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Goodnight Commentary on Blake D. Scott, “Doing Things with Argument: Assertion, Persuasion and Performance.”

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When a speaker addresses an audience, presence graces the act of argumentation. Blake Scott turns to Chaim Perelman who, in his view, rests argument in an unfolding a relationship with life and extrinsic and intrinsic time-bound choices (Scott, 2020). The end a speaker addressing an audience through argument is adherence, not belief or attitude change. Epistemic certification of truth, validity, or effective arguments results from critical inquiries of product (logic), procedure (dialectic), or social process (rhetoric) of argumentation. Perspectives reign in assignment of argument to schema. Since Joseph Wenzel’s (1992) work, these categories offers common ground to work within and among categories of argumentation. This paper tracks the importance of gaining mutual adherence, as Scott develops from Cassin and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. I review the mythic genealogy of *Peitho* who shows us that valorizes argument in diverse situations of concord discord. The ambivalent self-sealing category of ignorance is a gift of *Peitho*, too. Modern argument commitment to adherence is celebrated, and the consolation of philosophy is offered as an alternative to 21st century, global “infodemics.”

1. Epideixis and Apodeixis:

Scott’s paper re-introduces, and advances inquiry into the performance of speaker and audience. Crucially, in an exchange, the ‘effectiveness’ of the arguer is not measured by the quantitative shift of an opinion meter. Rather, an effect (attached to a duration, a stretch of time in which a performance is on-going) is a world-shift that achieves significance for the speaker, who requests adherence, and the audience, who decides to grant, deny or demur the request. Blake agrees with Barbara Cassin’s point: “the performance of speech is effective to the extent that it is a form of social action that modifies, to some degree, the situation from which it emerges” (2017, p. 5).¹ Scott works this notion further. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca locate argumentation in a house that hosts demonstration and rhetoric in the great hall of reason. The distinctive difference between logic and its counterpart is that quasi-logical argumentation includes “Bergson’s *durée*, duration nor lived time, and Eugene Dupreel’s *intervalle*, the space between premises and the steps of reasoning” (Dulak & Frank, 2010, pp 308-336). Adherence is a tie which links speaker to audience at the outset and upon which the goals of arguing activities (including persuasion) may be advanced.² Adherence appears as a goal for arguers at the European Union who release the binds of nationalism and pursue effective, cost-benefit policy for the common good.

In his prior effort to widen the legacy of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, Blake constructs an amiable relationship between philosophy and rhetoric--epistemic and action. Aristotle's system is newly arranged to redefine "effect" as the outcome of epideictic argument. Apodeixis is logical argument for Aristotle. It certifies knowledge by the laws of identity (A is A) contradiction (A is not non A) and the work of syllogisms. Blake, following Barbara Cassin (2017) when he asks that Aristotle's schema be re-thought. Epideixis is expressed through the epideictic genre. Contested abstract and concrete values fill a duration where performance adjusts reasons (logoi). Epideictic argument—once a peer to forensic and deliberative rhetoric-- is to be moved outside its realm, as an ordinary genre of rhetoric. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca initiated this move.³ Rather, the "empty present" of logic is to find its companion, "effective" argument. A rhetor and audiences speaks within and adds to a time—where life choices are being shown and decided. Epideixis generates the world effect of one performing an argument before an audience, with the decision in mind of "adherence" as adjustment. Lorenzini (2017) extends the idea: Performance of parrhesiastic argument with passionate expression of truth ethical force. Showing and display always involve the possible appearance of persuasion. Parrhesia is a rare act of courage, given the power of conventional expectations and boundaries. Peitho appears in various guises, surprisingly, to fulfill felicity and to disrupt the boundaries of expectation. Everyday rhetorics can be manufactured, engineered with the best, current technè in mind. In the persuasion of the everyday, *Peitho* dances still.

2. Peitho and Epideixis:

Peitho shows up at odd moments in socio-cultural performances of argument, because--to be argumentative--speech finds energy and possibilities in testing and stretching felicity conditions. Attitudes for and against, pro and con express felicity conditions or appreciate infelicity, separately or together. To speak of a subject or to an audience is accompanied by a variable third, the fact of the matter of the appearance of argument in its epistemic indeterminacy or incompleteness. Agreeable *Peitho* is a source of harmony, accord, and civil persuasion. She can also appear as an infelicitous goddess dawned in fresh allure. Trickery, rashness, discord, competition, and buyer's remorse jostle together. *Peitho* is whimsical, despite the best rhetorical technique or the subject command of an advocate. Surprises occur in short and long term "effect," the life of an argument. Indeed rhetorical arguments are valorized through playing reasons in chords of affect. Dissoi-logoi, the pre-philosophical understanding of contradictions among appearances, are resolved or heightened by those who argue from the heart or play with words.

