

Chapter 7

Narratives and Pragmatic Arguments: Ivens’ *The 400 Million*

Paul van den Hoven

Abstract Narratives and pragmatic arguments maintain a tight but complex relation. Narratives are a proto-scientific method to empirically investigate actions. In narratives, actions are explored, explained, interpreted, and evaluated. The action is a central element in a causal chain of events: motive – action – consequences. Storytelling is a way to summarize, share, preserve and accumulate narrative investigations. Pragmatic argumentation is another method to evaluate actions. Pragmatic arguments evaluate actions in terms of their observed or predicted consequences. Therefore, pragmatic argumentation is an abstract, intellectual complement of the narrative. Rhetorically, storytelling is supposed to appeal to reason, just as a pragmatic argument appeals to reason. Both devices are employed to support standpoints in which an action is positively or negatively evaluated, encouraged or discouraged. The rhetorical dynamics, however, differ. The justifying force of the narrative is primary, its causality is direct, motivated, embodied. The justifying force of the pragmatic argument is apodictic, grounded on abstract generalized regularities. We see this complex relation reflected in creating a documentary. In this chapter, I elaborate on the connection between narrative and pragmatic argument and illustrate its application to Joris Ivens’s 1939 documentary *The 400 Million*.

7.1 Introduction

Actions can be positively or negatively evaluated, encouraged or discouraged, according to their (expected) consequences. Such justifications are conveyed by telling a story as well as by presenting a pragmatic argument, both of which are meant to appeal to reason. In this chapter, I investigate the relation between stories and pragmatic arguments. Both discourse formats evaluate actions in terms of the (expected) consequences of the action. Both need to be evaluated on how the content relates to reality and on its relevance for the standpoint about the action. But the sources of their justifying force differ to some extent. I argue that the justifying force of the narrative is explanatory; its causality is direct, motivated, and

P. van den Hoven (✉)
Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands
e-mail: p.vandenoven@uu.nl

embodied. On the other hand, the justifying force of the pragmatic argument is apodictic, grounded on abstract, generalized regularities.

In Sect. 7.2, the scheme underlying a story is compared with the scheme of a pragmatic argument. This analysis explores how the formats can be mapped onto each other. The central action in the narrative, constituting the hero and her helpers or the villain and her partners, can be mapped onto the action that is evaluated in the pragmatic argument. The narrative format, however, tends to reveal the abductive and inductive processes that underlie the construction of a narrative causal chain, while the pragmatic argument format tends to suggest a (quasi-)deductive process that begins from an abstract generalization of a causal relation. In argument theory (Walton et al. 2008, pp. 100–102, 332–333; Van den Hoven 2015b, pp. 247–251), the scheme of the pragmatic argument focuses on the (theoretically expected or empirically observed) consequences that follow the action and neglect any relation with the factors that caused the situation, giving rise to the action. Where the narrative develops a meaningful connection between the cause that creates a situation behind an action and the consequences of that action, the pragmatic argument relies on a single, given, abstract regularity.

In Sect. 7.3, the differences between the story format and the argument format are explored. In our modern era, the rationality of the pragmatic argument is in higher esteem than that of the narrative. Enthymemes employing abstract, empirically or theoretically motivated regularities reflect the Enlightenment ideals. However, in practice, we observe that the formal distinctions between the theoretical models subside. Often a pragmatic argument extends the causal chain to what precedes the action, just as in the narrative.

Cultural anthropologists emphasize the centrality of narrative, which can connect observed effects of action with abductive processes that explain those effects in terms of addressing the causes. A story invites its meaning to be extended to new situations, by means of analogy or induction. The lesson of the epilogue is more general than the story as such, though not presented as an abstract regularity. Such narrative explanations constitute a primary human need. The rational, intellectual argumentation foregoes this deep-rooted need.

In Sect. 7.4, the relation between narrative and pragmatic argument is illustrated. In discourses that propagate, advise, or evaluate human responses to a new situation, both formats are employed in what seems a carefully designed combination. Joris Ivens's 1939 documentary *The 400 Million* about the Sino-Japanese war supports the standpoint that Western countries should ally with the Chinese against the Japanese because this may restore the Chinese democratic process of modernization (Bakker 2009). This type of discourse, bringing a message that resembles propaganda, employs the narrative appeal to reason in combination with verbal argumentative elements. Both devices complement each other in the construction of a pragmatic appeal to reason.¹

¹ In this chapter, I use the term *pragmatic appeal to reason* to refer to any appeal to reason that evaluates an action from its consequences, not looking at the discourse format that dominates. Pragmatic argument is reserved for the prototypical verbal format of verbal expressions with a

In Sect. 7.5, I summarize the theoretical implications of having two intertwined rhetorical devices supporting a standpoint. If one intends to develop an argument theory towards a normative theory about discursive appeal to reason, one needs to include narrative devices as potential argumentative means, extending the concept of argumentation to any move in a discussion that appeals to reason. This would imply dissociating argumentation as a specific discourse surface structure (verbal propositions, typically connected with discourse markers such as “since”, “because”, “the argument is”, “this leads to the conclusions that”, and so on) from argumentation as a discursive appeal to reason, justifying or refuting a standpoint. The challenge is to investigate relations between discourse structures that present verbal enthymemes and discourse structures that present appeals to reason in any other format.

7.2 The Structure of Narratives and Pragmatic Arguments

7.2.1 *Narratives*

Evolutionary anthropologists explain the importance of storytelling from the human need to culturally adapt to new situations, and literary scholars consider storytelling to be central to the development of human culture (Black and Bower 1980; Sarbin 1986; Sugiyama 2001; Gottschall 2013). Stories have a format that summarizes the interpretation and evaluation of goal-directed actions in response to situations that require adaptations. The cognitive narrative scheme that underlies a story entails the human disposition to interpret the act of an intelligent being as caused by something that precedes the act and as directed towards a goal. Its effectiveness is evaluated in terms of the coherency in a causal chain that starts with what caused the new situation and ends with the result of the action. If the action is successful, this is because it adequately addresses the factors that caused the initial situation, with the right motives and the right means. If an action fails, it is because it neglects the causes, departing from wrong motives or selecting wrong means.

