

University of Windsor

## Scholarship at UWindor

---

OSSA Conference Archive

OSSA 6

---

Jun 1st, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

### Theory and Practice Again: Challenges from Pinto and Toulmin

Ralph H. Johnson  
*University of Windsor*

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



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

Johnson, Ralph H., "Theory and Practice Again: Challenges from Pinto and Toulmin" (2005). *OSSA Conference Archive*. 30.

<https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive/OSSA6/papers/30>

This Paper 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).

# Theory and Practice Again: Challenges from Pinto and Toulmin

RALPH H. JOHNSON

*Department of Philosophy.  
University of Windsor.  
401 Sunset Avenue  
Windsor, Ontario N9B 3P4  
(519) 253-3000  
johnsoa@uwindosr.ca*

**ABSTRACT:** In *Argument, Inference and Dialectic* (2001) Pinto argues that critical practice can furnish us with the necessary guidance to answer our questions about argument and inference; we do not need to develop a *theory* of argument/inference. Pinto's provocative remarks raise questions about the appeal to practice, and recall problems that Toulmin encounters in development of his innovative theory in *The Uses of Argument* (1958). In this paper, I juxtapose and reflect on these developments.

**KEYWORDS:** theory of argument, practice, critical practice, Toulmin, Pinto

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most argumentation theorists take themselves, naturally enough, to be engaged in the task of theory construction. Toulmin's theory, for example, has been enormously influential in the development of the theory of argument<sup>1</sup> in the latter half of the 20th century. But his theory encounters certain problems, some of which I have discussed in other places (Johnson, 1981). I begin this paper by discussing a criticism of Toulmin developed in *Manifest Rationality* that concerns how Toulmin frames his theory in relation to practice. Recently Pinto (2001) has expressed doubts about the possibility of a theory of argument. His position raises important issues and thus warrants examination which I undertake in Section 3. That sets the stage for Section 4--additional reflections on theory, practice, and the relationship between them. In Section 5, I attempt to suggest a stance on theory-practice issues that I believe avoids the difficulties in Toulmin's theory-oriented approach and Pinto's practice-oriented approach.

## 2. TOULMIN ON THEORY AND PRACTICE

Toulmin's *theory of argument* ranks as one of the outstanding developments in argumentation theory and logic in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Toulmin begins from what to my way of thinking is an insightful read on the problems that have beset the theory of argument in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These problems stem from developments in logic in the 20th century that Toulmin relates to what he calls the geometrical model. (In my terms, logic became mathematicized (2000, p. 104ff.) He puts it this way: 'The ambition to cast logic into a mathematical form is as old as the subject itself.... Since the seventeenth century the subject has, if anything tended to

<sup>1</sup> Myself, I distinguish between argumentation theory and theory of argument. See my (2000, Chapter 2).

<sup>2</sup> As far as I can determine in *The Uses of Argument*, Toulmin never refers to his work as 'a theory of argument.' For him, it is an attempt to revise 'logical theory.'

become more mathematical rather than less...' (p. 177). Later Toulmin writes: '... we must be careful before we allow any formal calculus to assume the title of 'logic.' There may be room to treat a limited range of problems mathematically in logic, as in physics; ... Symbolic logic may accordingly claim to be a part of logic--though not so large a part--as mathematical physics is of physics. But can it claim to be more?' (p. 209) From what Toulmin has said earlier, it seems clear that it cannot: 'So far as formal logicians claim to say anything of relevance to arguments of other than analytic sorts, judgement must be pronounced against them: for the study of other types of argument *fresh categories are needed*, and current distinctions--especially the crude muddle commonly marked by the terms 'deductive' and 'inductive'--must be set on one side' (p. 147).<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, then, Toulmin believed that *an intervention was needed*: 'If all were well (and clearly well) in philosophical logic, there would be no point in embarking on these investigations: our excuse lies in the conviction that a radical re-ordering of logical theory is needed in order to bring it more nearly into line with critical practice,...' (p. 253) [Toulmin says 'philosophical logic' but I suspect he really means 'logic' and more likely he means something like the theory of argument, or what I would refer to as informal logic.] In effect, Toulmin has called attention to a gap between theory and practice. His own work can be seen as one attempt to achieve the radical re-ordering needed to bring logical theory in line with practice by developing a new theory.

