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What jokes can tell us about arguments

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"What jokes can tell us about arguments"

Perelman teaches us that, unlike demonstrations, arguments cannot be reduced to or understood as closed systems. In some particular--but telling-- ways, arguments are like jokes. Telling a joke requires close attention to, e.g., appropriateness as regards subjects, length (what details add or subtract from the humour), the extent of shared knowledge of both particulars and stereotypes, and whether it is possible to be ironic without being misunderstood. Thinking along these lines points up the futility of reducing either the invention or the evaluation of arguments to formal schemata.