ISSA Proceedings 1998 – ‘Blocking The Enthymeme’ – Does It Unblock Identity Problems In Argumentation?

“There are some men. . . so wild and boorish in feature and gesture, that even though sound in talent and art, they cannot enter the ranks of the orators (Cicero 1942, 1988: 81).”

This is a quote from Cicero’s *De Oratore*. Cicero argued that appearance trumps oratorical skill, thereby keeping otherwise articulate people from being able to effectively use their discursive powers. Cicero did not suggest that these “wild and boorish” men would be unsuccessful orators, instead, their appearance served as an insurmountable barrier forcing their silence. While acknowledging the effect of a speaker’s appearance on a rhetorical situation, Cicero removes appearance from the realm of rhetoric. This position is consistent with rhetorical theory both before Cicero and today.

The appearance of a speaker has been largely ignored within the field of rhetoric. When appearance is addressed, it usually serves as background information rather than an analytic focal point. One reason for this may be that much of rhetorical criticism engages texts that are in written form and removed from the original speech situation. This explanation is inadequate because text-based rhetorical criticism allows contextual readings, based on both textual and extra-textual historical information. Therefore, there must be another reason. I hypothesize that appearance is not considered rhetorical. When I use the term rhetorical, I am referring to an Aristotelian definition of rhetoric. According to Aristotle, rhetoric is composed of arguments constructed by the speaker during the speech (artistic proofs) made up of enthymemes and examples. I turn to Aristotle in part because his well-known handbook, The Rhetoric, is the oldest known treatise on rhetoric, and because his theory of rhetoric serves as the cornerstone of the contemporary incarnation of rhetorical studies.

Aristotle did not discuss the physical appearance of orators. He argued that a speaker's character (*ethos*) is constructed during the speech with words (Aristotle 1954, 1984: 24). Aristotle maintained that there was a clean separation between a person's public identity and his/her private identity. It is also important to note that the cultural perspective from which Aristotle wrote required that to be an orator one must be a male Greek citizen. The specific appearance issues with which I am concerned, namely race, gender, and ethnicity, were not relevant in ancient Athens.

However, it is time for rhetoricians to stop regarding appearance issues as being the realm of rhetoric and, therefore, not our theoretical responsibility. Visual characteristics can, and do, prevent otherwise articulate speakers from effectively addressing audiences. In the multi-cultural world in which we live, it cannot be the case that discourse is only persuasively powerful for those born looking a certain way. If rhetoric, as a field of study, dooms to failure all people who are not completely void of non-dominant features, then the field itself is doomed.

Fortunately, appearance does function rhetorically. If we understand how it works, we can create rhetorical strategies which will allow all people, regardless of their appearance, to use their discursive powers effectively. A speaker's appearance, although unchanging, has different meanings to different people in different situations. According to Stuart Hall, race (and by extension gender and ethnicity) are "floating signifiers." Hall's "floating signifiers" are signifiers whose meaning can never be fixed because they are based on relations not essences (Hall 1996). The inability to fix the signification of a person's appearance makes it contingent. This contingency designates appearance as potentially rhetorical. In order to understand why appearance can be understood as rhetorical we must understand what exactly rhetoric is. Aristotle contended that different methods of argumentation beget different types of understanding. According to Aristotle, there are three methods of argumentation: demonstration, dialectic, and rhetoric.

Demonstration is a scientific procedure for discovering and demonstrating universal non-changing verifiable truths. Demonstration can be composed of inductive or deductive (syllogistic) reasoning. Induction constructs a conclusion based on numerous pieces of specific evidence. For example, by examining many individual orchids and determining that they do not smell, a conclusion that all orchids are odorless is inductively construed. On the other hand, deduction is the process of moving from major premise, to minor premise(s), to a conclusion. For example, "any animal that breathes through its gills is a fish. A tuna breathes through gills. Therefore, a tuna is a fish."

Although dialectic argumentation is also composed of inductions and deductions, it differs from demonstration as it is a process of critique rather than a scientific process of discovery. Argument through dialectic involves a conversation between the dialectician (speaker) and the interlocutor (audience). The dialectician asks the interlocutor a question. If they agree on the answer, the answer becomes a premise and the argument can continue. Dialectic argumentation works inductively when a speaker asks a series of related specific questions and uses the answers as the foundation for a conclusion. Such as, "did your friend pass Introduction to Argumentation? Did your roommate pass Introduction to Argumentation? Did your sister pass Introduction to Argumentation? Did your classmate pass Introduction to Argumentation?" Consecutive affirmative responses allow the speaker to effectively argue that the interlocutor will also pass the introductory course on argumentation. Deductive dialectic occurs when the interlocutor asks questions the answers to which provide the major and minor premises. For example, the dialectician may begin, "do you think Meryl Streep makes good movies?" After getting an affirmative answer, the dialectician asks "was *Out of Africa* a Meryl Streep movie?" If the answer is again affirmative, the dialectician can deductively conclude that the interlocutor will agree with the conclusion that *Out of Africa* is a good movie. Because dialectic argumentation uses a "human" rather than scientific approach to creating the premises, dialectic argumentation produces probable truths rather than universal truths.

The third method of argumentation is rhetoric. Unlike demonstration and dialectic, rhetoric does not produce a truth of any kind. It does not use induction or deduction. Rather, a rhetorical argument is composed either of examples or enthymemes. If a rhetor wanted to make the argument that President Clinton lied about his affair with Monica Lewinsky, she might use as an example the fact that he previously lied about having an affair with Gennifer Flowers. The rhetor assumes that the audience will be persuaded that the example about Flowers is representative enough to warrant the conclusion that he lied about the affair with Lewinsky. An example can be viewed as a truncated induction with only one piece of powerful evidence rather than multiple minor related pieces. Similarly, an enthymeme can be seen as a syllogism, except that either the major premise, minor premise or conclusion, is "missing." The missing element(s) is not orally provided by either the speaker or the audience. Rather, it is supplied as a silent understanding between the parties involved. For example, an enthymeme is constructed when a speaker says: "more women die of breast cancer each year than all of the American soldiers that died in the Viet Nam War." The premise that

a large number of soldiers died in the war is an unspoken understanding between the speaker and the hearer. Likewise, both parties are brought to the silently agreed upon conclusion that too many women are dying of breast cancer each year. The use of examples and enthymemes often involves using far less propositions than is used in demonstration or dialectic. Aristotle explained, "[f]or if any of these propositions is a familiar fact, there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself (Aristotle 1954, 1984: 28)." It is this process of the audience silently responding to the speaker that makes an argument rhetorical. By relying on commonalities between the speaker and the audience, an enthymematic argument appears to be unable to produce new ideas. Given that the speaker relies on the audience to fill in the missing premises and/or conclusions, it is possible that enthymemes may merely reinforce and disseminate prejudice.

In order to clarify how a rhetorical enthymeme functions I will lay out an obvious example, that of the stereotype. George P. Boss gave the example of the stereotype that Jewish people are thought to be, "shrewd, mercenary, industrious, grasping, intelligent, and ambitious (Boss 1979: 25)." Boss argued that when a speaker says, "Joe Greenblatt is a Jew. What else could you expect (Boss 1979: 25)?" the speaker has verbalized the minor premise. The minor premise, according to Boss, inspires the listener to "create[d] the major premise, 'All Jews are shrewd, etc.,' and the conclusion that 'Joe is shrewd, industrious, etc.' (Boss: 1979: 25)." The minor premise, the articulation of Joe's identity, engages the audience. It invites them to construct the rest of the enthymeme using their own ideas about Jewish people.

This process works similarly for visible identities. In Boss' example the only verbalized part of the argument is the minor premise: "Joe Greenblatt is a Jew." When dealing with visible identities this verbal naming is not required to instigate the enthymeme. When a speaker is visibly female or black, the minor premise "Robin is a woman" or "Samantha is black" is not spoken. Although unspoken, the identity is known to the audience and allows the audience to create a major premise, based on stereotypes associated with that identity, and a conclusion that the individual has those stereotyped traits.

Former United States Representative of Texas, Barbara Jordan, is an excellent case in point. Barbara Jordan, an African-American women, was a champion debater, trained as a lawyer, and was a successful politician. In 1976, she gave a keynote address at the Democratic National Party's convention. At the

convention, the party nominates its candidates for president and vice-president and articulates the party's platform. The keynote speaker(s) is responsible for expressing the essence of the platform not the details. In 1976, Jordan was not the only keynote speaker. She was balanced by a white man: United States Senator from Ohio, John Glenn. Glenn is famous for being the first American to orbit the globe.

Jordan opened her 1976 Democratic Convention keynote address with the statement: "there is something different about tonight. There is something special about tonight. What is different? What is special? I, Barbara Jordan, am a keynote speaker (Jordan: 1976: 359)." This statement does not make sense when read as disembodied words. Every keynote address is made by someone, usually someone who has not given it before, making it a unique experience. Why did she focus on the fact that she was the speaker?

Jordan immediately clarified her questions in her next utterance: A lot of years have passed since 1832**[i]**, and during that time it would have been most unusual for any national political party to ask that a Barbara Jordan deliver a keynote address . . . but tonight here I am. And I feel notwithstanding the past that my presence here is one additional bit of evidence that the American Dream need not forever be deferred (Jordan 1976: 359).

Jordan never states exactly what it is about her that would have made it "most unusual" for her to be giving the speech. She presents her selection as if it were obvious. In doing so she invites, if not demands, her audience to infer their own conclusion. She asks them: what is the obvious thing about "a Barbara Jordan" that would make her selection as keynoter an "unusual" choice?

Looking at her, they decide it is because she is a black woman. By filling in the premise that black women have been kept from delivering keynote addresses, Jordan establishes the fact that her audience was constructing enthymemes regarding her race and gender, similar to the "Joe is a Jew" example. Instead of allowing her audience to use her appearance to unconsciously prejudge her, she forced them to face their own prejudices. In doing so, she created a new enthymeme that suggested that her race and gender was a symbol for the essence of the new Democratic Party and its platform.

This example illustrates how an enthymeme could exist entirely within the audience's mind. In the mind of the audience, it exists, in its entirety, before the speech begins. This type of an argument, where there is no collaboration between

the speaker and the audience, seems more akin to demonstration than rhetoric. This is exactly the reason appearance issues are not seen as rhetorical. People's preconceived opinions about appearance have an argument structure that precedes the speech situation making it an *inartistic proof* not an *artistic proof*. Given this understanding of how unspoken enthymemes can be constructed merely by viewing a person it would seem that all a speaker could do is block the audience from being able to construct the enthymeme.

Kathryn Olson and G. Thomas Goodnight in their article, "Entanglements of Consumption, Cruelty, Privacy, and Fashion: The Social Controversy Over Fur," offer "blocking the enthymeme" as positive oppositional strategy (Olson and Goodnight 1979: 250). Olson and Goodnight present the controversy in the United States in the 1980's and 90's over the wearing of animal fur. They identify two enthymemes as obstacles to the anti-fur advocates position. These two enthymemes are:
1. it is acceptable to use animals for clothing as long it is done humanely (Olson and Goodnight 1979:259) and
2. the wearing of fur reflects positively on the wearer in terms of wealth, status, and/or glamour (Olson and Goodnight 1979: 262). Olson and Goodnight found that the anti-fur advocates successfully engaged in an opposition strategy which they called "blocking the enthymeme." They explained that:

Whereas the Aristotelian enthymeme accomplishes the end of persuasion by affiliating the claims of the speaker to the conventional knowledge or opinions of an audience, oppositional argument functions to block enthymematic associations and so disrupt the taken-for-granted realm of the uncontested and commonplace. So, oppositional argument unsettles the appropriateness of social conventions, draws attention to the taken-for-granted means of communication, and provokes discussion. The work of oppositional argument, thus, is not 'adjusting ideas to people and . . . people to ideas' as much as rendering evident and sustaining challenges to communication practices that delimit the proper expression of opinion and constrain the legitimate formation of judgement within personal and public spheres (Olson and Goodnight 1994: 250).
This oppositional strategy of "blocking the enthymeme" seems to describe the strategy employed by Jordan in her 1976 keynote address. Clearly she is blocking enthymematic associations and disrupting taken-for-granted conclusions. She is unsettling the appropriateness of social conventions and provoking discussion.

Finally, I believe her speech was a sustaining challenge to communication practices that constrain the legitimate formation of judgement within personal and public spheres. Given the effectiveness of Jordan's speech and the theoretical possibilities of "blocking the enthymeme" as an oppositional strategy, it would seem to be the strategy of choice for responding to appearance constraints in a rhetorical situations.

I have found four dominant strategies which speakers use to reduce the negative effects of their appearance: separatism, anonymity, physical transformation (recasting), and discursive strategies by "blocking the enthymeme." Even though all four block enthymemes around appearance only the discursive strategy offers a way for people in a multicultural and gendered world to speak from within their bodies. The first three strategies allows speakers to express ideas but not from within their marked bodies. Separatism is a strategy where the speaker chooses to speak only with those who will not be hostile to her appearance, such as, when a woman speaks to an entirely female audience. Anonymity refers to a situation in which a speaker engages in discourse when her body is not in the scene. Examples of this include writing, computer mediated communication, speaking over radio waves, or puppetry. Physical transformation occurs when a speaker alters the audience's visual experience of the appearance's appearance. Dressing in drag is an example of this strategy, as is the long-term deception carried on by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to hide the extent of his physical infirmity. Finally, in the discursive strategy, the speaker makes a verbal argument in which her appearance is a premise and the effect of the appearance on the rhetorical situation is the conclusion.
All four of these strategies have the ability to be effective and all four of them engage in "blocking the enthymeme." The strategies of separatism, anonymity, and physical transformation "block" the preexisting enthymeme, but they do not replace it with a new enthymeme. Rather than take the minor premise from the audience and construct an argument for a favorable conclusion, they accept the audience's prejudice and work around it by attempting to "block" the audience from using the premise to reach a "prejudicial" conclusion. Accordingly, these strategies are non-rhetorical.

Take the enthymeme:
The speaker is visually an X
All X's are Y

The speaker is Y

The speaker who employs separatism avoids a situation were Y has a negative value by refusing to speak to certain audiences at all. By using either the anonymity strategy or physical transformation, the speakers prevents the audience from knowing that she is an X thereby completely avoiding the association of the X identity with the Y characteristic. All three strategies successfully block audiences from physically seeing the speaker and therefore from drawing negative conclusions based on their visible identities.

However, the ultimate effectiveness of these strategies is limited. First, such strategies are not always possible. If a black woman wants to be able to give the televised keynote address at the Democratic National Party, she can not engage in separatism, anonymity or physical transformation. Second, they are temporal solutions.

These strategies do not offer "sustaining challenges to communication practices that delimit the proper expression of opinion and constrain the legitimate formation of judgement within personal and public spheres (Olson and Goodnight 1979: 250)." Every time a speaker's body is visible she will be confronted with the same problem. Third, these strategies accept the prejudicial interpretation of the speaker's appearance instead of enacting the idea that a visible identity may have different meanings to different audiences in different situations. These three strategies do not allow for a rhetorical transformation of the audience's ideas.

In contrast, the discursive strategy does not only "block" the enthymeme, it replaces it. The minor premise (the appearance) remains in tact, and the major premise (the stereotype, preconceived notion or prejudicial belief) is blocked when the speaker argues that the audience's preconceived ideas about the speaker's visual identity does not take into account all the specifics of the rhetorical situation. Thus, the distinction between this strategy and the other three is that the discursive approach blocks the enthymeme by replacing the major premise with a new premise. Using discourse, the speaker argues that the audience should reinterpret the speaker's appearance in terms of the specific speech situation. When Barbara Jordan gave the keynote address, she used the fact that she was a woman of color as evidence of the Democratic Party's progressive platform. Moreover, she took the audience's predisposition regarding her appearance, and used those prejudices as premises for a new enthymeme with a favorable conclusion regarding the party's future. The

discursive approach is based on the belief that while a person's appearance is a constant (inartistic proof), the interpretation of the meaning of that appearance is contingent (artistic proof) and able to be rhetorically constructed. By offering an alternative major premise, the speaker directs the interpretation of her appearance resulting in a positive enthymematic conclusion.

Olson and Goodnight hint that successful blocking of the enthymeme requires replacing the enthymeme:
[t]o block audience completion of this enthymeme, anti-fur advocates invert the valence of fur from a social positive to a social negative. If the move is successful, people will be deterred from uncritically supplying the unspoken assumption that a fur garment comments on its wearer in an unambiguously positive way (Olson and Goodnight 1979: 262).

Clearly Olson and Goodnight are not arguing that "blocking the enthymeme" is enough. A successful speaker must not only block the enthymeme (through use of separatism, anonymity and physical transformation) but must also replace the enthymeme in order to sustain challenges to communication practices that delimit the proper expression of opinion and constrain the legitimate formation of judgment within personal and public spheres (Olson and Goodnight 1979: 262).
Accordingly, the field of rhetoric must begin to acknowledge that enthymemes do not need to be verbal and that appearances can function enthymematically. Once we embrace the idea that a speaker's visual identity can be rhetorically constructed, we can find rhetorical solutions to appearance based obstacles. Enthymemes which would otherwise prevent the "wild and boorish" from speaking, can be blocked and replaced with powerful rhetorical arguments. All people throughout the world can learn to discursively overcome appearance issues and communicate effectively.

NOTES
i. 1832 was the year of the first Democratic National Convention.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Students' Skill In Judging Argument Validity

1. Introduction

Within the context of a national assessment study into argumentation skills a large number of paper-and-pencil tests were administered for the measurement of receptive and productive argumentation skills. This study revealed large individual differences. Students vary considerably in their skills in identifying and analysing argumentation (cf. Oostdam 1990; Oostdam & Eiting 1991; Van Eemeren, De Glopper, Grootendorst & Oostdam 1995) as well in their skills in producing argumentation (cf. Oostdam, De Glopper & Eiting 1994; Oostdam 1996). Obviously the cognitive field of argumentation skills is as heterogeneous as the cognitive fields of other language skills such as reading, writing, speaking and listening (cf. Oostdam & De Glopper 1995). In oral and written arguments language users make an appeal to diverging knowledge and skills.

