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Does Taste Counts as Evidence in Argumentation?

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Abstract: This paper is intended to answer the question of whether taste represents some kind of evidence in argumentation. To do this, the text is divided into four parts: first, the relationship between the technique of reconstruction and the definitions of argumentation is exposed. Second, different borderline cases that limit the use of this technique are discussed. Third, a dialogue where the argument appeals to taste is presented as another borderline case. Fourth, the role of taste as evidence (ground) for the analyzed argument is explored.

Keywords: Argumentation, conclusion, definition, dialogue, evidence, premises, reconstruction, speech act, taste

1. Introduction

We often appeal to our experience to offer arguments. For example, we refer to our own history or to our senses. It is not usually difficult to accept this data as appropriate evidence in an argumentative discussion. However, we also appeal to our experience when we use feelings or desires as reasons in an argument. In these cases, it seems more difficult to understand what the evidence for the arguments is, or whether we are indeed dealing with cases of argumentation. One of these arguments is that which appeals to taste. There is a significant challenge in considering this type of argument: the impossibility of expressing the taste propositionally. We usually express feelings of taste or distaste due to different experiences. Also, we tend to explain such feelings, often through analogies and comparisons. However, it is not possible to express the experience of taste itself. Perhaps this is why argumentation studies have not sufficiently explored the role of taste in argumentative discussions. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to answer the question of whether taste can be evidence for argumentation.

This question is relevant to argumentation theory, since the mentioned challenge goes against the technique of argumentative reconstruction which is defended by different perspectives. Therefore, if we want to understand the role of taste in argumentation, it will be necessary to first review the scope of this technique. I shall thus proceed in four parts: first, I will set out the relationship between the technique of reconstruction and some definitions of argumentation. Second, I will review a number of borderline cases that criticize this technique as a preparatory step to presenting a critique of my own. Third, I will analyze a dialogue in which the argument appeal to taste as a new borderline case. Fourth, I will use such a dialogue to answer the question that has been proposed.

2. The reconstruction and the definitions of argumentation

Reconstructing an argument is reordering, modifying, deleting or adding information from the argument's linguistic expression. Arguments are reconstructed to ensure that its structure is composed of premises and a conclusion, understood as statements organized in a way that one or several of those —premises— serve as reasons for another statement —the conclusion— (Trudy Govier, 2009, p. 1). Those who suggest this technique consider that such a structure allows to

recognize which is the argument in question and thus be able to evaluate it. In this sense, I will explain in this section how the definition of argumentation and the technique of reconstruction are related in the cases of pragma-dialectics and informal logic.

2.1. Pragma-dialectical reconstruction

The pragma-dialectical approach is one of the most recognized in contemporary argumentation studies. Since the publication of *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions* (1984), the thoughts of Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst had influenced to a great deal of research. This approach presents the 'model of a critical (or rational) discussion' as an ideal framework that seeks to provide argumentative resolution to a difference of opinion through a critical evaluation of the acceptability of different points of view. *Grosso modo*, the model presents the resolution process through different stages, along with a set of rules, and the speech acts that will serve each of the stages. Pragma-dialectics has nuanced its definition of argumentation over the years. The latter definition states:

Argumentation is a communicative and interactional act complex aimed at resolving a difference of opinion with the addressee by putting forward a constellation of propositions for which the arguer can be held accountable in order to make the standpoint at issue acceptable to a rational judge who judges reasonably. (van Eemeren, 2018, p. 3)

This definition emerges as an attempt to cover different elements that are important to argumentation studies. Namely, it is a definition that arises from the everyday use of the term and, at the same time, is precise, explicit and comprehensive enough to be used in academic research. Besides, such definition signifies the double meaning of the term argumentation: as a process (of arguing) and as a product (the argument).

To analyze an argumentative discourse with the model of a critical discussion, van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) use the notion of the 'logical minimum' of Peter Schellens and Gerard Verhoeven (1979) which refers to the addition of unexpressed premises and logical connectors (if, then) so that the expressed premise plays the role of the antecedent, while the conclusion takes the place of the consequent. Thus, the authors invite to a reconstruction that ensures the logical minimum of an argument, that is, that ensures a premises-conclusion structure properly constructed.

