M. MEYER PUTS THE "ARGUMENTATION" BACK IN THE SPOTLIGHT: THE WAY TO DEVELOP ENGAGING COMMUNICATION "FOR THE PLANET"

M. MEYER COLOCA A "ARGUMENTAÇÃO" DE VOLTA NO CENTRO DAS ATENÇÕES: A MANEIRA DE DESENVOLVER UMA COMUNICAÇÃO ENVOLVENTE "PARA O PLANETA"

Korchi Houda
ORCID 0009-0000-3926-2217

Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, FLSH
Chouaib Doukkali University
El Jadida, Maroc
Korchi.h@ucd.ac.ma

Zaouri Rachid
ORCID 0009-0007-5277-8518

Faculté des Sciences Juridiques, Economiques et Sociales, FSJES
Chouaib Doukkali University
El Jadida, Maroc
Ilohim12@yahoo.fr

Abstract. This article offers a reflection on the value of an argumentative rhetoric that simultaneously employs the resources of *pathos*, *logos*, and *ethos* to develop mobilizing communication. It will not examine argumentation in its sophistic dimension, nor as a mere set of discursive techniques aimed at coercing the audience's adherence. Instead, we aim to approach it from a primarily communicative perspective, drawing on the reflections of the Belgian philosopher M. Meyer, who dedicates a significant part of his work to the study of argumentative rhetoric. This reflection has the merit of shifting argumentation from the field of pure formal logic and discursive structures to a broader perspective that considers the social and practical implications of argumentative techniques. Under the guidance of this new approach initiated by Michel Meyer, namely *problematology*[1], argumentation transcends the narrow conception that reduces it to a tool of persuasion, becoming instead a means of reflection that contributes to the development of a new vision of the unity of thought. This unity, which according to Meyer is now to be sought in the articulation of question and answer, highlights the use of argumentation as a principle that structures reflection and sustains the dynamic of questioning and debate. We will therefore explore how M. Meyer's theory of argumentation, acknowledging the context of *problematicity* in which it operates, proposes an approach based on the active interaction between the three fundamental dimensions mentioned above to build effective and, moreover, engaging communication.

Keywords: engaging communication; argumentation; *ethos*; *pathos*; *logos*.

Resumo. Este artigo propõe uma reflexão sobre o interesse de uma retórica argumentativa que mobilizasse conjuntamente os recursos do pathos, do logos e do ethos, com vistas ao desenvolvimento de uma comunicação mobilizadora. Não se tratará de estudar a argumentação na sua dimensão sofística, nem como um simples conjunto de técnicas discursivas destinadas a forçar o apoio do ouvinte. Pelo contrário, esperamos abordá-lo a partir de uma perspectiva essencialmente comunicacional, apoiando-nos nas reflexões do filósofo belga M. Meyer, que dedica a maior parte da sua obra ao estudo da retórica argumentativa. Uma reflexão que tem o mérito de deslocar a argumentação do campo da lógica formal simples e das estruturas discursivas para uma perspectiva mais ampla que leva em consideração as implicações sociais e práticas das técnicas argumentativas. Considerada sob a liderança desta nova abordagem iniciada por Michel Meyer, neste caso a problematologia, a argumentação vai além desta concepção demasiado estreita que a reduziu a uma ferramenta de persuasão para se tornar um meio de reflexão que participa no desenvolvimento de uma nova visão do unidade de pensamento. Essa unidade que se pretende agora procurar, segundo Meyer, na articulação pergunta/resposta, põe em causa a utilização da argumentação como princípio estruturador da reflexão e que contribui para a manutenção da dinâmica de questionamento e debate. Veremos, portanto, como a teoria argumentativa do Sr. Meyer, tomando nota do contexto problemático em que se desenvolve, propõe uma abordagem baseada na

[1] For Michel Meyer, problematology refers to a philosophical approach that focuses on the structure of problems and the way they are formulated and addressed within argumentation.

interação ativa entre as três dimensões fundamentais citadas acima para construir uma comunicação eficaz e, além disso, engajar.

