

Arguing at Cross-Purposes: Discharging the Dialectical Obligations of the Coalescent Model of Argumentation*

DAVID M. GODDEN

*Department of Philosophy
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario
Canada*

ABSTRACT: The paper addresses the manner in which the theory of Coalescent Argumentation [CA] has been received by the Argumentation Theory community. I begin (section 2) by providing a theoretical overview of the Coalescent model of argumentation as developed by Michael A. Gilbert (1997). I next engage the several objections that have been raised against CA (section 3). I contend that objectors to the Coalescent model are not properly sensitive to the theoretical consequences of the genuinely situated nature of argument. I conclude (section 4) by suggesting that the resolution to the dispute between Gilbert and his objectors hinges on the outcome of several foundational theoretical questions identified over the course of the paper.

KEY WORDS: Argument; argument-evaluation; argument-structure; argumentation; argumentation-analysis; coalescent-argumentation; Gilbert, Michael A.; informal-logic

1. 'PEOPLE WILL FIND ARGUMENTS IN THE VICINITY OF PEOPLE'¹

Contemporary argumentation theorists, having realized the essentially situated nature of their subject matter, have variously attempted to incorporate argument's contextual features into their models of it. Such models have been broadly classified as taking product-, procedure-, or process-based perspectives (O'Keefe, 1977; Wenzel, 1980), and are not always commensurable. Recently, Gilbert has offered *Coalescent Argumentation* (1997)² as a rhetorically-based (29), normative (102) theory of argumentation. This paper will address the manner in which the theory of Coalescent Argumentation [CA] has been received by the Argumentation Theory community.

This paper will roughly follow Johnson's (2000) two-tiered approach to argument. The purpose of the paper is to discharge some of Gilbert's dialectical obligations. But, before doing so, I recount the illative core of Coalescent Argumentation (section 2). In giving the features of the CA model, some of its theoretical justification is introduced, but much is left for the dialectical tier of the paper (section 3). In giving the theoretical justification for CA, and in the context of its dialectical obligations, I undertake to develop a reading of *Coalescent Argumentation* insulating it from



the kinds of standard objections articulated in the paper's dialectical tier (section 3).³ To discharge CA's dialectical obligations, I draw upon this reading to offer an answer to some of the standard objections to CA voiced over its development, by engaging the several commentaries in the literature dealing directly with CA (Bailin, 2000; Miller, 1995; Warnick, 1998). All three authors seek to champion some version of the Informal Logic model [IL] over Gilbert's model of Coalescent Argumentation.⁴ Yet, I contend that Gilbert's objectors are not properly sensitive to the theoretical consequences of the genuinely situated nature of argument. This is not to say that I find the CA model to be wholly uncontentious or unproblematic.⁵ Rather, over the course of the paper, I observe some of the theoretical questions that reside at the foundations of the dispute between Gilbert and his objectors. I conclude (in section 4) by suggesting that the resolution to the dispute between Gilbert and his objectors hinges on the outcome of these foundational theoretical questions.

2. COALESCENT ARGUMENTATION: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

In discussing the general features of CA, I consider CA's conception of the proper subject matter of Argumentation Theory, and the methodology of CA as it embodies the descriptive and normative (analytic and evaluative) standards of argument. In a nutshell, CA may be located by its subject matter and its goal, the latter of which is advanced as a norm. On the CA model, argument is defined as 'any exchange of information centred on an avowed disagreement' (104, cf. Ch. 2). 'The aim of coalescent argumentation is to bring about an agreement between two arguers based on the conjoining of their positions in as many ways as possible' (70; cf. xv, 74, 106). With this framework as a starting point, we will be able to situate some of the central features of CA and fill in some of the salient details.

2.1. *The delimitation of the concept 'argument'*

Gilbert begins his project with the realization that any model of argument we seek to provide will be, in part, a function of its subject matter. Since the definition of 'argument' adopted within a model effectively fixes the subject matter (or domain of study) of the model, Gilbert claims that the 'delimitation of the concept "argument"' is an 'essential issue' and one of theoretical importance (28). Gilbert's definition of 'argument', then, is informed by a series of theoretical considerations which I undertake to set forth in this section. To begin, Gilbert argues that 'we are obligated to treat argument as a *human* endeavour rather than a logical exercise, [and thus] we must make room . . . for those practices used by actual arguers' (77). In this sense, argumentation theorists 'need to shift the focus from the argument to the arguer, from the *artifacts* that happen to be chosen for

communication purposes to the *situation* in which these artifacts function as a component' (46).

Two points must be observed at this juncture. First, the shift from artifact to situation is a shift towards the rhetorical, towards a process-centred model of argument. Importantly, Gilbert's reasons for insisting on this shift, while theoretical, are not primarily evaluative; rather they are descriptive. This is the second point. One of the pillars on which CA is built is the rigorous separation of the descriptive-analytical and the critical-evaluative aspects of argumentation theory (35–36, 39, 77, 89) – a separation which, Gilbert argues, many other theories fail to mark steadfastly. The descriptive project, while theoretical, is independent of any evaluative norms.

This is not to say that arguments are natural kinds, nor that a comprehensive theory of argument may be provided from an exclusively naturalistic or empirical perspective. Surely, arguments are social constructs; quite frequently they are normative practices, where the relevant sets of norms are readily identifiable from the situation. Further, our definition of argument may be stipulative, as surely there are some kinds of things that we wish to exclude from the class of arguments. That is, our theory of argument may specify normative (i.e., constitutive) criteria for something's being an argument. Gilbert's claim is that these criteria do not, and cannot, flow from a set of evaluative norms given *a priori*. Rather, these norms will be a function of the context and goals particular to a situated instance of argument. That said, the choice of a stipulative definition cannot be arbitrary, but, instead, must be justifiable. I take it that the purpose of giving a model-specific definition of 'argument' is to give a technical (or formal) and stipulative definition that captures our normal use of the word 'argument.' Roughly, I take that normal use to pick out those cases where people come to a change in view on the basis of some set of reasons (or something that they take to be reasons) and as a result of some type of communicative interaction. I further take it that argumentation theorists are interested in determining those *actual* reasons on the basis of which an arguer (rightly or wrongly) comes to that change in view. These reasons, then, become the subject matter for the theory of evaluation. So, the CA model is built on the claim that the theorist cannot attempt to determine the actual reasons on the basis of which an arguer comes to a change in view by supplying some set of evaluative standards with which it is supposed that the arguer is trying to conform. Rather, description and evaluation must remain separate projects.

