mildly strong, but it is an interesting position, in that it questions a dual framework of association and dissociation. Kienpointner's position is the weakest, and it merely discloses conceptual weaknesses of dissociation as is described by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca.

In her OSSA paper, Rees (2001, 13-14) argued that dissociation is not an argumentation scheme but an argumentation technique. Although her claim sounds similar to that of Garssen's in that both attempt to deny the status of dissociation, they are different from each other. Rees still keeps dissociation in the study of argumentation, whereas Garssen may not offer any space for dissociation in the study of argumentation. In other words, Rees understands that dissociation is relevant to the study of argumentation, but Garssen may not support her position. I accept that she advanced an interesting claim, but she did not elaborate on why dissociation does not satisfy conditions to be an argumentation scheme. Neither did she elaborate on her thesis that dissociation is a technique. Although I will deal with her thesis shortly, suffice it to say here that what she says is important and thus merits our attention. If dissociation is not an argumentation scheme at all, why is it not? If it is an argumentation technique, why is it so and what are the basic natures of dissociation? These two questions are of interest to any scholars investigating dissociation.

Schiappa (1985) took a different approach in analyzing dissociation. He turns our attention to the philosophy of language that dissociation presupposes, and questions the presupposition and thus doubts the tenability of dissociation. In advancing this position, he calls our attention to a key notion called "philosophical pairs." The philosophical pair consists of what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca named "term I" and "term II". The term I is closely linked with the original starting point of dissociation, which people regard as a one and united thing. The term II is an explanation in light of which division is established in the originally united thing. In other words, the term II dissociates the original thing X into XI and XII. Not only does term II explain why the original thing is divided into two entities, but it also establish a norm that the thing dissociated ought to satisfy. So an XI that does not satisfy the norm will have a negative value, whereas an XII that satisfies the norm will have a positive value (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, 416; Perelman, 1982, 126-128). A prototype of the philosophical pair is the apparent/real pair. When an arguer attempts to dissociate love into apparent love and real love, apparent love will have a negative value, whereas real love will have a positive value. Addressing the notion of the philosophical pair, Schiappa argues that it presupposes that we can find the absolute or essential meaning. But since the idea of the absolute or essential meaning has already been questioned as dubious by later Wittgenstein and Quine, dissociation that emphasizes the absolute/true meaning is also dubious (Schiappa, 1985, 76-79. In other words, Schiappa made his objection to the assumption of dissociation and claimed that

since the assumption of dissociation is dubious and is discounted, dissociation is in itself untenable**(iii)**. If every type of dissociation presupposes something like the absolute or essential meaning, Schiappa's positions will be strong and call for our attention. If it does not, then we may not have to worry about it.

4. Redeeming dissociation

The foregoing discussion of the relevant literature has revealed the original conception of dissociation and its theoretical and practical problems. In light of the issues provided by these scholars, I will reconceptualize and redeem dissociation in this part of the paper.

To begin with, however, let me admit, along with the scholars mentioned in the previous section, that there are some problems in the original conception of dissociation. Namely, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca did not make clear whether dissociation is an argumentation scheme or an argumentation technique. When they first talked about dissociation, they called both dissociation and association "the schemes" (1969, 190). In the same sentence they also stated that dissociation and association "can be considered as *loci* of argumentation" (1969, 190). According to them *loci* are the equivalent of the Aristotelian *topoi*, which arguers use as premises in classifying and making dialectical and rhetorical arguments (1969, 84). In making these statements, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca seemed to assume that dissociation concerned selection of arguments from loci available to the arguer, and thus regarded dissociation as a product. While they stated that dissociation is an argumentation scheme, they also stated that it is a technique of argumentation. At one point they meant by dissociation "techniques of separation," the purpose of which is to dissemble what is believed to be a unified thing (1969, 190). One page later they stated that they would devote one chapter of the book to "the techniques of dissociation" (1969, 191-2). Since they did not explicate the difference between the argumentation scheme and the argumentation technique, I am not clear whether dissociation is an argumentation scheme or an argumentation technique, or whether they just meant the same by these two phrases.

