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Mere Dispositions:
Durability and the Teaching of Values

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Abstract
The power of epideictic, write Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, can be seen in the way argumentation instills dispositions in an audience, furthering the aim of durable responses (rather than immediate reactions). In this paper, I explore the role of argumentation in developing, sustaining, and activating dispositions. In particular, I am interested in how we use argumentation to teach values and thereby create dispositions, and I suggest the kinds of deep contextual treatments we can get from teaching argumentation schemes and their critical questions serve as a means to accomplish this.

It is not enough to change ideas; you have to change attitudes—Octavio Paz[1]

Unlike deliberative and legal speeches, which aim at obtaining a decision to act, the educational and epideictic speeches create a mere disposition toward action—Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca[2]

1. The many goals of argumentation

One thing we have learned over the last few decades is that argumentation is not only an interdisciplinary subject, it is also (perhaps because of this diversity) an activity that boasts different ways to contribute to our social well-being. Argumentation is core to inquiry, for example, to negotiation and to persuasion. It modifies environments in which

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[1] Paz 1999: 52.
[2] Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 54.

we interact, inserting, replacing and supplementing ideas that are important to our self-understanding and the understanding of others. It may assist in the resolution of disagreements; and it may promote the discovery of truth.

One of the important goals of argumentation is consensus building, and this involves exploring positions to arrive at understandings of those positions. This is also what goes on in education, and so is one way in which argumentation can operate there. In fact, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) argued, there are important associations between argumentation and education, associations that can be explored to the benefit of both activities. What they have in common, we should recognize, is the identification and promotion of values. It was the alleged absence of values from models of argumentation that prompted the New Rhetoric project of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. They were concerned, alarmed even, that in spite of the enormous advances in civilization on so many fronts, the catastrophe of war was still able to erupt in Europe and throughout the world to disastrous effects. What was called for was a return to the human element in argument, and this in turn required a return to the importance of value, and hence to the Greeks for whom argument and value were intertwined.

The emphases involved in this return to value also help to address an apparent conflict at the heart of education generally. Consider: There is a tension at the core of any education program where, on the one hand, there is the aim to create people "like ourselves," trained in looking at the world in the same way, caring about the same things, and holding the same values. Thus, ideas and values are instilled in order to further the society as an inert entity. Much of the work in argumentation theory that focuses on presumption appeals to such stability and continuity (Hansen, *et al* 2019). On the other hand, there is the aim to give students the tools to decide for themselves and come to reasoned judgment about what they will believe and what values they will hold. This aim anticipates change and implicitly values it. But it is a measured and not radical change and it operates against the backdrop of a stable community. As much as a tension is apparent between these two aims, the conflict may be no more than that—just apparent. We can reconcile them by identifying a set of common values that underlie both initiatives. Critical thinking, for example, is a social value, as important to the inculcation of accepted values as it is to the development of independence. The kind of reasoned judgement that it encourages and develops is required to fully understand the structure of one's society and the values on which it is founded. Other values like reasonableness and the fairness involved in treating similar cases alike could be traced in both aims.

Taking a lead from several suggestions of Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, my approach to the question of how values are taught through argumentation is by examining the nature of dispositions (what they call "mere dispositions) and how argumentation can be seen to create such dispositions of character in people. Given that

dispositions are long-term features of a person's character, I begin with a discussion of durability in argumentation.

2. Time and the durable argument.

Not all arguments intend an immediate response. This is an idea that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca stress in the New Rhetoric project. In their discussion of epideictic rhetoric (to which I shall return), they write that the "intensity of the adherence sought is not limited to obtaining purely intellectual results, to a declaration that a certain thesis seems more probable than another, but will very often be reinforced until the desired action is actually performed" (1969: 49). Several ideas are important here, such as the concept of "adherence," at which all argumentation aims (14). But for present purposes what is noteworthy is the recognition of a delay between the presenting of the thesis and the performance of the desired action. This interval ("whether long or short") gives rise to two consequences of note: (i) that it can be hazardous to evaluate the effectiveness of a speech. Why? Because we do not necessarily know *when* it will be effective, or how much reinforcement or repetition is required. And (ii) the adherence required by a speech can always be reinforced (50). This openendedness—what might on other terms be considered defeasibility—is an important but often overlooked feature of argumentation. But it fits the circumstances of many educational models. I will return to this idea in section 4 of the paper.

