

Conviction, Persuasion, and Argumentation: Untangling the Ends and Means of Influence

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Abstract This essay offers a start on sorting out the relationships of argumentation and persuasion by identifying two systematic ways in which definitions of argumentation differ, namely, their descriptions of the ends and of the means involved in argumentative discourse. Against that backdrop, the traditional “conviction-persuasion” distinction is reassessed. The essay argues that the traditional distinction correctly recognizes the difference between the end of influencing attitudes and that of influencing behavior—but that it misanalyzes the means of achieving the latter (by focusing on emotional arousal) and that it mistakenly contrasts “rational” and “emotional” means of influence. The larger conclusion is that understanding the relationships of the phenomena of argumentation and persuasion will require close attention to characterizations of communicative ends and means.

Keywords Conviction · Persuasion · Argumentation · Rational influence

The purpose of this essay is to start sorting out the relationships of argumentation and persuasion. (The interest here is in the *phenomena* of argumentation and persuasion, that is, argumentative discourse and persuasive discourse—a point worth emphasizing because in English, the term “argumentation” also refers to the academic discipline that studies phenomena of argument.) Because this subject can be fogged by definitional misunderstandings, the essay begins by identifying two systematic ways in which definitions of argumentation differ. Against that backdrop, the essay reassesses the traditional “conviction-persuasion” distinction.

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As a point of entry to the analysis, here are two claims that are almost certainly uncontroversial but are nevertheless worth articulating explicitly:

- (1) The relationship of persuasion and argumentation depends on how “persuasion” and “argumentation” are defined.
- (2) There is no correct (or universally-endorsed) definition of either “persuasion” or “argumentation.”

These claims presumably need little justification because they are not likely to provoke much disagreement. Still, these two points do draw one’s attention to the possibility that discussions of the relationship of argumentation and persuasion might easily become confused because of hidden definitional disagreements.

The implication is that obtaining a clear picture of the relationship of argumentation and persuasion requires vigilance about definitional matters. What appear to be substantive disagreements can actually reflect simply definitional differences, so being attentive to definitional variations will be crucial.

1 Variations in Definitions of Argumentation

Against that backdrop, consider some different definitions of “argumentation.” The central claim to be advanced is this:

- (3) Definitions of “argumentation” systematically vary in two ways, namely,
 - (a) the communicative ends specified and
 - (b) the communicative means specified.

I hasten to say that these are not the only ways in which definitions of argumentation might vary, but these two aspects of argumentation definitions are especially important in the context of considering the relationship of argumentation and persuasion.

Consider, as a first example, the definition offered by Baker and Huntington (in their 1925 revision of Baker’s classic 1895 work *The principles of argumentation*): “Argumentation is the art of producing in the mind of another person acceptance of ideas held true by a writer or speaker, and of inducing the other person to make a decision, or, if necessary, to perform an act in consequence of his acquired belief” (pp. 6–7). For present purposes, the notable feature of this definition is that argumentation is seen to have effects both on mental states (the “acceptance of ideas”) and on behavior (“to perform an act”).

In a similar vein, here is Ketcham’s (1917) definition: “Argumentation is the art of persuading others to think or act in a definite way. It includes all writing and speaking which is persuasive in form” (p. 3). Thus “the object of argumentation is not only to induce others to accept our opinions and beliefs in regard to any disputed matter, but to induce them to act in accordance with our opinions and beliefs” (p. 5). Again, notice, argumentation is meant to have effects both on mental states (opinions and beliefs) and on behavior.

Consider, by contrast, MacEwan’s (1898) definition: “Argumentation is the process of proving or disproving a proposition. Its purpose is to induce a new belief,

to establish truth or combat error in the mind of another” (p. 1). Here, argumentation is seen as having effects on mental states (beliefs), but not on behavior. Effects on behavior, in MacEwen’s view, are the province of persuasion: “the business of persuasive discourse is to arouse to action” (p. 215). MacEwen acknowledges that in most cases, “argumentation is ordinarily used in connection with persuasion and as its basis” (p. xvii). But the purpose of argumentation is seen as that of influencing mental states, which is something different from the purpose of influencing behavior.

