ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Asymmetry In The Dialogue Between Expert And Non-Expert

1. Introduction

This paper is about argumentation involving expertise with not all discussants being experts. This type of debate is very relevant for a field like Science & Society (which can be defined as the analysis and evaluation of the social consequences of the development and use of scientific and technological knowledge).

In the field of Science & Society, one is often confronted with argumentation patterns that would not be considered adequate in more orthodox argumentation studies. In an earlier study on discussions about the consequences and acceptability of biotechnology, my colleague Rob Pranger and I noted a number of fundamental ambiguities (Birrer, Pranger,1995). We showed that many of these ambiguities could be related to a two by two matrix of four different worldviews. The matrix was taken from cultural bias theory**(i)**, a theory that suggests that standpoints on e.g. risk tend to cluster in four types, each with a different way of interpreting the same data; although in many cases one would say that a balance of the various aspects would be most appropriate, worldviews tend toward polarisation rather than mutual understanding and compromise. We also showed how these different, worldviewbased interpretations, and the resulting ambiguities in communication between adherents of different worldviews, could be related to different views on where the burden of proof should be put.

In the present paper, discussion between participants with unequal relevant expertise will be subjected to a more theoretical analysis. We will trace some fundamental difficulties that such discussions are facing. The conditions under which dialogue and argumentation with unequal expertise are conducted are in some respects crucially different from cases where there is no such inequality. Consequentially, the rules of the game must be different too. We will examine the way in which expert statements are treated in the literature, in particular the work of Douglas Walton**(ii)**, and suggest some extensions of the category systems that can be found there.

2. The model of information seeking dialogue

The exchange between expert and non-expert is characterised by Walton at various places as an 'information seeking dialogue' (e.g. Walton,1995; Walton,Krabbe,1995). The non-expert asks the expert for certain information, and the expert provides this information. In this type of dialogue, there is a basic asymmetry between the participants (Walton,1995: 113).

Let us test this characterisation as 'information seeking dialogue' on a simple case of expert advise: that of a single client and a single expert adviser. The client has a problem, and in order to be able to deal with this problem in the most adequate way, the client needs advice from an expert. Let us say that the client wonders whether a computer might be helpful in his(her) situation, and wants to know what would be the most useful hardware and software in this situation. The client turns to a computer expert for advice. The expert will now inquire about the nature of the practices of the client that might be relevant. Since the expert does not have direct access to this information, the expert is dependent upon the information that is selected by the client. But the client is not by itself able to make a fully adequate selection, for what is and is not relevant depends upon the technical options, and the client has no knowledge about that.

One could say that the client and the expert are experiencing the difficulties of distributed processing: each actor has relevant information for the other, but they cannot directly access each others relevance criteria. To use a computer metaphor, if the expert's knowledge could in some simple way be fused with the mind of the client into one big database, it would present no fundamental problem to find the best solution given the available knowledge; but since the relevant knowledge is distributed over two databases, connected only by a low capacity communication channel, effective combination of the two sources is much more difficult. This is of course not to say that expert advice is impossible; we know from experience that it is possible, and when expert and client take enough time to communicate it may work well. The point is that there can be no analytic guarantee that it will work, no guarantee that the expert indeed will find the best solution for the client. It is always possible that the expert, despite serious efforts, still does not have a correct idea of the problem of the client, and this need not be due to faults by either the expert or the client.

To what extent can we say that this dialogue between expert and client is an 'information seeking dialogue'? It is not quite information as such that the client gets from the expert. The client gets information that is selected, interpreted and

