

ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Addressing Anticipated Countermoves As A Form Of Strategic Manoeuvring

✘ *Introduction*

Addressing anticipated countermoves is a commonplace practice in argumentative discourse. A speaker in a discussion may anticipate the objections of an opponent and deal with these before the latter expresses them. Likewise, a writer may make explicit to his readers that he does not expect them to take his views uncritically and proceed to address the criticism that he anticipates from them. With the help of the pragma-dialectical concept of strategic manoeuvring, I will investigate the different ways in which this strategy functions in argumentative discourse, both as a dialectical tool for critically testing the arguer's position and as a rhetorical tool by which the arguer aims to provide the strongest possible defence for his position.

1. Addressing anticipated countermoves as a form of prolepsis

Anticipating the opponent's countermoves has been studied in the rhetorical literature in terms of prolepsis or anticipation. Prolepsis is generally defined as a figure of thought by which the speaker anticipates the opponent's objections and accusations (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, Gerbrandy 2001). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) discuss the different ways in which the speaker can enhance the effectiveness of his argumentation when addressing opposing arguments.

Forget (1994) argues that the rhetorical effect of prolepsis is derived from the representation of argumentative roles in an argumentative exchange and that the principle at play in prolepsis is "He who is better should win." The speaker who anticipates an objection will try to present his own thesis as more deserving of winning the exchange. This, Forget explains, proceeds in this way: by advancing one's thesis first and then interrupting it, as it were, by mentioning the interlocutor's thesis, the speaker exploits the value of taking the initiative of debate (1994, p. 72). The counter-thesis does not have the quality of initiating

debate because it occurs later in the discourse (1994, p. 75).

Vincent and Heisler (1999) identify two types of prolepsis: concessive and refutative. Concessive prolepsis serves to reinforce the speaker's position by allowing him to admit the existence of a counterargument but not necessarily to adopt it; it implicitly shows that the speaker reserves an overall positive reception of the counterargument, whether it is real or imaginary, albeit the counterargument is eventually either neglected or removed (Vincent & Heisler 1999, p. 18). This confers on the presentation the quality of *fair-play debate* because the speaker maintains the truth of the conceded argument and does not emphasise that he rejects it categorically (Vincent and Heisler 1999, p. 19). Refutative prolepsis functions differently because by means of it the speaker does not maintain a positive reception of the argument. In this way, Vincent and Heisler (1999) argue, it serves to deactivate and block any possible reaction from the interlocutor.

2. Addressing anticipated countermoves as a form of message-sidedness

Within the empirical framework of persuasion research, the strategy of addressing anticipated countermoves has been studied in terms of message-sidedness. Persuasion scholars classify a message into three types with respect to sidedness: a one-sided message, in which only arguments supporting the point of view defended in the message are mentioned and a two-sided message in which arguments opposing the point of view defended are addressed. A two-sided message is divided into two types: non-refutational and refutational. A non-refutational two-sided message is one in which the communicator mentions a countermove but does not refute it, and a two-sided refutational message is one in which the arguer mentions and then refutes the countermove (Sloan 2001).

Persuasion scholars have sought to find out empirically whether there is a difference in persuasiveness between these forms of message sidedness. It is empirically established that two-sided refutational messages are the most persuasive form, followed by one-sided messages, and that two-sided nonrefutational messages are the least persuasive. This general finding has been captured by O'Keefe's (1999) meta-analysis of more than 40 experiments.

On the basis of this meta-analysis, O'Keefe (2003) concluded that the normative perspective of the pragma-dialectical theory should agree with the results of persuasion-effects research into message-sidedness. O'Keefe (2003) argues that a

refutational two-sided message is more persuasive than its non-refutational counterpart because the former satisfies the dialectical obligation of defending one's standpoint against criticism, while the latter does not. In this paper I shall explain in more detail how this view can be applied to other forms of addressing anticipated countermoves that are generated by the ideal model of critical discussion.

