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Argumentation as a Critical Standard between Ancient and Modern Thought

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Abstract

Argumentation is one of the central concepts through which rhetoric, criticism, logic, pragmatics, and interpretation meet. It cannot be reduced to ornamented speech, formal proof, or psychological persuasion alone, because its history shows a continuous movement between language, reason, audience, context, and critical judgment. This study offers a historical-critical and comparative reading of argumentation in Greek rhetorical thought, classical Arabic rhetoric and criticism, modern Western theory, and modern Arab critical thought. It examines the Sophistic emphasis on persuasive skill, Plato's critique of false persuasion, Aristotle's integration of rhetoric and dialectic, and the Arabic rhetorical movement from Al-Jahiz to Ibn Wahb, Al-Jurjani, and Al-Sakaki. It then discusses modern theories associated with Perelman, Ducrot, Meyer, and selected Arab critics. The study argues that argumentation becomes a critical standard when it is used to analyze discourse, interpret meaning, examine evidence, organize dialogue, evaluate claims, and direct persuasion through reason. This standard does not eliminate rhetorical effect, but it subjects effect to interpretation, accountability, and rational examination. The paper therefore presents argumentation as a flexible critical procedure capable of connecting ancient rhetorical heritage with modern theories of discourse and criticism.

Keywords: argumentation, rhetoric, critical theory, Arabic criticism, Greek rhetoric, interpretation, persuasion

1. INTRODUCTION

Argumentation is a complex critical concept because it moves across several fields at once. It belongs to rhetoric because it is concerned with persuasive discourse; it belongs to logic because it requires reasons and evidence; it belongs to pragmatics because it depends on speaker, recipient, situation, and intention; and it belongs to criticism because it provides procedures for examining claims, interpreting texts, and evaluating the strength of discourse. For this reason, argumentation cannot be confined to a single definition or a single intellectual tradition. Its development from ancient Greek rhetoric to classical Arabic rhetoric, and from modern Western theory to contemporary Arab criticism, shows that the concept has always been shaped by the relation between discourse, reason, audience, and truth.

The present study begins from the problem that argumentation is often treated either as a purely persuasive technique or as a strictly logical procedure. Both views are incomplete. If argumentation is reduced to persuasion, it becomes close to sophistic manipulation and loses its critical value. If it is reduced to formal proof, it becomes detached from language, audience, context, and literary discourse. A more balanced view is required: argumentation should be understood as a critical practice that combines evidence, interpretation, dialogue, and persuasive orientation. This view allows the concept to function not only as a rhetorical device but also as a standard for reading, judging, and reconstructing discourse.

The historical roots of the problem appear clearly in Greek thought. The Sophists gave persuasion an active public function and trained speakers in debate, rhetorical fluency, and victory in disputed issues [1, p. 24]. Their role was connected with political and social transformations in Athens, where public speech had practical power in civic life [2, p. 106]. Yet their emphasis on success in controversy also raised the problem of persuasion without truth. Plato's critique of Sophistic discourse therefore became a critique of speech that gains power through ambiguity, pleasure, and verbal skill rather than knowledge and moral orientation [3, p. 93]. His position also belongs to the wider philosophical attempt to recover order, reason, and knowledge after the instability created by Sophistic relativism [4, pp. 49–50]. Aristotle later reformulated the issue by linking rhetoric to dialectic and by defining rhetoric as the ability to discover available means of persuasion in each case [5, p. 29]. In this movement from Sophistic persuasion to Aristotelian rhetoric, argumentation acquired both its practical force and its need for rational control.

Classical Arabic rhetoric developed another important dimension of the concept. Arabic rhetorical thought was not limited to beautifying expression; it also addressed clarification, explanation, disputation, analogy, evidence, and the relation between speaker and audience. The Qur'anic model of argument, the rhetorical project of Al-Jahiz, the rational orientation of Ibn Wahb, the analytical depth of Al-Jurjani, and the systematic arrangement of Al-Sakaki all show that argumentation in Arabic culture was connected with understanding, proof, eloquence, and persuasive communication [6, p. 44]. This tradition makes it possible to read Arabic rhetoric as a field in which aesthetic and argumentative functions operate together.