Toulmin's theory had a significant impact on thinking about arguments, far too much to go into here. But his theoretical intervention suffers, in my view, from certain problems. In a revealing passage early on in *The Uses of Argument*, Toulmin writes: 'In tackling our main problems about the assessment of arguments, it will be worthwhile *clearing our minds of ideas derived from existing logical theory* and seeing by *direct inspection* what are the categories in terms of which we actually express our assessment, and what precisely they mean to us' (pp. 6-7, emphasis added). I see two problems here. *First*, Toulmin thought we could clear our minds of the ideas derived from existing logical theory. Toulmin saw clearly enough that the old way of looking at arguments (as premises plus an inference to a conclusion where the conclusion followed necessarily) was inadequate and needed changing, and that is why he proposed his new model for the layout (data, warrant, backing, etc). Yet Toulmin retained many elements of the geometrical model he sought to displace. For instance, in defining the notion of a field – a notion that is crucial for his theory (for both analytic and evaluative components)--Toulmin leaned heavily on the notion of *logical type*. Other terms—also imported from the lexicon of the geometrical model—that continue to loom large in Toulmin's theory are 'logical form,' 'logical possibility,' and 'validity.' In other words, Toulmin's own theory has significant indebtedness to the theory he seeks to replace.

A second problem with Toulmin's approach is the idea that we can come up with the appropriate categories by *direct inspection*. If the history of philosophy since Descartes demonstrates anything, it is how unlikely it is that anyone can pull this off. For it seems that any indexing of categories will owe some debt to existing theory. Thus although Toulmin declared his intention to minimize, if not exclude, the role that concepts like 'logic,' 'logically necessary,' 'deductive,' and 'demonstrative' (p. 7) play, and is perhaps partially successful on that front, we have seen that terms such as 'logical form,' 'logical type,' not to mention 'argument' and 'premise' and 'modal term' all continue to do heavy duty in Toulmin's theory (Johnson, 2000,

<sup>3</sup>In spite of the enthusiasm with which his theory was received, the deductive inductive-distinction continues to attract followers.

pp. 355-358). These are all carryovers from the vocabulary of existing logical theory, elements of which Toulmin retains.

The lesson here seems to be that we cannot just wipe the slate clean. At least Toulmin does not appear to have been able to do so, even if we take it that his project was not necessarily to banish such terms altogether but rather to remove them from a substantive role in his theory. Indeed the lesson from modern philosophy, played out all over again here, is that we will have to retain something of the practice/tradition we wish to leave behind. The customary way of expressing this realisation is by invoking the Neurath metaphor: we are in the situation of a boat at sea; we cannot take the boat out of the water; we have to repair while at sea (Neurath, 1937/1983).

If Toulmin intended to retain components of traditional vocabulary (which seems clearly to be the case) while casting out others--e.g., retain modal terms like 'can' and cast out others, such as 'premise' and 'deductive,' it seems to me he should have done two things, neither of which he has done in any self-conscious fashion. First, he should have stayed with his idea that this is in fact a reordering (as the text from p. 253 suggests) and not a wiping clean of the slate (as the text from pp. 6-7 suggests). Second, Toulmin should have developed some policy to guide the process of selection, some way of answering the question of which elements of prior theory get selected for significant work in the new theory, which will get pushed to the background, and which are to be eliminated altogether, and why these choices are proper ones--else the process appears *ad hoc*.

Toulmin was absolutely right to call attention to the gap that had developed between critical practice (his term) and logical theory. He attempted to bridge the gap by developing a new theory of argument. From the problems Toulmin encounters, we can learn that it may not be possible to make the Cartesian move of starting over, and that *faute de mieux*, we must in our efforts make use of prior theory.

