

Cognitive Dimensions of the Universal Audience

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What is universal about the universal audience?

That, as we intone to our students regularly, is a good question. What I want to explore is the shape a good answer to that question should take, addressing it from the purview of cognitive rhetoric, which is ultimately the only purview from which one can hope to find a good answer to this question. Still, shaping the answer is admittedly a very tough row to hoe, for a variety of reasons, but chiefly for the almost studious avoidance of mental claims in Perelman's work. Jeanne Fahnestock is an excellent barometer here. She is one of our finest Perelman scholars, yet her superb little article, "Rhetoric in the age of cognitive science," finds no way to mention him. Richard Gregg, too, whose *Symbolic inducement and knowing*, after twenty-five years, remains the most systematic exploration of the zones where cognition and rhetoric meet, finds scant opportunity to mention Perelman, and none at all to mention the universal audience. But a cognitive approach is important all the same, if the notion of universality is to have any serious bite at all in what Gross and Dearin call "the most original" idea to come out of Perelman's work (32).

The notion of cognitive rhetoric has the potential to be fairly distracting, however, so I proceed with a few rapid definitional stipulations, before getting on with Perelman's universal audience.

Defining some terms

The problems of my central terms are formidable. *Cognitive* is one of the most capacious and therefore pleonastic terms of the twenty-first century; *rhetoric* has had similar liabilities for many centuries longer. So:

- for *rhetoric*, I adopt a standard Aristotelian definition, 'the practice and study of suasion'
- for *cognitive*, 'the universal mental substrate underlying belief, knowledge, and disposition'¹
- these unremarkable definitions amount to cognitive rhetoric as 'the study of suasion as the construction of belief, knowledge, and disposition upon the universal cognitive substrate'
- this approach is influenced by the work of Mark Turner, who also used the phrase *cognitive rhetoric* of his framework for awhile (it now goes largely under the name *cognitive poetics*), and it is in consonance with the early sketch of Dan Sperber
- but it has little overlap with the work of Flowers and Hayes, or others, who have also used the phrase *cognitive rhetoric* of their research programme²

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- I also want to be clear that in my use of *cognitive*, I am trying to maintain distinctions, on the one hand, with *noetic* domains (concerned with specific complexes of information and belief) and, on the other hand, *neural* domains (with the brain's anatomy and chemistry)—as opposed to the properties of the mind that afford and constrain the acquisition, structure, and annealing of information and belief³

Perelman's universal audience

Perelman always moves quickly to various levels of particularity after introducing or defining the notion, universal audience, but we should not miss that he always begins with deep, true, full universality. It is (to start) "the whole of mankind," he and Olbrechts-Tyteca declare in *The New Rhetoric* (1969, 30). It is "all of humanity," he says in *Realm of Rhetoric* (1982, 14). An appeal to the universal audience is an appeal "*ad humanitatem*," he explains to Henry Johnstone Jr. (1955, 247). The qualifications of particularity, too, are revealing. They usually follow a channel like this: "The [rhetor] addresses himself to certain particularly qualified men ... [taken] to be really the universal audience, and not just a particular audience. He supposes that everyone with the same training, qualifications, and information would reach the same conclusions" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 34). There are, then, two components to this conception: a universal substrate and a more particular superstrate of training, qualification, and information.

I argue that the universal substrate is, and can only be, cognitive—that is, defined by the structure of the human mind—while the superstrate is a matter of noetic resources. The parallels with Aristotle's common and particular *topoi* are hard to miss, the one depending on a notion of argumentation universals, the other on a notion of specific audience analysis. Perelman's notion fuses these two dimensions in principle, but does not maintain that fusion in the specifics of his programme, which is one of the reasons the universal audience has often proven controversial. Perelman appears to want to have his cake and eat it too.

Now, the way my argument proceeds may seem like slight of hand, because I shift our attention somewhat away from what Perelman says about the universal audience directly, and toward other claims in his programme, especially those about logical structure and figuration. But the move is directed, first, at bringing increased coherence to the notion of a universal audience—that is, finding something genuinely universal about it—and, secondly, bringing increased overall coherence to the array of components in Perelman's approach.

Here, in short, is the fulcrum on which this move turns: while the noetic resources available to an arguer might be very broad, in cultural terms, implicating notions like common sense and intuition (1981, 17), they might also be very local indeed, including such specifics as historical details, popular events, or the variables of an equation—including any fact or principle or observation available within the rhetorical context.

