# ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Perelman's Universal Audience: Between Norms And Facts


I will open this lecture by pointing out that, quite paradoxically, Perelman's notion of Universal Audience seems to oscillate between two incompatible interpretations. We have, on the one hand, a factual universality, which is linguistically impossible to reach, and on the other hand, a universality of right, which concerns some happy few only among a well-read community.

Indeed, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca first claim that the agreement of a Universal Audience is a matter of right (1988 : 41); but they acknowledge, afterwards, that this notion looks like an illegitimate generalization of a particular intuition. In sum, the Universal Audience seems to lie somewhere between norms and facts.

In a second time, I will try to show that this hesitation could be the very sign of an underlying cognitive continuity. Relying on a genealogical perspective which aims at understanding the origin of audience as an argumentative notion, I will define our contemporary notion of a Universal Audience as a hybrid concept that covers two components: first, a regulatory principle which is concerned with norms; second, a factual notion that refers to the conscience of every man. The intimate link between both sub-notions paves the way to critical discussion. Indeed, when a norm turn out to conflict with facts, we endeavour to unearth its spirit through the feeling of a human conscience. Such a genealogical perspective helps us to understand the working of this argumentative process, without which every norm, sooner or later, is threatened with arbitrariness.

Finally, I will illustrate my claim by analyzing a debate that concerns Human Rights.

*1. The notion of an audience in Perelman's theory*

In Perelman's mind, an audience is always an orator's construction. In the *New Rhetoric*, the notion of an audience is first described as a "presumed audience", "product of the construction of an orator" (1969 : 19-23). But Perelman then underlines that this construction has to be as precise as possible, in order to meet

the actual psychology of particular audiences whose adherence the orator hopes to obtain. Now, in Perelman's theory, the question of adherence gets complicated by the opposition between *persuasion* and *conviction*.
"We are going to apply the term *persuasive* to argumentation that only claims validity for a particular audience, and the term *convincing* to argumentation that presume to gain the adherence of every rational being." (1969 : 28).
We may appreciate here that the opposition between persuasion and conviction is linked with a distinction between particular and universal audience. But, at the same time, this leads to the theoretical problem which is involved by the concept of a Universal Audience:
"The nuance involved is a delicate one and depends, essentially, on the idea the speaker has formed on the incarnation of reason. Every person believes in a set of facts, of truths, which he thinks must be accepted by every 'normal' person, because they are valid for every rational being." (1969 : 28).
Of course, the conception one assumes of what is a "normal" person implies a concept of a Universal Audience.

*2. The paradox of the universal audience*
Let us see how this is conceived by Perelman:
"Philosophers always claim to be addressing such an audience, not because they hope to obtain the effective assent of all men – they know very well that only a small minority will ever read their works – but because they think that all who understand the reasons they give will have to accept their conclusions.
*The agreement of a universal audience is thus a matter, not of fact, but of right.* (1969 : 31)

Hence a twofold paradox. First, an epistemological paradox, second, a political paradox. Let us begin with the epistemological question.

As underlined by Crosswhite (1989), the problem with Universal Audience – i.e. the problem with universality in general as it is build up by the Aufklärung – lies in the fact that one is condemned to choose between, on the one hand, an empty and abstract universality, and, on the other hand, a concrete particularity which is potentially relative to cultures and individuals. The threat of emptiness and abstraction for universality implies that any argumentative community runs the risk of building its own rationality with concepts and norms that are nothing else than empty constructions. According to Crosswhite, Perelman transcended this paradox thanks to his distinction between facts and right in the concept of a

Universal Audience. But this directly lead to the second paradox: A Universal audience of right is conversely proportionnal to a factual universality. Indeed, a rational individual who is able to understand a complex argumentation is automatically a member of an *elite*.

There is undoubtedly a link between this view in Perelman's conception and Habermas' theory of discussion. In Habermas' view, audiences are the measure of an argument. As it is explained by Crosswhite (1989):

"A central concern of modern political theory is to find an audience whose members evaluate one another's argument in a way that ensures that the most worthy argument will be the most effective one." (1989 : 159).

By doing this, Habermas tries to ground a rationality for discussion through an argumentative mechanism. To reach his goal, he stipulates that a *consensus* may be two faced. First we have a rational consensus which is a matter for truth. Second, we have a *de facto* consensus which is a matter for mere agreement. This distinction relays for a part the distinction between *episteme* and *doxa*, i.e., between persuasion and conviction, particular and Universal audiences. But, as pointed out by Crosswhite, Habermas has a serious problem with his concept of "an ideal speech situation" which has to do with emptiness participants' motivations.

This gives us a path to try to transcend the two faced paradox, at its epistemological level, as well as at its political level. Indeed, the crucial point in modern argumentative theories is the nature of an audience's adherence. As we will see, we may assume that the adherence of a Universal Audience is, as a principle, an ideal moment of the critique process. In this respect the concept of Universal Audience may be defined as a twofold concept, with a theoretical and normative aspect, and with an empirical and critical aspect. Let me explain this point.

A political maturity is characterized by a tendency to proceduralize the juridical institution. Thus, the argumentative process includes a dynamic critical mechanism which appears to be central in order to warrant the rationality of norms. Propositions have to face critique and sometimes refutation in order to be considered as rational. Now, in this step of the process, Universal Audience has to concretize in a human conscience, represented by a reasonable human being who will assume the delicate moment of the critique. Hence the political paradox; because the critical face of a Universal Audience has to be assumed by educated and enlightened men and women, i.e., by an elite. This is of course a crucial

question for democracy. When criticizing a proposition, one has to face the tradition and has therefore to assume the *burden of proof*. In order to compensate this burden, he/she has to associate his/her proposition to a certain actual audience which is identifiable in the core of the discussion, but at the same time, he/she has to declare this very audience to be universal.
Now, as we will see, when analyzing an actual debate where the question of a Universal Audience is used, we have to face both of the described situations. On the one hand, a conception of a Universal Audience as a regulatory principle where refers every declaration of right, aswell as every norm and rule which is implied by the declaration. On the other hand, one juges a norm in the name of the Universal Audience, when this norm offends the conscience of everyman. In this case, the notion recovers its factual dimension, since this conscious is supposed to be tested on every reasonable human being. Depending on whether we face one or another aspect of the Universal Audience, it will be more or less normative and abstract.

If we assume such a conception, the respective qualitiy of arguments are only juged *a posteriori*, by the argument's degree of resistance towards the refutation attempts. This criterion is of course directly related to the adherence of the audience to the presented claims. Let me then formulate the following hypothesis: the paradoxical status of a universal audience may be transcended by a dissociation and a hierarchisation. Someone discusses the letter of a law which is presumed to be assumed by a Universal Audience of right. The discutant is challenging the letter of the law in the name of its spirit, which has to be invoqued in the name of an actual Universal Audience: the conscience of every man.

*3. Analysis*
Let us now concretize these reflections by analyzing a short sample of a debate.
We will analyze some extracts of an "open letter" from a victim of Pinochet's terror in Chile, which is addressed to Jack Straw, who was, in April 1999, Home Secretary in Great-Britain, when the letter has been written. This is the situation: in the night of the 16 october 1998, Augusto Pinochet was arrested by the London Police, on a charge of torture. But torture became a *universal competence crime* in the United Kingdom only in 1988. As a dramatic consequence, crimes committed by Pinochet's government before that date may not be retained against him in a trial. This is the meaning of the open letter.

*It is cold and misty here; trees are turning slowly into yellow shadows and the morning dew finds it increasingly difficult to pose its crystal drops. It is automn again, red and yellow, beautiful and yet disconcerting. As is the Law Lord's decision to Grant General Pinochet immunity from crimescommitted before 1988. I'm confused and deeply offended by their verdict, because I was arrested and tortured before that date. Do we not matter, are we not human beings too, did we deserve to be savagely tortured ? It was before 1988, yes, but it was pure horror, something the Lords, sitting comfortably in their golden chairs, cannot understand.*
[…]
*He is responsible for all of the disappearances, the kidnapping and subsequent vanishing of over a thousand human beings. Ordinary people, men, women and children who disappeared after being arrested. It was before 1988, I know, but their families are still suffering the psychological torture of not knowing wether their loved ones are dead or alive.*
[…]
*Fortunately, they are many in Chile and around the world who are doing whatever they can to bring Pinochet to trial in Spain. To transforme the fragile past into a strong collective memory so that justice can be done. Jack Straw, we hope that you are one of them.*

As we may see, this discourse reveals both faces of the Universal Audience. First, the Universal Audience of right assumes the declaration from the Lord's decision and that we may formulate as follows: "Torture has become /has been declared a universal competence crime in United Kingdom since 1988". As a letter of a law, it is supposed to be assumed by the whole rational community, and, as such, it is moreover presented as undisputable. Second, a deontic rule follows from this declaration, which may be formulated as follows: "No trial concerning torture which happened before 1988 may be conducted in Great Britain". The declaration and its following deontic rule are assumed – in right – by the Universal Audience. More preciesely, this means that these propositions are written in law's texts and charters *as if* they had always been there and *as if* they were undisputable. This effect is in part due to the declaration's illocutionary force. Now, when applied to concrete cases, this law and its consequences creates incomptabilities such as one may be tempted to face law. This is actually what the author of the open letter does. But, as we saw, facing the doxa is always a delicate challenge. This is done in the name of a Universal Audience, which is identifiable with the actual

audience of the open letter. It is clearly brought about by an appeal to the conscious of everyman, an appeal to empathy and to pity towards a suffering that everyone may be able to feel and to understand. This appeal consists in challenging the letter of the law which is primarily assumed by the Universal Audience of right.

Let's now see in further details how this discourse is constructed.
1. The orator set an analogy between automn and the Law Lord's decision, both being qualified as *disconcerting*. This sample has something to do with epideictic genre of the rhetoric because of its appeal to poetical emotion. But, symptomatically, the author of the letter is not in a position to blame his adressee – Jack Straw – first, because, since he faces the doxa, he has to bear the burden of proof; second, because he still hopes to obtain something from him.
2. The author expresses more preciesly his feelings and his emotions towards this decision: he is *confused* and *deeply offended*. He immediately explains the reason (because). There, we may appreciate a concretisation of the dialogue between both faces of Universal Audience: *it was before 1988, yes*: which is a concession to the letter of the law; *but it was pure horror*: this represents an appeal to the spirit of this law, which is assumed by the conscience of every man. As a matter of fact, the author carries on with a kind of more direct blame: *something the Lords, sitting comfortably in their golden chairs, cannot understand.*
3. Bearing the burden of proof, the orator describes the charges brought against Pinochet, underlying – in the name of every human conscience – that such crimes were perpetrated against *ordinary people*, sothat everybody in the audience may recognize her/himself in the victim's fate. Repeating its opposition between the spirit and the letter of the law, the orator insists (*I know*) on the fact that he is aware about this letter but that its human spirit is a sufficient reason to challenge it.
4. The orator ends with an optimistic note (*fortunately*) hoping that his appeal to human conscious will be heared. His trust towards people who will help the victim to be officially recognized in their status is finally transferred to Jack Straw who is the official audience of this letter.

As we saw in this short analysis, the delicate articulation between norms and facts, between the letter and the spirit of a law may be clarified by a twofold concept of a Universal Audience, which, far from being contradictory, represents the very condition of critical discussion, which is the warrant for our norms and

rules to remain rational.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Retransmittability And Empirical Propositions


*1. Introduction*

The standard dictionary definition of a formally valid argument in classical, bivalent, deductive logic proceeds as follows: An argument is valid if it is impossible for all its premises to be true and its conclusion to be false. A valid argument, unlike a sound one, can have false premises or it can have a mixture of true and false premises, but if all of its premises are true, then its conclusion must be true as well. This can also be expressed by saying that truth is transmitted from all of the premises of a valid argument to its conclusion and that falsity is retransmitted from the conclusion of a valid argument to at least one of its premises. The terminology of transmittability and retransmittability has its origins in the work of Popper and Lakatos. That truth is transmitted and that falsity is retransmitted are both mentioned in (Popper, 1974, 64), though Popper sees these as being properties of valid rules of inference rather than of arguments. Lakatos, in the course of developing his mathematical methodology of proofs and refutations, formulates a principle of the retransmission of falsity which states 'that global counterexamples be also local: falsehood should be retransmitted from the naive conjecture to the lemmas, from

the consequent of the theorem to its antecedent' (Lakatos, 1976, 47).

Two interesting questions to ask of valid arguments are whether anything other than truth is transmittable and whether anything other than falsity is retransmittable. Concerning transmittability, some unusual contenders have been proposed. For example, in (Gjertsen, 1989, 127) it is suggested that if the premises of a valid argument are ambiguous, obscure, uncertain or bland, then so must be its conclusion! In this paper I am interested in the questions whether the property of being an empirical proposition is transmittable and, especially, whether this property is retransmittable. I show that a valid deductive argument with consistent premises, all of which are empirical, can have a non-empirical conclusion which is not logically true. I also show that it is possible for a valid deductive argument with consistent premises to have an empirical conclusion and yet to have no empirical premises. (Note that in this paper I do not, as some philosophers do, distinguish between propositions and statements. These terms are used interchangeably.) My interest in problems relating to transmittability and retransmittability arose out of my interest in what is sometimes known as anti-justificationism. This term applies to a family of approaches to philosophical problems inspired by the work of Popper. (Popper's clearest statement of his rejection of justificationism can be found in (Popper, 1983, 18-34).) Although anti-justificationists disagree about many things, they all agree in rejecting the traditional conception of knowledge. In this knowledge is defined to be justified true belief. A claim to knowledge is justified if it follows logically from other propositions which themselves have already been justified. As the chain of justifications cannot be indefinitely extended it must terminate in propositions which are not justified by other propositions but in some other way. In empiricism, for example, the ultimate authority is sense experience and a proposition which is to count as genuine knowledge must be derivable from basic or atomic propositions whose truth is guaranteed by sense experience. Anti-justificationists, by contrast, do not attempt to give a precise and exact definition of knowledge. Unlike justificationists, they do not attach great importance to definitions of philosophical terms. They see knowledge as consisting of a collection of conjectural and tentative theories that may well be replaced by better theories as these come along in the future. Scientific knowledge consists of those theories that have not yet been falsified, but which have withstood serious attempts to test and criticise them. Criticism is very important in anti-justificationism and a variety of forms of criticism are employed. In order to test a

theory anti-justificationists ask various questions about it and then evaluate the answers that are given to those questions. These questions include, but are not restricted to, the following: Is this theory consistent? Is this theory better than its rivals? Does this theory successfully solve the problem it was put forward to solve? Is this theory in conflict with some scientific theory that is well established? Is this theory in conflict with some element of the dominant cultural worldview? If the theory is empirical, we can also ask if it is consistent with observed facts. According to (Bartley, 1984, 114), however, in justificationism criticism and justification are fused. That means that theories are criticised by showing that they cannot be derived from the ultimate epistemological authority. Thus, in empiricism, any theories that cannot be derived from or justified by basic statements whose truth is guaranteed by sense experience are excluded from science. In extreme cases, such as that of logical positivism, they are deemed to be meaningless.