translated by the expert – on behalf of the client, that is, acting, as much as the expert is able to, upon the values, preferences etc. of the client. The 'information' is, so to say, impregnated with the client's normative and subjective attitudes, it not information in a general sense, it is personalised information. But what makes the exchange between expert and non-expert categorically different is that there is a selection, interpretation and translation process that is outside of the control of the client, and that the client is unable to check. This is different from a situation where someone inquires about the time, or about the location of the nearest post office. In such cases, the information requested can be specified by the information seeker. It can be that the information given is incorrect, but the information seeker will probably find out sooner or later, or at least is able to find out independently. It can happen that the first answer does not satisfy the information seeker, and that the seeker will have to respecify the question, but still the specification is under control of the information seeker only. For expert advice, that need not be the case; often, the client cannot specify precisely which information is needed from the expert, but only indicate a global objective the expert is supposed to support. Similar remarks can be made about the model of expert systems (Walton,1990). For a viable expert system, the competency of the advice seeker to specify the questions (with the help of the menu of the expert system) must simply be assumed; actually, expert systems are often designed to be used by semi-experts. So there seems reason to make a distinction between two types of dialogue: one of straightforward information seeking dialogue, where the information seeker is able to more or less fully specify the information needed; and one of expert advice seeking dialogue, where the advice seeking person is not able to do so.

3. Expert advice in societal discussions: The ideal case

So far the expert adviser had to reckon with the wishes and interests of one client only. We now move to a more complex setting, where expert advice is needed in a matter that involves more than one party. Let us take as an example a discussion about the risks posed by the use of a certain new technology, e.g. the manufacture of certain genetically modified organisms.

Risks posed by new technologies often are hard to assess, since much about them is not known yet. Generally, fault trees are used for such analysis, that is, every possible chain of events that leads to harm is assigned a probability, mostly by multiplying the (estimated) probabilities of the individual links in that chain. This results in an estimate of the probability that a certain harm will occur.

But this probability estimate is itself very uncertain. So with only this single estimate, the expert's judgement is represented in a poor, and in fact misleading way. For suppose the expert picks out a certain probability as the most likely probability of a certain harm, but, given all uncertainties, he thinks it not much less likely that the harm probability is a hundred times higher, then the latter judgement is obviously far more decisive than the first. So what the expert ideally would have to do is to specify a double probability distribution: for each estimate of the harm probability, there should also be a specification of the probability that that particular estimate is the right one. Of course this is not a feasible solution. First, one might ask how good experts can perform this difficult task. But even if the outcomes would make sense, such a double probability distribution would not be very helpful in a public discussion, for the information is too complex to be handled by most non-experts.

There is another possibility. One might ask the advice seeking persons to specify a certain (probability) level that marks the borderline of what they still find acceptable and what not. Then the expert can formulate an opinion on whether this one particular level will be exceeded or not (this single yes-or-no statement combines the probability estimates with how likely the expert thinks each of these estimates to be the right one). But in a societal discussion about risks, participants usually have different views on what is acceptable or not. So the expert has to deal with a heterogeneous group of clients, and each of them has a different question. Moreover, levels of acceptability will be the subject of a negotiation process. Not only will the various parties involved not want to show their ultimate bid on beforehand, they will also want to know what the result is when the acceptability level is shifted.

So we must conclude that even an ideal expert, who is trying to be as cooperative and helpful as possible, is facing a difficult task: the expert can only communicate judgements on the basis of normative judgements made on behalf of a particular client (the choice of the acceptability level), and even for that single client this information may not be enough. Again we see that much more is at stake than a simple exchange of information; whereas in the earlier example of the computer expert the main emphasis was on getting the client's problem in an undistorted form to the expert, here the emphasis is more on how to transmit all relevant information from the expert to the non-expert, in a form that the non-expert can handle.

4. Negotiation and the reliability of experts: Source reasoning

What we just analyzed was still an ideal case: we assumed that the expert was unquestionably dedicated to the questions and interests of any particular client. For advice in actual societal discussions this is a problematic assumption: even if the expert is a professional of high quality, and of the most sincere dedication, the question is on what grounds the advised persons could be convinced of that.

Non-experts are unable to check whether the judgement given by the expert is really based on their particular norms. Judgements on risk are themselves already highly uncertain. When conflicting interests are involved, the uncertainties and lack of transparency make the question whether or not to rely on a certain expert judgement a very crucial one.

This reliability issue can only be solved by reasoning about the source. This kind of reasoning is familiar in the area of law, with respect to the credibility of witnesses (Walton,1996). A witness may be considered of higher or lower reliability on the basis of indications concerning circumstances (was the witness really able to see that well in the dark) or personal character (a well-known criminal might be considered less trustworthy than a citizen of irreproachable reputation).