In this article we will focus on the paper-and-pencil test for the measurement of students' skill in judging argument validity. The test has been constructed according to a facet design in which the different facets define a specific form of valid and invalid arguments. Representative samples of students in secondary education were tested: grade nine students in junior vocational and lower general

secondary education, grade ten students in higher general secondary education and grade eleven students in academic secondary education. The following research questions will be addressed: 'To which degree are individual differences in skill in judging argument validity substantial and correlated with grade and school type?', 'To which degree are arguments correctly identified as valid or invalid?' and 'Do different types of valid and invalid arguments invoke different cognitive components or processes?'.

2. Research questions

In the pencil-and-paper test for judging argument validity we were concentrated on the students' skills in evaluating the argument validity of four types of argumentation: a syllogistic argumentation based on all-premises (e.g. 'All A are B. All B are C. So: all A are C'), a syllogistic argumentation based on some-premises (e.g. 'All A are B. Some C are A. So: Some C are B'), the modus ponens ('If P than Q. P. So: Q') and the modus tollens ('If P than not Q. Not Q. So: not P'). In former empirical research into argumentation skills we revealed considerable evidence for individual differences in students' performance in identifying and analysing argumentation. Therefore we would like to know whether individual differences also exist with regard to the judging of argument validity. Moreover we were interested in the correlation between the school type students visit and their ability of judging argument validity. After primary school students are referred to the different school types in Dutch secondary education on the basis of their general cognitive skills. It may be expected that occurring differences in argumentation skills correlate with differences in the general cognitive abilities of students. This assumption leads to the following research questions:

1. How substantial are the individual differences in judging argument validity?
2. To which degree are the individual differences in judging argument validity correlated with the type of school attended by the students?

Furthermore we were interested in effects on task difficulty of the different factors, type of argumentation and validity of argumentation, which are systematically manipulated by means of the facet design. This addresses the following research question:

3. What are the effects on task difficulty of the factors type of argumentation (syllogistic argumentation/modus argumentation) and validity of argumentation (valid/invalid)?

Finally we want to address the question whether the judging of different types of

argumentation measure one single underlying skill or different cognitive skills or components. This leads to the question:
4. Do different types of valid and invalid argumentation invoke different cognitive skills or components?

3. Design

A paper-and-pencil test has been constructed in order to test students' skills in judging argument validity. The test contains a series of multiple choice items which can be objectively scored. The assumption is that students have greater command of a specific skill if they make fewer mistakes.
Test items have been constructed by means of a facet design (see figure 1) in which each cell defines a certain form of appearance of syllogistic argumentation (with all-premises or some-premises) and modus argumentation (modus ponens or modus tollens). The use of a facet design optimises the content validity of a test and makes it possible to examine the effect of the facets systematically.
The items in the test contain two premises and a conclusion (e.g. 'If you cannot handle money, than you are no businessman. Quinten cannot handle money. So Quinten is no businessman'). There is little variation in length of the sentences. The style and level of abstraction are such that students can readily understand sentence meaning. In order to prevent sequence effects the presentation of the items was randomised. The test instruction had to be read by the students without any interference from the teacher. The concept of valid and invalid argumentation was defined with the help of examples. Furthermore, some examples of items were presented to demonstrate the test task. It was emphasised that there was no time-limit. The test contained 32 multiple-choice items. For the construction of the test the following 16 cells were distinguished (see Scheme 1). Each cell was filled in with two items.

Scheme 1: Definition of cells with the factors type of argumentation (syllogistic/modus) and validity of argumentation (valid/invalid)

Syllogistic argumentation		Modus argumentation	
Valid	Invalid	Valid	Invalid
All-premises All A are B All B are C So: All A are C	*All-premises* All A are B All B are C So: All not A are not C	*Modus ponens* If P then Q P So: Q	*Modus ponens* If P then Q Not P So: not Q
All-premises All A are B No B are C So: No A are C	*All-premises* All A are B No B are C So: Not all A are C	*Modus ponens* If P then not Q P So: not Q	*Modus ponens* If P then not Q Not P So: Q
Some-premises All A are B Some C are A So: Some C are B	*Some-premises* All A are B Some C are A So: All C are B	*Modus tollens* If P then Q Not Q So: not P	*Modus tollens* If P then Q Q So: P
Some-premises Some A are B No B are C So: Some A are not C	*Some-premises* Some A are B No B are C So: Some C are A	*Modus tollens* If P then not Q Q So: not P	*Modus tollens* If P then not Q Not Q So: P

Scheme 1: Definition of cells with the factors type of argumentation (syllogistic/modus) and validity of

argumentation (valid/invalid)

An example of a valid syllogistic argumentation with all-premises (All A are B. All B are C. So: All A are C) is: ‘Everybody who plays tennis, is sporting.
All people who are sporting are in a good condition.
So, people who play tennis are in a good condition’.

An example of an invalid form of this type of syllogistic argumentation is:
‘All clothing of good quality has a long life duration.
All clothing with a long life duration is expensive.
So, all clothing with a bad quality, is not expensive’.

A valid syllogistic argumentation with a some-premise (All A are B. Some C are A. So: Some C are B) is for example:
‘All pikes are greedy.
Some fish are pikes.
So, some fish are greedy’.

An invalid form of this type is:
‘Everybody who loves sensation is curious.
Some journalists love sensation.
So, all journalists are curious’.

Examples of valid and invalid modus ponens are:
‘If it rains the laundry gets wet.
It’s raining cats and dogs.
So, the laundry gets wet (valid)’ and

‘If it is the queens birthday, all the houses are beflagged.
Today it is not the queens birthday.
So, today the houses are not beflagged (invalid)’.

Examples of valid and invalid modus tollens are:
‘If the neighbours are at home, their car is at the drive.
Right now their car is not at the drive.
So, the neighbours are not at home (valid)’ and

‘People who adore sun bathing go on holiday to Greece.
Marius goes on holiday to Greece.

So, Marius adores sun bathing (invalid)'.

4. Subjects

The test was administered within the context of a national assessment in the pre-final grades of secondary education. Representative samples of students were tested: grade 9 students in the junior vocational (J-VOC) and lower general (LO-GEN) streams, grade 10 students in the higher general stream (HI-GEN) and grade 11 students in the academic stream (ACA). For the purpose of this study additional samples of grade 9 students from the higher general and the academic stream were tested, thus allowing for an unbiased answer to research questions 1 and 2. Research questions 3 and 4 are answered on the data of the main sample. Three-stage random samples were drawn: within each sampled school, one classroom was sampled and within each classroom the tests were administered to a sample of at least 10 students.

Table 1: Main and additional sample: school type, grade level, modal student ages, N of schools, N of students

Sample	School Type	Grade	Modal Age	N Schools	N Students
Main	J-VOC	9	15	34	318
Main	LO-GEN	9	15	27	415
Main	HI-GEN	10	16	39	492
Main	ACA	11	17	32	356
Additional	HI-GEN	9	15	9	134
Additional	ACA	9	15	7	91

Table 1: Main and additional sample: school type, grade level, modal student ages, N of schools, N of students

5. Results

5.1 Individual differences

The first research question is answered by computing standard errors of measurement for individual test scores. For the grade nine strata the mean score, standard deviation, reliability, standard error of measurement and the 95% confidence interval was calculated (see table 2). The results show that individual differences are substantial
in the grade nine sample.

Grade nine students on average evaluate 19 out of 32 items correctly. The standard deviation in this group is as large as 4.48 points. The standard error for individual test scores is 2.57 in size, which indicates that observed scores which differ 10 score points indicate true individual differences within a 95% confidence interval (the 95% interval for a true score is constructed as the observed score plus or minus the product of the standard error of measurement and the z-value

corresponding to the 95% confidence level).

5.2 Individual differences and school type

With respect to research question 2 the correlation between grade nine students' school type and their argumentation skills was computed in the following manner. For each of the four strata a dummy variable was constructed, indicating for each individual student strata membership. The multiple correlation of the four dummy variables and the total scores on the test is .43 (p=.000), which shows that the correlation between school type and judging argument validity is substantial. In terms of effect sizes, the effect of school type is between medium and large. The differences in general cognitive capabilities and achievement of students that underlay the school type differences appear to be associated with their skill in judging argument validity.

Table 2 Size of individual differences in judging argument validity: mean score, standard deviation, reliability (Cronbach alpha), standard error of measurement and 95% confidence interval for grade 9 sample (N=958)

Mean	19.13
Standard deviation	4.48
Reliability	.67
Standard error of measurement	2.57
95% confidence interval	± 5.04

Table 2: Size of individual differences in judging argument validity:
mean score, standard deviation, reliability (Cronbach alpha), standard error of measurement and 95% confidence interval for grade 9 sample (N=958)

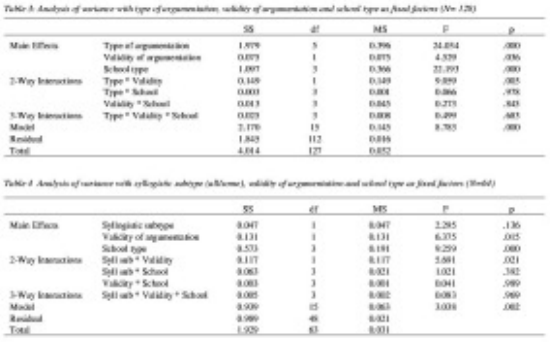
5.3 Effects on task difficulty

Research question 3 is answered by means of analysis of variance. The proportion correct responses for the four strata of the main sample was calculated for each item. The resulting item level data (n= 128, i.e. 32 items x 4 groups) were input to an analysis of variance with type of argumentation, validity of argumentation and school type as fixed factors (see Table 3).

Table 3: Analysis of variance with type of argumentation, validity of

argumentation and school type as fixed factors (N= 128)

The results show significant main effects of the factors type of argumentation, validity of argumentation and school type. The modus argumentation is easier to evaluate than the syllogistic argumentation and valid argumentation is easier to evaluate than invalid argumentation (see table 6). Furthermore there is a significant interaction effect between type of argumentation and validity of argumentation. In the case of valid argumentation modus ponens and modus tollens argumentation is easier to evaluate than syllogistic argumentation; in the case of invalid argumentation there is no difference in difficulty (see table 6).
To investigate whether there are also significant differences between the evaluation of the two subtypes of syllogistic argumentation and modus argumentation two further analyses of variance were carried out (N= 64, i.e. 32 items x 2 groups), one with syllogistic subtype (all-premises versus some-premises), validity of argumentation and schooltype as fixed factors (see table 4) and one with modus subtype (modus ponens versus modus tollens), validity of argumentation and school type as fixed factors (see table 5).



		SS	df	MS	F	p
Main Effects	Type of argumentation	1.979	5	0.396	24.054	.000
	Validity of argumentation	0.073	1	0.073	4.329	.036
	School type	1.097	3	0.366	22.193	.000
2-Way Interactions	Type * Validity	0.149	1	0.149	9.059	.003
	Type * School	0.003	3	0.001	0.066	.978
	Validity * School	0.013	3	0.045	0.273	.845
3-Way Interactions	Type * Validity * School	0.025	3	0.008	0.499	.685
Model		2.170	15	0.145	8.785	.000
Residual		1.843	112	0.016		
Total		4.014	127	0.032		

		SS	df	MS	F	p
Main Effects	Syllogistic subtype	0.047	1	0.047	2.285	.136
	Validity of argumentation	0.131	1	0.131	6.375	.015
	School type	0.573	3	0.191	9.259	.000
2-Way Interactions	Syll sub * Validity	0.117	1	0.117	5.681	.021
	Syll sub * School	0.063	3	0.021	1.021	.392
	Validity * School	0.083	3	0.001	0.041	.989
3-Way Interactions	Syll sub * Validity * School	0.005	3	0.002	0.083	.969
Model		0.939	15	0.063	3.038	.002
Residual		0.989	48	0.021		
Total		1.929	63	0.031		

Table 3: Analysis of variance with type of argumentation, validity of argumentation and school type as fixed factors (N= 128) Table 4: Analysis of variance with syllogistic subtype (all/some), validity of argumentation and school type as fixed factors (N=64)

The results in table 4 show that there is no significant main effect of the factor syllogistic subtype. The factors validity of argumentation and school type have a

significant effect and furthermore there is a significant interaction between the syllogistic subtype and the factor validity of argumentation. An inspection of the proportion of correct responses (table 6) shows that in the case of valid argumentation students evaluate argumentation with some-statements better than argumentation with all-statements. When invalid argumentation is at stake, there is no difference between the subtypes.

The results in table 5 show significant main effects of the factors modus subtype, validity of argumentation and school type. Modus ponens argumentation is easier to evaluate than modus tollens argumentation. Contrary to previous analyses, there is no interaction between modus subtype and argument validity.

5.4 Underlying skills or components

Research question 4 is answered by means of confirmatory factor analysis with LISREL. When the different items all evoke one common skill or set of cognitive components, one general factor will be sufficient do describe the test data. If different types of items address different skills multiple factors will be needed to account for the inter-item covariances.

The analyses were performed on a set of 16 variables, each consisting of a cluster of two items that have common values on the factors type of argumentation (syllogistic/modus), validity of argumentation (valid/invalid), syllogistic subtype (all-premises/somepremises) and modus subtype (modus ponens/modus tollens). Each combination of factor levels is represented by two item clusters. The table in the Appendix clarifies the composition of the item clusters and their distribution across the factor levels.

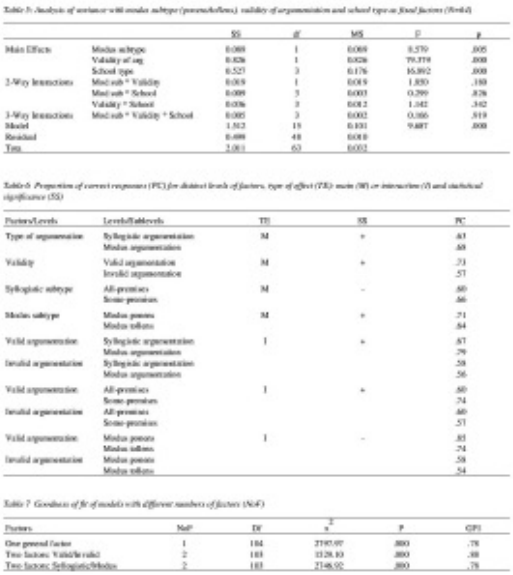


Table 5: Analysis of variance with modus subtype (ponens/tollens), validity of argumentation and school type as fixed factors (N=64)
Table 6: Proportion of correct responses (PC) for distinct levels of factors, type of effect (TE): main (M) or interaction (I) and statistical ISSA1998-page-624significance (SS)
Table 7: Goodness of fit of models with different numbers of factors (NoF)

From Table 7 it is clear that a model with one general factor gives an inadequate representation of the test data. A two factor model with distinct factors for argument validity gives a much better account. This does not hold for the two factor model with factors for type of argumentation.

The conclusion must be that more than one skill or set of cognitive components underlies the test performance of the students. Separate factors for valid and invalid argumentation must be distinguished.

6. Conclusion

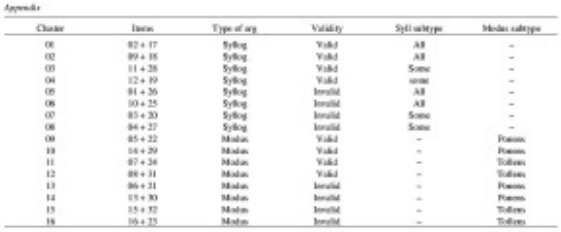
In this article we analysed data collected with a test for the measurement of students' skill in judging argument validity. The test was administered to representative samples of students in the pre-final grades of secondary education.

The estimated test reliability was sufficient enough to discriminate between the different levels of students' ability in judging argument validity.

The results show that individual differences in judging argument validity are substantial. We furthermore found a sizeable correlation between school type and students' skill in judging argument validity. The differences in general cognitive skills of students that underlie their distribution across school types seems to be strongly associated with the differences in their skill in judging argument validity.

Manipulations of the test items according to the employed facet design clearly affect test difficulty. Analyses of variance show significant main effects of the factors type of argumentation (syllogistic/modus) and validity of argumentation (valid/invalid). Modus argumentation is easier to evaluate than syllogistic argumentation and valid argumentation is easier to evaluate than invalid argumentation. An analysis of variance with the two subtypes of syllogistic argumentation shows a main effect of the factor validity of argumentation and a significant interaction effect with validity of argumentation. Valid syllogistic argumentation with some-premises is easier to evaluate than valid argumentation with all-premises. An analysis of variance with the two subtypes of modus argumentation shows significant main effects for the factors subtype and validity of argumentation. Modus ponens argumentation is easier to evaluate than modus tollens argumentation. Like in the case of syllogistic argumentation the valid forms of modus ponens and modus tollens are easier to evaluate than the invalid forms. There is no significant interaction between modus subtype and validity of argumentation.

Results of confirmatory factor analyses show that a one factor model gives an inadequate representation of the test data. A model with two factors (valid/invalid) fits much better. A model with two factors for syllogistic and modus argumentation does not fit the data. We therefore can conclude that the skill in judging argument validity is not unidimensional. Apparently, separate factors for valid and invalid argumentation seem to be at stake.



Cluster	Items	Type of arg	Validity	Syll subtype	Modus subtype
01	02 + 17	Syllog	Valid	All	–
02	09 + 18	Syllog	Valid	All	–
03	11 + 28	Syllog	Valid	Some	–
04	12 + 19	Syllog	Valid	some	–
05	01 + 26	Syllog	Invalid	All	–
06	10 + 25	Syllog	Invalid	All	–
07	03 + 20	Syllog	Invalid	Some	–
08	04 + 27	Syllog	Invalid	Some	–
09	05 + 22	Modus	Valid	–	Ponens
10	16 + 29	Modus	Valid	–	Ponens
11	07 + 24	Modus	Valid	–	Tollens
12	08 + 31	Modus	Valid	–	Tollens
13	06 + 21	Modus	Invalid	–	Ponens
14	15 + 30	Modus	Invalid	–	Ponens
15	13 + 32	Modus	Invalid	–	Tollens
16	14 + 23	Modus	Invalid	–	Tollens

Appendix

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Must Arguments Be Explicit And Violent? A Study Of Naïve Social

Actors' Understandings

Argumentation is one way of settling differences, and it is often prized by theorists as an alternative to violence and other less intellectual ways of managing conflicts (e.g., Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969; Ehninger & Brockriede 1963). We academics have no difficulty at all in seeing that arguing is a dramatically different sort of thing than physical fighting. The clarity with which we see this, however, may not match the perceptions of our students, or the public at large. This paper explores the possibility of perceptual connections between arguing and violence among ordinary people.