Scholars from different theoretical backgrounds have developed general models of the narrative scheme. Kafalenos combines insights from Todorov and Propp in her scheme that assumes five stages (2006, pp. 1–26). This scheme shows how two causal sequences are meaningfully connected. An intelligent being starts to act when an event changes its environment in such a way that a response is required. This is the first causality. The central action intends to change this situation again. That is the second causality. This action therefore connects both causalities because

well-delineated propositional content, ordered in a specific, (informal) logical structure. In Sect. 7.5, I briefly discuss the issue whether argument theory should or should not consider all discourse formats argumentative as soon as they are approached as an appeal to reason in a critical discussion (a material definition of argumentation).

it is an attempt to redress the disturbance caused by the initial event. From this perspective on actions follows the core of the narrative scheme.

1. There is a certain state of relative rest, balance, equilibrium at the outset (*preparation*).
2. Subsequently there is a disruption of this equilibrium by some event (*complication*).
3. The recognition that there has been a disruption leads to a “task” for a protagonist to try to reinstall a new equilibrium (*transference*).
4. There will be attempts to respond adequately to the disruption and to install a new equilibrium, often opposed by antagonistic forces (*struggle*).
5. This results in failure or in a resolution – a new equilibrium – and in an evaluation (*recognition*).

Children already use the scheme to interpret acts (Mancuso 1986; Sutton-Smith 1986; Brown and Hurtig 1983). The scheme seems part of a universal cognitive apparatus. Labov (1981) observed that besides the elements of this narrative syntagm, two more elements appear time and again in storytelling, indicating its specific explanatory function. Firstly, an audience expects the storyteller to make clear why a story is told. If this *motive to tell* is not obvious from the context or formulated explicitly by the storyteller, the audience will ask the storyteller for it. Closely related to this motive to tell is the lesson stories convey, a message that transcends the story as such. Labov calls this the *epilogue* because when made explicit, it often takes the form of an epilogue.

A motive to tell and an epilogue are part of the cognitive scheme. Both elements indicate that the prototypical narrative not only temporally connects two causalities, but explores the connections in a meaningful way. Kafalenos (2006, pp. 62–103) emphasizes this connection. When rising flood waters threaten homes (complication), the C-actants (the ones who take up the assignment and perform the central action) are named sandbaggers:

The decisions to become a sandbagger links the activity (sandbagging) to the motivation (the flooding), and links the motivation (the flooding) to the activity (sandbagging). Function C creates the causal link between C-actant’s intentional action [...] and the situation that motivates that action [...] (Kafalenos 2006, pp. 63).

The narrative chain is a syntagm that is ordered along a timeline, because causality presupposes time. The cause precedes the effect. The narrative chain starts with the initial equilibrium and (if the struggle is successful) ends with a new equilibrium. The storyteller, however, can start a story at any moment on the narrative timeline and reorder its elements. The storyteller can start *ab ovo*, or *medias in res*, at the moment of the transference, somewhere in the struggle or even during the recognition.

In Sect. 7.4, I demonstrate that Ivens starts with an element from the struggle, then jumps back in time to a scene situated even before the complication, and then emphasizes the transference. If a story has not yet come to an end – for example because the struggle is still going on – the storyteller can speculate about the

outcome, or the possibility of a bad outcome. In that case, these speculations and evaluations are an interpretation. Playing with the relation between narrative order (*sjuzhet*) and plot order (*fabula*) is an important instrument in the construction of the coherence between the two causal sequences.

7.2.2 *Pragmatic Arguments*

The pragmatic argument (Perelman 1959²) is also named the means-end argument or argument from consequences (Walton et al. 2008, pp. 100–102). The pragmatic argument has become dominant in modern society. Most communities nowadays are characterized by a high degree of *pragmatism*, and are relatively less determined by *idealism* or, expressed in negative terms, *dogmatism*. This means that in such communities most proposals for action are evaluated on the basis of their practical outcome (which results in pragmatic arguments), and not on the basis of their cohering with or following from “higher” norms and principles (which would result in arguments based on a normative rule). The pragmatic principle is that action A is preferred over action B if the (expected) expediency of action A is better than that of action B.

The pragmatic argument has a number of subtypes, leading to a different emphasis in its presentation and different subordinate arguments. Firstly, one can evaluate a future action, or an action that has already taken place. Secondly, one can propagate an action or advise against an action. One can propagate an action as it leads to desirable situations, prevents harmful situations, or causes minimal damage. One can advise against an action because it leads to harmful situations, obstructs desirable situations, or, compared with an alternative, accrues greater cost than necessary. Scheme 7.1 represents one positive subtype.

Standpoint	Action A is desirable.
Data	<i>Why do you think so?</i> (1) Action A leads to B and (2) B is a desired situation.
Inference rule	<i>What has A got to do with B?</i> If an action leads to a desired situation, that action is desirable.
Ground	<i>On what is this inference rule grounded?</i> (norm) Act in a way that optimizes gain and minimizes loss.

Scheme 7.1 Positive pragmatic argument

² In March 1957 Chaim Perelman used the term pragmatic argument in a university lecture at University College in the University of London, in French. None other than Sir Alfred Jules Ayer translated the lecture into English. In January 1959 it was published as “Pragmatic arguments” in *Philosophy*.

