

Unfortunately, in “The Concept of Argument” Hamblin does not define what an argument is and does so when he states that, “There is little to be gained by making a frontal assault on the question of what an argument is”(231). This is unfortunate because as argumentation theorists we are dealing with multiple understandings of what an argument is and it is useful to know exactly where the theorist is coming from, or to know what he assumes implicit. Hamblin diverts from defining argument when he suggests, “Instead, let us approach it indirectly by discussing how arguments are appraised and evaluated” (231). He accomplishes his task by listing criteria by which arguments are evaluated. In this section he discusses the Alethic and Epistemic models of argument. Hamblin sets up these two forms of arguments in such a way as to demonstrate the shortcomings of both as a means to introduce the superiority of the dialectical model.

Hamblin defines alethic arguments as formulated so that the premises must be true, and thus the conclusion is true. Interestingly Hamblin refutes such a narrow concept of argument by reminding readers that “there are good arguments *for* a given conclusion and also good arguments against it” (232); this is a key concept within the paper, as it demonstrates that there is no such thing as a knock-down argument. Furthermore, Hamblin discredits the theory by pointing out, “But what is the use of an argument with true premisses if no one knows whether they are true or not” (236). Here Hamblin moves from the shortcomings of an alethic argument into the epistemic model of argument.

Hamblin defines epistemic arguments as having premisses that are not only true but known to be true. When Hamblin uses the word *known* he does not assume that the knower is a person of “infinite logical wisdom and rationality” (239), rather he asserts that the knower is one of “relevant contexts” (239). Therefore both interlocutors must have adequate knowledge in the area being argued in order to partake in valid argumentation.

Having refuted both arguments on the basis that they are too strong, as in the case of alethic arguments one cannot always have true premisses, and one cannot always have known premisses, here Hamblin discusses that what is of real importance is that practical arguments are *accepted*. He is inferring that in reality, we move forward with less than knowledge or truth. Using the word acceptance allows Hamblin to demonstrate that it is an arguer’s job to arrive at premisses that the other party will accept and understand in order to begin. Thus a good arguer realizes the level or discourse that the other party is coming from and develops his argument accordingly. By acceptance Hamblin means the person for whom the argument is aimed at.

I found in the following section where Hamblin states the impossibility of being an objective and impartial judge as “onlookers concepts and presuppose a God’s-eye-view” (242) fascinating. In short, the notion that what one believes true is simply what they accept, drastically changes the nature of what I constitute my beliefs or “truths” to be substantiated upon. Therefore, telling someone, “Yes, you are right” is merely a glamorization of your own belief of what’s true and in essence you are saying that you also accept what they believe, but your acceptance has no bearing on whether the conclusion is “true”.