There is, then, an important element of *kairos* involved. It is not just a matter of finding the right moment to speak, it is speaking to the delayed moment. Planting seeds that will be awoken at the appropriate time. *Kairos* in argumentation also promotes the invitational response and is sensitive to audience reception. Beyond the temporal sense of *kairos*, there is alleged to be a proportionate sense that was common to both Plato and Aristotle, this forms the basis of the theory of the mean (the right thing at right time and so forth), and thus has an important ethical aspect that is relevant when questions of values and education are at issue.[3]

The ethical thread has an important trajectory, tracking from Cicero's discussions of decorum through to Michael Leff's (2016) contemporary account of this idea. Of course, there is more than just the ethical involved here. The full sense of *kairos* speaks to the "appropriate, as in the right balance" (Sipora 2002). In his essay "The Habitation of Rhetoric," Leff ties the kairotic interest in the "occasion" to his understanding of "decorum." "Decorum is the term that best describes the process of mediation and balance connected with qualitative judgment." As it applies to argumentation, decorum "works to

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[3] For a fuller discussion of the ideas in the following paragraphs see Tindale (2020a).

align the stylistic and the argumentative features of the discourse within a unified structure while adjusting the whole structure to the context from which the discourse arises and to which it responds. The locus of decorum always depends upon the particular case" (Leff 1987/2016: 159).[4] There is a clear echo here of the judgment involved in Aristotle's mean, weighing the circumstances of a case in order to decide on the best action to perform. Insofar as such actions have the reciprocal effect of reinforcing the right dispositions in a person's character then the full import of *kairos* for human flourishing becomes clearer.

Giving attention to the opportune moment recalls Eric Charles White's (1987) definition of *kairos.* White traces the concept to the ancient practice of archery, where an archer's arrow must follow a particular, narrow path to its target. But it must also do so accurately and with a force required for penetration. This second feature is what can be transferred to our discussion. White concludes: "one might understand *kairos* to refer to a passing instant when an opening appears which must be driven through with force if success is to be achieved" (13). The kairotic moment, then, is that sudden moment of opportunity in which a speaker sees that a point can be pressed.

Such a moment recognizes a range of features arising in a situation, such as introducing ideas and withholding them. But it also recognizes another important aspect of the temporal tied to argumentative concerns: while sometimes we look to encourage an immediate response in an audience, and can measure uptake (and, perhaps, success) accordingly, a more engaged approach looks to the long-term. We argue not just to achieve a reaction now, but one that has durability, resulting in an action or a series of actions in the future. Again, "the right time," is at issue, but it is a future time wherein an audience will be moved to act. The intervening time allows opportunities for repetition, reinforcement and revision.

3. Argumentation and Education: The Maieutic Effect

A complete picture of the human reasoner involves processes of the mind and body, reason and emotion, in all their intricate interaction. The model of the sterile reasoner devoid of emotional reactions, seen in figures like Socrates (as traditionally portrayed) or Sherlock Holmes, is a fiction. At times, perhaps, it is a necessary fiction when the focus of attention is on the power of deduction in human reasoning, but it is no less a fiction.

In his seminal paper on deep disagreements, Fogelin (1985) raises the importance of considering "a form of life" underlying human dispositions. He observes the presence

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[4] See also the detailed analysis of Cicero's concept of decorum in "Decorum and Rhetorical Interpretation: The Latin Humanist Tradition and Contemporary Critical Theory" (Leff 2016: 163-184).

not of isolated propositions, but "a whole system of mutually supporting propositions (and paradigms, models, styles of acting and thinking), if I may use the phrase, a form of life" (1985: 6). But he then proceeds:

> I think that the notion of a form of life is dangerous, especially when used in the singular. We do better to say that a person participates in a variety of forms of life that overlap and crisscross in a variety of ways. Some of these forms of life have little to do with others. This explains why we can enter into discussions and reasonable arguments over a range of subjects with a person who believes, as we think, things that are perfectly mad (1985 6).

Indeed, we can still trust the otherwise "mad" person on other subjects. Setting aside whether what is at issue here are multiple "forms of life," what is being brought to our attention is that the kinds of inner conflicts we so routinely experience are the results of clashing beliefs and commitments.