1. Literature Review

At the 1997 Alta meeting, we reported some intriguing results about naive social actors' understandings of argument (Benoit & Hample 1997). We had asked them to keep diaries about conflicts that they had avoided or cut short. But in reading the diary accounts, we frequently found ourselves wondering what could possibly have been avoided or cut off, because the narratives seemed very complete to us. After a number of re-readings, we decided that, unlike argumentation scholars, our respondents assume that there is a "violence slot" in the development of face to face arguments, and if nothing physically aggressive happened, the argument had not moved through all its potential phases. We also realized that they seemed not to count something as an argument at all if the central claim-and-disagreement were not explicit. That is, if no one had gotten around to announcing the disagreement, they thought the interaction was unfinished.

We followed that study up with a larger one, still using data from conflict diaries, but undertaking systematic coding of the accounts instead of a qualitative reading of them (Hample, Benoit, Houston, Purifoy, VanHyfte, & Wardwell 1998). We found that explicitness and destructiveness of the arguments in the diaries were correlated at $r = .80$, which is extraordinarily high. In other words, the more explicit (i.e., argument-like) a conflict was, the more destructive it was. For our respondents, arguments seem not to be alternatives to violence; instead, they appear to be companions to fights, or causes of them, or parts of them, or perhaps even essential to their nature.

That we were surprised by this is surely due more to our own perceptual blinders

than anything else. Earlier work has shown that people are definitely fearful that their arguments will get out of hand, in spite of their earnestly cooperative intentions (Benoit 1982). Trapp (1990) documented a tendency for arguments to escalate into verbal aggression, and Infante, Chandler, and Rudd (1989) suggest that these out-of-control arguments may trigger spouse abuse. When naïve actors are asked to list the specific actions that may take place in a face to face argument, many of them specify one or more slots for threats and physical violence (Hample, Dean, Johnson, Kopp, & Ngoitz 1997). Gilbert (1997) explores the idea that both the standard practices and standard theories of argument are competitive, agonistic, and masculine. Somehow, though, our own commitments to argumentation as an alternative to violence, as a rational path to conflict management, as an interactive ideal in the face of conflicting wants, made us see all these negative indications about the nature of argument as being nothing but minor perceptual distortions, failures to understand the real nature of arguing. We continue to hold our original commitments, but we now feel a greater need to acknowledge, understand, and respect what non-specialists think about all this.

Let us begin by asking, What had to be so, in order for our diary studies to have come out the way they did? Recall that the key result, the one exercising us here, is that explicitness and destructiveness of arguments are very nearly synonymous for our informants. We understand explicitness to index the recognition that the encounter actually is an argumentative one. When the disagreement is unstated or the conflict merely implied, our diarists seemed to think that an argument hadn't quite happened, that they were describing a conversation one could simply walk away from, without any argumentative commitments having been made. A clearly identifiable argument – an explicit one – was also a destructive one. Feelings would be hurt, bodies might be threatened, relationships could be put at risk.

Two explanations for this identity between explicitness and destructiveness occur to us. (1) This is the way the world is. People accurately and representatively reported their arguments to us. All, or virtually all, arguments really do implicate violence or its immediate possibility. (2) People have the prejudice that arguments are typically destructive. Therefore, whenever they identified something as being appropriate for a diary entry – perhaps as being a paradigm case of arguing – they had already judged that the episode had hurtful potential. Thus, destructiveness was a qualifying feature for something to be reported to us.

We have little to say here about the first possibility. We know that it is not so

theoretically, because arguments can be productive and emotionally positive experiences. The equivalence of arguing and hurting may well be an accurate summary of some people's personal experience with conflicts (Hample, in press), but this is not the case for everyone. The design of the study we report here controls for this first possibility by making it inoperative in our stimulus materials. The second possibility is the one that mainly concerns us. On reflection, we believe that explanation (2) could have two different causes. The first is that people's "destructiveness prejudice" is as deeply seated as some other deleterious stereotypes. Whenever they see an argument, they think they are also seeing danger of some sort. This might be a defensive reaction against the known possibility of hurt, or might reflect a negativity bias in perceiving others and their actions (see Coovert & Reeder 1990). The second possible cause is that people simply misunderstand what is meant by "argument" (or, less presumptuously, that naïve actor's definitions are just different than ours), and that they can be educated toward a view that more closely resembles the academic one.

Our research strategy is a fairly simple one, at bottom. We created a series of argument vignettes that were each explicit or implicit, destructive or constructive. Then we asked respondents to rate these on scales that would reflect perceptions of explicitness and destructiveness. By providing these scenarios ourselves, and systematically varying the two key variables, we removed possibility (1) from consideration. Even if the world nearly always does generate explicit and damaging arguments, our design doesn't.

We anticipate two possible sorts of outcomes, which correspond to the two possible reasons for explanation (2). If our respondents continue to see explicitness and destructiveness as highly correlated (even though they have been manipulated to be orthogonal in our design), we will be confident that we are observing a persistent perceptual bias. Anticipating the possibility of this outcome, we included tests of a trait connected to conflict perceptions, the tendency to take conflict personally (TCP) (Hample & Dallinger 1995). Should this perceptual effect appear, the TCP data might be a first step in explaining its etiology. If, on the other hand, the correlation between explicitness and destructiveness disappears, we will conclude that our diary respondents were simply working with a different definition of "argument," one that will not be unusually difficult to change through standard instruction; that is, the earlier association was due to their category "argument," rather than to their perceptions or biases about it. Our hope is that the correlation dissipates, but we

have no grounds for predicting whether it will or not, so we offer no formal hypothesis.

2. Method

2.1. Respondents

Data were provided by 303 students enrolled in undergraduate communication classes at the first author's institution. 53% were male, and the sample's mean age was 20.3 years. The sample was distributed across the four undergraduate years, with 20-30% belonging to each class.

2.2 Procedure

Respondents were given a booklet. After giving consent, they answered some demographic questions and filled out the trait version of the Taking Conflict Personally scale (Hample & Dallinger 1995). The respondent then read a brief argument scenario, was instructed to imagine himself/herself participating in the interaction, and then filled out several scales about the imagined interaction. Then each respondent repeated these last procedures with a second scenario. After finishing, students were debriefed.

2.3. Scenarios and Instructions

We wrote 16 scenarios, which were randomly distributed throughout the sample. We based them, as far as we could, on actual reports from the diary studies. The scenarios were labeled "possible interactions" for respondents. These vignettes were designed to represent several conditions. Half were explicit, and half implicit; half were constructive, and half destructive; half involved an argument with a roommate, and half with a romantic partner. Each condition was represented twice in the collection of scenarios, yielding a 2x2x2x2 (explicit x constructive x relationship x replication) design.

To ease the understanding of our results, please notice that "replication" will always refer here to a different example of, say, an explicit, constructive, roommate argument. This is easily confused with the fact that each respondent read two scenarios; these will be called scenario (or vignette) 1 and 2. The "replications" have nothing to do with the scenario series, so that the second explicit/constructive/roommate argument was read first just as often as it was read second.

Each scenario was preceded by these instructions: "Please read the brief description of a possible interaction you might have. Pause for a moment to visualize it, and to imagine you're actually in it. How would you react? What

would you do or say? How would you feel? After you've taken a moment to do that, please respond to the items we've provided, according to how they apply to the interaction we've supplied." Here is an example of one of the scenarios, instantiating a destructive, not-explicit argument with a romantic partner: "You have a long distance relationship. You haven't seen your romantic partner for a month and when s/he comes to visit, you go out with some of your friends. When you are out dancing, your romantic partner trips you, as a sort of bad joke." Following the scenario, 16 items (described below) were provided, along with standard instructions on how to respond.

2.4. Instruments

Taking Conflict Personally (TCP) was measured by means of a 37 item Likert instrument designed to produce scores on six subscales (Hample & Dallinger 1995). Cronbach's alphas for the subscales are as follows: direct personalization, .82 (omitting item 1); persecution feelings, .74; stress reactions, .65 (omitting item 27); positive relational effects, .74; negative relational effects, .79; and like/dislike valence, .75 (omitting item 20).

Constructiveness and explicitness were measured by eight semantic differential items each. These items were generated for this study. They are as follows (where R indicates reverse scoring, and item numbers are shown).

Constructiveness:

– constructive/destructive [1],
– good/bad [2],
– harmful/beneficial [4R],
– helpful/damaging [8],
– a controlled interaction/not a controlled interaction [10],
– would harm our relationship/would not harm our relationship [12R],
– violent/nonviolent [13R],
– positive/negative [15].

Explicitness:

– explicitly an argument/not explicitly an argument [3],
– hid my feelings/ expressed my feelings [5R],
– a conflict/not a conflict [6],
– didn't give reasons for what I said or did/did give my reasons for what I said or did [7R],
– disagreement between us not apparent/disagreement between us was apparent

[9R],
– I communicated clearly/I didn't communicate clearly [11],
– said what I thought/did not say what I thought [14], and
– everything would be out in the open/everything would not be out in the open [16].

We ran a series of exploratory factor analyses on these scales. Since each respondent filled out the scales for two scenarios, we conducted separate factor analyses for each scenario series. The destructiveness items performed more or less as expected, loading together for both scenario series, except that item 15 had to be dropped. On analysis, the explicitness items proved to be measuring two different things. The first, which we will continue to call explicitness, consists of items 3, 6, and 9. The other, which in hindsight appears to be assessing the presence or absence of full disclosure, we will call disclosiveness. We therefore formed scales, as follows.

The constructive/destructive scale consists of items 1, 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 13, and produces Cronbach's alphas of .89 and .90 for the two scenarios. The explicitness measure includes items 3, 6, and 9, with alphas of .71 and .76. The disclosiveness scale consists of items 5, 7, 11, 14, and 16, and yields alphas of .84 and .87. The directions of scoring were such that a high score on the first variable shows that respondents felt the conflict would be destructive, a high score on the second means that respondents thought the conflict would be implicit, and a high score on the third indicates nondisclosiveness.

3. Results

3.1. The Associations Among Destructiveness, Explicitness, and Disclosiveness

Perceived destructiveness and explicitness were correlated with one another. The first scenario series produces r = -.48 (p<.001), and the second r = -.51 (p<.001). These results replicate both Benoit and Hample's (1997) and Hample, Benoit, et al.'s (1998) findings, because both these papers report an association between destructiveness and explicitness, as in the present report. Perceived destructiveness and nondisclosiveness were also correlated with one another. In the first scenario, r = .35 (p<.001), and in the second, r = .24 (p< .001). Finally, the associations between disclosiveness and explicitness are r = .06 (ns) for the first series of vignettes, and r = .33 (p<.001) for the second.

The two previous studies examined respondents' argument diaries, and the

researchers observed a strong tendency for destructiveness and explicitness to co-occur in those accounts. The systematic manipulation of destructiveness and explicitness in the present design guards against such co-occurence, but therefore produced a systematically different sample of arguments to be rated. Consequently, we also examined the destructiveness-explicitness correlations in the present study after dividing the data set by manipulated destructiveness and explicitness. Table 1 displays the correlations between perceived destructiveness and implicitness, by manipulation condition.

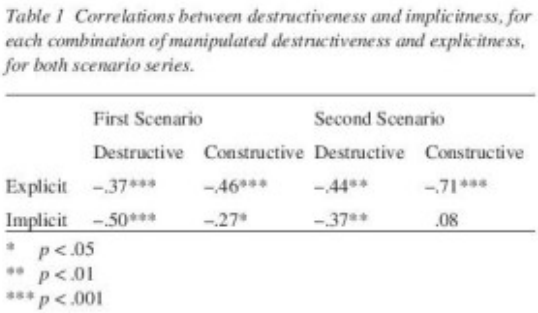

Table 1 Correlations between destructiveness and implicitness, for each combination of manipulated destructiveness and explicitness, for both scenario series.

	First Scenario		Second Scenario	
	Destructive	Constructive	Destructive	Constructive
Explicit	−.37***	−.46***	−.44**	−.71***
Implicit	−.50***	−.27*	−.37**	.08

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 1 Correlations between destructiveness and implicitness, for each combination of manipulated destructiveness and explicitness, for both scenario series.

The overall destructive/explicit correlations of -.48 and -.51 reported above are obviously depressed by the constructive/implicit conditions, which would probably have been rarest in the diaries data. The destructive/explicit conditions are perhaps most representative of the diaries data. This manipulation produces a moderate association between perceived destructiveness and perceived explicitness. The overall results, combined with the correlations subdivided by manipulation condition, indicate that our respondents persist in associating explicitness and destructiveness, but not at the exceptionally high levels reported for diarists (Hample, Benoit, et al. 1988). When these two variables are manipulated to be orthogonal in the stimulus set, as was done here, the destructiveness/explicitness correlation is somewhat reduced, but still clearly evident.

These results are supportive of explanation 2, because the design temporarily eliminates the possibility that the world supplies only explicit, damaging arguments to people.

Taking Conflict Personally

The TCP scales were correlated with respondents' ratings of the destructiveness, implicitness, and nondisclosiveness of each scenario.

Since each person responded to two vignettes, each pair of variables produces two correlations. Results appear in Table 2. The table shows few significant results, and little consistency among them. Since the scenarios were randomly distributed, and each occurred as often as the first stimulus as it did the second, the differences between the pairs of columns can only be attributed to some sort of fatigue effect. The table gives no evidence that there is any connection between people's trait TCP and their estimate that the argument would have been destructive or explicit, and weak evidence of a small connection between TCP and estimates of disclosiveness (such that people high in TCP may be somewhat less likely to be disclosive). In short, TCP appears to have little effect on one's perception of an argument's destructiveness, explicitness, or disclosiveness.

Table 2. Correlations between TCP variables and the rated destructiveness, implicitness, and disclosiveness of vignettes from scenario series 1 and 2.

3.3. Perceived Destructiveness, Explicitness, and Disclosiveness as Dependent Variables

This set of results clears the way for an examination of whether the manipulations (destructiveness, explicitness, relationship with other, and replication) had effects on perceived destructiveness, explicitness, or disclosiveness. We therefore undertook 2x2x2x2 ANOVAs, doing each analysis twice, once for the respondents' first vignette, and once for the second.

When perceived destructiveness is the dependent variable, the first vignette yields several significant results. Significant main effects appear for the constructiveness manipulation (F = 111.4, df = 1, 282, p .001; the destructively intended scenarios have higher means, as expected, 22.7 versus 16.5), the

explicitness manipulation (F = 5.4, df = 1, 282, p .05; the implicit arguments are rated as more destructive, 20.5 versus 18.8), relationship with other (F = 19.4, df = 1, 282, p .001; the roommate conflicts are more destructive than those with romantic partners, 21.0 versus 18.6), and replication (F = 4.4, df = 1, 282, p .05). The only significant interactions involved the replication manipulation, and are therefore of no substantive interest here.

The analysis was repeated for the respondents' second imagined interaction, with similar results. Significant main effects appear for the constructiveness manipulation (F = 122.0, df = 1, 281, p .001; the destructively intended vignettes are seen as more destructive, 24.4 versus 17.2), the explicitness manipulation (F = 24.1, df = 1, 281, p .001; the implicit interactions are again more destructive, 22.8 versus 19.3), and the relationship with other (F = 11.3, df = 1, 281, p .001; the roommate conflicts are again seen as more destructive, 22.3 versus 19.8), but not for replication (F 1). The only significant interaction not involving the replication factor is a two-way interaction between manipulated explicitness and relationship with other (F = 5.1, df = 1, 281, p .05). The means, displayed in Table 3, indicate that the effects of explicitness are strongly influenced by relationship: the destructiveness of the inter-action is greatest when romantic partners have implicit conflicts, and is most manageable when romantic partners have explicit arguments.

Table 3. Destructiveness means for the second vignette, by explicitness and target.

	Explicit	Not Explicit
Roommate	17.4	18.5
Romantic Partner	13.4	19.6

Table 3. Destructiveness means for the second vignette, by explicitness and target

The destructiveness results are nicely consistent. The main effects for constructiveness indicate merely that the manipulation worked. The main effects indicate that arguments with one's roommate (compared with one's romantic partner) are felt to be more dangerous, as are implicit conflicts. This last finding is inconsistent with the positive association between perceived destructiveness and perceived explicitness, and raises the question of whether the respondents and experimenters are viewing explicitness in the same way.

Similar analyses of variance were done, using explicitness as the dependent variable. Results for the first scenario series are as follows. Significant main effects appear for replication (F = 7.0, df = 1, 284, p 01) and destructiveness (F = 50.2, df = 1, 284, p .001, with means indicating that the destructively intended vignettes are seen as more explicit, 7.2 versus 9.4). Argument partner has no effect (F = 1.0, df = 1, 284, *ns*), and neither does manipulated explicitness (F 1). This last results points to a manipulation failure. The only significant interaction not involving the replication factor is a two-way between argument partner and destructiveness (F = 6.1, df = 1, 284, p .05; means indicate that destructiveness had the least effect on romantic partners, with their explicitness means showing less difference than those of roommates).

The second scenario produced comparable results. Significant main effects appear again for replication (F = 4.8, df = 1, 281, p .05) and destructiveness (F = 122.1, df = 1, 281, p .001, with means again showing that the destructively intended vignettes are seen as being more explicit, 6.5 versus 9.9). The second scenario series also yields a significant effect for argument target (F = 15.9, df = 1, 281, p .001, with means indicating that the roommate conflicts are seen as more explicit, 7.6 versus 8.8). Here, too, however, we obtain the disappointing failure to confirm the manipulation, with the explicitness effect being insignificant (F = 1.9, df = 1, 281, *ns*, although the means are in the correct order, 8.0 versus 8.4). The only significant interaction effect not involving the replication factor is between explicitness and destructiveness (F = 4.4, df = 1, 281, p .05; means show that the greater perceived explicitness for destructive arguments is more marked for explicitly intended episodes).

Finally, we undertook parallel analyses, using perceived disclosiveness as the dependent variable. For the respondents' first scenario, the only significant main effects are for relationship with other (F = 8.0, df = 1, 284, p .01; romantic partner arguments are seen as more disclosive, 12.4 versus 11.0) and replication (F = 7.2, df = 1, 284, p .01). The main effect for explicitness was not significant (F = 2.01, df = 1, 284, p = .15), although the means are the direction of explicit arguments having fuller disclosure, 11.2 versus 12.1. Several significant interactions not involving the replication factor appear. A two-way interaction between manipulated constructiveness and manipulated explicitness is significant (F = 4.2, df = 1, 284, p .05), as is a three-way interaction involving constructiveness, explicitness, and relationship with other (F = 7.3, df = 1, 284, p .01).