This general scheme indicates the complexity of the pragmatic argument. It combines a regularity with an evaluation, both of which may need further support. It presupposes the action to be feasible, which may not be evident. Besides this, gains and losses, benefits and costs, always run parallel. So in important pragmatic argumentations, complicated comparative assessments of pros and cons are often needed.³ Finally, nobody accepts the pragmatic principle unconditionally, so it may need further support that no other type of argument overrides the desirability of practicing the action. The list of possible issues, leading to subordinate arguments, therefore includes⁴:

1. Is B indeed a desired situation?
2. Does A indeed lead to B?
3. Is carrying out action A realistically possible?
4. Is the standpoint supported by a balance between benefits and costs?
 - (a) Besides B, what effects does A have and how are these effects valued?
 - (b) Are there risks involved in taking action A, and if so how do these risks need to be evaluated?
5. Is there not a cheaper/more efficient way to achieve B, taking the answers to question 4 into account?
6. Is practicing A consistent with other, fundamental values?

In practice, we recognize the pragmatic argument often as underlying complex and lengthy argumentations because many subordinate arguments can be required to meet possible objections. The scheme with the critical questions reveals that it is hard if not impossible to develop an absolutely decisive, uncontested pragmatic argumentation. Inevitably, humans have to make complex choices based on pros and cons on very different dimensions, and a debate will develop among opponents that contest each other's pragmatic argumentations.

By contrast, in many discourses only a regularity can be expressed, even though the audience immediately senses that the rhetor actually intends to convey a pragmatic argument. This can be understood if one looks at the data in the standard scheme; the first required data is a regularity and the second is a normative statement about its effect. When a rhetor argues “A leads to B” and it is evident that B is

³After a learned exposé about variations of the argument scheme, with examples from a diversity of philosophers, Perelman (1959) concentrates on the problems of assessing a situation in which both sides bring up pragmatic arguments. In particular, he discusses Bentham's utilitarian calculus.

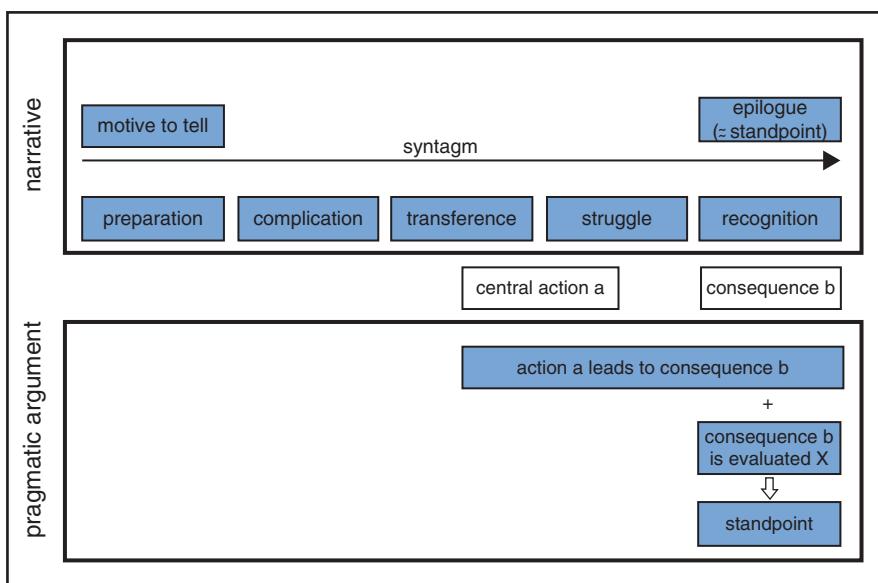
⁴This list of critical questions is more comprehensive than the one given by Walton et al. (2008), p. 333) who only mention question 2 and 4. Of course, question 6 is of a slightly different character than the other questions. One can argue that in all cases the application of an argument begs the critical question whether there is another argument that is more powerful. But that is not the issue here. The issue is whether in the specific domain, pragmatism of a certain kind is accepted, or that the pragmatic norm is overruled by some moral norm. An institution can for example state that any beneficial action that violates an issued moral code is unacceptable, even if its benefits are substantial.

desirable, he does not need to state the second data explicitly, declaring that A is (in principle) a desirable action. So, in many discourses, only the regularity with its supporting arguments will be presented. Discourse interpretation is a process in which audiences activate cognitive schemata and rhetors know they will; the pragmatic argument scheme is especially dominant in our modern societies and therefore audiences are ready to activate this scheme.

7.2.3 Mapping

When we map the pragmatic argument onto the narrative scheme, we see that the scheme of the pragmatic argument overlaps with the struggle and the recognition stages. There is no overlap with the preparation and complication stages, and therefore the transference in the narrative is not transference in the pragmatic argument, but an action. One premise of the argument connects this action with its (expected or observed) consequences and the other premise formulates the evaluation of these consequences (Scheme 7.2).

The mapping scheme indicates that a minimal story is more complex than a minimal pragmatic argument. This is because the narrative scheme contains more related elements than that of the pragmatic argument. More important, the nature of the narrative scheme commands richer descriptions. The central action, as element



Scheme 7.2 Mapping the pragmatic argument on the narrative

in the syntagm, is a motivated action and therefore requires an actor with some psychological identity. The consequences are part of the recognition and therefore require attributing praise or blame to someone or something with an identity. Such commands are absent in the formal scheme of the pragmatic argument.

The mapping explains why both formats are fit to support a standpoint evaluating an action. It also explains why one format can easily summon the other during the cognitive processing of the discourse. A discourse in an argumentative format can summon an underlying story (compare Van den Hoven 2015b, pp. 127–128). Formally, the argument focuses on the effects of the action, but these *effects* include neutralizing the negative force that caused an undesired situation preceding the action. For example: “Performing certain rituals is advisable because it will bring prosperity, and prosperity is desirable” is a very straightforward pragmatic argument. In practice, however, one will encounter extensions such as: “Faithful people performing the rituals will soothe the anger of the Gods and bring prosperity”, indicating the relation of the act (performing the rituals) to what precedes the action. Discourses predominantly employing narrative devices can invite – and are often meant to invite – their audiences to activate the pragmatic argument. Many lengthy documentaries employ a pragmatic format, showing the desirability of an action by showing the unacceptability of a situation for which an action is required. In Sect. 7.4, we discuss an example of a frequently employed relation between narrative, comparison and (pragmatic) argument.