Now that I have referred to some conceptual ambiguity of dissociation in the original conception, let me attempt to develop a line of argument that dissociation can be regarded as a product (scheme) rather than a technique. In describing a structure of dissociation, I accept, for the sake of argument, that an argument has a premise-inference-conclusion structure, and explain how dissociation fits into

this structure. The premise is usually what is true or reasonably acceptable, and the premise in dissociation is "the original unity of elements comprised within a single conception and designated by a single notion" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1959, 411-412). Although Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca do not stipulate who is the agent that takes the thing as united – a particular or a universal audience, still any other group of the audience, suffice it to say that the premise is what is commonly accepted as a single thing. Examples of the premise are, according to them, reality, life, peace, democracy, and so on. The second component of argument is inference, or a process of reasoning that connects the premise to the conclusion. In dissociation, inference is a process of dividing the premise X (what is thought to be a one and only thing) into two entities of XI and XII, and setting up a hierarchy between the two entities. The conclusion in dissociation is that X has a sub-category, which is the less valued XI and the more valued XII. Dissociation, as conceptualized by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca is schematized as follows:

1.

1. X is accepted as a one and united thing.

2. X that is assumed to be a one and united is not actually a single thing.

2.1 X is divided into XI and XII, based on a philosophical pair of term I and term II.

2.2 XI has less value than XII.

3. X can be divided into the less valued XI and the more valued XII. (from 1, 2)

In the scheme above, number 1 is the premise, number 2 is the inferential process that links number 1 with the conclusion, number 3. The schematized dissociation has critical questions matching it.

2.

1. Is the original thing X accepted as a single entity?

2. Is the division between XI and XII clear? In other words, does the philosophical pair used to set up the division actually make a conceptual distinction?

3. Is the value hierarchy set up between XI and XII tenable?

4. Is XII more valuable than XI according to the value hierarchy?

Number 1 seems to be clear. Since dissociation starts with what is accepted as a single entity, such argument as "X is not a single entity." will undermine the status of X as a starting point of argument. Regarding 2 through 4, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca made a suggestive remark when they spoke of the opposition to

dissociation: "As for opposition to a dissociation, it will be directed toward the characteristics of its term I or term II or toward the very principle of the dissociation" (1959, 427). Although they did not indicate how to examine the characteristics of term I and term II, they acknowledged that examining these characteristics is indispensable to determine the quality of dissociation. These critical questions, together with the schematized dissociation as shown in (1) demonstrate that dissociation can be seen as a product offered in the argumentative communication.

Given the structure of dissociation and the critical questions for it, a prototypical example will show how it works. According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, the prototype of the philosophical pair, or term I and term II, is the appearance-reality pair (1969, 415). This pair divides the original thing X into apparent X and real X, with the former having negative values and the latter positive values.

3.

1. People believe that Japan has peace because it is not involved in war.

2. Peace as a situation without war is not the real meaning of peace.

2.1 Real peace is a situation in which relevant parties co-exist harmoniously.

2.2 Apparent peace could possibly refer to a relationship in which two parties are on the brink of war, but this is not as highly valued as harmonious co-existence that a real peace means.

3. Peace can refer not only to a situation without war, but also to a situation of harmonious co-existence. Since peace as harmonious co-existence captures the real nature of peace, it should be valued more highly than peace as lack of war.

4. It is doubtful if Japan has peace, given that it has had several political disputes over its past.

In the above example, the arguer starts with an accepted idea that Japan has peace. Since Japan has not been attacked by any other countries after WWII, many people would take number 1 for granted. Then the arguer introduces a distinction that differentiates apparent peace and real peace (number 2). By introducing a notion of real peace with 2.1, the arguer creates an explanation and a norm that the peace should satisfy. The peace that does not satisfy the norm is regarded as apparent and thus discounted in 2.2. From these premises, the conclusion is drawn in 3 that peace has two meanings and real peace is more valuable than apparent peace. The arguer uses number 3 as a premise for number 4, which questions if Japan has peace at all. As is shown in this example, dissociation attempts to break what people take as a single conception into two

conceptions. Also, it attempts to establish a hierarchy between the differentiated things with the help of term I and term II. Although there are many other philosophical pairs used for dissociations, I would not go into describing those other pairs. For the purpose of my paper is to redeem the conception of dissociation as a product rather than classifying its sub-categories.