This separation of description and evaluation helps to justify Gilbert's adoption of a rhetorically-based model. On Gilbert's view, rhetorically-based models do not *impose, a priori* a normative (i.e., evaluative) standard on the very description of the subject matter (39) and hence do not make suppositions about the goals, beliefs and standards of acceptance of the participants in argumentation. At the descriptive level, 'the subject of investigation is the determination of exactly what goes on in an argument, not

what *should* go on in an argument' (ibid.). Said another way, theorists cannot assume that arguers themselves are attempting (as a goal) to fulfill some set of pre-supposed and pre-selected standards in their own acts of arguing, and subsequently use this supposition as a justification for a normatively-informed determination of the very subject matter under investigation.⁶ This thesis carries additional theoretical importance, as Gilbert does not make presuppositions regarding the doxastic force of certain argumentative standards that are embodied within other models of argument. Instead, Gilbert leaves the determination of those features of argument responsible for bringing about a change in view of the arguer to a completely empirical and descriptive study. It is only *after* this descriptive project is accomplished that the theorist may *import* any norms they wish to use as evaluative into the analysis. (Admittedly, some of these evaluative standards may be based on a normative conception of the proper structure of *good* argument.) Thus, '[w]hen this [descriptive phase] is finished, we can examine the process as an attempt to attain certain goals or accomplish certain ends, and then we can inspect this process from the various perspectives including the logical, critical, psychological, sociological, and moral' (ibid.).

There is a third important aspect of Gilbert's position here: because argument is (the product of) a human endeavour, it is essentially concrete and particular, not abstract and formal. That is, its situational and contextual aspects are essential to its very nature. Hence, any attempt to generalize or abstract away features of an instance of argument (say, to force its congruence with a particular model) is to completely change the subject matter under investigation. The result of such an abstraction is either to render the actual argument in only some of its aspects (aspects in which the theorist may take a particular interest), or it is to change the subject matter under examination entirely. These results have consequences at the subsequent stages of argument analysis and evaluation. In the first case, the consequence of an abstracted and incomplete description is an incomplete analysis (e.g., rendering of the structure). In the latter case, any subsequent analysis that is offered may bear no relevance whatsoever to the original argument. Gilbert attempts to answer the problem of fixing the subject matter of Argumentation Theory in the entirety of its concrete particularity by involving the participants of the argumentation as much as is possible in the determination of the argument that passed between them.

The essentially human nature of arguments, then, has two important theoretical consequences which prompt Gilbert to construe his subject matter at the descriptive level in the way that he does. First, because we cannot make reliable assumptions about the goals and standards of acceptability of particular arguers, we cannot presuppose a particular set of evaluative standards which teleologically govern our very conception and description of an instance of argument. Second, since arguments are essentially particular exchanges between particular parties, theorists are not

justified in attempting to fix their subject matter in an abstract or general way.⁷ Rather, the situational aspects of argumentation are essential to its nature and may prove integral to its subsequent analysis and evaluation. If we are actually interested in those features of argument responsible for a subject's change in view, we must incorporate the views of those subjects on the relevance and significance of particular argumentative features. We cannot eliminate, ignore or abstract away any such features in the very description of the argument to be studied and evaluated. Finally, it must be stressed that Gilbert provides theoretical reasons (which I have sketched above) for fixing the domain of Argumentation Theory as he does. As such, to reject Gilbert's conception of the subject matter theorists must refute, or raise objection to, these theoretical reasons, and provide theoretical reasons of their own supporting their view.

2.2. *Coalescent argumentation: Descriptive analysis*

If Gilbert's conception of the subject matter of Argumentation Theory is accepted, important consequences follow regarding the construction of any analytical model of argument. As Gilbert writes, 'if there is any desire to expand the range of Argumentation Theory to include the sorts of arguments people actually enter into, then the techniques for analyzing them must be re-examined' (42). Three main consequences of the nature of argument as construed by CA appear in Gilbert's analysis of the structure of arguments. First is the need for a multi-modal analysis of argument. Second is that the basic unit of argumentation is a position, not a claim, statement or proposition. Third is the need for a goal-oriented analysis of arguments.

2.2.1. *Argument is multi-modal*

First let us consider the multi-modal elements. Gilbert introduces four modes on which argument may be analysed. 'In addition to the classical logical mode . . . there are the emotional, visceral (physical), and kisceral (intuitive [& non-sensory]) modes' (75). Importantly, Gilbert proposes these four modes as a heuristic, and is willing to admit other modes, or eliminate certain modes in favour of others, based their contribution to a comprehensive description of argument. Still, for many theorists, the very notion that there may be many different 'modes' of argument will provoke serious questions. Firstly, what do we mean by a mode? How are these modes to be distinguished? 'An argument,' Gilbert replies, '. . . may be said to be wholly or partially in a particular mode when its claim, data, warrant and/or backing is drawn from that particular mode, or if these items are communicated using a form of presentation from a particular mode' (80). While the reader might object that, as a definition, this answer is circular, let us see what can be discerned about modes from it. In the first place, arguments are divided into modes according to modes of their

constituent elements. Further, a mode of argument does not relate to the propositional content of some element of the argument. As Gilbert's examples (6.1–6.11, pp. 80–88) aptly show, the same propositional content may be expressed in a variety of different modes. Rather, instead of the content of the message, it is precisely the manner in which these contents are presented that does the work of distinguishing modes.

Before considering any further how Gilbert sets about distinguishing between different modes, let us consider why he attempts to do so. What justifies the explicit incorporation of the 'form of presentation' of some content into our model of argument? Here the answer is twofold: (i) rhetorical efficaciousness and (ii) irreducibility. In the first place, Gilbert demonstrates through his examples (6.1–6.11, pp. 80–88) that the way in which arguers express their position may produce different rhetorical results, even though the (propositional) content of the position remains constant. What is communicated, then, and what we respond to in conversation and argumentation – and thus, what ought to be represented in models of argument – is more than the propositional content of an expression. Further, Gilbert maintains that the modes are irreducible to each other. Because the mode in which a position is presented may produce unique effects at the rhetorical level, it is not justifiable to reduce some argumentative move (e.g., utterance, expression, gesture) as presented in an emotional mode to the same (or another) propositional content presented in a rational mode. On this basis, Gilbert concludes: 'In expanding the concept of argument beyond the logical, we need to include modes of evidence, warrant, backing, and presentation that allow us to identify forms of argument that are actually used, as opposed to those that one particular group believes ought to be used' (78–79). Thus, incorporating the variety of modes of communication into a model of argument is important for two reasons: (a) descriptively: in order to understand why the argument proceeded in the way that it did, our theory must be sensitive to the mode in which positions were expressed; and (b) rhetorically: in order to understand why a position was either accepted or rejected, it may be important to consider the mode in which the position was presented.

