

***Erratum to M. Finocchiaro's "Dialectics, Evaluation, and Argument" INFORMAL LOGIC, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2003, pp. 19-49.***

The endnotes for Maurice A. Finocchiaro's article, "Dialectics, Evaluation, and Argument," published in Vol. 23, No. 1, Winter 2003, were inadvertently omitted. They should have appeared beginning on page 46. The Editors regret this oversight. For the record, we include these endnotes below. For each missing endnote, we indicate the location in the article where the note should have appeared, the sentence (or passage) in the article to which the note was to have been appended, and the note itself.

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My main motivation stems from the fact that the dialectical approach has become the dominant one in argumentation theory.<sup>1</sup>

1 The increasing strength of this trend may be seen from the fact that we have not seen the emergence of articles that attribute "dialectical" thinking to scholars whom one would not have expected to be so regarded, for example, Hilary Putnam; cf. Cummings 2002. And the trend is not only international, but also inter-linguistic, as one may gather from Cattani 2001.

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However, as I have argued elsewhere (Finocchiaro, 1995), the proof works both ways, so that the former methods acquire the merits of the latter, and the latter the limitations of the former; and the unintended consequence is that there is no logical difference between the axiomatic and the formal-dialectical method, and their difference will have to be located in some other domain.<sup>2</sup>

2 For a good, brief, and instructive example of translation of monological problems into dialogical terminology, see Krabbe 1998.

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They may also be seen as having stressed the importance of complex argumentation and suggested that the usual emphasis on simple arguments is an undesirable oversimplification.<sup>3</sup>

3 I believe this double-edged nature of Freeman's and Snoeck Henkemans's work has been recognized by an exponent of the dialectical approach: Erik Krabbe has recently stated that the dialectical "obligation to handle objections can, in solo argument, be dealt with within the structure of basic argument" (Krabbe 2000, 3), a basic argument being his (Walton and Krabbe 1995) label for what here I am calling complex argument. Similarly, he has suggested that "when studying more complex dialogues in which fallacy criticism is undertaken, not by an external evaluator, but by the participants themselves, profiles [i.e., sequences] of dialogue can again be used as a heuristic device" (Krabbe 2002, 155).

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In other words, both duet arguments and solo arguments are dialectical, but only duet arguments are dialogues. [Blair 1998, 10]<sup>4</sup>

4 Blair's clear distinction between (what he calls) the dialogue conception and (what I am calling) the evaluative conception of dialectics suggests the need to explore their relationship to other

notions of dialectics, such as the classical Hegelian concept (cf. Finocchiaro 1988) and, more recently, Hilary “Putnam’s dialectical thinking” (Cummings 2002).

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As many authors have done (Walton 1990, 408-9; Johnson 2000a, 146; Hansen 2002, 264), I too find it useful to quote Copi’s definition: “An argument, in the logician’s sense, is any group of propositions of which one is claimed to follow from the others, which are regarded as providing support or grounds for the truth of that one.”<sup>5</sup>

5 This definition has remained essentially unchanged at least since the third edition of this classic textbook, which had “evidence” (Copi 1968, 7) in place of “support or grounds.”

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I am stressing that according to Copi’s version of the traditional definition, an argument has function but no structure.<sup>6</sup>

6 This is almost the reverse of Johnson’s (2000a) view, as it will emerge below.

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For example, in *Choice and Chance*, Brian Skyrms stipulates that “an *argument* is a list of *sentences*, one of which is designated as the conclusion, and the rest of which are designated as premises” (Skyrms 1966, 1-2).<sup>7</sup>

7 See also Kalish and Montague (1964, 13), quoted in Johnson (2000a, 123): “an argument, as we shall understand it, consists of two parts—first, a sequence of sentences called its premises and secondly, an additional sentence called its conclusion”; see also Angeles (1981, 18), quoted in Walton (1990, 408): it defines argument as “a series of statements called *premises* logically related to a further statement called the *conclusion*.”

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An example of such a definition comes from Michael Scriven’s book *Reasoning*: “The simplest possible argument consists of a single premise, which is asserted as true, and a single conclusion, which is asserted as following from the premises, and hence also to be true. The function of the argument is to persuade you that since the premise is true, you must also accept the conclusion.” (Scriven 1976, 55-56)<sup>8</sup>

8 Cf. Epstein (2002, 5): “We’re trying to define ‘argument’. We said it was an attempt to convince someone, using language, that a claim is true. ... An *argument* is a collection of claims, one of which is called the **conclusion** whose truth the argument is intended to establish; the others are called the **premises**, which are supposed to lead to, or support, or convince that the conclusion is true.” Cf. also Govier (1989, 117).

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These three versions of the traditional conception are importantly different, and constitute a sequence of increasingly more complex and narrow<sup>9</sup> definitions (as one moves from the purely abstract one through the illative one to the rhetorical).

9 Although these three definitions are increasingly more complex and narrow, they are not necessarily increasingly more adequate, for as I shall argue below, the move from the “justification” of the illative definition to the “persuasion” of the rhetorical definition may not yield an increase in adequacy.