In addition to this first reconstruction, the pragma-dialectical approach proposes an argumentative analysis by reconstructing the discussion. In his words: “[t]he reconstruction is to reveal as clearly as possible, without paying attention to any sidetracks or detours, which route is followed in attempting to resolve the difference of opinion” (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 96). Therefore, they propose four reconstruction transformations: the first is the deletion of parts of the discourse —speech acts— that are irrelevant to the resolution of the difference of opinion. The second is the addition of implicit elements of the discourse that are functional to the aim of the resolution. The third is the substitution of confusing formulations that ensure uniformity in the description of the parts of the discourse that have the same function. The last is the permutation of parts of the discourse to provides a sequential structure that leads to the resolution.

2.2. Reconstruction and informal logic

According to Ralph Johnson and Anthony Blair (2000, p. 94), the task of informal logic is “to develop non-formal standards, criteria, procedures for the analysis, interpretation, evaluation, critique and construction of argumentation in everyday discourse”. This means that this logic separates itself from the notions of validity and deductive form of formal logic to analyze and evaluate argumentative discourses. Thus, this perspective has dealt with different issues such as the analysis of informal fallacies, the relationship between argumentation and reasoning, or the modeling of arguments in different dialogues, schemes and diagrams.

Authors close to informal logic do not propose an argumentative analysis based on reconstruction, but they do defend the need for a premise-conclusion structure to study arguments. For example, Douglas Walton (1990) defines argumentation as “a social and verbal means of trying to resolve, or at least to contend with, a conflict or difference that has arisen or exists between two (or more) parties” (Walton, 1990, p. 411). Despite this definition does not refer to an specific structure, the author's definition of reasoning does: “is the making or granting of assumptions called premises (starting points) and the process of moving toward conclusions (end points) from these assumptions by means of warrants” (Walton, 1990, p. 403).

If reasoning has a logical structure, then arguments have such a structure. Much of Walton's work focused on explaining different types of reasoning through argumentation schemes, which are understood as “forms of argument (structures of inference) that represent structures of common types of argument used in everyday discourse, as well as in special contexts” (Walton et. al, 2008, p. 1). For every argumentation scheme, Walton and his colleagues present a series of critical questions that help to determine the force of an argument in question. Thus, the relationship between the structure of reasoning and the argumentation scheme implies the need to relate every argument to a scheme that makes explicit the premises and the conclusion in order to conduct an evaluation.

Another example of the relationship between the definition of argumentation and the technique of reconstruction is the work of Govier. According to her, “[a]n argument is a set of claims in which one or more of them —the premises— are put forward so as to offer reasons for another claim, the conclusion” (Govier, 2009, p. 1). From this definition, the author proposes an argumentative analysis based on three conditions: *acceptable* premises, *relevant* premises and *good grounds* of the premises.¹ Thus, the analyst must ask himself three things: 1) if, in his opinion, there are good reasons *to accept* the premises; 2) if the premises are *relevant to* the conclusion they intend to support; and 3) if the premises, taken as a whole, are *good grounds for* the conclusion. Thus, these conditions are both a method of argumentative evaluation and the criteria of cogency of any argument.

Like the logical minimum required by the pragma-dialectical approach, Govier's analysis implies a *conditio sine qua non*: the structure. In the author's words: “[y]ou first put the argument into a standard form so that you can see exactly what its premises and conclusion are” (Govier, 2009, p. 94). This means that the argumentative analysis requires an initial reconstruction that allows an evaluation of the premises and the conclusion. However, Govier (2009, p. 151) suggests a “more ambitious” reconstruction that eliminates the potential irrelevance of the premises. That is, if the premises in an argument seem irrelevant to its conclusion, it may be

¹ Govier (2009) express this condition (*acceptable, relevance, good grounds*) using the acronym ‘ARG Conditions’. With this, the author seems to be taking up again the standards of relevance, sufficiency, and acceptability postulated by Johnson & Blair (1977) by their ‘RSA Triangle’.

