

University of Windsor

## Scholarship at UWindor

---

OSSA Conference Archive

OSSA 10

---

May 22nd, 9:00 AM - May 25th, 5:00 PM

### Response to my commentator

Adam Auch

*Dalhousie University, Department of Philosophy*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive>



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

Auch, Adam, "Response to my commentator" (2013). *OSSA Conference Archive*. 14.  
<https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive/OSSA10/papersandcommentaries/14>

This Reply is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences and Conference Proceedings at Scholarship at UWindor. It has been accepted for inclusion in OSSA Conference Archive by an authorized conference organizer of Scholarship at UWindor. For more information, please contact [scholarship@uwindsor.ca](mailto:scholarship@uwindsor.ca).

# Response to my Commentator

ADAM AUCH

*Department of Philosophy  
Dalhousie University  
Halifax, NS  
Canada, B3H 4R2  
[adam.auch@dal.ca](mailto:adam.auch@dal.ca)*

I would like to thank Dr. Johnson for his thoughtful and helpful comments on my paper. In particular, I take his plea for a more precise vocabulary to heart, beginning with these comments.

To begin with, let me here propose a three-way distinction between: a) hype *subjects*: that is to say the person, product, or state of affairs that is hyped by something or someone; b) hype *claims*: that is to say claims about the subject of hype; and c) hype *contexts*: that is to say contexts in which a subject has been hyped. In some cases (like the advertising cases Johnson cites) hype claims will be misleading, hyperbolic, or outright deceitful claims about the subject. However, perfectly ‘temperate’ claims about the subject, taken in aggregate, may also serve to hype the subject. Taken together, hype claims produce a hype context, in which other claims about the subject will be inevitably contribute to hype about it, and may themselves become salient. It is this dynamic, I argue, that causes the challenges to virtuous argumentation I described in the paper.

Before moving on, I want to reflect a little bit about the relationship between hype and advertising. My intent in this paper was not to claim (or presuppose) that advertising is a form of argument. I remain agnostic about this issue, though the examples Johnson cites certainly seem to suggest that there is reason to believe that advertising is not argumentative in any robust sense. At any rate, I think my argument is orthogonal to the debate: Although the term “hype” is often used to refer to advertising, it has a much broader application. Although the *American Heritage Dictionary* notes the advertising connection in one of its definitions, it also distinguishes two other relevant senses of the word: a noun form referring to “excessive publicity and the ensuing commotion” (which may or may not include traditional advertising), and a verb form that refers “to stimulat[ing] or excit[ing]” an audience. Although I might be accused of running together these two senses in my paper, neither requires “hype” to be synonymous with “advertising.”

With regard to challenges posed by hype contexts to argumentation, my idea is as follows: The repetition or proliferation of claims about a given subject may serve to artificially boost its importance. To put it another way, to hype something is to make it appear that it is something ‘worth knowing.’ This increased sense of importance may, in turn, boost the salience of other claims about that subject. As a result, one’s opponents, or co-arguers, or audience may be more prone to pay attention to these claims, and ignore other, less hyped, ones. The way I cashed this out in the paper was that the cognitive significance of hype subjects would likely

come to be misappraised. The virtue of proportionality, then, is the ability to evaluate these claims outside of (or in spite of) this influence.

#### REFERENCES

*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fifth Edition* (2011). Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.