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Training, qualifications, and information are all quite variable. Cognition, on the other hand, is universal all the way down. It is part of our biological endowment.

Perelman never says anything about the universality of his notion beyond vagaries like "whole of mankind" or "all of humanity," but he does implicate protocols of argumentation that evoke certain characteristics shared in a virtually definitional way by all of humanity; in specific, rational and aesthetic capacities. Aristotle, for instance, defines us as *rational animals* (*Metaphysics* 1036a29). Ellen Dissanayake calls us *Homo Aestheticus*. Neither of these claims about the fundamental nature of humans is uncontested, of course, and the specific realization of these defining characteristics can be quite variable. But if cognitive universals are to be found anywhere, both rationality, in the sense of algorithmic problem solving, and aesthetics, in the sense of taking pleasure in sensual apprehension, are certainly among the most probable domains.

Logical structure

"[A]rgumentation addressed to the universal audience," Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write when introducing the concept,

must convince the reader that the reasons adduced are of a compelling character, that they are self-evident, and possess an absolute timeless validity, independent of local and historical contingencies (1969, 32)

These notions are familiar from the traditions of logic—*self-evidence, absolute, timelessness, validity, independence from contingencies*—and Perelman clearly wants to retain some version of them. The affection with which he wrote about such criteria, with and without Olbrechts-Tyteca, led to some misunderstanding. Indeed, the difficult struggle he had in articulating a coherent account of the universal audience, and the consequent difficulty his readers have had, largely hinges on the desirability, but also on the impossibility, of such rock-hard, universally available standards of proof in argumentation, especially in epideictic argumentation.

Their impossibility led Perelman to dissociate his programme in two fundamental ways from the logico-philosophical tradition. First, bringing in the rhetorical tradition to trump the logical, he rejects any absolute form of these criteria because of their contempt for audience:

[The logical tradition invokes agreement which] must *result* from the existence of a reality or an objective truth, an established fact, or the necessity and the plainness of certain theses which every reasonable being is obliged to accept. This traditional conception, which links importance to previously guaranteed objectivity and not to the adherence of an audience, rejects all rhetoric not based upon knowledge of the truth. This point of view, *to which I am opposed*, was described in *The New Rhetoric* in such a sufficiently convincing manner as to lead certain rhetorician readers to consider it as expressing my own. (1984, 190)

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Second, playing the same trump, he shows how they can be partially salvaged by introducing the concept of degree (and, notably, doing so in explicitly cognitive terms): "What is characteristic of the adherence of minds is its variable intensity" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 4). Further, they note criteria like 'compelling character' and 'self-evidence' should not be utilized for their absolute timelessness—indeed, not for anything *absolute* at all—but for a certain, high, "particular degree of adherence" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 4). These criteria are high up on the adherenceometer, but they are not qualitatively different.

Now is the time to remind you of that the principles of the "traditional conception" associated with self-evidence and logical compulsion have long been held to reflect a pure and universal character of human cognition. As William Hamilton phrased it, they are coextensive with "the laws under which the human mind can know" (1860, 230); indeed, George Boole, entitled his modern-agenda-setting treatise on logic, *An Investigation of the Laws of Thought* (1854). The beginnings of modern cognitive science, too, are often dated to Newell and Simon's programme to understand the mind through computer simulation—in particular, with their first dramatic simulation, an inference engine called *The Logic Theorist* (e.g., Newell, Shaw, and Simon, 1958). The relation of the structures of logic to the basic principles of cognition is not uncontroversial, of course, and no one would now, if they ever would, regard those principles as sufficient to account for the whole of cognition, but Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca appear sympathetic to the line that they are implicated heavily in the fundamentals of thought, citing Schopenhauer's and Mill's positions in this regard (1969, 32), and associating the universal audience with Kant's approach to categorical imperative (1969, 32; Perelman 1979, 14), derived, as it is, in accord with "the form of the understanding and of the reason itself, and with the universal laws of thought" (1773 [1785], 1). The categorical imperative is especially important here because of the way Kant invokes universality to govern particularity (specific, individual actions), much as Perelman uses the universal audience to govern argumentation within particular argumentative contexts, and for the way in which Kant brings everything down to the projections of the individual ethical actor, Perelman to the projections of the individual rhetorical arguer.