Modern theories widened the field further. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca renewed the relation between rhetoric and reason by making audience, agreement, and reasonableness central to argumentation [7, pp. 11–12]. Ducrot and Anscombre shifted attention toward the argumentative orientation of language itself, while Meyer connected argumentation with questioning and problematology [8, pp. 35–39]. Modern Arab critics, including Muhammad Al-Omari, Salah Fadl, Taha Abdel Rahman, and Muhammad Miftah, developed these issues through maqam, discourse, interpretation, deliberation, and the ethics of dialogue [9, pp. 7–8]. These developments show that argumentation is not a fixed doctrine but a critical field formed by the interaction of many traditions.

The aim of this paper is to clarify how argumentation becomes a critical standard between ancient and modern thought. The study asks three questions. First, how did Greek, Arabic, Western, and modern Arab traditions define the function of argumentation? Second, what are the main continuities and differences between these traditions? Third, how can argumentation operate as a critical standard in the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of discourse? The argument of the paper is that argumentation becomes critical when it moves beyond the desire to win and becomes a disciplined practice of examining claims, interpreting evidence, organizing disagreement, and persuading through reason.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This study uses a historical-critical and comparative conceptual method. It does not present an empirical survey; rather, it examines selected theoretical sources that shaped the concept of argumentation across different intellectual traditions. The method is historical because it follows the development of argumentation from Greek rhetoric through classical Arabic rhetoric to modern Western and Arab criticism. It is comparative because it identifies similarities and differences among these traditions. It is critical because it evaluates the conceptual value of argumentation as a standard for reading, judging, and interpreting discourse.

The selection of thinkers follows the internal development of the concept. The Sophists, Plato, and Aristotle are examined because they established the early debate between persuasion, truth, rhetoric, and dialectic. Al-Jahiz, Ibn Wahb, Al-Jurjani, and Al-Sakaki are examined because they represent major directions in classical Arabic rhetoric:

communicative eloquence, rational clarification, metaphorical analysis, and systematic reasoning. Perelman, Ducrot, and Meyer are examined because they represent decisive modern movements: new rhetoric, argumentation in language, and the theory of questioning. Modern Arab critics are included because they connect the inherited Arabic rhetorical tradition with modern theories of discourse, pragmatics, and interpretation.

The paper proceeds by reconstructing each tradition in relation to five critical elements: the speaker, the audience, the claim, the evidence, and the context. These elements allow the study to distinguish between argumentation as manipulation, argumentation as proof, argumentation as dialogue, and argumentation as interpretation. The method also avoids treating ancient and modern thought as separate fields. Instead, it reads them as connected stages in the long history of discourse about persuasion, reason, and critical judgment.

3. ARGUMENTATION IN GREEK RHETORICAL THOUGHT

The earliest clear signs of argumentation in Greek culture appeared with the Sophists in fifth-century Athens. The Sophists were not merely teachers of ornamented speech; they were also educators of public effectiveness. They taught debate, rhetorical organization, and the ability to defend a position before listeners. Their work was made possible by the political and social life of the Greek city, where public speech could influence decision, reputation, and authority. In this sense, Sophistic argumentation gave language a social force and made persuasion a practical skill [2, p. 106].

This role had both constructive and problematic dimensions. On the positive side, Sophistic instruction developed attention to language, debate, civic participation, and the ability to argue before an audience. It gave rhetoric a place in education and linked speech with public life [2, p. 107]. On the negative side, Sophistic persuasion could become detached from truth. The aim of argument could become victory rather than understanding, and the speaker's skill could be used to make weak claims appear strong. This is why the Sophists became central to the philosophical debate about whether persuasion should serve truth or merely success.

Plato's criticism of Sophistic rhetoric arose from this concern. For Plato, discourse that relies on flattery, verbal ornament, and emotional manipulation does not produce knowledge. It may move the crowd, but it does not necessarily guide the soul toward truth. Plato therefore rejected the kind of rhetoric that persuades without knowledge and turns speech into a tool of domination, because knowledge for him requires rational perception rather than the mere authority of sense impression or personal opinion [10, p. 151]. His critique does not mean that all rhetoric is rejected. Rather, Plato distinguishes false rhetoric from a more disciplined dialogue based on knowledge, questioning, and philosophical inquiry [11, pp. 57–59]. In this view, argumentation must be governed by truth and by the ethical responsibility of the speaker.

