

University of Windsor

## Scholarship at UWindor

---

OSSA Conference Archive

OSSA 12: Evidence, Persuasion & Diversity

---

Jun 3rd, 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM

### Acquisition of Knowledge Through Narrative in Argumentative Processes

Guillermo Sierra-Catalán  
*University of Granada*

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



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

Sierra-Catalán, Guillermo, "Acquisition of Knowledge Through Narrative in Argumentative Processes" (2020). *OSSA Conference Archive*. 3.

<https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive/OSSA12/Wednesday/3>

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).

# Acquisition of Knowledge Through Narrative in Argumentative Processes

GUILLERMO SIERRA CATALÁN

*Department of Philosophy I*

*University of Granada*

*Edificio de Psicología. Campus de Cartuja, s/n.*

*Granada 18071*

*Spain*

[sierracatalan@gmail.com](mailto:sierracatalan@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** The objective of this investigation is to study the role that the narrative speech act plays in relation to the acquisition of certain types of knowledge within the frame of argumentative processes. An inferential scheme that regulates the acquisition of knowledge is exposed, as well as an analysis of the reasons adduced. This is used to develop an evaluative method for the argumentative “goodness” of narrative texts. Finally, the particular case of literary narratives is analysed.

**Keywords:** Argumentation, epistemology, inference, justification, Literature, narrative

## 1. Introduction

This paper addresses the question of how to analyse the process of acquisition of knowledge by narratives, when acting as reasons within an argumentation. The first part of the paper (Section 2) deals with the epistemological background needed in order to fulfil this task. The relations between narrative and epistemology are studied from the perspective of the knowledge acquired by testimony and the concept of basic knowledge. The second part of the paper presents an explanation of the process by which knowledge is acquired in argumentations when narratives are used as reasons. An inferential scheme is presented in order to systematize this phenomenon. The third part of the article is about the assessment of the performance of narratives when acting in the course of an argumentation. The last part of the article deals briefly with the particular case of literary narratives.

## 2. Knowledge and narrative

In this section, I will discuss some aspects about the relations between knowledge and narrative. In order to do so, some epistemological notions and assumptions have to be presented.

People acquire beliefs about the world through belief sources. If these sources are reliable, it become knowledge sources, from which people can acquire knowledge. The problem of the criterion (Cohen, 2002), which deals with the problem of the need of *a priori* knowledge about the reliability of the source in order to acquire knowledge from it, generates great controversy. The theoretical commitments I will present later make clear the position I am holding in relation to it.

Once the background is settled, I should like to make several remarks about the nature of the kinds of knowledge that are susceptible to be acquired from narrative. These kinds of knowledge partially coincide with the so-called “knowledge by testimony.”

The traditional belief sources considered in epistemology are perception, memory and induction (Cohen, 2002). Less frequently studied, introspection is also an accepted one. And the last one is testimony. It is often—and, in my view, mistakenly—considered as second-rate source, as it provides second-hand beliefs: those arriving to their destiny through someone else (O’Brien, 2006). However, and this is why I think testimony is a pure first-rate kind of knowledge, it is a very frequent source of knowledge. Whenever we come to believe facts like Patrick Modiano won a Nobel Prize—when we hear it on the radio—or that we were born on a shiny morning—when our mother tells us—we are acquiring beliefs by testimony. We are persistently acquiring knowledge by testimony, and in some of these cases, testimony is a piece of narrative.

Despite the role of the epistemology of testimony is not the main one of this paper, some theoretical commitments about this field have to be made. Firstly, I will face the dichotomy “testimony as an intentional activity on the part of the speaker [...] [*versus*] testimony as a source of belief or knowledge for the hearer” (Lackey, 2006, p.187) in favour of the second option.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, I am going to adopt the definition of testimony Jennifer Lackey (2006) calls *Hearer Testimony*:

*S* testifies<sub>h</sub> that *p* by making an act of communication *a* if and only if H, S’s hearer, reasonably takes *a* as conveying the information that *p* (in part) in virtue of *a*’s communicative content. (Lackey, 2006, p.190)

Hearer testimony allows to emphasize the role of the addressee of a communicative act. By doing so, it makes possible to study the relations between knowledge by testimony, narrative and argumentation from a perlocutionary point of view, as it will be done in the subsequent sections. As Lackey states, the illocutionary force with which the addresser loads a testimony as performing its emission does not make any much difference: “[Testimony<sub>h</sub>] can serve as a source of belief or knowledge for others, regardless of the testifier’s intention to be such an epistemic source”. (p.189)

It is also important to remark that I am referring to what M. Welbourne and C.A.J. Coady (Welbourne & Coady, 1994) call *natural testimony*. This expression refers to testimony offered in daily life circumstances, without any technical or specific requirements—unlike formal testimony, which refers to situations like “statements offered under oath in a courtroom or commission of inquiry”. (p.178) So, in this paper, by testimony I mean hearer, natural testimony.