In what way would it be appropriate to question the source of certain expert judgements in societal discussions? Only rarely an expert will be of such a manifestly bad character that this reason alone is enough to cast reasonable doubt on the expert's statements. Usually, the indications are more circumstantial. For instance, one would not like the expert to have considerable direct personal interests in the matter at stake. It is also relevant whether the expert has direct ties to a particular party in the discussion. Formulated in a more general way, one would consider the checks and balances that control the expert's work. To what degree can one expect hidden biases to be exposed and countered? Of course flaws in the checks and balances can never be proof that the source's statements must be wrong. Nor should arguments concerning the context of checks and balances in any way be mixed up with an attack on the integrity of a person. Serious source questioning refers to the socio-organisational context, it evaluates the risks of accepting judgements from the source – on the basis of that context.

Walton distinguishes three types of 'source indicators reasoning' (Walton,1995: 152ff):

1. ethotic argument (the speaker is suggested to have a bad, unreliable character)
2. argument from bias (it is suggested that the speaker is less likely to take all sides into account, or that the speaker fails critical doubt)
3. argument from popular opinion (acceptance by a large majority is advanced as an argument for something to be accepted by anyone).

The first and third type of argument are not so interesting in the case of expert advisers in societal discussion: it was already argued that not many experts have such a manifestly bad character that the first argument has a serious chance, and the third type does not apply at all. The second type seems the more appropriate for our case.
Walton's elaboration of this category suggests that is mainly conceived as personal disposition. The problem with this psychological interpretation is that it makes an accusation of bias very hard to prove. It seems a rather unfair distribution of the burden of proof to demand that it is not only shown that there are insufficient checks
and balances to counter certain biases, but also that the particular person who is in that situation will actually fail to meet his/her responsibility**(iii)**.

I therefore propose to extend the typology above with a fourth category:
4. argument from socio-organisational environment, which includes arguments that refer not to the individual spokes person, but to the environment in which that person operates, and in particular the checks and balances to which the spokesperson is subject to, and the degree to which those checks and balances can be expected to prevent and counter the utterance of biased statements.
This category seems relevant not just when experts are concerned, but for source indicators reasoning in general, e.g. also when one has to depend upon a source for simple factual information that cannot be independently checked.

Similar remarks can be made with respect to Walton's 'characteristics of a credible arguers' (Walton,1996: 244ff), and the 'characteristics of dialectical bias' (Walton,1996: 249ff); here too the characteristics relate to the arguer only, not to the environment in which the arguer operates. Even when an example is discussed of a member of the board of directors of coal company saying that reports on the extent of the acid rain problem are greatly exaggerated, Walton sees the problem in the board member not immediately making clear that she had that position, not in the position itself (Walton,1989). With respect to 'bias in science', Walton refers to straight-forward scientific fraud (Walton,1996: 226);

but in areas where there are not yet clearly established scientific truths, there is much interpretive flexibility (Birrer, Pranger,1995).

What about ‘ad hominem’ which seems so close to source indicators reasoning? In recent work, Walton distinguishes three main types of ad hominem:
1. direct/abusive (bad character)
2. circumstantial (contradiction between claims and personal circumstances)
3. bias (failure of critical balance) (Walton,1995).

The first and third are very similar to type one and two discussed above for source indicators reasoning. The second looks relevant for source indicators reasoning also, but is not included there. This category of ‘circumstantial’ is, however, limited to manifest contradictions, so adding this category to the source indicators reasoning categories is not enough, for it still asks for positive indications of misbehaviour.
It seems questionable whether a broader category of sociological argument as suggested for the source indicator reasoning would make sense for the analysis of ad hominem arguments as well. As was emphasised earlier, that category was not meant to include attack on a person. There might be cases where a person can be blamed for making statements from a position that lacks sufficient checks and balances, but as far as I can see that can be a reasonable argument only if the situation of that person was hidden (like in Walton’s example of the coal board director), and in that case it can be accommodated in the category ad hominem circumstantial as described by Walton.