7.3 Comparing the Rhetorical Force of Both Formats

The syntax of the narrative scheme is fit to investigate and understand human actions as an adaptive response to new challenges. A coherent narrative hypothesizes about the causal dynamics that explain observations from reality. Standpoints evaluating the action result from this hypothetical construction. A story taken from the Old Testament (*Numbers* 25) is a prototypical example.

While the Israelites were camped at Acacia, some of the men had sex with Moabite women. These women then invited the men to ceremonies where sacrifices were offered to their gods. The men ate the meat from the sacrifices and worshiped the Moabite gods. The Lord was angry with Israel because they had worshiped the god Baal Peor. So he said to Moses, “Take the Israelite leaders who are responsible for this and have them killed in front of my sacred tent where everyone can see. Maybe then I will stop being angry with the Israelites.” Moses told Israel’s officials, “Each of you must put to death any of your men who worshiped Baal.” Later, Moses and the people were at the sacred tent, crying, when one of the Israelite men brought a Midianite woman to meet his family. Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron the priest, saw the couple and left the crowd. He found a spear and followed the man into his tent, where he ran the spear through the man and into the woman’s stomach. The Lord immediately stopped punishing Israel with a deadly disease, but twenty-four thousand Israelites had already died.

There may have been a number of shared memories. At the time, men had sex with women from another tribe and adapted to their rituals. Tribe members died from

diseases. As a response, some of these men were massacred, including a memorable killing of one of them. The disease then disappears. These primary, embodied memories are organized in a coherent narrative.

Prototypical narratives are anthropocentrically framed. In the totality of circumstances that may be considered condition *sine qua non* for the transference and recognition, human actions are foregrounded. Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron the priest, takes up the assignment to kill the sinners. Struggle is dramatized. One specific man and his wife are singled out. In the narrative we encounter a world with recognizable feelings and responses, real people. These primary, embodied memories are transformed into a coherent sequence that helps to explain them and learn from them. This is the case in this proto-scientific world of the Old Testament as well as in many realms of our modern world.

If a human culture develops standard strategies to respond to complications that disturb an existing equilibrium, reporting can replace. An *a priori*, abstract regularity can account for the choice of a response to a situation. This is the transition from a narrative into a pragmatic argument. A primary discourse world can be transformed into an intellectual, abstract world. We may think of the following two pragmatic arguments as an abstract counterpart of Numbers 25.

It is advisable not to worship any other god than The Lord, because worshipping any other god than The Lord brings down the wrath of The Lord on all people.

It is advisable to kill all who by their behavior brought down the wrath of The Lord, because only killing all who by their behavior brought down the wrath of The Lord can stop the disasters that His wrath brings over the entire community.

This transformation replaces the narrative abductive reasoning (that invites analogical application) with two abstract regularities (that invite quasi-deductive application in an enthymeme). Of course, discussants can disagree about the validity of these general regularities or their application in a specific situation. The scheme of the pragmatic argument in Sect. 7.2.2. sums up several potential issues. But the rhetor claims to rely on this generalized knowledge and to deduce from this knowledge her standpoint.

Contrasting the two formats this analysis emphasizes the different rationalities from which they borrow their justifying force. One can say, referring to the famous concept of Pierre Bourdieu (1987), that the narrative belongs to the habitus in a proto-scientific realm while formal argumentation belongs to a scientific and institutionalized realm. In our days, narratives fit in with the realm of daily life, but also to the realm of the courtroom when we try to understand what has happened (Kjus 2010). Argumentation, in our days, fits in with the realm of modernist, Enlightenment ideology that dominates most of our institutions.

Formulated from a different perspective, one can say that rule-based codification of experiences is required to facilitate the argumentative format. This insight puts the differences between the formats more elaborately. The narrative scheme is prior to the pragmatic argument scheme. Great codifications coincide with changes in the habitus. And the reverse, significant changes in the perception of rationality go

along with changes in the preference for specific discursive practices (Heritier 2014).

These are broad claims that require nuances. But in many realms, this transition is documented. Approaching the relation between narratives and pragmatic argumentation within this framework explains why underlying narratives are often called upon to construct the explanatory force of a pragmatic argument. The argumentative discourse format invites the audience to activate a scenario and mentally develop a storyline (compare Van den Hoven 2015b, pp. 127–133; Bex 2015). One may adhere to the rule that worshipping any other god than The Lord brings down His wrath on all people, but then this rule may still be formatted as a prototypical story. This is why framing by means of a pragmatic argument goes so well with justifying the desirability of the action within the storytelling format. We see this in courtroom practice (Bex 2009; Kjus 2010), as well as in documentaries.

7.4 *The 400 Million*

Joris Ivens's 1939 documentary *The 400 Million* tells the story of a peaceful and prosperous Chinese population (preparation) being invaded and molested by the Japanese (complication); the population fighting against the intruder (transference) winning one battle, suffering revenge, preparing to fight on (struggle), hopefully to restore a new equilibrium in which China can continue to develop into a modern democratic republic (recognition). This documentary film is meant to be read as conveying an appeal to reason. It is a call to the Western world to participate in this struggle and support the Chinese population (“motive to tell”).

The film is rhetorically complex. The pragmatic appeal to reason is not conveyed in a straightforward argumentative format. The documentary opens with a text that employs an argumentative device. It conveys an analogy, supporting the standpoint that “Europe and Asia have become the western and eastern front of the same assault on democracy”. The story is told in five major parts. First, we see the bombing of a Chinese city by the Japanese (2.30–7). Second, we see peaceful China, while a lengthy story is told about its development into a modern democratic republic under Sun Yat Sen (7–16.30). Third, the history of the Japanese aggression is told (16.30–19.30). Fourth, we witness the Chinese reaction, starting a guerilla war, building a modernized army, and training civilians to liberate the country (19.30–39.00). Fifth, a soldier, sergeant Wong, tells the story of the first battle won by the Chinese, the battle of Tai’erzhuang (39.00–51.50). Finally, after the screen has turned black briefly, we return to the Japanese bombing, now understanding that this was the Japanese revenge for their Tai’erzhuang defeat (51.50–54.00). The plot is structured by means of two probing comparisons:

- The horror of the Japanese bombing is directly contrasted with the peacefulness of the Chinese people and the greatness of their history.