All of this would be moot, given Perelman's rejection of the "traditional conception," were it not for his introduction of audiences and degrees of adherence. It is not just the cognitive terms with which he explicates above variable intensity (the adherence of *minds*) that are relevant here, but also the noetic terms with which he discounts the "traditional conception" (facts, truth, plainness, theses). Structure is important to audiences; it shapes their degrees of adherence; and it is more critical than specific noetic premises and claims. I am speaking, in particular, of the realm of quasi-logical arguments, which achieve a certain power of conviction in the degree that they claim to be similar to the formal reasoning of logic or mathematics" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 193). Gross and Dearin call this similarity "purely illusory" (2003, 44), but Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca don't regard the high-adherence

effectiveness of these argument types as depending on trickery or misperception, but rather on the degree of approximation they have to demonstration.

Figuration

As Carrol Arnold notes in his introduction to *The Realm of Rhetoric*, Perelman found "that claims to rationality are embedded in a number of verbal structures that [had] heretofore been treated as either exclusively ornamental or dispositional" (Perelman 1982, ix), an aspect of their programme that has been developed brilliantly by Jeanne Fahnestock (1999; see also Reboul 1989). I will not treat their somewhat muddy theory of figures here⁴, but its general character is important. It is, first of all, a functional theory, a theory of effects, not of form, and secondly, it implicates, as Richard Leo Enos phrases it, "the psychological vectors of stylistics," undergirding an "epistemic process for structuring thought and expression." (1984, 102). Of particular relevance here is their notion of communion, which is facilitated by values (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 51-56) but also by form (163), and, in particular, by the figures of communion (177-179).⁵

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca identify only a small handful of figures with communion: allusion, quotation, apostrophe, rhetorical question, enallage of person, and change in the number of persons (their designation of figures is a bit idiosyncratic; don't get me started). These figures operate in two general modes. Allusion and quotation are ways of accessing shared values (quotation involves quoting authorities held in shared reverence, as well as using proverbs and maxims which epitomize shared values). The other four are ways of inviting tacit participation (apostrophes and rhetorical questions invite the audience to join "in the deliberation" the rhetor "appears to carry on before them;" enallage of person and change of grammatical number are ways of placing the audience imaginatively into the subject matter). Since the Belgians' approach to figuration is in no way morphological, however, this handful is not the full suite. Figures of communion are not localized to specific structural or conceptual arrangements. Any figure can effect communion.

The participatory group is especially interesting from a cognitive perspective, since it is, as Graff and Winn (2006, 61) note, "at base 'value-neutral'—that is, the techniques function independent of any system of values or the prior agreements of a community of hearers." They function in a largely formal way. Rhetorical question, for instance, is the first member of an adjacency pair. It calls, by virtue of its structure (syntactic and/or phonological), for an answer. Apostrophe, by its pragmatic structure (naming or assuming an addressee), activates a dialogic stance. Enallage of person and change of grammatical number similarly activate pragmatic stances, in this case by way of pronominal morphology.

The theorist who identified this sort of formal communion is Kenneth Burke. "Many purely formal patterns," he says, invite our participation by awakening

an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us. For instance, imagine a passage built about a set of oppositions ("we do this, but they on the

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other hand do that; we stay here; but they go there; we look up, but they look down," etc.) Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. Formally, you will find yourself swinging along with the succession of antitheses, even though you may not agree with the proposition that is being presented in this form. ... [Y]ou are drawn to the form, not in your capacity as a partisan, but because of some "universal" appeal in it. (Burke, 1969, p. 58)

What, we need to ask, are the sources of the "universal" appeal that Burke identifies? He doesn't tarry to say, and I have no grasp on his metaphysics, but cognitive scientists would have no trouble recognizing them as principles of mental organization. Let's isolate the three antitheses Burke offers:

- we do this, but they on the other hand do that;
- we stay here; but they go there;
- we look up, but they look down;

It is quickly obvious, in the petri dish of a bulleted list, that antithesis is not the only figure at work here. Other formal patterns in the passage include isocolon (parallel syntax), anaphora (clause-initial lexical repetition), and mesodiplosis (sentence-medial lexical repetition), along with a metaphorical cliché ("on the other hand"). And more, since some of these figures entail other figures: plocche, alliteration, assonance. What we have, then, is a conspiracy of forms that *say* practically nothing—six very general and routine verbs, each with deictic and pronominal satellites, a couple of prepositions, three conjunctions, and a single very common noun—but which drives the "collaborative expectancy" Burke's example illustrates, and does so because each of the figures partakes in the universal character of the human mind. The organizing principles of cognition and the organizing principles of figuration (similarity, contrast, balance, repetition, and the like) overlap very substantially.