The shift to the agent poses the suggestion that in order to understand others we must first understand ourselves. That understanding, may be a serious challenge in itself, and is certainly a discussion that warrants far more than could be extended to it here. What matters is that we appreciate the ways in which differentness and problems of comparability of values are assimilated in, and comprise natural features of, the living of lives.

Whatever way such forms of life evolve in an individual, education must have a formative role, laying stress on ideas and values that will interweave like the root ball of a plant. And when playwright William Boyd has one of his characters announce in his play "The Argument": "I argue therefore I am" (Boyd 2016: 23), while he no doubt goes too far, in recognizing the importance of the "absolutely fundamental human activity" that is argumentation he is identifying a formative factor in the emergence of an individual. Indeed, argumentation contributes to the "cognitive carpentry" that "builds" persons (Pollock 1995) and goes further with its promotion of values and the instigation of related dispositions that are later expressed in thought and action.

I would suggest, then, that dispositions always operate within the distinctive parameters of an individual life (that is, they have no general, abstract quality), with its value-fed goals. And they are intimately related to the expression, understanding and achievement of those goals.

With the foregoing in mind, I return to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's discussion of the relationship between argumentation and education. It is Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's own return to the human through the focus on values that brings these two activities into alignment. This comes through the importance they pay to epideictic speech, the purpose of which is to increase an audience's adherence to values. We should

recall that the epideictic took its place alongside the deliberative and forensic as one of the three Aristotelian genres of rhetoric. We might also recall that while the deliberative and forensic seemed to receive the more serious attention from Aristotle, each addressing audiences that served as judges, epideictic speech appeared "relegated" to a sort of "left-over" category, reserved for more ceremonial occasions and addressing a more passive audience of spectators.[5] For Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, however, the epideictic is elevated to the primary position for the very reason that it concerns values. The failure to appreciate this importance, they insist, "results from a false conception of the effects of argumentation" (49). Moreover, both of the other genres depend on it, for without such common values upon what foundation could deliberative and legal speeches rest? (52-3). We come then to a central passage in their discussion:

> Educational discourse, like the epideictic one, is not designed to promote the speaker, but for the creation of a certain disposition in those who hear it. Unlike deliberative and legal speeches, which aim at obtaining a decision to act, the educational and epideictic speeches create a mere disposition toward action, which makes them comparable to philosophical thought. This distinction between kinds of oratory, although not always easy to apply, offers the advantage, from our viewpoint, of providing a single, uniform framework for the study of argumentation: seen in this way, all argumentation is seen only in terms of the action for which it paves the way or which it actually brings about. This is an additional reason for which we prefer to connect the theory of argumentation with rhetoric rather than with the ancients' dialectic: for the latter was confined to mere speculation, whereas rhetoric gave first place to the influence which a speech has on the entire personality of the hearers.

There are a number of points to take note of here. Of prime importance is the assumed parallel between educational and epideictic discourse in sharing a goal of creating a disposition in those who hear. It is such a disposition that will account for the delay between argument and action that I drew attention to above. Deliberative and legal (forensic) speeches depend on such dispositions to induce actions. The "single, uniform framework for the study of argumentation" that is advocated aims at action. I imagine this needs to be broadly conceived, although this is a social model of argumentation. It is also a reason to favour rhetorical argumentation (and promote a new rhetoric) because it involves the entire personality.

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[5] Later (*Rhetoric* II.18.1), epideictic is also assigned an active audience that judges, but this change is often overlooked.

Keys terms circle each other here in an intricate pattern of involvement: argumentation, disposition, education, and personality. What might it mean to create "a certain disposition"? How is this a goal of education? And how does argumentation facilitate that goal? These are questions I wish to explore in the next section.

4. Dispositions

(i) *What* are dispositions?

In a very general way, dispositions are powers or tendencies towards some outcome. As vague as this definition is, it serves as a place from which to start. It also reflects the basic understanding that informs philosophical work in metaphysics, where dispositions are recognized as tendencies in things (like a stone is disposed to fall to the ground when released from a height), and the psychological work on attitudes, where dispositions are involved in character formation (as Aristotle had suggested).