With respect to narrative, in his *Narratology: The Form and Function of Narrative*, Gerald Prince (1982, p. 4) presents the following definition “the representation of at least two real or fictive events or situations in a time sequence, neither of which presupposes or entails the other”. In this paper, I will assume Prince’s definition. The alluded representation, in my view, will be made of certain speech-acts, whether of fiction-making (García-Carpintero, 2016) or non fiction-making (Romero Álvarez, 1996).

On the ground of the previous remarks, it is easy to identify testimony with non-fiction narrative. Testimony refers to people making communication—speech—acts in order to convey some information, while narrative is related with the representation of some events—by communicative means: speech-acts. In the case of testimony, the addressee takes the addresser as reasonably conveying some information. If we assume, as it is usually understood, that ‘information’ refers to some data about the real world, the equivalence is assured.

In order to accommodate fiction narrative into this analysis, some additional remarks are needed. In her article *Is there a specific sort of knowledge from fictional works?*, M.J. Alcaraz León (2016) states that there is evidence about the capacity of fiction for conveying knowledge. But, she defends, there is not anything specifically fictional in the features that enhance this epistemic value: “if we look at the reasons that [...] reinforce the idea that fiction possess cognitive value, none of them show that the fictional character [...] is playing a significant role in the constitution of these values”. (p.40) She defends that what explain the power of fiction for conveying certain kinds of knowledge has to do with “the representational means used to produce a work” (p.40), and that the common misunderstanding about the epistemic specificity of fiction is based on the historical effort—in terms of “modulating the expressive and cognitive virtues of each representational medium” (p.38)—that artists have made in producing fiction.

Based on these observations, it can be stated that, although fiction narrative doesn’t fit into the paradigm of testimony—unlike non-fiction narrative—, its epistemic values coincide.

---

<sup>1</sup>I am interested in what actually counts as testimony rather on what is intended to do so. According to that, and as my focus is on written narrative, I choose to follow Gadamer’s hermeneutical spirit. His views about the lack of relevance that the author’s intentions have in relation with the actual meaning of a text can be condensed in the following quote: “Not occasionally only, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive, but always a productive attitude as well.” (Gadamer, 1975, p.264)

Regarding the structural relation between testimony/non-fiction narrative and fiction narrative, some comments have to be made. The basic idea I endorse was expressed by J.L. Austin (1962) in relation with the circumstances required for issuing an utterance: “We [...] must bear in mind the possibility of ‘etiolation’ as it occurs when we use speech in acting, fiction and poetry, quotation and recitation” (p.92).

In this line, M. García-Carpintero (2007, 2016) explains fiction as a kind of speech-act that fulfills certain conditions. In order to provide a theoretical ground, he presents his account of assertion—also modelled as an speech-act—, based on the constitutive “Knowledge Transmission Rule”. According to it, asserting a proposition consists in uttering it in a way such that an intended audience is put in a position to know that proposition. On its basis, an analogue constitutive rule is presented, in order to define his account of fiction:

[...] to fiction-make a proposition by uttering something (or painting, or having people acting on stage, and so forth) is to so utter with the communicative intention to put an intended audience in a position to make believe (imagine) that proposition. (2007, p.204)

According to that, the point of fictioning is to imagine, that is, to know (or pretend to know, or acting as if one is knowing) certain things about a possible world, different from the real one. So, it is reasonable to understand fiction narrative (a narrative about a possible world) as the representation of a narrative about the real world—that is, the representation of a testimony. In conclusion, it has been shown that the epistemic values associated to testimonies—non-fiction narratives—and representations of testimonies—fiction narratives—coincide.

Once narrative has been properly accommodated into the field of epistemology of testimony, some theoretical commitments have to be made. It will provide some technical insights from epistemology that will allow me to precise the kind/s of knowledge suitable to be acquired through narrative.

The first matter about which I am shall to take sides is if knowledge by testimony is inferential or non-inferential. According to the remarks presented by Daniel O’Brien (2006), there are a number of non-inferentialist views that I support, although an inferentialist concession has also to be assumed.

