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Another Discourse on Method

Understanding Philosophy through Rhetorical Analysis

This paper aims to show that rhetorical analysis is necessary in order to gain a better understanding of European philosophy texts, but also, and particularly, to better understand texts from non-Western intellectual traditions. A clear view of the rhetoric of philosophical texts in the East and West is often disturbed, however, by an image of philosophy according to which only deductive arguments deserve to be considered as philosophical means of persuasion. We, therefore, offer a model of rhetorical analysis that systematically detects all of the persuasive means that a text employs and thereby widens the view on the persuasive repertoire of philosophy. We finally characterize philosophy in a way that allows for a variety of means for convincing readers, but at the same time sticks to a normative understanding and excludes texts that try to gain consent through intimidation, deception, or unwarranted authority.

KEYWORDS: rhetoric—textual analysis—Asian philosophy—syllogism—arguments—Kūkai—Dōgen—Descartes—Roman Jakobson—*inventio*—*dispositio*—*elocutio*

> And where else, indeed, should theoretical reflection on the art of understanding turn than to rhetoric, which from the earliest days of the tradition has been the sole champion of a claim to truth which vindicates the plausible, the *eikos* (verisimilar), and that which is illuminating to common sense against science's claim to proof and certainty? (Hans-Georg Gadamer)[1]

Philosophers have given many different answers to the question what philosophy is and how it should be done. There is a relatively broad consensus, however, that philosophy is a discipline that deals with certain general notions important to human life by way of reason and argument. This characterization contains a topical component that delimits the questions and problems philosophy deals with. It also contains a methodological component when it stresses that philosophy deals with these topics "by way of reason and argument." Such a descriptive characterization can be understood as the lowest common denominator of philosophy that bridges the disagreements among philosophers on this issue. More ambitious accounts of philosophy try to highlight the specific *value* of philosophy and give *normative* answers to the question what philosophy is.[2] In giving such normative answers philosophers disagree, of course, with regard to the *topics* of philosophy, but we will focus in this paper on philosophical *methods*.

1. Hans-Georg Gadamer. The English translation appears in (Mueller-Vollmer 1986, 278–9). The German original reads "Woran sonst sollte auch die theoretische Besinnung auf das Verstehen anschließen als an die Rhetorik, die von ältester Tradition her der einzige Anwalt eines Wahrheitsanspruches ist, der das Wahrscheinliche, das *eikos* (*verisimile*), und das der gemeinen Vernunft Einleuchtende gegen den Beweis- und Gewissheitsanspruch der Wissenschaft verteidigt?" (Gadamer 1986, 236).

2. See Overgaard, Gilbert, and Burwood 2013, 21–3.

Philosophical texts are persuasive texts. They want to convince their readers of a certain message or to confirm an already existing conviction of theirs.[3] The methodological requirement to confine oneself to "reason and argument" rules out intimidations, promises and appeals to prejudice, strong emotions or unwarranted authority as unphilosophical methods of persuasion. It has been a much-debated topic in philosophy, however, what else can be said about the range of philosophical strategies of persuasion. One very influential image in the European philosophical tradition posits the *syllogism* as the standard paradigm of philosophical argumentation. Since Aristotle's *Analytics* many authors have stressed that philosophers should take the hearers' or readers' convictions as premises and proceed to new conclusions by way of a set of purely formal logical patterns. This methodological understanding of philosophy seeks to align philosophical argumentation to mathematical proof as far as possible. For modern philosophy, Descartes, in particular, was seminal in establishing the tendency to see inference from axioms or given facts as the only legitimate mode of rational persuasion. He describes his own procedure in the *Discours de la Méthode* as follows:

> By beginning with the simplest and most easily known objects in order to ascend little by little, step by step, to knowledge of the most complex, and by supposing some order even among objects that have no natural order of precedence.[4]

Descartes' method was followed by important authors from Spinoza to Carnap and had an enormous influence on the development of modern philosophical thought. It also informed the general notion of philosophy, resulting in what we propose to call the "syllogistic image of philosophy."

Certainly, the syllogistic method has proven itself to be useful in understanding philosophical argumentation and in structuring philosophical

3. Philosophers already disagree, to be sure, with regard to the question what the "message" of a philosophical text may consist in. Richard Rorty, for example, famously claimed that "it is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions," see (Rorty 1979, 12).

4. Descartes 2008, vol. 1, 120. "...en commençant par les objets les plus simples et les plus aisés à connoître, pour monter peu à peu comme par degrés jusques à la connoissance des plus composés, et supposant même de l'ordre ent ui ne se précèdent point naturellement les uns les autres" (Descartes 1966, vol. VI, 18–19).

debates. The syllogistic *image of philosophy*, however, i.e. the reduction of argumentation to formally valid arguments as typified by the syllogism, and the assimilation of argumentation to proof come with problems of their own.[5] First, in terms of philosophical method, Aristotle himself emphasized the need to adopt one's means of persuasion to the topic, audience, and aims of the speaker.[6] But his *caveat* was in constant danger of falling into oblivion in the many attempts to model philosophy after science and mathematics, leading to an ill-fated formalism in many philosophical debates.[7] Second, the syllogistic image has led many readers of philosophy to ignore that the methods of persuasion in the pertinent philosophical literature have always—even in authors proposing the methodological ideal of inferential reasoning—been complex and varied, as we will illustrate in a later section of this paper.

Understanding non-western philosophy

The hermeneutical problem that hinges on the syllogistic image of philosophy is even more salient in discourses on intercultural or comparative philosophy. Here, it is often taken for granted that Western philosophical texts are "logical" in their forms of representation, while those from other traditions are not, or are at least less so. It is our hypothesis that such judgments are largely informed by the combined impression of the syllogistic

5. Please note that we use "argumentation" for any reasonable attempt to re-arrange the set of propositional attitudes of an individual or of a group of persons, but that we confine "argument" to a fixed set of sentences that are arranged as premises and conclusions.