But then, the question still remains: How is the theorist to distinguish between manners of presentation? One suggestion might be that two expressions having the same propositional content, and occurring in relevantly similar situations, yet producing different rhetorical effects must differ in their manner of presentation, and, hence, differ in mode. Gilbert, though, does not go so far. Instead, he begins with the familiar, logical mode and, drawing on our intuitive, pre-theoretical understanding of what it is to be logical (or rational), he writes: 'An argument that takes its information, for example, warrant, backing, evidence, from traditional rationalist sources, and which, in addition, is or can be put into traditional rationalist form is said to be in the logical mode' (79). This, though, returns us to the question: What does it mean to say of, e.g., a warrant or backing that it

occurs in a particular mode? For Toulmin, warrants and backing are field-dependent elements of an argument – that is to say that they are a function of subject-matter or discipline. To this, Gilbert adds that modes are ‘ways of relating and conceptualizing within fields so understood’ (90). Consider the emotional mode: ‘The backing of the emotional mode, just as for the logical, is a matrix of scientific, popular, cultural, and biologic information. It provides warrants, justifies data, and establishes claims. . . . To say that the [emotional] mode has a backing is to say that there is an arena in which we know and relate to emotions, recognize them, respect them, and, even, accept them as components of arguments’ (91–92). Yet, as with positions, the relations established within a mode (in contrast to the conceptual and logical relations established by a field) are psychological and depend ‘on the degree of one’s subscription and commitment to such a field’ (93).

The multi-modal thesis leads to one of the most controversial aspects of CA – normative pluralism. Gilbert argues that since modes are categories of, for instance, kinds of backing and ‘[b]acking contains within it rules of conduct, procedure and argument . . . [then w]hen a different mode of backing is the appropriate one, different rules and different forms of argument are relevant’ (92). In fact, when the evaluative criteria of relevance, sufficiency and acceptability [RSA] are considered in this context, the content of their standards ‘are delineated not by their internal characteristics, but by the mode in which they operate. In other words, each of the modes can define, for itself, relevance, sufficiency and acceptability’ (97). This, surely, is one of the most difficult elements of CA to accept. Yet, theorists accepting Toulmin’s field dependency thesis already accept a sort of normative pluralism, given that normative standards, e.g., rules of evidence, vary according to an argument’s field. Similarly, to the degree that relevance, sufficiency and acceptability are rhetorical categories (i.e., involve the arguers themselves, or are applicable to the process of argumentation), Gilbert’s multi-modal thesis must be taken seriously.

2.2.2. *Argument is position-based*

The second major consequence of a situated, pre-evaluative conception of the subject-matter of Argumentation Theory is that argumentation is position-based. That is, the basic units of argument are positions, not claims, propositions or statements. ‘A position is a matrix of beliefs, attitudes, emotions, insights, and values connected to a claim’ (105). Here, what links the constituents of a position are not their logical relations, but the various attachments that the disputant may have to the claim. ‘Claims,’ then, ‘are best taken as icons for positions that are actually much richer and deeper’ (ibid.). Propositions, taken in isolation, have very few consequences from which problems of e.g. consistency may arise. A position-based model stresses that ‘one’s set of beliefs are connected in a web-like way, such that altering one belief has considerable impact on surrounding beliefs and

potentially on the entire belief set' (103), and conversely recognizes that an argument need not have propositionally-specific consequences on an individual's belief-set.

This kind of holism should not seem radical or objectionable to most theorists. For instance, consider a case in which an arguer's [A] belief-set is found to be inconsistent with a given thesis [α]. (Assume that α is both self-consistent, and sufficiently justified or acceptable.) Now, even if consistency is to be maintained, A still has many choices, and may not need to admit α . Firstly, no one proposition in A's belief set is suspect at this point. Rather, the smallest proper subset of A's beliefs (and the justifications for those beliefs, if any) which still contradicts α must be determined. This may or may not isolate a single proposition. In the event that such analysis *does* isolate a *single* proposition [call it ' $\neg\alpha$ '], then $\neg\alpha$ is a fundamental one, and one for which, in the context of A's beliefs, *no* justification can be offered. (This situation seems beyond the scope of Argumentation Theory.) In the event that analysis *does not* isolate a *single* proposition, then any *one* (or more) of the remaining beliefs may be given up.⁸ Alternately, certain principles (of, say, implication) may be revised or questioned. A similar situation occurs when a scientific hypothesis is dis-confirmed in experiment (by observation). This alone is insufficient to falsify the entire theory, or any specific aspect of it. The scientist may even wish to make epicyclic-like adjustments to the theory to account for the anomalous instance. The holistic, or position-based, nature of argumentation should be at least familiar, if not already plausible, at a logical level. To this, Gilbert merely adds that this is true in a psychological context also. The position-based nature of argumentation contributes to the methodology for achieving the goals of CA.

2.2.3. *Argument is goal-oriented*

The third consequence of Gilbert's stance on pre-normative descriptivism is the goal-oriented nature of argument. It is because argumentation is position-based that CA utilizes goal-oriented analysis of argument as opposed to a strictly rhetorical model. Because the unit of argumentation is not a claim but the position for which a claim is an icon, the goal of argumentation need not be the acceptance of the claim. Instead, the goal of argumentation may have more to do with the position itself. Thus, goals too may be complex. Arguers may have goals of which they are not aware (69, 71); their goal-sets may be internally inconsistent (70) as well as inconsistent with the goals of their argumentative opponent. 'Consequently,' Gilbert writes, 'it is not possible to state [as on the traditional, rhetorical model], *simpliciter*, that the goal of an argumentation is to have the respondent adopt the claim' (70). Similarly, it is not possible to state *simpliciter* (and *a priori*) that the goal of argumentation is the ascertainment of the truth of some claim in a certain manner. Gilbert's model is sensitive to the

scenario in which the arguer concedes his or her expressed or 'overt' thesis, but yet the same argument continues.

Gilbert distinguishes three kinds of goals: task goals, face goals and motives (68). Task goals are those 'goals forming the immediate strategic object of the encounter' (67), and may include the acceptance of a thesis by an audience, the ascertaining of the truth of some claim, or the adoption of some course of action by a party. These are the kinds of goals that are standardly viewed as the only goals of argument by other models such as Informal Logic and the traditional rhetorical model. Face goals, on the other hand, 'indicate the goals concerning the relationship between participants, including their need to maintain or terminate the [argumentative] interaction' (68; see also Benoit and Benoit, 60 and *passim*). Face goals are often not explicitly stated in an argument and yet, as with argument modes, have distinct and discernable effects over the actual course and resolution of an argument. As such, when trying to understand the structure of an argument, these goals must be taken into account. Finally, there are motives. Gilbert writes: 'Motives are the sort of goals that determine task and face goals in a broad and general way. They delimit . . . the sort of goals one considers and acts upon as well as the sorts of actions one might use to obtain the goals' (*ibid.*). While it is often thought that a person's motive in advancing a position is irrelevant to the integrity of the position itself, it has never been claimed that a person's motive in advancing a position is irrelevant to how he or she will react when that position is received by an audience. In this sense, motives are relevant to determining the structure of actual arguments.

Having thus sketched the theory behind the descriptive-analytic phase of the theory of Coalescent Argumentation, I will proceed to sketch its normative-evaluative component. Importantly, this component is directly informed by the goals of argument.