Having set up a renewed conception of dissociation with its critical questions, let me address the dialectical materials surrounding the original conception of dissociation. I address Rees' and Garssen's positions first, because their positions deny the claim that dissociation is a scheme. The foregoing conceptual clarification of dissociation has prepared me to handle the problem posed by Rees. She stated that dissociation is not a scheme of argumentation, but an argumentative technique used in each of the stages in a critical discussion. She (2001) summarized the dissociative technique as follows:

In the confrontation stage, it [dissociation] may be used both in maintaining and relinquishing standpoints, and in attacking standpoints. In the argumentation stage, it may be used to attack the argument, as well as the argument scheme of the opponent, and the latter in various ways, corresponding to the critical questions that may be asked about the scheme. In the concluding stage, dissociation may be used to precizate or bring about a shift in the conclusion which is drawn from the preceding discussion. (14)

In calling dissociation to be an argumentative technique, Rees focused on functions it serves in the argumentative discussion: "reaction to the standpoint or argument of another party" (13). I believe she rightly observed that dissociation sometimes addresses the original position. However, I am not so much clear about what distinguishes a scheme and a technique from reading her paper. In the scheme (1) above, I have schematized dissociation from what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's have said; the premise is what is accepted as a single entity, the inference is the process of dividing the single entity and putting the divided things in a hierarchy, and the conclusion is that what is assumed to be the single entity, is actually two value-laden entities. I admit that this is a loose conception and we must crystallize this schematization, but it seems possible to construct an argumentation scheme from what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have said. I do not claim that my position is absolutely true, but it shifts the burden of proof to those who want to challenge it, for (1) has critical questions matching it, as shown in (2). An arguer may use product (1) in each of the stages in a critical discussion, which shows the multiple functions that dissociation serves, as indicated by Rees.

A reply to Rees' position that dissociation is an argumentation technique contains a reply to Garssen's position as well. He stated that dissociation is neither an argumentation scheme nor any type of argumentation, because acceptance of the starting point does not increase the audience's adherence to the claim. However, (1) and (2) above lay out the components of dissociation and the tests for its adequacy. So acceptance of the premise leads the audience to accept the conclusion, with the help of dividing the premise into two entities and to set them up in a hierarchy. In the example (3) above, acceptance of the premise that Japan has peace must lead the audience to accept the conclusion that it is doubtful that Japan has peace, if my position is true. The premise and the conclusion appear to be incompatible with each other, so the acceptance of the premise does not seem to cause the acceptance of the conclusion. However, using dissociation and dividing peace into apparent peace (lack of war) and real peace (harmonious co-existence) can function as a bridge between the premise and the conclusion, if the conceptual differentiation and a value hierarchy are clear and tenable. So dissociation can be regarded as an argumentation scheme and has a strong bearing upon theory of argument.

My conception of dissociation and answers to Rees and Garssen partially prepare me to handle Schellens' position that it is not clear what argumentation schemes use dissociation. So far I have attempted to crystallize a conception of dissociation as an argumentation scheme, by offering components of dissociation and the tests for evaluating adequacy. In this process I have consistently equated dissociation with one type of argumentation scheme. In contrast, Schellens regarded dissociation as one of the overarching notions governing argumentation schemes. His conception is laid out as follows.
4.
1. Association
1.1 causal argument
1.2 analogy
1.3 argument from authority
1.x etc.
2. Dissociation
2.1 ???
2.2 ???

According to his dichotomous framework for association and dissociation, I have

merely described characteristics of one overarching notion without specifying its species or parts **(iv)**. Dissociation may be considered to be a product, but the evaluation criteria for it does not have the same significance as those for causal argument, analogy, and argument from authority. I may have been successful in establishing a claim that dissociation is a product, but I fall short of showing specific types of the product. Although we may be able to handle Schellens' position with further study, I must confess that I do not have an answer now. But let me show two ways to handle Schellens' position. First, we can research actual texts and investigate what schemes arguers use in advancing dissociation. This process will clarify species or parts of the dissociation, thereby helping to compile a list of dissociative arguments and establishing a dichotomy between association and dissociation. This process can also reply to Kienpointner's position that dissociation is less systematic, because offering species or parts of dissociation will make it more systematic. Second, we can reply to his claim that the association-dissociation dichotomy is untenable, by laying out the scheme of association and providing criteria for the evaluation, as I have done for dissociation. This may leave the question of whether dissociation has its own species or parts unsettled, but it answers the question on the tenability of the association-dissociation dichotomy. In either way we will need further study to answer Schellens' position, as well as Kienpointner's position.