We are, I admit, a few steps away from Perelman's conception of the universal audience, but only a few, and we will now trace back the path. Communion is a dimension of argumentation that brings rhetors and audiences into closer synch. Formal communion, because it relies on the principles and properties of the human mind, is a broader for effecting that synchronization than the noetic methods of allusion and quotation. Indeed, it activates, as Burke says, that which is "universal" to the audience. The big difference between Burke's use of *universal* and Perelman's is that, even with his apprehensive quotation marks, Burke really means it. Perelman, with his sweeping definitions ("whole of mankind," "all of humanity") would really like to mean it, but his focus on the noetic context of values—privileging, in Burke's (1925) terms, the "psychology of information" over the "psychology of form"—prevents him. Cognitive rhetoric identifies the sorts of resources that license a notion of the universal audience which does not violate truth-in-advertising laws.

Conclusion

The Universal Audience is simultaneously one of the most rewarding and the most problematic concepts introduced by *The New Rhetoric*. On the one hand, it appears to salvage universal standards of reason (or reasonableness) without recourse to metaphysics. On the other, those standards appear to rely on "an absolute timeless validity, independent of human or historical contingencies"—that is, on metaphysics, which makes it vulnerable to attack and dismissal. It is frequently criticized and frequently shored up, almost entirely because it is not, as advertised, universal. It is a product of an individual rhetor, projecting his personal (though, in part at least, socially accrued) standards of reasonableness and objectivity into an ideal construct.

I don't claim to have reconciled the rewards and the problems here—rather, more modestly, just to have explored some elements of Perelman's programme in light of cognitive rhetoric and the universal audience, which may help to chart the shape such a reconciliation can take. Logic, long held to reflect fundamental cognitive properties and principles, is too starchy and constipated to support an argumentation flexible enough to meet the rhetorical demands of real people in their personal or institutional trafficking with symbols. But, because of those cognitive dimensions, it has potentially broader reach and elicits potentially stronger adherence than all other forms of argumentation. Perelman salvages these capacities of logic, to some degree, by his notion of quasi-logical argument forms. Figuration, too, has clear cognitive bases, and one of Perelman's most significant contributions to argumentation and rhetoric is the way he shifts the focus from the ornamental to the functional in the theory of figures.

He does not, however, in either case, logic or figuration, draw any conclusions of consequence about the character of the universal audience. I have tried to draw those conclusions here. Those authors who have been most appreciative of Perelman's concept have pointed to how it merges the universal and the particular, but their notions of universality have thus far not implicated the obvious universality of our fundamental cognitive structures. My argument is that by seeing the universal audience as a function of a cognitive substrate and a noetic superstate, we can help develop it in the direction of Perelman's wishful thinking. To the extent that cognitive concerns fail to inform the notion of universal audience—to that extent, we can say the notion fails to live up to its name.

We might just back off, throw in the towel, and call Perelman's notion something like *the fully informed, fully attending, fully rational audience as projected by the rhetor*. That's one option. Or we might continue to call it *the universal audience*. That's the other option. If we opt for the second option, and we respect the intention behind Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's coinage, we have to find some content in the adjective, *universal*. I have been argued that in large measure, the content resides in the cognitive substrate underlying rhetoric.

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¹ For an audience of rhetoricians and argumentation theorists, the first definition should need no further elaboration; feel free to mutter to yourself, 'oh, he's one of those sorts of rhetoricians.' The second definition, though, could use further provenance, and the conjunct, *cognitive rhetoric*, remains in need of further stipulation, distinguishing my approach from other possible and occurring approaches to studying the cognitive substrate of suasion.

"Etymology," as Skinner says, "is the archaeology of thought" (1989, 13), and *cognitive* comes from the Latin *cognōscere*, 'to know.' The first uses in English we can trace (coming through French; see La Primaudaye 1586) implicated the powers, faculties, or mental principles of knowing (e.g., More 1659, 6, 126, 229; Webster 1677, 198, 205, 317; especially Hobbes 1684, 3—"the *Faculty* or Power by which we are capable of such Knowledge, is that I here call *Cognitive Power*"). Immanuel Kant (1790) did perhaps the most to put the term into circulation, as a technical term in

philosophy of mind and faculty psychology, with these implications. The term retained the evocations of mental dispositions and capacities underlying our ability to know and understand long after faculty psychology receded, as in the title James McCosh's influential textbook, *Psychology: The Cognitive Powers* (1886).