One feature to be noticed in the definitions so far considered is that these definitions emphasize the *ends* (effects, purposes, outcomes) of argumentation—but do not specify the *means* by which those effects are obtained. Consider, by comparison, the definition of O’Neill et al. (1917, p. 1): “Argumentation is the art of influencing others, *through the medium of reasoned discourse*, to believe or act as we wish them to believe or act” (emphasis added). This definition, like some preceding ones, includes effects both on mental states and on behavior—but unlike those definitions, this one is more limited because it specifies that the effects are obtained through a particular means (“reasoned discourse”); similar effects obtained through other means would presumably not qualify as “argumentation.”

The point of discussing these various definitions of “argumentation” has been to lay out plainly two important ways in which such definitions differ. The first is in their descriptions of the *ends* of argumentation, that is, the described purposes or effects of argumentative discourse. The specific variation of interest here is whether argumentation is described as aimed at affecting only mental states, as opposed to also affecting behavior.

The second way in which definitions of argumentation vary is in their descriptions of the *means* of argumentation, that is, the characterization of the means of accomplishing those ends. The specific variation of interest here is whether argumentation is described as using only reasoned discourse, as opposed to (what are taken to be) non-reasoned mechanisms of influence, such as emotional appeals.

Not all definitions of argumentation so clearly identify the ends or means of argumentation as do the examples cited. But recognition of these distinctions—between different kinds of ends and between different kinds of means—can be helpful in parsing definitions of argumentation.

2 The Traditional Conviction-Persuasion Distinction

Some readers will have realized that this discussion has wandered into the conceptual territory known as the “conviction-persuasion” distinction. Indeed, the preceding analysis permits one to see an important feature of traditional treatments of conviction and persuasion. To put the key point explicitly:

- (4) In its characterizations of conviction and persuasion, the traditional formulation of the conviction-persuasion distinction conjoins communicative ends and communicative means.

The distinction between “conviction” and “persuasion” is commonly attributed to George Campbell’s discussion in his 1776 book *The philosophy of rhetoric*. Campbell was influenced by the psychology of the time, “faculty psychology,” which saw the human mind as divided into several distinct functions or “faculties.” Campbell’s treatment identified four faculties—the understanding, the imagination, the passions, and the will. Correspondingly, “all the ends of speaking are reducible to four; every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will” (Book I, Chapter I).

In Campbell’s view, conviction is one of the specific purposes of discourse aimed at influencing the understanding: “When a speaker addresseth himself to the understanding, he proposes the *instruction* of his hearers, and that, either by explaining some doctrine unknown, or not distinctly comprehended by them, or by proving some position disbelieved or doubted by them. In other words, he proposes either to dispel ignorance or to vanquish error. In the one, his aim is their *information*; in the other, their *conviction*. Accordingly the predominant quality of the former is perspicuity; of the latter, *argument*. By that we are made to know, by this to believe” (Book I, Chapter I). Argument, notice, is the means by which the end of conviction is achieved.

Persuasion, on the other hand, is seen as a matter of affecting the will. Discourse “which is calculated to influence the will, and persuade to a certain conduct, is in reality an artful mixture of that which proposes to convince the judgment, and that which interests the passions” (Book I, Chapter I). That is, a combination of argument (convincing the judgment) and evoking of emotions (interesting the passions) is the means by which the end of persuasion is achieved.

Thus, as Rowley (1932, p. 235) put it, “By ‘conviction’ he (Campbell) means the process of changing a hearer’s beliefs through an appeal to the understanding. By ‘persuasion’ he means the process of moving the hearer’s will through concurrent appeals to his understanding and his passions.”

Campbell’s distinction between conviction and persuasion received explicit endorsement and elaboration in Bishop Richard Whately’s (1828) work *The elements of rhetoric*. Like Campbell, Whately distinguished argumentation and persuasion as a matter of the faculty to be influenced: Part I of *The elements of rhetoric* is entitled “Of the Address to the Understanding, With a View to Produce Conviction (Including Instruction),” and Part II is entitled “Of the Address to the Will, or Persuasion.” Like Campbell, Whately held that influencing these different faculties requires different kinds of discourse.