I defend that testimonial knowledge can be acquired in a direct way. An inferential and non-exclusive testimonial chain—or web—justifying a testimony is not a necessary condition to acquire knowledge by it.

In consequence, I also support the idea that testimonial knowledge can be a type of basic knowledge. The notion of basic knowledge I use is the one addressed by O’Brien: “one whose epistemic credentials do not rely on another (more basic) form of knowledge” (p.6). Other accounts of basic knowledge, like the one by Stewart Cohen (2002) also fit into the position I am holding: knowledge provided to an addressee by a belief source, prior that to the knowledge (by the addressee) that the belief source is reliable and, consequently, is actually a knowledge source.<sup>2</sup>

In this line, knowledge acquired from testimony constitutes basic knowledge in some specific situations. The first one happens when a testimony yields knowledge directly, without appealing to another kinds, like perception, memory, etc. The second one consists in testimonies justified by an exclusively testimonial inferential chain, which first step is reliable enough to generate knowledge. And, consequently, so does it the final one.

As I stated before, there is also an inferential-style argument I also admit. Inferential chains of finite length, composed only by testimonial steps are an existing and valid way to achieve testimonial knowledge—as I have outlined above. As the inferential jumps that compose this kind of chains are supported by reasoning processes, this position contradicts genuine non-inferential views like the following one, presented by O’Brien: “if one does have to admit the ability to reason thus, such an ability does not play a justificatory role”(p.6).

---

<sup>2</sup>Basic knowledge according to Cohen’s view is also a type of basic knowledge in O’Brien’s (traditional) view (Cohen, 2006, p. 310).

The last subject from which I consider my position is my view about whether knowledge by testimony is of an internal or external nature. In order to illustrate my position, let's consider that some addressee, A, acquires knowledge, K, from a source, S (an addresser of a testimony), without A having acquired previously the knowledge  $K_S$ , about the reliability of the source. An internalist view would deny the viability of this situation, while an externalist one would accept it (O'Brien, 2006).

I am holding an externalist position, as I don't think that the addressee's prior knowledge of  $K_S$  is a necessary condition for the her acquisition of K.

Neither is it necessary, for the addresser associated to S, to know  $K_S$  prior to stating it. What it is necessary, I defend, is the reliability of the source—its “epistemic quality” (O'Brien, 2006, p.8)—in an ontological level. According to this view, acquiring knowledge by testimony seems rather similar to dying by a shot into the air. Neither the shooter's intention to facilitate the death nor the potential victim's one are necessary conditions for the event, although both of them may help.

In conclusion, in this chapter narrative has been accommodated into the field of the epistemology of testimony. Thus, some technical characteristics of knowledge by testimony can be applied to narrative. Among them, it can be stated that knowledge acquired through narrative is a type of basic knowledge

### **3. How is this knowledge acquired?**

In this paper, argumentation is understood in the line of Lilian Bermejo-Luque's Linguistic Normative Model of Argumentation (2011). According to it, argumentation is modelled as a second order speech-act complex, composed of the constative speech-act of adducing (i.e., the reason) and the constative speech-act of concluding (i.e., the conclusion) (Bermejo-Luque, 2011, pp. 60-62). This speech-act complex presents an illocutionary force, which amounts to trying to show that the conclusion is correct, and a characteristic perlocutionary effect, that consist on inviting to infer the conclusion, on the basis of the adduced reasons. In the case when the addresser, by means of her speech-act of arguing, succeeds in showing that the conclusion is correct—which requires the accomplishment of certain semantic and pragmatic conditions (Bermejo-Luque, 2011, pp. 186-194)—then she is justifying the conclusion.

The relation among the concepts of argument, argumentation, inference and reasoning is the following: reasonings (mental processes) and argumentations (communicative processes) consist on inferences that ground the acceptance of some beliefs based on other beliefs. The syntactic and semantic properties of these inferences are represented by means of arguments.

Bermejo-Luque's (2011) notion of correctness is the following one:

We will take a claim to be correct if we think of the (ontological or epistemical) qualifier that represents the type and degree of pragmatic force with which this claim has been put forward as the one by means of which this claim should have been put forward (p.62)

A claim is correct if its pragmatic force is adjusted with respect to both the real world and an ideal.<sup>3</sup> Despite how interesting the analysis is between the level of correctness of a claim and its quality with respect to make its addressee acquire some knowledge, it is beyond the scope of this study. I will only rely on the commonly accepted assumption that the more correct a claim is, the more accurate is the representation of the world it offers and, consequently, the more knowledge about the real world it generates.