The second of these threads is more relevant to my current concerns but let me first say a word about each of them. In metaphysics, dispositions can refer to a type of property, state or condition. This property, state or condition in turn provides for a future state or behaviour to arise. It thus provides a capacity or potentiality. Moreover, dispositions are thought to persist in the object in which they have been instilled. Thus, they continue to influence future states or behaviours (they are not fleeting).[6]

On the side of attitudinal psychology, we are in the domain of personality studies, many of which follow in the Aristotelian tradition. Drawing on the insights of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, whose theory of argumentation extends and amplifies the work of Aristotle, my discussion builds on that foundation. In the second book of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle explains his doctrine of the mean—that position of moderate action balanced between extremes of excess and deficiency—by saying that excellence of character is a disposition in a mean. For each excellence of character (or virtue) a person can be said to be well-disposed in her or his judgments.[7] Through habituation, they come to hit the mark at which they aim more readily or more often. And that habituation of right judgment somehow requires that the appropriate disposition be in place. In fact, there is reciprocity involved, since habitual performance of the right behaviour reinforces and strengthens the underlying disposition. We are creatures who are naturally moved to anger, or pity, or fear, and so forth. And these natural responses

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[6] This précis is informed by the explanations in Mumford (1998) and Mumford (2003), to which the reader is referred for further discussion.

[7] Hence, the importance of excellence (along with good will and practical wisdom) in the character of the rhetor (*Rhetoric* II. 1.5.)—one of a number of parallels between Aristotle's *Ethics* and his *Rhetoric*.

can be trained to meet the emerging desires, goals and beliefs of individuals. While still subject to the possibility of error, dispositions established in a person's character increase the likelihood over time of better outcomes. Learning how to respond to our emotional nature, we might suggest, is in part learning the cultural endorsements of specific emotional norms. And dispositions, once habitual, are hard to counter.

Jonathan Webber (2013) gives a detailed account of the attitudinal approach to dispositions that has implications for our interest in education. He notes that psychological research into the development of attitudes supports Aristotle's insistence that habituation is crucial to character formation. Virtue ethics, as it has matured, emphasizes the importance of such a foundation for ethical knowledge. We learn more about what is fair or just from experience than we could do from attending lectures on justice. Because if we do not already have a sense of what is at stake, the theoretical ideas will have nothing to which to adhere. Adopting the right habits becomes important because the assimilation of understanding takes time. As Webber explains this: "Assimilation takes time because it requires repeatedly trying to understand situations in terms of justice and injustice and reflecting critically on one's performance at this, in order to give content to one's understanding of justice" (1088). Experience, reflection and judgment are brought together here in a way that does more than decide the appropriate action on any particular occasion; an understanding over and above that instance is assimilated in a way that reinforces a particular attitude. Not only might we become better at "getting it right" on future occasions, but we become disposed to do so.

For Webber, this points towards an understanding of "disposition" as "a power or tendency towards some outcome" (1093). And, this point about the psychological reality of character does not entail any position in the more general metaphysical debate about the nature of dispositions. This is helpful in understanding what dispositions *are*. Christian B. Miller (2014) concurs in his definition of a personality trait[8]: a personality trait is "A disposition to form beliefs and/or desires of a certain sort and (in many cases) to act in a certain way, when in conditions relevant to that disposition" (3). A response from the cognitive psychologist Antonio Damasio (1999), based on his experimental work in clinical neuropsychology, physiology and anatomy, is less definitive since he believes the content of dispositions can never be directly known because of their unconscious state and dormant form. We can "never know the contents of dispositions directly….They are abstract records of potentialities" (332). As Michael Burke (2011) glosses this, "[dispositions] can fleetingly come to life, "Brigadoon-like", as mental images before they wane again into imperceptibility" (66).[9] Still, this is largely consistent

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[8] Although this is a definition of a "personality trait" and not a disposition per se, I take them to be synonymous for the purposes of this discussion.
[9] Indeed, Damasio compares dispositions to the fictional Scottish town of Brigadoon, which was invisible to the outside world; with both of them "wanting to come alive for a brief period" (Damasio 1999: 332).

with what we have uncovered: potential states, activated from their dormancy by the right stimuli.

For both Damasio and Richard Wollheim (1999: 6-11) dispositions, while they act on and modify our mental lives, are never directly experienced and have no subjectivity. But they do have a psychological reality insofar as they have causal properties.[10] At the same time, I would suggest, they can be experienced *indirectly* in the resistance we feel to breaking long-established patterns of behavior. Consider for example how difficult and unnatural people have found the call to self-isolate during a time of pandemic (Tindale 2020b). It becomes very difficult to act against our inclinations, whether that be performing an act of violence or failing to trust a friend or withdrawing from social contact.[11] As a provisional definition of dispositions arising from this discussion, I will judge them as 'durable tendencies of character to act in the future in regulated and relatively predictable ways'.