But Whately sharpened Campbell’s distinction by emphasizing the role of emotional arousal—and correspondingly downplaying the role of argument—in persuasion. Whately had it that “there is a wide distinction between strict argumentation, with a view to the conviction of the understanding alone, and the attempt to influence the will by the excitement of any emotion” (p. 129). Even when “reasoning” is involved in evoking feelings (for the purpose of persuasion), Whately believed that “it will almost always be the case, that the chief point to be accomplished shall be to raise those feelings to the requisite height, after the understanding is convinced that the occasion calls for them. And this is to be effected not by argument, properly so called, but by presenting the circumstances in

such a point of view, and so fixing and detaining the attention upon them, that corresponding sentiments and emotions shall gradually, and as it were spontaneously, arise” (p. 127). So in Whately’s view, even though argument and reasoning may have some role in influencing the will, these are decidedly secondary to the role played by evoking emotions.

The feature of interest in Campbell’s and Whately’s formulations of the conviction-persuasion distinction is that—in both formulations—the distinction involves *jointly* a difference in communicative ends and a difference in communicative means. For example, for Whately, the end of influencing the understanding is obtained through reasoned means, and the end of influencing the will is obtained through emotional mechanisms. So, on this view, persuasive discourse has both a specific end or purpose (namely, influencing the will) *and* an affiliated specific means of achieving that end (namely, evoking emotions); it is not clear whether, on this view, there are any *other* (i.e., non-emotional) means of effecting that end, but if such exist they would presumably not qualify as “persuasion.” Similarly, argumentative discourse has both a specific end (namely, influencing the understanding) *and* a specific means of achieving that end (namely, reasoned argument); any other means of effecting that end would presumably not qualify as “conviction.”

One can see this same linkage of ends and means in other characterizations of the conviction-persuasion distinction. For example, here is the analysis offered in Foster’s (1917) *Argumentation and debating*: “Analysis, structure, reasoning, and evidence are agencies of conviction. Conviction addresses the understanding; it aims to establish belief on rational grounds. But... *action* is not often based on purely rational motives... The volition must be secured through arousing the emotions. This is the work of persuasion” (p. 200).

In short, in these traditional formulations of the conviction-persuasion distinction, communicative ends and means are intertwined. Conviction concerns the end of influencing mental states by the means of reason, whereas persuasion concerns the end of influencing behavior by the means of emotion. And this intertwining of ends and means is seen as entirely natural because of (the supposed nature of) human psychology. That is, from the perspective of the traditional distinction, *of course* one evokes emotions to affect the will, because that’s the very nature of the will—that it is influenced by the passions.

3 Untangling the Ends and Means in Conviction and Persuasion

I believe, however, that it is a mistake to link communicative ends and means in the way that the traditional formulation has done. To express the matter as a revision of the previous claim:

- (5) In its characterizations of conviction and persuasion, the traditional formulation of the conviction-persuasion distinction conjoins communicative ends and communicative means *in a way that is needless and erroneous*.

To be clear: My claim is not that all ways of conjoining communicative ends and communicative means are inevitably defective, only that the traditional conviction-

persuasion distinction's specific linking of these particular ends and means is a mistake.

3.1 Distinguishing Two Communicative Ends

To display this mistake clearly, it will be helpful to recast the elements of the conviction-persuasion distinction in somewhat different (and more modern) terms. Specifically, the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction's identification of two different kinds of communicative ends, influencing the understanding and influencing the will, can usefully be reformulated as a difference between influencing the audience's *attitudes* ("the understanding") and influencing the audience's *behavior* ("the will").

An attitude (in the social-scientific sense) is a general evaluation of an object, where "object" is understood broadly: a policy, a product, a person, and so forth. Persuaders commonly seek to influence attitudes—for example, to get consumers to have a positive evaluation of a product. And attitudes plainly influence behavior; the products people buy, the candidates they vote for, the hobbies they pursue, the policies they support, and so on, are all affected by people's attitudes.

But attitudes are not always perfectly correlated with behavior, and hence influencing people's attitudes is not necessarily sufficient to induce the corresponding behavior. As E. J. MacEwan put it in his 1898 book *The essentials of argumentation*, "Many influences tend to prevent those who are convinced, from acting upon their convictions.... People know that health depends upon exercise, temperance in diet, and regularity in habits; but they stagnate in libraries and offices, indulge in excesses, and live no 2 days alike. So those to whom arguments are addressed and who accept the truths proposed, for various reasons fail to act on those truths" (p. 220). The very same point was expressed somewhat differently over 80 years later by a social psychologist, Snyder (1982, p. 105): "Most people express rather positive attitudes toward good health and a long life; nevertheless, substantially fewer individuals translate these positive attitudes into action (e.g., diet, exercise, checkups) that will produce good health and a long life." And similar examples come readily to mind, such as recycling, energy conservation, and environmental protection. In all these cases, people often have appropriately positive attitudes and yet do not act accordingly.