2.3. *Coalescent argumentation: Normative evaluation*

The normative aspect of CA follows principally from its goal, 'to bring about an agreement between two arguers based on the conjoining of their positions in as many ways as possible' (70; cf. xv, 74, 106). Agreement may not strike some readers as providing any standards that are normatively informed in a significant way. After all, the question can always be raised, if agreement is the only standard, is the following situation not possible: that there is agreement between the arguer and the audience and, yet both arguer and audience are wrong (factually, morally, logically, or otherwise)? Nevertheless, for Gilbert, the 'goal of agreement requires an act of will and is a normative commitment' (116), and we will see what he means by this shortly. There are, though, two points to note here before setting out the methodology of the normative component of CA.

The first point to note concerns the normative standards of CA. Standardly, models of argument supply their normative standards on the basis of the goals that are prescribed for argument. Thus, as Johnson says, 'a good argument is one that fulfills its purpose' (2000, 181). In setting CA's goal of agreement as a normative standard, Gilbert attempts to incorporate the often complex and unpredictable goals of the arguers into the very normative standards of CA itself. That is, the CA model seeks to not impose any normative standard that is foreign to the instance of argumentation under examination. Among other things, this allows Gilbert to provide for the standard of truth in his model, insofar as it is a real and attainable goal for the arguers themselves.

The second point to note here is that an objection raised only against the normative aspects of the CA model is not sufficient to completely discount the model itself. Rather, the theoretical arguments Gilbert offers regarding the proper approach to the subject matter of Argumentation Theory stand independently of his thesis regarding what norms should be adopted in evaluation. This is a crucial observation, for two reasons. One: Gilbert insists that real, concrete arguments are the only proper objects of study for Argumentation Theory. Two: by theoretically separating the object of study from the standards of evaluation, theorists are required to give an account of the relevance of the standards supplied by their model to the subject matter itself.

2.3.1. *Normative methodology*

Let us now turn to the normative methodology of CA. The methodology of CA may be fixed roughly as follows: 'First, expose the positions of the dispute partners; second, find the points of commonality; third, beginning from those points, attempt to explore the means of maximizing the satisfaction of goals that are not in conflict and explore the ways of satisfying goals that are in conflict' (119). Each stage of the methodology will be briefly commented upon.

The first stage of understanding a position (i) involves realizing that 'quite often, the reasons presented for a position are not the actual motivating reasons' (108); (ii) 'involves far more than knowing a claim and its immediate supporting reasons' (ibid.); and (iii) involves uncovering the goals of the arguers (107); consequently (iv) 'one must garner not only the facts that support the claim, but the values, emotions, and attitudes that go along with the outlook attached to the claim' (108). It is at this stage that arguers must undertake to genuinely understand not only their interlocutor's position but their own as well.

This stage of understanding may reveal previously un-asserted, or unknown, points of commonality among the goals, beliefs or attitudes of the arguers. These points of commonality are identified in the second stage of CA. Finally, having determined what is really at stake for each arguer in terms of that arguer's goal(s), and starting from the points of common-

ality revealed in the second stage, the third stage offers to provide some kind of resolution or coalescence. Two features of the coalescent phase will be discussed: empathy, and strategies for achieving agreement.

Coalescence is the explicitly normative aspect of CA in that it requires empathy. Gilbert writes: '[i]t is, perhaps, not too strong to say that the most crucial element in coalescent argumentation is empathy. . . . And here the avowed normative nature of this project is no more apparent. *Empathy* is an attitude and an act of will. It requires paying attention to the entire range of communicative and epistemic modes available in order to project oneself into another's position' (111). Empathy is likely not what the theorist might have expected as a normative standard of argument. But, it must be remembered that this standard is selected on the basis of the goal prescribed by CA, that of coalescence. (The realization of a different goal might require the adoption of a different normative standard.) It might further be asked⁹ whether empathy is a causally necessary condition for achieving coalescence, or whether it is a logically necessary criterion for good coalescent argument. In many respects, Gilbert might not see a significant difference between these two choices. Still, it certainly seems possible that coalescence (or concession) could be achieved in a variety of cases without an act of empathy as described above. Yet, in other, more complicated cases, it is quite conceivable that agreement on even the most trivial matter would be impossible in the absence of empathy. Empathy, then, seems to be a logical requirement, partly constitutive of good coalescent argument. And it is so just because, in failing to be empathetic one may (causally) render the prescribed goal of CA impossible to attain in certain situations. In this respect, choosing to be empathetic is similar to choosing to place agreement (or maximally fulfilling respective goal sets) amongst one's argumentative goals. In failing to do this, one fails to argue coalescently.

Gilbert prescribes three general strategies for locating points of agreement:

1. Vertical Inquiry: '[V]ertical inquiry involves examination of more fundamental beliefs and attitudes on which the position rests. Frequently, moving back into the position may permit arguers to agree that the more surface consequences are not necessary concomitants or consequences of the lower items' (114).
2. Horizontal Inquiry: '[Here] the argument moves from one mode to another for one of several reasons. In the first instance, the opponent might become aware that the proponent's logical beliefs are not sufficiently coherent to be gainfully explored. This would indicate that the true grounding of the position is to be found in a different mode' (114).
3. Diagonal Inquiry: '[In the] diagonal approach . . . it is realized or suspected that the dispute partners are operating in different modes. This can result in arguing at cross-purposes. If one dispute partner is talking about feelings and the other about beliefs, they may not be registering the other's essential position' (115).

This, then, is roughly the illative core of Coalescent Argumentation. CA takes as its subject matter particular instances of argumentation and attempts to rigorously incorporate into its theoretical model the consequences of argument's essentially situated nature. Further, CA posits the goal of coalescence which, while it has been defined in terms of agreement, may, I suggest, be equally aptly defined in terms of a maximal realization of the goals of the participant arguers.

3. RESPONDING TO THE OBJECTIONS OF COALESCENT ARGUMENTATION

Having set forth, in synopsis, the illative core of Gilbert's argument for CA, this section will attempt to discharge some of the dialectical obligations of the CA proponent. I will do this by considering (and hopefully refuting) the objections that have been raised against the theory of Coalescent Argumentation to this point in the literature. In dealing with these objections, I hope to locate some of the fundamental theoretical issues that inform the disagreements between Gilbert and his objectors.

3.1. *CA posits the wrong subject of study*

Many theorists might be inclined to object to CA on the grounds that it simply studies something different than argument properly conceived. Importantly, for this objection to stick, it must be claimed that Gilbert's model does not take what we normally mean by 'argument' as its subject matter. That is, CA defines 'argument' either too narrowly, or too broadly. Many theorists, I venture, suspect that CA does both. In either case, I take it that the burden of proof lies with the objector to supply a counterexample of the proper sort.