- And the courage of the Chinese laymen in the guerilla war is directly contrasted with the cowardliness of Japanese air strikes on civilian people.

On occasion, the voice-over conveys arguments, most pronounced in the final scene, supporting a standpoint that the Chinese will prevail. All these elements together convey the intended evaluation, the “epilogue”.

Before analyzing the relations between these devices, I sketch the context of the documentary to show that the documentary film indeed intends to convey a pragmatic appeal to reason, asserting that the European-Western non-fascist world should identify with and support the Chinese people (Sect. 7.4.1). Then I look at the functional relation between the storytelling and the argumentative parts in supporting the standpoint (Sect. 7.4.2). Finally, I look at the construction of the plot that supports the appeal to reason (Sect. 7.4.3).

7.4.1 *The Standpoint Conveyed by The 400 Million*

“Of the pioneers of documentary film, Joris Ivens can be considered as one of the most emblematic figures” (Aitken 2005, p. 653; entry by Kees Bakker). “Ivens used his camera in his roles as both political activist and humanitarian film maker” (Aitken 2005, p. 432; entry by Kent Taylor Anderson). In 1938, Ivens came to China to shoot *The 400 Million*. He was known as a “cinematic combatant”. A year earlier, he had finished *The Spanish earth*, a documentary about the war of the Republicans against Franco’s Nationalists. Ivens famously stated: “I never pursue passive art and never get interested in pleasing the spectator” (Devarrieux 1979, p. 25); “I am an international combatant expressing thought with films” (Devarrieux 1979, p. 29). These quotes illustrate that Ivens intends to convey and support standpoints about social and political issues by means of his film discourses.

Although Ivens visited China for the first time in 1938, he was not anonymous. He was received by Chiang Kai-shek, Song Meiling (the wife of Chiang Kai-shek) and Song Qinglin (the second wife of Sun Yat-sen, leader of the 1911 revolution). He also met Zhou En-lai who was serving in the Eighth Route Army in Wuhan. During production, Ivens moved between guerilla units, communist party members, and the nationalist army, much to the dismay and suspicion of each faction (Aitken 2005, p. 432). Ivens developed sympathy with the Communist party, becoming a life-long friend of Zhou En-lai, but in the film, he emphasizes the value of the coalition between nationalists and communists. His secret gesture of passing his camera on to the Red Army before leaving China is a significant statement of solidarity but (necessarily) beyond the text of *The 400 Million*.

The shooting of *The 400 Million* took 8 months. It premiered in March 1939, in New York. *The 400 Million* is a classical sound documentary, based on partisan journalism. Ivens used “the film medium to interpret creatively and in social terms the life of the people as it exists in reality” (Rotha 1952). He does not hesitate to

organize a mise-en-scène, synthetically edit separate shots into a narrative, or add fictional elements in an attempt to create more personalized elements. He explores the “narrative regions between fiction and non-interventionist ‘spontaneous’ shooting” (Waugh 2009, p. 15). Ivens’ puts the emphasis on balance – neither “naturalism” nor “re-enactment” should dominate (Waugh 2009, p. 13). Ivens himself described this mode in a note during the filming as “halfway between Hollywood and newsreel” (quoted in Waugh 2009, p. 15).

Bakker summarizes the rhetorical goal of *The 400 Million* as:

The 400 Million is an agitation film for the American people: it was made to raise awareness of the struggle of the Chinese people to prevent America from exporting scrap metal to Japan (who would turn into bombs) and eventually to raise money to help the Chinese people (2009, p. 22).

Indeed, the documentary has a brief scene of the harbor of San Francisco (18.45–19.13). Scrap is shipped. The voice-over condemns this while images of Japanese factories and shooting Japanese soldiers appear.

This iron will fall on a Chinese city. The United States ships 54% of war materials that go to Japan. Scrap iron and broken machinery are melted down in Tokyo and those shells will go into Japanese guns.

Also a brief shot (25.00–25.20) captures a parade in New York during which money is collected, followed by a shot of Song Meiling receiving a \$6000 American cheque.

The dominant standpoint supported by the documentary, however, seems a more general call to the Western world to save the Chinese people from isolation and abandon neutrality. Frank Capra acknowledges this; he later uses portions of Ivens’ film as part of his World War II propaganda film, *Why We Fight* (1942–1945). This standpoint is conveyed predominantly by means of a pragmatic appeal to reason, pointing at severe consequences for the (Western) world if the feudal “ally of the Roman-Berlin axis” destroys this ancient civilization that was well on its way to develop into a modern, Western-oriented, democratic society.

7.4.2 The Pragmatic Appeal to Reason in *The 400 Million*

An important line of pragmatic reasoning in *The 400 Million* is based on evaluating the possible negative consequences of not supporting and the possible gains from supporting the Chinese. No support means ending the democratic development of the largest population in the world, and allowing the Japanese to expropriate enormous resources. Support means maintaining a persistent, successful opposition against the Japanese, saving an ally from the Roman-Berlin axis, which may restore the Chinese democratic modernization project.

The appeal to reason is predominantly conveyed by the story. The narrative and its specific plot organization construct the main elements (see Sect. 7.4.3). The text

at the opening of the documentary and the voice-over at the end frame their verbal messages as predominantly pragmatic.

The very first sentences of the opening text convey a proposition that generalizes the struggle and announces its potentially damaging consequences for everybody.

The war in the Far East is no isolated conflict between China and Japan. It is a struggle involving one fifth of the world's population, and one whose outcome will have tremendous importance in the history of mankind.