But perhaps the problem lies equally in the view that what is needed is a new theory. I want next to have a look at a challenge that emerges from the writings of R. C. Pinto.

### 3. PINTO ON THEORY AND PRACTICE

In 'Logic, Dialectic and the Practice of Rational Criticism,' Pinto (2001) is reflecting on the sort of work with which he has been engaged. He is aware that many writers see their task as providing a theory of argument, or at least the elaboration of a theoretical foundation on which the evaluation of arguments and inference could be based' (p.128) and mentions a number of those working in the area of argumentation and informal logic, including me. (As an aside, I agree with this observation and note that it represents a marked shift from the days in which Mark Weinstein complained about the seeming obsession that informal logicians had with textbooks at the expense of theory).<sup>4</sup> Indeed, he once saw himself as engaged in a theory-building exercise. However, Pinto reports that while he thought the points he was developing were valid and important, 'they did not add up to the elaboration of a theory' (p.128); they remain 'fragmented and incomplete.' Recently he has come to a different view of the matter: '...I now hold that our judgments about arguments and inference are guided by *a tradition of critical practice* rather than by an over-arching theory' (p.129). Indeed, Pinto says that he is not sure whether it is possible to elaborate a theory that 'might *ground* a future critical practice.'

<sup>4</sup>I find it more than passing strange that in his recent review of Pinto's book Weinstein (2002) did not take up the skeptical challenge served up by Pinto.

Instead, he has come to see these papers as ‘attempts to *illuminate existing critical practice.*’ In terminology somewhat reminiscent of Wittgenstein, Pinto now wishes to characterize his work as ‘assembl[ing] a set of observations or reminders’ (p. 129). Pinto then turns to a discussion of the payoff of this way of looking at his own work. It will **not**, he says, result in ‘a set of propositions about argument inference whose truth is proved and which constitutes a theory of inference or argument.’<sup>5</sup> Rather the only possible payoff is ‘an altered way of looking at the phenomena this paper discusses—an alteration induced by observations and reminders set forth in them’ (p. 129).

In making critical practice his theme, Pinto is not suggesting that it is the final court of appeal when it comes to the business of evaluating specific arguments and inferences. Critical practice is, he says now quoting me, sometimes ‘all over the place, it has tensions within it, it has arguably sometimes gone astray; often stands in need of enhancement, emendation or correction’ (p.129).

For those of us who work in informal logic, Pinto’s remarks about the role of practice are certainly welcome. Historically, informal logic found its first expression in an attempt to remedy a certain kind of defect in existing practice (e.g., using artificial examples of argument) by changing that practice. The question of whether a theory of argument is possible was first raised by Govier (1987) who claimed that while such a theory was possible, none of the extant theories was adequate. Though there have been those who, like Pinto, expressed reservations about the role of and need for theory in informal logic (Weddle, 1985; Doss, 1985), the last twenty years have witnessed a number of attempts to develop a theory of argument.

I interpret Pinto as taking a *skeptical position* on the possibility of theory and its potential role in our study, and see him as offering an alternative. I want to press him on two fronts: I think that (a) clarification of his skeptical position is needed; and (b) some fleshing out of his alternative is needed.