Palavras-chave: comunicação envolvente; argumentação; ethos; pathos; logos

1. INTRODUCTION

In his "Rhetoric Course" taught at the University of Basel, Nietzsche, addressing the issue of argumentation through the lens of perspectivism[2], highlights the intrinsically subjective nature of this science of persuasion[3], which tends less to construct truths than to manipulate the audience. Indeed, this discipline, throughout the modern era, was subject to widespread disdain precisely because of its inability to establish realities in the manner of experimental sciences and its association with sophistry.

However, a fruitful reversal of thought regarding rhetoric (and consequently argumentation) occurred during the second half of the 20th century. Rhetoric regained its vigor in a context marked by the collapse of monolithic ideologies and the emergence of problematic questions, such as environmental issues, which are currently among the subjects provoking deep concerns. In the face of the multitude of debates triggered by these problematic issues, argumentation rose from its ashes and gradually moved away from being purely a linguistic reflection to become an integral part of philosophy.

Within this framework, we will examine how argumentation, deeply tied to Michel Meyer's philosophy of questioning, fosters a critical and dynamic exploration of ideas, positioning itself as a powerful tool for constructing meaning and structuring debates. What argumentative strategies does he propose to bridge the gap with his audience and thereby secure their agreement? And what role can emotions—revitalized by the "theory of argumentation"—play in crafting communication that is described as mobilizing "finally for the planet" (Libaert, T., 2020)?

2. QUESTIONING AT THE HEART OF ARGUMENTATION

> "Rhetoric is born when ideological systems collapse," remarks Belgian philosopher Michel Meyer (1986, p.7), in a most transparent allusion to the resurgence of rhetoric (and consequently argumentation[4]) in postmodern times. This resurgence is facilitated by a historical context marked by the plurality of opinions, the deconstruction of certainties, and possibly that of so-called rational truths, generated by the "death of the subject."[5]

Established as an inherent fact of postmodernity by Michel Foucauld, the Death of the Subject (which, in the Cartesian perspective, is presented as the foundation of meaning) undermines the power of monolithic visions and thus opens the field to a more nuanced understanding of truths. These truths, no longer able to appear as objective facts, tend from now on to be constructed through a dynamic process of dialogue and confrontation of ideas, in

[2] A central philosophical notion in Nietzsche's thought, which should not be confused with relativism or the rejection of truth. Rather, it involves defending the idea that all truths and knowledge are tied to different perspectives; in other words, each truth is a human construction influenced by subjective factors.

[3] An expression borrowed from Isocrates and Gorgias to refer to argumentation.

[4] Michel Meyer stipulates that there is a profound unity between argumentation and rhetoric. In his "theory of argumentation,"

[5] For Nietzsche, the "death of God" serves to announce the end of ancient certainties. Foucault, in *The Order of Things*, proclaims the death of the subject—an indication of the end of belief in the sovereign power of human reason to establish absolute knowledge of truth.

which argumentation as a practice is called upon to play a determining role. Indeed, in a time no longer oriented toward certainties or absolute scientific truths, "propositionalism [6]" (M. Meyer, 2010, p.7) appears to have given way to a system of thought that favors Dialectics—understood in the sense of the practice of questioning—which greatly contributed to restoring argumentation to prominence.

Freed from its traditional role of validating already established propositions, argumentation has succeeded in transcending this old conception that reduced it to a mere tool of justification and/or verification of theses. It has taken on a more dynamic function: opening spaces of reflection conducive to the emergence of new ideas, a function that, as M. Meyer notes in one of his lectures, disposes it to become the new matrix of humanities. Conceived in this way, argumentation serves to broaden and explore in depth the processes of reflection initiated by questioning, promoting the confrontation of ideas and the exploration of new perspectives. Argumentation and questioning are thus closely linked and actively interact to structure thought and guide intellectual exchanges. We are therefore indebted to Michel Meyer for having rehabilitated the philosophy of questioning—not in its critical dimension as Descartes did, nor in the sense of negotiating the responses provided by preceding philosophers in an attempt to impose his own[7], but rather as a tool that structures and advances reasoned discourse. Questioning, in fact, has the advantage of preserving the problematic instead of dissolving it in a premature answer. It thus paves the way for continuous reflection and encourages reexamination of certainties, particularly in a context rich in problematic issues:

> "If people prefer certainties, it remains true that these also result from questions that need to be solved. As they vanish once solved, that confirms the impression that everything begins with 'answers,' which then no longer answer anything, supporting themselves in the name of 'the' truth. But this is only an impression, an illusion, connected to the mind's consideration of only what is visible. Yet certainties are rare in everyday life, where everything is open to challenge, debate, controversy, and probability. We must learn to live with the problematic, even though people are often afraid of it." (M. Meyer, 2010, p.8)

Closer to Socratic maieutics, Michel Meyer's philosophy of questioning aims to stimulate critical thinking while providing argumentative theory with the means to organize and deepen philosophical debates through rigorous analysis of underlying issues. Employing questioning as an argumentative strategy enables this philosopher to propose a process of continuous reflection, grounded in logic, yet diverging from so-called manipulative rhetorical techniques that Plato ceaselessly denounced. While rhetoric uses various stylistic techniques to entice the audience by putting the question "under the table" (to borrow Meyer's expression), questioning, on the contrary, confronts interlocutors with the problematic nature of the subject in question, forcing them to challenge their certainties and take an active role in the critical reflection underway:

> "Rhetoric," Meyer explains, "addresses the question through the answer, presenting it as gone, thus resolved, whereas argumentation starts with the

[6] Propositionalism is a philosophical position according to which knowledge primarily consists in understanding propositions—that is, statements or assertions that can be considered true or false. The idea here is that knowledge is reduced to the comprehension and validation of specific propositions.

[7] The history of philosophy is composed of a sequence of negotiations. Each generation negotiates the answers of the one preceding it in order to impose its own.

> very question it clarifies, arriving at what resolves the difference, the disagreement among individuals." (Meyer, M., 2011, p.13)

Envisioned as a communicative skill that fosters interaction with the audience by inviting them to participate in critical reflection (and not as eloquent speech in the style of the sophists who manipulated public opinion), argumentation occupies a prominent place in the philosophy of questioning. From this perspective, arguing is identified as a philosophical process that aims less at finding answers—and thus establishing truths—than at posing and exploring issues by placing questions "on the table" (Meyer, M., 2011, p.3). The objective is to make them visible and thereby encourage deep reflection on the subject being addressed, which goes beyond the mere pursuit of truth or persuasion. Strategically formulated questions serve to precisely define the problem under consideration, while structuring and advancing critical thinking, thus allowing the public to engage in seeking solutions. Situated within the framework of the philosophy of questioning, argumentation thus appears as an active and dynamic process of persuasion, one that advantageously promotes the public's commitment to the cause being defended. According to Meyer's theory, questioning and argumentation are intimately linked and tend to mutually complement each other, forming a profound unity:

> "Argumentation is part of the theory of questioning. What is an argument if not an opinion on a question? Raising a question—which is the essence of discourse—is to argue." (Meyer, M., 1982, p.137)

Developed under the influence of the philosophy of questioning, the theory of argumentation proposed by Michel Meyer invokes questioning not to establish definitive answers—since the era of absolute truths is over—but to emphasize interaction with one's interlocutor (regarded as an active recipient) and invite them to participate in the construction of meaning. Recognized since Toulmin and Perelman as a communicative skill practiced within the "field of the reasonable" (Meyer, M., 2011, p.10), arguing essentially consists in raising questions and opening up debate without necessarily promising a definitive resolution to the problematic. In this perspective, the argument itself should be seen as a response to the question raised, one that may, in turn, be questioned, clarified, expanded, or refined. The goal is to advance the debate around the identified issue and involve the audience in this dynamic process of critical reflection that does not claim, as Plato did, to establish truths, but rather seeks a nuanced understanding of the problem through the question/answer interaction:

> "There is no answer that cannot raise a question. Everything is therefore, in principle, debatable, subject to debate, or simply open to discussion (…). A response to a given question may raise another that has nothing to do with it, or, on the contrary, is the one to which it truly responds." (Meyer, M., 2005, p.35)