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Such a more moderate dialectical conception has in fact been advanced by some scholars.<sup>10</sup>

10 Besides Goldman, Reed (2000,1) may be attributed this concept when he says, "The most fundamental problem facing the designer of an argument is premise availability: do there exist premises which can support a given conclusion or which can rebut or undercut some counterargument?"

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In a truly dialectical account, argument *per se* would be defined as an attempt to meet the critical reactions of an antagonist, that is, to take away anticipated objections and doubt" (Rees 2002, 233).<sup>11</sup>

11 She makes it clear that she is speaking from the "pragma-dialectical" point of view of the Amsterdam school of argumentation studies, and indeed one can find statements to this effect in such works as van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, 73), Snoeck Henkemans (1992, 179), and van Eemeren *et al.* (1993, 12, 14).

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And besides these two explicit formulations, the hyper-dialectical definition has a memorable, emblematic, and brilliant illustration; that is, an argument by Alan M. Turing published in 1950 in the journal *Mind*, advocating that machines can think based primarily on a critique of nine objections to this conclusion.<sup>12</sup>

12 I first learned of this collector's piece from Reed and Long (1998, 3).

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Some of the additional values are what might be called suggestiveness or fruitfulness and novelty or originality.<sup>13</sup>

13 This point about novelty is, of course, not novel. Johnson anticipates it to some degree (2000a, 336) and discusses it implicitly in replying to the objections that his own definition of argument is similar to Toulmin's notion of rebuttal (Johnson 2000a, 173-74). See also section 6 below.

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So an unfriendly evaluator<sup>14</sup> might at this point raise the possibility that Johnson's argument from the nature of the process of arguing begs the question.

14 In this sentence and the next one, I am (for the sake of the argument) using Johnson's distinction between evaluation and criticism, although it seems to me that the concept of evaluation is broader than he allows and thus includes the concept of criticism as a special case; cf. Johnson 2000a, 217-23.

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The criticism of alternatives can be easily subsumed under the notion of reply to objections, by regarding that criticism as a reply to the objection that the traditional conception;<sup>15</sup> but it is useful to treat the two parts separately, as Johnson does explicitly in his book.

15 This only means that any alternative position generates an objection, not that any objection yields an alternative position. Indeed, as Govier (1999b, 226-27) has argued, many objections do not involve alternative positions; for example, counterexamples to generalizations are objections but do not constitute alternatives. At times Johnson (2000a, 206-9) speaks of the dialectical as having a third part, namely dealing with undesirable consequences or implications of one's position; elsewhere he (Johnson 1998, 2) seems to accept Govier's (1998, 7-8) friendly critical revision that this is a special case of replying to objections; in still other places, Johnson (2002b, 3-4) speaks of *four* types of dialectical material, namely objections, alternative positions, criticism, and challenges. Such discussions suggest that more work is needed to clarify the concept of objection; indeed some scholars (Finocchiaro 1997, 314-18; Govier 1999b, 229-32; Johnson [2000b; 20002b]; Krabbe 2002, 160-62) have undertaken this task, but much more remains to be done.

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The second objection (Johnson 2000a, 171-73) is that the dialectical tier is unnecessary in the definition of argument because the work it does could be accomplished in other ways: for example, one could make the dialectical tier part of the normative requirements of a good argument;<sup>16</sup> or part of the definition of such more complex discourses as extended arguments, or cases, or supplementary arguments, or full-fledged arguments, and the like, as distinct from mere arguments or ordinary arguments.

16 Johnson (2000a, 171 n. 20) attributes this objection to Blair in Blair and Johnson (1987); one can also find it in Govier (1998). This objection was also implicitly raised above in my criticism of Johnson's inductive generalization argument, when I asked whether the conclusion should be formulated as saying that all arguments have a dialectical tier, or that all good arguments have it.

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In fact, such welcoming leads to a paradox.<sup>17</sup>

17 This paradox is a version of the problem discussed by Johnson (2000a, 223-36) in connection with his principle of vulnerability and his argument that no argument is conclusive. Mill (1965, 293-95 = *On Liberty*, ch. 2, par. 31-33) also discusses a version of this problem.

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Although similar considerations have led Hitchcock and Hansen<sup>18</sup> to conclude that Johnson's notion of manifest rationality is rhetorical after all, my own conclusion here is that this argument from manifest rationality has no force above and beyond the argument from the telos of rational persuasion.

18 Hitchcock (2002a, 7), Hansen (2002, 273-74); cf. the reply in Johnson 2002a, 327-29.

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Of course such an ending is dialectical in a sense that is perhaps not in accordance with some people's idea of dialectics, but is nevertheless suggestive of further work needed to clarify the meaning of the concept of dialectics.<sup>19</sup>

19 I am of course referring to the Hegelian view of dialectic as the synthesis of a thesis and antithesis. My reference is made partly in jest, for I am aware that it is questionable whether this triadic interpretation of Hegelian dialectic is anything more than a vulgar oversimplification and has anything more to do with the dialectical philosophy of Hegel than the *terza rima* has anything to do with the poetry and art of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; cf. Findlay (1964, 353) and Finocchiaro (1998, 183).