So, in my view, the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction is correct to acknowledge the potential divergence of attitudes and behavior and, correspondingly, correct to recognize the possibility of two distinct challenges for advocates, namely, getting people to hold the desired attitude and getting them to engage in the corresponding action. That is, the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction correctly identifies two communicative ends that are usefully distinguished—*influencing attitudes and influencing behavior*. Expressed explicitly, my view is:

- (6) In discussing influence-related communicative ends, a distinction between
 - (a) effects on attitudes and
 - (b) effects on behavior can be useful.

And the reason such a distinction can be useful is precisely because of the possibility that persons' actions might not align perfectly with their attitudes. The

consequence is that sometimes the challenge that an advocate faces is not that of instilling the desired attitudes—because those are already in place—but rather the challenge of getting people to act on those existing attitudes.

3.2 Separating These Communicative Ends and Means

Although the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction correctly recognizes the two communicative ends of influencing attitudes and influencing behaviors, I believe that distinction errs in its analysis of the means of accomplishing those different communicative ends. On the traditional view, attitudes are induced (exclusively or primarily) through reasoned argument, and behavior is induced (exclusively or primarily) through emotional arousal. I believe that this analysis is defective in at least two ways: It is mistaken to think that inducing attitude-consistent behavior requires emotional arousal, and it is wrong to (too easily) contrast “rational” and “emotional” means of influence. What follows elaborates each of these points.

3.2.1 *Inducing Attitude-Consistent Behavior Without Emotional Arousal*

In the traditional formulation of the conviction-persuasion distinction, inducing attitude-consistent behavior requires arousing the audience’s emotions. I believe this analysis is mistaken:

(7) (The end of) inducing behavior that is consistent with existing attitudes does not necessarily require (using the means of) emotional arousal.

The traditional formulation supposes (implicitly, at least) that when the desired attitudes already exist, the primary (or only) way in which to accomplish the purpose of influencing behavior is to evoke the audience’s emotions. But there are a great many means for accomplishing that communicative purpose, and these means do not necessarily require engaging the audience’s emotions.

In fact, the social-scientific research literature on persuasion points to a number of different means of encouraging attitude-consistent behavior when it is not otherwise present. Here I want to briefly discuss three such mechanisms. The appropriateness and effectiveness of these different means will vary from circumstance to circumstance; my point here is that each of these is a possible way of encouraging attitude-consistent behavior without arousing emotions.

One means of inducing attitude-consistent behavior is through the use of prompts, simple cues that make behavioral performance salient. Many experiments have illustrated the potential of prompts to influence behavior. Some examples: Stair use in a shopping mall was significantly increased by placing simple signs (mentioning the benefits of stair use) next to escalators that had adjacent stairs (Andersen et al. 1998). People in developing countries (Bolivia, Peru, and the Philippines) with new savings accounts who got prompts from the bank (by mail or by text messages to cell phones) about making deposits were more likely to save (and saved more) than did people who didn’t get such reminders (Karlan et al. 2010). Parents with newborns who got reminders (computerized telephone calls at

home) about getting on-time immunizations for their child were significantly more likely to have their child immunized (and immunized on time; Alemi et al. 1996).

A second means of inducing attitude-consistent behavior is by encouraging explicit planning about behavioral performance (sometimes described as a matter of the development of "implementation intentions"; see Gollwitzer and Sheeran 2006). Several studies have found that people who specified when and where they would perform the action were more likely (than control-group participants) to subsequently engage in the behavior. For example, participants who specified when, where, and how they would make an appointment for a medical screening test were much more likely to subsequently attend the screening than those in a control condition (Sheeran and Orbell 2000; for some other examples, see Kwak et al. 2007; Steadman et al. 2006).

A third general means of inducing attitude-consistent behavior is to increase perceived behavioral control with respect to the desired behavior. "Perceived behavioral control" refers to persons' perception of how easy or difficult it is for them to perform a given behavior. Perceived behavioral control figures prominently in the "theory of planned behavior," a theoretical framework for understanding the factors influencing voluntary action (Ajzen 1991). Perceived behavioral control is quite similar to the concept of perceived "self-efficacy," one's perceptions of one's ability to perform a given action (the classic treatment is that of Bandura 1977).