It is with this set of implications that the adjective first modified *science*, as it amalgamated branches of philosophy, psychology, engineering, anthropology, neurology, and linguistics in the early 1960s, but that very amalgam of interests and methods, as well as its highly diverse successes, and all the resulting charisma, is precisely what has stretched the word, *cognitive*, to near vacuity.

² The phrase *cognitive rhetoric* has been used at least four programmatic ways over the last several decades (Harris 2007, which I plunder for the following sketch). Sperber (1975, 2007) is the earliest, but the least known in Anglo-American rhetoric. Sperber's programme is from outside the discipline of rhetoric, and is easily the most general (speaking historically, since his position has shifted—see especially Sperber and Wilson 1990, 455—Sperber 2007, 362 sees rhetoric as "the study of discourse"). I'll suspend further discussion for a couple of paragraphs, until I have mentioned the other three ways.

The most familiar of the remaining three, especially to rhetoric-and-composition scholars, comes out of the work of Linda Flower and her colleagues (especially psychologist John Hayes), work that contributed to the shift of focus in writing instruction away from the products of writing and toward the processes of writing. Flower sees the fundamental move of this research as the recognition "that cognitive processes do not exist in the abstract," that they exist rather in the planning and execution of activities, like writing; and she sees the chief result to be an account of "how writing is influenced not only by the structure of the task but also by the way individual writers represent the task to themselves, by social rules, by the ongoing interaction of people involved, and by the wider social and cultural milieu" (Long and Flower 1996, 108; see also Flower 1993, 1994). For clarity of reference, we can call this framework *cognitive writing theory*.

The other familiar usage, especially to rhetoric-and-literature scholars, comes out of Mark Turner's adaptation of cognitive linguistics to the study of literature (e.g., Turner 1991; 1996). It builds on the foundational research into conceptual metaphor by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980; see especially Lakoff and Turner 1989). Literary critics who have taken up Turner's work tend quietly, and appropriately, to call the framework *cognitive poetics* (e.g., Stockwell 2002, 8; Gavins and Steen 2003, 5), a usage I endorse here.

The third programme using the label, *cognitive rhetoric*, comes from yet another set of disciplinary interests, those of theoretical logic. It is also the most eccentric use, at least from an Anglo-American point of view. Coined by Witold Marciszewski in his *Logic from a Rhetorical Point of View*, this use of the phrase signals "the task of

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applying some achievements of modern logic to the art of successful communication, especially in regard to argumentation" (1994, 4), though he dates that approach somewhat mysteriously back to Socrates (1994, 28). For ease of reference, I will call Marciszewski's approach, *cognitive logic*; many, many others, as I take up briefly in this paper, fall within this general phrase—all of those who pursue the theory of logic under the conviction that they are investigating the structure of thought.

Others have used the label, *cognitive rhetoric*, in a variety of non-programmatic ways. No doubt, this includes scholarship I have not encountered: the rampant use of *cognitive* in so many domains and niches has led to so many phrases on the order of *cognitive x*, that the existence of a few more than I have found where the $x = \textit{rhetoric}$ is inevitable. Paul de Man, for instance, uses the term *cognitive rhetoric* in a way that overlaps quite roughly with Turner's use, glossing it as "the rhetoric of tropes" (Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 300). But for de Man it is an assumption, which he partially opposes to *performative rhetoric*—the persuasive function of discourse—not a theory or a research programme.

The approach I am following is spiritually in line with Sperber (1975, 2007), for its scope, which envisions a cognitive rhetoric that encompasses cognitive writing theory, cognitive poetics, and cognitive logic—that is, the other three programmes—and for the centrality it assigns to figuration. In both respects, it anticipates Turner's approach, which is more thoroughly developed and explored, and which has been far more influential on my thinking (I only discovered Sperber's paper a few years back).

I am, of course, fully aware that not everyone will be comfortable with the hierarchy implied by Sperber's position, and which I adopt. Nor is this the only legitimate perspective. In some ways, it is quite natural to see cognitive poetics as the master theory, which explains and defines other possible cognitive approaches to symbolic intercourse—especially in those ways which recognize that poetic uses of language are fundamental to rhetoric (see, especially, Walker 2000). It really comes down to a difference in emphasis, on either aesthetic or purposive uses of symbols, and both perspectives need to recognize that aesthetic discourse is purposive and that purposive discourse has an inevitable aesthetic dimension.