In this perspective, Meyer appears indebted to Socrates, particularly regarding the use of questioning as an argumentative tool to clarify concepts, stimulate critical reflection, and potentially move it forward. True to Socratic teaching, Meyer sees questioning as the lever that destabilizes truths and advances one's argumentation by refining and enriching it within a communicative context aimed at stimulating critical thinking and intellectual autonomy. In other words, questioning is an argumentative tool that encourages the audience's active participation in debate and thus invites them to take a stand:

> "Hence the idea that argumentation is a direct act of making someone take a position or decide to adopt a course of action on a given problem, and an

> indirect act if one simply communicates certain usable opinions (…) when they later find themselves confronted with the question." (Meyer, M., 2005, p.70)

Such an approach proves particularly effective in implementing so-called engaging communication in that it promotes active involvement of interlocutors, stimulates the exchange of ideas, and encourages critical and constructive participation in the dialogic process. However, mobilizing the audience remains dependent on the degree of its involvement in negotiating the difference around the question under discussion, hence the need to develop an argumentative strategy that takes into account the interaction between the three pillars of communication: ethos, pathos, and logos.

3. WHAT ARGUMENTATIVE STRATEGY TO MOBILIZE THE AUDIENCE

"The art of convincing" has been at the heart of philosophical reflections since the ancient Greeks. They sought to move it beyond the realm of seductive speech, and by extension deceitful speech, by emphasizing—following Plato's recommendation—the ethical character and essentially persuasive aim of argumentative discourse. The notion of persuasion, which from Aristotle to Michel Meyer has characterized argumentation, led to the development of a multitude of rhetorical practices drawing their resources from *ethos*, *logos*, or *pathos*. Greek philosophers, in this perspective, contributed significantly to exploring the value and applications of these three dimensions of argumentation. Despite notable differences in the importance, they ascribed to these concepts, Plato and Aristotle were the first to lay the foundations of an argumentative rhetoric in which persuasion is addressed from the standpoint of both ethics and truth, as well as technique and effectiveness. It is undoubtedly meaningful in this regard that the lengthy debate between Socrates and his interlocutor in Plato's *Gorgias*[8] initiated a profound reflection on the foundations of rhetoric and the art of argumentation, as well as their ethical implications.

Several centuries later, Michel Meyer would revisit these classical concepts, refining them to gain a better understanding of how they function in the argumentative process, and thus propose their application in various communication contexts. Whether it involves convincing an audience, inducing a change in their behavior, mobilizing them to act, or simply making them aware, these three pillars of rhetoric (now identified with argumentation by Chaïm Perelman[9]) regain their relevance in reflecting on the mechanisms of persuasion. *Ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, still central to Aristotelian rhetoric, would be revisited and reinterpreted by Michel Meyer within his philosophical reflection on argumentation. According to our philosopher, these three combined elements form the indispensable basis for any argumentative strategy: *Ethos* refers to the speaker's credibility and authority, essential elements for establishing the audience's trust; *pathos* aims to move and mobilize passions by appealing to the audience's sensitivities; and finally, *logos* focuses on the coherence and logic of the discourse, relying on the inherent rationality of the arguments. These three dimensions, Meyer explains in one of his lectures at the Collège de France, have always been central to the art of oratory and

[8] In the *Gorgias*, Plato brings two radically opposed views into confrontation concerning the relationship between the art of argumentation and the requirement of truth. The question of rhetoric and its purpose pits Socrates against several interlocutors, including Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles. This debate probes the relationship between persuasion and truth, as well as the ethical stakes of argumentation. Plato criticizes the use that the sophists make of argumentation by stripping it of any ethical end: it becomes a tool of manipulation rather than a means of seeking truth. He thus emphasizes the need for argumentation founded on reason and the common good.