According to (Bartley, 1984, 261) one of the assumptions legitimating the fusion of criticism and justification is the view that the derivates of a statement inherit all the properties of intellectual value or merit possessed by that statement. (Any proposition that follows logically from a given proposition or set of propositions is said to be a *derivate* of that proposition or set of propositions.) He calls this the *transmissibility assumption* and states it as the view that '*all properties, measures, and tokens of intellectual value or merit are transmitted from premises to conclusion, in the same manner as truth, through the relationship of logical derivability or deducibility*' (Bartley, 1984, 261). (In this context I prefer the spelling 'transmittability' to 'transmissibility' as the latter spelling of the word is used in epistemic logic. Transmissibility assumptions there refer to the conditions under which, concerning some proposition, when a person only knows that another person knows that proposition, he himself can legitimately be said to know it (Hendricks, 2001, 268).)

Bartley is particularly interested in criticising various theories of confirmation which are important in many versions of empiricism. One of the key components in many theories of confirmation is known as the *consequence condition*. According to (Goodman, 1983, 68) this states that 'whatever confirms a given statement confirms also whatever follows from that statement' (In (Hempel, 1965, 31) this is called the *special consequence condition*.). Some philosophers, such as Carnap, have given numerical values to empirical theories which measure how

well they have been confirmed. This value is known as the *degree of confirmation* of the theory and it obeys the laws of the probability calculus (Carnap, 1950). As probability is transmitted from the premises of an argument to its conclusion, in the sense that the probability of the conclusion is greater than or equal to the probability of the conjunction of the premises, degree of confirmation is also transmitted in this way. (Popper's notion of the degree of corroboration of a theory, by contrast, does not satisfy the laws of the probability calculus (Popper, 1983, 223–227). It is, rather, a measure of the degree to which a theory has stood up to tests and to attempts to falsify it (Popper, 1983, 228).)

Bartley mentions that the property of being an empirical proposition is not transmittable, although it is assumed to be by many empiricists. He adds that this gives rise to counter-intuitive results in that non-empirical conclusions can inherit the probability and degree of confirmation of the empirical premises from which they follow. Bartley, however, uses the obvious notion of transmittability, to which it is easy to find counterexamples, and he does not even ask if the property of being an empirical proposition is retransmittable.

My plan for the remainder of this paper is, firstly, to mention the counterexamples to the claim that the property of being an empirical proposition is transmittable using the obvious definition of transmittability and then to show that counterexamples can still be devised to this claim even if we strengthen the notion of transmittability involved. I also show that these counterexamples make use of very weak assumptions. In fact, counterexamples can be devised which only use patterns of argumentation that are valid in minimal logic. After that I turn my attention to the topic of retransmittability and my discussion of that topic mirrors my discussion of transmittability.

I demonstrate that the property of being an empirical proposition is not retransmittable using the obvious notion of retransmittability and also that it is not retransmittable using a strengthened notion of retransmittability. These arguments employ very weak assumptions. In fact, as in the case of transmittability, counterexamples can be constructed which only use patterns of argumentation that are valid in minimal logic.

*2. Transmittability*

A considerable number of empiricists think that the property of being an empirical proposition is transmittable. For example, in (Ayer, 1946, 33) we find the claim, 'Surely from empirical premises nothing whatsoever concerning the

properties, or even the existence, of anything super-empirical can legitimately be inferred.' Such a statement presupposes the view that the property of being an empirical proposition is transmittable or, at the very least, that the conclusion of a valid argument with empirical premises is either empirical or a logical truth. Another example occurs in Dancy's exposition of Kripke's views on necessity. Dancy argues that the proposition that a table is necessarily not made of ice is empirical 'because it is derived by inference from our empirical knowledge that' it is wooden (Dancy, 1991, 220).
Such a comment presupposes that the property of being an empirical proposition is transmittable, at least in arguments with a single premise.The most obvious way of formulating the claim that the property of being an empirical proposition is transmittable is given in principle (T1):
(T1) If all the premises of a valid deductive argument are empirical, then the conclusion must be as well.

However, because of the way in which validity is defined, counterexamples to (T1) are easy to come by. It follows from the definition of validity that all arguments whose premises form an inconsistent set are valid and all arguments with logically true conclusions are valid. Thus, the following two arguments are both counterexamples to (T1):
1. The speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second. The speed of light in a vacuum is less than 200 million metres per second. Therefore, God created the universe.
2. The speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second. Therefore, either snow is white or snow is not white.

The premises of argument (1) are both empirical, but, as they form an inconsistent set, they allow the derivation of a non-empirical, metaphysical conclusion. The premise of argument (2) is empirical, but its conclusion is a tautology. Thus, both (1) and (2) show that principle (T1) is false. However, I do not think that someone who believes in the principle that the property of being an empirical proposition is transmittable would be unduly concerned by such counterexamples. Therefore, it is necessary to devise counterexamples to a stronger version of this principle. This stronger version is captured in principle (T2):
(T2) A valid deductive argument all of whose premises are empirical and whose set of premises is consistent and whose conclusion is not logically true must have

an empirical conclusion.

Both (T1) and (T2) can be thought of as capturing the idea that the property of being an empirical proposition is transmittable, but the sense in which is is transmittable is not identical in these two principles. To distinguish them I will say that (T1) states that the property of being an empirical proposition is *weakly* transmittable whereas (T2) states that the property of being an empirical proposition is *strongly* transmittable.
A counterexample to (T2) can be obtained from (Popper, 1974, 258n):
3. There is now a sea-serpent on view in the entrance hall of the British Museum. Therefore, there exists a sea-serpent.

According to Popper this has an empirical premise and a metaphysical conclusion. However, to see (3) as a counterexample to (T2) involves accepting Popper's particular definition of what a metaphysical statement is. For him a statement is metaphysical if it cannot be falsified. The premise of argument (3) can be falsified by actually going to the entrance hall of the British Museum and carefully checking whether or not a sea-serpent is displayed there. Because it can be so falsified, the premise of (3) is an empirical proposition for Popper. The fact that this procedure might result in the premise of (3) being verified is irrelevant to Popper in deciding whether or not it is empirical. The conclusion of (3), by contrast, cannot be falsified, though it could be verified. It cannot be falsified because this would require the entire universe being checked for the presence of sea-serpents. This task could never be completed. That the conclusion of (3) could be verified, by actually encountering a sea-serpent, is irrelevant to Popper in deciding whether or not it is empirical.

Many people have found Popper's account of what constitutes a metaphysical proposition counter-intuitive and it is not universally accepted. It is possible, however, to devise counterexamples to (T2) which do not depend upon Popper's understanding of what constitutes a metaphysical statement. Consider the following two arguments:
4. The speed of light in a vacuum is less than 200 million metres per second. Therefore, either the speed of light in a vacuum is less than 200 million metres per second or God created the universe.
5. Either the speed of light in a vacuum is less than 200 million metres per second or God created the universe. The speed of light in a vacuum is not less than 200 million metres per second. Therefore, God created the universe.

If the disjunction of an empirical proposition with a non-empirical, metaphysical one is taken to be non-empirical and metaphysical, then (4) is a counterexample to (T2). However, if such a disjunction is taken to be empirical, then (5) is a counterexample to (T2). Whether the disjunction of an empirical proposition with a non-empirical one is taken to be either empirical or non-empirical, we have a counter-example to (T2). The conclusion that the property of being an empirical proposition is not transmittable follows by the simple constructive dilemma. It should be noted that the truth or falsity of the premises that occur in arguments (4) and (5) is not at issue here. All that I am concerned to show is that there exists a *valid* argument with consistent premises, all of which are empirical, whose conclusion is neither empirical nor a logical truth.

The argument used to show that the property of being an empirical proposition is not strongly transmittable makes use of very weak assumptions. It assumes the validity of three patterns of argumentation, namely disjunction introduction, the disjunctive syllogism and the simple constructive dilemma. (Disjunction introduction is needed to establish the validity of (4) and the disjunctive syllogism is needed to establish the validity of (5).) These three argument-patterns are all pretty weak. They are, for example, all valid in intuitionistic logic. In fact, both disjunction introduction and the simple constructive dilemma are also valid in minimal logic, though the disjunctive syllogism is not. Few people, except a small number of extreme intuitionistic mathematicians, regard minimal logic as being an accurate formalisation of everyday and scientific reasoning, but counterexamples to (T2) can even be devised that only make use of patterns of inference that are valid in minimal logic. The heart of the argument showing that (T2) is false is the claim that a disjunctive proposition is either empirical or non-empirical, even if one of its disjuncts is non-empirical. Similarly, a conditional statement must be either empirical or non-empirical even if its antecedent is non-empirical. Consider the following two arguments:
6. The speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second. Therefore, if God created the universe, then the speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second.
7. If God created the universe, then the speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second. The speed of light in a vacuum is not greater than 300 million metres per second. Therefore, God did not create the universe.

If, on the one hand, we take a conditional with a metaphysical, non-empirical

antecedent to be non-empirical, then (6) is a counterexample to (T2). On the other hand, if we take such a conditional to be empirical, then (7) is a counterexample to (T2). Argument (6) is valid because it is an instance of the rule known as implication introduction and argument (7) is valid because it is an instance of *modus tollendo tollens* and both of these are valid in minimal logic.

The only other assumption that was made in the two arguments presented above (that were used to show that the property of being an empirical proposition is not strongly transmittable) is the assumption that every proposition is either empirical or non-empirical. This is an instance of the law of the excluded middle and in recent years this law has been severely criticised (Dummett, 1993). However, this instance of the law is not problematic since it is easy to decide whether or not a statement is empirical. Dummett's view is that the law of the excluded middle is in doubt only in those cases when it is impossible to effectively decide the truth or falsity of the component disjuncts. That is not the case here.

*3. Retransmittability*

At first sight it appears as if the failure of the property of being an empirical proposition to be transmittable creates grave problems for empiricism. One of the motivations of empiricists like Ayer is to exclude metaphysics from science. If the property of being an empirical proposition were transmittable, then every statement following logically from basic statements whose empirical character is beyond doubt would also be empirical. This means that nothing metaphysical could be part of science. However, the fact that the property of being an empirical proposition is not transmittable means that various sorts of non-empirical material may well enter science. Thus, it looks as if the non-transmittability of the property of being an empirical proposition would radically undermine the empirical purity of science. This, however, need not be the case. To appreciate this we first need to note that Ayer, for example, appears to overlook the role of mathematics in science. Although sometimes scientists make use of arguments all of whose premises are empirical, much of the time the arguments they use also contain mathematical premises. Although the following argument is unlikely to appear in any textbook of physics, it illustrates my point, 'The speed of light in a vacuum is less than 350 million metres per second. A speed of 350 million metres per second is less than one of 400 million metres per second. Therefore, the speed of light in a vacuum is less than 400 million metres per second.' Somebody who is attracted by the view that the property of being an empirical proposition is

transmittable would also want to allow such arguments in science. Because of this, I think that critics of empiricism, such as Bartley, are wrong to attach so much importance to the failure of the transmittability of the property of being an empirical proposition. The failure of this principle is not a fatal weakness of empiricism. The retransmittability of the property of being an empirical proposition would achieve much of what empiricists need in order to exclude metaphysics from science. If the property of being an empirical proposition were retransmittable, then an empirical conclusion could not be validly inferred from a set of metaphysical premises.

It is interesting that Frege, one of the fathers of the modern version of empiricism known as analytical philosophy, attached far more importance to the retransmittability of the property of being an empirical proposition than to its transmittability. Frege was greatly influenced by Kant and accepted Kant's distinction between a priori and a posteriori (or empirical) statements and also his distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. Frege also thought that there were synthetic a priori statements. (An example of such a statement is 'Every event has a cause.') Thus, Frege did not think that every non-empirical statement is analytic. According to (Frege, 1953, 3) the 'distinctions between a priori and a posteriori, synthetic and analytic, concern, as I see it, not the content of the judgement, but the justification for making the judgement.' He goes on to say (Frege, 1953, 4), 'The problem [of how to categorise a judgement] becomes, in fact, that of finding the proof of the proposition, and of following it up right back to the primitive truths.' In the specific case of trying to decide whether a proposition is empirical he lays down the following requirement (Frege, 1953, 4), 'For a truth to be a posteriori, it must be impossible to construct a proof of it without including an appeal to facts, i.e., to truths which cannot be proved and are not general, since they contain assertions about particular objects. But if, on the contrary, its proof can be derived exclusively from general laws, which themselves neither need nor admit of proof, then the truth is a priori.' In these passages Frege is making distinctions between *true* propositions. He does not explicitly consider how we would decide whether or not a *false* proposition was empirical. Frege's requirement for a proposition to be a true, empirical one involves constructing a sound argument with that proposition as its conclusion and not merely a valid one. (A sound argument is one which is valid and all of whose premises are true.) In making the distinctions between a priori and empirical statements and also between analytic and synthetic ones only for true

statements Frege is committing the fallacy that Anscombe has dubbed the fallacy of being guided by the truth. (This fallacy is mentioned, for example, in (Geach, 1976, 8).) A correct account of these two distinctions would encompass all statements and not just true ones. In the case of deciding whether or not a statement is empirical I do not think that it is difficult to extend Frege's account to cover both true and false statements.

The definition of a sound argument makes use of the notion of a valid argument. Therefore, I think it is reasonable to suggest that Frege implicitly assumes that the property of being an empirical proposition is retransmittable. His characterisation of a true, empirical statement can then be split into two parts. First, we characterise an empirical statement, irrespective of truth or falsity, and then we characterise its truth. A characterisation of an empirical statement in the spirit of Frege's definition would then go as follows: For a proposition to be a posteriori it must be impossible to construct a valid argument which has that proposition as its conclusion without including at least one a posteriori premise or one premise which is not general because it mentions particular objects. (The reason for the disjunction in this definition is to accommodate the fact that it might be necessary to construct a chain of valid arguments in order to decide whether a proposition is empirical. Ultimately, the chain will end in basic propositions. The correctness of Frege's characterisation of these as being not general because they mention particular objects is not important here.) To complete the characterisation of a *true* empirical statement all we have to add is that there must exist a *sound* argument with this statement as its conclusion.