Objectors claiming that CA's definition is too narrow should be expected to supply an example of something that is properly called 'argument,' but is not picked out by the definition 'any exchange of information centred on an avowed disagreement' (104). To this point, though, objections of this sort have not claimed that the CA definition fails to pick out all arguments. Rather, the objection seems to be that CA does not have the theoretical resources to properly analyse and evaluate certain kinds of arguments. Both Bailin and Warnick accuse CA of being ill-suited for the argumentative context of inquiry (arguments whose goal is the ascertainment of the truth).¹⁰ This horn of the objection is significant enough that it will be dealt with separately (section 3.6.1, below); it is complicated by matters that go beyond the claim that CA gets the subject matter wrong, relying also on arguments that CA does not do justice to the standard of truth at the foundation of our norms of argument.

For now, though, let us read this objection as claiming that the CA definition of argument misrepresents the nature of inquiry, and as such fails

to properly include inquiry as an instance of argument. Suffice it to say at this point, that a 'too narrow' objection of this form is not sufficient to discount CA. Rather, in trying to establish that CA misrepresents the nature of inquiry, it must be further argued either (i) that inquiry (as it is construed on the alternative model) is the sole and exclusive province of argumentation, or (ii) that the alternative model (i.e., IL in this case) is up to the task of studying types of argument that are not best characterized as inquiry. Theorists most often support (ii) by arguing that IL-based models have sufficient resources to deal with an argument in all of its contextual features, and thus do not need to rely on any external theory like CA. I address this point below (section 3.4). Case (i) argues that CA includes a range of human activity (e.g., disputes, spats, quarrels, negotiations, and the like) which we are not interested in as argumentation theorists; that is, CA is 'too broad' in its conception of argument.

At this point, the 'too narrow' objection has become the 'too broad' objection. An objection of this sort, should supply an example of something that is not properly called argument, and yet falls under the CA definition. Since the CA model admits many more items into the class of argument than do most other theories, the 'too broad' objection may take one of two forms: (1) Gilbert is wrong to include all of the extra cases (e.g., disputes, spats, etc.) that he does, or (2) Gilbert's model admits cases which even he would not want to call arguments (e.g., cricket matches). Since counter examples of the second type have not been supplied, I consider only the first form of this objection. On this objection, then, it is suggested that Gilbert grounds his model either on acts that are not properly called argument, or on acts that we only *derivatively* call argument. In this way, CA fails to capture the core of the notion of 'argument,' and, as a result, posits a subject matter that is largely irrelevant to the study of argument properly conceived. That is, objections of the 'too broad' form typically claim that Gilbert is wrong to include antagonistic, emotional, personal and non-rational exchanges as central to the notion of argument. Rather, these example(-type)s are either not properly called 'arguments' or are not paradigmatic instances of argument (and Gilbert may be tacitly relying on some more fundamental notion of argument). In fact, what is fundamental to the notion of argument is something like what is provided by IL.

But, these *other* kinds of interaction studied by CA affect the normative behaviour of people by (a) informing their decisions and by leading them to (b) change their views or (c) come to new or different beliefs. More importantly, both the propositional content and the manner of its presentation in these exchanges are instrumental in (if not responsible for) bringing about those changes in view. Finally, on the CA model, the testimony of the arguer him- or herself is integral in determining what are the actual reasons responsible for his or her (change in) belief. So, the question is, why should we not be interested in these exchanges when construing the subject matter of our study? I suggest that the burden of

proof lies with the objector to establish the irrelevance of these other kinds of exchanges to the study of argumentation, and to do so in a non-question begging way. Some attempts at this kind of justification are attempted in the following way.

3.1.1. *IL is constitutive of argument*

As was mentioned above, some theorists (tacitly) hold that inquiry (arguments whose goal is the ascertainment of the truth) is the sole and exclusive province of argumentation. In this way, Miller actually defines the term 'argument'¹¹ in terms of the IL normative model. She writes: 'the Critical-Logical model [my IL-model] both defines what it means to be reasonable and forbids any inference which is inconsistent with this definition' (338).¹² This point trades on the tacit claims that (i) the proper theory of argument is one of reasonable inference and that (ii) the example(-type)s cited by Gilbert are either unreasonable or non-inferential or both.¹³ To accept Miller's point is to concede that the notion of argument is not captured by the tenets of CA, that subject matter of CA is not argument, or, if it is, it is so only derivatively or accidentally.

In the first place, though, it is not obvious that Gilbert tacitly relies upon any conception of argument other than the one offered in CA itself. Moreover, the theoretical considerations that led him to this conception are quite explicit and well developed (see section 2). Further, it strikes me as especially question-begging to advance, as does Miller, by simple assertion, that the IL normative model is *constitutive* of argument when it is precisely the delimitation of the concept of argument that is at issue. Such a claim requires theoretical justification, and should address the points raised by Gilbert. In the conclusion (section 4), I set forth some of the theoretical considerations that would have to be addressed by any argument seeking to substantiate such a view against CA.

3.1.2. *CA is for dispute resolution (not argument)*

A version of the 'too narrow' objection contests that 'CA seems to be designed for contexts of dispute-resolution' (Bailin, §3.1). Whether Bailin thinks that CA is exclusively, or only primarily, designed for dispute resolution, the claim is that, as a result, CA is not a suitable model of argumentation. Warnick shares Bailin's objection, stating that CA 'tacitly posits interpersonal, interactive argument as *the* model for studying argument' (429).¹⁴ There are at least two ways in which this objection might detract from CA as a model of argumentation. The first is the situation in which one person must make a decision regarding some matter. This objection, too, is complicated by matters that extend beyond the claim that CA gets the subject matter wrong, but also relies on arguments that CA encounters problems at the normative level; hence I defer consideration on this matter (until section 3.6). The second way in which this objection may detract from CA as a model of argumentation is articulated by Warnick

when she writes: ‘while many of. . . [Gilbert’s] recommendations seem well suited to interpersonal disagreement, they are ill suited to many asynchronous one-to-many situations in which audiences are heterogenous in their beliefs, attitudes and predispositions’ (429). Now, while it may be true that Gilbert’s model seems best suited for one-to-one instances of argumentation, there is no *prima facie* reason to think that the model could not be applied in instances where the audience is more complex and has a multitude of members. Here, though, the task of determining the goals of those audience members and the union of those goals would, admittedly, be more complicated. Yet, it is one thing to say that the model would be difficult or impractical to apply, and another to say that it is theoretically incorrect. While Warnick is not clear on this point, to say that a model is merely impractical might not be an indication that the theory is incorrect, but instead evidence that no manageable theory is possible for a given subject matter. Finally, it should be remembered that Gilbert would embrace this objection to the degree that it is merely founded on the point that argument must be studied in the fullness of its concrete particularity.