5. Conclusions
Societal debates involving expert judgements are an interesting field for the study of argumentation. We have examined argumentation involving expert judgements, and confronted it with the categorisations developed by Walton at various places. This has resulted in two suggestions:
1. Expert consultation is so different from straightforward information seeking, that they should not be put under the same heading without additional qualification. Either the category of ‘information seeking dialogue’ should be split, or a separate category should be introduced. Confusion raised by the term ‘information seeking dialogue’ (which might be taken to suggest that straightforward information seeking is the paradigmatic model here), can be avoided by using a term like ‘consultative dialogue’ for the general category.
2. The source reasoning categories also need extension with a category which

referring to socio-organisational (sociological) factors.
The first suggestion is specifically related to the analysis of the role of expert statements; the second, however, seems relevant to source reasoning in general.

NOTES

i. A good introduction to cultural bias theory is (Schwarz,Thompson,1990); a more extensive theoretical elaboration can be found in (Thompson,Ellis,Wildavsky,1995).

ii. Very recently, Walton published a book called Appeal to expert opinion. Arguments from authority (Pennsylvania University Press); it was not possible to include this in the analysis presented here.

iii. In Informal logic, Walton occasionally mentions one example in which context plays a role: the relevance of the financial interests of an expert's financial who appears in a court case; but in the following critical questions for the appeal to expert opinion, sociological context is again not mentioned.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Walton's Argumentation Schemes For Presumptive Reasoning: A Critique And Development

1. Introduction: Walton's account

In this paper I first sketch Douglas Walton's account of argument schemes for presumptive reasoning (Walton, 1996). Then I outline some of what I think is missing from the account as presented by Walton. Last, I propose ways of filling in some (not all) of those missing pieces. The sketch of Walton's account will occupy the rest of this introductory section. I should make it clear at the outset that what inspires this paper is admiration for Walton's project. Although I think his account is incomplete, and I disagree with some details, I believe that the study of argumentation schemes is important, and that Walton's approach is fruitful and suggestive. In the book under examination (Walton, 1996), Walton restricts his discussion to argument schemes found in presumptive reasoning. He takes presumptive reasoning to be typified by the pragmatic, "rough and ready generalizations," of practical reasoning (reasoning about what to do); it is the "plausible reasoning" for which Rescher provided a calculus in his *Plausible Reasoning* (1976). A model for presumptive reasoning is default or non-monotonic reasoning discussed in computer science.

Central to Walton's account is his analysis of *presumption.* He presents presumption as related to, but distinct from, burden of proof. On his analysis, it is that move in a dialogue which lies between assertion (which incurs the burden of proof) and assumption (which carries no burden whatever). A presumption so conceived has practical value by way of advancing the argumentation, and, in

accepting something as a presumption, the interlocutor assumes the burden of rebutting it. Thus a presumption shifts the burden of proof, and this function is at the heart of Walton's analysis. Presumptions come into play in the absence of firm evidence or knowledge, which is why they are typically found in practical reasoning. Presumptive reasoning, in sum, "is neither deductive nor inductive in nature, but represents a third distinct type . . ., an inherently tentative kind of reasoning subject to defeat by the special circumstances (not defined inductively or statistically) of a particular case" (Walton 1996, 43).

For Walton, argument schemes are structures or "forms" of argument which are "normatively binding kinds of reasoning" and are "best seen as moves, or speech acts" in dialogues (Walton 1996, 28). They are normatively binding in the sense that in accepting premises organized in a "genuine" scheme "appropriate" to the type of dialogue in process, one is bound (in some way) to accept the conclusion drawn from them, provided the "critical questions" that are "appropriate to" that scheme are answered satisfactorily (Walton 1996, 10).

Walton postulates that the validity of an argument scheme is contextual: a function of the context of dialogue in which it is used in a given case. Remember that the aim of argument in presumptive or plausible reasoning is to shift the burden of proof in a dialogue (not to prove a proposition with a given degree of probability or plausibility). Whether a scheme succeeds in shifting the burden of proof depends on whether the scheme is valid (for the occasion of its use) and on whether the members of a set of "critical questions" associated with it either have been answered affirmatively earlier in the dialogue or can be later if they are raised.