Table 4. Disclosiveness means for the first vignette, by explicitness, constructiveness, and target manipulations.

	Explicit		Not Explicit	
	Constructive	Destructive	Constructive	Destructive
Roommate	10.7	13.2	14.4	11.6
Romantic Partner	10.5	10.6	11.0	11.7

Table 4. Disclosiveness means for the first vignette, by explicitness, constructiveness, and target manipulations

The means illustrating this three-way interaction (and, of course, including the information necessary to see the two-way interaction), are in Table 4. These means indicate that the most disclosive arguments are those with romantic partners. For roommates, the arguments are seen as disclosive when they were intended to be explicit and constructive, and are seen as nondisclosive when they were intended to be implicit and constructive.

The parallel analysis on the second vignette for each respondent produced these results. Significant main effects appear for constructiveness (F = 11.1, df = 1, 282, p .001; destructive arguments are more disclosive, 11.2 versus 13.3), explicitness (F = 36.4, df = 1, 282, p .001; explicitly intended scenarios are seen as more disclosive, 10.4 versus 14.0), and replication (F = 14.1, df = 1, 282, p .001). The only significant interactions not involving the replication factor are between the constructive and explicitness manipulations (F = 12.6, df = 1, 282, p .001), and between the explicitness manipulation and relationship with other (F = 13.4, df = 1, 282, p .001).

The means for these interactions are in *Table 5*. These means indicate that the most disclosively perceived arguments are those that were supposed to be implicit and constructive for romantic partners. The least disclosively perceived ones are those that were intended to be explicit and between romantic partners. The results for romantic partners are the most variable, suggesting that these relationships involve more exaggeration of (or, perhaps, more salience for) the manipulations.

Table 5. Disclosiveness means for the second vignette, by explicitness, constructiveness, and target manipulations.

	Explicit		Not Explicit	
	Constructive	Destructive	Constructive	Destructive
Roommate	11.5	11.0	14.8	10.7
Romantic Partner	9.3	9.8	17.6	13.1

Table 5. Disclosiveness means for the second vignette, by explicitness, constructiveness, and target manipulations

The results for perception of disclosiveness are not entirely consistent. The two scenarios do not produce quite the same pattern of significant results, in spite of their containing the same scenarios in the same proportions. Results suggest that arguments with romantic partners are seen as having fuller disclosure, and that destructive arguments are also seen the same way, although these effects are qualified by interactions. When compared to the explicitness results, these findings suggest that we may have been somewhat more successful in manipulating disclosiveness than explicitness, in spite of having intended only to vary the latter.

4. Discussion

In this final section, we wish to discuss our leading results, and then to return to the issues that stimulated the study.

Perhaps the two most interesting empirical findings in this paper are that (1) destructiveness and explicitness are positively correlated, and (2) roommate conflicts are more destructive than conflicts with romantic partners. Both findings deserve some comment.

First, let us consider the destructive-explicit association. As in the diary studies, our respondents made a clear connection between the explicitness of an argument and its inherent danger. The diary data (Hample, Benoit, et al. 1998) produced a stronger correlation than appeared here, and the effectiveness of this study's explicitness manipulation is open to question. Still, this investigation both replicates and triangulates the earlier finding. The chief benefit of the present design is that our attempt to vary destructiveness and explicitness orthogonally means that the earlier findings cannot be explained by our instructions to diarists, or by their search for paradigm cases of face to face argument.

We were faced with an unanticipated complication in our study of the association between destructiveness and explicitness, however, and this centered around our own understanding of explicitness. We generated a number of scales to reflect our own construct for explicitness: that an episode would have clear disagreement, that it would obviously be mutually framed as an argument, that both people would speak their minds, and that they would put their claims and counter-claims on the table. Our respondents had a more sophisticated view of all this, however, and saw two things being indexed in those scales: the explicitness and obviousness of the episode-as-argument, and the degree to which our respondents would have been willing to express their true thoughts and feelings. Dividing this into two separate scales was not a problem, of course. The problem occurred when we tried to translate our understanding of explicitness into varying scenarios. The explicitness manipulation did pretty much work as far as disclosiveness was concerned, but it did not produce supportive means on the measure of perceived explicitness. This necessarily qualifies all our findings relating to the so-called manipulation of explicitness.
On reflection, we now think that it may be important to consider that some sorts of argument may involve a failure to self-disclose, an unwillingness to expose one's thoughts and feelings to the other. This might be thought dangerous and destructive in and of itself, and might also be seen as symptomatic of an already damaged interaction or relationship. Thus, arguments in which participants do not say what they think are perceived as bad, harmful, and damaging, but this may have less to do with recognizing whether the episode is an argument, than with the view that a non-disclosive interaction is already fundamentally flawed. So a nondisclosive argument might indicate damage, rather than cause it.

The second empirical finding of note is that roommate conflicts were rated as more fraught with danger than romantic conflicts. One would suppose that the stakes would be higher with romantic partners, making intense hurt and extreme danger more possible in that setting. But roommates evoked more apprehension here. We wonder if two factors – other than the stakes – might be at work here. First, in our sample, people were living with their roommates, but not necessarily with their romantic partners. One can simply go home after a date, but still has to sleep in the apartment. This would make conflicts less avoidable for roommates, and so more dangerous. Second, the intimacy of a romantic relationship may well have generated norms for handling conflict, in part because of the greater value placed on the relationship by both parties. Table 3 showed an interaction effect,

such that implicit arguments were rated as particularly destructive for romantic couples. Even though intimate partners may have better developed conflict management norms, ambiguous episodes can be threatening, and the high stakes may exacerbate this more than for roommates.

Perhaps the most substantial issue raised by our results is whether they are compatible with those of Benoit and Hample (1997) and Hample, Benoit, et al. (1998). The present findings replicate the earlier ones. The connection between destructive potential and explicitness was unmistakable in all these investigations. In the present study, we created a stimulus set that destroyed any possible natural connection between explicitness and destructiveness. This design strategy permitted us to test whether the earlier result was due to the peculiarity of the argument sample we were dealing with. In fact, the clear association between perceived destructiveness and perceived explicitness does not appear to depend on the argument sample, and this considerably improves our confidence in the finding. However, it also points toward the more troubling explanation for the association, namely, that people have a fundamental, stereotyped pessimism about arguments.

This leads us toward several conclusions regarding our title question, Must arguments be explicit and violent? (1) Left to their own devices, and asked to identify clear arguments from their lives, people will report explicit, dangerous episodes. (2) Given a systematically neutral stimulus set, people still see a strong connection between explicitness and destructiveness. (3) This derives from their perception of what an argument is, and this view is one argumentation scholars wish to alter. (4) Therefore, we should worry about our students' most basic understandings of argumentation, and not take for granted that they believe us when we tell them that arguments are alternatives to violence.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Ad Baculum Is Not A Fallacy!

1. Practical Arguments

Our point of departure is the practical syllogism. The invention is Aristotle's and the interpretation we give it is Anscombe's (Anscombe, 1957). As is well-known, the standard syllogism is a discursive entity, an n-tuple of declarative sentences, of which the terminal member is the conclusion and the rest are premisses. In contrast, a practical syllogism is a mixed structure, part discursive and part non-discursive. The difference shows up in the conclusions of the two structures. In a standard syllogism, the conclusion is

a sentence; in a practical syllogism the conclusion is an action. It is useful to compare practical syllogisms with deontic or prudential arguments. A simple example of such is:
1. If you are late home from the movies, you'll irritate and worry your mother
2. So, you shouldn't be late.

It is easy to construct what we could call the *practical syllogisation* of this argument. It is the ordered pair in which the first member is the premiss of the deontic argument

1* If you are late home from the movies, you'll irritate and worry your mother.

and in which the second member, the conclusion, is not the sentence which *bids* the addressee *not to be late*, but is simply the addressee's not being late.Thus the conclusion of our practical syllogism is the action advocated by the conclusion of the preceding deontic argument.

The distinction between deontic-prudential arguments and practical syllogisms calls to mind the old maxim that talk is cheap. `Cheap' in turn suggests `suboptimal', and, in some respects, this is precisely what can be claimed by deontic-prudential arguments in contrast with their practical syllogisations. It is one thing to get an addressee to concede that he should do such-and-such; it is another, and often better thing, that he actually do it. Better the cheque in the mail than `The cheque is in the mail'. We may say in a quite general way that a practical syllogism is the *consummation* of a deontic arguer's intent.

In this note we propose to expand the concept of practical syllogism in a slight but natural way. We shall attempt to show that modest though the extension might be, it produces results of genuine consequence for the theory of argument. In our proposal, a second way of being a practical syllogism is one in which one or more of the premisses is an action rather than a sentence. It is a point worth emphasising that the conclusions and, as we now may say, the *premisses* that make for practical syllogisms are *role-specific*. Any action by any agent at any time, make for a true proposition, namely the proposition ascribing that action to that agent at that time. Any of these truths is available in principle as the conclusion or as a premiss of some or other bit of argument that may chance at a time to bubble out of the dialectical soup of the human community. Such arguments are not made into practical syllogisms in consequence of this fact; for

it is the actions themselves, not the sentences they make true, that are the irreducible components of practical syllogisms. In Aristotle's conception of it, the action that is the conclusion must be the action of the party to whom the argument is addressed. In our extension of it, the action that is the premiss of a practical syllogism must be the action of the maker of the argument, not his addressee. So there is an agent-specific asymmetry between, as we shall now say, *conclusionally practical syllogisms* and *premissorily practical syllogisms.*

There is a further asymmetry. Let <'P', A> be a conclusionally practical syllogism. Let 'A' be the sentence in which this action A is attributed to its agent. Then, in general, a standard syllogism <'P', 'A'> is not preservable from the practical syllogism <'P', A> under replacement of A by 'A'.**[i]** On the other hand, consider a simple case of a premissorily practical syllogism. Suppose that Joe will be elected Treasurer if and only if Henry, Sarah, Frank and John vote yes. Imagine that John is attempting to construct an argument whose conclusion is that Joe is elected. Joe adds the following true premisses.

2. 'Henry has voted yes'
3. 'Frank has voted yes'
4. 'Sarah has voted yes'.

The desired conclusion that Joe will be elected Treasurer requires a further premiss. So:

5. [John simply votes yes.]

In this, our two asymmetries are evident. For one thing, the action which serves as the clinching premiss must be John's, the speaker of the argument, rather than Sarah's or Henry's. But, secondly, if our previously practical syllogism is correct, there is a correct standard syllogism got by replacement of the action that constitutes premiss (5) of the former with the sentence `John votes yes', which correctly attributes that action to John.

Essential to both types of practical syllogism, and corresponding to the parameter of role specificity, is the element of *participant control*. If my conclusionally practical syllogism that you *do* so-and-so is good, then that it is so lies essentially in your power, not mine. All that rests with me is to show that you *should* do so-and-so. But if my intent is to produce a practical syllogism rather than a deontic-prudential argument, the premisses are up to me to select and present; but the

conclusion finally is up to you. This other-party dependency is missing in the case of premissorily practical syllogisms. To recur to our example, the argument cannot succeed without premise (5), and yet premise (5) in an action entirely up to John, the person whose argument it is. Similarly, the corresponding standard syllogism has no chance without the sententialization of premiss (5), i.e. 'John voted yes'. But that premiss is true if and only if John voted yes; which, again, is entirely up to John.

2. Ad baculum reasoning

It is perhaps not surprising that fallacy theorists and argument analysts should have been preoccupied with the idea that there is something inherently defective about *ad baculum* arguments. Our own view is that those comparatively few writers are correct who, like Walton [1992] and Woods [1987], [1995], see the ad baculum as a form of prudential argument which, when bad, cannot have been made bad simply because it pivoted on the factor of threat. We lack the space to expatiate on this prudential perspective, promising as we think it is.**[ii]** Instead we shall take the Woods–Walton approach a step further. We shall show that

1. ad baculum arguments are systematically connected to premissorily practical syllogisms;
2. they are in a sense to be explained always a more benign and welcome form of argument than their counterpart practical syllogisms;
3. in vindication of something theorists such as Walton have been saying – perhaps with insufficient explicit motivation – arguments from negative consequences are not as such ad baculum arguments (that is, ad baculum arguments are a proper subset of negative consequence arguments); and
4. (recurring to point (2)), although some theorists have been aware of the importance of utility functions in the analysis of ad baculum arguments, there are always utility-functional considerations which favour recourse to ad baculum argument over their counterpart practical syllogisms.

Let us now see how it is that our analysis of ad baculum arguments give rise to these four consequences. We consider in turn three arguments of a type well-known in the recent literature. They are:

1. collective bargaining arguments;
2. the mugger's argument and
3. anti-smoking arguments.

2.1 Collective bargaining

For expository convenience we consider a simplified case. We assume that in the present example both parties, workers and management alike, are satisfied that a threat to strike is sincere and that a strike would encumber management with higher costs than would a settlement in the near vicinity of the union's most recent offer. Even so, consider the following *action-matrix*, an ordered 2-tuple.
1. The workers strike (S)
2. The management yields (Y)

Schematically our action-matrix is
1* S
2* Y

'S' and 'Y' are abbreviations of (1) and (2), which in turn report certain action-facts. In the circumstances of the case, the episode characterised by <S, Y> is costlier to each party than an available alternative. In real-life situations, this is not always the case, of course, and in any event, calculating the actual cost-benefit spread over actual option spaces can be a fairly complex matter. Even so, we know that one of the alternatives is the one we now describe; and we also know that in general it appears to yield a better cost-benefit payoff for both parties. We represent this option as a dialogue between the workers' representative W and management's spokesman M. As before, 'S' denotes the strike-action and 'Y' management's action of yielding to the present demands of the workers.
W: 'If ¬ Y, then S'
M: Y.

As we see, W makes an explicit threat. It is a conditionalisation of S on the negation of Y in our action-matrix <S, Y>. M's response to W is an action, a capitulation to W's demand. If we could think of the sequence <'If ¬ Y, then S'Y> as an argument, then not only is it a cross-agent argument; it is a conclusionally practical syllogism. Its most distinctive feature, however, is that it is a substitute for a premissorily practical syllogism, which is what our actionmatrix <S, Y> in effect is. In the W-M dialogue (or quasi-dialogue), an action which is in the control of W to perform and which, if performed, would serve as a premiss in the practical syllogism <S, Y>, is only threatened. In our simplified example, the threat is justified on simple cost-benefit grounds. It is less costly to threaten to strike than to strike, and it is no more costly to yield to the threat of a strike than to a strike.

We propose that dialogues or quasi-dialogues of the W-M type are prototypes of ad baculum argumentation. If so, it is easy to see the systematic link between ad baculum arguments and practical syllogisms. The threat that constitutes the dialogue as an ad baculum threatens an action which is within the threatener's power to effect, and which if effected would produce a premiss in the practical syllogism <S, …>, where … holds a place for, but does not guarantee, the appearance of the intended M-action Y.

It is also apparent that ad baculum arguments have clear advantages over the premissorily practical syllogisms, to which they are systematically linked. Here is a case in which `Talk is cheap' is a virtue. The threat to strike possesses at least the following advantages over striking. Even an efficacious threat to strike is in general, as we have seen, a less costly inducement to yield than yielding to an actual strike. Moreover, talking about striking, rather than striking, provides the contesting partners with a larger deliberation-space than simply striking. Thus ad baculum contentions are dialectically more efficient (to say the least) than the premissorily practical syllogisms to which they are linked. We take it, then, that the characteristic features (1) and (2), cited above, may now be claimed for ad baculum exchanges. These same features will be apparent in our next example, the mugger.

2.2 The mugger

Here too, there are two parties, M, the mugger, and V, the victim, and an action-matrix <K, T> in which K is the killing of V by M and T is M's getting V's money. As before <K, T> can be likened to a premissorily practical syllogism, and as before it is a less good thing than its counterpart ad baculum, in which the action-premiss K is replaced by a discursive premiss which threatens K. It is bad enough to be threatened with death, but for most people in most circumstances it is a better thing than death itself. The mugger's ad baculum achieves two things at once. It identifies a situation in the joint option space which itself is constituted by the premissorily practical syllogism <K, T>. And it gives the addressee the option of replacing the muggers' practical syllogism with his own cross-agent *conclusionally* practical syllogism

M: 'If ¬ T, then K'
V: T.

As before, the conclusionally practical syllogisms confers on M all the benefits conferred by the premissorily practical syllogism, yet sparing V the extreme cost

of that option. Either way, V loses his money. But in only one of these ways does he lose his life.

2.3 Anti-smoking arguments

Again we simplify. We shall take it that in some non-trivial sense, habitual cigarette-smoking shortens a smoker's lifespan. If so, then we could expect to find instances of the matrix

Sm
D

('Sm' for 'The subject was an habitual smoker' and 'D' for 'The subject died earlier than would have been the case otherwise'). Is there an ad baculum counterpart of this sequence <Sm, D>? If so, it would be something like:

P1: 'If ¬ D then Sm'
P2: D

(where P1 and P2 are respectively the ad baculum-maker and his addressee.) We see that the absurdity of this reconstruction as self-announcing. This is tantamount to a proof that negative-consequence arguments are not just as they stand ad baculum arguments. If this is right, the rejection of the present example by the ad baculum model will show up in structural features of the model. If the anti-smoking argument were an ad baculum, then the sequence

Sm
D

would be construable as a premissorily practical syllogism. For this to be so, two conditions require fulfilment. One is that Sm be an action-premiss, and the other is that Sm be the action of the *argument-maker*. But as the example shows, this is not the case. Similar difficulties, and then some, apply to the interpretation of the would-be ad baculum

P1: 'If ¬ D then Sm'
P2: D

The reader will note that we have conformed the present example to the ad baculum structure recognised in our model. It is significant that it gives rise to such nonsense. For one thing, it is hard to conceive of 'If you don't die, then you

are an habitual smoker' as any kind of threat (In fact, it may be wondered what are the truth conditions of this fabulous conditional.) For another, D can hardly be represented as P2's action-conclusion, since in no direct way is his death in his own control. Thus the sequence <'If ¬ D, then Sm', D> is not representable as a conclusionally practical syllogism. We see, then, that if we opt for an analysis of the ad baculum in which premissorily and conclusionally practical syllogisms play a load-bearing role, the anti-smoking argument cannot be made out to be ad baculum. Central to this result is the fact that even if Nature herself threatens a certain fate for the smoker and even if I know this, I cannot threaten the same thing on Nature's behalf, so to speak.