A lack of perceived behavioral control can be an important barrier to people's engaging in a behavior. For example, in a comparison of householders who recycled and those who did not, De Young (1989) found that recyclers and nonrecyclers had similar positive attitudes about recycling, but nonrecyclers perceived recycling to be much more difficult to do than did recyclers, and indicated uncertainty about exactly how to perform the behavior; that is, the barrier to recycling appeared to be a matter of perceived inability to perform the action, not a negative attitude toward the behavior. (For some research reviews concerning perceived behavioral control, see Albarracín et al. 2001; Armitage and Conner 2001; Conner and Armitage 1998).

Perceptions of behavioral control can potentially be influenced in various ways, but here I want to mention three as illustrations. One possibility, appropriate when a lack of relevant information is the problem, is simply to provide such information; for example, parents' self-efficacy for lowering the temperature setting of a water heater (so as to prevent tap-water scalding of infants) can be enhanced by a simple informational brochure describing how to perform the action (Cardenas and Simons-Morton 1993). Second, opportunities might be provided for rehearsal of the behavior; for instance, several studies have found that self-efficacy for condom use can be enhanced by interventions that include practice at using condoms properly, role-playing discussions with sexual partners, and so on (Maibach and Flora 1993; Weeks et al. 1995; Weisse et al. 1995; Yzer et al. 1998). Third, examples of successful performance can be offered as models of the behavior; for instance, pre-service teachers who viewed a videotape that demonstrated various classroom management techniques subsequently reported enhanced self-efficacy for using such techniques (Hagen et al. 1998).

In short, there are many ways of inducing attitude-consistent behavior that do not involve emotional arousal. Using prompts, encouraging explicit planning

(implementation intentions), and enhancing perceived behavioral control do not require engaging the audience's emotions. So the first way in which the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction goes wrong (in its linking of communicative ends and means) is its supposition that the end of inducing attitude-consistent behavior requires emotional arousal.

Of course, nothing in the present analysis is inconsistent with a belief that *one* way of inducing attitude-consistent behavior is through arousal of appropriate emotions. In fact, arousal of feelings of guilt (O'Keefe 2000, 2002) or hypocrisy (Aronson et al. 1991; Stone and Fernandez 2008) might potentially be effective ways of producing such behavioral effects. But the claim here is simply that inducing attitude-consistent behavior does not inevitably require emotional arousal.

3.2.2 *Emotional Means of Arousal as Rational*

The second way in which the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction goes wrong (in its particular linking of communicative ends and means) is its supposition that there is an easy distinction to be drawn between rational and emotional means of influence. I believe such a distinction to be difficult to formulate satisfactorily, and hence I believe that such a distinction ought not too easily be invoked.

To be sure, there can be many different ways of formulating a distinction between rational and emotional means of influence—these deriving in part from there being many different ways of defining “emotional means of influence.” (For example, the use of emotionally-charged language might be thought to represent an example of an “emotional” means of influencing others.) For present purposes, however, I want to focus on the phenomena of interest in the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction, that is, arousing emotional states in the audience as a means of influence. So my claim here can be expressed as follows:

- (8) Emotional-arousal-based means of influence are not intrinsically unreasonable.

Two lines of supporting argument are developed in what follows. The first is that emotional-arousal-based means of influence can be seen to parallel other recognizably-reasonable appeal forms. The second is that some cases of emotional arousal may be epiphenomenal to recognizably-reasonable means of influence.

The first line of argument is this: Arousal of the audience's emotions is parallel to other means of influence that are recognizably reasonable. The reasoning here can be expressed in a series of related ideas. First: It is not intrinsically unreasonable to invoke consequences of an action as a basis for justifying performing or not performing that action. In fact, appealing to the consequences of an action is a familiar and reasonable way of underwriting claims about whether the action should be performed. [Perelman (1959, p. 18) called this appeal form a “pragmatic argument”; Walton (1996, p. 75) labeled it “argument from consequences.”] The general abstract form is a conditional: “If the advocated action A is undertaken, then consequence C will occur.” Sometimes the conditional is expressed relatively explicitly (“if you wear sunscreen, you'll have attractive skin when you're older”), sometimes not (“this automobile gets great gas mileage”), and sometimes the

consequences of not undertaking the advocated action are invoked (“if we don’t adopt this economic program, unemployment will increase”), but the underlying form of the appeal is the same, namely, an invocation of potential consequences as a basis for justifying a course of action. And I take it to be obvious that this is in principle an entirely reasonable way of justifying behavioral decisions. A particular invocation-of-consequences might be found unreasonable, of course, but there is not anything intrinsically irrational about the argument form in general.