(ii) *How* are dispositions formed?

In addition to understanding the nature if dispositions, a major question for this discussion is whether or not a person possesses a particular disposition. The work of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca speaks clearly about the importance of instilling or encouraging certain dispositions. But left to be addressed in all of this is the *how* of the matter. Our interest in argumentation and education must be in how dispositions arise.

"Speech influences the entire personality of the hearers" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 54). We can now appreciate the depth of insight captured in this statement. It is not a casual remark but recalls the age-old power of language recognized in the rhetorical tradition together with the philosophical account of character recognized in the Aristotelian tradition. It announces the ways in which rhetorical argumentation modifies ideas in the cognitive environment, introducing, supplementing and reinforcing values.

I want to suggest that to *know* on the terms that I have been discussing, that is, to be disposed to see things a certain way, a way that consistently influences emotions, judgments and actions, is to be in possession of strong arguments that we hold with confidence (but not certainty) because they have, in Perelman's terms, "survived all objections and criticisms" (Perelman 1963: 117), while remaining open to revision should further evidence come to light. Thus, positive character traits and appreciating strong arguments must work in tandem.

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[10] In a similar vein, Martha Nussbaum (2001: 69) draws a distinction between background and situational emotions to suggest what persists through situations of different types.
[11] There are accounts of torturers having to be trained to behave against their natural inclinations, and subsequently requiring help to rebuild their lives (see Glover 2014: 326).

Also related to this question of how dispositions arise in an individual is the larger one of how values are instilled in a society, because dispositions activate those values, express and reinforce them. We know that values can be activated, reinforced, promoted, and encouraged through speech. We see this whenever a political leader appeals to values as an argument in support of certain practices or behaviours. For example: People should self-isolate because the community is supported by values of care and concern for others and self-isolation is the best way to express those values at this time. But how is argumentation brought into the activity of instilling values in the first place?

One way we use argumentation to instill values as well as to then promote them in a community or society is by arguing that specific people instantiate those values in some way. These are people who manifest the valued kinds of dispositional behaviour, who are looked up to because of positive qualities of their character, and in such arguments an appeal is made to those people (perhaps on a specific issue; perhaps generally). This is the understanding that informs the tradition of epideictic speeches that take the funeral oration as the paradigm. On such occasions, the qualities of an individual are praised in a way that the individual comes to represent a standard expressing those qualities and thus is someone to be emulated. This further recognizes the private, hidden (Brigadoon-like) nature of dispositions. We look for some public demonstration of them, as Aristotle pointed out (*EN* 1104b5), an outward sign of what resides within.

Some people are listened to more than others. We listen carefully to the views of those we respect, to people who have achieved a certain position in a community or organization, to people whose judgment we trust, like teachers or religious leaders. In fact, people can hold what we will call moral authority on issues for a number of reasons. One important way in which people hold a type of authority is by virtue of what they know. Informal Logic has approached such matters by developing analyses of the Appeal to Expert Opinion. But a person can be knowledgeable independent from having a strong character that warrants listening to their judgments. That is, experts can be people of poor character. So, appeals can be made that focus specifically on the character of a person rather than any knowledge they possess, and those appeals can be seen to have a regular pattern to their nature.

This is to turn attention to one of the more prominent tools of contemporary Informal Logic: argumentation schemes and their associated critical questions. Argumentation schemes are patterns of reason that have a common usage and that are defeasible. The patterns involve a series of sentential forms with variables that are replaced in actual arguments by the specifics of a case (See Tindale 2020c: 254). Schemes also have critical questions associated with them. These questions derive from the specific features relevant to each scheme (that is, they are "bottom-up" descriptions of how reasoning works rather than "top-down" prescriptions of how they ought to work).

Informal logician Robert C. Pinto (2001) insists that the normative force of an argument is not to be found in the way it exemplifies an argumentation scheme, but in the contextual considerations that reveal rhetorical factors specific to a case: "considerations that would justify the use of *this* sort of evidence in *this* sort of context to settle *this* sort of question" (Pinto 2001: 111). It can't be the scheme itself that provides the validation of such presumptive reasoning, because the use of the scheme on any occasion itself requires validation. Thus, Pinto observes, the real value of analyzing argumentation schemes lies in the tool that the critical questions represent, this is where the rhetorical dimension involved becomes apparent. What I say below about "thick" descriptions is intended as an extension of Pinto's insight: we need tools to open up the context as fully as possible, and critical questions serve this purpose in a particularly effective way.