But before doing that, I want to note that Pinto presents a challenge which may have clear advantages. First, there is a kind of looseness that attends the way the term ‘theory’ has been used.<sup>6</sup> The term is often used without it ever being made clear just what the requirements are. To cite but one example: Walton’s *A Pragmatic Theory of Argument* (1997) never undertakes to say exactly what the requirements for a theory of argument are. Second, Pinto’s alternative might help resolve issues in informal logic and argumentation theory. For example, the problem of relevance. Many theorists have tried to work out a theory of relevance but general opinion is that none has worked (Woods 1995). In his review of my *The Rise of Informal Logic* (1996), Hitchcock makes the point that although the theory of argument evaluation that Blair and I advocate makes use of a relevance criterion, there are many difficulties in our account of this criterion. In effect, I take Hitchcock to be saying that our account is vulnerable because we do not have a viable theory of relevance. If we were to take Pinto’s suggestion seriously, then it could be argued that *perhaps* no theory of relevance is needed. We might be able to appeal to our critical practice of making judgments about relevance and find in that practice the materials we need to answer the question. Similarly with respect to the issue of dialectical obligations, I have been attempting to develop such a theory but we have, the argument from Pinto might go, a critical practice that seems for the most part to be working; attention to critical practice

<sup>5</sup>In an earlier version of this paper, I attempted to use this text to extrapolate Pinto’s view about the nature of a theory of argument. In private correspondence, however, Pinto indicated his dissatisfaction with this text.

<sup>6</sup>In my (2000) I did sound a cautionary note. See note 9 on p. 171.

combined with reminders and fruitful suggestions may well suffice. Hence the belief that we need a theory is unfounded, and quite possibly misguided.

That said, I do have some concerns about Pinto's skeptical position that I can best articulate by posing questions that divide naturally around three topics: (1) about theory; (2) about critical practice; and (3) about the relationship.

#### 4. THEORY, PRACTICE AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM

I found Pinto's position challenging in two respects. First, as indicated above, it has prompted me to stop and think about my own use of 'theory' and whether it is justified. Second, it has been a challenge because Pinto's position seems somewhat ambivalent. That might be because the papers in which Pinto's views are found were written over a period of time, and only at the end does Pinto offer us his characterization of his own views in the course of which he presents the views about theory that I am focusing on here.

It is clear that Pinto thinks his own remarks do not add up to a theory. Pinto also holds that 'no *adequate* general there currently exists or is in the offing' (p. 127). On the surface, this remark seems to suggest that while Pinto thinks there are theories, they just are not adequate. But Pinto's skeptical challenge is *not about whether the various theories that have been proposed are adequate, but whether they are in fact theories at all*. Speaking for myself, I certainly thought what I was developing in MR was a theory. I used the word 'theory' to describe my work, and I spent a great deal of time in Chapter 2 stating just what I thought a theory of argument consisted in, and what the adequacy conditions for a theory of argument were. I could be wrong in any or all of these respects. Perhaps what I offered was not a theory at all; perhaps my attempt to spell out what a theory of argument is was wrong; perhaps the distinction I drew between a theory of analysis and a theory of argument was wrong or misguided, though I do not think so. My conjecture is other erstwhile theorists would have a similar reaction. All of them use the word 'theory' to describe what they are doing, though none of them have made an explicit attempt to spell out just what they believe constitutes a theory of argument. Now we must suppose that these writers are competent users of the language. If they say they are putting forth a theory, the presumption would seem to be that they/we were right in so describing our work. Hence, the burden of proof would seem to fall to Pinto to give reason to think that we in fact were wrong. It's a strong claim that requires some fairly strong support.

So Pinto takes a skeptical position with respect to the possibility of a theory of argument. But it is a modest scepticism in that he stops short of *asserting* that no such theory is possible: 'Personally I don't know whether it is even possible to elaborate a theory,' he says.

Let me turn to the three crucial issues that have emerged: (1) the nature of and role of theory; (2) critical practice; and (3) the relationship between theory and practice.

##### 4.1 About theory

Pinto reports he found himself headed toward a theory but not able to develop one. This remark occasions two questions: First, what was he headed towards? What exactly does he think is required for a theory of argument (inference)? Second, what basis does Pinto offer in support of his skeptical views?