6. (Aristotle 1984, Rhet. I.3, 1358a37–8; cf. also Nic.Eth. 1098a26–1098b5). We should stress at this point that all invocations to Aristotle as a defender of rhetoric must be aware that his attitude toward rhetoric seems to be ambiguous (see, e.g. Christof Rapp's commentary in Aristoteles 2002, vol. 4). It is clear, however, that Aristotle defended the use of non-argumentative means such as the configuration of the *rhetor* and the rise of emotions in the audience *if necessary* (Aristotle 1984, Rhet. II.1, 1377b18–137830).

7. This formalism has led, among other things, to an impoverishment of philosophical genres: see, e.g., Hösle 2006, Ferrell 2002, and the special double issue of the literary journal *Poetics Today*, vol. 23: 2–3 (2007). The one-sided focus on formal models has furthermore influenced the way of asking philosophical questions, as Edward Craig has argued for in his Wittgenstein Lectures (Craig 1993).

image and the unfamiliar content and order of many non-Western texts. The impression of unfamiliarity leads, in a first step, to the assumption that these texts *do not follow logical rules.* The syllogistic image of philosophy then provokes the conclusion that non-Western texts *do not argue at all*, which fits neatly into the colonialist image of the rational West and the emotional rest.[8]

In the modern history of intercultural and comparative philosophy, there have been three prototypical modes of argument, which can be seen as so many inferences from this conclusion: The first one states that non-Western texts may be interesting from a literary, religious, or historical point of view, but that they are alogical and, therefore, of no concern for contemporary systematic philosophical discourse. The tendency to locate Asian philosophy in the prehistory of philosophy, visible in histories of philosophy from Hegel to Störig (Hegel 2009; Störig 1990), exemplifies this view. The second type of comparative argument is based on the general assumption that humans are rational beings and that, consequently, the same forms of reasoning should be found in philosophical texts from all traditions. It, therefore, partly rejects the claim that non-Western cultures are alogical and proceeds to locate "logical arguments" in the corpora in question. The pertinent philosophical tradition is then equated with these passages, however, and all other texts, or text elements, are relegated to the realm of "religion," "literature," or even "superstition" (e.g. Paul 2001). The third type, finally, rejoices precisely in what the first two reject, and finds an "alternative way of thinking/logic" in those texts that do not fit into the image of argumentation by syllogistic inference (e.g. Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo 2011, 17–28; Kasulis 1998). Although these reactions produce divergent outcomes in their selection and evaluation of persuasive texts, they share a fundamental problem: They proceed from the equation of philosophical persuasion or reasoned argumentation with the formal model of the syllogism, and they

8. We would like to stress that although we use the expressions "Western" and "non-Western philosophy" in this text, we do not wish to suggest that there is a clear-cut boundary between these discourses. Arab and Russian philosophy, e.g., notoriously resist attempts of categorization within this binary model. All modern philosophers from Asia, Africa, and Latin America are, moreover, consciously influenced by more than one intellectual tradition. When we speak of non-Western philosophy in this text we simply refer to those traditions that were not influenced by Aristotelian logic.

do not seek, or analyze, the method of argumentation used by the literature in question. Therefore they leave out important aspects of the texts that are essential for their reasoned interpretation. By systematically exploring persuasive means and strategies, rhetorical analysis therefore helps us to move beyond the limitations of these three paradigms in comparative philosophy.

By the same token, a systematic model of rhetorical analysis can also provide us with a means to move forward in the dispute in comparative philosophy that pivots around the problem if there are any philosophical texts at all in non-Western traditions.[9] These disputes are often led ideologically because the question of whether a text is a philosophical text or not is seen as a verdict about its quality, or more generally as a verdict about the quality of the culture from which the text originates. As we shall proceed to demonstrate, systematic rhetorical analysis enables reasoned and well differentiated answers to the question of a text's philosophical character.

In what follows, we first undertake to briefly recapitulate the research on the rhetoric of a seminal author that helped shape the syllogistic image of Western philosophy, i.e., Descartes. This will illustrate our point that philosophical persuasion in the Western literature entails many persuasive strategies besides argumentation by syllogisms, and establish a first grasp of some of them that were essential to the success of Descartes' work. Secondly, we will go on to propose a model for rhetorical analysis that can help to systematize these findings and to pave the way for a rigorous exploration of persuasive means and strategies in philosophical texts from Western and non-Western traditions. In this second part, we shall mainly refer to two sources from our field of specialization, i.e. Japanese intellectual history. We will also use these sources to discuss the question of how "philosophical persuasion" may be defined and distinguished from other forms of persuasion, once we accept that the syllogistic model provides us with neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for identifying texts as "philosophical."

9. A differentiated overview on the discussions in East and West is provided by the philosophical exchangee between Carine Defoort and Rein Raud: see Defoort 2001 and 2006; Raud 2006a and 2006b).

Persuasive means in descartes

A glance at the modern commentarial literature on Classical Western philosophers reveals that the rhetorical means they employ have actually received some scholarly attention.[10] This attention has not permeated the image of philosophy, however, nor did it change the common practice of reading philosophical texts. In this section we will present some carefully chosen analyses of Descartes' rhetorical means in order to illustrate how much will be lost if his texts are only read as a series of syllogisms. We also aim to show that a systematic framework is essential for a thorough analysis of rhetorical means and propose a paradigm that can help to explore the different levels of persuasion in philosophical texts.