necessary to add premises. The addition of premises may cause an argument to satisfy the condition of relevance. In this sense, Govier's proposes two types of reconstruction for an argumentative evaluation: one that standardizes the form of the argument, and another that adds relevant premises for the conclusion.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that Govier is aware that mastering the technique of reconstruction does not imply the need for it, since she argues that “the fact that it is always possible to do this [reconstruct an argument] does not show that it is always correct and sensible to do it” (Govier, 2009, p. 151). This claim is ratified in her analysis of the argumentative potential of parables. In her words:

The charm and wit of the story seem to disappear if we cast it in argumentative form, and the logical argument we would derive from it is weak at best. Thus it may seem interpretively preferable, and more charitable, to leave the parable as a story. (Govier & Lowell Ayers, 2012, p. 178)

Based on the above, Govier recognizes that it is best not to reconstruct certain types of discourses. Despite this, she argues that it is necessary to use the standard form obtained through the technique of reconstruction in order to understand and evaluate an argument.

2.3. An operational definition of argumentation

We offer a definition as an attempt to make explicit a rule for using a term, that is, to limit the use of a term. The definitions of argumentation by van Eemeren (2018), Walton (1990), and Govier (2009) achieve this in different ways: the first two focus on the use of argumentation to resolve a difference of opinion, while the third focuses on the structure of the argument.

None of these definitions make any mention of the technique of reconstruction. However, this technique is necessary for the identification of what an argument is. In other words, the rule for using the term 'argumentation' does not dictate, either for pragma-dialectics nor for informal logic, that every argument must be reconstructable. Nevertheless, in the argumentative analysis proposed by these perspectives, reconstruction plays a key role to identify the arguments. This means that a new element is introduced to the rule of use of the term argumentation.

As Christopher Tindale (2017) claims, the insistence on a particular structure for argumentation makes reconstruction indispensable for argumentative analysis; such that “the analyst can demand of the text, “what are the premises?”, and in the absence of a suitable response, reject the candidate” (Tindale, 2017, p. 16). In this sense, what seems to be just a way of studying the argument becomes a criterion for the identification of what an argument is. In short, *every argument can be successfully reconstructed*.

This diagnosis allows us to claim that the technique of reconstruction looks like an 'operational definition of argumentation.' According to Copi, Cohen and McMahon (2014, p.97) such a definition “states that the term is applied correctly to a given case if and only if the performance of specified operations in that case yields a specified result.” In addition, Macagno & Walton (2014, p. 248) argue that this type of definition should be understood more as a strategy of classification as it does not describe the concept itself, but rather the fragment of reality to which the concept refers. Thus, according to these authors, such strategy provides the efficient or final causes of the thing referred to. That is, it describes the agent that produces the thing or the function that such thing fulfills.

In this context, we can say that the reconstruction is an operation that provides the standard form of an argument (specified result). Also, this operation provides the final cause of the argument, as it implies that the function of the argument is to present statements for a conclusion. Therefore, the insistence on the technique of reconstruction implies an 'operational definition of argumentation', according to which *the term argument is correctly applied to something as long as the operation of reconstruction is successful on that thing*. Thus, even though the technique of reconstruction is not part of the definitions of argumentation of the discussed perspectives, its role in argumentative analysis implies that an operational definition of argumentative practice.

3. Arguments that are difficult to reconstruct

Different works have shown certain types of arguments that can be studied, although it is difficult to reconstruct them as suggested. In other words, they have shown, through the analysis of different arguments, that there are limits to the technique of reconstruction. In this section, I will present four of these works in order to justify the way I will proceed later with the case of the argument that appeals to taste.

Firstly, Christian Kock (2009a) presents several examples against what he calls an 'assertive theory of argumentation'. According to this theory, all argumentation is composed of assertive speech acts; otherwise a reconstruction is required for this to be the case. This idea, says Kock (2009b), is based on a confusion shared by most argumentation theories: to analyze practical argumentation as if it were theoretical. This means that every argument must be evaluated in terms of truth and falsehood and also fit into a propositional logic model, guided by the notions of inference and conclusion.