3. A pragma-dialectical framework

In this paper, I present an approach to the strategy of addressing anticipated countermoves that is based on the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation. Addressing anticipated countermoves is viewed in light of the ideal model of critical discussion in which two parties aim to resolve a difference of opinion about the acceptability of one or more standpoints by subjecting them to critical testing (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984, 1992, 2004). The resolution process consists of four stages each of which is characterised by the performance of certain speech acts aimed at the resolution of the difference of opinion. In the confrontation stage, a difference of opinion arises. This can be either mixed or non-mixed. It is non-mixed when one party advances a standpoint and the other challenges it with doubt and mixed when one party advances a standpoint and the other adopts an opposing standpoint towards it. In the opening stage, the parties assume their roles either as protagonist or as antagonist of the standpoint(s), decide on who should assume the burden of proof (first), identify their starting points and agree on the rules of discussion. In the argumentation stage, each party provides arguments to defend his standpoint and to attack that of the other party, and in the concluding stage, the protagonist maintains his standpoint and the antagonist retracts his doubt about it, or the protagonist retracts his standpoint and the antagonist maintains his doubt.

Reaching a mutual resolution of the dispute, however, does not preclude the fact that each party is equally interested in resolving it in his own favour. It is, therefore, assumed that each party will manoeuvre strategically with the argumentation in order to maintain a stronger position and eventually win the discussion. The aim of strategic manoeuvring is to balance one's dialectical commitment to a rational resolution of the dispute with one's rhetorical objective of winning the discussion. It takes place in every stage and consists in exploiting the opportunities provided by each stage to present oneself to be enjoying the strongest position possible vis a vis the other party (van Eemeren & Houtlosser

2000, 2002).

Viewing the practice of addressing anticipated countermoves as a way by which the arguer manoeuvres strategically requires that we determine how it contributes to the arguer's aim of presenting himself to be enjoying a stronger position in the discussion. By making explicit the countermove that he anticipates, the arguer challenges the acceptability of his own position and thereby commits himself to defending his position in a reasonable way against the anticipated countermove. In this paper I argue that any contribution to an advantageous resolution depends on whether or not the arguer discharges his self-imposed obligation of providing a conclusive defence of his standpoint and (arguments) against the countermove that he has anticipated.

4. Addressing anticipated countermoves: a manifestation of the implicit discussion inherent in argumentative discourse

Since the arguer[**i**] —the speaker or writer— is assumed to be defending a standpoint, he will be said to be performing the role of the protagonist of that standpoint. By pointing out an anticipated countermove to his standpoint or argument, the arguer challenges the acceptability of his own standpoint or argument. As Snoeck Henkemans (1992, p. 132) has explained, the countermove mentioned should be regarded as representing the voice of a different party, the antagonist. Addressing an anticipated countermove is thus an argumentative move by which the arguer manifests the argumentative positions pertaining to the propositions around which the implicit discussion revolves. It is a way by which the arguer subjects his standpoint to critical testing.

The countermoves that the arguer may wish to address in his argumentative text are derived from the moves that an antagonist in a critical discussion is allowed to make in order to attack the protagonist's standpoint or argument. In order for the antagonist to counter a standpoint, he may doubt it, advance a counter-standpoint to it or give a counterargument against it. A counter-standpoint can be either a contradictory standpoint (by which the propositional content of the protagonist's standpoint is simply denied) or a contrary standpoint (relating to a different proposition and implying the contradictory standpoint). When the antagonist advances a counter-standpoint of either type he assumes the role of protagonist towards it.

To attack an argument advanced by the protagonist, the antagonist may doubt it,

deny it or refute it with an argument. A denial consists of a proposition that is contradictory to the protagonist's argument, and a counterargument consists of an attack on either the propositional content or the justificatory potential of the protagonist's argument.

Adopting Snoeck Henkemans' (1992) distinction between acknowledging and refuting an anticipated counter-argument, I make a distinction between simply mentioning an anticipated countermove and mentioning and then invalidating an anticipated countermove. I consider counterarguments namely as just one form of 'countermove' that the arguer can mention against his standpoint or argument. The aim is to show that an arguer can do more than either acknowledging or refuting the anticipated countermove and that the different possibilities for invalidating the countermove contribute in different ways to a conclusive defence of his position which is crucial to successful strategic manoeuvring.

4.1 Mentioning anticipated countermoves

What an arguer chooses to mention in his argumentative text depends systematically on what he wishes to defend. If the arguer has expressed a standpoint, the countermove that he will anticipate and address will be one of the countermoves that the antagonist in a critical discussion can make in order to attack the protagonist's standpoint, which I identified above. The arguer may thus anticipate either an expression of doubt, which can take the form of a question, or, as Snoeck Henkemans (1992) has shown, a counter-standpoint which can be either contradictory or contrary, or a counterargument that implies that the potential opponent has reasons not to accept the standpoint.