Along with Plato, Descartes is arguably among the philosophers who are most commonly held responsible for the parting of ways between philosophy and rhetoric. The literature tends to emphasize his "low esteem" for rhetoric, purporting that he dismissed it as "trivial or artificial" and as "less concerned with truthful communication than with sterile word games" (Bineham 1994, 302). Less attention has been given to the fact that Descartes was a knowledgeable and gifted rhetorician in his own right. A notable exception is John Fauvel who stresses in one of the few pertinent studies that "Descartes was a shrewd literary craftsman who went to immense pains to define and structure what he wanted the reader's response to be" (Fauvel 1988, 26). This observation—based on research by Jonathan Rée on the narrative traits of the *Discourse* and Fauvel's own examination of Descartes' *Geometry*—adds a twist of its own to the philosopher's prominent dismissal of this discipline. Peter France stated, in respect to one of Descartes' frequent verdicts against elaborate style, that this in itself "could be seen, of course, as no more than a well-known rhetorical move." (France 1972, 41) France explicitly acknowledges that "Descartes' first and constant notion of persuasion is one in which he will state the truth firmly and clearly and everyone will agree" (1972, 47). However, as France also observes, Descartes was keenly aware of "one of the fundamental aspects of traditional rhetoric,"

10. See, for example, Yunis 2016, and part 1 of Wiley-Blackwell's *Companion to Plato* (Benson 2006) on Plato's means and forms of persuasion, and (Smit 1991) and (Gorlée 2016) on Wittgenstein's rhetoric.

namely the necessity to adapt "method and style to the audience," and that he accepted "the need to please" (1972, 50, 51). In his subsequent analysis of Descartes' persuasive method, he highlights the philosopher's efforts to "set up a current of sympathy between himself and his reader" (1972, 58) and also notes that he makes frequent resort to "all the customary weapons of polemic" (1972, 54). In terms of argumentative exposition, he observes that Descartes "rarely gives us anything like the full-blown synthetic method" that would best fit with the image of philosophy as science, and prefers the "analytic method" of step-by-step resolution of problems inviting the audience to share the philosopher's process of thinking (1972, 60).[11]

This feature of Descartes' argumentative style gives his works a distinctly narrative aspect and has invited analyses of some of his works in narratological terms. The following paragraph provides a vivid impression of the richness of Descartes' persuasive repertoire and of his use of narrative devices:

> Yet at the moment my eyes are certainly wide awake when I look at this piece of paper; I shake my head and it is not asleep; as I stretch out and feel my hand I do so deliberately, and I know what I am doing. All this would not happen with such distinctness to someone asleep. Indeed! As if I did not remember other occasions when I have been tricked by exactly similar thoughts while asleep. As I think about this more carefully, I see plainly that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep. The result is that I begin to feel dazed, and this very feeling only reinforces the notion that I may be asleep.[12]

In light of the syllogistic image of philosophy, Descartes' statement "that there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep" is often taken as the first premise of an argument:

P1 We can never tell if we are dreaming or not.

11. On this point, see also Rée 1987, 26–7. For more on Descartes' distinction between analytic and synthetic ways of communication, see France 1972, 51.

12. Descartes 2008, vol. II, 13. "Atqui nunc certe vigilantibus oculis intueor hanc chartam, non sopitum est hoc caput quod commoveo, manum istam prudens & sciens extendo & sentio; non tam distincta contingerent dormienti. Quasi scilicet non recorder a similibus etiam cogitationibus me alias in somnis fuisse delusum; quae dum cogito attentius, tam plane video nunquam certis indiciis vigiliam a somno posse distingui, ut obstupescam, & fere hic ipse stupor mihi opinionem somni confirmet" (Descartes 1966, vol. VII, 19).

P2 In dreams we have all kinds of sense impressions that do not correspond to reality.

C We can never tell if our sense impressions correspond to reality.[13]

This form of presentation is certainly helpful for understanding and for criticizing Descartes' position, but it hardly accounts for the whole suggestive power of his persuasive strategy in the quoted passage. One may notice, for example, that while the conclusion is achieved by way of formal argument, the text does not present inferences to the premises. Instead, Descartes attempts to secure agreement for the first premise by saying that one can "plainly see" its truth.[14] He then moves on through a process of recollective observations and generalizations, inviting the reader to follow him in his progression of thoughts through the skillful use of a narrative of thinking in the first person.

The question of *who* clearly perceives the alleged truth of the first premise and moves through the ensuing thought process has received some attention. It has been observed that the first *ego* holds that he is certainly awake, while the referent of the seventh occurrence of the word "I" stresses that we can never be sure if we are awake or dreaming. Jonathan Bennett, therefore, uses the telling names "Hopeful" and "Doubtful" to distinguish between these two referents of "I."[15] Moving beyond "Hopeful" and "Doubtful," the "I" arrives at an integrative position in the end:

> For now I notice that there is a vast difference between the two, in that dreams are never linked by memory with all the other actions of life as waking experiences are.[16]

13. A very careful and much more sophisticated reconstruction of this passage as an argument can be found in Wilson 1978, 17–31.

14. This appeal to evidence as a persuasive strategy was already mentioned and criticized by Descartes' contemporary Antoine Arnauld (cf., for example, Descartes 1966, vol. vii, 214) and has since then been discussed as the problem of the Cartesian Circle (cf. also Hatfield 2006).

15. See his translation at: http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/descmedi.pdf, accessed in July 2017.

16. Descartes 2008, vol. ii, 61. "Nunc enim advert permagnum inter utrumque esse discrimen, in eo quod nunquam insomnia cum reliquis omnibus actionibus vitae a memoria conjugantur, ut ea quae vigilanti occurrunt" (Descartes 1966, vol. vii, 89).

Descartes thus tells the story of a complex development of the thinking agent in the progress of his meditation.

