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Christian Plantin: *Les bonnes raisons des émotions. Principes et méthode pour l'étude du discours émotionné*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2011, 305 pages.  
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**Reviewed by Markku Roinila (University of Helsinki)**

Alfred North Whitehead famously said that all philosophy is just a series of footnotes to Plato. This seems to be true at least in the theory of argumentation where the common opposition between the rational and the irrational is not too far from *Phaedo* (66b-67a), where the soul is related to rationality and the body to irrationality. Just as the ancient Greek did not find anything positive in the desires and passions of the body, the modern theories of argumentation — represented, for example, by Toulmin (1958) or by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) — tend to avoid emotions as far as possible in the theory of argumentation as they are often seen as leading to fallacies and the corruption of discourse.

Christian Plantin is a well-known author of several books on argumentation and has co-edited *Les émotions dans les interactions* (2000). His new book, based on several articles, challenges the long tradition of regarding emotions as being harmful or even disastrous to rational speech. Plantin sees himself as doing an argumentative reconstruction of emotions. This becomes clear especially in the last part of the book, which includes seven case studies of fictional and real life argumentative situations varying from journal articles to more complicated cases such as the presidential election of 2006 in Mexico.

Plantin's approach is bold. Contemporary theories of emotions have not discussed emotions in linguistic discourse and often prefer to consider them as cognitive phenomena, comparable to beliefs, judgements, and decisions. Emotions are seen as evaluative judgements rather than irrational passions which threaten our rational behaviour. This is not the case in the theory of argumentation, where emotions are apparently still thought mostly to be horrendous monsters from the abyss which lead us to wrong judgements. Although Plantin does not discuss contemporary philosophical theories of emotions (this may be regarded as a weakness of his treatment), his theory of emotional arguments may be very fertile for a discipline where cognitive theories have been recently criticized.

In general, I think that Plantin's approach is well-founded. The platonic view of philosophy as being a rational process, in contrast to rhetoric or the sophists, is constricted and therefore misses important aspects of human communication. I agree with the author that in normal discourse reason and emotion are

inextricable from each other and there is no separate discourse for rational and emotional expression. Plantin relies on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and sees emotional discourse as comprising techniques for expressing emotions, on one hand, and the possibility of reconstructing emotions from the discourse, on the other.

Chapter 1 discusses the emotion terms which all have their own uses and their own history. This history stems from Aristotle to the Stoics and to the early modern era. Plantin presents various terms related to emotions (the term "emotion" began to be used as a general term only fairly recently) such as affect, humour, passion, and sentiment. These different terms were used in different contexts and can have surprisingly different nuances which are often ignored in contemporary theories. For example, "passion" which derives from Stoicism and was used in 17th-century rationalism, regards emotions as disturbances or sufferings of the mind, while "sentiment" is related to 18th-century philosophy and is a more neutral and larger concept including intuition, opinion, worldview, etc. The author suggests that "affect" as a neutral term should be used in contemporary psychology (10). Although the term suffers from less of a historical burden than "passion" or "sentiment", it was used by both Spinoza and Leibniz in the sense of the movement of the mind and is perhaps more widely used in a historical context than Plantin thinks.

In Chapter 2 he goes on to lay the foundation for his theory of emotional discourse, that is, he discusses classical rhetoric, as presented in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*. Aristotle presents the emotions as opposite pairs and considers them as a tool for persuasion. The second book of *Rhetoric* even defines emotions as different scenarios which the speaker can activate by using one of three techniques (*docere, delectare, movere* or teach, please, move) to make the audience think or act in some way, that is, to create pathos. Pathos is contrasted with ethos or, to use the modern term, the image of the speaker, his appearance, fame, and manner of speaking. This delicate contrast between the trustworthiness or charisma of the speaker and the emotions he creates confirms the opposition between reason and desire/passion: when the speaker judges wrongly, he is condemned by the general public. While Aristotle emphasizes ethos, the Stoics such as Cicero and Quintilianus trust pathos to produce the desired effect.