The second (linked) idea: It is not intrinsically unreasonable to invoke consequences involving the feelings of others (emotions experienced by others) as a basis for justifying performing or not performing an action. Among the various sorts of consequences that might be invoked as relevant to a behavioral decision, one identifiable sort is consequences for the emotional states of others. A commonplace example is the parent who tries to shape a child’s behavior by encouraging the child to consider how the child’s actions might affect others’ feelings (“Nicolas, how do you think it made Ségolène feel when you didn’t share your toys with her?”). But it is easy to imagine similar appeals in other situations: “You should accept the invitation to her party, because she will be disappointed if you don’t attend.” And, at least in the abstract, this sort of argument seems to be entirely reasonable. A particular concrete realization of this kind of appeal might be found unreasonable, but the general argument form seems unobjectionable.

But if it is reasonable to justify an audience’s actions by considering the consequences for *others’* feelings, then (it seems to me) it can be equally reasonable to justify the audience’s actions by considering the consequences for the *audience’s* feelings. Hence, the third (linked) idea: It is not intrinsically unreasonable to invoke consequences involving the feelings of the audience (emotions experienced by the audience) as a basis for justifying performing or not performing an action. So, for example, just as it can be reasonable to say “You should accept the invitation to her party, because she will be disappointed if you don’t attend,” it can equally be reasonable to say “You should accept the invitation to her party, because you will feel guilty if you don’t attend.” Expressed more generally: Invocation of emotion-related consequences is not intrinsically unreasonable as a means of influence, because it is entirely parallel with familiar (and not unreasonable) appeal forms based on the invocation of other sorts of consequences.

It might be objected that this last example concerns appeals aimed at instilling beliefs about anticipated (future) emotions, not appeals aimed at arousing (current) emotions—and it’s the arousal of emotions, not their anticipation, that is of central interest here. But the very same reasoning applies to aroused emotions as to anticipated emotions, because—at least when invoked in the service of influence—emotions are often aroused precisely because of the prospect of their subsequent diminishment.

Consider, for example, the case of guilt. In research aimed at identifying the beliefs and feelings associated with different emotional states (guilt, anger, sadness, and so forth), Roseman et al. (1994) reported that among the reactions distinctively associated with feelings of guilt were “thinking that you were in the wrong,” “thinking that you shouldn’t have done what you did,” “feeling like undoing what you have done,” “wanting to make up for what you’ve done wrong,” “wanting to

be forgiven,” and the like (see p. 215; see also Niedenthal et al. 1994; Tangney et al. 1996). That is, guilt, unlike some other emotions (such as sadness), seems naturally to motivate (certain sorts of) behavior—which makes it especially susceptible to invocation for purposes of influence.

Because guilt is an aversive emotion, arousing guilt can motivate action aimed at reducing guilt feelings. So, for example, in order to motivate adherence to an exercise program, a person might be made to feel guilty about having failed to exercise regularly, because future performance of the behavior will reduce those feelings of guilt. That is, the point of arousing guilt is to motivate its reduction through performance of the advocated action—because persuadees anticipate that performance of the action will reduce their guilt.

Or consider the case of fear. One appeal form that has been much studied in social-scientific persuasion research is “fear appeals.” A fear appeal has two components, namely, fear-induction material (material designed to induce some fear/anxiety about possible undesirable events/consequences) and a recommended course of action (about how to avoid the undesirable consequences). But the point of inducing fear is precisely to motivate its reduction through adoption of the recommended course of action—because persuadees anticipate that adoption of the recommended action will reduce their fear.