The most obvious way of formulating the claim that the property of being an empirical proposition is retransmittable is given in principle (R1):
(R1) If the conclusion of a valid deductive argument is empirical, then at least one of its premises must be as well.

However, because of the way in which validity is defined, counterexamples to (R1) are easy to come by. It follows from the definition of validity that all arguments whose premises form an inconsistent set are valid and all arguments with logically true conclusions are valid. If a proposition is empirical, then it cannot also be logically true. Therefore, to devise a counterexample to (R1) all we need to do is to form an argument with non-empirical premises such that the set of these is inconsistent. As a proposition cannot simultaneously be both empirical and mathematical a suitable counterexample is:

8. The number 7 is prime. The number 7 is not prime. Therefore, the speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second.

I do not think that anyone attracted to the idea that the property of being an empirical proposition is retransmittable would be unduly concerned by this sort of counterexample. Therefore, it makes sense to strengthen (R1). This is done in principle (R2):
(R2) A valid deductive argument whose set of premises is consistent and whose conclusion is empirical must have at least one empirical premise.

Both (R1) and (R2) can be thought of as capturing the idea that the property of being an empirical proposition is retransmittable, but the sense in which is is retransmittable is not identical in these two principles. To distinguish them I will say that (R1) states that the property of being an empirical proposition is *weakly* retransmittable whereas (R2) states that the property of being an empirical proposition is *strongly* retransmittable. To devise a counterexample to (R2) consider the following two arguments:
9. God created the universe. Therefore, either God created the universe or the speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second.
10. Either God created the universe or the speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second. God did not create the universe. Therefore, the speed of light in a vacuum is greater than 300 million metres per second.

Here, the statement that God created the universe and its negation are both taken to be examples of non-empirical, metaphysical statements. If the disjunction of an empirical proposition with a non-empirical one is taken to be empirical, then (9) is a counterexample to (R2). However, if such a disjunction is taken to be non-empirical, then (10) is a counterexample to (R2). As the disjunction of an empirical and a non-empirical proposition must be either empirical or non-empirical, the falseness of (R2) follows by the simple constructive dilemma.

The argument used to show that the property of being an empirical proposition is not retransmittable makes use of very weak assumptions. In fact, it makes use of the same assumptions as the first argument used above to show the falsity of (T2), that is to say, the argument which hinges on the fact that a disjunction of an empirical and a non-empirical proposition must be either empirical or non-empirical. It assumes the validity of disjunction introduction, the disjunctive syllogism and the simple constructive dilemma and it also assumes that every

proposition is either empirical or non-empirical. The discussion of these assumptions that occurs above is, therefore, also relevant here. It is also possible to devise counterexamples to (R2) that make use of conditional propositions rather than disjunctive ones, but I omit the details as nothing new would be added to the discussion by including them. Thus, it is possible to show that (R2) is false using only patterns of argumentation that are valid in minimal logic.

As far as I know no one else has explicitly shown that the property of being an empirical proposition is not retransmittable in either the weak or strong meaning of retransmittability. Nor has anyone else made explicit the assumptions on which these results depend. Discussions of retransmittability are usually to be found in discussions about imperative and deontic logic. For example, in (Hare, 1952, 28) it is stated, '*No imperative conclusion can be validly drawn from a set of premisses which does not contain at least one imperative.*' In other words, if a valid argument in imperative logic has an imperative conclusion, then it must have at least one imperative premise. That is to say, the property of being an imperative is retransmitted from the conclusion of a valid argument in imperative logic to at least one of its premises. In several articles Geach has presented a number of counterexamples to Hare's claim. (See, for example, (Geach, 1972). (Borowski, 1980) cites other relevant articles by Geach and evaluates them critically.) According to (Prior, 1976, 91) it was T. H. Mott who first used an argument similar to the one that I used above (to show that the property of being an empirical proposition is not strongly retransmittable). However, he used it in the context of deontic logic to show the falsity of the maxim, 'Ethical conclusions never follow from *consistent* premises all of which are non-ethical' (Prior, 1976, 90). Neither Prior nor Mott, however, make explicit what assumptions Mott's argument makes. (Surprisingly, discussions of transmittability are much rarer than discussions of retransmittability in imperative and deontic logic.)

*4. Conclusion*

Bartley was the first philosopher to make explicit the difference between justificationist and anti-justificationist approaches to epistemology. He stated the transmissibility assumption that is implicit in justificationism. He was particularly critical of empiricism and showed, for example, that various counter-intuitive consequences follow from the fact that, although degree of confirmation is transmittable, the property of being an empirical proposition is not. He, however, understood transmittability in a weak sense. Furthermore, he did not even ask if

the property of being an empirical proposition is retransmittable, which is all that some justificationists, like Frege, think that is necessary in order to preserve the justificationist account of empirical knowledge. In this paper I have distinguished between weak and strong senses of transmissibility and retransmissibility and I have shown that the property of being an empirical proposition is neither transmittable nor retransmittable in either the weak or the strong sense of these terms. Furthermore, I have clearly stated the assumptions underlying the counterexamples to principles (T2) and (R2) and shown that they are extremely weak as they are valid in intuitionistic logic. I have also shown that counterexamples to (T2) and (R2) can be devised which only make use of patterns of argumentation that are valid in minimal logic. Hopefully, by explicitly stating these two principles and by showing that they are false I will encourage philosophers who hold them to think some more about the nature of deduction and how deduction interacts with the property of being an empirical proposition. I do not think that empiricism will be destroyed just because I have shown that both (T2) and (R2) are false, but the falsity of these two principles makes it clear that it is no easy matter to exclude metaphysics from science by insisting that we can only start from empirical and, maybe, mathematical premises.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Communicative Components Of Imperatives As Speech Acts


*1. Introduction*

Speech act theory brought in a diversity of communicative components associated with the Imperative (viewed as an actualization of a Directive) and initiated debates about the importance of these components for defining Imperative meaning (see the review of these debates in Hamblin, 1987).

I propose a systematization of the communicative (speech-act related) components associated with Imperative meaning. My approach to this systematization is based on separating the (variable) "pragmatic" components which reflect the meaning of an imperative utterance in context from the (invariant) "basic" components which constitute the meaning of an imperative construction independent of context and should be regarded as the grammatical meaning of the Imperative. Furthermore, I propose to interpret the basic

imperative meaning by treating the Imperative as a speech-act category rather than a verbal Mood.

I claim a) that the basic imperative meaning is a speaker-oriented entity and not just a relation between the Sb and Pr of a content proposition, and b) that this meaning is not a semantic primitive, but a highly complex entity. I argue that it includes three situations (appellative, causation/volition, and content/proposition), where each situation in turn contains a specific predicate with its sets of arguments, and also a 'framing-framed' relation reflecting that the content proposition is not an actual one.

Finally I claim that my approach allows us to present the meaning of an imperative utterance not as a chaos of communicative components, but as an organized system. This system gives ground for defining the "logical form" of any imperative utterance. *2. Traditional vs. post-speech-act approach to imperative*

Traditionally (in pre-speech-act frameworks) the interpretation of the Imperative attracted the attention of diverse scholars: linguists, philosophers, logicians. But the interests of different disciplines in the study of the imperative were quite far apart, sometimes hardly commensurable. The Imperative was dealt with both as a part of grammar and as a logical/semantic entity. On the grammatical side the more or less general consensus was that the Imperative is a special verbal category – one of the Moods, clustered with Indicative, Subjunctive, Irrealis, Optative, etc. Grammatical semantics was perceived by linguists as a relation within the proposition (actualizing the 'imperativized' event) between the Sb and the Pr – see discussion in (Jespersen, 1924), which was the first to point out explicitly that the Imperative is a category different in principle from other Moods. Besides, linguists treated the meaning of the Imperative holistically as a single unit and did not try to break this unit into components. The imperative forms discussed in connection with the Imperative followed the Imperative person number paradigm, where disagreements concerned whether to exclude non-second-person Imperative, on the ground either that the Imperative cannot refer to any other person than an interlocutor (that is, second-person forms) or that periphrastic constructions like "Let me go!", "Let's go!", "Let him/them go!" cannot be recognised as verb-forms.

Philosophers and logicians concentrated on different issues: on the semantics of the Imperative from the point of view of its reducibility to indicative meaning; on the analysis of the deontic and inferential properties of imperatives; on moral, legal, etc. inferences following from imperatives. Logicians offered different

models of logical language for the Imperative which could grasp the elusiveness of imperative meaning, which was fully dependent on the context (see review in Moutafakis, 1975). They also discussed completely different types of data than linguists did, predominantly the contrast between imperative, modal and indirect constructions: “Show your documents! You must show your documents! I order you to show your documents!”

Speech act theory (as discussed in Austin, 1962, and Searle, 1969, 1976; cf. Grice, 1957 and Hamblin, 1987) influenced deeply the study of the Imperative on new grounds from a communicative perspective by bringing together the interests of different fields. Special attention began to be paid to the communicative components of the semantics of the Imperative as a language actualization of a Directive, i.e. to such aspects of meaning as the motivation of the participants (who is willful, who is accountable, who has the authority, etc.), the types of functions carried on by imperatives {commands, requests, etc.), language forms other than straightforward imperatives which actualize a Directive (like “Close the window!” vs. “Would you mind closing the window?” “Close the window, would you!”), the politeness factor as a part of imperative meaning and form, and lots of other issues (starting with Fillmore, 1970; Lakoff, 1973; Gordon and Lakoff, 1971; Sadock, 1970; Schachter, 1973; Vendler, 1972; Wierzbicka, 1972; etc.). These discussions to a large extent broke the boundaries between the “disciplinarian” approaches and put the discussion of the Imperative on common basis with a possibility of using common or at least “translatable” concepts (Bybee, 1985; Birjulin, 1994; Paducheva, 1985; Wierzbicka, 1972).

This influx of new ideas about the nature of the Imperative had two types of consequence. On the one hand, it gave new theoretical possibilities for discussion and widened the range of topics under consideration, and also defined a new set of points of interest in discussing grammatical, semantic and pragmatic features of the Imperative. But on the other hand, it resulted in putting forward such a variety of communicative components of imperative meaning that the latter began to seem even more elusive than ever. So, a task of ordering all the data in some intellectually digestible system became a theoretical imperative. We know a lot about the Imperative, but we do not know how the aspects of this knowledge are related to one another.

*3. The goals of the paper*

In this paper I propose to organize the existing chaotic diversity of what is referred to as the communicative components of imperative meaning into a

system and suggest that this system includes different layers and sub-layers of meaning. To accomplish this, I make the following preliminary claims:

1. I argue that the overall imperative meaning of an utterance contains two separate and actually autonomous domains of meaning – a 'grammatical' and a 'pragmatic' one. The first refers to the imperative construction per se, which is the centre of any imperative utterance, and represents the meaning of the Imperative as a grammatical category. This meaning is invariant, and is present in any imperative utterance. The second domain of meaning(s) refers to particular additions to the basic meaning which are related to specific pragmatic conditions of a speech situation. They constitute "accompanying" variable components in the meaning of an imperative utterance .

2. I argue that speech-act-oriented descriptions of the Imperative predominantly concentrated on meanings of the second type – purely pragmatic and discourse related, and often dealt with as a set of entities which are not mutually organized. I argue that they can be organized along the lines of their sub-meanings, and thus presented as different aspects of 'pragmatic' meaning itself.

Though a lot was said about the communicative components of pragmatic meaning, no serious attention was paid to analysis of grammatical meaning and to its communicative components.

3. I propose a model of the grammatical semantics of the Imperative. I treat the Imperative as a grammatical category of speech act, and argue that its semantics is not a primitive, but a complex one.

4. I argue that my treatment of an imperative meaning as a complex system of components can explain a whole range of the peculiarities of both imperative utterances and "imperative forms". Thus it can separate imperative constructions which constitute the imperative paradigm as a grammatical category, explaining why there is a difference in the way Imperative meaning is marked, and it can explain what type of form imperative utterances can have when diverse pragmatic/communicative components are added to the basic meaning.

*4. Types of semantic components of imperative utterances*

The range of semantic components discussed in attempts to define the meaning of imperative utterances is extremely wide, especially after the speech act revolution. So it is not surprising that researchers complained even more than before about the elusiveness of "Imperative meaning", and claimed that it is practically impossible to define it when trying to create a formal language for it. This explains why there appeared and were so popular numerous reductionist

theories**[i]** which proposed to single out (what can be referred to in linguistic terms as) the dominant meaning of an imperative and to reduce Imperative meaning to it. Thus these were proposals to reduce the Imperative to the Indicative, that is to the proposition describing the action which does not exist prior to a directive; to modals of obligation on the part of the doer, or his ability; to causation by the speaker, etc. As I will show later, all these components are important for understanding the meaning of imperatives, but none of them is the unique dominant to which the meaning can be reduced.

I argue that, elusive as it is, "Imperative meaning" can be treated not as a chaos of numerous components or arbitrary interpretations, but as a multi-layered system of communication in which each of the layers makes a definite contribution to an overall resulting meaning.

As I have already mentioned, I suggest distinguishing between the meaning of the imperative construction and the meaning of an imperative utterance. The first represents a primary grammatical meaning of the Imperative, the second – diverse additions to the basic meaning in particular contexts of different speech situations. Thus the meaning of an imperative utterance includes the primary/basic meaning of the Imperative plus all the pragmatic additions to it**[ii]**.

The study of pragmatic components was paid a lot of attention to in the literature, as for the study of the basic/primary semantics of the Imperative as a grammatical category there were only very few explicit discussions of the issue even within contemporary theoretical frameworks (Wierzbicka, 1973, 1985; Bybee, 1985: Bybee et al., 1994; Khrakovskij, 1992; Dolinina, 1992, 2002).

In the next two sections I will first discuss my proposal for classification of 'pragmatic' components of imperative utterances, and then elaborate my interpretation of the primary Imperative meaning.