The same holds of Pascal's Wager, in which the Wagerer cites God's threat to the Christian sceptic. But citing a threat is not making a threat. Once cannot issue God's threats, except that one is God, anymore than one can catch Yogi Berra's catches except where one is Yogi Berra. We conclude, therefore, that contrary to recent speculation to the contrary (Woods,1987 and 1995), Pascal's Wager is not an ad baculum for Pascal, though it would be for God. This being so, Walton is right to say, in effect, that negative-consequence arguments and ad baculum arguments share no more intimacy than a set-theoretic intersection which chances to be a proper subset of each.

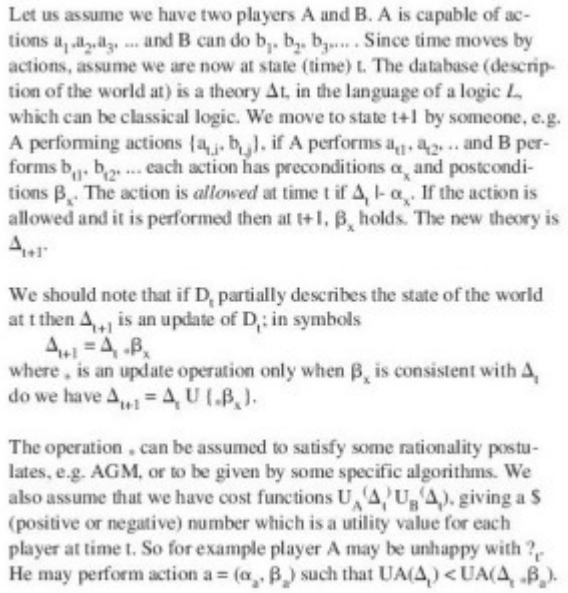
We said that utility functions play an important role in the analysis of practical argument. At one level, there is a constant utility-functional component. The arguer seeks to give the addressee the option of conceding, hence of avoiding the cost of looking stupid (not to put too fine a point on it). In other respects, utility-functions bite more differentially. When the mugger makes an intervention ad baculum, he is predicting his victim's deployment of utility functions in a context of menace imposed by the mugger himself. But, as we have already suggested, there is a further respect in which ad baculum arguments are the result of utility functions of both arguer and addressee alike. For the arguer to forward an ad baculum is a reflection of a cost-benefit analysis which induces the arguer to favour the ad baculum over its counterpart premissorily practical syllogism. On the other hand, the ad baculum-maker also anticipates a favourable cost-benefit determination by his addressee in which it is obviously preferable to yield a benefit under threat of death than to suffer the loss of the benefit as a result of one's death.

The above discussion shows that utility, actions and time play a central part in our

understanding of the ad baculum. The underlying logical model is propositional logic enriched by temporal flow and action symbols. The next section develops such a model in some generality. Such models can be applied to other areas such as the analysis of natural language conditionals, but we shall leave that for another time. Because space is limited we shall not dwell in detail on the way the analysis of Sections 1 and 2 is represented in the model. It will, in any case, be obvious to the interested reader. We shall also give a fairly realistic example.

3. Description of a Basic Model

We imagine that we are moving through a flow of time. Time is discrete (day after day?) and moves by the performance of actions. So if we are at time t we can move to time t+1 by performing some action a.



Let us assume we have two players A and B. A is capable of actions $a_1, a_2, a_3, \ldots$ and B can do $b_1, b_2, b_3, \ldots$. Since time moves by actions, assume we are now at state (time) t. The database (description of the world at) is a theory Δt, in the language of a logic *L*, which can be classical logic. We move to state t+1 by someone, e.g. A performing actions $\{a_{i,j}, b_{i,j}\}$, if A performs $a_{t1}, a_{t2}, \ldots$ and B performs $b_{t1}, b_{t2}, \ldots$ each action has preconditions α_x and postconditions β_x. The action is *allowed* at time t if $\Delta_t \vdash \alpha_x$. If the action is allowed and it is performed then at t+1, β_x holds. The new theory is Δ_{t+1}.

We should note that if D_t partially describes the state of the world at t then Δ_{t+1} is an update of D_t; in symbols

$$\Delta_{t+1} = \Delta_t *\beta_x$$

where $*$ is an update operation only when β_x is consistent with Δ_t do we have $\Delta_{t+1} = \Delta_t \cup \{*\beta_x\}$.

The operation $*$ can be assumed to satisfy some rationality postulates, e.g. AGM, or to be given by some specific algorithms. We also assume that we have cost functions $U_A(\Delta_t) U_B(\Delta_t)$, giving a $ (positive or negative) number which is a utility value for each player at time t. So for example player A may be unhappy with $?_t$. He may perform action $a = (\alpha_a, \beta_a)$ such that $UA(\Delta_t) < UA(\Delta_t *\beta_a)$.

3.1 Example
A and B are arguing about something. The database contains

1. p ^ q -> r
2. p

B is desperate to deduce r. He controls an action whose postcondition is q. By performing this action he is practically inserting q into the database and thus enabling the deduction of r. In the language of Section 1, B is in the process of constructing a premissorily practical syllogism.

3.2 Example
Jobless John (JJ) has an old car which he insured with the Universal Insurance Company. According to the terms of the insurance his coverage expires December 31st 1990. As is common practice with many insurance companies, if JJ pays his premium by 31.1.91, his insurance coverage is renewed from 1.1.91 to 31.12.91. So for example, if JJ forgets to pay on 1.1.91 and has an accident on 15.1.91, he can still pay his premium on 20.1.91 and be covered on the 15.1.91 accident.
In our story, JJ has no money and does not pay his premium. On 15.1.91 he bumps into Richy Rich's (RR) Rolls Royce, causing extensive damage. RR now has a problem. It is clear that JJ cannot pay his premium. If he doesn't, then he is not covered, and RR cannot collect from JJ's company. RR cannot of course collect from JJ. On the other hand, RR collects from his own insurance company, he will lose his 56% no-claims bonus. Let us give some utility values.

JJ's premium is $500
RR loss of the no-claims bonus is worth $3000
RR damage is assessed at $8000.

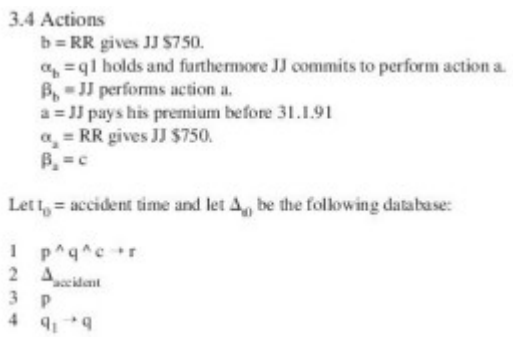
It is clearly worthwhile for RR to pay JJ's premium provided JJ is co-operative. We assume the factual circumstances of the accident, D accident, strongly support of q = 'J is at fault'. This means that the database can probably prove that JJ is at fault even if JJ denies fault. However, it is much simpler if q1= 'JJ admits fault' is

available. Let us now construct the story formally.

3.3 Propositions

p = JJ damages RR's car
q = it is JJ's fault
q1 = JJ formally admits fault.
c = JJ is covered
r = JJ insurance *pays*
D*accident* = facts about accident

3.4 Actions


3.4 Actions
b = RR gives JJ $750.
α_b = q1 holds and furthermore JJ commits to perform action a.
β_b = JJ performs action a.
a = JJ pays his premium before 31.1.91
α_a = RR gives JJ $750.
β_a = c

Let t_0 = accident time and let Δ_{t0} be the following database:

1 $p \wedge q \wedge c \rightarrow r$
2 $\Delta_{accident}$
3 p
4 $q_1 \rightarrow q$

RR wants r to follow. For that he needs to generate q and c. The simplest course of action is for JJ to make q1 true at t+1 and give a commitment to perform a, then get $750 from RR, then go ahead and perform a; and then RR can claim from the insurance company. JJ can threaten RR that he will not renew his insurance unless he receives $750 from RR. This is a legitimate threat. Although JJ is at fault and may face a damages claim from RR, it is clear that simply by not renewing his insurance, he creates a premissorily practical syllogism of particular consequence

for RR. This is why, in effect, RR is trying to persuade JJ to produce a different premissorily practical syllogism, in which the practical premiss of not renewing is replaced by its action-negation.

We can now summarise what an *ad baculum* fallacy is. It is *not* a fallacy. At worst it is an incompetent threatening move, which is either illegal (since preconditions do not hold) or ineffective (since it has a low utility threat for the postcondition).

NOTES

i. That this is so is indicated by the fact that the more natural candidate for the standard syllogistic counterpart of the present practical syllogism would be the deontic argument whose conclusion is, 'You ought to do A'.

ii. But see Wreen [1995].

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 – The Dialectic Of Quasi-Logical

Arguments

To the memory of *Theodoor Jan Krabbe* (1941-1996) **[i]**

1. Introduction: The Self-Gratulatory Argument

There can be no doubt that this is a perfect morning for the study of quasi-logical arguments. Otherwise, to say it bluntly, our hosts wouldn't have put it on the program. Or would it be quasi-logical to say so? Anyhow, quasi-logical arguments are what's up, and I'm much honored that you have all come to join me in this enterprise.

Of lectures on the quasi-logical there are exactly two types, either they are long or else they are short. Fortunately, I hate long lectures. This is fortunate for you, but also for me. Why may I rejoice in my own abhorrence of lengthy lectures? Well, that can be argued thus: suppose I liked long lectures, then I would certainly give one right now and be bound to hearing it out; but to hear my own long lecture would be a bad thing, since I happen to hate long lectures. So am I ever happy to hate long lectures!

That was an argument. Was that a quasi-logical argument? Yes, it was. It was meant to give you a taste of the quasi-logical, that is, to put it briefly, of a style of reasoning that unwarrantedly takes on the trappings of logical or mathematical rigor.**[ii]**

So, if this was a quasi-logical argument, what is its dialectic? Now wait. Give me a break. We'll get to that later. It is certainly my intention in this lecture to show some of the dialectic of this argument; that is to expound in a profile of dialogue some of the moves and countermoves available to its discussants. But first I want to turn logic against quasi-logic and offer a *logical* analysis of this quasi-logical argument. Later on, I hope to show that such a logical analysis provides part of a profile of dialogue; that it constitutes part of the dialectic, but not all of it.

What would a logical analysis of the long lecture argument amount to? Generally, a logical analysis of an argument consists of two parts: a reconstruction and a

critical evaluation. To reconstruct the argument, we notice that the argument gives the impression of being tightly reasoned and logical. We therefore try to reconstruct it as a logical derivation.**[iii]** One thing we need to attend to is the occurrence of a suppositional subargument that needs to be put into a more explicit format. As a first line of proof one may enter:

(1) I hate to hear long lectures.

(This may, in context, be taken to constitute a fact.)
As an unexpressed (and unproblematic) premise we may add:

(2) For all X, if I hate X, X is a bad thing for me.

And from this we may conclude:

(3) Hearing a long lecture is a bad thing for me.
As another unexpressed, empirical but, I think, unproblematic premise we may state:

(4) Whatever type of lecture I like, I get to hear it.
Then the argument introduces a supposition:

(5) Suppose: I like long lectures.
Given this supposition we may conclude, using (4):

(6) I get to hear a long lecture.
Whence, by (3) (maintaining the supposition):

(7) I get what is a bad thing for me.
By conditionalization we may retract the supposition to obtain:

(8) If I liked long lectures, I would get what is a bad thing for me.
For the sake of argument, let us pretend that the following premises are also acceptable:

(9) If I liked long lectures, that would do me no good.

(10) On account of my dislike of long lectures, no evil will befall me.

Thus, on balance, if I liked long lectures things would get worse as compared to my present state of dislike of them. Hence, let us presume that the calculus of

rational sentiments now warrants the conclusion:

(11) I may be glad not to like long lectures.**[iv]**

One may expand the reconstruction so as to reach the conclusion that "I may rejoice in hating long lectures", but the weaker conclusion will do. Passing to the evaluation stage, we first notice that the argument is less of an innocent conundrum than it might have been supposed.

What is worrying about the argument is its generalizability to a type: *self-gratulatory argument*. Given the present analysis, it seems that for all matters where choice is ethically neutral, a matter of taste, we have, no matter our predilections, special reason to be glad to have exactly those preferences we happen to have. If you hate red funiture, you should be glad that you hate red furniture.

Otherwise, you might have been buying loads of red furniture; and you so much hate the stuff! Yet the same holds for those that love red furniture: they have reason to rejoice in their preferences as well. This looks terribly suspect; you're OK and I'm OK. Can it be? One logician's solution, given this analysis, would be to point at line (8):

(8) If I liked long lectures, I would get what is a bad thing for me.

This line is obtained from the preceding suppositional argument by the rule of conditionalization. But conditionalization does not warrant the modalities ("liked" and "would") that were introduced at this line. A proper application of conditionalization yields instead:

(8*) If I like long lectures, then I get what is a bad thing for me.

This proposition, which, by the way, follows immediately from premise (1), is much weaker. It is too weak to carry the rest of the argument. To reach the verdict that I may rejoice in my dislike of long lectures one needs to have recourse to the original modal version that tells us that I would be worse off in counterfactual situations in which I liked long lectures.

Alternatively, if one wants to save the full modal version of (8), one needs a modalized version of suppositional argument to support it. In a modalized suppositional argument reference to the preceding nonmodal part may be

blocked. There are two such references: use is made of (3) and of (4). The use of (4) might be saved by giving this premise a modal formulation:

(4*) Whatever type of lecture I might like, I would get to hear it.

This modalized version of the premise will certainly not be canceled by the introduction of the counterfactual supposition that I like long lectures. The use of (3), however, cannot be saved in this way. In order to establish the following proposition:

(3*) Whatever type of lecture I might like, hearing a long lecture would be a bad thing for me.

One would have to push up the modalization to its premises (1) and (2). For (2) this may be unproblematic but the modalization of (1) yields a problematic premise:

(1*) Whatever type of lecture I might like, I would hate to hear long lectures.

This is problematic, for its seems plausible that if I liked long lectures I would not hate to hear them.

Thus, following the gist of this logical analysis, it seems that the argument goes wrong somewhere, but we cannot tell for sure where it goes wrong. Now this result is not really spectacular: one could have suspected beforehand that something was rotten. What the logical analysis adds is a more precise insight in the ways the argument goes wrong; or better, in the ways it might go wrong. Proposition (8) must be either modalized or unmodalized. If it is unmodalized the trouble arises in the last part of the argument. If it is modalized then either the suppositional part must be modalized as well, or the application of the rule of conditional proof would be in error. Then, if the suppositional proof is modalized, one needs to modalize (3) to avoid a fallacious reference in the now modalized suppositional proof. Finally, if (3) is modalized one needs to modalize premise (1) to restore validity in the first part of the argument. But this leaves us with a problematic premise.

From the logical analysis one may extract a pattern of dialectic moves and countermoves, a kind of profile of dialogue. Together these moves determine a strategy for the critic of the self-gratulatory argument. First, corresponding to the

reconstruction part of the logical analysis, the critic must try to get to an agreement on a more precise understanding of the argument. In this phase the critic may ask the proponent to reformulate parts of the argument in a clarifying way, but she may also, more actively, propose reconstructions of her own. Of course, this dialectic process may lead to an understanding of the self-gratulatory argument different than the present reconstruction. In that case the rest of the dialectical process will also be quite different from what follows. But let us assume that an agreement on the present reconstruction can be obtained. Corresponding to the evaluation part of the logical analysis, the critic should then, in the second phase, go on to ask whether proposition (8) is to be understood as modalized or as unmodalized. If the answer is that it is to be understood as unmodalized, then the critic is to turn to criticism of the last part of the argument. If the answer is that it is to be understood as modalized, then she should point out that the suppositional part of the argument must be understood as modalized as well. Once this much has been granted she may go on to push the modalization upward over (3) to (1). Finally the critic may point out that the modalized version of (1) is highly problematic.**[v]**

We would not speak of a quasi-logical argument if we did not think there was something wrong with it, and this presentiment, in the present case, was borne out by the strategy displayed. Without going as far as to claim that we here have a winning strategy for the critic of the self-gratulatory argument (for one thing, we did not check on other possible reconstructions), there can be no doubt that the proponent of that argument gets driven into a corner from which it is hard to escape. Such a strategy I shall call a *strong critical strategy* (namely, a strong strategy for the critic).

Using a strong critical strategy against a quasi-logical argument will most likely put the proponent at fault. But the strategy need not tell which particular step in the argument is the one to blame. Generally, in a particular discussion, a tournament, in which the critic uses the strategy, the fault will be pinpointed at a particular spot. But then it can hardly be said that the fault was there to start with; rather it seems that the fault was constructed to be right there by the outcome of the dialectical process. The situation is quite analogous to that so aptly described by Richard Whately as he points out the indeterminate character of some fallacies. These are situations where a fallacy has been committed, but you cannot tell which fallacy it is.**[vi]**

To sum up the lessons drawn from this first example: a language user confronted

with a quasi-logical argument is not without means of defense. In order to convince her adversary that his argument fails, she may solicit reconstructions of the argument and offer reconstructions herself, until a picture is obtained that is sufficiently clear to pursue a strategy of detailed criticism and evaluation. In this type of defense the critic generally goes beyond the stance of pure critical doubt to engage herself actively in discussing merits and demerits of parts of the argument. Thus part of the profile of dialogue associated with quasi-logical arguments consists of these two types of moves: the reconstructive and the evaluative.