As to the first: Pinto never does state exactly and explicitly what he means either by a theory generally or a theory of argument/inference, specifically: 'The points I was developing

were valid and important; ...it bothered me that they did not seem to add up to the elaboration of a theory' (p.128). This remark suggests that Pinto does have a particular conception of theory, though he does not tell us what it is.<sup>7</sup> There are indications that, for Pinto, a theory would have to aspire to being complete, systematic, and foundational; he characterizes his own remarks as fragmented and incomplete. But having raised this issue of whether a theory of argument is possible, it seems to me that Pinto owes us an account of exactly what a theory of argument would consist of.

Let me turn now to the second matter: Pinto's reasons for scepticism about the possibility of a theory. It seems to me that Pinto provides two different considerations that might be construed as providing support of for his skeptical position. One reason is hinted at on page 129 where, following Rorty, he says that he is 'inclined to question the idea that our critical practice must look to a theory of argument for a foundation and an anchor.' Here Pinto echoes a remark in Chapter 12 where he stated that 'we do not have anything today that can claim to be a general theory of criticism' (p.118). In the footnote, we get a somewhat clearer understanding of a possible basis for his scepticism: 'The idea is that criticism must be based on an appropriate theoretical discipline which elaborates truths capable of grounding our normative prescriptions. I am suggesting that we do not have the luxury of grounding our critical norms in such a theory—not, now, and perhaps not ever.' It is clear that Pinto is rejecting a Husserlian view of the role of theory as the ground (anchor, foundation) for critical practice (p.118, 129). A second reason may be gleaned from remarks in Chapter 3 where Pinto discusses 'The Relation of Argument to Inference.' Here Pinto seems more tolerant of the possibility of theory generally. He argues that classical logic (which I think he would concede is a theory) cannot be a general theory of inference or reasoning...' (p.38). Then on page 40, he refers to Toulmin's theory of argument and in referring to 'the causal theory of inference' he suggests that there is 'something importantly right headed in this theory of inference.' On page 44, he recognizes 'the achievement of the pragma-dialectical school in the elaboration of a normative model of theoretical discourse' (p. 44). Nevertheless, he writes that 'even there the supposition seems to be that a set of straightforward procedures for determining validity are already available and can be presupposed'—a supposition Pinto rejects, saying that 'there needs to be a critical practice and a set of techniques for evaluating the inferences that don't fall under an articulable inference rule, and these techniques cannot be defined or captured by any set of procedural rules either' (p. 44). Then in another passage that seems to countenance the possibility of theory, he states: 'For example, where simplicity emerges as a salient criterion of theory choice, one can rationally consider...which of two theories is simpler, but no rule or algorithmic procedure will settle the question.' Such considerations function as grounds for scepticism about theory only if one thinks that that's what theories should accomplish. Very few theories can meet such requirements.

To summarize, I think that the basis for Pinto's skeptical position regarding a theory of argument stems primarily from his view of the role such a theory would have to play; i.e., it would have to serve as a ground or foundation for critical practice. Secondarily, it stems from the

<sup>7</sup>In private correspondence, Pinto writes: 'A theory of X consists of set of propositions which purport to offer account of X which (a) is a systematic account [i.e., it addresses the outstanding features of X and shows how those features are connected with each other) and (b) is an account that has been defended by argument and the appeal to evidence.' If we follow this line of thought, then *a theory of argument* would consist of a set of propositions that purport to offer an account of argument which is (a) systematic (it addresses the outstanding features of argument and shows how these features are connected with each other) and (b) is an account that has been defended by argument and/or appeal to evidence. If we accept this definition, then the focus shifts now to what is required for an account.

view that no such theory could be complete, algorithmic. My preliminary response to this basis for his scepticism (if I have interpreted Pinto correctly here) is to suggest that Pinto is operating with too narrow, too rigid a conception of theory, and of the relationship between theory and practice. And my countersuggestion will be to the effect that we do not need to see theory as the foundation (anchor or ground) for critical practice, nor as sufficient in and of itself. I will later suggest an alternative that I think gets around this view.