*5. Pragmatic components of the imperative utterance*

The semantics of imperatives as actualizations of a Directive includes at least the following co-existing layers of pragmatic components.

a. The functional semantics of an imperative (as systematized by Hamblin) includes four major groups, each of which reflects a specific communicative goal of the Directive: a command (order, demand), a request, a piece of advice, an invitation. The distinctions between these functional types of imperatives are based on communicative components which reflect the relations between Speaker (S) and Addressee (A): 'in whose interests the action is carried out', 'who benefits from the action', 'who initiates the directive', or such qualities of the participants

as wilfulness – non-wilfulness, authority/power to issue the directive, accountability, sanctions, obligations, etc.
From this perspective a Command refers to a Directive where S initiates the directive, has the authority to do so, benefits (in a broad sense) from an action, has institutional power to issue the Directive, and carries out sanctions in case of A's non-compliance. Addressee in his turn is not wilful, has no authority to refuse, and is obliged to act. Unlike the other imperatives, it is usually a practically bare imperative construction: "Read this letter!" Order differs from Command on the parameter of authority vs. power" (a gun in the hands of a robber: "Give me your wallet!"); Demand differs from the previous two by S's (-) authority/power and (-) ability for sanctions: "I do not want to see you anymore. Get out!".
Request differs from the previous group on the parameters that S has no authority to issue a directive, though the action is in his favour, and A is not obliged to carry out an action. Request normally must have some context, some clarifying "hedges": "Read this letter, will you!"
Advice is issued on the will of A, and for A's benefit, but A is free not to comply; S has only moral authority and responsibility for the benefits for A, if A complies. "Read this letter! It might clarify the situation for you".
Invitation is characterized by the parameter of mutual benefit: "Read this letter! Then we can discuss your plans, otherwise it's too difficult to judge."

b. The "presumptive" semantics refers to the state of affairs in the real world at the moment when the Directive was issued. Here such components as the following are important: A. is carrying on some action and the speaker directs him to carry on/stop the action, to shift/not to shift to another action. This layer of pragmatic meaning of the utterance is represented as denotative realities beyond the situation of speech in general and the speech act in particular. This component of meaning influences the understanding of how the expected action is related to the current activity of the "Doer". This issue is discussed in (Birjulin, 1994) as the continuation of a more general discussion referring to the "presumptive" meaning of a declarative and a question (Hintikka, 1974; Paducheva, 1985).
This is an important component of meaning of the imperative utterance, but it is interpreted by Birjulin as part of the basic/primary imperative meaning. I disagree, because this component becomes clear only if an imperative utterance is positioned in the context.

c. “Politeness” components of the Imperative refer to the pragmatic layer which is aimed to moderate the semantic conflict between the basic principle of politeness, which is a prohibition on imposition (Lakoff, 1973, etc.), and the prescriptive meaning of the Imperative, which violates this principle. A number of semantic components and of discourse strategies to help the Speaker to moderate (or reinforce) the pressure of an Imperative/Directive have been identified (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Clyne, 1994; Marquez Reiter 2000). The major components discussed in respect to politeness were the so-called “face work”components. They were interpreted as one system, reflecting three real-life hierarchies: the mutual social status of interlocutors (professor – student, host – guest, old – young), the power relations between interlocutors (boss – employee, officer – junior rank) and the closeness of relations between interlocutors (close friends, siblings).

My investigation of the grammatical encoding of politeness in the Imperative from a cross-linguistic perspectives permits a broader understanding of politeness. I claim, first, that politeness refers to a wider range of components of an imperative situation than the ones named above, and, second, that some of these components can be explained within the concepts of a more general semantic framework. I think that there are three semantic areas relevant to politeness.
The first represents how the Speaker(S) verbally treats the Addressee/Doer (A/D) – expressing his high respect towards him (e.g. through honorific forms or Pl when addressing a singular person), or coaxing him into action by marking lexically/grammatically that A/D’s compliance will be appreciated (e.g. “Please” semantically going back to the verb “confer pleasure”), or asking for A/D’s opinion and agreement to comply, as in Tag-questions :“Go there, will you!”.
The second domain is lowering of the deontic modality imposed on the A/D. It consists in substituting ought/must by can/able: “Can you pass me the salt?”.
The third domain is lowering of the epistemic modality, by reducing the level of probability of the action taking place: “Would you pass me the salt!”. In English these components of politeness are often expressed indirectly by replacing straightforward imperative constructions by questions, tags, indicatives, or modal expressions, but cross-linguistically they are often a grammatically marked part of an imperative construction.

d. The layer of sincerity concerns whether S really wants A. to carry out an action. This parameter is often discussed in connection with Prohibitives, e.g. “Don’t’ tell

anyone!" with the hope that the information will spread around.

All the above described layers of meaning of an imperative utterance are important, but they are only additional modifications (or maybe specifications) of the basic imperative meaning. Their presence makes the surface meaning of an imperative utterance seem quite messy, but if we adopt the scheme I put forward, at least there appears to be an ordering frame of what to look for in defining the meaning of the utterance.

None of these semantic components is part of the basic meaning of the imperative construction as an actualization of the Imperative as a grammatical category.

In contrast to the vast research on the pragmatic components of Imperative meaning discussed above, not much attention has been paid to the analysis of basic Imperative meaning. The dominant approach in grammars was to describe the semantics of the Imperative as a semantic primitive – just "Imperative", "Prescriptive", etc. without breaking it down into components**[iii]**. The speech-act-based understanding of an imperative as a speaker-oriented entity and the analysis of the forms of "imperative constructions" (which constitute an imperative paradigm) require reconsideration of both the grammatical status and the meaning of this category. Being a speaker-oriented entity, it has to include at least such components as the meaning of the proposition representing the action/event to happen and the "attitude" of the speaker to this event.

I claim that the Imperative is not a verbal category, because such an interpretation does not incorporate the speaker-event relations (which are outside of the proposition), and besides it cannot explain features of imperative forms which are unusual for a verbal category**[iv]**. It is a category of speech act, and consequently its meaning can be broken into the components characterizing speech acts in general and Directives in particular.

*6. Speech-act-based interpretation of the imperative*

The peculiarities of imperative constructions (see note 4) can be easily explained within a framework where the Imperative is interpreted as a category of speech act. The speech-act nature of the Imperative was widely discussed – it is considered an actualization of Directive (Searle, 1975, 1976). Within a speech-act approach to the Imperative three specific claims are made.

First, the Imperative does not modify the verb but a proposition.

Second, the semantics of the Imperative is not a matter of subject-predicate relations inside a proposition, but is speaker-oriented and thus at least to a large

extent is outside the proposition: the speaker has certain intentions towards the existence of the imperativized event (wants, causes, expects cooperation or willingness of the doer, etc.).
Third, the semantics of the Imperative is not a simple primitive, but is a complex of semantic components (Wierzbicka, 1972, 1995; Khrakovskij, 1992; Hamblin, 1987; Moutafakis, 1976). But these three claims were made as separate considerations and have never been put together as a system of interconnected properties (before Dolinina, 1992, 2002). The proponents of the speech-act approach actually have never proposed that we should consider the Imperative as a special type of grammatical category with a categorial status and a categorial paradigm (not a loose set of syntactic constructions) which naturally unites such synthetic forms as "Go!", "Read!" and constructions like "Let's read!", "Let him read!" and refers to all three persons and both numbers.

I propose to incorporate the discoursal features of the Imperative in one system and to claim that the Imperative is a regular grammatical category of a proposition (not of a verb). I propose to call it a "frame-forming" type of category, because such categories are formed by the introduction of additional predicates which specify the content of the proposition in certain ways**[v]**.

*7. Components of basic imperative meaning*
I claim that the semantic structure of the Imperative (considered as a marked member in the opposition Indicative/Declarative–Imperative) includes at least the following components, reflecting its general speech-act features and its Directive's peculiarities in particular:
1. *an appellative component*: The Speaker addresses his speech to a direct interlocutor – Addressee (feature common for all speech acts). In a variety of languages (e.g. Spanish, Russian) this component is marked explicitly by marking the category of Number on an auxiliary with respect to the number of Addressees.
2. *a causative/volitional component*: The Speaker expresses his causation/volition that some situation/event will take place (particular feature of a Directive). In a wide variety of languages causative auxiliaries are used to mark periphrastic imperative constructions: English "let", German "lassen", etc.
3. *the proposition*: This components is represented by a content verb and it explicates what is the caused/desired situation and who will be bringing it about. This component of meaning is present also in other speech acts as the content of the speech act, but the peculiarity of it in a Directive/Imperative is that it can take

place only after the situation of speech.
4. *"framing-inclusion" relations* (to frame and to be framed): This component is specific to any directive, but in the Imperative is signals the temporal priority of the Directive to the situation: the situation has a doubly dependent status – it is embedded in a speech act, but it also is a projection of a future possibility, as something triggered by the Directive/Imperative. What's more, the probability that it will come into existence is not absolute. That is why in many languages at least some imperative constructions are marked by Irrealis, Subjunctive, etc. forms of the verb.

Identification of these components is supported not only by insights into possible semantics of the Imperative in discourse studies, by attempts of logicians to single out what Imperative meaning implies, and by diverse suggestions of logicians of the dominant component of Imperative meaning in order to build reductionists models**[vi]**, but also and most importantly by cross-linguistic data which provide a list of types of marking mechanisms, reiterated in different languages, where each of these components is explicitly marked in an imperative construction.

*8. Mechanisms of marking basic imperative*
So, according to my interpretation of basic Imperative meaning, the imperative situation is a semantic hybrid, and consequently a syntactic hybrid, of diverse components. It encompasses three component situations: the appellative situation, the causative/volitional situation, and the content situation. This complex of semantic components is present in every imperative construction. When the basic construction is used as/in an imperative utterance, any of the relevant pragmatic components described above (functional, politeness, sincerity, etc.) can be added to it.
Each component situation has its own predicate and its own set of arguments. As in any hybrid, the component situations interact and overlap. Arguments interact, and predicates interact, including first-order predicates in the framed situation and second-order predicates in the framing situation. Arguments interact in the following way. The appellative situation includes two arguments: Addresser and Addressee. The causative/volition situation includes a Causer (issuer of causation and bearer of volition) and a Causee (someone who is caused to act, but can have wilfulness of his own). The content situation has at least one argument – a "Doer". Blending the three sets of participants results in a new set with three macroroles:

the speaker S, the listener L, the third party T. The Doer does not exist on its own; it overlaps with any one of the first three roles.
The first macrorole S (Speaker) must combine the roles of an Addresser and a Causer, and can overlap with the Doer (D) role. Since it is always associated with the 1SG, it does not need marking, unless it overlaps with the Doer (D) role. The macrorole L (Listener) must include the Addressee role, and can also include the roles of Causee and Doer; this combination is the prototypical combination in the imperative situation. The macrorole L (Listener) is associated with the 2nd person and is part of a central specialized form of the Imperative. The third macrorole T (third party) becomes part of the imperative situation only if it overlaps with the Doer role D; this role must be explicitly marked. Thus, the marking of the Imperative must obligatorily include marking the Doer if it is not the Addressee. So, the marking of the Doer D is an indispensable component of an imperative construction, not an agreement category as in verbal categories.

The predicates constituting an imperative situation are of two types, “framing” (appellation, causation/volition) and “framed” (content verb). The framing predicates define the nature of the speech act; the framed predicate defines its content. The framed predicate must be actualized by the content verb; the only variation is in the morphological form of this verb.
The framing part must also be actualized. But the way it is actualized varies. It can be encoded by a special inflection on the content verb, as is the rule for 2nd person imperatives and sometimes for other synthetic constructions. In 1st and 3rd person constructions it can take the form of an actualization of one of the framing predicates**[vii]**.
The appellative predicate can be actualized directly by a special auxiliary or by a particle (e.g. Russian “davaj”), or more commonly indirectly via its arguments: by vocatives, or number-agreement, etc.
Actualization of the appellative predicate evidently highlights the recognition of the existence of L or of the need for L’s cooperation/agreement. The fact that the address function of the Imperative is explicitly encoded in many constructions is evidence that it is inherently present in each of the three-person forms or constructions of the imperative paradigm.
Causation/volition predicates are more commonly actualized than the appellative predicate in imperative constructions. They can be marked straightforwardly by grammatical causatives, by particles, by other delexicalized verbs, or by other auxiliaries which go back to grammatical Inchoatives originating from

“movement” verbs.
In summary, the framing predicates must be actualized, but the way they are actualized depends on the selected dominant level of grammaticalization, or paths of grammaticalization (Bybee et al., 1994; Hopper & Traugott, 1993). There can even be zero actualization marked only as the demonstrated dependent status of the content verb (e.g. in Spanish *que*-constructions).

Considering all these facts, the imperative paradigm includes forms which satisfy the above-mentioned semantic qualities. All other imperative forms place these basic constructions with basic Imperative meaning in a discoursal context.

The proposed interpretation of communicative and basic components of the Imperative offers a reliable framework for interpreting the semantic components of each imperative utterance.

NOTES
**[i]** Among them are the “you will…” theory, which reduces ‘Read this article!” to “You will read this article” and thus reflects the component of Imperative meaning which refers an action to the future; the “you should…” theory, which chooses as the major semantic component deontic modality: “Read this article!” – “You should/ought to/must read this article”; and the “I order you to…” theory, which puts forward as a semantic dominant causation: “Read this article!” as an equivalent to “I order you to read this article”.
**[ii]** As far as I know, no one has previously suggested making this distinction. Failure to make it is responsible for a lot of arbitrariness in what particular components are associated with the Imperative.
**[iii]** Such an attitude is partially understandable, because traditionally the Imperative was treated as a verbal category (Mood) and the semantics of such categories was generally presented as a unity.
**[iv]** These features are discussed in (Dolinina 2002). They are 1) the inclusion of verb-forms and periphrastic constructions in a single paradigm, 2) the multiple constructions used by different languages to mark each person-value, 3) the frequent difference in marking of Imperative meaning in 1, 2, and 3 persons, 4) the frequent use as markers of the Imperative in non-2-person synthetic forms of forms associated with other verbal categories–Causativity, Modality, Subjunctive, Hortative, Future Indicative, 5) the reconciliation of the need for an addressee with the fact that the Directive is issued to the 1st or 3rd person.
**[v]** The composite meaning of the Imperative explains why it can be (and actually

is) encoded differently in different person-value constructions, why it uses “alien” forms in non-2-person constructions, and how the addressee’s role is preserved in all constructions.