The second paragraph urges verbally the good forces to be saved and the evil forces to be prevented from gaining position. Both elements fit into a pragmatic argument, but they are not presented in a discourse structure that is characterized by many argumentative indicators. In the third paragraph, the analogy that Western interests are at stake is explicitly formulated. Together these verbal statements construct the frame that makes the story part of a pragmatic appeal, even before the storytelling starts.

On one side – China – which has enriched the world for 4,000 years with its treasures of art and wisdom. On the other side – the rulers of Japan – determined to capture all China, and with the aid of her immense resources, seize the world for her empire. China was forced into this war to protect its national independence, its freedom, and its precious culture.

On the one side, the Japanese military machine, ally of the Roman-Berlin axis, brutal and merciless. On the other side, just as in Europe, the peaceful masses of humanity – victims of fascist attack.

Europe and Asia have become the western and eastern front of the same assault on democracy.

Final sentences of the voice-over emphasize once more, who are the good and who are the evil, and the relevance of taking part in this conflict. Here, one other element is emphasized that is relevant for the pragmatic appeal. Supporting the Chinese people is feasible, and may restore the positive situation of the past. Notwithstanding the suffering under an oppressive enemy – winning a small battle that leads to a horrific retaliation –, the Chinese people are determined to win. One can recognize this as an answer to question 3 in the scheme of the pragmatic argument, the feasibility.

When the Japanese general staff learned about their loss at Tai'erzhuang they struck back. They took revenge for their defeat. They bombed the open cities of China. They bombed the unarmed population. These are not easy things to look at. But as Americans we had to see them. We saw the building, the destruction, the suffering and the hope of victory. Tai'erzhuang is taken. The Chinese will march all night in the streets to celebrate their first victory. Here is a great people, one fifth of the human race, fighting in defense of their freedom, their fine culture and their independence against the pitiless attack of undeclared war. Will these people win? They believe they can. They say it may take them 10 years or more and they fully realize the suffering they have to endure. But they have weapons to fight with and they understand why they are fighting. In the end those are the things that mean victory. THE END

Even though the verbal elements of the voice-over are limited, it is clear that the opening and the closure are, in particular, used to frame the information conveyed by the discourse as a whole. This supports the position of sceptics on the

impossibility of purely non-verbal argumentation, who often argue that the relations between elements of an appeal to reason are hard to express without using verbal means.

7.4.3 *The Rhetorical Meaning of the Plot Structure*

The appeal to reason is predominantly conveyed by the story. The construction of the plot fills in the pragmatic frame. The choice to break the temporal order of the story (*sjuzhet*) and create a plot (*fabula*) that opens with a scene that is latest in time is significant. After showing the text, the frame turns black for a moment before the first shot appears. We hear a drumroll, followed by composed music, fitting the images. The voice-over, speaking only a few lines every now and then, is a male with a probing but composed voice. In 51 shots, of 4 s on average, we see the bombing of a civilian neighborhood and its effects. In 19 shots of about the same length, we see people on the run, trying to escape from the area. Some of the most dramatic shots are handheld close-ups, positioning the camera as an agent on the spot and involved in the action. Then we turn to an interior area in the far west of China, symbolic of China before the Japanese invasion. Music changes. The editing slows down significantly, using much lengthier shots. The camera is placed on a tripod. The first long panning shot lasts 18 s.

This editing was done by Helen van Dongen who also edited Ivens' *The Spanish earth*. One reason to place the bombing scene at the opening, even though this scene captures later events in the timeline of the story, is to create a rounded unity: the scene is taken up again at the end. It seems the decision was taken quite late in the editing process, but reasons are not documented. Certainly, it creates an optimal contrast between the cruelty of Japanese bombing of women and children, and the peacefulness of pre-invasion China at the onset of its modernization. It can hardly be a coincidence that this order perfectly serves the pragmatic appeal.

Five full minutes of extreme human suffering, constructed from documented materials, was impressive; the innovative use of close-ups by a handheld camera intrinsically calls upon the humanitarian need to support. These images prove the evilness of the Japanese feudal forces against the Chinese population and the suffering of the Chinese population caused by the extreme immorality of the Japanese. It follows from the discussion in Sect. 7.3 that a pragmatic appeal to reason can be tightly interwoven with evaluations based on a general humanitarian norm. In the narrative scheme, consequences of an action can include neutralizing negative forces that caused the necessity of the action. If these forces are considered inherently immoral, the overlap between the purely pragmatic norm and the purely moral norm is a fact. This is what we see happen in *The 400 Million*.

The story, however, also needs to portray China as a recognizable, potentially powerful ally. It needs to show the future of China when it survives the Japanese

assault as desirable for the West. Even more, the subtext of a backwards, feudal China needs to be neutralized. The horrific opening scene allows a subsequent emphasis on the strengths and the positive values of the Chinese culture on its road to modernity, which may make it a strong ally in the struggle against anti-democratic forces. This antithesis is constructed by cinematographic contrasts: contrast in topic, contrast in camera-movement, contrast in music, and contrast in editing rhythm.

After a lengthy episode that conveys these potential gains, the remainder of the film is dedicated to the issue of feasibility. The Chinese people are capable, and determined to prevail: “[...] they have weapons to fight with and they understand why they are fighting. In the end those are the things that mean victory.”

7.5 Conclusion

The formal structures underlying storytelling and pragmatic argumentation make clear that an appeal to reason in a story form can be transformed into an appeal to reason in an argument form, preserving the core of the topical materials. The crucial distinction is that the pragmatic argument projects a generalized regularity onto a current situation, while the narrative gives the storyteller opportunities to explore the situation as embodying a meaningful causal chain, and to employ the coherency of this causality. Evolutionary anthropologists teach us that narratives based on abduction (in which a desired new situation is explained in terms of effectively addressing the presumed cause of the old situation) are told and retold to convey lessons for comparable situations in the future. The narrative flourishes in new situations, unknown or not yet fully understood. The pragmatic argument flourishes in contexts in which established regularities and shared evaluations are available.