[9] In his major work *Traité de l'argumentation: La nouvelle rhétorique* (co-written with Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca), Chaïm Perelman identifies rhetoric with argumentation, but with significant nuances. For Perelman, rhetoric and argumentation are intimately linked. Argumentation constitutes the core of modern rhetoric, redefined as a method of communication oriented toward rational and practical influence, rather than merely an art of fine speaking.

argumentation, even if they were often considered separately. If Quintilian, in his *Art of speaking well* (Quintilian, 1752, p. 288), endeavored to highlight the orator's role in developing persuasive speech, Ducrot and Perelman place greater emphasis on the importance of discourse (*logos*) in argumentation. Lastly, Plato pays particular attention to the passions and their influence on the audience. Thus, *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* function as a reservoir of definitions upon which ancient and modern thinkers alike have drawn in turn to construct the foundations of their rhetorics. Those definitions tended to favor one or another of these three dimensions without ever considering them together:

> "Rhetoric," for Aristotle, "is a speech delivered by an orator and suited to persuading an audience or moving them. The three dimensions are very much present but incorporated into the power of the word. It is the word that creates an effect on the audience, and it is this power that the orator seeks. For Plato, it was the opposite. Pathos, rather than truth, governs the language game and also the orator's approach, who cares only about effects, and at times even changes sides, not hesitating to defend opposing views, or seeking contradictory effects (……). After logos and pathos, there remains ethos, or the dimension of the orator. This approach is typically Roman. Eloquence has meaning only if it highlights the virtue (ethos) of the orator" (Meyer, M., 2011, p. 15).

In his "theory of argumentation," the Belgian philosopher proposes a thoughtful and, above all, balanced integration of these three fundamental dimensions of persuasion in developing an argumentative strategy that, in order to be mobilizing, must consider both the communication context, the rational aspect of the discourse, and the audience's emotions. Moreover, to resolve the problematic raised by questioning, he points out the necessity of perspective: "*Ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are the three fundamental dimensions," he says, "of all possible rhetoric, of all possible argumentation" (Meyer, M. 2005, p. 12).

Meyer's reflection thus highlights the importance, for any argumentative discourse that seeks to reduce (or at least clarify) the problematic surrounding a posed question, of drawing its rigor simultaneously from the credibility of *ethos*, the rational force of *logos*, and potentially the emotional commitment of *pathos*. Neglecting one of these aspects or prioritizing one over another in formulating one's argumentative process would risk weakening the discourse and making it less effective or even completely inoperative. To be persuasive, argumentative discourse must take into account the complexity of the contextual interactions between these three pillars of communication. Far from reducing argumentation to its rational aspect by separating it from the ethical or emotional context, as did the theorists of logicism[10] or even Aristotle himself in his formal logic[11], Michel Meyer insists on the need to consider not only the logical aspects of the arguments but also the contextual, ethical, and dialogical dimensions of argumentation. "The orator and his values, the audience with its passions" (Meyer, M., 2011, p. 134) must therefore be integrated into the interaction with *logos* to make the discourse convincing enough and thus, a fortiori, engaging.

From this perspective, let us note that while Michel Meyer is not the first theorist of argumentation to have recognized the importance of these "three sources of answers" (Meyer, M., 2011, p. 23) to questioning in shaping a convincing discourse (Perelman preceded him[12]),

[10] Formulated primarily by the philosopher Bertrand Russell at the end of the 19th century, logicism is a philosophical and mathematical theory that argues mathematical truths can be reduced to logical truths.

[11] A system of reasoning based on the analysis of propositions and syllogisms.

[12] Perelman was the first. This aligns with the idea that his approach is more focused on logic and argumentative structure than on a complete mobilization of the three dimensions of classical rhetoric.

he is nonetheless the only one to have placed *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* on an equal footing. His theory of argumentation has the merit, as the rhetoric theorist Marc Angenot explains, of proposing a comprehensive approach that integrates the rational, emotional, and ethical dimensions into any discourse:

> "Certainly, Meyer pays sincere homage—beyond a doubt—to Chaïm Perelman, his mentor and the starting point of everything that has been done in francophone rhetoric for half a century, but one can nevertheless say—and Meyer does not hide it—that the Principia stand at the opposite extreme and in reality form a complete refutation of the four axiomatic traits or four biases of the Treatise on Argumentation: the predominance of logos, the exclusion of pathos, and law/legal argumentation as models for oratorical practices, along with the ipso facto indifference to the situation of linguistic exchange and thus to the 'treatment of difference,' which is at the heart of Meyer's reflection" (Marc Angenot, 2009).