**[vi]** The drawbacks of these studies were that each researcher singled out generally only one of the components, and not the whole set of them, thus never offering a full range of components of basic imperative meaning.

**[vii]** Selection among these predicates evidently is based on what was diachronically chosen as a semantic dominant of a directive: causation, or volition, or the need for approval on the part of the addressee, etc.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Topos In Rhetorical Argumentation: From Enthymeme To Figure

James J. Murphy some ten years ago raised the question, "[W]hat is the relation between *Topos* and . . . *Figura*?" (Murphy, 1990, 240), a question he understood as one of an historical development yet but dimly known, and whose answer would require long and difficult scholarship. No doubt he was right, but one might equally well ask a related, equally important, and perhaps more manageable question: "What are the intrinsic (structural) relations between topos and figura?", relations which are presupposed by the historical developments which Murphy rightly insisted need to be investigated.

It is the latter question that this paper proposes to engage – I say *engage*, not *answer*, because a full answer relies also on historical developments, though not as profoundly as the answer to Murphy's question above. This paper investigates in a preliminary way the historic relations between topos and figure, and, using recent developments in the theory of topos, argues that *the figures are enthymemes constructed from particular topoi*. The paper proceeds in three steps:

1. What are *the (historically constituted) intrinsic relations between topos and figure*?
2. What does recent scholarship say about *the relation between topos and enthymeme*?
3. To what extent does the notion of *the figure as an enthymeme constructed from a topos* explicate the extrinsic relationship between topos and figure?

To initiate an answer to the first question, consider the following example. In his *Rhetoric,* Aristotle considers one of the general topoi, *rational correspondence*, more commonly understood as *similarity* or *proportion*, A:B::C:D (1399a34 ff.). In the *Poetics*, the figure *metaphor* is explicated as a proportion (1457b). Indeed, to use one of Aristotle's not-so-excellent metaphors from the *Rhetoric*, "the arrow flies" (1411b35), the proportion

(the motion of the arrow):(the motion of the bird):: X: flight
explicates precisely the metaphor in question. In other words, from the beginnings of written rhetorics, there is the notion that *the figure (metaphor)* is based on *a topos (similarity)*. Furthermore, and more to the point of this paper, that the figure (metaphor) is an enthymeme using a topos (similarity) is implicit in the explanation:
If *the bird flies*, and if *the motion of the bird* is similar to *the motion of the [shot] arrow*, then *the arrow flies.*
The only part of the enthymeme that is expressed in the metaphor is of course the conclusion.

Four tropes (of the usual set of about eight) have been identified as master tropes: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony (Burke, 1969, 503 ff.). Whatever Burke's reasons for choosing them – and we will return to these reasons in due time, these four do occupy a prominent place in the history of relations between topos and figure, a place that is so prominent that it might well represent the larger proposition that this paper is arguing. I anticipate – that is, I am already *arguing figuratively* [using the figure *prolepsis*], something that I have not yet shown I can do. But then, practice, as rhetors have reminded us, precedes theory (*utens* before *docens*). To return to my point – of these four master tropes, it is a commonplace that metaphor occupies the premier position, and it is that figure's relation to similarity from Aristotle till today that I shall focus on.

Quite as Murphy long ago noted, the Roman rhetoricians present full-blown lists of the figures: the anonymous writer in *Rhetorica ad herrenium*, Cicero in *De oratore*, Quintilian in *Institutio oratoria*. As in Aristotle, the link between, say, metaphor and the topos similarity is made, though more obliquely than in the *Rhetoric*. Thus, whereas Aristotle clearly names the topos proportion in his treatment of the figure metaphor, the Romans, who use the words "resemblance" and "similarity" (e.g., Cicero, 1942, §§155 and 157) do not note that these are topoi, which in any case are not treated in their rhetorics but in their writings on the topics. Still – the association is there.

By the Middle Ages, if we take the early and late examples of St. Augustine (Robertson, 1958) and Geoffrey de Vinsauf (Gallo, 1971) as representative, we find a vastly diminished rhetoric of the figure and a nearly complete abandonment of the topoi altogether (not just in relation to figure). Regarding metaphor, e.g., de Vinsauf says it involves "transposing" a word from its literal meaning (Gallo,

1971, lines 770 ff.), but gives no theoretical definition; the topos normally associated with metaphor, comparison, is discussed separately under "Methods of amplification" (lines 241-263). Thus, Curtius, in his study of the literature of the Middle Ages, rightly treats the topics in Chapter 5 (1991, 79-105) and metaphor in Chapter 7 (1991, 128-144) as unrelated and separate, without drawing the Aristotelian connection between them. We might note that this is not very surprising, given that the Roman rhetorics were well-known in the Middle Ages but Aristotle's was not.

A shift occurs in the Renaissance, however. Thomas Wilson's *The arte of rhetorique* (1553), one of the first Ciceronian ones in English, says that metaphor is "an alteration of words from the proper and naturall meaninge, to that which is not proper, and yet agreeth therunto, by some lykness that appeareth to be in it" (1962, 194); and his "coloures of rhetorique" (212-214) include the topos *similitudo* (as well as most of the Aristotelian topoi), while his "places" refer to the places of logic (18 and 37).

It is well-known that Peacham's stylistic rhetoric, *The garden of eloquence* (1593), includes most of the classical topics in its lists of the figures. Less well-noted, perhaps, is the fact that Peacham's book begins with a remarkable table (*Table 1*):

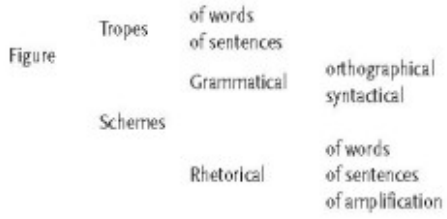


Table 1

What caused Peacham to use this device I do not know, though I observe that Ramism was already known in England, and that it may have influenced Peacham as it most certainly did Fenner and Fraunce in their rhetorics of the same time. Ramism, with its binary structuration (the core of its infamous "method") and its transfer of all matters dialectical from rhetoric to logic. Indeed, Fenner, an avowed Ramist, "diagrams" all four master tropes under the heading of comparison (a topos), using "the method" (1966, n.p.) (*Table 2*):

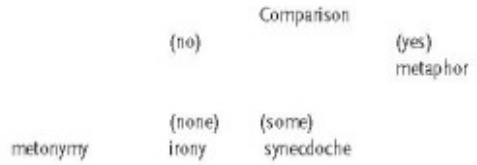


Table 2

The significance of the English Renaissance's understanding of the figures was recognized only much later, however. Sisiter Miriam Joseph's *Rhetoric in Shakespeare's time* (1947) is one of the first extended studies to argue conclusively what the Ramistic diagrams show implicitly, that the figures are based entirely on the topoi. For Sister Miriam, metaphor is an application of the topic *similarity* (Miriam Joseph, 1962, 328), synecdoche an application of the topic *division* (315). Another study contemporary with Sister Miriam's is Rosamund Tuve's *Elizabethan metaphorical imagery* (1947). Tuve's Part II, "Logical Functions of Imagery," argues – independently of Sister Miriam – that the topoi ground the figures. For example, the basis of metaphor is the predicament quality (and the predicaments are among the logical topoi), division (a general topos) is the basis of synecdoche. Nearly twenty years later, Rosalie Colie, though taking a somewhat different point of view, essentially argues that at least some of the figures are based on the topoi in her Paradoxia Epidemica (1966). Paradox is, among other things, a rhetorical topos, and as such leads to conceits like the courtly lovers' predicament (Colie, 1966, 89 ff.), the infinite as a figure for God (145), the problematization of non/being (303), and so on.

The Aristotelian association fades again during the Enlightenment. The rhetors after Locke (1690) were much too busy rescuing their subject from his new philosophy, sometimes by using that philosophy against itself. Yet from Bacon's (1620) "idols of the marketplace" (1993, 1273) – by which he meant abuses in public discourse or rehtoric – to Campbell's "tropes conducive to vivacity" (1776, 299) – including metaphor which "represents things intelligible by things sensible" (304) – is a straight line that leads directly through Locke's view of rhetoric as an instrument of deceit.

How refreshing, then, to find at the very end of the Victorian era's *feeling* (following hard on the Enlightenment's *reason*) the astonishing rhetorical sophistication of a Nietzsche. Blair's translation of Nietzsche's lecture notes shows that he argued forcefully that language is inherently not accidentally

figurative: “all words are tropes in themselves, and from the beginning” (1983, 107). A sentence like “The grass is green,” for instance is a metaphor because grass (a plant) is not literally green (a colour). Similarly, any name that substitutes distinguishing function for description is synecdochic (the present-day computer, e.g.), and so on. This argument is much more radical than mine in this paper, for where I claim only that the figures are based on the topoi, Nietzsche claims that all language is topical.

Completing this preliminary and admittedly reduced survey of topos and figura, the Modern Age is replete with support for the thesis in question. Richards’s metaphor as tenor/vehicle (1936, 97-100); Perelman’s rhetorical figures within argumentation (1969, 167-179); Saussure’s sign = signified / signifier (1966, 66-67) which leads directly to Group Mu’s “general rhetoric [of the figure]” (1981); and Burke’s motivation for identifying the four master tropes – metaphor=perspective, metonymy=reduction, synecdoche=representation, irony=dialectic (1969, 503 ff.). [To these might be added Eco’s comments on Aristotle’s notion of metaphor, and Genette’s figure as a gap with the sign (in metaphor, this gap is called “resemblance”).] In short, the historically constituted relation between the topos (viz. similarity) and the figure (viz. metaphor) is that the latter is squarely based on, derived from, and constituted by the former.

To move on to the second stage of my argument, it has very recently been argued that the Aristotelian topoi and enthymemes are related as follows: T, a binary relation between linguistic terms, is a topos exactly when “If P(x) and if T(x,y), then P(y)” is an acceptable enthymeme (Dyck 2002). This rather simple statement is of course a reduction of the fuller argument which deals with Aristotle’s twenty-eight general topoi and therefore with rather more complicated enthymemes also. Evidently, if this argument is correct, then the relations between rhetoric and logic may have to be rethought: for, since implication is a (logical) topos and has a form identical to the above, it follows that the (rhetorical) enthymeme is a generalization (weakening) of the (dialectical) syllogism.

But such esoteric byways are not my interest here and now. Consider the following topoi and the enthymemes associated with them:
1. S = similarity: If P(x) and T(x,y), then P(y).
2. C = contiguity: If P(x) and C(x,y), then P(y).
3. R = representatation: If P(x) and R(x,y), then P(y).

It is immediately clear that the assertions "P(y)," under the given conditions, are the figures metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche, respectively. I have already dealt with the first case, in which the topos is similarity and the figure is metaphor, and the second case is handled in the same way: contiguity or "is associated with" leads to metonymy. The third case involves the topos *pars pro toto*, and we might examine the textbook example of synecdoche, where a ship is represented by its sail, or R(sail,ship). To assert "Ten sails are on the water" is to assert the conclusion of the following enthymeme:
If ten ships are on the water, and if R(sail,ship), then ten sails are on the water.

The third part of my argument is, in other words, obvious, and in the case of metaphor may be put in strictly Aristotelian terms using "Dionysus's shield" as an example (*Poetics* 1457b20):
If Ares's shield (object) is a shield (function), and if shield:Ares :: cup:Dionysus, then Dionysus's cup (object) is a shield (function).

[If Shield(Ares's shield) and if S(Ares's shield, Dionysus's cup), then Shield(Dionysus's cup).]

It would be inexcusably poor rhetoric if I did not present a telling example of my over-all claim, namely, an example showing how argument by figure works. For this I need a familiar poem, and I know of none more familiar or more excellent than Shakespeare's 116th Sonnet.
Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark
Whose worth's unknown although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love changes not with his brief hours and weeks
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ nor no man ever loved.

“116” is a *Shakespearean* sonnet: (3×4) + 2 = 14. This *disposition* (arrangement), or subgeneric structure, imposes severe restrictions on the reader as well as on the writer. Three quatrains rhymed *abab* and a closing heroic couplet suggest a triadic approach to the topic love followed by a summative or concluding statement. And the sonnet bears this out: quatrain 1 = what love *is not*; quatrain 2 = what love *is*; quatrain 3 = a mix of what love *is/not*; the couplet = an “if -, then – ” summary.

But what is one doing when one says, of a word or an idea, that it *is not* such-and-such, but *is* such-and-such? One does not have to be a rhetor to recognize this is a *definition*, but one would probably have to know some rhetoric to know that definition is a topos. Like any educated man in the Renaissance, Shakespeare knew this, and he adapted the *topos of definition* to the *disposition of the sonnet*, beginning negatively in the first quatrain, moving to the positive in the second, and mixing the two in the third. Shakespeare was *inventing* this particular poem by using a *topos* to generate an argument for a given *disposition*.

The closing couplet of this sonnet has earned enormous attention because it supposedly is difficult to understand. But for rhetoric the couplet is an instance of a figure called *syllogismus* in Renaissance rhetorics. Syllogismus is an apparently valid syllogism: if [my definition proves false, then [I never wrote and no man ever loved]. A bit of logical analysis reveals that all this syllogism asserts is that the definition of love given in the poem, call it L, must be true: “if not-L, then N” is logically equivalent to “L or N”; and since N = “I never writ nor no man ever loved” is evidently false, we see that L must be true for the syllogism to be valid. In other words, this syllogismus is a *petitio principii*, begging the very question it pretends to answer – Is this definition really true? A slightly different analysis of this couplet may be given, for the enthymeme is constructed from the topos implication. But of course the topos implication, namely, “if -, then -,” is exactly the topos syllogismus.

What then does the couplet add to the rest of the poem, if it does no more than assert what is required to be proved? It can at best measure the poet’s *conviction* that his definition *must* be right; it may at worst suggest his underlying *fear* that he might be wrong: it is, in short, a cry of near-desperation – if love is not what I believe it to be, how could I ever have written or any man ever have loved?

The poem therefore presents a larger enthymematic argument based the topoi *definition* and *implication*. The full extent of Shakespeare’s genius in constructing

this poem has not yet been broached, however: for the details of the argument are presented using another topos, *similarity*, in a series of brilliant metaphors. These metaphors, utterly characteristic of Shakespeare's style, are also part of the invention of his argument. Here are some of the ones employed in generating the positive aspects of his definition of love:
[Love] [is] "The marriage of true minds" (line 1)
[Love] "is an ever-fixed mark" (line 5)
[Love] "is the star to every wandering bark" (line 7)
[Love] [is] [a grim, Time-like reaper] (line 10)
(The last metaphor derives from the negative personification "Love's not Time's fool" (line 9) and the synecdoche "rosy lips and cheeks" (standing for youth) which come "within his bending sickle's compass" (line 10).)