³ One of the ways that *cognitive* is regularly deployed which fogs a lens on the cognitive substrate is synonymous with *noetic*, or *psychological*, or *conscious*, or *epistemic*. Sperber and Wilson, for instance, use the phrase *cognitive environment* for a "set of facts" (1986, 39) available to a speaker at the time of utterance (and Christopher Tindale's argumentation model picks this up effectively for the broader sphere of argument construction/analysis—1999, 101ff). The concept is important, as Sperber and Wilson, and Tindale, and many others, demonstrate, but for clarity I prefer the phrase *noetic environment* for the realm of information and belief.

Another way that *cognitive* is used that unduly complicates this project is as a synonym for *neural*. Indeed, I chose the noun *substrate* advisedly, since it is used in

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neuroscience, in partnership with the adjective, *neural*, to identify the physiological location and properties underlying certain brain functions, like vision. I want to be clear that any cognitive account has to be responsible to what we know about its physical instantiation, but that neuronal material and machinery operates on a different focal plane from cognition. On another focal plane, the molecular substrate of neurons, we find molecules; on another, the atomic substrate of molecules, we find atoms; on yet another, the quantum substrate of atoms, we find the subatomic menagerie of particles. On each focal plane of investigation, we find materials and principles that afford and constrain, but do not exhaustively explain, the character of the materials and principles at the higher stage. In short, I am at this stage interested in *cognitive* rhetoric, not in *neurorhetoric* (or *molecular* rhetoric or *quantum* rhetoric).

⁴ In particular, two distinctions Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca make get in each other's way here. They make, first, a distinction between a verbal structure functioning 'normally'—that is, in such a way that there is no awareness of verbal structure, but only of the information or attitude it sponsors—and functioning 'figuratively,' when the structure draws notice to the verbal structure qua verbal structure (1969, 168-169). Secondly, they make a distinction between the argumentative and aesthetic functions of figuration (1969, 169-170). The difference rests on the effect a given figure has on its audience. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's typology, in short, is not a structural typology, but a functional typology, in which a figure might be argumentative in one context, aesthetic in another; or even, because it is a product of audience perception, the same figure, in the same discursive context, might be argumentative for one auditor, aesthetic to another. An argumentative figure is one that brings about a change of perception in the audience about the rhetor's standpoint, a stylistic figure is one that raises admiration for the rhetor's aesthetic skill; both of them raise issues of the rhetor's authenticity. For instance, the Belgians say that when

a speaker introduces objections into his sentence in order to answer them himself ... [we have] *prolepsis*, which is simply a feint. These objections may be clearly imaginary, but it can be important for a speaker to show he had himself foreseen possible objections and had taken them into account. (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 169)

Here, *prolepsis* is an argumentative figure because it is not asked out of authentic dissent by the rhetor, but as a ploy; more critically, nor is it perceived as an expression of authentic dissent. The ploy is manifestly a move in the language game of argumentation. Nevertheless, it induces the audience to think in a new groove, seeing plausibility in the objection, and granting greater credit to its answer than might otherwise be the case, for its demonstrable robustness under attack. Similarly, a sudden exclamation, or a hesitation in speaking, or a halting repetition, or an unaddressed question, might be no figure at all, if it functions only "normally," without an argumentative or aesthetic effect; an argumentative figure, if it brings about a change in perspective; or an stylistic figure, if it raises admiration for the rhetor's

linguistic prowess. It might also, though Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca do not identify this possibility, function aesthetically and argumentatively at the same time.

The section in which Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca introduce these distinctions is very opaque, which appears to mislead Fahnestock. She criticizes the system for relying on "an untraceable psychological experience, a perceptual moment in which a reader or listener becomes aware of a word or phrase" (1999, 36). But I am not convinced she has caught the Belgians' meaning. Their discussion moves among, almost haphazardly, the perspectives of the argumentation analyst, the inventing rhetor, and the perceiving audience. And the 'noticing' perspective seems to be that of the analyst. If not, their endorsing quotation of Longinus's maxim "no figure is more excellent than the one which is entirely hidden, so that it is no longer recognized as a figure" makes little sense (Longinus 1964 [c40 AD], ch15; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 171). Here we are talking about the rhetor crafting a figure so perfect in its functioning that the audience experiences the effect without noticing the structure which catalyzed it.

⁵ See Graf and Winn (2006) for an extended and necessary examination of communion; while communion is surely a superordinate component of Perelman's approach, he nowhere treats it with any sustained explication.