#### *4.2. About critical practice*

Pinto says that our judgements ‘are guided by a tradition of critical practice rather than an overarching theory’ (p. 129). Because this idea plays a pivotal role in Pinto’s position, we need clarification as to just what he means by ‘a tradition of critical practice.’ Now Pinto does not offer any characterization of ‘practice.’ In private correspondence, Pinto says that he is thinking of it along the lines of what MacIntyre calls a practice. MacIntyre’s definition is quite complex but the core of it is ‘...any coherent and complex form of socially established human activity...’ The sort of practice to which MacIntyre (and by inference Pinto) intends to refer is thus social in character, inter-subjective, shared. It refers us to a set of people who partake in that practice--a community of inquirers. The particular practice in question here would seem to be the practice of arguing, of giving and exchanging reasons—our argumentative practice (or practices). Examples of this practice would be found on the Op-Ed page of most newspapers, in Parliament and other deliberative bodies, in everyday conversations, in articles in journals etc.

The term ‘critical practice’ also stands in need of clarification.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps we can get a better idea of what Pinto has in mind by looking at an earlier chapter where that term is doing work. On page 42 ff. Pinto outlines a series of six steps toward a revitalized concept of inference [‘which would make liability to criticism an essential component of the very concept of inference’ (p. 42)].<sup>9</sup> In Step 3, he says, ‘we teach those who make proto-inferences to identify them as good or bad by reference to such patterns’ [the reference here is to patterns of logical form, Toulmin warrants etc.]. As a consequence of doing this, we will have introduced them to what Pinto calls ‘a practice of criticism.’<sup>10</sup> In Step 5, Pinto writes: ‘Critical practice... was a matter of discerning the pattern which the inference exemplifies and judging the extent to which that is truth preserving.’

From these texts, I infer that by ‘critical practice’ Pinto means ‘a practice of criticism’ (rather than a practice that is itself critical or critically informed) which then is itself a moment with the practice of argumentation/inference. For Pinto, then, ‘critical practice’ seems to refer to that aspect of our argumentative practice concerned with evaluation. This strikes me an unwarranted limitation: our argumentative practice is broader and includes the task of construction, analysis and interpretation as well as evaluation. And some of the developments that I would think of as theory have taken place here: Toulmin’s approach to analyzing the structure of argument which is separable from his theory of evaluation. Thus when Pinto refers to critical practice, he is referring mainly to the evaluative dimension of what many would

<sup>8</sup>I found myself a bit confused at times by the way Pinto refers sometimes to ‘practice’ (p.129) sometimes to ‘critical practice,’ sometimes to ‘existing critical practice’ (p.129), but this is not I think a serious matter.

<sup>9</sup>If I understand what Pinto is doing here, he is in effect attempting to make important revisions to our conception of inference [he is doing with inference much the same as what I am doing with argument].

<sup>10</sup>Pinto and I disagree here about the nature of criticism. He takes what goes on here identification of a pattern of argument as good or bad by reference to normative patterns as criticism. In my approach, that would be and evaluation; criticism requires an articulated judgement of the strengths and weaknesses. See my (2000, p. 219 ff).



call the practice of argument/ation which I take to have dimensions other than criticism (or evaluation). Our existing practice includes the techniques as well for the analysis, interpretation, and construction of arguments. His conception is critical practice is too narrow.

Pinto's reminders about the importance of (critical) practice are timely and welcome. But the appeal to critical practice, however we understand it, has limits. It seems to me that the appeal has its greatest potential for enlightenment when there is a more or less coherent, widely shared and acknowledged practice.<sup>11</sup> The appeal to critical practice will run into trouble when that practice is unclear or silent about an issue, which happens not infrequently; *or* when that practice is conflicted 'all over the place' (my words); *and* when there are tensions or contradictory impulses in the practice; *or* when practice is in need of correction, *or* when it has (in some sense) 'gone astray.' But if the above view is anywhere near correct, the appeal to practice will be in trouble most of the time, because one or the other of these conditions is almost always satisfied. I am skeptical, then, that the appeal to critical practice can provide the sort of leverage Pinto seems to envisage.