Chapter 3 deepens the concept of ethos. In rhetoric it is usually considered to have an ethical aspect where the orator is supposed to have a moral character and good sense and good will. His trustworthiness is founded on this ethos, whereas on the other hand, the character of the speaker may also be an artificial construction, founded on the response of the public. A certain amount of sincerity is, however, required. For Aristotle the ethos is the primary cause for persuasion — it creates an optimal impression on the audience. While ethos represents empathy (I am like you), logos represents common purpose (I have the same goals as you), and pathos represents affection (I have the same concerns as you). It is clear that

this kind of ambivalence of the speaker is something which in most theories of argumentation is not often taken into account. It has been more popular in literature where the author has different methods for surprising the reader (such as irony, several narrators, etc.) and Plantin presents three interesting linguistic perspectives of ethos (which may be in conflict with each other), following more recent theories of Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980) and Amossy (1999). It is important to note that ethos is not only expressed linguistically, but includes gestures, facial expressions, and so on which may be sincere or pretended.

The “new rhetoric” of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) is the topic of Chapter 4. Plantin is very critical of the doctrine as it strives to present a master of rhetoric as one who is a master in demonstration. Contrasted to demonstration is value theory, where emotions rule. The practice of rhetoric is between these two camps and the reasonable talk neither demonstrates claims nor expresses emotions. Plantin argues that expressing emotions should not be seen to threaten the rationality of the discourse (in a kind of post-Cartesian sense), but should be seen as a different kind of rationality from that of logical demonstration (47). According to him, Toulmin’s (1958) idea of causes as logical arguments or demonstrations cannot be accepted.

Rhetoric is quite another discipline than logic and cannot be reduced to it, or so goes Plantin’s argument. I am persuaded by it, I have to say. When I am listening to a political discussion, for example, it is certain that I am affected not merely by verbal discourse, that is, words, demonstrations, arguments — I also look at their faces, listen to their stressing of words, observe their gestures and also what they do not say. Signs of emotions are an essential part of the game, although expressed passions can also deceive. Therefore I would join Plantin in asking (47): “Is rhetoric without emotions really rhetoric anymore?”

On the other hand, Plantin does not consider the speaker herself, but tends to regard her as a kind of paradigmatic case, an adult, normal, western rational being with normal feelings (although he also discusses animal expressions of emotions). Naturally, one has to adopt a certain prototype of an orator / speaker in the theory of argumentation to make sense of the discourse (especially when the work is as polemical as this), but I would be interested in various kinds of speakers, for example whether there are differences between expressions of emotions between men and women or adults and children. Also of interest are cases of people with frigidity or schizophrenia. Plantin does discuss a little about cultural differences, but I would be interested in reading more about them, for example whether North Europeans express emotions differently from South Europeans, Americans from Asians, or Africans etc. However, perhaps such a discussion belongs to another discipline.

In addition to the new rhetoric, the theory of fallacies, as represented by Hamblin (1970:43), for example, has been merciless towards emotional discourse.

In Chapter 5 Plantin compares the theory of fallacies to Stoicism where passions are taken to lead men astray and relates the theory to later positions, such as Arnauld and Nicole's (1683) and John Stuart Mill's (1843: ch. 6). Fallacies are seen as pseudo-arguments and the prime example is *argumentum ad passiones*, which appeals to passions such as pity. The theory of fallacies tends, according to Plantin, to relate emotional arguments to disturbed or perverted discourse where judgement is led astray by passions. When one looks at the history of rhetoric, there are single passions which may disturb one's judgement, but the idea of emotions in general leading to fallacies is rare. Plantin goes on to discuss in detail different appeal-style arguments to clarify their use which, according to him, is often confused. In general, the theory of fallacies strives to abolish all subjective elements in argumentation and regards argumentation as working best in a world which is totally without emotions (one of its incentives is perhaps to battle pseudo-scientific doctrines). However, as Plantin observes (75), this hostility in itself is emotional and people with no ability to express emotions often experience a poverty of imagination and tend to act rather than to think (86).

In Chapter 7 Plantin argues that research on emotions in argumentation cannot be distinguished from their appearance in communication in general. He employs the stimulus-response model (which he sees as both useful and problematic) and discusses emotions from three perspectives: before, during, and after the expression of emotion. The problem in using the stimulus-response-model is the fact that responses can vary a lot — the same stimulus may produce all kinds of reactions in different people and some stimuli may also elicit social emotions (sport, religion, and politics). Despite this they can be regarded as causal reasons which have physical consequences and there are some empirical experiments on measuring emotional response. Plantin presents the recent results of psychological research on emotions and finds many similar problems with defining basic emotions, for example, as have past thinkers (Aristotle, Stoics, Descartes, Hume). For some reason, however, he does not discuss contemporary philosophy of emotions. Of interest, however, is a study by Ortony, Clore, and Foss (1987) where affects are reduced to three different components of cognition, affection and behaviour. Perhaps the most interesting result of this study is that not all emotions have an affective component at all.