---

<sup>3</sup>This meaning is derived from the last part of the definition: “this claim should have been put forward.” The expression “should have been put forward” makes a reference to an ideal world in which both qualifiers coincide. In this way, this notion of correctness evaluates the similarity between the pragmatic conditions in which the addresser of a claim puts it forward and an ideal set of conditions in which it “should” be uttered.

In order to believe a conclusion, the addressee should believe both the reason and the inference that lead to it. When an arguer wants to show the correctness of her point of view, she has to look for reasons and inferences that can help her to justify it. If she finds a reason that contributes to this task but needs additional support, the next thing she should do is to find a new reason that fully justifies the previous one—and, transitively, the original point of view, or desired conclusion. If it doesn't do it completely, the chain will continue growing in length. Each reason constitutes a partial conclusion whose correctness has to be proved by the next reason to find. The relations between these steps are hold by the inferences that lead from one to the next.

As infinite-length chains of inferences are not sufficient to achieve evidence about the correctness of the original conclusion to prove, there must be a final step, an inference whose reasons are good enough to stop inferring. This precise step would be the last to be found, but the first one in relation with the order relationship determined by the direction of the inferential chain.

In argumentative contexts like the one that has been described, narratives can be used as reasons. They exhibit a great justificatory and persuasive power, which comes from their effectiveness in making an addressee acquire particular pieces of knowledge or belief. This issue has been explained in Section 2, in relation with the fact that knowledge by narrative can constitute a kind of basic knowledge. This means that certain<sup>4</sup> pieces of knowledge acquired through narrative can perform the role of the first step of an inferential chain—although it would be the last one at being found, as it was mentioned above—, as its epistemic credentials does not depend on any other kinds of knowledge.

This topic of the “last reason” has been widely discussed in Argumentation Theory literature. In their *The New Rhetoric*, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca stated that “Argumentation...must convince the reader that the reasons adduced are of a compelling character, that they are self-evident” (1969, p. 32). The “self-evident” characteristic Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca demanded to reasons coincides with the basic nature of the knowledge achieved by certain narratives. It is evident now that these particular narratives can become “good reasons.”

To this point, the role of inferential chains should be detailed. The relation between an argumentative process and an inferential chain comes from the already discussed one between argumentation and reasoning. The first one is a communicative process, while the last one is of an internal nature. Both of them rely on inferences that allow the jump from some beliefs to another ones. According to this, the mentioned inferential chain, motivated by the utterance of the characteristic speech-acts of the argumentation, leads a cognitive process: a reasoning. This one goes from the piece of basic knowledge acquired through the first reason of the chain to the derived knowledge associated to the conclusion—although not necessarily in a direct way: several steps may be needed to justify the conclusion.

The expression ‘inferential web’ has also been used, because any of the aforementioned steps is isolated. All of them are supported by a web of auxiliary inferences—which refers to contexts (Sperber, 2000), sources, etc. In order to explain this situation, some remarks about direct and indirect judgements (Bermejo-Luque, 2011, pp.73-75) should be done.

When reviewing all the possible ways of “coming to believe new things” (2011, p.75), Bermejo-Luque classifies it among direct judgements, indirect judgements and “judgements prompted by other judgements in a non-inferential way.” Direct judgements correspond to judgements that have not been yield by any other judgement. The author exemplifies this type has recalling that empirical knowledge is often derived from direct judgements.

However, she refuses to label this kind of judgement as ‘non-inferential.’ As she states:

In the philosophical literature, this kind of judgment is usually called “non-inferential”; however I would rather call it “direct” because I would like to leave aside the question of whether, in the end, a judgment must be inferentially articulated for it to have any content at all. In fact, I am willing to say that (most, or even, all) direct judgments “depend” upon previous

---

<sup>4</sup>The issue about which narratives are good enough ones when they are working as reasons in argumentative contexts will be studied in Section 4, appealing to the notion of “good reasons,” by Walter Fisher (1987).

inferences. ...This association is something that probably depends on many inferences had I already made over time. Yet, despite its inferential articulation and dependency, I say that this judgment counts as a direct judgment because I didn't make these inferences in order to judge in this particular case. (p.74)

The case of inferential webs accommodates into this situation. We could say that the auxiliary inferences that support the principal steps of an inferential chain correspond to the ones (mentioned by Bermejo-Luque) that are not made to judge in particular cases—but conform automatic associations of ideas. As it is stated later, the events that prompt these auxiliary inferences should be count as causes rather than reasons. As reasons, they should have timeless validity so they could properly justify the associated inference. As causes, these events are “sufficient to generate a mental state that did not exist previously” (p.74).