In our modern society, we accept many empirically and theoretically grounded models; the pragmatic argument serves as a sign of this scientific rationality. Still, a coherent narrative is a primary way to fit (proposed) actions into our perceived reality (Kjus 2010; Van den Hoven 2015b). This may explain why in many contexts the two formats merge (Bex 2015). An established regularity (with its attached values) corresponds with the epilogue of the narrative.

If we accept the narrative as (a crucial part of) an appeal to reason and accept its complex relation to an argument scheme, then obviously we expect argument theory to deal with the narrative. Scholars have reached similar conclusions concerning non-verbal discourses, as they rethink the limiting focus of argument theories on one prototypical verbal discourse format (Bateman and Wildfeuer 2014; Birdsell and Groarke 2007; Blair 1996, 2015; Dove 2012, 2013; Gilbert 1994, 1997; Groarke 2009, 2015; Kjeldsen 2012, 2015; Roque 2012; Van den Hoven 2012a, b, 2015a, b; Van den Hoven and Yang 2013).

The notion of strategic maneuvering, an extension of the pragma-dialectical framework (Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2006, 2009; Van Eemeren 2010), helps deal with formats that deviate from the prototypical verbal argumentative discourse formats. The core idea in this approach is that a strategic rhetor tries to reconcile both dialectical goals (resolving a difference of opinion in a reasonable way) and rhetorical goals (maximizing effectiveness by choosing and performing dialectically relevant moves in a way that may best convince the prospective audience). Van Eemeren distinguishes three aspects of strategic maneuvering: choices made from the topical potential, adaptation to the audience, and presentational choices (Van Eemeren 2010, pp. 93–127). The same dialectical move can be rhetorically varied by making different choices, maximizing its effectiveness. Arguing the same stand-point with a story or a pragmatic argument would then be considered making (slightly) different choices from a topical potential, combined with making different presentational choices.

This theoretical approach would imply that opting for storytelling (as opposed to a pragmatic argument) as an appeal to reason affects the effectiveness of what would be considered the same dialectical move. In light of the analyses presented above, this does not seem satisfying.⁵ On the contrary, the type of reasoning the formats appeal to differ. The way the narrative constructs causality appeals to abductive reasoning, based on primary ideas about coherence, analogy, or inductive reasoning; meanwhile, the pragmatic argument appeals foremost to (quasi-)deductive reasoning, departing from a generalized regularity and an evaluation as premises that, if necessary, may require further subordinate arguments.

Acknowledging this difference would require a different response from argument theory, at least if one intends to develop a general theory about discursive appeals to reason. It suggests to abandon the idea that every discourse can and should be reconstructed (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004; Van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2009), or standardized (Govier 2010), or dressed (Woods 1995) in the prototypical verbal format, with a well-delineated propositional content, ordered in a specific, (informal) logical structure. The idea that an appeal to reason can be separated from its presentation as such and, more importantly, that this process of reconstruction does not interfere with successive analyses and evaluations of the reasonableness of the reconstructed argumentation, seems grounded on the assumption that the prototypical verbal format covers all that can count as an appeal to reason.

Documentaries and other discourse practices that propagate, advise, or evaluate a human response to a *new* situation (i.e. religious scriptures) utilize carefully con-

⁵ At one point in his book, Van Eemeren seems to share this idea that presentational choices are not neutral towards the dialectical dimension of the discourse: “[R]ecognizing the unbreakable connection between expression and content observed already in antiquity [...] my starting point is that whenever something is at one time expressed differently than it was expressed at another time it is pragmatically no longer ‘the same thing’” (Van Eemeren 2010, p. 119). Taken to its consequences, this would mean that the narrative format and the argumentative format convey, also in Van Eemeren’s view, different dialectical moves and should therefore appear as different arguments in a dialectical reconstruction, potentially influencing the assessment of dialectical reasonableness.

structed discourses that deliberately mix narrative and argumentative formats. Similar observations can be made in courtroom discourses (Bex 2015). It seems advisable to keep in mind Max Black's view on the metaphor:

Somebody seriously making a metaphorical statement [...] might reasonably claim that he meant just what he said, having chosen the words most apt to express his thought, attitudes, and feelings (reprinted as Black 1994: 22).

Reducing the deliberate choice not to use the prototypical verbal format as either abandoning an appeal to reason or as presentational variations that only affect persuasive effectiveness, seems untenable.

Argument theory should develop in a direction that explores varied, complex presentations through which appeals to reason are discursively constructed. The aim is to understand the specifics of each format. The prototypical verbal format should be approached then as one particular format with specific features, among others. Social and cultural analyses such as those presented by Latour (1993) explain the dominance of the prototypical verbal format in our modernist Enlightenment era, while anthropological analyses explain the role of the narrative format in developing human cultures, and developmental psychological analyses explain why the narrative scheme plays a part in construing the rhetorical force of pragmatic arguments.

References

- Aitken, I., ed. 2005. *Encyclopedia of the documentary film*. New York: Routledge.
- Bakker, K. 2009. They are like horses with blinders on. *Studies in Documentary Film* 3: 19–33.
- Bateman, J.A., and J. Wildfeuer. 2014. A multimodal discourse theory of visual narrative. *Journal of Pragmatics* 74: 180–208.
- Bex, F. 2009. *Evidence for a good story. A hybrid theory of arguments, stories and criminal evidence*. Dissertation, Groningen.
- Bex, F.J. 2015. An integrated theory of causal scenarios and evidential arguments. In *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Law (ICAIL 2015)*, 13–22. New York: ACM Press.
- Birdsell, D., and L. Groarke. 2007. Outlines of a theory of visual argument. *Argumentation and Advocacy* 43: 103–113.
- Black, M. 1994. More about metaphor. In *Metaphor and thought*, ed. A. Ortony, 2nd ed., 19–41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Black, J.B., and J.H. Bower. 1980. Story understanding as problem-solving. *Poetics* 9: 223–250.
- Blair, J.A. 1996. The possibility and actuality of visual argument. *Argumentation and Advocacy* 33: 1–10.
- . 2015. Probative norms for multimodal visual arguments. *Argumentation* 29: 217–233.
- Bourdieu, P. 1987. What makes a social class? On the theoretical and practical existence of groups. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32: 1–18.
- Brown, J.B., and R.R. Hurtig. 1983. Children's discourse competence: An evaluation of developmental inference process. *Discourse Processes* 6: 353–375.
- Devarieux, C. 1979. *Entretiens avec Joris Ivens*. Paris: Editions Albatros.
- Dove, I. 2012. Image, evidence, argument. In *Topical themes in argument theory: Twenty exploratory studies*, ed. F.H. Van Eemeren and B. Garssen, 223–237. Dordrecht: Springer.