The Sophistic debate also raised the relation between speech and existence. Some early views tended to identify speech with being, while others emphasized the distance between what is said and what exists. Gorgias, for example, made this distance central to the problem of persuasion, because speech can represent what is absent, uncertain, or merely possible [12, pp. 57–58]. Corax's concern with probability also pushed rhetoric toward the possible rather than the certain. The importance of these positions lies in showing that argumentation often operates in fields where demonstrative certainty is unavailable. It is therefore concerned with probability, credibility, and judgment.

Aristotle gave this problem a systematic form. He did not reduce rhetoric to manipulation, and he did not make it identical with formal demonstration. Instead, he linked rhetoric to dialectic and treated it as a method for discovering available means of persuasion in matters open to discussion [5, p. 29]. Human action, political judgment, ethical choice, praise, blame, accusation, and defense are not governed by the same necessity as mathematical proof. They require argumentation because they involve possibility, uncertainty, and audience judgment.

Aristotle's account is important because it brings together reason, emotion, character, and style. Argumentation does not depend on logical proof alone, although proof remains central. It also depends on the speaker's credibility, the listener's emotional disposition, the form of the discourse, and the appropriateness of delivery [13, pp. 84–85]. The well-known rhetorical elements of logos, ethos, and pathos show that persuasion is a complex act. It is rational when it offers reasons, ethical when it depends on credible character, and psychological when it recognizes the state of the audience.

Greek rhetorical thought therefore produced two enduring lessons. The first is that argumentation has great persuasive power and can affect public life. The second is that this power requires critical regulation. Without truth, argumentation becomes manipulation; without audience and context, it becomes abstract proof; without language, it loses its communicative force. These tensions prepared the ground for later traditions that would connect rhetoric with interpretation, proof, and criticism.

4. ARGUMENTATION IN CLASSICAL ARABIC RHETORIC AND CRITICISM

Argumentation in classical Arabic culture was shaped by eloquence, disputation, explanation, and the need to persuade through clear and effective expression. Arabic rhetoric did not arise only as a decorative art; it developed through poetry, public speech, Qur'anic studies, theology, jurisprudence, and literary criticism. Early poetic contests and critical judgments

contributed to attention to metaphor, simile, analogy, and the persuasive power of style [14, p. 24]. With the Qur'an, the argumentative dimension became more significant because the text addressed belief, objection, proof, and transformation of inherited assumptions [6, p. 44].

The Qur'anic model gave argumentation a distinctive relation to dialogue and ethical persuasion. Old critical discourse also treated persuasion as a relation between claim, objection, and evidence rather than as formal embellishment alone [15, pp. 52–53]. The command to argue "in the best manner" establishes argument as a practice governed by method, purpose, and moral discipline [16]. The structure of claim and objection also became central to Arabic argumentative thought. Argument is not merely assertion; it requires response to doubt, presentation of evidence, and guidance of the recipient toward conviction. This explains why rhetorical studies around the Qur'an became concerned not only with eloquence but also with the arrangement of meanings and proofs [17, pp. 33–34].

Al-Jahiz represents a major moment in the Arabic rhetorical history of argumentation. His work connects rhetoric with understanding, communication, and persuasion. For him, eloquence is not limited to beautiful expression; it is the ability to make meaning clear to the recipient and to achieve understanding in the proper place [18, p. 76]. This means that rhetoric has a communicative function before it has an ornamental function. Al-Jahiz also gives attention to dispute, debate, and the relation between speech and social effect. His project shows that language is a tool of clarification and persuasion, especially when speech confronts speech and opinion confronts opinion [19, pp. 61–64].

The importance of Al-Jahiz lies in the connection he establishes between eloquence and the recipient. Speech becomes rhetorical only when it suits the situation, reaches the listener, and performs its persuasive function. This makes the maqam, or communicative situation, essential to argumentation. The speaker must know what is required by the context, the audience, and the disputed matter. Argumentation therefore becomes an art of appropriate communication as much as an art of evidence [19, p. 65].

Ibn Wahb develops the rational and epistemological dimension of Arabic rhetoric. His classification of clarification gives reason, belief, expression, and writing a systematic place in rhetorical theory [20, p. 211]. He distinguishes forms of explanation that arise from things themselves, from inner understanding, from verbal expression, and from writing [21, p. 56]. This classification expands argumentation beyond oral persuasion. It also connects rhetoric with knowledge, because explanation is tied to the production, circulation, and confirmation of meaning.