The larger point here is that invoking emotion-related consequences of actions is an appeal form entirely parallel to other forms of consequence-based arguments. And that is true no matter whether the means of influence involves arousal of emotions or involves invocation of anticipated emotions, because the former is connected to the latter. Of course, this does not mean that *all* invocations of emotion-related consequences are reasonable. For example, it might be unreasonable to expect a person to feel guilty about some particular action or inaction. But my claim in this first line of argument is simply that because invocation-of-emotional-consequences is a general argument form very like other consequence-based arguments, it is not an intrinsically unreasonable means of influence.

The second line of argument (aimed at showing that emotional-arousal-based means of influence are not intrinsically unreasonable) is this: Some cases of emotional arousal may be epiphenomenal to recognizably-reasonable means of influence.

To see this clearly, it will be useful to think of aroused emotions as affective states arising from particular constellations of beliefs. In social-scientific work on emotions, this general approach is described as an “appraisal” theory of emotions (e.g., Roseman et al. 1990). Arousing a given emotion, then, can be seen as a matter of instilling, or making salient, particular sorts of beliefs. [Some will recognize this as a strikingly Aristotelian view of the emotions. For a nice treatment relevant to the present discussion, see Nussbaum (1996).] But the beliefs involved in arousing a given emotion can sometimes be seen to play a quite straightforwardly rational role in behavioral decision-making—with the aroused emotion being epiphenomenal to the influence process (that is, a by-product or side effect).

Consider, for example, the case of fear appeals. One should not assume that the persuasive effects of fear appeals come about because fear plays a causal role in the influence process. The fear-induction message component—the message material

meant to arouse fear or anxiety—might lead receivers to think that the negative outcomes are more severe (more harmful, noxious, disadvantageous) than they previously believed. And these beliefs in turn might motivate acceptance of the recommended course of action in a thoroughly reasonable way. Those beliefs might also give rise to the emotion of fear—but as a by-product of the influence process, that is, without fear causing acceptance of the recommendations. For instance, an advertising campaign concerning seatbelts might alter people's beliefs about outcome severity (“I never quite realized how bad it would be to be in an accident if I weren't wearing a seatbelt”), and these beliefs then motivate seatbelt use—and also, as a byproduct, create fear.

As another example, consider arousing feelings of pity. In Aristotle's treatment (in Book II of his *Rhetoric*; 322BC/2007) of various emotions relevant to rhetorical practice, he characterizes pity as (in part) “a certain pain at an apparently destructive or painful event happening to one who does not deserve it...” (1385b). Hence arousing pity involves (at a minimum) showing that some harm or suffering befell someone who did not deserve it. So imagine a person who comes to recognize a given instance of undeserved suffering (“these innocent flood victims are suffering”). Those beliefs might quite reasonably underwrite various conclusions (“the government should act quickly to provide assistance” or “I should donate money to a flood relief organization”). And those beliefs might also give rise to the emotion of pity—but as a by-product of the influence process, that is, without the emotion of pity causing acceptance of those conclusions.

In short, the evocation of audience emotions might be epiphenomenal to otherwise-reasonable influence processes. Given that possibility, one can hardly easily contrast “rational” and “emotional” means of influence as the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction does.

4 Conclusion

Seeing clearly how the phenomena of argumentation and persuasion are related can be difficult, because definitional differences can obscure substantive ones. In the hope of untangling some of the complexities in this relationship, the analysis presented here has tried to look past definitions to focus on communicative ends and communicative means. Such a focus permits one to see that the traditional conviction-persuasion distinction gets one thing right, and at least two things wrong. The traditional distinction is right to recognize the importance of distinguishing effects on attitudes and effects on behavior. But it is wrong to claim that inducing attitude-consistent behavior requires emotional arousal (wrong, because there are many other ways of inducing such behavior), and it is wrong to contrast “rational” and “emotional” means of influence (wrong, because emotional-arousal based means of influence are not intrinsically unreasonable).

The larger suggestion here is that being clear about the relationship of argumentation and persuasion requires acknowledging different communicative purposes, recognizing different communicative means, and being careful about the characterizations of those ends and means and their relationships. Because the terms

“argumentation” and “persuasion” have no correct or universally-endorsed definitions, useful discussion of the relationship of persuasion and argumentation will require some attention to how those terms are to be used. A treatment of the relationship of persuasion and argumentation that is inattentive to the varying understandings of those terms—and especially the ways in which different views of argumentation can arise from different conceptions of the communicative ends and means involved—is bound to end in confusion.

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