Likewise, a countermove anticipated against an argument is derived from the possibilities that the antagonist in a critical discussion has for attacking an argument supporting the protagonist's standpoint. The arguer may thus point out doubt, denial or, as Snoeck Henkemans (1992) explained, a counterargument attacking his argument. In this paper, I will, for the sake of concision, illustrate only a few of these countermoves.

Mentioning an anticipated countermove against the standpoint

By mentioning a countermove that the arguer anticipates against his standpoint, the arguer basically acknowledges the existence of a difference of opinion between him as the protagonist of the standpoint and the potential opponent as the antagonist of that standpoint. Snoeck Henkemans (1992, p. 145) has argued

that mentioning an anticipated counter-standpoint against his standpoint is a way by which the arguer represents the confrontation stage in the text. Since in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion the standpoint can be attacked by other countermoves as well, anticipating those countermoves will also be considered as a way by which the confrontation is represented in the text.

The simplest way in which the arguer can address an anticipated countermove to his standpoint is mentioning anticipated doubt about it. Example (1) illustrates this move:

(1) Drinking too much alcohol is, let me put it frankly, dangerous for your health, even though you may not be able to realise that.

In this example, the arguer advances the positive standpoint that drinking too much alcohol may be dangerous for the hearer's health and anticipates that the hearer will have doubt about that by stating that the latter may not realise that danger. The arguer does not attribute to the hearer any standpoint regarding the question as to whether drinking too much alcohol is dangerous for his health. Saying that the hearer may not be able to realise that drinking too much alcohol is dangerous for his health implies that the arguer anticipates the hearer to only not accept his standpoint, but not necessarily to endorse a counter-standpoint against it. The dispute is therefore represented as non-mixed.

In example 2 the arguer mentions a counter-standpoint that he anticipates against his own standpoint.

(2) I believe that hiring a PR expert will spare our organisation a lot of trouble, although some colleagues may object that it will only add more.

That *hiring a PR expert will only add more trouble* is the counter-standpoint that the arguer anticipates, his standpoint being that *hiring a PR expert will spare our organisation a lot of trouble*. *Some colleagues* are anticipated not only to have doubt about the arguer's standpoint but also to have a standpoint of their own. The confrontation represented here is mixed because both the arguer and *some colleagues* are presented to have standpoints about the issue of whether or not hiring a PR expert will spare trouble or add more.

Mentioning an anticipated countermove against the argument

As mentioned earlier, there are three main countermoves that an arguer may anticipate against his argument: doubt, denial or a counterargument. Mentioning an anticipated countermove against one's argument is reconstructed as a way by

which the arguer makes explicit parts of the argumentation stage of the discussion because this strategy takes place when the arguer has already started advancing argumentation in support of his standpoint.

In example 3, the arguer mentions a statement of doubt about his argument.

(3) Excessive sleeping is dangerous because it remains the cause of all sorts of health problems, even though one may question that.

The arguer advances the standpoint that *excessive sleeping is dangerous* and defends this standpoint with an argument, namely that *excessive sleeping remains the cause of all sorts of health problems*. He introduces a challenge to this argument by stating that *one may question that*. The arguer presents himself as the protagonist of a standpoint who has assumed the burden of proof towards it by supporting it with an argument and who acknowledges that a potential opponent may still have doubt about the acceptability of the argument. That *one may question that* indicates that this opponent is not yet in a position to either accept or reject the argument brought forward by the arguer. This amounts to the state of doubt.

Snoeck Henkemans (1992) distinguishes between three ways in which an anticipated counterargument can target the argumentation: the counterargument can be an attack on the acceptability, sufficiency or relevance of the argument. The following is an example in which the arguer mentions an anticipated counterargument attacking the acceptability of the propositional content of his own argument.

(4) I don't think relocating the airport will present a practical solution to the current problems. Although initial estimations predict that the net budget for the project will be less than 30 million Euros, I am sure it will surpass 50 billion.