3.2. *CA advocates (unjustifiably) the wholesale abandonment of IL*

This suspicion was first voiced by Miller (1995). Miller writes of Gilbert’s (1994) ‘Feminism, Argumentation and Coalescence’: ‘at some points in his argument Gilbert seems to suggest merely supplementing critical-logical skills, and at some points he seems to call for out-and-out abandonment, it is difficult to discern precisely what Gilbert requests of the reasoning industry. . . . Is he advocating that we abandon critical reasoning in its entirety, or simply that we add something to critical reasoning to make a predominantly male practice more palatable to the rest of the population?’ (337–338). Gilbert answered Miller’s question as it was being asked. In ‘Arguments and Arguers’ he writes, ‘Critical reasoning . . . does not need to be replaced, but expanded and modified to embrace *arguers*, and not just *arguments*’ (1995, 125; cf 1997, 42; viz also 1997, 39, 89–90, 101).

Admittedly, there remains the question of under what terms, precisely, is the IL tradition to be modified? That is, what is to be the relationship between CA and IL? In one sense, this question only arises at the critical-evaluative phase of Argumentation Theory. Here, the standards of IL become imbedded into the normatively-pluralistic model of CA, and it may be this arrangement with which the IL theorist is dissatisfied. The point is, though, that these questions cannot properly be answered until the theoretical issues (raised in section 4) are properly addressed.

3.3. *CA is not perspectival*

This objection, offered by Warnick, claims that Gilbert’s work should offer ‘a more inclusive perspectival approach rather than claiming that his own

approach should be overarching' (429). Presumably, the perspectives to be included are those of product, procedure and process, and it is the product-based, IL model of which CA should be more inclusive. That said, it is difficult to determine how this criticism should be read.

In the one sense, Gilbert offers theoretical arguments in support of his claim that the argument-as-product is produced by the process of argumentation. This thesis, I argue, has yet to be contested; certainly none of Gilbert's commentators have even attempted to contest it. In fact, it is well supported amongst other theorists. Wenzel, for instance, writes that 'the *only* way to unpack the argument [-product] is to put it in the totality of its actual *rhetorical* context' (1987, 108). Similarly, Tindale (1999) argues that the product-based models utilize concepts (e.g. relevance) that are ultimately process-based and defined in terms of audience. Even authors typically attached to an IL perspective claim that argument is 'the product of the practice of argumentation' (Johnson, 1995, 242).¹⁵

In another sense, CA is normatively pluralistic, and thus allows the adoption of a number of normative perspectives. In separating the projects of descriptive analysis from that of critical evaluation, CA tacitly allows for the adoption of any normative perspective the theorist wishes to take. CA then *prescribes* a normative approach which posits coalescence as a goal, and offers a method by which this goal is best achieved. The standards to be applied to an instance of argument are a function of the goals specific to that argument. Thus, if, for example, the ascertainment of truth is among the goals of a particular argument, then standards appropriate to that goal may be applied in that instance.

3.4. *CA mischaracterizes IL*

This objection states that Gilbert's criticisms of IL are unjustified because he misconstrues some (if not much) of what IL is capable of, and thus, IL properly conducted need not answer Gilbert's charges. Specifically, as was mentioned in section 3.1, it is claimed that IL has the required resources to comprehensively deal with argument in all of its relevant contextual features. This claim is raised by all three of CA's objectors.

Warnick argues that the function of IL is not merely critical; rather, 'those more sympathetic to . . . [IL] might point out that it seeks to understand (through diagramming and modelling) how arguments are structured and how they function' (429). Similarly, Bailin argues that the 'aim of C-L [my IL] is not to defeat the opposing argument but rather to concede to the strongest argument . . . C-L aims at finding the best justified position' (§3.3). Yet, the problem with this defence of IL is that it only rings true if the argumentation theorist *presupposes* the argument goals and corresponding evaluative standards that are incorporated into the IL model, and which teleologically inform the very description of argument on the IL model. Notice for instance, Bailin's invocation of the terms 'strongest'

and ‘best justified.’ The very sense of these terms presupposes that they are informed by a set of normative standards. That is, it is only if one does not rigorously separate the descriptive from the evaluative that the theorist can argue that IL in any way captures how *actual* arguments are structured and function.

Similarly, Bailin (§3.3) and Miller (344) argue that the IL perspective, when properly conducted, actually does take into account all of the significant, relevant situational features that Gilbert claims it ignores. Moreover, Bailin argues, citing Miller (1995), that CA’s ‘consideration of context relates [only] to the actual communicative exchange between dispute partners, however, and not to the logic of the argument itself. . . . Being sensitive to the feelings and context of the arguers does not preclude evaluating their arguments according to critical criteria’ (§3.3). Bailin’s claim here evidences a pervasive ambiguity in the IL approach to Argumentation Theory. If the structure of arguments are mapped according to the ‘logic of the argument itself’ (as defined by some set of standards which inform our evaluative criteria for arguments) and yet it is claimed that IL can give an account of change in view (because IL is interested in those cases where the person accepts the conclusion on the basis of the reasons given in the argument), then the connection between ‘the actual communicative exchange between the dispute partners’ and ‘the logic of the argument itself’ must be demonstrated. Yet, for the most part, IL theorists do not feel obliged to undertake this project. Rather, they seem content to claim something like the following: *if* the argument-product can be found in the argumentation process (by some process of analysis) then the reasons found in that argument-product *must* have been operative (either partially or completely) in the arguer’s change in view (at least insofar as the arguer is rational).

3.5. *There is no need for normative pluralism*

This objection, while it has never been explicitly stated in the literature, is implicit in the three published critiques. It might best be seen in a view like reconstructive deductivism. On this view, while it may be reasonable (even necessary) to incorporate non-propositional contents of arguments into their analysis and description, when it comes to evaluating arguments, it is either unnecessary, unjustifiable or both to provide any alternative evaluative mechanisms to the study of argument. That is, even if one accepts the multi-modal thesis, the irreducibility thesis is rejected. Problematically, this objection seems, again, to be based either on a narrow view of the goals of argument, or on the thesis that a single set of standards may be applied to all the goals of argumentation. Gilbert has argued against the acceptability of either thesis.

In my view, the point of irreducibility and normative pluralism hinges on the issues of (a) whether or not the mode of presentation of proposi-

tionally equivalent contents can produce unique rhetorical effects, and (b) whether these effects constitute the reasons for a subject's holding a certain view and are thus properly contained in the subject matter of Argumentation Theory. Answering 'yes' to both of these questions inclines the theorist to the view of normative pluralism, while answering 'no' would incline one to a single normative standard for argument. Problematically, Gilbert's arguments in favour of (a) and (b) have not been dealt with adequately in the literature to this point.

3.6. *CA is not normative*

It has been observed that Gilbert sees his model as an explicitly normative one. Warnick notes a failure in this normative theory, saying that CA has an unacknowledged 'inability to provide standards for judging between competing claims when a choice must be made between them' (430). Warnick elaborates her objection by saying, '[i]f we seek to improve the skills of students, we need to have criteria for judging whether one argument is *better* than another along substantive lines. After all, there are many venues in which *decisions* must be made, and where one *reason* must be judged as superior to another. . . . Gilbert's theory does not help us to ascertain standards for correctness in such venues' (429).