Kock presents a variety of cases where the argument is formed by directives and commissives, i.e., political discourses, Bible verses, advertising strategies, poems and environmental claims. Thus, the author shows that, even though the assertive theory emphasizes on the assertive in order to get an acceptable point of view and secure the commitment of the speaker to his argument, sometimes a reconstruction is not convenient. Moreover, it would be impossible to maintain the meaning of the argument if the directive or commissive used in the arguments presented were changed to assertive.

Secondly, Christopher Tindale (2017) defends the idea of narrative arguments by rejecting certain traditional conditions imposed by a notion of argumentation. Such conditions are: 1) the inferential relationship between premises and conclusion (Tone Kvernbekk, 2003), and 2) the ability to provide reasons to support claims in favour of additional premises and conclusions (Govier & Ayers, 2012). The common feature of both conditions is the need to reconstruct or standardize an argument in a propositional form that would explicit the premises and conclusions.

Thus, says Tindale, these conditions reflect a tendency to believe that "if something is to count as an argument it must be possible to frame it in, or "reduce" it to, propositions. And those propositions can then be tested for logical cogency in terms of their internal relations" (Tindale, 2017, p. 14). However, the author proposes that narratives can be considered as arguments that should not be reconstructed, because they do not aim to establish a truth, but to express a reason in favour of what is likely to be the case. For example, in a parable, its argumentative force can be determined by comparing one's experience of probability with the probability of the moral teaching contained in the story.

Thirdly, Jonathan Adler (1985) raises questions about the scope of the technique of reconstruction through the case of a poem. Thus, although the standardized poem would fit the usual definitions of argumentation, a reconstruction would affect its spirit, its charm. Moreover, even if the poem can be reconstructed, it is not intended to establish the truth of a proposition. Therefore, the author asks: “when we reconstruct an argument, the result is something incredibly heavy-handed compared to the readability of the original piece. My question is this: are we losing anything other than style by this reconstruction?” (Adler, 1985, p. 62). Indeed, although Adler concedes that an argument has a standard form (premise-conclusion), he questions whether such a form, guaranteed by reconstruction, would necessarily grasp the cognitive force of an argument.

Finally, Blair (2004) argues that what distinguishes an argument from a 'symbolic stimulus' is its function of providing reasons to accept a point of view. Thus, despite the fact that arguments are generally associated with written discourse (particularly with assertives) it is possible to talk about visual arguments, as long as they offer reasons. In this way, the author analyses the main objections against the existence of visual arguments. On one side, it has been said that visuals are inevitably ambiguous (which makes argumentative analysis impossible). On the other side, it has been claimed that visuals do not have propositional content (while arguments do).

To answer the first objection, the author states that ambiguity is a necessary condition for all forms of communication. On the second objection, he claims that not every argument is intended to cause a change of belief in its addressee. Therefore, an argument does not need to have a truth value that can be evaluated by means of the propositional content. On the contrary, it can be argued to seek changes in attitude, intention or conduct. In this sense, Blair (2004, pp. 48-49) says: “[n]ot all arguments must be propositional. Hence, even if it is true that (some) visual images do not express propositions, it does not follow that they cannot figure in arguments.”

The previous studies have at least two common aspects: 1) they justify the study of different products or forms of communication to which their value as arguments has been objected; 2) such objections are usually directed at the impossibility to achieve a satisfactory propositional reconstruction. Such impossibility is based on the same idea: such arguments are not aimed at establishing a truth. Therefore, they should not be standardized in order to evaluate them in veritative terms. In other words, a reconstruction would modify or eliminate the meaning of the argument (besides the style in some cases).