Shall we say now that this developing ego is the flesh and blood Descartes who wrote the book? Certainly not—even if, as Jonathan Rée remarked, "very few readers have consciously recognized that, like any other author with a leaning to narrative, Descartes was not necessarily referring to himself when he used the word 'I'" (Rée 1987, 23). Louis Aryeh Kosman has offered a systematic analysis of this problem on the basis of Gérard Genette's narratology, using the analytical category of the *voice* and the narratological distinction between story and discourse in order to describe the persuasive method of the *Meditations.* Kosman starts from the observation—supported by research on the actual production of the work[17]—that Descartes clearly did not write the book while he actually had the states of mind that he attributes to the referents of "I." The text should rather be seen as an autodiegetic fictional account of a meditative process. Neither the first person devices[18] nor other deictic markers, such as "now," "yesterday" or "here," in the text refer to real entities. They point to the fictional subject, time, and place of meditation—even if the narrator identifies as the author Descartes (Kosman 1986, 25, cf. also Wilson 2003, 4–5).

As Kosman rightly observes, this narration of a mental development is, in spite of its being fictional, not merely a *fictitious* story. It maintains a link to factual reality in that it is meant to induce the reader to identify with the "I" in the text and lead him to actually experience this development of thought by himself. This performative aspect is further strengthened by the gradual development of doubt in the First Meditation (1986, 32) and by explicitly leaving room for reflection that lies outside the text (1986, 38–39) in passages such as the following:

17. Jonathan Rée summarizes the pertinent research to the extent that "it probably took Descartes an average of more than a year to compose each day's diary" (1987, 20). Independently from Kosman, Rée gives a similar account of the narrative devices used by Descartes and their function (1987, 18–24).

18. The personal pronoun "I" in the English translation and the verb endings for the first person singular in the Latin original.

> But since the habit of holding on to old opinions cannot be set aside quickly, I should like to stop here and meditate for some time on this new knowledge I have gained, so as to fix it more deeply in my memory.[19]

This passage neatly illustrates that the text invites the reader to perform actions that are not performed during the reading of the text, but that should rather be performed after the text has been put aside. We concur with Kosman that one would indeed underestimate the text's subtlety if one were to reduce these passages to the presentations of a formal argument and discard the persuasive force it gains from inviting the reader, via identification with the autodiegetic narrative voice, to perform a meditative thought process.

A further characteristic feature of the *Meditations* that is important for its understanding, but that can hardly be reconstructed as a formal argument is Descartes' choice of genre. Kosman and others argue that Descartes intentionally appropriated the well-established genre of *meditation* precisely to overcome the prior tradition of meditative literature.[20] By choosing this genre, Descartes makes it clear that he did not want his work to be read as a series of philosophical arguments, but rather as an exercise to be practiced. On the other hand, he introduces important changes into the traditional genre: For him, the *Meditations* are not meant to cleanse the reader of sin, for example, but of doubt, or, as Kosman puts it, "logodicy" in this work "replaces theodicy" (1986, 23).

With regard to methodology, Kosman and Rée have built a strong case for availing oneself of methods from literary analysis, such as narratology, in order to identify and appreciate the persuasive means of philosophical texts. On the other hand, Kosman is also right in mentioning that it is often difficult to adopt narratological instruments for the analysis of non-narrative, or not primarily narrative texts, and the same may be true for other methods such as the Greimasian actant theory and the like. It often remains unclear, for example, how to proceed from narratological findings to justified state-

19. Descartes 2008, vol. II, 23. "Sed quia tam cito deponi veteris opinionis consuetudo non potest, placet hic consistere, ut altius haec nova cognitio memoriae meae diuturniate meditationis infigatur"(Descartes 1966, vol. VII, 34).

20. Cf., for example, the contributions of Hatfield and Oksenberg Rorty in Oksenberg Rorty 1986.

ments about persuasive effects. Narratological methods should, therefore, be integrated into a comprehensive methodological framework that provides an overview of persuasive means and makes it possible to explain the persuasive reactions that are likely to result from the use of such means. What is needed is a *rhetorical* framework of philosophical persuasion.[21] The rest of this paper will be dedicated to the elucidation of such a framework and an illustration of its uses.

A model for rhetorical analysis

Taking the results of the interpretations of Descartes that were undertaken by Rée, Fauvel, France, Kosman and others as a point of departure, it becomes clear that the rhetorical framework that could be used for systematic investigations about a text's persuasive means cannot consist in a mere list of figures of speech. The conscious design of a text's voices, the choice of genre, the use of performative elements are not among the rhetorical means that are usually contained in such lists. Furthermore, although non-Western texts can be rhetorically analyzed according to catalogs of rhetorical means developed in the Western rhetorical tradition—as Ulrich Unger has shown (Unger 1994)—such texts contain many other means that are not part of such lists. This is also true for the list presented by Perelman in his *Traité de l'argumentation* (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969). Search for a rhetorical framework can, however, start with Perelman's insight that persuasion means, first of all, to communicate and not merely to employ a logical machinery (1969, 14). Persuasion takes place in a real world within a certain communicative situation, and we can avail ourselves of communicative models in order to find the elements that comprise such a situation. The famous model of Roman Jakobson (Fig. 1) distinguishes six communicative elements (Jakobson 1960):

What is implicit in Jakobson's model is the idea that communication is a form of interaction between at least two people, and the classical rhetorical distinction between *docere*, *delectare*, and *movere* stresses that this interaction can take different forms. We, therefore, propose to enlarge Jakobson's

21. The idea that narratology has to be integrated into a rhetorical framework in order to meaningfully interpret its structural results is also expressed in (Kearns 1999).