Recognized by all theorists as a complex process, it would ignore this complexity to conceive of argumentation from a single dimension. Developing a persuasive argument therefore involves using rhetorical techniques, as Aristotle recommended in his *technê rhêtorikê*; the rationality of *logos*, as prescribed by Chaïm Perelman two centuries later; and finally, the consideration of *pathos*, highlighted by Roman rhetoric. None of these dimensions, Meyer explains, should take precedence over the others, because before being an exercise in reasoning, argumentation is a human interaction that involves emotions, values, and logics specific to each individual. Involving the other in the process of reflecting on a given problem thus requires taking account of reason, sentiments, and discursive techniques. All these elements are part of what enables individuals to dialogue, resolve disputes, and construct meaning together. Making one's discourse more persuasive (especially when the problematic raised by questioning concerns a particularly sensitive subject) requires, in addition to choosing sufficiently convincing arguments, a careful analysis of the interlocutor's expectations and emotions in order to adapt the argumentation to the context and thereby achieve "consensus" with one's audience. *Ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* together function, all in all, like a "reservoir of arguments, of answers that the orator implicitly conveys or, if necessary, explicitly addresses to the other, with no other aim than to convey: 'I have the answer, you can trust me'" (M. Meyer, 2011, p. 28).

Rightly compared by Stephen Toulmin to a physiological structure that is born and develops in a context of interactive discussion, the argument is where *ethos* is invited to "negotiate distance (with *pathos*) on a given question that is captured by *logos*" (Meyer, Michel, M., 2011, p. 18). The speaker must construct his arguments by relying, depending on the context, on argumentative schemas as varied as identity, causality, values, or even the invocation of passions. An effective argumentative strategy involves adjusting the distance to one's audience during communicative exchange, making sure to align one's arguments with the audience's values in order to engage them in confronting the problematic of the question at hand and participating in the dynamic process of its resolution. *Ethos*, which is not necessarily a physical person, must convey a set of values in which the audience can recognize itself to ensure its credibility. It must also know how to choose arguments according to the communication context in which it finds itself, or, to use Meyer's expression, know when to put the question on the table and when to put it under the table. In short, one must view *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* as "Sources of answers, which can be arguments or places for argumentation, rather than isolating them into distinct genres—*ethos* for law, *pathos* for politics, and *logos* for argumentative reasoning or rhetorical figures" (Meyer, M., 2011, p. 23).

Understanding this dynamic can help produce an "effective discourse" capable of resolving both the difference surrounding the problematic raised and any "dispute" between interlocutors.

4. THE "LOGIC" (M. Meyer,2012, p.30) OF PASSIONS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE AUDIENCE

> "'The entire object of eloquence,' says Vico, 'is relative to our listeners, and it is according to their opinions that we must adjust our speeches.' What matters in argumentation is not what the speaker personally considers true or convincing, but rather the opinion of those to whom the speech is addressed… Concerning discourse, to borrow a comparison from Garçian, it is 'like a feast, where the dishes are prepared not to the taste of the cooks but to that of the guests'" (Perelman, Ch. 2008, p.31).

In his *Treatise of Human Nature*, the Scottish philosopher David Hume advocates taking into account the fundamental role of passions in the reception of arguments. He does this not as a modern communication theorist but rather in the context of analyzing the impact of emotions on beliefs and judgments in people who are naturally more inclined, he says, to be guided by "the emotions of the soul" (Hume, D. 2008, p.101) than by "reason." In this case, the effectiveness of any communication geared toward persuasion would largely depend on the capacity of the arguments to appeal as much to the audience's feelings as to its reason.

