

Argumentation: from Theory to Analytical Practice

My contention is that argumentation, understood in the light of theories such as informal logic, the New Rhetoric, pragma-dialectics, etc. cannot account for practical reasoning and persuasive moves without closely looking into the materiality of the discourse in which the argumentative schemes are embedded. In this perspective, I will present the framework of my approach, "argumentation in discourse" (2012 [2000]) developed at the crossroad of Perelman's theory of argumentation and the contemporary French trend of Discourse analysis. It relies on a few principles:

- It is not enough to illustrate abstract models by examples: these models are to be tested on the ground. Analyzing authentic discourses shows how they are complexified and sometimes challenged by concrete data.
- Looking at argumentation means examining how **argumentative and discursive means are closely associated** in order to orient the audience's way of thinking and seeing the surrounding world. Arguments are thus analyzed in their wording, with the help of the tools provided by language studies.
- Arguments are examined in the intertextual web in which they are produced and received, in connection with the doxa of their time. This ensures the historical and social dimension of argumentative analysis, here privileged at the expenses of universals.

This paper thus claims that dealing with argumentation means trying to understand the way people interact, discuss and debate, and to find out the logic that underlies their discourse at a given place and moment. Promoting descriptive rather than normative analysis, it demonstrates through a selection of examples the need to recur to Discourse analysis when studying argumentation.