Ibn Wahb's discussion of argument and disputation is especially important because he treats them as statements intended to establish proof in matters where disputants differ [21, p. 176]. This gives argumentation a rational and dialogical character. It is not simply a display of eloquence; it is a disciplined movement from premises to conclusions, from disagreement to evidence, and from objection to possible agreement. His position therefore complements Al-Jahiz. Al-Jahiz emphasizes communicative understanding and persuasive speech, while Ibn Wahb emphasizes rational clarification and proof.

Abd al-Qahir Al-Jurjani deepens the critical value of argumentation by linking rhetorical meaning to structure, relation, and interpretation. His theory of metaphor and composition shows that meaning is not located in isolated words but in the relations that organize discourse. In the argumentative reading of metaphor, the visible meaning and the interpreted meaning enter a relation of claim and objection. The apparent structure may claim one meaning, while interpretation reveals another, more appropriate meaning [22, pp. 311–313]. This means that rhetoric is not a surface ornament; it is a field of reasoning within language.

Al-Sakaki organizes rhetoric through definition, inference, context, and proof. His attention to limit and reasoning shows that the science of meanings cannot be separated from argumentative procedure [23, pp. 545–548]. He also emphasizes variation in communicative stations, since praise differs from blame, gratitude from complaint, and congratulation from condolence [23, p. 206]. This view gives Arabic rhetoric a pragmatic dimension: discourse must be judged according to its situation, intention, and audience. The persuasive function is therefore placed at the center of rhetorical practice [11, pp. 148–150].

Classical Arabic thought thus offers several trends in argumentation. Al-Jahiz represents a rhetorical-communicative trend; Ibn Wahb represents a rational and explanatory trend; Al-Jurjani represents an interpretive and structural trend; and Al-Sakaki represents a systematic and inferential trend. Together, these trends show that argumentation in Arabic rhetoric is not fragile or merely decorative. It is a logical, rhetorical, and interpretive practice capable of clarifying meaning and persuading the recipient through evidence and appropriate discourse.

5. ARGUMENTATION IN MODERN WESTERN THEORY

Modern Western theory renewed the concept of argumentation by moving it beyond the narrow opposition between formal logic and emotional persuasion. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca were central to this renewal. They argued that argumentation concerns reasonableness, adherence, audience, and the attempt to secure acceptance without coercion. Their work brought rhetoric back into relation with philosophy and practical reason [7, pp. 11–12]. The aim of argumentation in this view is not mechanical proof but the strengthening of adherence to a thesis through reasons that can be accepted by an audience.

Perelman's theory is important because it distinguishes between persuasion directed toward a particular audience and conviction directed toward a more universal rational audience [12, pp. 300–301]. This distinction does not remove audience from argumentation; rather, it makes audience a critical element. A discourse becomes argumentative when it selects premises, values, facts, and hierarchies that can be shared with those addressed. Argumentation therefore depends on agreement, but this agreement must be examined critically. It may be based on facts, values, presumptions, or accepted connections among ideas [24, p. 42].

This renewed rhetoric resembles Aristotle's project because both theories recognize probability, audience, and practical reason. Yet Perelman widens the field by placing argumentation in law, philosophy, politics, ethics, and everyday discourse. Argument is not limited to the courtroom or public assembly; it becomes a general procedure through which people justify beliefs and actions in uncertain matters. This is why modern argumentation theory can be used as a critical method for reading texts, institutions, and cultural practices.

The French linguistic school developed another direction. Ducrot and Anscombre argued that argumentation is not simply added to language from outside; language itself contains orientations that guide conclusions. Words, connectors, and sentence structures can direct the recipient toward one inference rather than another [8, pp. 35–39]. This view shifts attention from argument as external proof to argument as a semantic-pragmatic property of discourse. The argumentative force of language may appear in small linguistic choices that organize the direction of meaning.

This theory is valuable because it reveals the hidden argumentative movement inside ordinary statements. However, it also raises critical concerns. If argumentation is placed entirely inside language, the role of speaker, context, truth, evidence, and ethical responsibility may be weakened. Argumentation cannot be reduced to linguistic orientation alone. It must also include the situation of speech, the credibility of the claim, the position of the recipient, and the relation between discourse and reality. A balanced theory should therefore benefit from linguistic argumentation without ignoring rational and contextual dimensions.