On the contrary, indirect judgements are judgements “caused by other judgment(s) or belief(s) of the subject that are related to this judgment in an inferential way” (p.75). These judgements correspond with principal steps of the described inferential webs.

In conclusion, inferential webs present a structure similar to the external one of a leaf. There is a main inference chain that relates several pieces of knowledge (so-called ‘principal steps’—according to the leaf model, it correspond to each node to which arrive the auxiliary veins) and that would play the role of the midrib of a leaf. There are also a set of auxiliary inferences for each principal step, that relate determined causes with it and that would play the role of the auxiliary veins of a leaf. The principal steps can also be prompted by other judgements in a non-inferential way.

It can be noticed that the presented analysis by Bermejo-Luque allude to making judgements and acquiring beliefs, while this paper deals with the subject of acquiring knowledge through narrative. So, the relationship between judgement, belief and knowledge has to be precise, as these three have been said to constitute the principal steps of an inference web. With respect to the distinction between belief and judgement, Bermejo Luque states that “the difference between a belief and a judgment as a matter of the difference between an attitude and an act: whereas believing is having a certain attitude towards a given propositional content, judging would be (the act of) presenting to ourselves a given propositional content as holding” (pp. 74-75).

To this part, despite the great conceptual difference, it is not difficult no expand an analysis based on judgements—the one made by Bermejo-Luque—to an analysis based on beliefs.<sup>5</sup> It seems necessary, at least in average cases, to have an attitude prior to make an act. Consequently, the direct or indirect character of judgements, along with the rest of considerations made with respect to them, can be applied to beliefs only by stopping the act of “presenting to ourselves a given propositional content as holding” in the very moment of having the so mentioned attitude about this same propositional content.

Regarding the application of previous analysis to pieces of knowledge, the already made theoretical commitment of externalism allows it. The main condition for acquiring knowledge, according to the setting presented in Section 2, is the ontological reliability of the source, its “epistemic quality,” (O'Brien 2006) terms. Neither the knowledge by the addressee nor the one by the addresser, of the reliability of the source is a necessary condition for the acquirement of knowledge. In consequence, the distance between judgements, beliefs and knowledge does not constitute a problem in order to apply the analysis carried out with respect to the first two to the last.

---

<sup>5</sup>Neither the author pays too much attention to the specificity of her analysis with respect to beliefs or judgements. She often expands it to both of them: “Now, let us define “indirect judgment” as a judgment caused by other judgment(s) or belief(s) of the subject that are related to this judgment in an inferential way” (p. 75).

#### 4. Argumentative goodness of narratives

As it has been outlined, narratives can work as reasons, when adduced within the course of an argumentation. In this section, an analysis and an assessment system for these narratives will be developed.

The idea of narratives performing as reasons does not fit in many conceptions of argumentation. These conceptions share a view of rhetoric as a mere procedural discipline, which purpose consist on developing some techniques—mostly heuristic—in the line of persuading specific addressees within argumentative contexts. Narratives acting as reasons fit in this account as “rhetorical devices,” improving persuasiveness of argumentations.

There are two different conceptions about the relationship between rhetoric and argumentation. The classic one focuses in the persuasive capacity of the argumentation itself, and explains the rhetorical value of any piece of text or discourse in terms of persuasion to particular audiences: it is a purely instrumental conception of rhetoric, and it has been criticized by authors like Christian Kock (2009) or Lilian Bermejo-Luque (2011, pp. 158-162), due to the absence of mention and study of the justificatory character of argumentation.

Another conception of the rhetorical, as it is presented in Bermejo-Luque (2011, pp. 148-157), defends that the rhetorical properties of any communicative object does not constitute a function of the effect it provokes on particular subjects, but of what can be considered as a normal or standard response, coming from a normal or standard audience. In this line, in the course of argumentations, rhetoric plays a role in justifying points of view rather than merely in persuading particular addressees. That is to say, rhetoric aspects constitute an essential part of reasoning.

The account that Walter Fisher (1989) presents about the “narrative paradigm” can be inscribed as one of these last conceptions. As he asserts: “Reasoning need not to be bound to argumentative prose or to be expressed in clear-cut inferential or implicative structures” (p.57). In this same direction, he points out further “Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings” (p. 65). That is, according to him, reasoning does not need to be so attached to logic approaches as it has been traditionally, but to other aspects closer to rhetoric. He focuses in narratives as the core of his reasoning paradigm, which are defined as follows: “By “narration” I mean symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create or interpret them” (p.58).