Two points should be noted here. First, Warnick's argument uses such phrases as the 'superiority' of reasons, 'standards' for 'correctness' of judgements and 'substantive criteria' for judging whether one argument is 'better' than another. Yet, these terms, while clearly value-laden, do not yet occur in any context in which they could be supplied with any substantive content. Rather, it is only when we look to the situations in which these terms are to be applied that they begin to have some kind of substantive content. This, though, is already to concede a significant point to Gilbert – normative standards are a function of the goals of argument and these goals are fixed situationally. Here, then, is the second point. To provide content to her normative terminology, Warnick lists the argumentative situations of 'criminal trials, legislative debates, and scientific investigation' (429) – situations in which the goals are more-or-less defined. Now, on my reading, there is nothing preventing the importing of goal-specific or situation-specific standards ostensibly external to CA into the coalescent phase, to serve as a foundation for normative standards, in the aid of resolution. The point to be noted here is that CA, unlike IL, does not seek to provide those standards in advance of the description of some instance of argumentation.

3.6.1. *The situation of inquiry*

A virtually universal objection to CA claims that CA is an inadequate model of argument for the situation of inquiry, where inquiry is defined as argument whose goal is the ascertaining of the truth. I take it that the

central obstacle for CA in the case of inquiry is that CA's posited goal of agreement is not a suitable substitute for truth. After all, are there not situations in which we have even universal agreement on the truth of a falsehood?

It is, I think, narrow to construe the goal of Coalescent Argumentation as *mere agreement*. The goal of CA is to maximally fulfill the goal-set of the arguers in a specific instance of argumentation through *coalescence*. According to CA, the norms of argument evaluation are a function of the goals of argumentation. That is, in light of the discussion in section 3.6, the situation of inquiry becomes a specific argumentative situation, and one to which specific norms may pertain. Thus, if the ascertainment of the truth is one of the goals of an instance of argumentation, then the standard of truth is an apt standard on which to ground evaluative norms of argument. Perhaps this portion of my reading of Gilbert's position should properly be regarded as an amendment to the coalescent model. Yet, I do not see how Gilbert's position in CA is incongruent with this claim. In fact, I see that Gilbert's attitude of normative pluralism tacitly allows for this circumstance. Admittedly, CA does not provide the content for any of those situation-specific (especially truth-specific) standards. Rather, the onus must be on the theorist asserting such a standard to substantiate a theoretical connection between his or her chosen standards of argument evaluation and the concept of truth.

3.6.2. *The situation of mutually unattainable goal sets*

It has been suggested that perhaps a better way to read Warnick's objection that CA is 'ill suited to many a-synchronous one-to-many situations in which audiences are heterogenous in their beliefs, attitudes and predispositions' (429) is that CA runs into a systemic problem when participants in an argument have mutually exclusive goal sets. In this situation, it is not just that the arguers share no common goals, it is that the goals that they do have are in conflict, and cannot be mutually satisfied. As one reviewer observed 'such contexts create a *theoretical* problem for Gilbert's theory. For, if just two different members of a heterogenous audience have conflicting goals, depending on the nature of the conflict, it is conceivable that the arguer could not, in principle, coalesce with both.' This seems like the case in which, as the saying goes, they must simply agree to differ. Yet, while the problem here is thorny, it is not unapproachable.

In the first place, according to CA, positions are person-specific. As such, there are at least three positions at issue in the above example, not two. Were there only two positions (audience and arguer), then the normative methodology of CA could, in principle, expose the fact that the audience's position is unsatisfiable in itself. Just as logic cannot be blamed for a person's irrationality, it is not a failing of CA when a person holds a position that is unsatisfiable in itself. Let us then simplify the example to one in which there are only two positions, each of which has

an independently satisfiable goal set, yet, when taken together, the goal sets are mutually unsatisfiable. Presumably, if the arguers are arguing coalescently, then agreement (or the maximal satisfaction of their respective goal sets) is among the goals of each arguer. Thus, the arguers share at least one common goal. Further, in principle, CA could isolate precisely those aspects of each position which are mutually unsatisfiable. Supposing that some aspects of each position remain, they would be mutually satisfiable, and coalescence is possible in respect of those aspects. Considering the mutually unsatisfiable aspects of each position: either the arguer values the goal of coalescence above those aspects or s/he does not. The first case genuinely represents a situation of irreconcilable differences. Nevertheless, the CA norm of empathy would seem to prescribe tolerance for the other position. If, on the other hand, in the name of coalescence an arguer is willing to be flexible concerning conflicting goals, it would seem that CA would prescribe a modification of the respective goal sets of each arguer, until such time as common, or mutually satisfiable (and perhaps less desirable), goals are located. This brings us to yet another objection.

3.6.3. *Evaluating goals*

The temptation, in the above example, might be to determine whether one arguer's goals are more worthwhile, commendable, or what have you than the goals of the other arguer. Are there not some argumentative goals, norms or standards which always trump others? After all, is the goal of truth not more commendable than that of civility? Is not justice to be prized over economy? (Rationality over coalescence?) Yet, it might be objected¹⁶ that CA seems ill-suited for evaluating different goal sets and ranking them against each other. I take this objection to be a specific case of the more general objection that CA is not normative (discussed above, section 3.6). Certainly, my reading of CA allows that particular situations may prescribe that a certain set of norms or goals be held above (all) others. When it comes to inquiry, truth should be valued over civility. But, in my view, to say anything more would require the articulation of a theory of value, and one which does not rely on any theory of argument(ation). This brings me to one final objection.

3.7. *CA is based on bad epistemology*

To this point, I have argued for the acceptability of Gilbert's position on non-epistemological grounds. That is, I contend that even if Gilbert is wrong on certain points of epistemology, significant components of the CA theory stand independently. Particularly, insofar as Argumentation Theory seeks to study the actual reasons we have for holding a certain view (i.e., those responsible for any change in view), it would seem that any theory of argument(ation) must take as its subject matter concrete, situated instances or argumentation. That said, it must be remarked that Gilbert does

have an epistemological position (the argument for which appears centrally in Chapter 4) which informs CA's methodology for the evaluative study of argumentation.

Many of the objections to Gilbert's dealing with the situation of inquiry are based on his epistemology of truth. While Gilbert's epistemology has not been directly challenged in the literature (but see Godden, 2000a), it has been observed that 'several of his points of criticism stem from disagreement with some of the epistemological assumptions behind C-L' (Bailin §1). Thus, Bailin identifies Gilbert's as a constructivist epistemology and her own as a fallibilist epistemology (Bailin §3.2). It is quite correct that Gilbert challenges what he calls the 'Natural Light Theory' of truth advocated by, e.g., Descartes. Rather, as Gilbert writes 'there is no "natural light" that shines forth from [all] true statements and is lacking in false ones' (6) and by which we know the true ones to be true. Here, I think Gilbert's epistemological point is well-taken. Further, I am not convinced that Gilbert advocates agreement as a sufficient criterion for truth. (Surely he is aware of the traditional problems with this relativistic, psychologistic view.) While Gilbert is not clear on this matter, a softer reading on this point might simply be that Gilbert offers agreement as a necessary and pragmatic criterion for argument whose goal is the ascertainment of the truth. For instance, arguers must agree on the criteria that will be used in ascertaining truth. Here, agreement would not be a truth criterion, i.e., a reason that is cited when justifying a claim or position as a true one. Rather, agreement would be a necessary (though not a sufficient) criterion for the resolution of an argument in which the truth of some claim or position is at issue. What is important to note here is that, on my reading, Gilbert's position does not preclude the adoption of some external criteria for truth that is provided independently of CA.