2. The New Rhetoric's Idea of the Quasi-Logical

What may be surprising, or even disquieting, is that in stressing the importance of applied logic the present approach might seem to run counter to that of *The New Rhetoric*. Since *The New Rhetoric* constitutes the *locus classicus* for the concept of quasi-logical arguments, and since I have no intention of belittling my indebtedness to Perelmans and Olbrechts-Tyteca, it will be proper to shortly investigate the New Rhetoric's notion of the quasi-logical and to see where the differences lie between their approach and mine. According to *The New Rethoric*, quasi-logical arguments avail themselves of techniques of formal demonstration in a context of informal argumentation. I quote the beginning of its chapter on quasi-logical arguments (translation in the notes):

Les arguments que nous allons examiner dans ce chapitre prétendent à une certaine force de conviction, dans la mesure où ils se présentent comme comparables à des raisonnements formels, logiques ou mathématiques. Pourtant, celui qui les soumet à l'analyse perçoit aussitôt les différences entre ces argumentations et les démonstrations formelles, car seul un effort de réduction ou de précision, de nature non-formelle, permet de donner à ces arguments une apparence démonstrative; c'est la raison pour laquelle nous les qualifions de quasi logiques. (1970: Section 45, p. 259)**[vii]**

One more quote brings out a characteristic feature of many quasi-logical arguments:

… l'accusation de commettre une faute de logique est, elle-même, souvent, une argumentation quasi logique. On se prévaut, par cette accusation, du prestige du raisonnement rigoureux. (1970: Section 45, p. 260)**[viii]**

The authors discuss several ways in which the exploitation of formal

demonstration in a context of informal argumentation can be accomplished. For instance, the arguer may present as a formal contradiction what is merely an informal, perhaps a pragmatic, incompatibility.**[ix]**

As a second example, I mention the informal division of a domain, which may be exploited, quasi-logically, as a basis for a completely rigorous constructive or destructive dilemma.**[x]**

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca also discuss several means to fend off these quasi-logical arguments. Thus, where the claim is to have shown up a formal contradiction, one may try to show that it is merely a matter of incompatibility, that is, that one's opponent has reduced or simplified the meaning of some statements in order to assimilate the system under attack to a formal system.**[xi]**
In the case of a quasi-logical dilemma, they point out the possibility of converting it into a counterdilemma; this would amount to answering a quasi-logical argument by a quasi-logical argument. But they also mention a method of more general application that allows the critic to deconstruct a dilemma argumentatively: this method has the critic allege qualifications of time and other nuances that permit him, argumentatively, to slip between the horns of the dilemma (1969: 238; 1970, Section 56, p. 321).**[xii]**

The authors do not mention the possibility of detailed logical criticism, as embedded in a strong critical strategy, of a quasi-logical argument. It is not unlikely that in their view such criticism would be itself quasi-logical. On the other hand, at certain junctures they seem not to object to answering a quasi-logical argument by another one. So perhaps they would not object to the type of responses given in a strong critical strategy. Conversely, our profile of dialogue may be enriched by the inclusion of a branch that offers the Perelmanian option of answering a quasi-logical argument by a quasi-logical counterargument. The counterdilemma, for instance, may be looked upon as an invitation to retract the original dilemma without having to go through a detailed logical analysis of either dilemma. As such it is not unreasonable.**[xiii]**
Another type of move that is rightly stressed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca is that of introducing terminological clarifications and qualifications. These moves form an important part of the dialectic; we must assume them to be prominent in the discussion phase in our profile that corresponds to the reconstruction part of the logical analysis.
Yet another type of move is suggested by the aforementioned characterization of

certain quasi-logical arguments as taking advantage of the prestige of rigorous thought. In as far as an arguer tries to intimidate his opponent by the use of vocabulary or other resources taken from logic and mathematics (or, for that matter, from any other prestigious field), where these resources have no real role to play, he may be charged with *ad verecundiam*. So we may add a move to the profile that introduces this type of charge.

Now that we have noted these valuable contributions, we should not refrain from mentioning two rather worrisome features of the account in *The New Rhetoric*. The first of these concerns the question whether quasi-logical arguments are ultimately to be evaluated negatively. And if so, whether ordinary *logical* deductive arguments, too, would have to be called *quasi*-logical in most cases. On these points *The New Rethoric* leaves us somewhat in the dark.**[xiv]**
On the view I want to defend, we can hold on to a distinction between the logical and the quasi-logical; the first being a positive and the second being a negative term of evaluation. But who is to decide whether an argument is logical or not?**[xv]**
The point of view I want to take on this question is an *immanent dialectical* one. That is, ultimately, the status of an argument must be decided in discussion, by the participants themselves. Dependent on that outcome the argument is reconstructed as valid, as doubtful, as erroneous, as a blunder, or even as a fallacy. An argument that is presented as deductive and logical may be reconstructed as logical or as quasi-logical, and in the latter case as doubtful, erroneous, or fallacious. But such predicates may also be applied to an untested, unreconstructed argument – an argument "on the hoof", as John Woods would say (1995: 187). In this case they must be taken as a preliminary verdict by which the speaker indicates a presumption that, after having been reconstructed and discussed, the argument would most likely be thus designated. A preliminary verdict can be given by an outsider from a spectator's perspective, or it can be given by a participant, before the show begins. In particular, the predicate "quasi-logical" indicates that the speaker, whether a spectator or a participant, presumes the profile of dialogue to contain a strong critical strategy.

From this point of view, there is no need to designate all arguments that make use of resources taken from logic or mathematics as "quasi-logical". Some of these are far better designated as "logical". The latter predicate, as used in a preliminary verdict, would indicate that the speaker expects the argument to

prove its mettle when tested by a critical opponent. So these two predicates express different expectations as to what the profile of dialogue contains. It is true that on a abstract level the profiles of dialogue for logical and for quasi-logical arguments will contain the same types of move; but only the latter profiles will contain a strong critical strategy once specified.**[xvi]**

The second worrisome feature of the account in *The New Rhetoric* is that the authors base their treatment on a dichotomy between a realm of formal demonstration and a realm of informal argumentation.**[xvii]** As I see it, this whole dichotomy has been misconceived, whether we interpret "formal" as "formalized" or merely as "rigorous". For reasons of time, I shall skip that part of my paper, which, as you may have noticed, stands in danger of presenting a quasi-logical dilemma.**[xviii]**

3. Are Quasi-Logical Arguments Fallacies?

Now that we have reviewed the treatment in *The New Rhetoric*, we may return to the construction of a profile of dialogue. But first I want to take up the issue of whether quasi-logical arguments are fallacies. The answer of course depends on one's theory of fallacy, but if I were to survey them all this would become a long lecture, indeed. Let me therefore announce that in the present context I take fallacies to constitute transgressions of the rules of what may either be called "persuasion dialogue" or "critical discussion". Acts that conform to the rules of dialogue, but are strategically inferior are not fallacies, but errors or blunders. The point of the distinction is that one may see it as a goal of critical discussion, subsidiary to its primary goal of conflict resolution, that the arguments that are put forward in it are critically tested. This means that in good dialogue both outcomes must be possible: sometimes an argument will pass all tests and sometimes an argument will fail. Consequently, putting forward a bad argument is not by itself a fallacy. It need not be unreasonable. Just as it is not by itself unreasonable to lose a discussion or a part of it, but only to fail to admit the dialectical consequences of one's loss, so it is not by itself unreasonable to argue quasi-logically, but only to fail to admit that one has done so, once the flaw has been exposed.**[xix]**

4. A Profile of Dialogue

A profile of dialogue for quasi-logical and other arguments can now roughly be sketched as folows (see Figure 1). It is a profile that pertains to argument criticism in general; but, by means of an example, I hope to show presently how it

may be applied to criticism of arguments that claim to be logically tight.**[xx]**
It is supposed that the argument is presented within a context of persuasion dialogue. Most simply, let there be two parties Wilma and Bruce. Suppose that Wilma has advanced a thesis and that Bruce has challenged this thesis and that Wilma has put forward an argument in order to defend her thesis. The argument can be either simple or complex. A simple argument contains only one premises/conclusion structure, a complex argument may contain a whole tree of such structures as well as suppositional parts.

I now want to see what dialectical moves should be available for Bruce to react to the argument. One reaction for Bruce would be to accept the argument as adequate and to retract the challenge. Other reactions are more or less critical.
The least critical of these other reactions would be to renew the *challenge*. Bruce may simply declare not to have been convinced by the argument. But in order that the dialectic process move forward, it is then incumbent upon Bruce to indicate precisely those steps in the argument that failed to convince him. This gives Wilma the opportunity to expand the argument precisely at those turns where expansions are required to achieve her particular goal in the dialogue, namely to convince Bruce. Notice that in the case of simple arguments this part of the profile reduces to moves of *tenability criticism* (are the reasons given themselves acceptable?) and of *connection criticism* (is the reason adequate to support the thesis?).
A number of more critical reactions for Bruce are grouped under the heading of *active criticism*. In these branches of the profile, Bruce takes upon himself a burden of proof to show that the argument, though perhaps not unreasonably proposed at this point of dialogue, is ultimately wrong, mistaken or insufficiently weak in some way or other. In this branch one finds *counterarguments* (including quasi-logical ones) and *argument criticisms* of various sorts.
Finally a third type of reaction for Bruce would be to put up a *fallacy criticism*. Bruce now denies that Wilma's argument might be reasonable. On the contrary, it is claimed that the argument is inadmissible. That is, that it infringes such rules for persuasion dialogue (including rules of logic) as obtain in the company to which both disputants belong. The retraction Bruce is after is not the regular retraction that takes place on the ground level dialogue, but a retraction of the argument as an argument that never should have been put forward in the first place.**[xxi]**

5. An Example: The Immortality Argument

To fill out this rather sketchy profile a little further, let us contemplate another example. In it Wilma and Bruce discuss a proof of immortality that has often proved to be hard to disentangle. After each move I shall indicate its place in the profile.

Wilma: We, human beings, are immortal. [*thesis*]
Bruce: How come? [*challenge*]

Wilma: This can be proved by sharp logical reasoning. For suppose we were mortal. In that case a good question to ask would be: shall we remain mortal? There are exactly two cases to consider: either we shall remain mortal for ever or we won't. Suppose we shall remain mortal for ever. In that case we shall remain for ever. So in that case we must be immortal. On the other hand, supposing that we shall not remain mortal for ever, we must become immortal at some time in the future. But whosoever will become immortal at some time in the future, happens to be immortal right now. Consequently, both cases lead to the conclusion that we are immortal right now. The supposition that we would be mortal, therefore, has as a consequence that we happen to be immortal. From which we may conclude, by impeccable logic, that we must be immortal. [*argument presented as "proof": see Figure 2 for a survey*]
Bruce: First of all I want to object to calling this argument a proof and to your calling your own logic impeccable. You have not indicated what special features would justify one to speak of a proof. For instance, you have not mentioned any axiomatic theory such that your argument would be a proof within the context of that theory. So, please, withdraw the claim to have provided a proof and admit that your logic still needs to be tested in critical discussion. [*fallacy criticism: ad verecundiam*]
Wilma: O.K. Let us call it an argument. [*retraction of "proof"*] But is there anything wrong with it? [*upholding the argument]*
Bruce: Let me see. Your argument sounds rather fishy. Many people will object to the last part, where, from the result that the supposition that we would be mortal leads to the consequence that we are immortal, you conclude that we are immortal. Your conclusion really seems conjured up out of a hat. But, fortunately for both of us, I studied enough logic to see there is nothing wrong with this last step. It is a *reductio ad absurdum*. So there must be some other mistake in your argument. Could I put my finger on a false dilemma? I suppose you realize that,

for your case-splitting to be exhaustive, it must be presumed that we are either all equally mortal or all equally immortal? [*active criticism: logical analysis, reconstructive phase*]
Wilma: Yes. But alternatively one could replace the "we" in the argument by each of our proper names in turn: Frans, Rob, Tony, Charley, and so on. Thus the argument would show each of us, separately, to be immortal, and the case-splittings would all be safe. [*alternative reconstruction*]
Bruce: Uh, well, let us look at these cases. Aha! There you are! You say that if we shall remain mortal, we shall remain. The first "remain" is a linking verb, the second is an intransitive verb. That cannot be right! [*active criticism: logical analysis, evaluative phase*]
Wilma: Please pay attention to the thought rather than to the words. What I meant to say is that if we shall remain mortal for ever, that is, if we shall be mortal at any future point of time, then at any future point of time we must be there to be mortal. We can't be mortal when we are dead. [*back to reconstructive phase*]
Bruce: I see. Now I'm confused. I thought to have spotted the flaw. But this was a kind of red herring in your argument, was it not? It looked like a flaw , but it wasn't. I'd say your presentation is somewhat at odds with our rules of dialogue – the tenth rule of pragma-dialectics to be exact.**[xxii]** How can one pay attention to the thought if the words are jumbled? [*fallacy criticism*] Anyhow, I now grant the first horn of your dilemma. But in the second horn I think I can spot a problematic premise. You say that anyone who will become immortal at some time in the future, happens to be immortal right now. But take the case of Hercules, the ancient hero. At the end of his life he was adopted by the immortal gods; so during his life, as he was still a mortal being, it was true to say of him that he would become immortal at a certain time in what was then the future. But, before the gods granted him this great favor, he was not immortal yet. Wouldn't that disprove your premise? [*active criticism: counterargument*]
Wilma: I'm sorry if my way of expressing has been misleading. Now as to the apotheosis of Hercules, you are right that there is a distinction to be made. On the one hand, "immortality" may be understood as an intrinsic property, such that for whoever has the property dying is impossible. This was the property the gods conferred on Hercules. But I meant "immortality" to be understood as an extrinsic property, that is, simply as the property one has if one will, in fact, live forever (even though death may in all eternity remain an unrealized possibility). Now if at some time in the future one of us has the property of living at that time and

forever after, he or she must necessarily live through all moments of time from the present moment onwards. That is, that person must right now be immortal in the extrinsic sense. [*back to reconstructive phase*]
Bruce: I never was aware of this ambiguity in the meaning of "immortal" But the distinction seems almost evident now that we have delved so deeply into this argument. Yes, I suppose I can see it your way. [*idem*]
Wilma: Since now you have checked all parts of the argument, isn't it about time to get to the concluding stage of this discussion as well as of this rather lengthy lecture in which our discussion is embedded? Are you prepared to withdraw your critical doubt with respect to my thesis? [*walks to the door as she is getting to the concluding stage*]
Bruce: Now wait a minute! If your thesis is right and we are immortal, there is plenty of time, so why hurry? [*ad hominem: you don't practise what you preach*]
Wilma: Because you cannot beat my argument, dumbo. [*abusive ad hominem*]

We must leave Bruce and Wilma right in the middle of this altercation which, by the way, provides us with a clear-cut example of a dialectical shift.**[xxiii]** After all, I hate long lectures.

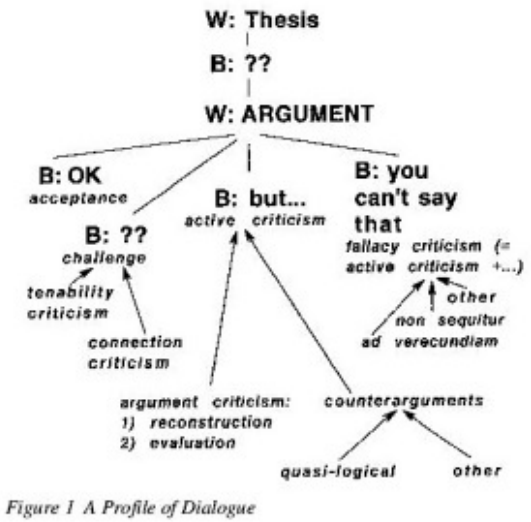

Figure 1 A Profile of Dialogue

Figure 1 A Profile of Dialogue

6. Summary and conclusions
Summing up: In this lecture I wanted to discuss the dialectical moves that are appropriate in a critical discussion of a quasi-logical argument. Two examples of quasi-logical arguments have been presented for the purpose: the self-gratulatory argument and the immortality argument. Though the dialectical analysis of both

of them had to be rather sketchy, I hope to have raised some interest in the dialectical study of arguments by means of the specification of profiles of dialogue. Ultimately, as I see it, the study of profiles is to help us construct rigorously formulated systems of formal dialectics (as in Walton and Krabbe 1995: Ch. 4); but I have not touched upon these. In the present case of quasi-logical arguments the dialectic was seen to link up closely with logical analysis, from which strong critical strategies could be derived, but we have also profited from the rhetorical point of view expounded in *The New Rhetoric.*

Adhering to the pragma-dialectical concept of fallacy, I did not want to say that all quasi-logical arguments are fallacious. Moreover, I did not envisage a theory of dialogue that would in all cases be able to decide on such matters as quasi-logicality or fallaciousness beforehand. In many cases, the theorist will have to refrain from anything more than a preliminary judgment. According to the *immanent dialectical* approach it must often be left to the disputants themselves to decide these matters. But their decision is not arbitrary. In their discussions the disputants are supposed to be guided by rules of dialectics that are accepted by the company of discussants to which they belong. The empirical and normative study of these rules is the task of the dialectician.

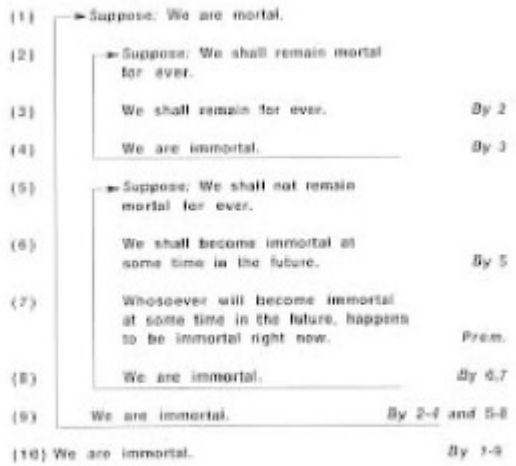

Figure 2 The Immortality Argument

NOTES

[i] The present paper contains the literal text of my ISSA-conference keynote, read on June 18th, 1998. I hope the reader will be willing to excuse a number of peculiarities of style which are due to its having been written for the ear rarther

than for the eye. Some notes, references, captions, and figures have been added. A summary of the paper is contained in the last two paragraphs. I want to thank the board of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation (ISSA) for their invitation; my Groningen colleagues of the Promotion Club Cognitive Patterns (PCCP), who were the victims of a first try-out presentation, for a number of helpful suggestions; and David Atkinson for some prompt and apposite linguistic advice. Finally, I dedicate this piece to the memory of my brother, Theo, with whom I first invented and discussed the argument for immortality.

[ii] This rather sketchy definition is, I think, all that is needed to delineate my topic. The term 'unwarrantedly' introduces a normative element to be fleshed out from various perspectives.

[iii] Whether one is a deductivist or not, this way to reconstruct an argument seems perfectly legitimate when the mode of presentation of the argument invites us to see it as a rigorous deduction.