The narrative paradigm is widely developed and discussed in Fisher’s work, so that I am not going into present it in detail. Despite that, some details and insights about it should me useful for the objective of this section. First of all, al last general insight about the narrative paradigm:

Under the narrative paradigm all [people] are seen as possessing equally the logic of narration—a sense of coherence and fidelity. This is what is implied by the commonplace that everyone has “common sense” (p.68).

Besides that, it should seem evident that are better and worse narratives when it comes to play a role in reasoning and/or argumentation processes. The idea that sustains the evaluation of narratives points to its internal coherence and “truth”. Internal coherence is related to formal features: “the consistency of the characters and actions, the accommodation of auditors and so on” (Fisher, pp.75-76).

The so-called “truth” is a semantic matter, and deals with the relationships that connect a narrative with the real world. Fisher names it ‘narrative fidelity’: “fidelity to the truths that humanity shares in regard to reason, justice, veracity, and peaceful ways to resolve social-political differences” (p. 76). Despite this concept is more allied to moral values, it is similar to Teun van Dijk’s notion of macrostructure: “In a theory of discourse the notion of macrostructure...is used to account for the various notions of global meaning, such as topic, theme, or gist. This implies that macrostructures in discourse are semantic objects” (van Dijk, 1980, p.10).

The main difference lies in that van Dijk refers to *the* meaning of a narrative, while Fisher’s definition is about individuated meanings, potentially extractable from the narrative. As he states, “the principle of fidelity pertains to the individuated components of stories—wether they represent



accurate assertions about social reality and thereby constitute good reasons for belief or action” (Fisher, 1989, p. 105). Interpretation, which is the basis for semantics, is always an action of many levels. Gadamer’s views on hermeneutics are very close to this issue. In *Truth and Method* (1975) he presents an account for explaining the various meanings of a given text. Each meaning extracted from a given text—through its interpretation—by a given reader is conditioned by the associated reception conditions: those in which the reader is embodied at the moment of the reading. These circumstances must present some link with the text in order to allow the interpretation.<sup>6</sup> The reading circumstances (in Gadamer’s terms “the interpretation horizon”) may vary according to many factors, even for the same reader. In consequence, there is a wide variability of combinations from which a given interpretation may arise. This variability explains the phenomenon of the multiplicity of levels of interpretation for a given narrative. Associated to each level of interpretation there can be defined a set of meanings, extracted from the narrative. This hierarchizes the relations between argumentations, narratives and internal reasons that sustains the discourse/text semantics I am dealing with in this paper.

This analysis allows the definition of “reasons” (in Fisher’s terms) associated of a given narrative. That is, the parts of a narrative which assessment will provide an integral level of fidelity. According to that, a reason<sup>7</sup> can be defined as an element of the greater set of independent meanings potentially extractable—by a particular interpretation—from a given narrative.

An important remark is that this account of reason should not be confused with the one that refers to the reasons provided within the course of an argumentation, which can present, as it has been discussed, the form of narratives. To avoid that misunderstanding, I will name the reasons I have just defined as ‘internal reasons.’ When the expression ‘good reasons’—for the sake of brevity— is used, it will mean ‘good internal reasons.’

The standard that fundamentals the evaluation of internal reasons, according to Fisher (1987), is “good reasons”: “those elements that provide warrants<sup>8</sup> for accepting or adhering to the advice fostered by any form of communication that can be considered rhetorical” (Fisher, 1989, p.107).

Internal reasons associated to the same narrative are interrelated. There might be a set of good reasons not properly related, so the correspondent narrative does not exhibit an acceptable level of fidelity. For a given narrative, the first condition for fidelity is that all its reasons are to be good reasons. The second condition is a proper interrelation among the internal reasons, which is assessed by the logic of good reasons. Fisher understands logic as “A systematic set of procedures that will aid in the analysis and assessment of elements of reasoning in rhetorical interactions” (p. 106), and particularizes it in a set of five critical questions (Fisher, 1989, p. 109). A narrative with a good degree of fidelity should answer properly all of it.

To this point, there is a set of regulative conditions (Searle, 1969) that explains how to assess narratives acting as reasoning devices. As it was stated in Section 3, reasonings are mental processes, while argumentations are communicative ones. Both are sustained by inferences. According to that, in order to achieve the assessment of a narrative acting as a reason in argumentations, an adaptation of this set of regulative conditions has to be presented—attending to the communicative character of argumentations.