4. CONCLUSION & FUNDAMENTAL THEORETICAL ISSUES

The purpose of this essay has been discharge some of the dialectical obligations of Coalescent Argumentation, by meeting some of the objections to it that have appeared in the recent literature. While I feel that it is best to deal with these issues in relation to a concrete example, many of the arguments supplied herein apply more generally to the justification of a rhetorical-based approaches.

Over the course of this paper, I have observed several fundamental theoretical issues that I see as lurking at the foundations of the debate between the competing approaches to Argumentation Theory discussed herein. In discharging some of Gilbert's dialectical obligations, I observed that Gilbert's objectors often rely on assumptions about these fundamental issues, assumptions which require additional justification in order that the objections be well-founded. At this juncture, I articulate these points in

the form of criteria for a more justified criticism of a process-based model of argumentation such as Coalescent Argumentation.

1. That insofar as argument-products (the subject matter of IL) are relevant to the process of argumentation, these argument-products actually occur in the particular instances of argumentation under study.
2. That insofar as IL hopes to specify and evaluate the actual reasons responsible for a change in view, the reasons isolated in the argument-as-product model are *actually* and *exclusively* operative in, or responsible for, a subject's change in view in the particular instance of argumentation under study.
3. That insofar as the evaluations of argument-products are to be relevantly applied to the process of argumentation, the goals of 'argument' (as rendered within the model) are the same as the goals in play in the particular instance of argumentation at issue.

Now, given that both models (CA and IL) accept that the goals of argument(ation) inform the standards and norms according to which argument is to be evaluated, another point must be established:

4. That insofar as one of these goals is the ascertainment of the truth, there is a theoretically justifiable connection between the truth and the standards informing the model.

Finally, if the theorist wants to weaken the model such that the goal is not ascertainment of the truth but 'what is most rational to believe' then (4) could be changed to:

- 4*. That insofar as one of the goals of argument is 'what is most rational to believe,' there is an internal connection between what we normally call rationality and the standards informing the model. (But, it should be remembered that a separate argument is now required to establish that accepting what is most rational to believe is the most reliable guide to the truth.)

In the absence of good arguments on these points, there is little reason to suppose that the domain of argument, as construed by IL, is exhaustive of the domain of argumentation insofar as it takes as its subject matter, or hopes to be relevant to, those actual processes of argumentation serving as a vehicle by which we come to changes in view. These four points mark some of the foundational points of difference between Gilbert and his objectors, and have, I suggest, yet to be dealt with properly in the literature.

Gilbert, in setting forth the theory informing his model of Coalescent Argumentation, challenges traditional assumptions regarding not only how theorists should render the subject matter of Argumentation Theory, but also how theorists should capture the goals of argument. At the intersection of these two assumptions is the further assumption that the reasons exposed in an IL analysis actually have doxastic force. This is a standard assumption operative in IL models, and one that is explicitly challenged by Gilbert who questions the traditional bond between the reasons (offered) and the adherence to or acceptance of a thesis (Gilbert, 76, 108, 109, 115).

Given that much of the debate between product- and process-based models of argument (as may be seen in the case of Gilbert and his objectors) hinges on the issue of the relationship between the evidentiary (or epistemic) relations that obtain between claims and reasons and the actual doxastic force that those evidentiary relations carry in some instance of argumentation, I suggest that this is one of the most pressing matters for contemporary Argumentation Theory.¹⁷

NOTES

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¹ Brockriede, 1975, p. 179.

² All citations from Gilbert in this paper will be from *Coalescent Argumentation* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum, 1997) unless otherwise noted.

³ While I contend that this reading is both plausible and defensible, some aspects of this reading may properly constitute revisions to the CA model.

⁴ As such, the scope of this paper is limited. I do not explicitly deal with other viable models of argument(ation) that have currency in the theoretical marketplace. Nor do I see the choice argument(ation) model as being only one between CA and some version of IL.

⁵ I have articulated one such problem (Godden, 2000a) and attempt herein to provide a reading of *Coalescent Argumentation* that insulates CA from this objection.

⁶ Rather, it would have to be demonstrated that the norms being supplied by the theorist are somehow *constitutive* of argument itself, and hence of all acts of argument.

⁷ Keeping in mind what has been said in the preceding paragraph, basically this is meant to rule out two scenarios that might occur when modelling an argument: (a) putting something into an argument that was not there in the first place (e.g., theorists making suppositions about the goals of an arguer or about the doxastic force of some argumentative claim, norm or standard); (b) taking something out of an argument that was there in the first place (e.g., arguer slammed the door when saying 'Ok, you win, are you happy now?'; arguer shook head from side to side and rolled her eyes while saying 'Sure, I believe you.').

⁸ Admittedly, the issue is more complex than has been stated. E.g. if A simply 'gives up' $\neg\alpha$, but $\neg\alpha$ is a consequence of A's beliefs β_1, \dots, β_n , then there is good reason to maintain that A is still committed to $\neg\alpha$.

⁹ As did one reviewer for this paper.

¹⁰ Inquiry, I take it, is offered as a quintessential, but not necessarily exclusive, example of argument that is beyond the analytical and evaluative scope of CA.

¹¹ Actually, Miller offers the IL normative model as constitutive of critical reasoning. But she does so in the context of Gilbert's challenges to critical reasoning as an exclusive and comprehensive tool with which to study argument. So, in effect, Miller is claiming that those things not encompassed by the IL model are not arguments.

¹² This is one of the reasons Miller offers for her claim that Gilbert advocates the wholesale abandonment of IL, an objection discussed below (section 3.2).

¹³ The IL theorist may wish to supply some other paradigm of argument here, in which case the same considerations would have to be applied to that paradigm.

¹⁴ It should be noted that this is sometimes offered as the specific reason that CA is not

adequate in the situation of inquiry and that of individual decision making (see section 3.6 below).

¹⁵ Although Johnson takes it that the practice of argumentation has some definite features: (1) it is teleological; (2) it is dialectical; (3) it is manifestly rational (1995, 242).

¹⁶ As did one reviewer.

¹⁷ I attempt a preliminary discussion of this matter in Godden, 2001 to which Pinto (2001) offers an extensive and insightful reply.

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