In this example, the arguer defends the negative standpoint that *relocating the airport will not present a practical solution to the current problems* by arguing that *the net budget for the project may surpass 50 billion*. The fact that *initial estimations predict that the net budget for this project will cost even less than 30 billion Euros* is the anticipated counterargument. This counterargument challenges the acceptability of the propositional content of his argument. It contains a contrary proposition to the proposition of his argument and hence implies its contradictory (i.e. *the net budget for the project will not be less than 30 million*). As Snoeck Henkemans (1992, p. 131) argues, this move causes a mixed dispute to arise at the level of the arguments; that is to say, the argument

attacked becomes a sub-standpoint that is in need of defence.

4.2 Invalidating anticipated countermoves

In the preceding section, I identified some of the countermoves that an arguer can anticipate against his standpoint or argument. By ‘mentioning an anticipated countermove against the standpoint or argument’ I am referring to the argumentative move by which the arguer *only acknowledges* that his standpoint or argument can be challenged. But there is more that the arguer can do about the countermove that he has anticipated than just mentioning it; he can also invalidate it.

When the protagonist advances a standpoint, he, as a rule, commits himself to it and, therefore, will have to defend it with arguments if the antagonist asks him to do so (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992). By anticipating any of the countermoves identified above, the arguer challenges his own standpoint and incurs upon himself the obligation to defend it in order to get the potential opponent to accept it. When the arguer has defended his standpoint with an argument, he also commits himself to the propositional content and the justificatory and refutatory potential of this argument. By anticipating a countermove against his argument, the arguer in effect anticipates that this argument may not suffice to justify the acceptability of the standpoint and that as a consequence more should be done in order to defend that standpoint.

Invalidating an anticipated countermove against the standpoint

As discussed above, the countermoves that the arguer can anticipate against his standpoint are doubt, a counter-standpoint or a counterargument. Having anticipated a counter-standpoint, for instance, the arguer may decide to invalidate it by only stating his doubt about it, denying it, or by providing an argument supporting this standpoint.

In example (5), the arguer invalidates a counter-standpoint to his standpoint by providing an argument.

(5) It will be to our company’s advantage to appoint a new PR expert. There are many colleagues who may disagree with this, but I am sure that—if implemented—such a *plan would solve many problems that we have been unable to solve on our own.*

That *it will be to the company’s advantage to appoint a new PR expert* is the arguer’s standpoint that the opponent (*some colleagues*) is anticipated to

disagree with, that is, to have a contradictory standpoint to. The arguer treats this counter-standpoint as a challenge to the acceptability of his standpoint and thus as a challenge for him to provide an argument for his standpoint. He manifests this through providing the argument that the plan would solve many problems that they have been unable to solve on their own.

Invalidating an anticipated countermove against the argument

A countermove against the argument may take the form of doubt, denial or a counterargument that refutes the argument. As mentioned above, these countermoves, when made explicit, represent a challenge to the argument as a defence for the standpoint. In order to maintain his argument, the arguer will have to invalidate these countermoves.

Example (6) illustrates a case in which an arguer reacts to an anticipated doubt about his argument.

(6) I think that relocating the airport will not present any practical solution to the current problems. The net budget for the project may surpass 100 billion Euros. One may ask, "But isn't that an exaggeration?" Well, similar projects in the past often took more than what the government had allocated for them.

In this example, the arguer invalidates the opponent's doubt about his argument by bringing forward another argument. To support his negative standpoint regarding the relocating of the airport, the arguer provides the argument that *the net budget for the project may surpass 100 billion Euros*. He then anticipates that there could be doubt about this argument. The arguer expresses the anticipated doubt in the form of a question: ("*But isn't that an exaggeration?*"). This anticipated doubt represents a challenge to the propositional content of the argument and therefore to its suitability as a defence for the arguer's standpoint. To maintain this argument, the arguer provides a new argument, namely that *similar projects in the past often took more than what the government had allocated for them*.

Snoeck Henkemans (1992) has argued that when the arguer anticipates a counterargument to one of his arguments the structure of his argumentation will be determined by the nature of this counterargument. If the counterargument anticipated attacks the propositional content of the argument, the argument he will provide to refute this counterargument will give subordinative support for the argument. If the anticipated counterargument attacks the sufficiency of the argument, the defence will be coordinative, and if it attacks the relevance of the

counterargument, the refuting argument will support the unexpressed premise supporting the standpoint (Cf. Snoeck Henkemans 1992, ch. 6). Some countermoves that the arguer may anticipate can attack the argument in the same way counterarguments do. As in example (6), an expression of doubt can challenge the propositional content. This means that structure of the argumentation in this example is subordinative. The same can be said in the case of a denial of the propositional content of the argument.