The appeal to the person that I identified above has the alternative name of Ethotic Appeal. In this scheme, we see a thread linking the epideictic tradition to contemporary Informal Logic. The Ethotic Appeal relates to the attention the ancient Greeks gave to the importance of character in reviewing the rightness or wrongness of actions. As might be recalled, one of Aristotle's three main sources of persuasive force was *ethos*—that is, character. People can be persuaded, Aristotle thought, not just by what is said but also by who says it. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca extend the same idea to further actions (that is, not just speech acts) in the concept of "prestige": that "quality of the person which is known by its effects" (1969: 303).

This argument scheme has carried some weight in the history of Western thought. For long periods, for example, it was judged disrespectful to challenge the views of *the* Philosopher—Aristotle. He had achieved such a status within intellectual circles that there was a burden of proof in favour of anything he had said. That is, he was assumed to be correct, and anyone who thought otherwise bore the burden of showing so—if they dared. This respect for status was so strong that when John Locke first introduced the fallacy of *ad verecundiam* (sometimes simply called the fallacy of authority) in 1690, it was based on the idea of feeling shame for having challenged someone who ought to be respected for the authority they hold.

It matters, of course, what supports the moral authority or status of the person appealed to. It could be the status of the office they hold (president; elder), or it could be some exemplary act or acts they have performed (in time of crisis, or for a charitable organization). Here is a version of the scheme, slightly adapted from Walton, Reed and Macagno (2008: 336):

> P1*:* If a person is of good character, then what that person says should be accepted as more plausible.
> P2: *a* is a person of good character.
> Conclusion: Therefore, what *a* says should be accepted as more plausible.

This is a simple scheme, but such is the argument involved. Like other similar schemes it is unlikely to stand alone in making a case but would certainly constitute some of the contributory argumentation for doing so. Also, presented in this way, this scheme (like all argumentation schemes) is notably "thin." But this is the skeleton on which greater detail is then laid. Informal argumentation schemes are considered to be defeasible—that is, where the argument is a strong instance of the scheme, the conclusion follows on the evidence, but further evidence might require a revision.

By identifying this pattern or scheme as thin, I suggest a contrast with what should be considered "thick." Afterall, we might still wonder how dispositions can be encouraged by such a scheme, how, to recall the language I used above, experience, reflection and judgment can be brought together here to instill a disposition. Thin descriptions capture surface details and lack penetration, they are more—to follow Pinto—identification tools rather than evaluative; it is the "thick description" of an argument that adds features absent from that which report the minimum, the thin layer of premises and claims.[12] Thick descriptions draw on and open up the argumentative situation in all its contextual variety. Thick descriptions facilitate reflection and judgment. For scheme theory, access to a thick description of an argument is through consideration of its critical questions. For this scheme, the questions are as follows:

> CQ1: What grounds are there for believing that *a* is a person of good character and are those grounds plausible?
>
> CQ2: Is character relevant in the argument in question?
>
> CQ3: Is the weight of presumption claimed warranted strongly enough by the evidence given?[13]

All three questions take us beyond the thin description of the scheme's structure and into the contextual details, the "total argumentative situation," in which the scheme was first recognized. The first question seeks to establish the nature of the authority involved and the grounds on which it is established. "Good character" is notoriously vague and it needs to be left to the context to determine it. Still, the question ensures that we begin by looking at the nature of good character in the specific situation and what support has been provided for it.

The second question asks about the relevance of character to the argument in question. It is a question concerned to uncover what is at issue in the discourse. Some matters would seem to stand on their own merits irrespective of who says what about

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[12] Elsewhere (Tindale forthcoming), I give considerably more attention to the distinction between thin and thick descriptions and its importance for argumentation.

[13] Again, these are modified versions of the critical questions introduced by Walton, Reed and Macagno (2008: 336).

them. But other matters involve societal debates that bring to light the underlying values and the importance of embracing them.