Meyer's problematological approach adds the theory of questioning. For Meyer, discourse is connected with explicit or implicit questions, and argumentation responds to a problem that the recipient must reconstruct [8, p. 39]. This view is useful for criticism because many texts do not present their questions directly. The critic must ask what problem the discourse answers, what it suppresses, and what kind of response it expects from the recipient. Argumentation therefore becomes linked with interpretation, because to understand a discourse is also to understand the question that gives it meaning.

Modern Western theory thus contributes three essential insights. Studies in new rhetoric and argumentative reasoning further confirm that argumentation is both a theory of discourse and a method for examining how reasons are arranged in actual communicative situations [25]. New rhetoric gives argumentation an audience-based rational foundation; linguistic argumentation reveals the argumentative orientation of language; and problematology connects argumentation with questioning. Together, these approaches expand argumentation from rhetorical technique to a critical theory of discourse.

6. ARGUMENTATION IN MODERN ARAB CRITICAL THOUGHT

Modern Arab critical thought engaged with both the classical Arabic rhetorical heritage and modern theories of discourse. Muhammad Al-Omari's work is important because it restores the maqam to the center of rhetorical analysis. He distinguishes between the specific rhetorical situation and the broader communicative situation, and he also distinguishes context from maqam. Context concerns the internal relation among linguistic units, while maqam concerns the circumstances of communication, the speaker, the audience, and the aim of discourse [9, pp. 7–8]. This distinction is crucial for argumentation because an argument is not evaluated only by its internal structure; it is also evaluated by its suitability to the situation.

Al-Omari also links the maqam with modern rhetoric and argumentation. In his view, argumentative theory and general rhetoric both develop the study of situation because persuasion depends on the relation between discourse and its recipients [9, p. 18]. This position allows Arab rhetorical criticism to move beyond the purely stylistic reading of texts and toward a broader analysis of communicative force, intention, and persuasive arrangement.

Salah Fadl contributes by connecting rhetoric with discourse and text science. He stresses that argumentation should not be limited to oral public speech, because written texts also address readers and organize evidence for them [26, p. 68]. This view is important because it extends argumentation to literary and critical discourse. A poem, essay, sermon, narrative, or theoretical text may all contain argumentative structures, even when they are not presented as direct debates. The critic must therefore examine how texts arrange claims, values, images, and interpretive directions.

Taha Abdel Rahman gives argumentation a dialogical and ethical form. He defines argumentative discourse in relation to a statement directed toward another who has the right to object [22, p. 226]. The value of this definition lies in its insistence that argumentation presupposes an interlocutor. A claim becomes argumentative when it anticipates possible objection and provides reasons for acceptance. At the same time, this definition can be expanded. Argumentation may be

oral or written, direct or indirect, explicit or interpretive. It seeks not only understanding but also conviction, revision of belief, and critical accountability.

Muhammad Miftah's work on reception and interpretation shows another important dimension. Interpretation emerges when meaning becomes strange, disputed, or distant from prevailing values. The interpretive act seeks to return strangeness to familiarity or to introduce a new value into the field of understanding [27, p. 218]. This process is argumentative because interpretation must justify itself against competing readings. It presents evidence, answers objections, and seeks to convince readers that its path is stronger than alternatives.

Modern Arab criticism therefore offers a productive synthesis. It preserves classical Arabic concern with eloquence, clarification, and maqam, while also engaging modern questions of discourse, text, reception, and deliberation. Its strongest contribution is that it treats argumentation as a critical act embedded in culture, language, and ethical communication. Argumentation becomes a way to examine not only what a discourse says but also how it persuades, whom it addresses, what values it assumes, and what kind of interpretation it permits.

7. ARGUMENTATION AS A CRITICAL STANDARD

The historical survey shows that argumentation can function as a critical standard when it is understood as a procedure for testing discourse. A critical standard is not merely a rule imposed from outside the text; it is a set of operations by which the critic identifies claims, examines evidence, interprets relations, evaluates coherence, and judges the persuasive force of discourse. Argumentation provides such a standard because it connects the text with reason, audience, context, and interpretation.

Argumentation becomes critical when it performs seven connected functions: analysis, critical thinking, pragmatic circulation, interpretation, dialogue, treatment of claims, and rational persuasion. These functions do not work separately. Analysis reveals the structure of the discourse; critical thinking examines its assumptions; pragmatic circulation studies its communicative situation; interpretation opens its hidden meanings; dialogue tests it against objection; critical treatment evaluates evidence; and rational persuasion judges whether the discourse can legitimately guide conviction.