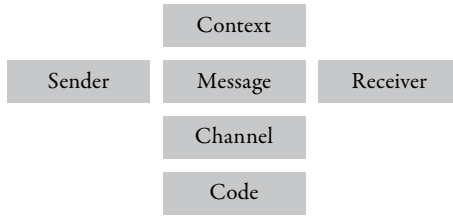

FIGURE 1

model and make the interactive element explicit that is present in every form of communication. Thereby, we arrive at the following (FIG. 2):

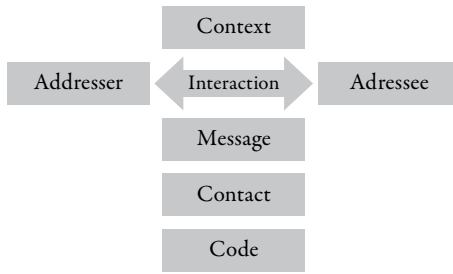

FIGURE 2

An author[22] who wants to convey a message can try to choose each of these elements in a way that suits her intentions. She can, for example, decide on the desired audience, the preferred language, and an adequate form of contact. None of the communicative elements are, however, at the author's full disposal. She will not be able to completely control the composition of the texts' readership, and she has to comply with many extant rules of language.[23] Knowledge concerning the *communicative situation*, i.e. the specific condition of pre-established and discretionary factors shaping the said elements in relation to each other, is therefore crucial for our under-

22. In this text, we are talking primarily about written texts and not about oral communication.

23. Some authors deliberately violate certain rules of language for aesthetic or other effects. Such effects are only possible, however, if a sufficient amount of other rules of language is followed.

standing of the text. Jakobson's model leads us to actively and systematically seek out this kind of information, which is all the more important if the text is remote from our own time and place.

One element of the communicative situation deserves special attention because it can be controlled by the author to a high degree, namely the text itself. It is important to notice that this creative leeway will regularly be used to shape *the perception of* all other elements of the communicative situation. A sophisticated author will try, for example, to influence how she is seen by her readers, how the readers think of themselves, and what is understood to be the central message of the text. We can thus rightly state that the text not only *stands in* a communicative situation but that it will also attempt to *configure* this situation in a specific way.[24] The established narratological distinctions between *author* and *narrator*, or between *audience* and *readership*, reflect the potential of narrative texts not only to tell a story, but also to tell a story about the telling of this story. In other words, the text presents its own image of the communicative situation, leading to a duplication of Jakobson's elements. This idea of a configuration of communicative elements is best established in narrative theory (Schmid 2008, 42–44), but it is our hypothesis that it also applies to persuasive discourse and therefore, to philosophical texts.[25] One would underestimate philosophical authors if one were to think that there was, in philosophical texts, a straightforward, one-on-one relationship between the real elements constituting the communication, and the way they are displayed. Our analytical model, which may be called

24. This idea should not be confused with Perelman's and Olbrecht-Tyteca's talk of the "audience as a construction of the speaker" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, 19). The *New Rhetoric* uses the expression to describe the anticipation of an external audience and does not refer to the intentional configuration of an audience within the text.

25. The duplication of the communicative situation certainly does not work in exactly the same way in persuasive and in narrative texts. We are used to accepting that the personal pronoun "I" in a novel does not refer to the author, but to a narrator who is more or less involved in the events of the story and who may differ in almost every aspect from the real author. In the case of persuasive discourse, however, we expect a closer relation between the author and the text's addresser. We do expect, for example, that the author shares the addresser's convictions. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca seem to make a related point when they stress the necessity of commitment (1969, 59–62).

an "embedded communication model," therefore, takes the following, more complex form (FIG. 3):

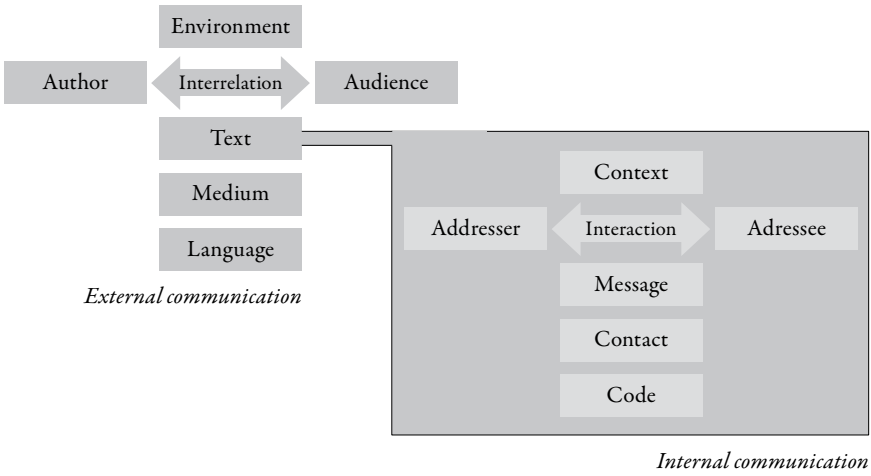

FIGURE 3

This model helps us to see which elements determine and which are determined by the persuasive intentions of an author. If we are looking for the persuasive means and strategies that an author employs, we have to analyze which roles these elements, both external and internal to the text, play within the persuasive interaction. The model also enables us to describe more clearly our findings from the analyses of Descartes' *Meditations*, in distinguishing between the *text*, which was, in the real world, produced over the time of several years, circulated among famous philosophers of the time and then published as a book with comments and replies in 1641, and the *message* it conveys, i.e. the story of a process of meditative considerations conducted in the course of a few days. The referent of the word "I" can be identified with the *addresser*, as distinguished from the *author* Descartes, although the message creates an image of identity between author and addresser. The *interrelation* between author and audience is one of public argumentation, while the *interaction* between the addresser and addressee is one of intimate conversation, where the addressees are invited into the chamber, and even into the mind, of the addresser. There is, however, congruency between the external and the intratextual systems of communication in that, in both, the communicating parties are conceived as being

on a par with each other in principle. Still, while the author clearly retains the privilege of having had an insight that he presents to his readership, the intratextual figuration minimizes the implied distance in its use of a rhetoric of sharing a thought process.