Let me illustrate. In addressing the issue of the arguer's dialectical obligations, I have come to the conclusion that it would be useful to make a distinction between a criticism and an objection in order to be able to develop a prioritizing principle that would help clarify the arguer's dialectical obligations. But if we look at critical practice, we will not find much if any support for such a distinction. Instead we will find the terms used interchangeably (see, for example, Johnson and Blair (1993), Govier (1999) both of which are discussed in Johnson (2000)). I do not think the distinction I have in mind could be classified as a reminder, nor does it strike me as an observation, though it originates in an 'observation' (in an extended sense—a kind of realization) about what is not represented in existing practice. I believe such a distinction *can be made*, that it *needs to be made*, and that *making it will result in greater clarity and will be useful in thinking about the arguer's dialectical obligations*. However, to do this, I must go beyond existing critical practice. I would need to draw a clear distinction between a criticism and an objection, and that in turn would require that these be distinguished from an alternative position—so that some further elaboration is necessary. All of this work to me would fall naturally into what I call a theory whose role is not to provide a foundation for existing practice but rather an improvement. (Maybe Pinto would regard all this as a fruitful suggestion.)

#### 4.3 *About the relationship between theory and practice*

It seems to me that Pinto sees the relationship between theory and practice in fundamentally Husserlian terms; and perhaps if we see it that way, he is correct to resist the idea that we need to develop such a theory to serve as anchor. But is not correct to say (or imply) that I view my theory 'as a *foundation* for evaluation of inference/argument' (p. 128). There are other ways to view the relationship. I have in mind Dewey's way of construing relationship between logical theory and practice. In Dewey's view, logic is an evolving inquiry; logical forms change and develop. In *The Pattern of Inquiry*, Dewey writes:

Just as art forms and legal forms are capable of independent discussion and development, so are logical forms ... As in the case of these other forms, they originate out of experiential material, and when

<sup>11</sup>Rorty's remarks are premised on the assumption that we find our practice 'more or less successful.' But how are such assumptions themselves to be made and justified? And, to be sure, if one seeks to challenge 'the practice' (or 'aspects of the practice'), then the appeal to practice will itself be potentially question-begging.

constituted introduce a new way of operating with prior material, which ways modify the material out of which they develop. (1938, p.103)

In Dewey's view, the standards and techniques that are part of logical theory are extracted from the practice and feed back into it. (This is Dewey as interpreted by Bernstein (1971, pp. 216-218).) In this type of account, a theory of argument would not be seen as providing the anchor or foundation for practice. The relationship between them would be reciprocal—in much the way that Pinto describes on page 122 where he writes that 'critical practice is itself something that evolves over time...'

In sum, while I regard Pinto's skeptical position as a welcome addition to the literature, his views are not without problems. In my remarks, I have focused on his position on theory and practice and have argued that (i) his position on just what is required for a theory needs clarification, and the basis for his skeptical position needs elaboration; (ii) there are problems with the way he construes both the idea of critical practice and the role his account assigns to it; and (iii) his view of relationship between theory and practice is too limited.<sup>12</sup>

## 5. CONCLUSION

I began this paper by revisiting Toulmin's groundbreaking theoretical intervention which aims to provide a better model for our critical practice, but which runs into problems in the way in which Toulmin seeks to carry out his reform. The lesson I drew from Toulmin is that our attempts to improve theory must to some degree depend on prior theory, though ways of reducing the unwanted influence of prior theory must be sought. Next I looked at what I called Pinto's skeptical position with respect to the need for theory. That turned out to involve Pinto's view of the relationship between theory and practice which is Husserlian in character; I suggested an alternative that comes out of Dewey.

It seems to me that both Toulmin and Pinto's efforts are, in the last analysis, compromised by tacit reliance on Cartesian ideas, though different aspects. The remedy, in my view, is to lean more heavily on insights available to us from the pragmatists, particularly Dewey. In another context, Quine (1963, p.46) has said:

Each man is given a scientific heritage plus a continuing barrage of sensory stimulation; and the considerations which guide him in warping his scientific heritage to fit the continuing sensory promptings are, where rational, pragmatic.