In short, these studies show that argumentation should be understood in a more comprehensive way. Other authors have offered definitions of argumentation that can be applied to a greater number of cases. For example, Hubert Marraud (2018, p. 1) claims that “the constitutive function of arguing is to present something to someone as a reason for something else; that whoever argues does so for the purpose of showing the addressee that there are good reasons for something.”² A similar approach is taken by Dale Hample (2005) in his critique of the pragma-dialectical definition of argumentation. In his view, such definition is committed only to propositions, assuming that arguments are formed by a rational judgment that is distinguished from emotions. Against this, the author suggests that argumentation can be understood as an interactive activity that often involves non-discursive elements, emotions, and more than two actors. Thus, Hample argues that the function of argumentation is to create meaning, while its form is a conclusion supported by reasons. Hence, since reasons may be suggested by elements other than the text, the exclusively propositional approach is unjustified.

² Translated from Spanish by the author.

According to these views, it is not necessary to ensure (through reconstruction) a particular structure for recognizing an argument, since the purpose is to present good reasons, which do not have to be propositional. I do not seek to commit myself to a new definition of argumentation by quoting these perspectives, because that is not the purpose of this study. Rather, I seek to show that not all forms of understanding and studying arguments imply an operational definition of argumentation. There are broader definitions that do not introduce the operation of reconstruction into their notion of argumentation.

4. Argumentation that appeals to taste

It was mentioned earlier that the challenge to consider arguments that appeal to taste is the impossibility of expressing taste propositionally. We could address such challenge by consider only the expression of the feeling of taste as part of the argument. However, the expression of feelings has been dismissed as part of the argumentative analysis by perspectives such as pragma-dialectics or informal logic. The first perspective removes expressives from its model of a critical discussion since the truth of such speech acts is considered to be presupposed. This is incompatible with their model of discussion, which aims at discussing the truth, so it cannot be presupposed (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984). The second perspective has also dismissed the expression of emotions as part of arguments. For example, Govier (2009, p. 175) claims that emotions are used to stimulate feelings in the audience and thereby avoid the need to provide reasons for a conclusion. Consequently, the expression of feelings has been seen as a fallacious form of argumentation.

In this section I will show that, as happens with other arguments that are difficult to reconstruct, it is not viable to reconstruct an argument that appeals to taste. To do this, first, I will explain in more detail what an expression of taste is, in order to be able to understand the subsequent analysis of a fictitious dialogue that contains such expressions. Second, I will illustrate how the reconstruction of the argument of one of the interlocutors in the dialogue, who refers to another's taste as part of his argument, could be done. Third, I will show the challenges of reconstructing the argument of the interlocutor who appeals to his own taste. Fourth, I will suggest that this also concerns the reconstruction of the argument of the one who refers to a taste that is not his own.

We have a taste-related sensation as a reaction to a sensory stimulus (e.g., a flavor). It is in relation to this sensation that we can have feelings of taste or distaste. Whether or not we can explain such feelings, we can usually express them through predicates of taste or judgments of taste. The former qualifies the sensation through adjectives such as *delicious* or *disgusting*, while the latter qualifies a personal disposition towards the sensation by expressions such as *I like it*, or *I don't like it*. This distinction is important because, as we will see, the argumentative potential of taste lies in the judgments of taste.

Judgments of taste, as expressions of a feeling, are expressives. According to John Searle's (1975) taxonomy, such speech acts have three features: 1) their propositional content expresses a psychological state, 2) they have no 'direction of fit', that is, they do not pretend a correspondence between what is said and the world, or viceversa; and, 3) the truth of the expressed proposition is presupposed. What makes something a psychological state could be discussed in detail. However, for the purposes of this study, it can be said that expressions of taste meet the first feature to the extent that they express feelings of like or dislike in relation to a stimulus. Moreover, such expressions lack direction of fit, since they do not pretend that the

world (the sense) fits to what has been said, nor that what has been said fits to the world. Rather, they express a personal state or feeling.

