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Commentary on Linda Carozza's "Emotional Arguments: What Would Neuroscientists and Psychologists Say?"

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1. Introduction

Linda Carozza's proposal, that we consider emotional arguments as a way to understand, more holistically, how people actually argue in everyday interactions, resonates with interpersonal argumentation literature. Scholars examining argumentative exchanges in close relationships have noted for a while that arguing *is* an emotional experience for those involved (see Benoit 1982 or Hample 2005). Although theorists conceptualize arguing as a reasoned debate or intellectual endeavour, this is a partial representation of the concept; lay individuals often associate arguing with negative outbursts, intense emotion, and physical violence in extreme cases (Benoit 1982). So, what does considering emotional arguments bring to the table? In what follows, I offer a few speculations and comments on Carozza's empirical example, the suggestion to examine biases and emotions from a neuroscientific perspective, and the broader connections to conflict resolution she proposes.

2. Emotional argument

The first question that arises if we are to consider people's emotional arguments is to explain further when and how such arguments may arise. Carozza's example pertains to the realm of interpersonal conflict (i.e., two individuals with incompatible goals that have created tension between them) and mediation. But it is reasonable to see that such arguments could arise in other contexts, too. For instance, two colleagues in the workplace could have incompatible views about their course of action for a project, and the emotional argument that arises or accompanies these views may put their teamwork at a stalemate. Furthermore, the two arguers need not necessarily have a close or even interpersonal relationship. For example, two strangers in a public forum could engage in emotional arguments, too. Carozza alludes to these ideas when she contends that individuals in varying levels of government, law, or social work must deal with emotion frequently. So, one of the clarifications that I believe this line of inquiry could pursue is to delineate and further explicate emotional arguments' realm of existence, similar perhaps to some of the earlier work in argumentation theory that asked where arguments were to be found (e.g., Brockriede 1975).

What Carozza is trying to persuade us is that emotion should not be dismissed. Emotion is part of the very fabric of an argument in multiple cases. In other instances, acknowledging and addressing the emotion is a necessary pre-requisite for any logical, rational discourse. Someone who is angry at their spouse for being too grumpy or not social enough (to use Carozza's example) may not be able to move past this emotion to have a constructive discussion about

one's marriage. Thus, the emotion *is* the argument (i.e., I am angry at you), even if spouses (or any other parties) may not recognize it as such. Dealing with the emotion, the cause of anger, is necessary in order to be able to move beyond it and towards conflict resolution.

Furthermore, self-regulation involves biases, Carozza explains. This discussion gets a bit more complicated because we are aware of some biases, but not of others. In an argumentative context, then, it becomes difficult to recognize the unconscious influences that motivate an emotional argument. How might we then be able to acknowledge and work through such issues? Carozza suggests to start by approaching arguing with others in an open-minded way and trying to become aware of our own biases. This dialogic perspective suggests more collaborative than competitive argumentation, and a commitment on behalf of both arguers to work together to understand each other, the issue at hand, and how to move past their incompatibilities. Walton's (1998) description of positive dialogues, such as information seeking or negotiation, may be useful here in that people could be taught to enact the normative moves that lead to successful arguments. One possible difficulty may be trying to shift people's perspective from competitive, adversarial, and oppositional arguments that are prevalent everywhere around us.

Carozza's explanation that beliefs and values infuse an emotional argument brings to mind another fruitful distinction and aligns further with some of the work conducted in interpersonal argumentation. Johnson (2002) differentiated personal-issue arguments (i.e., those tied closely to the relationship between arguers) from public-issue arguments (i.e., those not directly pertaining to the relationship between the two individuals). Johnson, Hample, and Cionea (2014) also explained that personal-issue arguments are likely more involving (i.e., people become more invested in them) than public-issue arguments. These ideas suggest it is likely that emotional arguments may permeate personal-issue arguments more than public-issue arguments, although this is a question that may be best answered empirically. But, if self-regulation helps us control our behaviour, do emotional arguments exhibit less ability to self-regulate? And do the importance of the issue or the value we place on it make us more susceptible to react emotionally or be less able to self-regulate?

Finally, in respect to conflict styles, work in conflict and negotiation may be helpful as an avenue for understanding when outcomes are better for individuals who hold different styles or approaches to handling conflict (or any disagreements for that matter). For instance, studies of negotiating dyads (e.g., Liu 2013; Zhang, Andreychik, Sapp, & Arendt 2014) have found that emotion (anger or compassion) affects partners' goals throughout their interaction, their conflict styles, or joint outcomes. Similarly, work on dialogue orientations (see Hample and Cionea's paper in these proceedings) may reveal which discursive approaches yield better outcomes for individuals and how individuals who match or do not match in respect to their conflict styles might work through such situations. The domain of emotional arguments suggests the presence of eristic dialogue; some options may be better suited than others for working through such a dialogue. If we accept Carozza's proposition for emotional arguments, perhaps the role of the eristic approach and what it entails may also be reconceptualised.

3. Conclusion

Examining emotion in arguments suggests theoretical developments for what we consider arguments, how emotion functions in argumentative structures, and how we assess emotional arguments. It also suggests practical applications in that individuals could become better arguers if and when they recognize how emotion affects their behaviour in such exchanges. I agree with

Carozza that incorporating emotion in our study of argumentation allows us a better, more in-depth, and well-rounded understanding of how and why people argue.

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