The poem's full *matter* (content, the Renaissance res ) is inseparable from its *manner* (form, the Renaissance verba). Its definition and concept of love may be stated as *love is that mental or spiritual relationship which is perfect, steadfast, trustworthy, independent of circumstance, and eternal*. This love, in other words, is a highly idealized (in the sense of Plato's *ideas*) love, not a love as it most probably exists in the world. Few if any, even in the Renaissance as today, likely experience such love.
I conclude with one small observation. I have argued *synecdochically* that *the figure is an enthymeme derived from an appropriate topos* – in other words, doing something while I was arguing that it could be done (utens before docens). But such circularity underlies also the very claim I am making. Long before enthymemes and topoi were understood or even articulated as such, far back (in other words) in an imagined place at an imagined time, a prehistoric female dropped her infant into the soft grasses: *Ah – dam*, she grunted, and figuratively gave birth to the enthymeme and to my argument.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2002 – A Normative And Empirical Approach To Petty And Cacioppo's 'Strong' And 'Weak' Arguments


What makes a persuasive message persuasive? According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo 1986), argument quality plays an important role in the answer to this question. The present study takes a close look at this factor. First, background information will be given about the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). Subsequently, the role of argument quality in the ELM will be discussed. After that, the results will be presented of a normative and empirical study of Petty and Cacioppo's research material containing strong and weak arguments. These results will provide insight into the role of argument quality in the persuasion process **[i]**.

*1. Petty & Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model*
According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, people can be persuaded into adopting a claim by walking two different routes. The first route is called the

central route. At this route, people systematically examine the quality of the given arguments. If they agree with these arguments, they adopt the claim. If they disagree with the arguments, they reject the claim. The second route is called the peripheral route. At this route, people are persuaded by peripheral cues. Peripheral cues are all non-argumentative features of a message that are capable of influencing the formation or change of the receiver's attitude. Commonly used peripheral cues are rules of thumb, such as 'If this authority says so, it must be true' or 'If hundreds of people used this product before me, it must be a good product.'

Which route is being taken is determined by two factors: motivation and ability. Motivation is about *wanting* to process the persuasive message. If people want to be very sure of the correctness of their attitude, they will be very motivated to examine the given arguments carefully. So, for example, motivation is higher when a house is to be bought than a detergent. The second factor is about *being able* to process the message. The easier it is for people to examine the given arguments, the quicker they will perform this task. Motivation as well as ability is required in order to follow the central route. If these conditions are not met, the peripheral route will be taken. *2. Argument quality*

Petty and Cacioppo claim that highly involved people are more persuaded by strong than by weak arguments. Many studies have used Petty and Cacioppo's research material to – successfully – test this claim (e.g., Burnkrant & Howard 1984; Heesacker, Petty & Cacioppo 1983; Petty & Cacioppo 1979, 1984). However, Petty and Cacioppo manipulated argument quality in their research material by means of an *empirical* definition. They define 'a "strong message" as one containing arguments such that when subjects are *instructed* to think about the message, the thoughts that they generate are predominantly favorable. […] the arguments in a weak message are such that when subjects are instructed to think about them, the thoughts that they generate are predominantly unfavorable' (Petty & Cacioppo 1986: 32).

O'Keefe (1990: 110) aptly notes on this subject that if, 'in a given investigation, an argument-strength manipulation did *not* influence persuasive effects under conditions of high elaboration […], the conclusion would *not* be "This result disconfirms the ELM's prediction," but instead "The manipulations were somehow defective; either the study didn't effectively manipulate argument strength, or it didn't effectively manipulate elaboration likelihood conditions, because *by definition* stronger arguments lead to greater persuasion under conditions of

higher elaboration." To say that under conditions of high elaboration, strong arguments have been found to be more effective than weak arguments" is rather like saying "Bachelors have been found to be unmarried." We didn't need empirical research to find these things out'.
Furthermore, Petty and Cacioppo have left aside the specific cause of the difference between their strong and weak arguments. O'Keefe (1990, 1995) therefore proposes to further conceptualise and concretise the concept of argument quality. He suggests the use of 'some independently-motivated account of argument quality' (1995: 14) by means of which Petty and Cacioppo's research material can be analysed. This 'normatively-guided analysis of these messages may offer some insights into just what aspects of the messages may be contributing to the observed effects.' (O'Keefe 1995: 14). For example, it may be the case that it is the argument not linking up with the given claim that causes the weakness of the argument.

The analysis and evaluation method of Schellens and Verhoeven (1994) is an example of such an independently-motivated account of argument quality. Schellens and Verhoeven have developed several argument types, of which 'Explanation' is an example:
B is (in general) explained by A.
B is the case.
Hence: (probably) A.

Each argument type is accompanied by a set of evaluation questions. Examples of evaluation questions belonging to the argument type 'Explanation' are:
Are there reasons to doubt B?
Is A a necessary condition for B?
Are there other possible explanations for B imaginable and plausible?

Evaluation questions address for example the correctness of the relationship between a claim and its argument or the desirability of an argument. A positive answer to an evaluation question means that the argumentation is strong on this part. A negative answer means that the argumentation is weak on this part.

Areni and Lutz (1988) also address Petty and Cacioppo's argument quality. They divide argument quality into two components: argument strength and argument valence. *Argument strength* is defined as the 'subjective probability that the attitude object is associated with some outcome or consequence'. *Argument*

*valence* is the 'audience's evaluation of that consequence' (1988: 198) or, in other words, the desirability of this outcome or consequence. For example, in the argumentation 'Studying harder leads to an increase of the grade point average', argument strength addresses the probability that studying harder (the attitude object) is associated with the increase of the grade point average (the outcome or consequence). Argument valence deals with the desirability of this increase.
Areni and Lutz carried out an experiment in which participants had to determine the argument strength and valence in Petty and Cacioppo's research material. The results only showed a difference between the strong and weak arguments in argument valence, but not in argument strength. These results led to their conclusion that Petty and Cacioppo only manipulated argument valence instead of the broader argument quality.
Areni and Lutz suggest research in which argument strength is also manipulated. They suggest that people have to be more motivated and able to find weaknesses in argument strength than in argument valence. This is because judging the argument strength means judging probability and logical coherence. This task is more demanding than judging the argument valence, the desirability of an attribute.

The present study consists of two parts: an analytical and an experimental part, inspired by O'Keefe (1990, 1995) and Areni and Lutz (1988). The purpose of the analytical part was to examine whether Petty and Cacioppo's strong and weak arguments differ from each other normatively. To accomplish this, the arguments in their research material were analysed by means of Schellens and Verhoeven's method, which can be used normatively. Furthermore, this analytical part concentrates on the specific characteristics in which the strong arguments differ from the weak arguments.
The aim of the experimental part was to observe whether there is an effect of argument strength on the persuasiveness of a message, as suggested by Areni and Lutz. Are highly involved people more persuaded by strong than by weak arguments when argument strength is manipulated, while argument valence is kept constant?

*3. Petty and Cacioppo's Research Material: Analysis and Evaluation*
Petty and Cacioppo's research material consists of eighteen short arguments, all in favour of implementing the so-called 'Senior Comprehensive Exam' (SCE) at universities in the United States. The Senior Comprehensive Exam is 'a

requirement for graduation; the exam would be a test of what the student had learned after completing the major, and a certain score would be required if the student was to graduate' (Petty, Harkins & Williams 1980: 87). Nine of the arguments are strong; the other nine are weak or very weak. As mentioned, the division into strong and weak is based on Petty and Cacioppo's empirical definition.

*Hypothesis*. It was hypothesized that Petty and Cacioppo's strong arguments are stronger than their weak arguments not only empirically, but also normatively. Support for this hypothesis is given by O'Keefe, among others: 'if one examines the "strong-argument" and "weak-argument" messages, it's apparent that these do differ in normative quality – the "strong-argument" messages in fact do make normatively better arguments than do the "weak-argument" messages' (O'Keefe 1995: 13). Schellens and Verhoeven's method was used to test the hypothesis.

*Question*. A question was asked about the possible cause of the difference between Petty and Cacioppo's strong and weak arguments. Petty and Cacioppo barely touched upon this issue themselves. They only mentioned (Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman 1981: 850) that their strong arguments contain persuasive evidence in the form of statistics and data and that their weak arguments contain quotations, personal opinions and examples. Furthermore, O'Keefe found a difference between the strong and weak arguments in '(for example) the relevance of the evidence to the conclusions drawn, in the apparent self-interest of cited evidence sources, in the desirability of the benefits claimed to attach to the advocated position, and so on' (O'Keefe 1995: 13-14). And we already know that Areni and Lutz found a difference in desirability (i.e. argument valence) between the strong and weak arguments. This latter finding was the reason for the present study to answer the question by looking in the research material at argument strength and argument valence specifically.

*Procedure*. Two judges performed the analysis and evaluation, one of them being a lecturer in argumentation. Mr Verhoeven advised them on some global problems. Each argument was analysed by charting the argument types used**[ii]**.

*Analysis*. Each of the 18 arguments contains a claim plus several argumentations. Each claim consists of the attitude object (i.e., the introduction of the SCE) and an attribute varying per argument. Examples of these attributes are:
A sharper increase of the grade point average (strong argument 1)

Higher starting salaries (strong argument 8)
An increase of students' anxiety (weak argument 1)
More parental support (weak argument 3)
Et cetera

The object and attribute are linked by a cause-effect relationship: the introduction of the Senior Comprehensive Exam is the cause of the attribute. Hence, the claims are formulated as follows: 'The introduction of the SCE leads to (for example) higher starting salaries.'

On a global level of analysis, all claims can be seen as arguments. The argument type 'Advantage' links these arguments to the general overlapping claim 'The introduction of the SCE is desirable':
A leads to B: The introduction of the SCE leads to the attribute.
B is desirable: The attribute is desirable.
Thus, A is desirable: The introduction of the SCE is desirable.

It is 'Advantage' that is used here, because this argument type points to the positive or negative effects of a possible action or measure, which is the case here. The attribute of the first strong argument 'An increase of the grade point average' can for example be seen as a positive effect of the introduction of the Senior Comprehensive Exam.

This 'Advantage' interpretation is supported in the literature. O'Keefe (1995: 13-14) and Areni and Lutz (1988: 198) mention for example that the introduction of the SCE is accompanied by very positive attributes ('higher starting salaries') in the case of the strong arguments and by less positive ('more parental support') or even negative ('an increase of the students' anxiety') attributes in the case of the weak arguments.

The analysis per argument – on a lower level – is illustrated by the first strong argument:
The National Scholarship Achievement Board recently revealed the results of a five-year study conducted on the effectiveness of comprehensive exams at Duke University. The results of the study showed that since the comprehensive exam has been introduces at Duke, the grade point average of undergraduates has increased by 31%. At comparable schools without the exams, grades increased by only 8% over the same period. The prospect of a comprehensive exam clearly

seems to be effective in challenging students to work harder and faculty to teach more effectively. It is likely that the benefits observed at Duke University could also be observed at other universities that adopt the exam policy. (Petty & Cacioppo 1986: 54-55)

'Explanation' is one of the argument types that supports the claim 'The introduction of the Senior Comprehensive Exam leads to a sharper increase of the grade point average of undergraduates'. This argument type explains the sharper increase of the grade point average: students are working harder and faculty is teaching more effectively. The scheme looks as follows:
B is (in general) caused by A: A sharper increase of the grade point average is caused by students working harder and faculty teaching more effectively.
B is the case: The grade point average has increased more sharply.
Thus, (probably) A: The students worked harder and faculty taught more effectively.

*Evaluation*. After the 18 arguments were analysed, the evaluation questions belonging to the argument types found were answered. To illustrate, three 'Explanation' questions and their answers are given:
Are there reasons to doubt the increase of the grade point average? No
Are the students' hard work and faculty teaching more effectively necessary conditions for the increase of the grade point average? No
Are there other possible explanations for the increase imaginable and plausible? *Yes, for example, the students do not waste time studying irrelevant subjects anymore*.

Subsequently, the answers were evaluated as positive, negative or neutral. As said before, 'positive' means that the argumentation is strong on this part; 'negative' means that the argumentation is weak on this part. The neutral answers were not relevant for testing the hypothesis and were therefore left aside.

To answer the question about the cause of the possible difference between the strong and weak arguments, the evaluation questions were divided into argument strength and argument valence. If an evaluation question addressed the *probability* of the link between the attitude object (i.e., the SCE) and the attribute (e.g., higher starting salaries), it was classified as an argument *strength* question. For example: 'Is the occurrence of A in general a necessary condition for B?' If a

question addressed the *desirability* of the attribute, it was classified as an argument *valence question*. For example: 'Is B really desired?'

Table 1 Average percentages of positive and negative answers, in total and subdivided into 'argument strength' and 'argument valence'.

| | Total | | Argument Strength | | Argument Valence | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative | Positive | Negative |
| Strong | 89,66 | 3,10 | 54,83 | 2,99 | 34,84 | 0,00 |
| Weak | 71,41 | 25,30 | 35,31 | 14,58 | 36,10 | 10,73 |

Table 1

*Results*. The answers were analysed by means of a multivariate one-way analysis of variance. The data in *Table 1* show that the hypothesis is confirmed: Petty and Cacioppo's strong arguments are in fact normatively stronger than their weak arguments. The percentage of positive answers is higher for the strong arguments than for the weak arguments (89.66 > 71.41; $F$ (1, 16) = 27.42, $p$< .01). Hence, the strong arguments yielded more positive answers than the weak arguments. Furthermore, the percentage of negative answers is higher for the weak arguments than for the strong arguments (25.30 > 3.10; $F$ (1, 16) = 80.14, $p$< .01). The weak arguments yielded more negative answers than the strong arguments.

*Table 1* also reveals the answer to the question about the possible cause of the difference between the strong and weak arguments: they differ from each other in argument strength as well as in argument valence. For argument strength, the percentage of positive answers is higher for the strong arguments than for the weak arguments (54,83 > 35,31; $F$ (1, 16) = 9.62, $p$< .01). With regard to argument strength, the strong arguments thus yielded more positive answers than the weak arguments and are therefore stronger than the weak arguments. Also, the percentage of negative answers is higher for the weak arguments than for the strong arguments (14.58 > 2.99; $F$ (1, 16) = 12.35, $p$< .01). Hence, the weak arguments yielded more negative answers than the strong arguments and are therefore weaker than the strong arguments.