Now, with respect to the truth of the proposition of a judgment of taste, it seems that it cannot be presupposed since it is possible to retract the judgment itself. In other words, it is possible to claim *I like it* and then to change my mind and claim *thinking about it, I don't really like it*. It is even possible for a judgment of taste to be a lie. For example, out of courtesy, you claim to have liked a gift when in fact you have not. In the first case, the speaker meets the sincerity condition, as he intends to express his psychological state. In fact, he does so, even though he may express *another state* that denies the previously expressed one. In the second case, however, the speaker does not meet the sincerity condition. This does not imply that the propositional content expressed is false, but insincere, since the speaker's commitment does not lie with the truth of the proposition. Rather, it lies with the expression of the psychological state. In this sense, the truth of a judgment of taste is indeed presupposed.

Something different happens with assertives, since its direction of fit is word-to-world. In this sense, the speaker has a commitment to the truth of the proposition, and this is what determines the fulfillment of the sincerity condition. That is, while an assertive implies a commitment to truth, an expressive —as a judgment of taste— implies the intention to express a psychological state. Therefore, the reactions of rejection in each case are different; in the case of an assertive someone reacts by saying *you're wrong, that's not true*. In the case of an expressive someone reacts by saying *that's not how you feel*.

Understanding the distinctions between sensation, feeling and expressions of taste, it is now possible to present the dialogue. The dialogue takes place in the following context: a guest (G) is in a restaurant and has not been able to decide which wine to choose to accompany his meal, so he seeks advice from a *sommelier* (S). In order to recommend a wine, the *sommelier* dialogues with the guest, like this:

1. S: What will you eat?
2. G: A medium rare steak
3. S: What wine do you usually accompany such meat with?
4. G: With a Cabernet Sauvignon.
5. S: Try this red wine X.
6. After tasting it, G: I like it!
7. S: X is your best choice, considering your taste, your choice of food, and your previous experience.
8. G: Sell me a bottle of X.

The above dialogue may seem easy to reconstruct; there would be no difficulty in taking the recommendation of the *sommelier* and expressing it in a structure of premises-conclusion, by adding and modifying certain parts:

1. A choice of wine depends on the taste, the choice of food and the habits of the guest.
2. The food chosen by the guest matches well with X.
3. The guest usually drinks wine of the same kind as X.
4. The guest liked X.
5. In conclusion, X is the best choice for the guest.

With this reconstruction, we are showing an argumentation scheme (logical minimum) that allows us to evaluate the relations between the premises and the conclusion. Furthermore, the argument is composed of assertives, which fits with the 'argumentation stage' proposed in the model of a critical discussion of pragma-dialectics. Then, from the point of view of reconstruction, what is the challenge of an argument that appeals to taste? It seems that, at first, none. That is, the *sommelier* is not appealing to his own taste, but to a guest's taste. He is not committed to the sensation in question, but to the truth of what he is saying: the guest has liked the wine X. It seems necessary then to understand if the argument of the guest can be successfully reconstructed.

The argument of the guest is composed of two parts, expressed in lines 6 and 8 of the dialogue. This means that the taste has been the reason why the guest has ordered a bottle of wine. Both parts are problematic for the reconstruction, as the first is an expressive and the second is a directive. The reasons why the expressives has been dismissed from argumentation studies were already exposed at the beginning of this section. Now, regarding directives, it is worth mentioning that Kock (2009b) has insisted that a choice cannot be evaluated in veritative terms, which is problematic for an assertive reconstruction of an argument that justifies a choice. However, what is typical of an argument that appeals to taste and limits an attempt of reconstruction is the expressive corresponding to the feeling of taste. This means that it is such speech act which should be reconstructed as an assertive if anyone wanted to show that the argument that appeals to taste does not represent any kind of limit to the technique of reconstruction.

According with this, it will be necessary to show now that, although the expression *I like it* is understood as the antecedent of the conclusion *Sell me a bottle of X*, it would not be advisable to reconstruct the argument propositionally. On the one hand, the antecedent is a judgment of taste; that is, the expression of a perception that cannot be reduced to propositions. However, even if we try to reduce the experience of taste to the linguistic expression of a feeling, it is an expressive that could not be transformed into an assertive, since a feeling alone cannot be assessed in terms of truth or falsehood.