An example from East Asia may serve to further explain and illustrate the value of this model based on the idea of two embedded levels of communication. *Bendōwa*[26] or, in English, *Discourse on Distinguishing the Way*, is the title of a manuscript composed and circulated in 1231 by a Buddhist monk named Dōgen (1200–1253) who lived in a decrepit temple on the outskirts of the capital, Heian-kyō. The manuscript contains the first exposition of Dōgen's famous doctrine of the unity of meditative practice and the highest insight. Although it was probably not intended for such a small readership, the manuscript was kept away from the eyes of all but the trusted members of Dōgen's lineage by its possessors between the thirteenth and eighteenth centuries. The monk Gentō Sokuchū first published it in print in the early nineteenth century as an important work of the Japanese founder of the Sōtō School of Zen Buddhism (Mizuno 1965, 50–51; Bodiford 2006). The *Bendōwa* received renewed attention, this time from the general Japanese public, when the renowned Japanese philosopher of culture, Watsuji Tetsurō, treated it in his seminal *The Buddhist Monk Dōgen* as a token of the Japanese philosophical spirit (Watsuji 1926 and 2011). In the course of the twentieth century, Dōgen arguably became, in the eyes of an important strand of the literature both in Japan and in the West, the epitome of the "Zen Philosopher.'" In 1231, however, he was still a Buddhist monk at the fringes of the dominant Tendai School, without a clerical rank to speak of. In terms of competence and standing, he had two things going for him: He hailed from the highest echelons of court aristocracy and he had been accepted, during a four-year-sojourn in China, as "Dharma Heir" of the abbot of one of the Song Empire's largest state-sponsored Chan monasteries, thereby making him a fully acknowledged Chan/Zen Master. In Japan, however, the Chan/Zen School was not recognized yet as a legitimate school of its own. All of this obviously placed Dōgen in an insecure position between his as-yet unrecognized legitimation, and his aspirations to

26. Quoted here after the widely available edition (Dōgen 1965, 69–97).

spread what he regarded as a universal truth. None of the insecurity, however, surfaces directly in the configurations of the addresser and the addressees in *Bendōwa:* Here, the addresser hints in a seminal passage at a parallel between himself and the famous founding patriarch of Chinese Chan, Bodhidharma (Dōgen 1965, 73), and consequently, in his postscript, styles himself as the "Buddhist Monk Dōgen, who has entered the Song [Empire] and transmits the Dharma" (Dōgen 1965, 97). The text furthermore states in its first section that it is meant for those who earnestly seek the truth of the Buddhist teaching, and that it is delivered by a master who stands in a direct line of transmission with the Buddhas and Patriarchs (Dōgen 1965, 72). It thus places the reader in the position of a disciple who asks for, and receives, benevolent advice.

To sum up, the real-world author, a cleric with high aspirations but of unestablished legitimacy, attempted to convince a mixed audience of clerics of higher, equal, and lower rank as well as actual and potential lay followers and patrons, also of mixed rank, of the qualities of his spiritual authority and teaching.[27] He had to reckon with their doubts on the legitimacy of his position and with their objections to his teaching, which ran contrary to the established convictions of the day. He chose to deal with this problem by employing a structural rhetoric device: he reconfigured, in the intratextual communication, his own position and the pragmatic relationship between himself and his readership. The *Bendōwa* thus illustrates how an author can try to configure the communicative situation embedded *within the text* in order to compensate for the deficiencies of his power to influence his communicative stance *in the real world*.

How does the model work?

The discussion of Descartes and Dōgen has shown that a rhetorical model that focuses on communicative elements and compares their design within the text with the real communicative situation outside enables reasoned hypotheses about the persuasive effects and intentions of a text. These hypotheses must still be substantiated, however, by adducing evidence

27. Interestingly, Frederic Cossutta sees similar attempts to gain a readership in Descartes. Cf. Cossutta 2006, 184–5.

pertaining to concrete features of the text. We therefore have to look for a systematic paradigm for finding those textual features that are chosen and designed by the author in order to configure the communicative elements of the intratextual communication.

We believe that a model that was developed by ancient European rhetoric and has been further elaborated by modern narratology (Schmid 2008, 251–254) can provide a helpful scheme to survey textual features and to evaluate interpretative hypotheses about persuasive effects and intentions, if applied in combination with the paradigm of communication given above. The famous model of the so-called *Five Canons* distinguishes between five ideal steps of producing a text, and these steps are the ones that an author can use to configure the communicative elements (Cicero 1954, I.2.3):

1. *inventio*
2. *dispositio*
3. *elocutio*
4. *memoria*
5. *actio*

The last two steps—*memoria* and *actio*—are relevant for the particular genre of ancient rhetoric, namely speeches. As we confine ourselves to the analysis of written texts, we focus on the first three steps *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*. According to this model, an author basically has three spheres of decision to create the text and its message: She can decide what topics are integrated into the text and which are left out: *inventio*. She chooses how the text is to be arranged and structured: *dispositio*. And finally, she verbalizes the material employing a specific language and style: *elocutio*. A comprehensive rhetorical analysis will, therefore, methodically analyze with respect to each element of communication what material has been chosen, how it is arranged, and how it is verbalized.

The merits of this scheme can best be seen at work. The example we would like to use for its illustration is a relatively short text of Kūkai (774–835), who was one of the most influential figures in early Japanese Buddhism. The text is entitled "Interpreting the meaning of the term 'Attaining Enlightenment in this very Existence'" (即身成仏義 *Sokushinjōbutsugi*) and starts with the following sentences:

> Question: The Buddhist sutras and treatises teach that three eons are needed to attain Buddhahood. What basis do you have for your present claim that Buddhahood can be perfected immediately and in this body? Answer: The Buddha has taught this within the esoteric canon.