7.1. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Argumentation based on reality is not limited to assumption or implication. It interprets events and explains relations among things, because persuasive discourse becomes stronger when its references are connected with what the recipient recognizes as meaningful or real [28, p. 214]. Literary criticism performs a similar function. It judges, explains, and interprets texts by clarifying what is ambiguous and by distinguishing strong expression from weak expression [29, pp. 339–340]. The common ground between argumentation and criticism is therefore the movement from obscurity to clarity and from claim to justified judgment.

In this sense, analysis is the first critical function of argumentation. The critic asks what claim the discourse presents, what evidence supports it, how its parts are arranged, and what assumptions govern its movement. Interpretation then examines how explicit and implicit meanings interact. A text may persuade not only through direct statement but also through metaphor, structure, silence, contrast, and arrangement. Argumentative analysis therefore prevents criticism from becoming impressionistic, because it requires the critic to show the reasons for interpretation.

7.2. CRITICAL ARGUMENTATIVE THINKING

Argumentation depends on thinking because every argument moves from one issue to another through inference, comparison, objection, or justification. Critical thinking is therefore not external to argumentation; it is one of its internal conditions [30, p. 89]. The need to ask, object, and justify turns argumentation into a conscious intellectual process. It moves discourse from passive reception to active examination.

This intellectual process is important for criticism because it allows the critic to test claims rather than merely repeat them. A critical reading asks whether the evidence is sufficient, whether the conclusion follows from the premises, whether the discourse hides a contradiction, and whether alternative readings are possible. Argumentative thinking thus changes criticism from a descriptive act into an evaluative and analytical act. It examines how discourse is formed, what function it performs, and how it interacts with cultural and human contexts [26, p. 111].

7.3. PRAGMATIC CIRCULATION

Argumentative discourse is also pragmatic because it is produced by someone, directed toward someone, and shaped by a situation. Pragmatic circulation studies how meaning moves between speaker and recipient, how references are established, and how discourse seeks to influence understanding and action [31, p. 22]. Argumentation therefore belongs to deliberation because it is not isolated from speech conditions, reception, position, and communicative purpose [32,

p. 176].

This function is important in criticism because the meaning of a discourse cannot be separated from its communicative setting. A statement may persuade in one context and fail in another. A metaphor may appear effective in one cultural horizon and obscure in another. A claim may depend on values shared by the audience. Pragmatic circulation therefore enables the critic to examine the relation between discourse and the conditions that make it persuasive.

7.4. ARGUMENTATIVE INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is argumentative because it normally arises in the presence of difficulty, ambiguity, or disagreement. A reading becomes convincing only when it offers reasons and responds to possible objections. Metaphor provides a clear example. Modern criticism no longer treats metaphor as a simple substitution of words; it treats it as an interaction between a focus and a surrounding frame, between apparent meaning and interpreted meaning [26, pp. 139–141]. This interaction produces an argumentative movement because the interpreter must justify why one meaning should be preferred over another.

Ricoeur's view of rhetoric and interpretation also supports this connection. Interpretation is not neutral explanation; it has the power to change the position of readers by reorganizing their understanding of the text [1, p. 172]. Miftah similarly treats interpretation as a procedure generated by strangeness, difference, and the need to establish a new relation between meaning and cultural value [27, p. 218]. Argumentative interpretation therefore makes criticism accountable. It requires interpretation to be supported by evidence rather than by arbitrary preference.

7.5. CRITICAL ARGUMENTATIVE DIALOGUE

Dialogue is one of the strongest signs of argumentation. An argumentative text presupposes another position, whether that position is explicit or implicit. The speaker presents a thesis, anticipates objection, and seeks to guide the recipient toward acceptance. In dialogical argumentation, the objector examines the thesis and the proponent defends it. This process produces an exchange of knowledge, beliefs, and reasons [32, pp. 986–987].