The first step consists on checking the internal coherence of the narrative, just as Fisher explains it for reasoning.

---

<sup>6</sup>As Gadamer states: “In our analysis of the hermeneutical process we saw that to acquire a horizon of interpretation requires a fusion of horizons. But no text or book speaks if it does not speak a language that reaches the other person. Thus interpretation must find the right language if it really wants to make the text speak. There cannot, therefore, be any single interpretation that is correct ‘in itself,’ precisely because every interpretation is concerned with the text” (p. 398).

<sup>7</sup>The account of reason provided by Fisher does not seem precise enough (“the individuated components of stories,” p.105), neither collects all the insights that have been mentioned. This is why I have decided to present my own account of reason—internal reason—, in the presented context.

<sup>8</sup>His account of warrant is “[any piece of communication that] authorizes, sanctions, or justifies belief, attitude, to action” (p. 107).

The second step is based on the evaluation of the fidelity. In order to do that, the already mentioned set of associated internal reasons has to be extracted from the narrative. Once this task has been fulfilled, the goodness of every internal reason must be tested.

To this point, the interrelation of the internal reasons should also be checked. To do this, an adaptation of Fisher's original set of critical question will be used, so that a positive answer has to be obtained for each question. These are the following.

*Logic of argumentative good reasons:* a set of inner reasons from a given narrative is adequately internally organized if the following questions can be satisfactorily answered:

1. Question of fact: What are the implicit and explicit values embedded in an *internal reason*?
2. Question of relevance: Are the values appropriate to the nature of the decision the *internal reason* bears upon?
3. Question of consequence: What would be the effects of adhering to the values—for one's concept of oneself, for one's behaviour, for one's relationships [...]?
4. Question of consistency: Are the values confirmed or validated in one's personal experience, in the lives or statements of others whom one admires and respects [...]?
5. Question of transcendent issue: Are the values the message offers those that...constitute the ideal basis for human conduct?
6. Question of internal coherence: Are the values offered by each internal reason by a particular narrative compatible among it?
7. Question of sequential coherence: Are the values offered by each internal reason by each uttered narrative compatible among it?

Questions 1-5 are the same as Fisher's, only with the 'internal reasons' expression marked in italics replacing 'message.' Question 6 and 7 are particular of the presented account, and are adequately formulated due to the previous definition of internal reason.

Question 6 refers to the local compatibility of all the internal reasons from a given narrative. It is not specific for argumentations; in my view it should be a necessary condition for an internal coherence system like the logic of good reasons. It is not deductible from Questions 1-5, and captures de whole essence of the system. Question 7 refers to the communicative character of argumentations: coherence among reasons is a necessary condition for a good argumentation, and it is a consequence—in the case of narratives working as reasons—of coherence among all internal reasons from all narratives.

A last issue has to be discussed. An argumentatively good narrative is the one that is composed of good reasons that present logic with good argumentative reasons. It anticipates a good performance in justification, within an argumentative context. But, does it also make its addressee to acquire knowledge properly?

This question has been answered in Section 3, by using results about direct and indirect judgements, inferential webs and chains, and so on. Now, it can be stated that an argumentatively good narrative provides basic knowledge or, at least, provides knowledge cooperatively along with the previously adduced narratives—acting as reasons—.

To this point, only a new remark can be added. In this paper, an epistemological externalist account has been hold. It defends the absence of necessity of knowing the reliability of the source of a given belief in order to it becomes knowledge. But, despite this absence of necessity, the knowledge of knowing can also be a matter of study, even for an externalist. And it can be obtained when the knowledge acquired comes from a narrative: the reliability of the source can be derived from both internal coherence and fidelity. A narrative presenting good levels of these indicators is presumably coming from a reliable source, at least it is typically assumed<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>9</sup>A justification for this last assertion could provide from an assumption that is often made subconsciously. This is related to integrity: a person of good narrativity should also be a person of good moral and knowledge.

## 5. On literary narratives

Finally, some remarks are presented regarding the singular character literary narratives exhibit in relation to their power to generate new meanings and, consequently, additional pieces of knowledge.

Literary narratives exhibit a number of specific characteristics. Louis Hjelmslev (1943) highlights one of them: literary language and, in general, artistic language is not an exclusively denotative semiotic system but a connotative one. Connotation, in terms of Hjelmslev and Roland Barthes (1964)—Hjelmslev's results on connotation were commented and enriched by the latter—is explained as follows: Artistic language involves both signified and signifier in order to get additional meanings to the first-order denotative meaning. That is the so-called, by Hjelmslev, 'connotative semiotics'. In Barthes' words: "[...] any system of significations comprises a plane of expression (E) and a plane of content (C)...the signification coincides with the relation (R) of the two planes: ERC...[in connotative semiotics] the first system (ERC) becomes the plane of expression, or signifier, of the second system:... (ERC) R C" (Barthes, 1964, p. 90).