The last question concerns how much weight the person supporting it has given to a claim. Again, this is something that can only be assessed in the context of a specific case. It involves the relationship between the power of character and the claim in the conclusion. Does the appeal make a difference to how we look at the claim, and if so, how much?

Of course, people do a lot of different things over the course of their lives and our opinion of them might change. As such, the Ethotic Appeal is also a fitting scheme to illustrate just how important the standard of defeasibility is in the use of argumentation schemes. This standard, you will recall, points to the ways in which the arguments involved remain open to revision even after they appear settled by the circumstances available to us.

Consider, as an example, the organization L'Arche and its founder Jean Vanier. The mission of this international organization, established in 38 countries including Canada and Japan (Muramoto and Kosaka 2017) is "to make known the gifts of people with intellectual disabilities, working together toward a more humane society."[14]

In 2015 Jean Vanier's accomplishments were brought to wide attention after he was awarded the $2.1 million (Canadian) Templeton prize.[15] This prompted a laudatory editorial in a national paper that involves a clear ethotic appeal:

> The ideals of humanity, to say nothing of humanity itself, have been made better by Jean Vanier.
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> The 86-year-old Canadian, son of the 19th governor-general, disenchanted naval officer, restless philosopher and unbounded explorer of the soul, was awarded the $2.1-million Templeton Prize last week for his exceptional contribution "to affirming life's spiritual dimension."
>
> Spirituality is too often defined within sectarian limits. But the values expressed by Jean Vanier, as he's lived a humble life of compassion for wounded humanity, transcend the Biblical message and Catholic theology that inspired him.
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> In 1964, troubled by the grim state of psychiatric institutions he'd visited after finishing a doctoral dissertation on Aristotle's principle of happiness, Mr. Vanier invited two mentally disabled men to leave their hospital and come to live with him in a French village.

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[14] From the L'Arche International web site: https://www.larche.org/what-we-do, accessed June 18, 2020. Muramoto and Kosaka (2017) provide a detailed case study of one such institution in Japan, where they claim shortages of care workers for the disabled is a serious issue.

[15] The Templeton prize is an annual prize awarded by the Templeton Trust to a living person whose work harnesses the power of the sciences to explore deep questions.

This was the beginning of a now-global community called L'Arche, named for Noah's Ark—a refuge. Drawing on his own transformative experience, Mr. Vanier saw how doing good was mutually beneficial—people without egos or an inflated idea of success brought their so-called normal counterparts down to size. By doing so, they awakened a sense of humanity lost in the combative world of ego, ambition and economic winners and losers.

In this challenging vision, it's not until we share our lives with people who've been rejected by society that we come to recognize our own flaws and deeper needs. Mr. Vanier had the courage and the humanity to turn his spirituality into action. As his Templeton nomination eloquently states, he "exposed his ideas to the most challenging test of all—real people, real problems, real life."[16]

This epideictic praise clearly encourages consideration of the values that underlie the man: specifically, an ethic of care. Although any ethotic appeal here which is reduced to the argumentation scheme alone would be thin, the deeper evaluation of the reasoning prompted by the critical questions, and especially the consideration of the second premise of the scheme (Vanier is a person of good character) would involve a thick recovery of contextual features that bring to light the values involved and encourage a reflection on those values as ones to emulate: the encounter with those values promotes a dispositional attitude that will in turn arise in future actions of a similar kind.

Consider, for example, some of the statements in the editorial: "the ideals of humanity…have been made better by Jean Vanier." The "values expressed by Jean Vanier" include humility and compassion; they involve values of shared experiences with people of very different mental capacities that result in mutual benefits to those involved. These ideas combine to give substance to the understanding of "good character" that this context supports, all of which would be part of a thick response to the first critical question.

But I introduced this case as a purported illustration of defeasibility, and some of my readers will already be eager to raise objections because they know how this story ends (or, at least, how it has continued). The case of Jean Vanier is indeed a striking example of the notion of revisability captured in the scheme's feature of defeasibility. Jean Vanier was respected and admired throughout the world as the founder of L'Arche in 1964. This was a community where people with and without intellectual disabilities lived together on an equal footing. By 2020 there are 154 such communities in 38 countries. Vanier himself lived for decades in such a community and wrote extensively about the bonds of spirituality that united the members. All of this is reflected in the above account.

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[16] *The Globe and Mail*, March 16, 2015.