5. Strategic aspects of addressing anticipated countermoves

It should by now be clear that by addressing an anticipated countermove the arguer seeks to externalise the implicit discussion in such a way that his dialectical position as the protagonist of a standpoint is placed in explicit contrast with another party's position as the antagonist or even as the protagonist of a counter-standpoint. The aim of this move is therefore to reconstruct the discussion in which the protagonist's standpoint is subjected to the critical testing necessary for a rational resolution of the dispute. From this perspective, however, it would follow that, for the sake of this critical testing, the protagonist should be prepared to sacrifice the acceptability of his standpoint by, for example, subjecting his position to countermoves that are too strong to refute. This conclusion is true if one did not take account of the fact that arguers who choose to externalise the countermoves that they have anticipated are normally as much interested in having their position accepted by the (potential) opponent as in critically testing their standpoint and arguments. Therefore, in order to understand this argumentative move, it should also be made clear how it helps in achieving the arguer's aim of getting his standpoint accepted.

One important feature of addressing anticipated countermoves is its *voluntary* character. By addressing a countermove belonging to a real or imaginary opponent[**ii**] before this opponent externalises it himself, the arguer confers what Vincent and Heisler (1999) called an atmosphere of fair-play debate on the presentation because the arguer appears to voluntarily recognise the opponent's right to have his own argumentation taken into account in the arguer's contribution.

In a critical discussion, it should be noted, the role of the protagonist is restricted to advancing a standpoint and providing arguments for it. Anticipating and addressing a countermove before it is made explicit by the antagonist is not an obligation that the protagonist has to comply with. Advancing a countermove is

strictly speaking the task of the antagonist, and only when the antagonist himself has challenged the acceptability of the protagonist's standpoint or argument by means of a countermove is the protagonist required to react to it in order to proceed towards a conclusive defence of his standpoint.

From the perspective of critical discussion (in which the protagonist is required to deal with only the countermoves that have been externalised by the antagonist), the arguer in a real argumentative situation may only anticipate those countermoves that he renders relevant to his standpoint or argument, i.e. those countermoves that, if externalised by the opponent, could present a challenge to his position.

Another important feature of addressing anticipated countermoves is its *directing* effect. Addressing an anticipated countermove can help the arguer to direct the discussion in a way that is most instrumental in attaining an advantageous resolution of the dispute. By anticipating specific countermoves, the arguer prompts certain reactions from the potential opponent. What the arguer suggests by addressing a specific countermove is that the potential opponent should rather come up with a different countermove, if he still does not accept the arguer's standpoint or argument, as the arguer in this case has already dealt with at least one possible countermove. The arguer manages in this way to "block and deactivate" certain countermoves, to use Vincent and Heisler's (1999) terms.

5.1 Addressing anticipated countermoves to the standpoint

In the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, a difference of opinion arises: the protagonist advances a standpoint and the antagonist challenges it with a countermove. Addressing an anticipated countermove to one's standpoint is one way in which this confrontation can be made explicit. However, the arguer in actual argumentative discourse seeks more than just making explicit his and, more crucially, an opponent's countermove. The arguer will also manoeuvre strategically to secure the most beneficial presentation of the confrontation (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2000). Seen from this perspective, the arguer can use the strategy of addressing anticipated countermoves by selecting from the disagreement space certain countermoves and not others. In this way, the strategy helps him to push the whole discussion towards addressing those topics that he prefers. As Kauffeld (2002) argues, by choosing certain issues rather than others for discussion, the arguer obliges the opponent to consider and respond to those issues.

From the perspective of strategic manoeuvring, the simplest countermove to be anticipated against a standpoint is an expression of doubt as through this countermove the potential opponent is merely anticipated to not accept the standpoint (not to necessarily reject it). Since by anticipating doubt the arguer presents the dispute as non-mixed, the potential opponent is presented to have nothing to defend. The arguer presents himself as the only party with anything to defend. The most strategic way for the arguer to deal with anticipated doubt is therefore discharging his burden of proof by providing an argument to defend his standpoint. Only in this way can the arguer maintain his standpoint against the doubt.