Consider the puzzling genealogy of *Peitho* (a goddess of uncertain lineage). Charles Marsh a public relations specialist tries to explain why PR field finds persuasion ambiguously awkward and mostly ambivalent. Myth genealogy reveals the complex regard the Greeks had for the ancient companion goddess to socio-cultural events in the making.

The tangled lineage of the goddess Peitho offers additional evidence of the ancient Greeks' confusion regarding persuasion. Sources ranging from Hesiod to Sappho and beyond cast Peitho as the daughter of Ate, the goddess of "infatuation and rashness," and the granddaughter of Eris, the "goddess of strife" (Kane, 1986, p. 101); or the daughter of Oceanus and Tethys, the generic parents of thousands of

gods; or the daughter of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, revered in Athens as a source of civic harmony. Another source has Peitho present at Aphrodite's birth. Peitho was the wife of Phoroneus, the first king of Argos and a civic unifier—or of Argos, who would be her own grandson if she, indeed, were the wife of Phoroneus. Or she was the wife of Hermes, the boundary-spanner and trickster. She was the sister, in some accounts, of Tuche (goddess of luck) and Metis (goddess of cunning or, alternately, wisdom)—and, perhaps, of Eunomia (good laws). In short, by birth and association Peitho was anything from a deceiver and manipulator to a source of concord and civic harmony. The Greeks' eventual resolution of the contradictory nature of Peitho may hold lessons for modern public relations. (Marsh, 2015, p. 231)⁴

Early Greek pottery captures *Peitho* in her various appearances as wife, sister, mother, friend, and companion. I will not analyze the gender element here, save to mention the journal, *Peitho*, as leading feminist studies in the theories and practices of rhetorical argumentation and history. Classical myths leave multiple legacies that address questions of why those who are epistemically challenged, nonetheless, remain eager to announce conviction and demand adherence. Consider a case of cognitive bias defining polarizing populist political argument these days.

3. *Peitho* and Cognitive Bias.

Social psychology borrows the traditions of rhetorical argument. *Peitho's* virtuous and venal appearances into the civic realm are explained by psychologists in terms of cognitive biases: Biases trigger preferences for agreement and concord or disagreement and discord. With some exceptions, at this time American politics may be characterized as an ignorance machine. Democratic deliberation is trumped by expideixis, speech acts whose infelicity conditions require aggressive assertion. Argument from sheer assertion are claimed in inverse proportion to available evidence and necessary qualification. Polarization results. Cognitive biases are said to account for the problematic of commitment to evidence-based reason: “How do you combat ignorance when the ignorant believe themselves to be knowledgeable.” The “Dunning-Kruger effect.” is a type of cognitive bias, which occupies people with little expertise or ability when they assume superior expertise or ability. “Audiences or speakers don't have enough knowledge to know they don't have enough knowledge. His simple but loopy concept has been demonstrated dozens of times in well-controlled psychology studies and in a variety of contexts. However, until now, the effect had not been studied in one of the most obvious and important realms: political knowledge” (Azarian, 2018). *Peitho* deceiver, manipulator, trickster, the goddess may dupe audiences who trust; *Peitho* leaves “a confusion regarding persuasion” among those who don't know they don't know and their interlocutors who are frustrated at the vehement assertion of blind ignorance.

4. Appreciation of Modern (1950's) Argumentation.

The understanding of rhetoric as a process of durations that can be extended and critiqued in the light of justified, timely adherence is important. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca were among the Western authors of the 1950s who were caught up in creating a transitional space (Bolduc & Frank, 2010). The political rhetoric of the twentieth century had soared (or fallen) to mythic terms of

fascism. Meanwhile, the logical positivists had stripped logic from the commons, leaving its ethical and political programs independent. Further, the advance of the Soviet Union into Stalinist dictatorship had been matched by authoritarian pseudo-cultural rhetorics of Germany's totalitarian state. The holocaust ruptured the Western Human Sciences. The extension of the Social Sciences in the United States were militarized into supports of propaganda in the name of a "free world," which was neither (Simpson, 1994). The equation of adherence to apodeixis and a showing of one's humanity through reasoning with audiences constitutes an important recovery, never to be forgotten. Argumentation scholars took the road normative work to set the line for human dignity and respect. Justice and rights were not only to be argued in light of future deliberative choice but also argumentation served as road to re-enter the past and open questions of justice. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca are to be complemented in creating a New Rhetoric that rested on the dignity of adherence in life engagements with argument. Cassin and Blake, too, are to be congratulated for extending this work, to redefine and point us to philosophical argument and performance, according standing to speech acts and world effect. In this wor[ld], the recoveries of argumentation to the hypertrophy of globally-aspiring pseudo-philosophies is not to be forgotten. The projects of deliberative democracy, critical-thinking, and pragma-dialectic are compatible with Scott's read of the Perelman and Wenzel schema for a broader, timely understanding of argumentation. The problems of anti-intellectualism, radical populism, and enlightenment dismissals advance to the 21st century, as the apparatus of simulated apodeixis to feed flattery and screen echo chambers.