In the present context, I propose the following adaptation of Quine's formulation:

Each [logical] theorist is given a logical heritage plus a continuing barrage of phenomena [in the form of critical practice]. The considerations that guide him in warping his logical heritage to fit the continuing barrage (or *vice-versa*) are, where rational, pragmatic.

<sup>12</sup> Too late in the process of writing this paper, it occurred to me that another limitation in Pinto's position is that it fails to take into account the contribution of theory to the development of critical practice. Just think of the role that Toulmin's concept of warrant has had on the practice of analyzing arguments. 'Had I the time...and words...'

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: I am grateful to Bob Pinto for comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I hope I have eliminated some of the shortcomings, though likely others will have taken their place. I also want to thank my Research Assistant, Michael Baumtrog (Bommer!), for his assistance both in preparing the content and especially for handling the formatting.

## REFERENCES

- Bernstein, Richard: 1971, *Praxis and Action*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Dewey, John: 1939, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston.
- Doss, Seale: 1985, 'Three Steps Toward a Theory of Informal Logic', *Informal Logic* 7(2&3): 127-136.
- Govier, Trudy: 1987, *Problems in Argument Analysis and Evaluation*. Dordrecht, Foris.
- Govier, Trudy: 1999, *The Philosophy of Argument*, Newport News, VA, Vale Press.
- Hitchcock, David: 1996, 'Critical Review of Johnson's *The Rise of Informal Logic*', *Argumentation* 18 (2&3), 273-288.
- Johnson, Ralph H.: 1981, 'Toulmin's Bold Experiment: An Appreciation and Critique of Toulmin's *An Introduction to Reasoning*', *Informal Logic Newsletter*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 16-27, and Vol. 3, No. 3, pp. 13-20.
- Johnson, Ralph H.: 1996, *The Rise of Informal Logic*, Newport News, VA, Vale Press.
- Johnson, Ralph H.: 1999, 'Arguers and Their Dialectical Obligations', in H.V. Hansen and Christopher Tindale, (Eds.), 'Proceedings of the 3rd Conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation', St. Catharines, ON (CD-ROM).
- Johnson, Ralph H.: 2000, *Manifest Rationality: A Pragmatic Study of Argument*. Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Johnson, Ralph H.: 2000a, 'What is an Objection?' Ontario Philosophical Society, McMaster University. (Unpublished)
- Johnson, Ralph H. and J. Anthony Blair: 1993, *Logical Self-Defense*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Toronto, McGraw Hill Ryerson.
- Mill, John Stuart: 1859/1974, 'On Liberty' *Norton Critical Edition*, David Spitz (Ed.). New York, W.W. Norton.
- Neurath, Otto: 1937/1983, 'Unified Science and Its Encyclopedia', *Reprinted in Philosophical Papers 1913-1946*, Robert S. Cohen and Maire Cohen (Eds.), Dordrecht, D. Reidel.
- Quine, Willard Van Orman: 1963, 'Two dogmas of empiricism', in W. V. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Pinto, Robert C.: 2001, *Argument, Inference and Dialectic*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Toulmin, Stephen Edelston: 1958, *The Uses of Argument*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Walton, Douglas: 1997, *A Pragmatic Theory of Argument*, Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Press.
- Weddle, Perry: 1985, 'On Theory in Informal Logic', *Informal Logic* 7(2&3), 127-136.
- Weinstein, Mark: 2002, 'Critical review of Robert C. Pinto's *Argument, Inference and Dialectic*', *Informal Logic* 22(2), 161-180.
- Woods, John: 1995, 'Sunny Prospects for Relevance?', in Ralph H. Johnson and J. Anthony Blair, (Eds.), *New Essays in Informal Logic*, 82-92.