Nevertheless, from Platon to Perelman, passions were condemned, if not completely excluded from the field of argumentation, then at least minimized. Deemed unworthy of philosophical thought—which preaches the valorization of "logos" and emphasizes the binding power of understanding—any argumentation that summons emotions is thus deemed "fallacious.[13]" Consequently, resorting to "pathos[14]" in the argumentative process is often strongly criticized or even forbidden in certain contexts (including by Perelman[15], who nonetheless sees it as a powerful persuasive tool). Moreover, many communication theorists, particularly those who place "logos" at the center of their approach, view it as an obstacle to constructing a solid argument. It is indeed telling, in this respect, that several modern theories of rhetoric claim "rationality" as the guarantor of the universality of their argumentation. The price to be paid in this case is the exclusion of "pathos," under the pretext that argumentation appealing to passions is closer to sophistry:

> "Theories—mainly of Anglo-Saxon inspiration—privilege rationality in argumentation; pathos is seen as an obstacle to the smooth progress of an interaction, whether it unfolds in the public or private sphere. Thus, according to Charles Hamblin's normative approach (1971), arguments that solicit the passions are fallacies (or fallacious arguments) akin to sophisms and should be eliminated from all reasoning. This applies to arguments that appeal to threat (ad baculum), pity (ad misericordiam), or popular sentiment (ad populum)" (Bonhomme, M. 2015).

[13] Here, we refer to reason.

[14] We refer here to the "standard theory of fallacies" outlined by Hamblin (1970), according to which arguments that "substitute emotion for reasoning "are considered fallacious.
"Pathos" here refers to the emotional aspect of the audience.

[15] In his *Treatise on Argumentation*, co-written with Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, Chaïm Perelman discusses the significant role that *pathos* can play in argumentation while emphasizing the risk that inappropriate use of this tool could turn it into an obstacle to constructing a solid argument. Passions can make discourse more persuasive and engage the audience more deeply, but they should not be left to guide argumentation on their own. Rationality and ethics remain pillars in Perelmanian argumentation.

Certainly, speech by itself can be persuasive, as Perelman also asserts in his *Treatise on Argumentation.* Yet it is difficult to conceive of an argumentative rhetoric that has been deprived of one of its principal dimensions, namely *pathos*. Since the audience cannot be neutral—being traversed by feelings likely to influence its judgment, as Aristotle rightly observes in his *Nicomachean Ethics*—it risks being unaffected by an argument that omits *pathos* in favor of an excessive valorization of *logos.* Is it even possible to develop a mobilizing argument while excluding affective subjectivity?

According to Meyer, "Opposing reason and passions hardly makes sense" (Meyer, M. 2012, p.132). Indeed, invoking the audience's emotions during communication on a subject as sensitive as the risks threatening our planet does not exclude reason. In fact, "playing on the movements of the soul," to borrow Descartes' expression, has the advantage of putting the audience in a frame of mind that not only inclines it to adhere to the speaker's cause but, furthermore, to act in its favor. Consequently, placing *pathos* in perspective within the argumentative process—particularly in "environmental communication," where emotion rather than rationality takes precedence—becomes imperative

> To convince an audience, explains Michel Meyer, it is essential to know their states of mind, moods, dispositions, and, of course, their emotions—even their passions. "A woman in love or an angry man will not necessarily be receptive to the same arguments, and it is even rational to act accordingly. A neutral audience does not exist; at best, one might ignore its current state of mind because one does not know this audience" (M. Meyer, 2012, p.3).

Often combining rationality and emotion, "environmental communication" is even more effective when it masters "the grammar of passions" (Meyer, M. 2012, p.6) to foster the audience's engagement and mobilization. From this perspective, the emotional argument has the advantage of being more convincing by resonating with the audience's personal values, it touches their feelings and promises to mobilize them for concrete action in favor of protecting nature. An argumentation that plays on passions proves to be more mobilizing in this case because it tends to reduce the distance between interlocutors, or even eliminate it altogether, while at the same time alleviating the problematic nature of the issue at hand. Passion is thus, as Michel Meyer stipulates, "rhetorical," in that it touches on shared emotions and allows interlocutors to be unified around the posed problem: "That is why playing on passions is always useful. Passion is therefore a powerful reservoir for mobilizing the audience in favor of a thesis" (M. Meyer, 2011, p.30).