Plantin suggests a model for studying emotions in speech (*parole*) in Chapter 8. By model he means a schematic, coherent, compact, and systematic representation of a class of objects or phenomena by rigidly defined concepts and consistent internal rules. Here the model is presented by discussing preliminaries, but one gets a better picture of its use by studying the case studies in the last part of the book. Plantin distinguishes systematically between three approaches of (verbal) expression of emotion, pragmatics of emotion (situation of the expression of

emotion), and interaction and communication of emotions (the social aspect of the expression of emotions). Expressing emotions is not always strictly verbal (for example, screaming; Plantin provides a detailed discussion on expressing emotions), but they are always related to a certain situation which can be seen as a basic starting-point of Plantin's discussion. One can also distinguish, following Caffi and Janney (1994:384), who cite Marty's 1908 distinction, intentional expression of emotions (*communication émotionnelle*) and spontaneous expression of emotions (*communication émotive*).

Following these distinctions, Plantin presents a three-way method of reconstructing emotions in speech. The first way is the explicit expression of emotion. In addition, there are two indirect ways of expressing emotions: interpreting physical symptoms and traces in a certain social situation (certain kinds of behaviour, for example). Thus the idea is to make use of all indirect expressions of emotions in addition to direct ones and reconstruct the expressed emotions. This enterprise can of course include a lot of pitfalls. How, for example, can the physical symptoms be interpreted intersubjectively — surely the experiences with behaviourism provide many bad examples of problematic interpretations? And, on the other hand, tracing emotions in a written text can be problematic when the author suppresses them. But it seems to me that Plantin is fully aware of possible problems of this kind.

As we have seen, emotions can also be produced intentionally in order to affect the other person. Plantin concludes by discussing this theme in Chapter 9, presenting detailed methods for creating pathos which are often employed for jurisprudential purposes (for example, showing a bloody knife to the jury can be more effective than any verbal accusation). In that context emotions are regarded as arguments and counter-arguments. In the journalistic context one can also find methods such as describing gruesome details which can trigger emotions in the reader. Plantin's message here seems to be that when we are aware of different ways of creating emotions in the audience (rhetoric) we are also better able to reconstruct emotions in speech and appreciate them as part of communication. Emotions can be taken as alternative kinds of argument to drive a point home and therefore they have to be taken seriously.

Plantin argues that emotions and reasons have to be constructed by the same principles, part of the strategic resources for controlling and affecting the audience. There are different kinds of situations: some are primarily emotional and some are not, but emotions are not to be seen as consequences of certain causes, but as causes (or expressions or signs of causes) in themselves. Plantin sees rationality as a dead end — the “soft power” of emotion should be utilized to make the theory of argumentation richer and more fertile. As emotions can be seen as causes in themselves, the conclusion can be an expression of emotion. While this

may happen easily in real life (think of the Titanic and the emotional roller coaster of the victims), it is obvious that an emotional conclusion is probably too much to ask for the contemporary theory of argumentation.

I can live with this idea, however. In fact, I would not have thought impossible a sort of dictionary between expressions of emotions and verbal arguments where signs, gestures etc., of a certain situation can be translated to verbal form and *vice versa*. In some cases (silent films and comics, for example) this has already been done to an extent. But again there are additional structures which affect the discourse. The same gesture may mean different things in western and Asian culture or in the 21st century and the 18th century just as in verbal expressions (one notes this when one reads oral histories). Teenagers may understand some sign differently from adults and so on. Therefore the interpretation of emotions requires an understanding of the social context as Plantin himself points out (144).

The style of the work is very readable and instructive. It includes numerous tables to clarify the distinctions presented. Most chapters comprise appendixes which feature detailed presentations of various more marginal themes. He gives historical precedents to different views, explains the terms used and presents the sometimes complicated views clearly with useful examples. There are nine chapters, a transition which summarizes the presented points and introduces a larger context, and seven studies of different cases of argumentation mentioned above which illustrate the views expressed very well. The studies also inspire the study of emotions in different discourses, which may be useful to theorists of literature, politics, culture etc. A reader less well-versed in argumentation theory gets a good picture of the history and contemporary trends of the discipline (a huge number of individual studies are introduced and discussed), but at the same time, Plantin does not hide his criticism of the narrowness of many contemporary theories of argumentation. In sum, the work is extremely interesting and provides an excellent platform to continue researching the presence and role of emotions in argumentation.

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