Schiappa's position is different from the others' in that it focuses on the theoretical presupposition of dissociation. He argued that such philosophical pairs as apparent/real used in dissociation presupposes the absolute or essential meaning that philosophers had already denied. In order to directly reply to his position, we need to argue that the theoretical presupposition (the absolute or essential meaning) is in fact theoretically tenable or that he has ascribed the false presupposition to dissociation. Although I do not elaborate on theoretical tenability of the absolute or essential meaning, I doubt if using dissociation will always mean to commit to the absolute or essential meaning. For it seems possible to make a clear distinction within what is accepted as a single thing without resorting to the absolute or essential meaning. This means that an arguer can use dissociation and show clear but not absolute difference within a single entity presented in the premise. In the above example (3), the real peace (harmonious co-existence) may not be the absolute meaning or the essence of peace. Instead, arguers may merely offer this dissociation to classify two types of peace. If this approach to dissociation is acceptable, then not every type of

dissociation is problematic, even if Schiappa's position is correct. This issue needs further study, and compiling examples from actual argumentative text will be helpful to settle this issue. For becoming empirical and examining actual argumentation will tell us how often people use dissociation without claiming the absolute or essential meaning, thereby helping us determine the nature of dissociation.

5. Concluding remarks.

In this paper I have conceptualized dissociation, laid out issues surrounding the conception and use of dissociation, and redeemed its status in light of those issues. From the foregoing sections I conclude as follows:

1. Dissociation can be conceptualized as a product with multiple functions in an argumentative communication. Conceptualizing dissociation as a product will help us analyze the argumentative text, thereby a better appreciation of the text will be possible. Also, it helps us to produce better arguments in case conceptual issues are at stake.

2. Dissociation has its critical questions. Regarding the premise, we can examine whether the original starting point is actually a single entity. Regarding the inference, we can investigate whether the division introduced for establishing the new entities is clear, and whether the value hierarchy is tenable. Also, we can examine if the value hierarchy leads us to put the divided entities in an order, as desired by the arguer.

One and 2 above both deal with a conceptual and normative framework to investigate dissociation. Both have attempted to settle vexing notions surrounding dissociation.

The foregoing sections have also demonstrated a list of topics that needs further investigation:

1. What is dissociation? Is it a scheme or a technique of argumentation? If it is a technique, as Rees says, what does technique mean in this context, and what bearing does dissociative technique have on the product (argumentation scheme)? In other words, which conception of dissociation will best serve to analyze, evaluate, and produce arguments?

2. Is dissociation an overarching notion governing argumentation schemes, or is it a type of argumentation scheme? If dissociation is an overarching notion governing an argumentation scheme, what are the constituting types of dissociation? Is it possible to compile a list of dissociation schemes? If it is a type of argumentation scheme, is there any overarching notion for all argumentation

schemes that would take the place of the dual notion of association and dissociation?

3. How do arguers use dissociation in argumentative communication? Are there any functions other than the ones offered by Rees?

4. Does dissociation presuppose an untenable theory of language? If it is theoretically tenable, how is it so? If it is theoretically untenable, are all dissociative arguments weak, bad, or fallacious because of its presuppositions? If not all dissociative arguments presuppose an untenable theory, what criteria distinguish the untenable dissociation and the tenable dissociation?

I do not claim that the above list of topics exhausts all possible topics, but they offer a useful starting point for further investigation. I strongly hope that argumentation scholars across disciplines will start talking more about this class of argument, which has been ignored in the development of theory of argument.

NOTES

i. Johnson is the primary advocate of the notion of dialectical obligation. He (2000a, 165) argues that to fulfill an arguer's obligation, an arguer should address "alternative positions, and standard objections" as well as offer reasons in support of the conclusion, and include it in a second structure of arguments called "dialectical tier."

ii. I apologize that my inability to read languages other than Japanese and English has kept me from rigorously examining the various views that Grootendorst summarized in his work, in the original language.

iii. In addition to objections, alternative positions, and criticisms, I (2001) made a case that arguments against assumptions of an argument are what arguers must handle in dealing with her or his dialectical obligations, for failure to do this can deny the overall argument if the premise-inference-conclusion structure appears to be good. Schiappa's position fits in this type.

iv. I am not sure whether the relationship between dissociation and argumentation scheme is one of whole-parts, or one of genus-species. In either case, (2) above, or the criteria for evaluating dissociation, must have strong implications for different types of argumentation schemes constituting the dissociation.

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