Certainly, an argumentation that privileges "logos" would force reason to follow it and lead the mind to adhere to the facts it presents as certainties, while also having the advantage of relying on objectively valid evidence, which is closer to what scientific rigor teaches. That said, it cannot force another person to follow its recommendations or to change their attitude in order to protect the ecosystem, let alone engage concretely in environmental actions. The famous *Myth of Medea*[16] offers a rather pertinent example here by highlighting the limits of rationality in the face of passions. It illustrates how passions, though capable of leading to irrational and tragic decisions, are also a powerful vehicle in argumentation. Driven by her rage and suffering, Medea draws from the reservoir of "pathos" the arguments to manipulate Jason. She appeals to empathy, guilt, and morality to influence her interlocutor and justify her actions. This shows how passion can direct argumentation, but also how it can be used to manipulate others, thereby reinforcing the idea that *pathos* should not be neglected in the art of persuading. Besides, if

[16] A tragic myth built around the tragic dilemma to which the character is subjected, torn between the voice of reason and that of passions, which ultimately prevails.

rational argument alone had the power to control desires, would Medea have succumbed to her thirst for vengeance?

In this respect, the theory of argumentation formulated by Michel Meyer has the merit of restoring the role of passions in communication. As Aristotle did in his *Rhetoric of Passions*, the Belgian philosopher stresses the determining role of the receiving instance in the process of persuasion. The audience, regarded as "the source of questions (that) respond to multiple interests revealed by passions, emotions, or simply opinions" (M. Meyer, 2011, p.29), plays a role no less important than that of the speaker in argumentation. Through its emotional reactions, opinions, and passions, it actively participates in the discursive dynamic. Moreover, to make one's argumentation more effective, the speaker must consider all these criteria in choosing arguments. Argumentation becomes even more effective when it integrates the rhetorical dimension of *pathos.* This makes it possible to emotionally mobilize the audience, influence opinions, and create a stronger connection between the speaker and the listeners. Furthermore, this "play on the movements of the soul" eliminates the problematic nature of the raised issue or, as Meyer puts it, "transfers the problematic to the level of the answer" (Meyer, 2011, p.30).

In short, the audience, according to Meyer, is not merely a receiver of arguments: it actively participates in constructing argumentation. That is why the speaker must pay particular attention to this emotional dimension in order to make their discourse both rational and emotionally persuasive:

> "Contrary to what has been done since Aristotle, I defend the idea that there is a 'logic' of passions, which is metaphorical, metonymic, ironic, or who knows what else, where one absorbs the problem by stylizing its answer. This process is as rational as argumentation, rational in its own way. We too often forget that the values on which we argue are emotions that the distance between beings has desubjectivized" (M. Meyer, 2012, p.30).

5. CONCLUSION

> To argue is "to find the means to provoke a unity of response, an adherence to one's answer from the interlocutor, thus reducing the problematic" (M. Meyer, 2005, p.15).

As defined by Michel Meyer, argumentation appears to address the need to tackle problematic questions head-on, particularly those emerging in this century. Long overshadowed by the "discourse of method," argumentation was brought back into prominence in the second half of the 20th century, thanks to the works of Chaïm Perelman, Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, and later Michel Meyer. Faithful to the teachings of his mentor, Meyer primarily envisioned argumentation as a communicative skill, placing it at the core of his philosophy of questioning. However, he did not hesitate to criticize his mentor for being overly rational and proceeded to rehabilitate the role of *pathos*, alongside *logos* and *ethos*, in the development of persuasive communication.

The purpose of our article was precisely to highlight the value of such an approach in rehabilitating argumentation not only as a tool of persuasion but also as a process for resolving the "problematic" and exploring complex questions. Particular emphasis was placed on the argumentative techniques and methods Meyer proposes in his "theory of argumentation," aiming to structure discourse in a way that equally involves *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos* in the creation of communication that seeks less to establish truths than to foster critical reflection on a given issue.

The variety of argumentative methods he proposes to convince the audience has the merit of including passions—which were long criticized and sometimes demonized by religion and later by Descartes—within the argumentative process. This interplay with the passions of the soul thus opens up the possibility of influencing and persuading the public, even mobilizing them in certain contexts, to adopt ethical values in their environmental behaviors.

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