Anticipating a contradictory standpoint presents the dispute as single non-mixed. The anticipated countermove takes the form of a denial of the arguer's own standpoint if the latter is negative and a confirmation if it is negative. Pointing out a contradictory standpoint not only puts the opposing party on equal footing with the arguer, as both are shown to disagree on the same issue, but also presents them to have the same obligations, because both are in a position that requires them to defend their respective standpoints. But the anticipated contradictory standpoint is first of all a challenge for the arguer to defend his standpoint. This means that, in order to show that he has reasons to reject the anticipated counter-standpoint maintain his standpoint, he will need not only to doubt or deny this counter-standpoint but also to refute it by means of an argument. In this way, the arguer has shown that his standpoint can be maintained even though it has been opposed. To provide a well-rounded defence of his standpoint the arguer may further need to provide an argument possessing a justificatory potential for his own standpoint.

Through anticipating a contrary standpoint, the dispute is represented as multiple mixed: two opposing standpoints relating to two different propositions are projected. Like in the previous case, the arguer has the option of doubting the anticipated counter-standpoint. In this case, however, he will not be doing anything to justify that his own standpoint can be maintained. He can react to this counter-standpoint by denying it, in which case the move amounts to a rejection of the counter-standpoint but remains short of any justificatory force. Only refuting the counter-standpoint with an argument will help the arguer to show why the anticipated contrary standpoint represents a failed attack on his standpoint. This argument will then be said to possess a refutatory potential

concerning the anticipated counter-standpoint; it justifies why the anticipated counter-standpoint may not be maintained by the potential opponent. At the same time it justifies why the arguer may maintain his standpoint.

Since a contrary standpoint implies the contradictory standpoint, the anticipation of the first implies the anticipation of the second and therefore the options available for the arguer when anticipating a contradictory standpoint are also available to him when anticipating a contrary standpoint. Having anticipated a contrary standpoint, the arguer can proceed to show that even the contradictory standpoint that is implied in it is not tenable, by refuting this contradictory standpoint with an argument. Such a refutation would imply a refutation of the contrary standpoint.

Apart from anticipating counter-standpoints, the arguer may also anticipate a counterargument to his standpoint, which is the fourth option that he has available at this stage. The arguer may choose to only doubt or deny the content of the counterargument and keep his standpoint, but in this case opposition to the counterargument remains unjustified and his standpoint remains unsupported. To strengthen his position, the arguer will need to provide a justification for his doubt or denial by bringing an argument that challenges the refutatory potential of the counterargument. The latter option will allow him to overthrow the anticipated counterargument and keep his standpoint unchallenged.

Having refuted an anticipated counter-standpoint or counterargument, the arguer may find it useful to bring forward new arguments that have a justificatory potential for his own standpoint. This makes the arguer's position appear even stronger, because it will show that he not only overcomes the anticipated counter-standpoint but also possesses reasons for maintaining his own standpoint.

5.2 Addressing anticipated countermoves to the argument

When the arguer addresses an anticipated countermove to his argument, the presentation of the argumentation resulting from the move can be reconstructed as part of the argumentation stage. In this case, addressing the anticipated countermove should be seen as a way by which the arguer seeks to provide a successful defence for his standpoint and to launch an effective attack on the other potential opponent's counter-argumentation.

According to van Eemeren & Grootendorst (2004, p. 151), a conclusive defence of

a standpoint or sub-standpoint is attained if the protagonist “has successfully defended both the propositional content called into question by the antagonist and its force of justification or refutation called into question by the antagonist.” Only in this case is the protagonist in a position to make the antagonist retract his doubt and accept the standpoint. By anticipating countermoves against his argument, the arguer subjects both the justificatory potential and the propositional content of his argumentation to the (potential) antagonist’s criticism.

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst’s (2004) condition requires that if the arguer is to get his standpoint accepted by the opponent whose countermoves he has anticipated, he (the arguer) has to defend this standpoint conclusively against these countermoves. By anticipating a countermove, the arguer not only places himself in a situation in which he has to show how his argumentation justifies the acceptability of his standpoint and refutes the anticipated countermoves, but he also opens for himself the opportunity to demonstrate the strength of his argumentation vis a vis that of the potential opponent to whom the countermove could be attributed. This opportunity, if seized properly, shall be instrumental towards presenting a conclusive defence of the standpoint.

