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1. INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW OF THE PAPER

The goals of the paper are clearly stated. Auch aims "to present a conceptual analysis of hype and distinguish it from a number of superficially similar phenomena" (p. 1). Second, following Cohen (2009), Auch wants to show how the possession of certain critical virtues, particularly the virtue of proportionality, can help arguers cope with the challenges posed by hype contexts.

The paper is nicely laid out and timely. It has caused me to think more about the issues surrounding hype and provoked a number of questions. The distinction between 'hype' and a 'hype context' strikes me as potentially useful.

My commentary focuses on the question: Does Auch succeed here in realizing the aims he has stated? On the whole, while he does make progress toward the realization of the aims he has set, there are some problems with his paper that I will endeavor to point out. After that, I turn my attention to what I believe is a problematic assumption underlying the paper.

2. THE FIRST TASK: THE CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF 'HYPE'

Regarding the first task: the conceptual analysis of hype and its relation to superficially similar phenomena: Whether Auch is successful here depends on two questions:

> 1A: What is his conceptual analysis of hype? Is the conceptual analysis on target?
> 1B: Is the conceptual analysis successful in "distinguishing hype from superficially related phenomena?"

I deal with each of these in turn.

2.1 Task 1A: Conceptual analysis of hype

Though he promised us a conceptual analysis or definition of 'hype,' I did not find one. And I think that is unfortunate because it seems to me that a definition (or conceptual analysis) would be helpful both in itself (for reasons I suggest shortly)

and for the second task of distinguishing hype from related phenomena. Auch writes: "Although the term has many different connotations, the sense of 'hype' that interests me is the one that is applied to subjects or states of affairs that receive exaggerated or otherwise outsized levels of attention from a particular community" (1). I am a bit puzzled because here because Auch seems to be understanding hype in terms of the response from a particular community, whereas elsewhere he has alluded to what I take as the original sense of 'hype'— that of an exaggerated claim made on behalf of some product; as occurs in advertisements.

To help with the analysis, Auch introduces the notion of 'a hype context.' In the Abstract, he writes: "A hype context is one in which otherwise perfectly temperate claims take on an outsized or inappropriate importance, simply due to their ubiquity." Here the feature of exaggeration has disappeared--the claim is perfectly temperate--but its ubiquity leads to a sense of inappropriate importance (hype). An example would help. Is advertising such a context? This description would certainly seem to describe what happens when a product is hyped in an advertisement.

What I think is going on and what is reflected in Auch's analysis is that the concept of hype is evolving. Originally 'hype' was mainly applied to advertising with its exaggerated claims, as in: "Don't believe the hype" meaning "Don't trust the inflated claims of advertisers." But if Auch is right, the term can also be applied to network news coverage of events, like the coverage of Irene; and I think his analysis is meant to capture this.

I believe then that key elements for a conceptual analysis are in place, and they suggest to me something like the following definition: hype is the use of exaggerated and repetitious claims on behalf of, or about, something in a particular context.

2.2 Task 1B: Differentiating hype from related phenomena

Auch writes: "Hype is something distinct from hyperbole or overstatement, but is rather a feature of the contexts in which claims are made" (1). There are two claims here: The first is the claim that hype is different from hyperbole or overstatement or exaggeration. But how is it different? I don't think Auch has answered that question. The second claim is that hype is rather a feature of the context in which claims are made. I am unclear what he is driving at here. Does he mean to suggest that 'hype' should be thought of as predicated of context rather than of as the feature of an individual claim? Of course, all claims are made in some context or other; and my view would be the salient context in which hype occurs is advertising.

As far as the first task, a good start but work remains to be done.

3. RE: THE SECOND TASK

Is Auch successful in showing how virtues of argumentation (proportionality) can help arguers cope with challenges posed by hype contexts? I think he is right to warn us about the dangers and remind us of the virtue of proportionality. I have no problem with his treatment of the two challenges that hype poses for virtuous

argumentation. The first is the case where someone might dismiss a claim as being hyped and failed to provide the evidence for that; the second is that a sense-of-proportion helps an *arguer* realize a simple point: whether or not a claim is hyped is irrelevant to its actual cognitive value. These are timely reminders about the dangers we face.

There are two matters that I want to comment on in connection with this how he goes about this part of task.

First, Auch's analysis is marred by a shifting focus: from providing information, to making an argument, to making claims, to advertising. The concept of cognitive value would certainly include all these, yet they are quite different contexts. One can provide information without arguing; 'claims with cognitive value' is a much broader category than 'providing information' etc. I believe a tighter, more consistent focus is needed.

Second, Auch's analysis seems to operate on the assumption that it makes sense to construe advertising claims as argumentation. I am skeptical about any such interpretation. It seems to me mistaken to construe advertising as argumentation; even though advertisements often have the appearance of argumentation: "Here are four reasons why you should buy a SAAB." But appearances, as they say, are misleading. The aims of argumentation are quite different than those of advertising. Both may be construed as forms of persuasion but after that they diverge. How? By the methods they use

Legendary adman Rosser Reeves described the situation the advertiser faces this way: Our problem is: a client comes into my office and throws two newly minted half-dollars on my desk and says: "Mine's the one on the left; you prove it's better" (Mayer, 1958, p. 53). What Reeves is acknowledging here is the inherent similarity of most brands. Of course, no argument can show this. This aim cannot be done without smoke and mirrors. Another legendary adman, David Ogilvy, describes the basic strategies advertisers use: "Dorothy Sayers, who wrote advertisements before she wrote whodunits and Anglo-Catholic tracts says; 'Plain lies are dangerous. The only weapons left are the *suggestio falsi* (false implication) and the *suppressio veri* (suppression of the truth)'" (Ogilvy, 1964, p. 45). And these remain dominant strategies for persuading people (along with cleverly designed emotional and psychological appeals: viz., Mean Joe Greene for Coke).

If this interpretation is correct, then to construe advertising as a form of argumentation seems to me a mistake. People who use the tools of the advertising trade are not seekers after truth, they are not giving arguments aimed at rational persuasion. They are not operating in good faith when they deliberately state claims with implications they know to be false, and they regularly fail to provide information which they have.[1] Such a context should not be construed as a Gricean one (cooperative). The virtues of argumentation have no application here.

4. CONCLUSION

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[1] For a fuller treatment of this approach to advertising, see Johnson and Blair (2006, pp. 220-241).

In his paper, Auch has raised some important issues regarding hype. I think more work lies ahead in terms of a conceptual analysis of hype that would help clarify the relationship between hype and what Auch calls a hype context. And I think that more examples would provide the necessary ballast for the analysis.

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