

(Good) Arguments are Goal-Directed

In *On Rhetoric* (written ~340-335 B.C.E.), Aristotle remarks that because arguments exist to affect the giving of decisions, arguers must accomplish the following to be successful:

one, they must make their own character look right, and

two, they must put their audience, who are to decide, into the right frame of mind.

To engage in argument, to use symbols (like language), is to engage in a goal-directed activity, defined as an activity where one (or more) hopes to bring about or affect change in others.

There are (in general) four types of goals in any argument:

(1) Discrete Goals

- small steps along the way to the ultimate goal(s)
- not “discreet” (hidden, secret, modest) but discrete in the sense of “constituting a separate entity”; a part of a larger whole

(2) Ultimate Goals:

- the final outcome(s) one strives for

(3) Implicit:

- not stated by the arguer: tacit, unexpressed
- also, oftentimes not consciously known or recognized by the arguer and/or the audience
- often the most common and powerful of all types of goals

(4) Explicit:

- actually written, stated, said, etc.
- consciously recognized by the arguer, and hence, the audience
- somewhat rare or uncommon