Vanier died in 2019, and after his death the L'Arche authorities conducted an internal study based on rumours of improprieties on Vanier's part. Made public in February 2020, the report corroborated six cases of sexual assault by Vanier on women associated with the organization. Although none of these women had disabilities, they had all struggled to gain a hearing in part because of the status of moral exemplar that Vanier enjoyed.

Such revelations should not undo the valuable work that Vanier did, but they do lead to necessary revisions of his status as a moral exemplar. Instead, he stands revealed as a flawed individual like any other (and this itself is a lesson to be acknowledged). Those conclusions of 2015 needed to be rethought. This is the recent judgment of several leaders of the organization:

> *For many of us, Jean was one of the people we loved and respected the most. Jean inspired and comforted many people around the world … and we are aware that this information will cause many of us, both inside and outside L'Arche, deep confusion and pain. While the considerable good he did throughout his life is not in question, we will nevertheless have to mourn a certain image we may have had of Jean and of the origins of L'Arche."[17]*

Beyond what this instructs us about defeasibility, it has further lessons about the relationship between *ethos* and value—the person and his or her actions (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 293-305). That "durable being" or "stable structure" that underlies a person's acts "permits us to prejudge" those acts. But the success in doing so depends very much on the accuracy of our information about the person in question. And this is where the import of the third critical question comes to the fore: CQ3: Is the weight of presumption claimed warranted strongly enough by the evidence given? In 2015, the answer to this was a confident affirmative. It is in the light of new evidence that the 2020 judgment about the person changes. It does recommend against placing people on pedestals that are too lofty. But I don't think it undermines the argumentative strategy of using ethotic appeals to place the spotlight on community values and encouraging the adoption of those values and the appropriate dispositional attitudes that can follow. When we use argumentation in the services of education we are rarely in the domain of certainty, and when we deal with the complexities of social argumentation we are always in the domain of uncertainty. But the rewards of adopting effective strategies outweigh the perils that can accompany them. As we struggle to find and adopt strategies that connect dispositions with values, we are most concerned with the public expression of those

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[17] https://www.larche.org/news/-/asset_publisher/mQsRZspJMdBy/content/inquiry-statement-test, accessed June 18, 2020.

values. Other aspects of character may indeed be left in the private sphere of individual life. But in the end, we detach the value from the life as any epideictic speech ultimately aims to do. That is the force of representation. The life with the character it possesses is a conduit to values presented, just as the centripetal force of argumentation aims to infuse those values into the characters of those who are learning. It is again related, as Aristotle observed, to habituation. We get better at recognizing the right kinds of cases, and we get better at acting in the right kinds of ways. We become better disposed.

5. Conclusion

In closing, I want to return to one of the points made in the introduction: the tension between being like "us" and being one's own person; the tension between common values and the value of autonomy. The discussion of dispositions clearly promotes individuals over the societies from which they emerge. But that emergence is crucial, because as the Aristotelian lessons stress, we arise against a background of ready-formed values that we take up and express in our own ways. That earlier tension is founded on a mistake of thinking that common values require commonality of belief and actions. But experience tells us that we understand and live such values like fairness and compassion in quite distinct ways, ways that can even bring us into conflict over those values. This is what considering "forms of life" illustrates. And this is the nature of argumentation within the social realm.

We have further reinforced the insight of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca regarding the fundamental role that epideictic must play in argumentation and education involving values. While for some in the tradition, epideictic has been relegated to the sidelines while the important roles were extended to the deliberative and forensic genres, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca promoted it to the centre of our concerns for the very reason that it is essentially concerned with values and both of the other genres cannot escape the involvement of values (we do not deliberate, for example, in a value vacuum).

Argumentation has many uses, many goals. Among them is the modification of our cognitive environments and, as we have seen, the subsequent modification of the persons who operate in those environments. Following the remarks of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, I have tried in this paper to make some headway in understanding the importance of dispositions as part of this modification. Michael Burke (2011) adopted the term "disportation" to describe the kind of affective change that takes place in a reader as she engages a text (2011, p. 232). We are concerned with more than readers, but the import of affective change is similar: the whole person is transformed by argumentation. The deeper sense of cognition this involves is why the idea of the cognitive environment needs to be expanded to include not just belief, but also emotion and value (Tindale, 2016).

And the central role that the emergence of character plays in all of this is why education will always rely on argumentation.

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