The weakest countermove that the arguer can anticipate against his argument is doubt. Presenting one’s argument as simply an object of doubt suggests that the opponent is not anticipated to be entirely against the targeted argument but simply to question the its acceptability, thereby giving the arguer the opportunity to strengthen it with more argumentation. Doubt may take the form of a critical question targeting the justificatory force of the argument. The most advantageous way of addressing the doubt in this case would be providing an argument that answers the specific critical question that the arguer envisages to arise. If the anticipated doubt targets the acceptability of the propositional content of the argument, then the best way to counter it would be providing arguments supporting the propositional content of the argument about which the doubt has been anticipated.

The arguer can also make it clear that he anticipates a counterargument against the propositional content or justificatory potential of his argument and then attacks either its refutatory potential or its content or both. When the arguer has anticipated a counterargument to his argument, he has different invalidating paths to follow. He can doubt it, deny it or provide an argument to refute it. By

doubting or denying the refutatory potential of the counterargument, the arguer simply shows that he is not ready to give up his argument in the face of the counterargument. The fact that the refutatory potential of the counterargument is doubted or denied does not grant any support for the arguer's argument. It is not a refutation of the counterargument; it is simply a challenge for the potential opponent to give up his counterargument. The arguer still has to provide argumentation in support of his own argument in order to maintain his position.

Providing arguments against the refutatory potential of the anticipated counterargument serves to justify why the counterargument is not a successful attack on the argument and allows the arguer to maintain his argument as a defence for the standpoint. The whole argumentative move undertaken by the arguer would then be said to possess both a justificatory potential for his standpoint and a refutatory potential concerning the anticipated counterargument.

The arguer can also choose to attack the propositional content of the counterargument itself by means of an argument. By opposing the propositional content of the anticipated counterargument, this argument is either contradictory or contrary. When it is contradictory it is simply a denial of the counterargument; when it is contrary it relates to a different proposition and implies the opposite of the counterargument. Challenging the counterargument in either way has the effect of shifting the focus of the argumentation away from the justificatory potential of arguer's argument to the weak propositional content of the counterargument. Dealing with the counterargument in this way serves the arguer to maintain his initial argument as a defence for his standpoint.

Furthermore, the arguer can opt for refuting the anticipated counterargument as insufficient or irrelevant (Snoeck Henkemans 1992, p. 139). By doing this, the arguer clearly presents the initial dispute as mixed because now the potential opponent is anticipated to have a counter-standpoint regarding the issue and that this standpoint is not appropriately defended.

The arguer may always decide to proceed further towards a conclusive defence of his standpoint by providing new arguments supporting his standpoint. However, this may only be helpful towards such defence if the arguer has already refuted the anticipated counterargument. Providing support for his argument without first refuting the anticipated counterargument amounts to evading the burden of

proof towards one's standpoint. The arguer is therefore obliged to react to the challenge imposed by the countermove in order to proceed for any conclusive defence of his standpoint. The rule for a conclusive defence of the standpoint, mentioned above, stipulates that one may only call one's defence conclusive if both the refutatory potential of the counter-argumentation and the justificatory potential of one's arguments have been fulfilled. Leaving the anticipated counterargument unrefuted may not lead towards such a defence, whether or not the arguer provides more argumentation for his position.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued that by considering the practice of addressing anticipated countermoves as a form of strategic manoeuvring it is possible to explain how the arguer can use it to provide the most advantageous defence for his position. I have shown that the options provided by the model of critical discussion determine the different ways in which the arguer can address the countermove he anticipates. Any advantage that this strategic manoeuvre may have for the arguer's position depends on how the arguer chooses to handle the anticipated countermove. Since an anticipated countermove presents a challenge to the arguer's position in the (implicit) discussion, his position is strengthened insofar as he proceeds to invalidate it in order to secure a conclusive defence for his position.

NOTES

[ii] I use the term 'arguer' to refer to the speaker or writer in the text, reconstructed as the protagonist of a standpoint, and I use the term 'opponent' to refer to the person or group of persons to whom the anticipated countermove is (explicitly or implicitly) attributed, reconstructed as the antagonist of that standpoint and in a mixed dispute as also the protagonist of a counter-standpoint. I use the terms 'protagonist' and 'antagonist' only in the context of critical discussion.

² It is namely not so important whether this opponent exists or not. To avoid any confusion, I use 'potential' to refer to both 'real' and 'imaginary' opponent.

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