The critical value of dialogue is that it prevents discourse from becoming closed. A text becomes richer when it is placed in relation to other texts, opposing views, and alternative interpretations. Dialogue also develops the skills of evaluation, analysis, and interpretation because each claim must face possible objection. Philosophical and critical creativity often depends on this courage to enter dialogue with the self and with others [33, p. 230]. The renewal of dialogical thought also requires principles that protect disagreement from turning into mere conflict and direct it toward understanding and responsibility [34]. Argumentative dialogue therefore makes criticism a shared search for stronger understanding rather than a unilateral judgment.

7.6. CRITICAL ARGUMENTATIVE TREATMENT

Argumentation can also be understood as a practical critical skill. It deals with claims by presenting, examining, accepting, modifying, or refuting them according to rules of evidence and relevance [32, p. 1003]. Critical treatment requires the reviewer or critic to examine the evidence offered for a thesis, identify its strengths and weaknesses, and judge whether it is sufficient for the conclusion [35, p. 340]. In this sense, argumentation becomes a method of disciplined evaluation.

This function is especially important for literary and cultural criticism. A critic does not only express admiration or rejection. The critic must explain why a reading is valid, why a claim is weak, why an interpretation is more persuasive than another, and how the evidence supports the judgment. Argumentative treatment transforms criticism into a reasoned practice. It establishes standards for accepting or rejecting claims while remaining open to revision.

7.7. RATIONAL PERSUASION

Argumentation seeks persuasion, but the persuasion required by criticism is not submission to emotional pressure. It is persuasion through reason, evidence, and interpretive coherence. Argumentation is a communicative act in which opinions vary and in which the speaker attempts to defend one position more strongly than others [36, pp. 54–55]. This process does not exclude emotion, style, or performance, but it gives priority to reasons that can be examined.

Rational persuasion also requires awareness of the limits of proof. In many humanistic and critical fields, conclusions are not demonstrated with mathematical certainty. They are supported by plausible evidence, coherent interpretation, and responsiveness to objection. The critic must therefore distinguish between what can be proven, what can be reasonably defended, and what remains speculative. This is why critical rationality involves both the attempt to support convictions with logical evidence and the awareness of cases where proof remains incomplete [30, p. 148]. Critical thinking studies similarly emphasize that good argument requires the examination of premises, inference, relevance, and possible objections

[37, p. 482]. A convincing argument is not one that silences all difference; it is one that gives the recipient sufficient reason to accept, reconsider, or debate the claim.

8. CONCLUSION

This study has argued that argumentation is not a marginal rhetorical technique but a critical standard formed through the long interaction of rhetoric, logic, interpretation, dialogue, and pragmatics. In Greek thought, the concept developed through the tension between Sophistic persuasive skill, Platonic concern for truth, and Aristotelian integration of rhetoric with dialectic. This stage showed both the power of persuasion and the danger of persuasion without knowledge.

In classical Arabic rhetoric and criticism, argumentation appeared through eloquence, clarification, debate, Qur'anic reasoning, metaphorical interpretation, and the relation between discourse and maqam. Al-Jahiz emphasized understanding and persuasive communication; Ibn Wahb gave clarification a rational and epistemological dimension; Al-Jurjani revealed the argumentative depth of metaphor and structure; and Al-Sakaki connected rhetoric with definition, inference, and context. These contributions show that Arabic rhetoric contains a strong argumentative foundation and cannot be reduced to stylistic ornamentation.

Modern Western theory widened the field by linking argumentation with audience, reasonableness, linguistic orientation, and questioning. Perelman restored rhetoric to practical reason; Ducrot and Anscombre revealed the argumentative direction of language; and Meyer connected argumentation with implicit questions and problematology. Modern Arab criticism then connected these developments with inherited concepts such as maqam, clarification, discourse, interpretation, and dialogue.

The central conclusion is that argumentation becomes a critical standard when it performs disciplined operations of analysis, interpretation, evaluation, dialogue, and rational persuasion. It enables the critic to identify claims, test evidence, interpret hidden meanings, examine context, and judge the persuasive force of discourse. This standard does not deny the role of style, emotion, or performance. Rather, it organizes them within a broader process of accountability and reasoned communication.

Argumentation therefore offers a productive bridge between ancient and modern thought. It preserves the rhetorical concern with persuasive effect while also requiring logical examination, ethical dialogue, and interpretive responsibility. As a critical standard, it helps criticism move beyond description and impression toward justified judgment. It also shows that the value of discourse lies not only in what it says, but in how it argues, how it addresses others, how it responds to objection, and how it leads the recipient toward understanding through reason.

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