5. The Consolation of Argument.

Peitho may be a mysterious goddess that shows up at curious times and in different dress, but she has been captured and formulated into social media platformed postings. Her world-altering statements erode the politeness conditions that renew intersubjectivity and considerate reply to others. Adherence, fades; angry ignorance soars. Philosophical argument recedes to the background, a set of terms for appropriation by computer scientists or disciplinary specialists. Dame Reason reappears at conferences like these, where we remember classic schemes and imagine philosophy refreshed. Such re-imagining finds philosophy as relief, for thinkers losing contact with the showy reasons of the times. A long ago, Boethius turned to philosophy when his everyday social rounds of argument were nearing the end.

*While I was pondering thus in silence, and using my pen to set down so tearful
la complaint, there appeared standing over my head a woman's form, whose
countenance was full of majesty, whose eyes shone as with fire and in power of insight
surpassed the eyes of men, whose colour was full of life, whose strength was yet intact
though she was so full of years that none would ever think that she was subject to such
age as ours. One could but doubt her varying stature, for at one moment she repressed
it to the common measure of a man, at another she seemed to touch with her crown
the very heavens: and when she had raised higher her head, it pierced even the sky
and baffled the sight of those who would look upon it. Her clothing was wrought of the
finest thread by subtle workmanship brought to an indivisible piece. This had she
woven with her own hands, as I afterwards did learn by her own shewing. Their beauty
was somewhat dimmed by the dullness of long neglect, as is seen in the smoke-grimed
masks of our ancestors. On the border below was in woven the symbol Π (Pi), on that*

above was to be read a Θ (Theta).... And between the two letters there could be marked degrees, by which, as by the rungs of a ladder, ascent might be made from the lower principle to the higher. Yet the hands of rough men had torn this garment and snatched such morsels as they could therefrom. In her right hand she carried books, in her left was a scepter brandished. (Boethius, n.d, 3-4)

Philosophy may serve as a refuge after shared norms become inaccessible or shredded. Adherence requires coupling with concrete or abstract values as a beginning. Boethius straightens out his thinking by differentiating what matters from what distracts. Trust in the sympathetic driving curiosity to trace a logic, test a hypothesis, or isolate and repair a fallacy energizes normal efforts. When curiosity is blocked and angry assertions reign, then the space for informed “adherence” shrinks and disappears. Political argument in the United States is saturated with bias, pandering, polarization, and aggressive assertions that—when mixed with viral uncertainty--generate waves of “infodemic.” (Horobin, 2020). Existential questions thrive in a mix of personal, technical and public health choices in a pandemic. Ontology meanwhile does its prevailing work in refining the jargon of computer science communication. Perhaps in these times of simulated natural speech, philosophy, will wake us from Peitho’s now-patented charms and carry us thoughtfully along paths that entertain reason.

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¹ Barbara Cassin, *How to Really Do Things with Words: Performance before the Performative. Sophistical Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism*. New York: Fordam University Press.

² Argumentation has been ordered into a three-fold schema: rhetoric, dialectic, and logical argument. The categories were designed to spread and sharpen critical focus on particular instances. Products were to be evaluated logically, dialectic, discursively; and, rhetoric, as situated social action. The “perspective” approach is borrowed from Wayne Brockriede who believed that arguments were established and experienced from the point of view of interlocutors.. Professor Blake D. Scott invites us to work toward a synthesis of Wenzel’s categories, but he sees a barrier to the unity of philosophy and rhetoric. Platonic dualism divides philosophy with its epistemic work from rhetoric which appears as display. Wenzel’s model is popular, I think, because he places argumentation in three different schema. Schema are useful in two ways: first, as a way of maintaining formal fiction and second, as areas for a computer ontology treatment. I see Wenzel’s work as “constructs” emanating from Fritz Heider’s (1958) understanding of cognitive balance and communication. Constructs put three elements in positive or negative relations to one another, generating dissonance and a stress for gaining symmetry.

³ External temporality is spatially constructed as places for arguing. Internal time is a duration which are occupied by adherence—being on the same page—about an argument. Scott, 2020.

⁴ What does it mean to entertain an argument as product, process or procedure? A perspectival approach is relativistic and ungrounded, maximizing freedom for the theorists choices and reconstruction. On the other hand, what is it for an audience to entertain rhetoric, dialectic, or rhetoric as performed? The shift from entertaining rhetoric, in times when a specious style triumphs and skepticism is required requires a movement beyond rhetoric to the consolation of philosophy. How do arguments entertain consolation and how do these endure?