- _____. 2013. Visual arguments and meta-arguments. In *Virtues of argumentation. Proceedings of the 10th international conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation (OSSA)*, ed. D. Mohammed & M. Lewiński, 1–15. Windsor: OSSA, May 22–26.
- Gilbert, M.A. 1994. Multi-modal argumentation. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 24: 159–177.
- _____. 1997. *Coalescent argumentation*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Gottschall, J. 2013. *The storytelling animal. How stories make us human*. New York: Mariner.
- Govier, T. 2010. *A practical study of argument*. 7th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth.
- Groarke, L. 2009. Five theses on Toulmin and visual argument. In *Pondering on problems of argumentation: Twenty essays on theoretical issues*, ed. F.H. van Eemeren and B. Garssen, 29–239. Amsterdam: Springer.
- _____. 2015. Going multimodal: What is a mode of arguing and why does it matter? *Argumentation* 29: 133–155.
- Heritier, P. 2014. Law and image: Towards a theory of nomograms. In *Law, culture and visual studies*, ed. A. Wagner and R.K. Sherwin, 25–48. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Kafalenos, E. 2006. *Narrative causalities*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press.
- Kjeldsen, J.E. 2012. Pictorial argumentation in advertising: Visual tropes and figures as a way of creating visual argumentation. In *Topical themes in argumentation theory. Twenty exploratory studies*, eds. F.H. van Eemeren & B. Garssen, 29–255. Dordrecht: Springer.
- _____. 2015. The rhetoric of thick representation: How pictures render the importance and strength of an argument salient. *Argumentation* 29: 197–215.
- Kjus, A. 2010. *Stories ate trial*. Liverpool: Deborah Charles Publications.
- Labov, W. 1981. Speech actions and reactions in personal narrative. In *Analyzing discourse: Text and talk. Georgetown University Round Table*, ed. D. Tannen, 217–247. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Latour, B. 1993. *We have never been modern*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Mancuso, J.C. 1986. The acquisition and use of narrative grammar structure. In *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*, ed. T.R. Sarbin, 91–111. New York: Praeger.
- Perelman, Ch. 1959. Pragmatic arguments. *Philosophy* 34: 18–27.
- Roque, G. 2012. Visual argumentation: A further reappraisal. In *Topical themes in argumentation theory. Twenty exploratory studies*, ed. F.H. van Eemeren and B. Garssen, 273–288. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Rotha, P. 1952. *Documentary Film; the use of the film medium to interpret creatively and in social terms the life of the people as it exists in reality* [in collaboration with Sinclair Road and Richard Griffith], 3rd ed. London: Faber and Faber. <https://archive.org/stream/documentaryfilmu00roth#page/n11/mode/2up>. Accessed 31 May 2016.
- Sarbin, T.R., ed. 1986. *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*. New York: Praeger.
- Sugiyama, M.S. 2001. Narrative theory and function: Why evolution matters. *Philosophy and Literature* 25: 233–250.
- Sutton-Smith, B. 1986. Children's fiction making. In *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*, ed. T.R. Sarbin, 67–90. New York: Praeger.
- Van den Hoven, P.J. 2012a. The narrator and the interpreter in visual and verbal argumentation. In *Topical themes in argumentation theory. Twenty exploratory studies*, ed. F.H. van Eemeren and B. Garssen, 257–272. Dordrecht: Springer.
- _____. 2012b. Getting your Ad banned to bring the message home? – A rhetorical analysis of an Ad on the US National Debt. *Informal Logic* 32 (4): 381–402.
- _____. 2015a. Cognitive semiotics in argumentation: A theoretical exploration. *Argumentation* 29: 157–176.
- _____. 2015b. *Gold mining. The art of rhetorical discourse analysis*. Xiamen: Xiamen University Press.
- Van den Hoven, P.J., and Y. Yang. 2013. The argumentative reconstruction of multimodal discourse, taking the ABC coverage of President Hu Jintao's visit to the USA as an example. *Argumentation* 27: 403–424.

- Van Eemeren, F.H. 2010. *Strategic maneuvering in argumentative discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Van Eemeren, F.H., and R. Grootendorst. 2004. *A systematic theory of argumentation: The pragma-dialectical approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Eemeren, F.H., and P. Houtlosser. 2006. Strategic maneuvering: A synthetic recapitulation. *Argumentation* 20: 377–380.
- Van Eemeren, F.H., and P. Houtlosser. 2009. Strategic maneuvering: examining argumentation in context. In *Examining argumentation in context. Fifteen studies on strategic maneuvering*, ed. F.H. van Eemeren, 1–24. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Walton, D., C. Reed, and F. Macagno. 2008. *Argumentation Schemes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Waugh, T. 2009. The 400 Million (1938) and the solidarity film: ‘Halfway etween Hollywood and Newsreel’. *Studies in Documentary Film* 3: 7–17.
- Woods, J. 1995. Fearful symmetry. In *Fallacies: Classical and contemporary readings*, ed. H.V. Hansen and R.C. Pinto, 181–193. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.