In addition, it is important to emphasize that the judgment of taste expressed in the argument of the guest is not subject to acceptance or rejection by the *sommelier*. That judgment could not even be false, but only insincere, as explained above. In this sense, it would not make sense to reconstruct that speech act as an assertive. It is not that the validity of the judgment of taste justifies the validity of the decision to buy the wine, nor that the acceptance of the judgment of taste motivates the acceptance of the conclusion. In the argument of G there is really nothing to accept as true, but rather a reason (judgment of taste) is provided to justify a choice. Although that reason could be described assertively, it would not replace it, but only describe it.

On the other hand, the conclusion of the guest is a directive that could not be reduced to an assertive either, as the intention and need of the speaker is to buy the wine, now that he knows his best option. The guest is not describing the world, nor asserting anything that is true or false, he is executing an order. Moreover, the directive makes it impossible to understand the dialogue under the pragma-dialectal model of discussion. That is, the dialogue ends in a way that does not fit with the 'concluding stage' of the model. Namely, the directive cannot be changed for an assertive that describes the state of the initial point of view, nor for a commissive that accepts or rejects the opposite point of view. Furthermore, the fact that the dialogue presented ends with a directive indicates that there is no difference of opinion between the guest and the *sommelier*. Hence, the argument of the guest cannot be reconstructed in a standard way.

Now, the impossibility to reconstruct the argument of the guest affect the understanding of the argument of the *sommelier*. That is, the *sommelier* refers to the guest's taste in his recommendation because he knows the feeling of taste just expressed. In this sense, as such feeling is an expressive, not reducible to an assertive, he will have to appeal to such speech act if he wants to explain his argument clearly enough. That is, while it appears that the *sommelier's* argument fits well with the argumentation stage of a critical discussion and with the standard way of representing an argument, its reference to taste implies that it cannot be separated from the expressive character of the expression of the guest's feeling of taste. To put it simply, although the reference to the taste of others may be expressed in assertive terms, it cannot be separated from the expressive nature of the speech act that expresses that taste. This means that the reconstruction made on the argument of the *sommelier* is incomplete, since to justify the assertive of premise 4 it is necessary to reconstruct the expressive related to the guest's taste, which has been proven impossible.

Accordingly, even if we reduce the taste to its corresponding expressive speech act, it is not possible to make an assertive reconstruction of it. Nevertheless, in this dialogue, taste is a reason that supports the argument of the guest and it is also a presupposition in the recommendation of the *sommelier*. Does this imply that, in fact, it is not an argument? Should we exclude the appeal to taste from the argumentative analysis? If we accept that the function of argumentation is to present good reasons for something, why should we deny that taste can be part of an argument? The answer that must be concluded from the analysis of the dialogue is that it is a case of argumentation, even though it cannot be reconstructed in the way suggested by the theorists.

5. Taste as evidence in argumentation

Any argumentation theorist would agree that arguing implies presenting evidence. That is, in order to be an argument, the proponent must be able to support his thesis with evidence. This evidence must be sufficient to motivate the acceptance of the thesis in question. For example, if the thesis is a description of the world, it is expected that specific features of the world will be presented as evidence of such description. At the same time, the evidence should also constitute a common ground in a disagreement scenario.

Toulmin et al. (1984) offer a model of argumentation that illustrates well these assumptions. According to them, a thesis must be supported by grounds; that is, by particular facts that represent a common ground between the parties. The grounds are not uncontested. Instead, generally most discussions focus on the acceptability, relevance or sufficiency of the grounds for a thesis. Moreover, there are different types of grounds, since the context of the argument determines how evidence is presented and the type of information that serves as evidence. For example, in the context of legal argumentation, a lawyer presents his defense through a sequence of small steps. At the same time, in this context, oral testimony, depositions, or historical records can serve as the grounds for the defense.

If the dialogue analysed is accepted as argumentative, one may ask what is the ground for the argument? In other words, what is the evidence presented by the guest? It has already stated that the conclusion of his argument is a directive that expresses the decision to buy a bottle of wine. The value of this type of speech act as a conclusion to an argument is controversial in argumentation studies. That is not the subject of this study. What is important to understand here is what is the evidence that supports the decision to buy the wine.