Considering the points discussed so far, a deeper set of inner signifier-signified relationships arise in literary narratives. The denotative sign (ERC) acts as the signifier for the connotative sign ((ERC), R, C) (Gaines, 2012) and, in so doing, it generates an additional meaning for the narrative text: the second order, connotative one. In this way, additional rhetorical imports may take place based on literary texts, as they may be based on both the denotative and the connotative levels, loading the text with a deeper and richer set of perlocutionary meanings (Bermejo-Luque 2011, pp. 148-157). Accordingly, a literary narrative is potentially a source of more pieces of knowledge than a non-literary one. Alcaraz-León, as it was slightly mentioned in Section 2, also points out in this direction. She defends that the "cognitive virtues"—i.e., epistemological value—of fiction does not come from its fictional character, but from the fact that fiction literature has commonly better merits—artistic, representational, expressive ones—than non literary narratives.

## 6. Conclusion

It has been shown that knowledge acquired through narrative in argumentations can constitute basic knowledge. The constitutive feature of this kind of knowledge is that it does not need support from other more basic types of knowledge. Argumentation with narrative reasons is mainly a sequential activity, as it has been explained through the so-called inferential leaf-structures. Consequently, the argumentative goodness of a given narrative does not need to be strictly linked to its capacity to provide basic knowledge. It can also be derived from the capacity to provide basic knowledge of the narratives uttered previously to one.

**Acknowledgments:** I wish to thank Lilian Bermejo-Luque for his comments and guidance, as well as Diego Castro Amenábar for encouraging me to present my abstract to this Conference. The work presented in this paper has been financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation (Research project FFI2016- 79317-P).

## References

- Alcaraz León, M. J. (2016). Is there a specific sort of knowledge from fictional works? *Teorema*, 35(3), 21–46.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words* (2nd ed., J. O. Urmson & M. Sbisà, Eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barthes, R. (1964). *Elements of semiology* (15th ed.). New York: Hill and.
- Bermejo-Luque, L. (2011). Giving reasons. In *giving reasons*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-1761-9>

- Cohen, S. (2002). Basic knowledge and the problem of easy knowledge. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 70(2), 406–416.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2005.tb00535.x>
- Fisher, W. R. (1987). *Human communication as narration: Towards a philosophy of reason, value and action*. Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press.
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1975). *Truth and method* (2nd ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1086/486539> (Original published in 1989)
- Gaines, E. (2012). The semiotic analysis of myth: A proposal for an applied methodology. *The American Journal of Semiotics*, 17(2), 311–327. <https://doi.org/10.5840/ajs200117227>
- García-Carpintero, M. (2007). Fiction-making as a Gricean illocutionary type. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art*, 65(2), 203–216.  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-594X.2007.00250.x/full>
- García-Carpintero, M. (2016). *Relatar lo ocurrido como invención : una introducción a la filosofía de la ficción contemporánea*. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/libro?codigo=669738>
- Hjelmslev, L. (1943). *Prolegomena to a theory of language*. Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- Lackey, J. (2006). The nature of testimony. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 87, 177–197.
- O'Brien, D. (2006). Introduction to the epistemology of testimony. *Philosophica*, 78, 5–11.
- Perelman, C., & Olbrechts-Tyteca, L. (1969). *The new rhetoric: A treatise on argumentation*. Notre Dame (Ind.): University of Notre Dame Press.
- Prince, G. (1982). *Narratology: The form and functioning of narrative*. Berlin: Mouton.
- Romero Álvarez, M. L. (1996). El relato periodístico como acto de habla. *Revista Mexicana de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, 41, 9–27.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press, (p. 626).
- Sperber, D. (2000). Metarepresentations in an evolutionary perspective. *Metarepresentations: A multidisciplinary perspective*, 117-137.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1980). Macrostructures: An interdisciplinary study of global structures in discourse, interaction, and cognition. In *Macrostructures: An Interdisciplinary Study of Global Structures in Discourse, Interaction, and Cognition*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429025532>
- Welbourne, M., & Coady, C. A. J. (1994). Testimony: A philosophical study. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 44(174), 120. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2220156>