[iv] I doubt whether anything like a satisfactory 'calculus of rational sentiments' exists, but, anyhow, some sentiments are deemed more reasonable than others in certain contexts. We argue about these things with an – often implicit – appeal to "feeling rules" (Hochschild, 1979). As Arlie Hochschild wrote: In common parlance, we often talk about our feelings or those of others as if rights and duties applied directly to them. For example, we often speak of "having the right" to feel angry at someone. Or we say we "should feel more grateful" to a benefactor. We chide ourselves that a friend's misfortune, a relative's death, "should have hit us harder," or that another's good luck, or our own, should have inspired more joy. We know feeling rules, too, from how others react to what they infer from our emotive display. Another may say to us, "You shouldn't feel so guilty; it wasn't your fault, You don't have a right to feel jealous, given our agreement." (p. 564) One may agree with this idea – that we can discuss the rationality, or the appropriateness, of emotions, sentiments, or feelings – without committing oneself to the view that emotions are judgements (Solomon, 1980). The rationality of emotions as patterns of salience has been discussed by Ronald de Sousa (1980).

[v] If the proponent of the original argument refuses to move along with these latter criticisms, say if he holds on to a step that derives a modalized from an unmodalized proposition, the critic may need to go into detail to demonstrate the invalidity of that particular step. Here she may have recourse to several methods in order to convince the proponent: counterexample, logical analogy, and formal analysis. In some cases, if the proponent can be held to certain rules of logic on

account of which the invalidity should have been obvious, he may be brought to admit to have committed a fallacy (cf. my 1995). We shall get back to fallacies later.

[vi] Whately writes: if a man expatiates on the distress of the country, and thence argues that the government is tyrannical, we must suppose him to assume either that 'every distressed country is under a tyranny,' which is a manifest falsehood, or, merely that 'every country under a tyranny is distressed,' which, however true, proves nothing, the Middle Term being undistributed. (1836: 149-50) According to Whately, a fallacy has been committed, but you cannot tell which fallacy it is.

[vii] Translation: The arguments we are about to examine in this chapter lay claim to a certain power of conviction, in the degree that they claim to be similar to the formal reasoning of logic and mathematics. Submitting these arguments to analysis, however, immediately reveals the difference between them and formal demonstrations, for only an effort of reduction or specification of a nonformal character makes it possible for these arguments to appear demonstrative. This is why we call them quasi-logical. (Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca 1969: 193)

[viii] Translation: … the charge of having committed a logical error is often itself a quasi-logical argument. By making this charge, one takes advantage of the prestige of rigorous thought. (1969: 194)

[ix] Thus the arguer may pretend to have given a proof by the celebrated logical pattern of reductio ad absurdum, whereas he has done no more than raise some objections that might be answered.

[x] Thirdly, informal definitions that cover terminological manipulations may be presented as formal stipulations without theoretical content which, moreover, are taken to warrant unscrupulous substitutions by Leibniz's Law.

[xi] Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca write: Aussi, un des moyens de défense qui sera opposé à l'argumentation quasi logique faisant état de contradictions sera de montrer qu'il s'agit non de contradiction mais d'incompabilité, c'est-à-dire que l'on mettra en évidence la réduction qui seule a permis l'assimilation à un système formel du système attaqué, lequel est loin de présenter, en fait, la mème rigidité. (1970, Section 46, p. 263) Translation: Therefore one of the means of defense to be used against the quasi-logical argument which claims a contradiction is to show that it is not a matter of contradiction but of incompatibility. In other words, one will display the reduction which alone has made possible the likening to a formal system of the system under attack, which in fact does not exhibit the same rigor. (1969: 196).

[xii] As to the example of Note 10: Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca do not explicitly discuss any techniques to ward off uncongenial definitions (except for the somewhat dubious charge of tautology), but it is clear that they consider definitions as argumentative, and therefore in principle as a proper focus for critical objections in a context of informal argumentation.

[xiii] This is not to say that, in critical discussion, it could be reasonable to negotiate and to 'trade off dilemma's'. Rather the counterdilemma is an expedient to convince the other party that the original dilemma does not hold water.

[xiv] On the one hand quasi-logical arguments are not officially designated by any negative terms such as 'error', 'flaw', or 'fallacy', and neither would one expect such a verdict from The New Rhetoric. On the other hand the term 'quasi-logical' by itself has a negative ring, and in discussing such arguments the authors strike a particularly critical note. An argument's claim to be similar to the formal reasoning of logic and mathematics would hardly ever be justified. This leaves us wondering. A situation that is aggravated by the rather puzzling fact that many examples in The New Rhetoric are based on valid logical schemata such as the constructive dilemma, be it that their application remains somewhat doubtful. This makes one wonder whether there is any distinction between ordinary logical deductive arguments and quasi-logical arguments.

[xv] For an argument to be designated as quasi-logical, it is not sufficient that its mode of reasoning be taken from logic or mathematics. As stated in the introduction, it must also be the case that the transfer is 'unwarrented'. But who decides whether this is the case or not?

[xvi] On an abstract level, a profile of dialogue, as in Figure 1, merely shows what possible types of moves are available for the disputants. Once the general scheme has been applied to a specific thesis, one obtains a survey of possible specific moves, from which strategies for either party may be selected.

[xvii] This dichotomy might explain the authors' resistance to the idea of admitting a group of arguments that are plainly logical and not quasi-logical. So-called plainly logical arguments, they might want to say, would illegitimately treat a context of informal argumentation as if it were a context of formal demonstration.

[xviii] Braving such risks, I here present the argument that had to be skipped: The core of the trouble lies in the concept of "formal demonstration". On the one hand "formal demonstration" may be taken to refer to formalized axiomatic deductions, that is, deductions in a formal language using a fixed set of rules of inference. But the construction of formal languages and formal deductions is

much too specialized an activity for it to have such an impact on informal argumentation as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca ascribe to formal demonstrations. For one thing, it is not the formalization of logic and parts of mathematics that is responsible for the prestige of rigorous thought. Nor do the ideas of contradiction, definition, identity, dilemma, etc. originate from these formal systems. Also, if formalized axiomatic deductions were the standard that quasi-logical arguments exploit, it would remain a mystery how there could have been quasi-logical arguments before Frege.

On the other hand, one may interpret "formal demonstration" as "rigorous demonstration" or "proof". Then we get to a concept of formal demonstration that very well explains the ad verecundiam character of many quasi-logical arguments. This is something to be aware of, and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca were right to stress it. But there is simply no dichotomy. Logical and mathematical proofs are just one of a kind with informal arguments. Proofs cannot be taken as absolutes: what counts as a proof for one person may not count as a proof for someone else. To call an argument a proof announces a surplus value above the more mundane types of informal argument, such as being part of an (informal) axiomatic set-up, but the character of this surplus value may vary in different contexts. (This is explained more fully in my 1997.) In some cases the label "proof" may just constitute an ad verecundiam or ad baculum ingredient of one's argument. Thus, what is presented as a rigorous proof is a potential object of analysis, of reconstruction and evaluation. In this proofs do not differ from other types of informal argumentation. Misuse of what appears to be schematically correct schemata is not excluded in the area of demonstration, as is witnessed by the logical paradoxes and the existence of flawed proofs. We may conclude that if "formal demonstrations" are interpreted as rigorous (but informal) proofs, quasi-logical arguments could occur just as well within the context of formal demonstrations as in the context of juridical, philosophical or everyday argumentation. Hence it would be impossible to explain quasi-logical arguments as attempts to emulate formal demonstrations in a context of informal argumentation. Thus either interpretation of the term "formal demonstration" lands us in difficulties. This poses a (hopefully not quasi-logical) destructive dilemma for the whole idea of basing the concept of quasi-logical argument on a dichotomy between informal argumentation and formal demonstration.

[xix] The cases where quasi-logical arguments are fallacies are those that may be shown to fulfill some extra conditions, among which figures pre-eminently that they must transgress the operative rules of dialogue. Which quasi-logical

arguments are fallacies depends, then, on the rules of dialogue that hold in the context.

[xx] Profiles of dialogue are tree-shaped descriptions of options and possible sequences of moves in reasonable dialogue. Here "reasonable" does not imply that no fallacies are committed, but that fallacies and challenges of fallacies are adequately handled within the dialogue. The method of profiles aims at getting a survey of all the different ways a reasonable dialogue of some type could proceed. It was applied by Douglas Walton in his discussions of the fallacy of many questions (1989a: 68, 69; 1989b: 37, 38) and in several of his later books on fallacy theory (1995: 22-26; 1996: 150-54; 1997: 253-55). Cf. also my 1992 and 1995.

[xxi] The subject of retraction is a tricky one. Surely, one should admit reasonable retractions: retractions of fallacious moves of course, but also ground level retractions, say of standpoints a disputant has been unable to defend in a satisfactory way. On the other hand, persistent retraction of each of one's commitments in dialogue would make reasonable discussion all but impossible. The problem of where and how to draw the line is one of the main themes in Walton and Krabbe 1995.

[xxii] '… Rule 10 for a critical discussion runs as follows: A party must not use formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous and he must interpret the other party's formulations as carefully and accurately as possible.' (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992: 196)

[xxiii] In fact, Bruce's tu quoque and Wilma's abusive ad hominem secured them a fast cascading down into a quarrel. See Walton and Krabbe 1995, Sections 3.3 and 3.4, esp. pp. 105-7 and 111-12. A closer look at Proposition 6 (Figure 2) would have been more profitable

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Arguing From Clichés: Communication And Miscommunication

You should always try to avoid the use of clichés. (anonymous)

1. Clichés Don't Grow on Trees – Introducing Clichés
Following the unprecedented growth and dissemination of information and the widespread access to it through the media, we are increasingly experiencing the use of *clichés,* old and new, unchanged and altered, famous and anonymous: 'Life imitates art', 'All the world's a stage', 'It's a small world', 'Money talks', 'Time is money', 'Money does not grow on trees', 'Traduttore, traditore', 'Cherchez la femme', 'the man in the street', 'political correctness', 'I promise to love you until death do us part', 'Men and women are different: Vive la différence!', 'Elementary, my dear Watson', and so on. These frequently recycled expressions are looked upon as unquestionable truths or at least as 'le mot juste' by many people. Some, however, dismiss them as "clichés".

This paper is devoted to clichés. Not to discard them, but to make some observations about their relevance to argumentation and their potential for miscommunication. Actually, we claim that certain clichés are crucial to argumentative discourse, and that their capacity for building arguments is closely linked to their liability to trigger divergent interpretations.

We propose a pragmatic and rhetorical approach to the concept of cliché and its functions in argumentation. This approach takes into consideration three major elements in the dynamics of clichés, the disregard of which may lead to misinterpretations:

1. there is no complete overlap between the form and the function of the lexical entitities that underlie clichés
2. many clichés exhibit a balance between a general scope and a specific focus on certain topoï for which a particular audience is expected to have a particular preference at a particular time in a particular context
3. there is an inherent tension between the explicit and the implicit functioning of a cliché in argumentation

Cliché is a word with a negative ring to it. When you say “This is a cliché” about an opinion voiced by a partner in conversation, you usually imply that s/he is yielding to popular unreflected opinion, that s/he is just repeating something constantly circulating in the mental marketplace of a certain discourse community. A cliché is then seen as a commonplace, the collective consensus speaking through the mouth of an individual without involving his/her own critical thinking (Lerner: 1956, Ricks: 1980). Maybe what a cliché stands for is not blatantly untrue to a rational observer, as a *prejudice* usually is. But it is still likely to be seen as a crude and simplified way of looking at things that deserve a deeper and less biased consideration.

It is not easy to come to grips with clichés because their form does not display any regular patterns, their structure is difficult to capture and their occurrences impossible to predict. Whether the coinage of clichés is ascribed to well-known or to anonymous sources, it is their distribution and frequency that eventually decides their subsequent evolution.

Generally speaking, cliché seems to be a rather elitist word. Popular wisdom is not likely to come as close to the truth as a well-educated, highly trained and critical mind, such as the typical academic intellectual. Cliché, with its derogatory value load, is a word that Plato, that outspoken critic of the masses, could have used. It would have come less natural to Aristotle with his respect for ‘doxa’, for

tradition and general opinion. We will side with Aristotle on this issue and try to show that clichés fulfil no negligible role even in informed discourse, rational argumentation and creative problem-solving dialogue.

2. What's in a Cliché? – Defining Clichés

Clichés are often defined as stereotypical forms that have been proliferating in many areas of life, such as art, philosophy, behaviour, and language. Whether we like them or not, they represent an important ingredient in verbal and non-verbal communication and are meant to establish or signal common ground. Our education is, after all, based on certain fixed patterns of thinking and speaking.

The origin of the word cliché can be traced back to the technical jargon of the French printing trade in the nineteenth century. It denoted a cast obtained by dropping a matrix face downwards upon a surface of molten metal on the point of cooling (Howard: 1986). It may be an echoic word since it imitates the plopping sound that the matrix made as it fell into its hot bath, which is rendered in English by 'click' and 'clack', as has been pointed out by Redfern, who adds:

Because of its origins, together with 'stereotype' in printing, and its later extension to photography, the term parallels the development of modern technology. Imitation, identical reproduction (cloning, before its time), such associations led on to the figurative meaning (because reproducibility entails wear and tear) of mechanized mental processes and textural fatigue. (1989: 8)

According to Redfern, "famous quotations become clichés when they are trivialized by inappropriate use, for example: 'To be or not to be', parroted when a footling decision has to be taken" (1989: 41). He considers that *kitsch* is "the twisting of clichés to non-productive ends" (1989: 61).

Some dictionary definitions tend to draw a fine line between cliché as a repetitive formula, and *stereotype* as a more negatively loaded and oversimplified evaluative formula and mental attitude. Thus the word cliché is defined as "a stereotyped expression, a commonplace phrase" by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989), "a hackneyed phrase or expression; also the idea expressed by it; a hackneyed theme or situation" by the *Longman Webster English College Dictionary* (1985), and "a form of expression that has been so often used that its original effectiveness has been lost" by the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995). The word stereotype is defined as "something continued or constantly repeated without change; a preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.; an attitude based on such a preconception" by the Oxford

English Dictionary (1989), as “somebody or something that conforms to a fixed or general pattern; esp. a standardized, usu. oversimplified, mental picture or attitude that is held in common by members of a group” by the Longman Webster English College Dictionary (1985), and as “disapproving (a person or thing that represents) a fixed set of ideas that is generally held about the characteristics of a particular type of person or thing, which are (wrongly) believed to be shared by all the people and things of that type” by the Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995).

As can be seen in the definitions above, the most common connotations of the term stereotype are overwhelmingly negative, which is not always the case with clichés. *Stereotypes* are conceived of as subjective and prejudiced speech and thinking habits, as well as the label of disapproval given by a person to another person’s generalisations (Missimer: 1990). Unlike clichés, which apply mostly to verbal and visual expression, stereotypes are especially used in connection with human types, attitudes, as well as human perception and behaviour. In social psychology, the method of phenomenology has been used to highlight and account for various stereotyped classifications, which tend to perceive and evaluate people as specimens of a social type. However, Ichheiser (1949) provides a more complex and nuanced picture of social and psychological stereotypes. He emphasizes that, in spite of their predominantly negative evaluation, “the preformed stereotyped images about other people are certainly among the most important factors in the system of ‘collective representations’ necessary to guarantee a minimum of consensus for a group. They should not be lightly dismissed as ‘prejudices’” (1949: 34). We subscribe to his claim that classificatory stereotypes contain both elements of truth and elements of falsehood. After a reconsideration of the linguistic form of clichés in 3. below, we will argue in 4. below for a new way of redefining clichés in terms of the relation between their linguistic form, on the one hand, and their discursive and rhetorical structure, on the other.

3. Words Don’t Make the Cliché – The Linguistic Form of Clichés

In what follows we proceed to a reevaluation of the criteria usually applied to the definition and classification of clichés as distinct from *idioms, euphemisms*, and other more or less fixed linguistic expressions.

Clichés have been studied by scholars from different disciplines, such as linguistics, literary studies, psychology, sociology, and political studies, to name but a few. After examining the items in Partridge’s *Dictionary of Clichés,*

Luelsdorff (1981) has analysed their phonological, syntactic and semanic features, and makes the distinction between clichés exhibiting nominal, verbal or sentence structures. Whereas Luelsdorff focuses on the strictly linguistic features of clichés, Howard (1986) takes a step further, by discussing various subtypes of clichés in terms of idiomaticity and distinguishes between non-idiomatic and idiomatic clichés.

Of more recent date is the research carried out by Gramley and Pátzold (1992) on so-called 'prefabricated language', namely multi-word units or lexical phrases, including clichés. They discuss the effects and functions of clichés in connection with an analysis of the wider category of fixed expressions. Like Redfern (1989), they claim that clichés fulfil an important social function and can be assigned even a positive role in those areas of human interaction where consciously thought-out language is unusual, if not inappropriate, such as funerals, disasters, the writing of references and testimonials.

Concerning the distinction between an *idiom* and a cliché, Gramley and Pátzold are quoting Brook's conclusion: "Whether we call a phrase an idiom or a cliché generally depends on whether we like it or not" (1981: 14). This statement appears to confirm our own intuitions, even though it offers little enlightenment about the nature of clichés. It is precisely at this point that a discussion of the defining features of clichés should actually start. None of the studies mentioned above has succeeded in pinning down the properties that distinguish clichés from other related linguistic expressions such as idioms. In trying to establish linguistic parameters and comparative default features for clichés, the authors overlook the crucial fact that clichés can hardly represent a linguistic category, but rather a pragmatic and a rhetorical category. In other words, clichés cannot be treated and classified as syntactic and/or lexical entities, i.e. according to grammatical form and structure, but rather as functional elements made up of longer or shorter stretches of words, from one word to a whole utterance. This insight may help to explain why both idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions can acquire the value of a cliché, as can any other linguistic item in a particular context. Makkai (1972) expresses a similar view in this respect: "Some clichés are idioms and some idioms are clichés, but neither group includes the other fully".

Like *idioms, euphemisms* represent still another shifting pragmatic category that may turn into and function as clichés. An increasingly popular example is Sir Robert Armstrong's famous statement during the cross-examination in which he tries to provide a justification for not having reported everything he knew in the

Spy Catcher case. When asked why he did not tell the authorities everything he knew and withheld important information, his reply was: “I have been economical with the truth”. This example is symptomatic for the way in which many euphemisms are more politically biased nowadays. As a result of the growing influence of the concept of ‘political correctness’ in several areas of social and political life, an increasing number of ‘politically correct’ terms have emerged lately, some of them replacing older, no longer appropriate ones. Thus, the former ‘Swedish Board of Immigration’ has recently been renamed with a strategically more fitting name, i.e. the ‘Swedish Board of Integration’, which is generally perceived as an attempt to avoid the overuse of the negatively loaded word ‘immigration’.