An analysis of the *inventio*-level of this text reveals that it contains a clear message that is already displayed in its title: Attaining enlightenment in the current existence is possible. Kūkai furthermore clarifies in the first sentences that this statement is strongly controversial because it differs from tradition according to which attaining enlightenment is a process that lasts three eons, which is an almost immeasurable amount of time. Kūkai answers the objection of breaking with orthodoxy by pointing to another Buddhist tradition, Esoteric Buddhism, which sanctions the claim that attaining enlightenment in this existence is possible. In the passage that follows Kūkai presents eight quotations from the esoteric canon to prove his foothold in these sutras. A quick look at Kūkai's text, therefore, seems to lay bare the typical makeup of many persuasive texts: A controversial statement is exposed to critical voices that are then overruled by authoritative support. A comparison of the intratextual makeup with the actual communication between Kūkai and his readers refutes this superficial reading, however. The texts that Kūkai quotes did not have an authoritative status at that time and could not simply be used to support a controversial claim. If these non-authoritative texts contain controversial claims, it is all the worse for the texts and their claim. Kūkai's strategy must, therefore, be more complex. As Matsunaga Yūkei (1982) has argued convincingly, Kūkai rather employs the esoteric texts to prove the canonicity of his position and he uses *his own authority* within the clergy and Japan's society in the early ninth century to improve the status of the esoteric canon. He depicts the esoteric canon in his text as if it had authoritative status in order to let it achieve this status in reality. Using the terminology of our model, we can state that Kūkai configures the (literary) *context* depicted in the text in order to change the *environment* outside of the text.

Further remarkable elements of the *Sokushinjōbutsugi* are eight verses that the addresser presents as an answer to the addressee's question what the words of the esoteric canon are meant to reveal. These verses are not quoted from the canon, but were created by Kūkai himself. In his presentation of

these verses Kūkai skillfully combines configurations on the *dispositio-* with those on the *elocutio*-level: on the one hand, the verses are used to structure the text as a whole and are themselves ordered in a peculiar way. On the other hand, the words used in the verses creatively allude to other texts. The first three verses are given in the following form:[28]

"The six great elements are unobstructed and eternally in a state of yoga. <Essence>	六大無礙常瑜伽 體
The four mandalas are mutually inseparable. <Manifestations>	四種曼荼各不離 相
The empowerment of the three mysteries manifests immediately. <Functions>"	三密加持速疾顯 用[1]

Kūkai's verses in the original consist of seven characters, but characters that were written smaller than the verse itself accompany the main characters. These small characters fulfill diverse functions: they yield additional meaning and order to the verses. Above all, however, they allude to other texts. The first three characters, here translated as "essence," "manifestations," and "functions," are adopted from the *Awakening of Faith* (C. *Dacheng qixin lun*, J. *Daijōkishinron*), one of the most influential texts in East Asian Buddhism. In that text the categories are used to characterize the mind. By choosing words that allude to the *Awakening of Faith*, Kūkai pays homage to the text, but at the same time he clarifies the difference between that text and his own doctrine. The *essence* of reality, for example, is according to Kūkai not only the mind, but also comprises five material elements that are implicitly referred to in the first verse. In general it can be said that while the *Awakening of Faith* clearly separates between the essence, manifestations, and functions of absolute reality and that of the ephemeral and impermanent aspects of the world, Kūkai stresses that the absolute and the phenomenal aspect of reality are, in the final analysis, not different at all. In order to express this doctrine, he alludes to a reference text that his readers certainly know and uses the assignment of its categories to his own verses to implic-

28. The original text is published in Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo 1994, 18–19. The translation of the verses is adopted from Takagi and Dreitlein 2010, 37.

itly criticize this text's doctrine, but also to integrate it into his own system of thought. The implicitness of this arrangement makes it necessary for the reader to discover the change of meaning of traditional terms by himself. The addressee is, therefore, depicted as an active player in the configuration of the text's message and his interaction with the addresser has a dialogical character that can also be seen in the critical questions that structure the text as a whole. We see then how an author's choices with regard to his text's material, arrangement, and verbalization serve to configure the communicative elements within the text and how this configuration may affect the real communication between the author and his readers.

The combination of the Embedded Communication Model with the model of the Three Canons or phases of text production provides for a useful general matrix of fundamental questions for rhetorical analysis. This matrix is open to, and indeed in need of, complementation through more specific methodologies that can be integrated into it and should, in each case, be selected according to the characteristics of the texts in question. The model thus makes up a framework that structures the modern reader's dealing with ancient texts and is a necessary tool in order to better understand the text's specific mode of persuasion. The model can also be used to analyze groups of texts in order to describe the characteristics of larger intellectual discourses and highlight the differences between diverse cultures of persuasion.

Persuasive norms for philosophy

In the last part of this paper, we would now like to come back to the issue of philosophy and exemplify how the model can be used to evaluate a text's philosophical character. The decision as to whether a text is a philosophical text or not depends, of course, on the concept of philosophy that we are employing. The characterization of philosophy that we have given at the beginning of this paper was intentionally very wide and only sorts out obviously irrational means of persuasion as unphilosophical. Most accounts of philosophy are more substantial, however, and add normative conditions to their definition of philosophy. One such account is the dialogical account of philosophy: From Plato onwards philosophy has often been characterized as a dialogical enterprise and it has been claimed that a philosophical text will respect the text's reader as an equitable partner whose rea-