For argument valence, the analysis led to the following picture: the percentage of positive answers for the strong arguments equals the percentage for the weak arguments (34.84 = 36.10; $F$ (1, 16) < 1). Hence, there is no difference between the strong and weak arguments in the amount of positive answers; the strong and weak arguments are equally strong as far as the amount of positive answers is

concerned. But the weak arguments do get more negative answers than the strong arguments (10.73 > 0.00; $F$ (1, 16) = 9.08, $p$< .01). The weak arguments thus yielded more negative answers than the strong arguments and are therefore weaker than the strong arguments.

*Conclusions*. When using an independently-motivated account of argument quality, there turns out to be an overall difference between Petty and Cacioppo's strong and weak arguments: their strong arguments are in fact stronger than their weak arguments, not only empirically but also normatively. Furthermore, the results show that Petty and Cacioppo's strong and weak arguments differ from each other in argument strength as well as in argument valence. In other words, both argument strength and valence cause the normative difference between the strong and weak arguments.
The latter result seems to contradict Areni and Lutz's claim that Petty and Cacioppo only manipulated argument valence. This seeming contradiction can be solved as follows: Areni and Lutz used participants who only registered weaknesses in argument valence and not in argument strength. However, this does not mean that there were no weaknesses in argument strength; the participants just did not see them.

*4. Experiment*
Petty and Cacioppo claim that argument quality plays an important role when people are highly involved: these people are more persuaded by strong than by weak arguments.  But the participants in Areni and Lutz's experiment only saw weaknesses in argument valence and not in argument strength. This may suggest that it is argument valence that is responsible for the persuasiveness of strong arguments instead of argument quality (that consists of argument valence and argument strength). But we do not know this for sure, because Petty and Cacioppo manipulated argument strength as well as argument valence, as our analysis has shown.

*Question*. An experiment was set up to answer the following question: are highly involved people still more persuaded by strong than by weak arguments when argument strength is manipulated and argument valence is kept constant?

*Material*. The research material in the present study was comparable with Petty and Cacioppo's. It was also about introducing some kind of Senior Comprehensive Exam. In Dutch, it was called the MEA, the 'Mondeling Eindexamen voor

Afstudeerders' (Oral Examination for Graduates).

The following two variables were manipulated in the experiment:
1. Issue Involvement: high or low
2. Argument Strength: strong or weak

The first variable 'Issue Involvement' influences the motivation to carefully examine the given arguments. 'As the personal consequences of an advocacy increase, it becomes more important for people to form a veridical opinion because the consequences of being incorrect are greater. Because of these greater personal consequences, people should be more motivated to engage in the cognitive work necessary to evaluate the true merits of the proposal' (Petty & Cacioppo 1986: 82).

To manipulate issue involvement, two versions of a text were created. In the first version the MEA was to be introduced at the participants' own university (the University of Nijmegen) in the following year. It was expected that the participants reading this version would feel highly involved and motivated. This would lead to a careful examination of the text. In the second version, the MEA was to be introduced at the University of Leiden in about ten years. It was expected that participants reading this version would feel less involved and motivated. This would lead to a more superficial examination of the text.
The second variable to be manipulated was 'Argument Strength'. Three advantages of the introduction of the MEA were given in each version of the text. The strong arguments correspond to Petty and Cacioppo's strong arguments, except for the removal of some weaknesses discovered in the analytical part of this study. Subsequently, weak arguments were composed by weakening one supporting argumentation per advantage on argument strength. Schellens and Verhoeven's evaluation questions were used for this.
The first advantage was an increase of the grade point average by 34%. Argument strength was manipulated by adding the following sentence in the weak version: 'All lectures are replaced by tutorials at this university in the same period.' This extra sentence could lead to the conclusion that it was this introduction of tutorials instead of the MEA that caused the increase of the grade point average. The second advantage was that the MEA led to an improvement of teachers' qualities. In the strong version, this was supported by the Ministry of Education. In the weak version, this was supported by a teacher of Ghent University. This is weak because a teacher is an unreliable source for stating that the MEA has led

to an improvement of his or her own qualities. Finally, the third advantage was that graduates of universities with MEA received higher starting salaries. In the strong version, this was supported by examples from the universities of Brussels and Leuven. In the weak version, this was supported by a single example from the hotel and catering school in Brussels, which is not even a university.

Four conditions were derived from a crossing of the two variables:
1. High issue involvement /strong arguments
2. High issue involvement /weak arguments
3. Low issue involvement /strong arguments
4. Low issue involvement /weak arguments

The material consisted of four versions; each of which covered one of the four conditions.

Note that there is a normative difference between the strong and the weak arguments in the present study. According to O'Keefe (1995: 14), an independently-motivated account of argument quality supplies us with general criteria to construct normatively good arguments. With the help of these criteria, the persuasiveness of normatively strong versus weak arguments can be empirically examined. The arguments were therefore constructed by means of Schellens and Verhoeven's method instead of Petty and Cacioppo's empirical definition. Because of this approach, the strong arguments are normatively strong in argument strength and the weak arguments are normatively weak in argument strength, whereas argument valence is kept constant.

*Pilots*. The material was extensively tested in a series of pilots. It was tested whether weaknesses in argumentation were seen and whether the strong arguments were really judged as strong. The research material was adjusted if needed.

*Participants*. A total amount of 60 participants joined the experiment, 41 female, 19 male. All of them were students at the University of Nijmegen at one of the following studies: Law, History, Dutch, Psychology, Pedagogics or Physics. All participants were between 17 and 24 of age and got approximately EUR 2,27 for their participation in the experiment.

*Design*. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Each version was read by 15 participants. Both variables had a between-

participants design.

*Procedure*. The participants first read the message. Subsequently, they were asked to list their thoughts on the subject of the message for about three minutes. Afterwards, the participants had to categorize their thoughts into positive, negative or neutral. The neutral reactions were later left aside. The participants' categorization was the only categorization made. This is because Cacioppo, Harkins and Petty (1981: 44-45) found that participants and independent judges largely put responses in the same categories.

The participants' thoughts can be seen as 'cognitive reactions'. The notion of cognitive reactions stems from the Cognitive Response Model (Greenwald 1968). Cognitive reactions reflect the way in which someone processes information. Cognitive reactions to a persuasive message from a political party could be for example: 'How nice that they support the elderly', 'I find it unlikely that they will succeed in solving the traffic jams', et cetera.
Finally, the participants had to fill in scales to measure their level of attitude and involvement. As for attitude measurement, the participants were asked to judge the introduction of the MEA by taking position on five-point scales in between four couples of opposing adjectives:  wanted – unwanted, bad – good, nice – unpleasant and insensible – sensible. The attitude was determined on the basis of the scores on these scales. As for involvement measurement, the participants had to indicate to what amount they felt involved with the introduction of the MEA. They had to answer the following questions on a five-point scale from 'Not at all' to 'To a very great extent':
– *To what extent does the introduction of the MEA occupy you personally?*
– *Do you find the introduction of the MEA of great interest to your own life?*

*Manipulation checks*. The attitude scales appeared to have sufficient coherence to be treated together (a = .70). The involvement scales showed enough coherence as well (a = .76).

Subsequently, a t-test for independent measurements was used to test whether the manipulation of issue involvement led to a difference in involvement. This was indeed the case: the high issue involvement versions led to a higher score on the involvement scales than the low issue involvement versions ($t(58) = 1.82$, $p < .05$). Because of this outcome, it is justified to use the terminology of high and low involvement.

Table 2 Average cognitive reactions per subject, subdivided into positive, negative and neutral and average attitude per subject, both subdivided into high and low involvement and strong and weak arguments.

| | | High Involvement | | Low Involvement | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Strong Arguments | Weak Arguments | Strong Arguments | Weak Arguments |
| Cognitive Reactions | Positive | 1,47 | 1,00 | 2,07 | 1,93 |
| | Negative | 2,13 | 1,80 | 1,87 | 2,07 |
| | Neutral | 1,73 | 1,87 | 1,20 | 1,00 |
| Attitude | | 4,57 | 4,62 | 4,63 | 4,50 |

Note to sixth row: 1 = very negative attitude; 5 = very positive attitude

Table 2

*Results*. Petty and Cacioppo claim that strong arguments are more persuasive than weak arguments when people are highly involved, while argument quality does not have an effect when people are less involved. When people are highly involved, strong arguments should lead to more positive cognitive reactions and subsequently to a more positive attitude than weak arguments. Weak arguments should lead to more negative reactions and subsequently to a more negative attitude than strong arguments. Our question was whether this is still the case when argument strength is manipulated and argument valence is kept constant.

Univariate two-way analyses of variance were used to test whether there was an effect on the participants' attitude and cognitive reactions. As for the participants' attitude, no interaction effect was obtained ($F$ (1, 56) < 1) nor a main effect of 'Argument Strength' or 'Issue Involvement' (both $F$ (1, 56) < 1). Furthermore, no interaction effects were obtained on respectively the participants' positive and negative cognitive reactions ($F$ (1, 56) < 1; $F$ (1, 56) = 1.07, $p$= .57). 'Argument Strength' did not have an effect on the amount of positive nor negative reactions (both $F$ (1,56) < 1). In addition, there was no effect of 'Issue Involvement' on the amount of negative cognitive reactions ($F$ (1, 56) < 1). The only effect found was a main effect of 'Issue Involvement' on the amount of positive cognitive reactions ($F$ (1, 56) = 5.77, $p$< .05). The less involved participants generated more positive cognitive reactions than the highly involved participants.
Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to test whether there was a relationship between cognitive reactions (positive or negative) and the attitude. For each subject, the amount of negative cognitive reactions was subtracted from the amount of positive reactions. The results confirmed the presence of this relationship ($r$= 0.59, $p$< .01). Hence, positive reactions led to a positive attitude and negative reactions led to a negative attitude.

*Conclusions*. According to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, highly involved

people should be more persuaded by strong than by weak arguments. The results of the present study show us otherwise. The strong arguments did not lead to a more positive attitude than the weak arguments and the weak arguments did not lead to a more negative attitude than the weak arguments. Furthermore, the strong arguments did not lead to more positive cognitive reactions than the weak arguments and the weak arguments did not lead to more negative reactions than the strong arguments.  Because of these negative results, it has become irrelevant that positive reactions did lead to a positive attitude and that negative reactions did lead to a negative attitude, just as the fact that less involved people saw no difference between strong and weak arguments.

A remark has to be made about the main effect of issue involvement on the amount of positive cognitive reactions; highly involved participants generated less positive cognitive reactions than less involved participants. There may have been an effect of involvement with the introduction of the MEA on the *desirability* of the introduction of this exam. The MEA was presented as a heavy exam with a lot of extra pressure. Therefore, the highly involved participants (who had to do the exam) may have found the MEA less desirable than the less involved people who were not to encounter the exam. Measurements on separate attitude scales support this suggestion; some highly involved participants did find the MEA sensible and good, but also unwanted and unpleasant.

*5. General Conclusion*

Petty and Cacioppo claim in their Elaboration Likelihood Model that argument quality determines the persuasiveness of a persuasive message when people are walking the central route to persuasion. This claim was largely built upon their research material about the Senior Comprehensive Exam. The research material was based on an empirical definition: arguments are strong when people generate mainly positive reactions to them and arguments are weak when people generate mainly negative reactions to them.

The analytical part of our research was executed to find out whether the arguments in Petty and Cacioppo’s research material differ from each other normatively to empirically. It appears that this is the case; Petty and Cacioppo’s strong arguments are normatively stronger than their weak arguments, based on Schellens and Verhoeven’s method. Furthermore, we found out that Petty and Cacioppo’s arguments differ normatively from each other in argument strength as well as in argument valence. In other words, Petty and Cacioppo’s strong arguments are more probable and more desirable than their weak arguments.

We have seen in the experimental part of the study that manipulation of argument strength did not lead to a difference in persuasiveness between strong and weak arguments when people were highly involved. This contradicts Petty and Cacioppo's claim that the broad argument *quality* determines persuasiveness at the central route. It seems to be the case that only the more narrow argument valence is responsible for this effect. But it may also be the case that the participants in the present study were not motivated or able enough to register the weaknesses in argument strength. After all, Areni and Lutz tell us that judging argument strength instead of argument valence requires a higher level of elaboration.

The question presents itself as to whether highly involved people see the weaknesses in argument strength. They may not see them or they may see them but are not influenced by them. In the present study, only 2 out of 302 cognitive reactions discuss the weaknesses. The first option therefore seems to be the case: people do not see the weaknesses in argument strength, not even when the subject is personally relevant to them. As opposed to this, Areni and Lutz found that weaknesses in argument valence are seen. It must be the case then that the weaknesses in argument valence are not only seen but also cause the difference between the persuasiveness of the strong and weak arguments.

*6. Suggestions for further research*

Judging by the results of Areni and Lutz's and the present study, one would tend to say that it is argument valence that is responsible for the persuasiveness of strong arguments when people are highly involved. But Petty and Cacioppo have manipulated argument valence unconsciously and their strong and weak arguments differ from each other in argument strength as well as in argument valence. It therefore deserves recommendation to conduct an experiment, comparable with the present one, in which argument valence is manipulated and argument strength is kept constant. This kind of research is necessary to find out whether it is really argument valence that is responsible for the difference in persuasiveness.

The ideas of the ELM seem simple: people are more convinced by strong than by weak arguments on the central route, whereas argument quality is of no importance on the peripheral route. The present study reveals that the persuasion process is far more complicated. Petty and Cacioppo (1986: 8) speak rightly of a continuum: 'We view the extent of elaboration received by a message as a continuum going from no thought about the issue-relevant information presented,

to complete elaboration of every argument'. They nevertheless choose to describe the model in terms of the central and peripheral route: 'it's also important to note that these different theoretical processes can be viewed in their extreme cases as specifying just two qualitatively distinct routes to persuasion' (Petty & Cacioppo 1986: 11).

It must be sorted out which weaknesses in argument quality are detected at which elaboration levels. The results of the present and Areni and Lutz's study suggest that motivated and able people are capable of detecting weaknesses in argument valence, whereas these people do not see weaknesses in argument strength. According to Areni and Lutz, this is because judging the argument strength is a more demanding task than judging the argument valence. But how motivated and able does someone need to be to detect flaws in argument strength? Not to mention the differences within the argument strength level: some weaknesses are more transparent than others. The present study showed that the weaknesses in argument strength were still not seen, in spite of their high transparency. Very subtle and obscure weaknesses in argument strength may possibly just be detected by very motivated argumentation experts.