Are there clichés specific to particular professions? On the one hand, there is a ‘jargonisation’ of all-purpose clichés, such as ‘deliver the goods’, which is increasingly used institutionally, on the other, there is an emergence of everyday clichés adapted from established institutional discourse types, such as ‘to know the ropes’, or ‘cast the anchor’, borrowed from seafaring jargon. Howard refers to these as ‘occupational clichés’ (1986: 90), while Ichheiser (1949) calls them ‘occupational stereotypes’ (1948: 33). Nowadays clichés are more widespread since they are used not only by professionals at the work place, but also by laymen outside the work place. More and more people are using, as well as misusing, clichés coined within various types of institutional discourse, such as journalese, advertising, legalese, political or medical jargon. This is why we propose to call them *institutional clichés*. The dynamics of institutional discourse is thus speeded up and this may account for the fact that some clichés become outdated and are gradually replaced with new ones.

Propaganda, another of those tired expressions one seldom hears nowadays because *public relations* has taken its place (or education, or consciousness-raising): the propagandist does not coax, wheedle, indoctrinate, or inveigle the public into accepting his point of view, but educates it or raises its consciousness. (Bolinger, 1980: 115)

Worth mentioning among institutional clichés are the ones originating in the theories of language and philosophy of language, such as ‘Colourless green ideas sleep furiously’, ‘The king of France is bald’, ‘Have you stopped beating your wife?’. These clichés are not simply recycled, but also reinterpreted, recontextualised and rediscussed both within and outside their institutional frame.

Gender clichés are age-old, but they have become so downgraded and

deconstructed lately that they have already started to trigger their counter-clichés. For example, the masculine 3rd person pronoun 'he' used to act as the generic pronoun for both 'he' and 'she', whereas now it is normally used together with 'she', which in writing appears as 's/he'. Several writers have even made a point of consistently using 'she' instead of 'he' as a generic pronoun in their books. Moreover, many generic nouns ending in 'man', such as 'spokesman', 'chairman', have undergone an alteration, whereby 'man' has been replaced by 'person', as in 'spokesperson' and 'chairperson', the new clichés in the making.

An important category of clichés which are being institutionalised as often as they are being deinstitutionalised are *ethnic clichés*. They are as necessary as they can become infinitely dangerous in that they have a tendency to degenerate easily from outlines of recognizable national patterns of behaviour and mentality into polarised, usually negative and distorted, value judgements. Past and modern history shows clearly that the misuse of such ethnic clichés can have most undesirable, even tragic, effects. Take a common cliché, like 'Swedes are blond and blue-eyed'. It probably started from a matter of fact observation, which may afterwards lend itself to a variety of more or less biased interpretations. According to one interpretation, which exists in Swedish, 'blue-eyed' also means 'innocent, not sophisticated, easy to be cheated'. An oversimplification and generalisation of this particular connotation would not only be false, but also misleading.

Are clichés specific to a culture, and to a certain age? Certainly every culture and every age have their own clichés, but there are also commonly shared clichés. While it is obvious that *culturespecific* and *time-specific* clichés may cause certain problems of understanding and interpretation, it is less obvious that each culture and each historical age is differently aware of the commonly shared clichés. For example, in our age, postmodernist clichés in the visual arts and popular culture represent meaningful and easily recognizable expressions of thinking patterns and values. Many more or less universally recognized clichés seem to have fostered their own 'subclichés' in different ages and communities. For instance, a cliché like "man is the measure of all things" has been frequently reinterpreted. Today, as we know, the meaning of 'man' can equally be interpreted less generically and more in terms of the contrast between the two poles of the dichotomy 'man' – 'woman'.

4. Clichés Revisited – Redefining Clichés as Discursive and Rhetorical Structures

As we have showed above, clichés are not definable in strictly linguistic terms. Like other complex elements of discourse, clichés have a multi-faceted structure: textual, ideational and pragmatic (Halliday 1989/85). When faced with a cliché we can notice one of these aspects, or two, or all of them. We may conceive of a cliché as a phrase, or a fixed expression (textual level). Or we may look upon a cliché as a certain idea, the propositional content of the particular phrase just mentioned or as a logical scheme underlying a number of stereotypical phrases as a generative matrix (ideational level). Or it may bring to mind a repetitive utterance or speech act (pragmatic level). Quite often all three aspects are involved in our evaluation of a cliché.

Can we find a *differentia specifica*, something that distinguishes clichés from other utteraces and ideas? In search of an answer to this question, we need to go back to Aristotle (Ross: 1949) and a very important distinction he made concerning two kinds of knowledge: *apodictic* and *problematic.* By using this distinction in our definition of clichés, we intend to show their particularity and relevance to argumentation.

To Aristotle, apodictic knowledge is certain and conclusively proved. It cannot be doubted. Its primary domain is mathematics and logic. It is the goal of a theoretical science. *Problematic knowledge* on the other hand concerns our practical life. It is relevant to situations where we must choose a line of action. In such cases we need to make a judicious decision, perhaps by arguing back and forth, but no certitude can be reached.

By applying both of these concepts we propose a *rhetorical definition* of a cliché in keeping with the functional approach outlined in section 3. above:

A cliché is a problematic claim treated like an apodictic truth by a certain group in a certain socio-cultural setting. Typically, it derives its discursive efficiency from a simple structure with general applicability. As can be seen, this definition relies primarily on the ideational aspect but does not exclude the other dimensions. The reason for this choice of focus is its emphasis on the functions of clichés in argumentative reasoning. This definition opens up opposite perspectives on clichés at the same time, thus doing justice to the somewhat dualistic nature of this concept.

Let us now see what the definition above actually entails. It is based on antagonistic concepts which help explain the distinctive functions of clichés in argumentation. What we find is a series of four dichotomies:

1. *questionable vs unquestionable*

On the one hand, a cliché expresses something problematic in the sense that it

could actually be otherwise. It is not merely a formal truth of a logical nature. It makes a statement about the world, and in so doing it restricts the possible ways of looking at a certain issue. This is how a cliché becomes such a powerful tool for establishing and maintaining a common perspective upon reality. On the other, this problematic aspect tends to be forgotten when the cliché is used. Typically, a cliché is not questioned by its adherents. That does not mean that they might not see its problematic nature if it were pointed out to them. But basically they tend to treat the cliché as something that can be taken for granted and that is not a proper subject for a debate. This dichotomy can be further clarified if we consider a very well-known cliché: 'All men are equal'. It sounds uncontroversially true, especially because it expresses something highly desirable. However, on closer examination, it becomes problematic because of the underlying questions in search of evidence:

How do we agree on what 'equal' means? Is it a measurable concept?, Does it apply in all circumstances?, etc.

2. *implicit vs explicit*

Since a cliché sounds so familiar, it may look acceptable and unproblematic to most people. Its apparent simplicity makes it easy to recall and gives it a special openness, like in 'All men are equal'.

However, its ironical counter-cliché comes to mind instantly, to remind us that everything can be implicitly challenged: 'Some men are more equal than others'. The initial cliché is meant to adjust and 'correct' precisely this circulating cynical view. Its explicit message is backed by the implicit assumption that there are exceptions to all generally accepted rules.

3. *outsider's perspective vs insider's perspective*

On the one hand, this dichotomy endorses the outsider's view as an unbiased and critical perspective which makes it possible to see clichés for 'what they are', namely more or less challenging propositions that can always be questioned. On the other hand, it endorses the insider's perspective, which makes it possible to look at clichés with the trusting eyes of the one who sees them as established and reliable points of reference. To take the example above, the use of the concept 'equal' may vary from one discourse community to another and from one historical age to another. What is 'equality' to some may very well be meaningless or downright unacceptable to others.

4. *argumentative vs deductive*

This dichotomy refers to the functioning of clichés in argumentation. To understand this, we have to see how a cliché is integrated into an argumentatively backed knowledge claim. On the one hand, argumentation deals with problematic issues, where deductive certainty cannot be achieved, and the questionable character of clichés allows for a considerable openness. On the other hand, an argumentation sets out to convince, to reduce uncertainty and ideally to replace it with assurance. The apparent self-evidence of clichés satisfies this striving for a firm ground on which to build a stable line of reasoning.

Let us now look at the further specifications of the definition of a cliché. First, we say that a typical cliché has a simple structure and is of a general nature. It does not apply primarily to a single individual or event but to all items of a kind. This wide applicability of a cliché is important to its use in argumentation. Having a general scope, it can serve as the major premise of a syllogistic type of argument. Or, in Toulmin's terms (1958), it can function as a warrant, relating a ground to some specific claim. Usually, a warrant should not in itself be the object of a debate. The quasi-apodictic quality of the cliché makes it well suited for its supportive function. Second, a cliché is valid only within a specific group. This feature is highly relevant to argumentation. It helps explain why an argument must be directed at a certain audience, whether this audience consists of some physically present persons or of an abstracted and idealized group operating only in the speaker's mind (cf Perelman's "universal audience", 1969). The argument is successful only as long as it takes into consideration what this group can agree upon as reasonable starting points for a line of reasoning. This includes group-specific clichés.

Clichés have a striking resemblance to the concept of *topos* in classical rhetoric. Topos is often translated into English by *commonplace,* and although this translation does not render the whole meaning of the Greek word, it matches the aspect of its meaning which comes closest to a cliché – a phrase or an idea known and accepted by many which could be put to good use in persuasion or, heuristically, taken as a starting point in the search for a specific truth in a concrete case.

In classical rhetoric, a distinction was made between *general* and *particular topics*, the former belonging to all kinds of discourse and the latter to specific types of discourse. In the same way, a distinction could be made between *all-purpose clichés,* anchored in the everyday cultural patterns of a community, and *institutional clichés,* shared by the members of a professionally restricted group, such as lawyers and scientists observant of a certain rhetorical paradigm.

Toulmin (1958), among others, sees argumentation as field-specific. These fields could be related to sets of particular clichés, which are recycled in different areas.

5. Your Clichés Tell Us Who You Are: Functions and Malfunctions of clichés in Argumentation

In this section, we will take a closer look at the functions of clichés in argumentation. We will start from the basic assumption that clichés bridge the gap between the problematic and the apodictic poles of an argument. We will also discuss some aspects of clichés that are likely to give rise to divergent interpretations in a particular situation and how that may affect their functions in argumentative discourse.

Let us start with a simple cliché that acts as a prop in a line of argumentation. A case in point is the following example. The political opposition in Sweden is known to continuously attack the social democratic government with arguments such as: 'The present government should be voted out of power, since unemployment [which is now unusually high in Sweden] can only be fought by setting the market forces free'. This type of argument is based on two powerful clichés which, although not self-evident in the strict sense, are not likely to be critically examined by supporters, or by unmotivated addressees. The first cliché functions as the *suppressed major premise*: 'Unemployment is bad and should be fought'. Probably, one could envisage a coherent argument against this view. But it still remains a cliché because most people who share this view do not feel that it should be interpreted as a controversial view that needs to be defended. They rest assured that all sensible people will agree. Actually, most people who think like this might not even have the impression that they are committed to a specific view but rather that they are just expressing an objective fact of life.

There is one more hidden cliché in the argument above, which functions as the *suppressed minor premise.* It could be expressed as follows: 'Social democrats indulge in thwarting the market'. This is a cliché of a different kind. Many people who hold this view are definitely aware that it is not a neutral, but a politically loaded truth and that others may completely disagree. Still, it is regarded by many as a sort of axiom, a political fact that need not be discussed and that should be readily accepted by any unbiased observer of the political scene. And finally, let us examine the argument itself, 'The present government should be voted out of power, since unemployment can only be fought by setting the market forces free'. This statement openly expresses the *conclusion*, the only explicit part

of the argument.

In such a case, two important functions are associated with the cliché:
(a) it fulfils an ideological function by defining certain basic views about potentially controversial issues as being most accurate and relevant;
(b) it functions as a device for strengthening group cohesion: 'Show me what your clichés are, and I will tell you what company you keep'. We will return to these points shortly.

Clichés are of crucial importance to rhetorical argumentation for one simple reason: Argumentation must always start somewhere, and preferably with something generally accepted within its target group. The least controversial things are the commonly shared views that we take for granted without any further critical thinking. Views that are constantly repeated in a way not inviting discussion are most likely to function as the shared axiomatic wisdom of a discourse community. Clichés can function as *premises* in argumentation, i.e. as agreed-upon beliefs in debatable issues, because they are normally accepted as suitable starting points for a line of reasoning. They may sometimes be *implicit*, as the *suppressed premises* above, since they are so well-known that they can easily be inferred by the listeners or readers. Actually, asserting them instead of presupposing them might even draw undue attention to them and consequently involve them in a debate as elements that can be scrutinized and questioned. Thus, the truncated syllogisms called enthymemes and considered by Aristotle as a characteristic of rhetoric, are typically conveyed by clichés. By being left unverbalised, the cliché must be supplied by the addressee. Certainly, that leaves plenty of room for indeterminacy – anyone can distort a cliché so as to fit their goal.

6. The Characteristic Features of a Cliché as a Source of Miscommunication
We will now discuss what we consider to be five major features of clichés. The intrinsic complexity and the complementarity of these features enables the clichés to function argumentatively in a predictable and efficient way. However, the more their efficiency is taken for granted, the more their conventional interpretation tends to be abandoned when it interferes with new context-sensitive reinterpretations, which are likely to bring about different effects perceptions.
1. Typical for a cliché is that it is *recycled in discourse*. As a matter of fact, this is how it becomes a cliché. It is used over and over again, explicitly or implicitly, to convey a socially accepted common ground or shared belief among the people

discussing a particular topic within a particular field. In this way, a cliché acquires its quasi-apodictic character, which may sometimes be reduced to what is politically correct, serving as a constraint for so-called acceptable ways of reasoning.

Moreover, a circulating cliché tends to develop semantic 'density'. It becomes permeated with additional connotations and acquires a multiplicity of meanings, which allow for wider acceptability. Sometimes, however, a recycled cliché may result in combinations of incompatible elements. Building an argument from clichés does not mean so much starting with a well-defined common ground as bridging two distinct positions by means of a comprehensive and flexible approach. The argumentative movement towards a common conclusion could be suitably illustrated by a triangle pointing upwards and resting on the cliché as its base, which represents the diversity of opinions brought together by a common discursive practice.

2. Since they are the product of constant repetition, clichés are typically expressed by *formulaic expressions.* In certain situations clichés need to be explicitily mentioned or at least evoked, in order to be transmitted to members of the discourse group who are not yet fully socialised into it, to remind violators of decorum of the basic premises still in force or, simply as a way of reasserting them. Particularly for the last purpose, formulaic expressions can be seen to facilitate the articulation of a coherent line of argumentation. At the same time, their ready-made form makes them heavily dependent on context, thus allowing for a variety of interpretations.

In a dialectical discussion, however, these expressions need not function as catch-phrases which immediately support a claim, but as starters, feelers or stepping stones leading to more specific ideas developed during the ensuing dialogue. Clichés may be eventually reconsidered, but by then they will have already served their function as ready-made tools for opening up a new area to reflection.

3. Clichés are also important devices for *group cohesion*. Since clichés are socially rooted, they tend to present reality as reflected in a collective practice, by pointing back to the group(s) and to the the ideas that fostered them. More than any other element of social cognition, clichés discriminate between different groups, while at the same time serving as a means of identification for the members of each group. They can also fulfil a positive role by creating a greater awareness among the members of a particular group about the normality and acceptability of unfamiliar or unusual beliefs and customs observed in other communities. In this way, clichés help to shape a mentally and culturally coherent

audience that can be collectively affected by the socially inclusive appeal of an ethical argument. Group cohesion can be established *intraculturally,* i.e. within and between ethnic groups or individuals belonging to the same culture or discourse community, but also *interculturally,* i.e. between ethnic groups or individuals belonging to different cultures.

4. Clichés tend to be *ideologically loaded.* Since clichés serve as rhetorical devices for orienting the members of a group in the social environment, they systematically influence people's beliefs, value judgements and actions. In doing so, they fulfil an ideological function. This function becomes even more prominent in situations where political power is exerted by one group against another. The ideological function of clichés is important for rooting arguments in common ground, in order to guarantee their function as supporters of the general social claims articulated by the group using them. Thus, clichés help maintain a common perspective which is essential for efficient argumentation.

While normally functioning as general matrices of meaning that other utterances adjust to, clichés also allow for contextualised meanings. This is why it is essential to be familiar with the various socio-political configurations of a particular culture, both synchronically and diachronically. Ignoring the clichés of certain areas of one's culture or of another culture deprives us of a crucial means for accessing discourse meaning and intentionality.

5. An interesting feature of clichés is that they tend to attract *counter-clichés.* As solutions to open-ended problems, clichés are not complete in themselves because they automatically trigger complementary alternatives. Between them, a cliché and a counter-cliché tend to structure an argumentative dialogue and give it pluridimensional orientation, dynamic intentionality and a higher potential for truthfulness. Politically left-wing and right-wing clichés may contradict each other, but they are also interrelated through a pattern of left-right polarisation.

7. Clichés in a Nutshell – Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to examine and redefine clichés in an attempt to identify their argumentative functions, as well as their liability for miscommunication. We claim that clichés are crucial to argumentative discourse, and that their potential for building arguments is closely linked to their tendency to trigger divergent interpretations in certain contexts.

When redefining clichés, we argue that they do not represent a linguistic category, but rather a pragmatic and a rhetorical category, and we emphasize their dualistic nature. As a rule, a typical cliché has a simple structure with

general applicability, which may account for its use and misuse in argumentation. A cliché may serve as the explicit/implicit premise, or as the explicit/implicit conclusion, in a syllogistic argument.

We started from the basic assumption that clichés bridge the gap between the *problematic* and the *apodictic* poles of an argument, which helps to explain why they tend to attract counterclichés. The analysis has led to the insight that building an argument from clichés does not mean so much starting with a well-defined common ground, as bridging two distinct positions by means of a comprehensive and flexible approach.

Due to the fact that clichés emphasize group cohesion and adherence to a particular ideology, they are often used as slogans which can give rise to conflicting interpretations when recycled by opposite socio-political groups.

We would like to conclude with what may very well turn out to be a cliché about clichés: we cannot do without them, but we had better watch out.

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