According to the dialogue course, it is reasonable to claim that the evidence that supports the guest's decision is the judgment of taste regarding the wine. What is interesting in this case is that the experience of taste (assisted by the *sommelier*) is part of the argument itself. That is, without the experience of taste, there would be no evidence and no arguments for any of the two parts of the discussion. Therefore, taste is the evidence that supports the decision of the guest, but it is not evidence in favor of the truth of the directive. That is why the judgment of taste of the guest does not seek the acceptance by the *sommelier*, but rather communicates a feeling that shapes his decision.

Following Toulmin et al., the context defines the nature of the grounds for the arguments. Thus, the dialogue exposed happens in a context where a judgment of taste is a legitimate ground. This same context implies that this ground is not subject to the acceptance or rejection of the interlocutor, but that it is necessary to decide. Moreover, the information that constitutes this ground is obtained by tasting. In a different context, this ground would not be acceptable, nor would it have these aspects. For example, in a scientific argument, the admitted ground might be the result of an experiment. In this case, such a result is subject to the acceptance or rejection of the scientific community, which will consider several variables—related to the conditions of the experiment—to evaluate the ground. Also, the argument may be presented as a contribution to solve a scientific problem.

In short, the context of the analyzed dialogue allows taste to be a ground for argument, since the decision that the guest must make is precisely about an object that can be tasted. For this same reason, tasting is a valid procedure to obtain the information that is necessary to make the decision. Moreover, given that the guest's argument communicates his decision, it is not subject to acceptance or rejection.

Understanding the analyzed dialogue as an argumentative one and understanding taste as the evidence of the argument leads to a judgement on the technique of reconstruction. Namely, reconstruction should not be the only criterion to identify arguments. In other words, the reconstruction should not function as the only operational definition of argumentation, because the result of this technique is not an argument, but a representation of it. Theorists are aware of this, as they use words like 'standardization' instead of reconstruction, and 'standard' to designate the result of the reconstruction. Thus, as shown by the cases of arguments that are difficult to reconstruct—including the case of taste—it is not indispensable to use the technique of reconstruction. In this sense, the fact that we can reconstruct a discourse propositionally proves only the mastery of this technique. If the reconstruction is not possible, or if its result is not satisfactory, it does not mean that it is not a case of argumentation. Therefore, the assumption that if something cannot be reconstructed it is not an argument is unjustified.

What can be deduced from this study is that discussions regarding taste do not fit well with notions of argumentation that relate to the technique of reconstruction. This means that it is necessary to look for or develop other techniques that allow us to study situations related to taste. In other words, the fact that the reconstruction is not useful should not discourage us from studying cases in which taste is offered as a reason for something. Quite the opposite, in order to motivate the study of arguments that appeal to taste, it is possible to highlight some theoretical contributions that could arise from such a study.

First, this could help us to understand the notion of argumentation more broadly, as it would allow us to distance from traditional notions of argumentation. Second, it could contribute to more general 'fields' of argumentation, such as aesthetics, identity and morality. That is, taste is a common reason for making aesthetic and moral judgements about individual or groups. Thus,

understanding what taste is, how it is studied and how it is presented, as a reason, could be useful in understanding the above-mentioned fields of argumentation. Finally, the study of arguments that appeal to taste would create a bridge to the epistemological studies concerning disagreements about taste³, since it would be helpful for such studies to appreciate the argumentative development of such disagreements.

This does not imply, however, that there are no problems to consider arguments that appeal to taste. Rather, one question remains unanswered: how can we evaluate such arguments? The question is compelling given that a reconstruction is not available. So, is it necessary to look for other approaches? Or is it better to adjust the usual approaches to an argument that does not have the standard form? It will be necessary to answer such questions if one wants to embrace the normative character of an argumentation theory.

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³These studies analyze disagreements about predicates of personal taste (initially postulated by Peter Lasersohn, 2005) and attempt to characterize such situations according to fault. That is, whether such predicates of taste involve a real disagreement, a double-fault disagreement, or a non-fault disagreement.

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