**NOTES**

**[i]** The present study was performed within the framework of Van Dijk's MA thesis.

**[ii]** You can contact one of the authors for more information on the analysis.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2002 – Mobile Argument: An Investigation Of Bumper Stickers In The United States


What does an argument look like and how does one define argument? At first glance, these two questions appear manageable. Arguments after all, are what occur around the family dinner table or between politicians on the floor of Congress. In today's rapidly changing environment, however, the look of an argument and how one defines this particular rhetorical device is not so clean-cut. In the United States, for example, the average citizen is bombarded every day with a healthy diet of mediated messages ranging from television advertisements to the Internet. Conversations (and instances of argument) have even gone virtual with a number of Americans maintaining their relationships in a virtual environment.

Given the complexity of how we find information and ultimately engage in argument, this paper explores one dimension of argument: the automobile bumper sticker. This paper suggests that Americans use bumper stickers to put forth arguments that otherwise would go unheard or noticed by others. Bumper stickers represent a medium available to any automobile owner who wishes to have his/her voice heard. To demonstrate this phenomenon, we illustrate the point with the "most pro-life car in the U.S.A", according to its owner, Pirate Pete. Furthermore, we draw distinctions between verbal arguments and visual arguments and contend that this particular vehicle is both argumentative and a moving piece of art. We begin with a review of the literature surrounding both verbal and visual argument, as well as previous scholarship on bumper stickers as a communicative form. *1. Literature Review*

The study of argument has maintained a focus primarily on language that has caused a number of other important arenas of argumentative possibility to be ignored. This failure of communication studies to acknowledge areas outside of language is reflected in the difficulty of applying communication theory to areas such as art (Morgan and Welton, xi). The distinction between language and other types of symbols has resulted in a structure that generates knowledge through discourse. Foss and Griffin (1995) note:

Knowledge is generated by the *discursive* practices of a *discursive* formation so that those individuals who are not 'heard' or allowed to participate in the dominant discourse do not have their knowledge incorporated into common cultural knowledge (p. 9).

While our ability to use language is a unique characteristic, making language an absolute is problematic. Miles (1985) writes "not only does this view of reality as

verbally constituted unjustly exclude all people some of the time, and some of the people all of the time, but it also forces discourse to entertain and respond only to itself" (p. xi).

Despite these insights, argument theory has virtually ignored the possibilities of visual communication as a form of argument. Argument as two parted such as Fleming's (1996) argument structure and O'Keefe's (1977) Argument1 and Argument2 are typically held as discursive definitions and do not reach beyond to include visual forms of communication. Field theory offers some opportunity to make room for the study of visual communication, if one believes that argument should be studied in terms of its context.

Field theory opened the way for new metaphors to describe argument that appeal to those who study visual communication. McKerrow's "argument communities" and Goodnight's "spheres" of argument both incorporate a measure of context in the study of argument and move away from more traditional approaches that favor discursive communication (Zarefsky, 1991, p. 39). O'Keefe (1977) encourages students of argument to "undertake the task of seeing and describing the arguments in each field as they are, recognizing how they work; not setting oneself up to explain why, or to demonstrate that they necessarily must work" (p. 127). In the spirit of O'Keefe and Zarefsky, then, a field approach to argument is one not overly concerned with proving how an argument operates, but instead it is an approach that seeks to better understand the characteristics of the field.

In his critique of field theory, Rowland (1982) advances the idea that a field can best be understood in terms of its purposes (p. 228). He writes, "the view that fields are energized by shared *purposes* also suggests that the search for a single paradigm to explain all communicative behavior is fruitless" (p. 241). Those who study fields of argument understand argument as a phenomenon that is not held to universal rules but instead is a dynamic form of rhetoric that has great depth and breadth.

On a larger scale, other communication scholars apply a more hermeneutical approach to the study of argument by considering all forms of communication as argumentative. Willard (1982), for example, suggests, "any attempt to distinguish it (argument) from other forms of persuasive communication is driven by a bureaucratic rationale" (p. 109). Likewise Zarefsky (1980) notes, "our object of study would not be some part of the natural world but all communicative

behavior. The concept of argument would be hermeneutic; that is, it would be a way to interpret communication" (p. 234). Perhaps a hermeneutical approach to the study of argument is advantageous. Such an approach moves away from structured and ultimately limiting definitions of argument that set up a system for determining good arguments over bad ones. A hermeneutical approach is not occupied with judging arguments but in understanding the argumentative nature of communication. In the end, all people are able to make arguments, not just those who are well educated in the art of argumentation.

One final perspective worthy of consideration is Foss and Griffin's (1995) concept of an "invitational rhetoric" which recognizes "equality, imminent value, and self-determination" for all people (p. 4). Such an approach conceptualizes argument from a more feminist perspective in that it de-emphasizes the competitive nature of argument and instead creates a rhetorical ground where anyone's voice has merit.

While this overview of argument theory is brief, it provides an idea of the different approaches available for the study of argument. What is missing from the puzzle, however, is commentary on the issue of visual argument. What follows then, is a discussion of this important, and often overlooked, communication variable.

*2. Visual Argument*

The power of the visual in communicating has been considered primarily within the context of rhetoric. In developing a rhetorical schema for evaluating visual imagery, Foss (1994) notes, "the study of visual imagery from a rhetorical perspective may make contributions beyond providing a richer and more comprehensive understanding of rhetorical processes" (p. 213). Foss' insight certainly provides room for the study of visual communication from an argument perspective. One area of interest that has received some attention is that of visual art as a rhetorical form. Throughout time, art has functioned as a form of individual expression and an important communicative vehicle. According to Kenneth Burke (1964) "for when an art object engages our attention, by the sheer nature of the case, we are involved in at least as much of a communicative relationship as prevails between a pitchman and a prospective customer" (p. 106). Most people, if asked, could describe a work of art that has stirred their emotions. Foss (1994) maintains that the relationship between an audience and a work of art is ultimately a rhetorical one. This, however, does not help to reach

the point of formulating a grounded understanding in how visual images may function as arguments.

Perhaps the first step in arriving at such an understanding is to establish that visual meaning, like discursive communication, is not arbitrary (Birdsell & Groarke, 1996, p. 5). According to Blair (1996), visual argument is akin to O'Keefe's argument1 in that visual arguments "are more plausibly akin to reasons for claims" (p. 24). Blair (1996) points out that argument1 is not necessarily linguistic or verbal arguments. He writes, "O'Keefe's account … is that reasons be *overtly expressed*, and that reason and claims be linguistically *explicable*. That means we have to be able to state or restate them in language, not that they have to be expressed in language in the first place" (p. 25). Visual images are often translated by an audience into language, making it plausible that the visual can function as an argument. Blair (1996) warns that approaching visual argument from this perspective does not discount the visual because it can be explained through language, "the visual stands on its own feet" (p. 25).

In the end, the debate over whether visual forms of communication can function as argument remains unsettled. This is not problematic as it allows for the continued inquiry into an energizing topic that deserves further attention. What follows is a consideration of one unique form of visual communication: the automobile bumper sticker and previous studies into this modern form of communication.

*3. Bumper Stickers*

Over a decade ago, Fiske (1989) described the automobile as "not just transport, but a speech act" (p. 34). Since then, the vocabulary to describe bumper stickers as a communicative form are varied and each provide an interesting perspective in understanding their meaning, function, and importance. Endersby and Towle (1996) refer to bumper stickers as the "most significant avenue of personal political expression" during presidential elections (p. 310). Bloch (2000) describes bumper stickers as a form of political discourse, a type of mobile rhetoric, and a protest medium (in press). Salamon (2001) refers to the use of bumper stickers in Isreal as a type of folk politics. Newhagen and Ancell (1995) describe bumper stickers as an important form of self-identity in an ever-growing world where individuals feel alienated and detached from the public sphere. In like fashion, Case (1992) considers the aspect of self-identity in the use of bumper stickers as well and suggests that investigating bumper stickers yield a better

understanding of what is important to “common folks” (p. 118).

To date, these scholarly endeavors to explore the medium of bumper stickers as a form of communication lack any insight into understanding the function of bumper stickers as a form of argument. In her comprehensive analysis of Israeli bumper stickers, Bloch (2000) comes closest to describing bumper stickers as a form of argument. She refers to the use of bumper stickers as a “protest medium” and concludes that bumper stickers perform two functions: “voicing a message and championing its cause” (p. 448).
These elements lend themselves nicely to the position that bumper stickers can indeed function as an argument.

In the case of Israeli bumper stickers, Bloch (2000) notes “some messages trigger other bumper stickers, resulting in a very stylized form of argument” (p. 438). Other studies on the communicative value of bumper stickers are less insightful for our purposes. Newhagen and Ancell’s (1995) study of bumper stickers analyzed the emotional tone of bumper stickers in a suburban neighborhood as it relates to issues of economic status and race. Endersby and Towle (1996) looked at political bumper stickers during a presidential campaign to understand the organizational aspects of these messages. Case (1992) considered how bumper stickers function as an expression of one’s self-identity.

Clearly, the available literature on bumper stickers is sparse. Previous research offers little in the way of better understanding how the use of bumper stickers represents a unique form of argument. What might we gain from taking such a step? Bumper stickers as a form of argument opens up a new field of investigation and illustrate the ways people have created new forms of communication to put forth arguments. As Case (1992) notes over a decade ago “the modern urban society is characterized by interactions among anonymous strangers and communications received through mass media sources” (p. 107). Given the dependence of Americans (and other highly industrialized societies) on both the media for information and automobile as their primary means of transportation, the bumper sticker represents a creative means for anyone who wants to make an argument.

*4. The Most Pro Life Car in the USA*
Driving the streets of West Virginia, it would be difficult to miss the 79’ Dodge Diplomat covered in Pro-Life stickers. There are 104 stickers in all and according

to its owner, Jack Voltz (whose alter-ego is known as Pirate Pete), he wants to "take a stand and make an undeniable statement abut the right to life of all unborn children" (www.mountain.net).

Unlike most automobiles that have one or perhaps two bumper stickers (many have none at all), Pirate Pete's car is an unusual sight. He has taken the medium of bumper stickers and turned his car into a mobile work of art whose purpose is to make an argument.

The bumper stickers adorning Pirate Pete's car require little interpretation on the part of the onlooker. Generally, with works of art, the case of intentionality has been an issue. How does an audience interpret the intentions of the artist/author and more importantly how does the audience read the argument that resides in the work? In the case of Pirate Pete's automobile, intent and argument are clear: Abortion is wrong. His bumper stickers include "Abortion causes breast cancer", "Abortion is mean", "Abortion is not health care", and" Abortion: America's #1 Killer" and taken together, all 104 stickers turn this automobile into a piece of artwork. The artwork is both controversial and confrontational at the same time. It would be difficult to view the car without having an emotional reaction to these bumper stickers.

Pirate Pete, by all accounts, is the average citizen living in the United States, with one exception: he is passionate about the issue of abortion. To what end, however, can his passion be translated into a form of individual participation in the public sphere? In today's society, the opportunity for such participation is minimal. Letters to the editor have little impact. Calls to a talk-radio show, while entertaining, are fleeting and are generally aimed at an audience of like-minded persons. Pirate Pete has found a vehicle (literally) for making an argument about the issue of abortion. Automobiles, while common for most Americans, are still considered a valued possession. Most car owners are unlikely to cover their automobiles in bumper stickers. Only someone who is passionate about an issue and sincerely desires to make a personal argument would use his or her automobile for more than mere transportation. To that end, Pirate Pete has found a rhetorical space that reaches perhaps thousands while moving along the streets of West Virginia.

*5. Discussion*

Those living in the United States live in a mediated world. From MTV to

billboards for The Gap men, women, and children all come into contact with visual images throughout the day. When Habermas conceptualized his idea of the public sphere, he did not account for the changes that would take place over the next thirty years. Today, according to Thompson (1995) our conception of the public sphere "does not involve individuals coming together in a shared locale to discuss issues of common concern. Rather, it is a publicness of openness and visibility, of making available and making visible, and this visibility no longer involves the sharing of a common locale" (p. 236). And yet, for many Americans, there is a shared locale: the highways and interstates that link cities and states to one another. And on these roads are motorists, such as Pirate Pete, who have chosen this space to make an argument.

Bumper stickers do not represent the idealized form of argument, as conceived by traditional approaches to the study. But in today's world that is literally fragmented along so many lines the perfect representation of argument is often only an imagined one. Bloch notes (2000) "a bumper sticker offers a one-sided, capsulized treatment of an issue. Its message is a synecdochic representation of the claims or conclusions of an argument frequently presented in hyperbolic style to emphasize the point" (p. 437).

Quite often, one bumper sticker may lead to another bumper sticker that is a response in kind. A debate of sorts can emerge between motorists over issues such as abortion or other controversial social issues. One excellent example is the popularity of the Christian fish seen on many automobiles. Several years ago, in response to the Christian fish, Darwinists adorned their cars with the same fish, only walking on legs. Inside the body of the fish is written "Darwin". Clearly, this was a visual sort of response to the earlier Christian fish.

*6. Conclusion*

Must arguments be dialectical? If we are to move forward in the study of argumentation, and allow our study to remain fresh and energized, it is imperative to include the aspects of visual argument in our studies. In the case of bumper stickers, further study is warranted. Given the popularity of bumper stickers among some motorists, it would be of interest to investigate the characteristics of those who adorn their automobiles with bumper stickers. Are these people more politically active in other aspects of their lives? Do they personally see their choice in bumper sticker as argumentative? Further investigation could compare how individuals in other countries (such as Bloch's analysis of Israeli bumper stickers) use bumper stickers on their automobiles.

Beyond the bumper sticker, there are a number of potential areas in the study of visual communication. The study of art as visual argument deserves continued exploration as well as other forms of visual communication such as advertisements. These forms of communication offer critical insights into our cultural values and beliefs and how we argue. The average citizen has few opportunities to reach a mass number of people to express his/her opinions. There are mediums, such as art, artifacts, etc. that do allow one to put forth an argument.

Discursive communication should not remain the narrow focus of our study. Perhaps this study of Pirate Pete and his automobile bumper stickers will spark new ideas for future research. Visual communication is powerful and deserves equal attention.

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