sons and convictions have to be taken seriously.[29] Dōgen's *Bendōwa* as well as Kūkai's *Sokushinjōbutsugi* are both dialogical in their *dispositio* as they follow the question and answer mode of many Buddhist texts. We would like to argue, however, that Dōgen's *Bendōwa* is *not* a philosophical text, or, if we understand "philosophical" as a gradable predicate, a *less* philosophical text than Kūkai's *Sokushinjōbutsugi*. This evaluation is based on the analysis of *Bendōwa*'s persuasive strategies. We have mentioned how Dōgen consistently re-configures the relationship between the addresser and his audience as one between an enlightened master and his disciples. This strategy is certainly meant to compensate for Dōgen's low status within the Buddhist discourse of his time, and the fact that Dōgen avails himself of this means may be seen as an ancillary feature of the text that is not connected to its central business of philosophical persuasion. Dōgen's configuration of the text's addresser as an intellectually superior speaker, however, fits in nicely with many other persuasive means of the text. We furthermore find a strategic reconfiguration of all *arguments* as *explanations* in the *Bendōwa*, for example, whereby Dōgen polemically positions all counter-questions as ill informed, if not heretical. (See, e.g., *Bendōwa*, 77 and Steineck 2015, 138–143) The notion of epistemic privilege that comes with Dōgen's use of the concept of *bodhi/satori* ("enlightenment"), the restriction of questions and positions to those sanctified by his choice of authoritative tradition, and the constant refusal to remain on the plane of argumentation are indications that this author's goals and intentions were different to a large extent from the ideas and ideals that are tied in with the dialogical conception of philosophy. That is not to say, however, that his works lack intellectual depth or conceptual acuity and, therefore, do not deserve philosophical scrutiny. However, rhetorical analysis shows that in terms of textual pragmatics, syntax, and semantics, his texts should not be read as representing a Buddhist version of *philosophy*.[30]

In this respect, Kūkai's *Sokushinjōbutsugi* differs in an interesting way from Dōgen's *Bendōwa*. Like the latter text, the *Sokushinjōbutsugi* promotes a ritual practice. It also contains many explicative sequences, and the author strives to depict the text's addresser as a competent authoritative exponent

29. See, for example, Castoriadis 1989.

30. On this, see also Steineck 2018 (forthcoming).

of religious doctrine. Furthermore, there are nearly no passages in Kūkai's text that can plausibly be reconstructed as formal arguments. In contrast to the *Bendōwa*, however, the *Sokushinjōbutsugi* addresses its readers as equals: The questions that structure the text are taken as fully legitimate, open questions and the addresser does his best to answer to their critical potential. The many explanations, furthermore, do not seem to be intended to establish a hierarchical relation between the addresser and addressee, but are rather meant to provide the information that is necessary to see the appeal of Kūkai's doctrine of achieving Buddhahood in the present existence. The text, as a whole, is argumentative in character, and its explicative, descriptive, and narrative passages merely serve its argumentative purpose. Finally, the implicitness of many of Kūkai's persuasive means—his assignment of quotations from the *Awakening of Faith* to his own verses, for example—is not due to an intentional argumentative opacity, but can rather be understood as an invitation to the reader to reach the author's conclusion himself, a performative means similar to Descartes' analytical method. According to our rhetorical analysis, the *Sokushinjōbutsugi* is, therefore, an argumentative text that primarily appeals to the reason of its audience.[31]

Conclusion and beyond

This paper is motivated by the observation that the image of philosophy, according to which philosophical texts *demonstrate* philosophical truths just as mathematical texts demonstrate mathematical propositions, misleads our understanding of philosophical texts in important ways. First, it distorts our reading of philosophical texts from the Western tradition. As the example of Descartes' *Meditations* illustrated, these texts are a lot more complex in their persuasive design than even their authors suggest. Second, the syllogistic image of philosophy inhibits reasonable debate about the existence and quality of philosophy outside the confines of the received canon of the "West" (which is, in itself, an arbitrary and ill-defined category). The question to the general character of any given tradition of thought can only be answered by a thorough examination of the particular texts it contains.

31. For a more detailed argument defending the philosophical character of Kūkai's writings, see Kaufmann 2018.

To understand these texts we are in need of a systematic method of detecting persuasive means, a method that is open for new and unfamiliar means and strategies to convince readers. We sought to show that our rhetorical method based on (1) Jakobson's model of communication, (2) the idea of an embedded communication, and (3) the scheme of the Three Canons, provides such a framework. This framework can be supplemented by more fine-grained methods of textual analysis and thereby can be adapted to the text's characteristics and to the aims of the interpreter. Only such a systematic method can reason for the formation, defense, and refutation of interpretative hypotheses on persuasive texts. We, therefore, agree with Gadamer that a true understanding of texts must include an analysis of its rhetoric and that the rhetorical perspective might help to overcome the misleading syllogistic image of philosophy.

On the other hand, we emphasize a normative understanding of philosophy according to which philosophical texts cannot employ any rhetorical strategy whatsoever. They differ from other fields of communication by being dialogical and thus focus on persuasive means that invite the addressees as potentially equal partners into a shared discussion, and accordingly appeal to their faculty to judiciously accept well-reasoned changes of mind. This normative requirement allows for more persuasive means than the syllogism, but it eschews strategies such as intimidation, denunciation of adversaries, or the appeal to permanent epistemic privilege.

This is not to deny that many philosophical texts every now and then make use of rhetorical strategies that seem to contradict such a standard. "[I]t would be unreasonable to expect pure reason from a philosopher at all times" as Peter France says with regard to Descartes' immoderate use of polemics (France 1972, 54). Still, we expect that, all told, a philosophical text will present itself rather as a contribution to a dialog in a community of equals than as the revelation of insights gained by or from some superior being, and that philosophers will retain in general a disposition toward dialog. We also believe that Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes, for that matter, would probably concur that philosophy is defined by such a general attitude, rather than by the use of syllogistic demonstration. If this understanding is applied, we will find philosophical texts in many traditions and, thereby, new and interesting proposals on how to think.

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