To this distinction between an argument scheme and its associated critical questions there corresponds, in Walton's theoretical structure, a distinction between two (of three) levels of argument criticism. At the "local" level the scheme itself may be invalid, or the argument may fail to conform to its scheme's requirements, or its premises may lack needed support. The critical questions associated with an argument scheme normally lead to further arguments, when and as their answers are provided and supported, so that the occurrence of a scheme in a dialogue effectively introduces a sequence of exchanges, which Walton labels an "argumentation theme." These argumentation themes form the backdrop for the second level of argument criticism: questioning the relevance of an argument at a given point in a dialogical exchange. The idea seems to be that what makes an argument relevant is the appropriateness of its placement in the

sequences of questions and answers that constitute the argumentation theme of the dialogue at that point. (The third level of criticism is to question the appropriateness of the dialogue type being used.)
So a presumptive argument scheme is the pattern of a unit of local reasoning that is a move in an argumentative dialogue aiming to provide sufficient grounds to shift the burden of proof with respect to the assertion that is its conclusion.

In *Argument Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996), Walton describes and discusses about thirty such schemes. For each scheme he supplies a description, a formulation, a set of critical questions associated with it, at least one and often several "cases," which are actual or invented examples of the scheme in use, and a discussion of the scheme in which he typically draws attention to its salient properties, relates it to other schemes, discusses the fallacies associated with it, comments on its presumptive force, and mentions typical contexts of its use.

An example of one of the argument schemes Walton discusses will illustrate his treatment. Here is the scheme of the "argument from sign" (Walton 1996, 49):
1.
A is true in this situation. B is generally indicated as true when its sign, A, is true, in this kind of situation. Therefore, B is true in this situation.

Walton gives, among others, the following examples of arguments that instantiate the argument from sign scheme (Walton 1996, 47, 49):
2.
3.1 There are some bear tracks in the snow.
Therefore, a bear passed this way.
3.4 Bob is covered with red spots.
Therefore, Bob has the measles.
3.5 The barometer just dropped.
Therefore, we will have a storm.
3.6 Bob is biting his nails.
Therefore, Bob is worried about something.

Following Hastings (1962) Walton identifies the following two "critical questions" as associated with the scheme of the argument from sign (Walton 1996, 48):
3.
1. What is the strength of the correlation of the sign with the event signified?
2. Are there other events that would more reliably account for the sign?

Although Walton's account is rich in detail, I believe it leaves many theoretical questions and issues unanswered and unadressed. I will list and discuss these *lacunae* in the next section.

2. What is missing from Walton's account

A natural first question to ask is, "Where do argument schemes come from?" Are they in the first instance descriptions of patterns to be found in (or, that can be abstracted from) actual argumentation as social events and products? If so, then their normative force requires an explanation, for from the fact that people's arguments happen to exhibit a particular pattern, it does not follow that the conclusions of such arguments are warranted by their premises. Or instead, are argument schemes in the first instance a priori prescriptions for cogent argumentation–patterns whose instantiations will be cogent arguments if they are used appropriately? In that case, on what principles are they formed? Where do they get their probative force? As far as I can discern, Walton does not address these questions in this book. In sum, we get the following set of questions.

Q-set 1: Are the schemes meant to be descriptive or prescriptive?
In either case, what gives them normative force?

Other questions concern the classification of the schemes. Walton's argument from sign scheme looks like a scheme for causal reasoning, yet he also includes as a distinct scheme what he calls "the argument from cause to effect." Does "the argument from sign" amount to "the argument from effect to cause"? And if so, are these two schemes species of a generic causal argument scheme? Or are they best classified as different types of reasoning? In any case, how is the matter to be decided?

Notice also that Walton has grouped somewhat different types of reasoning together under the label of argument from sign. The paw of a bear is necessary to make a bear track, but worry is not necessary in order to cause nail biting, nor is a storm necessary for the barometer to drop. Also, the connection between worry and nail biting is psychological, whereas that between a brewing storm and a falling barometer is physical. I do not mean to disagreeing with Walton that these four examples should be grouped as exemplifying one scheme, but it is fair to ask for an explanation of why these somewhat different contents of reasoning end up being classified as exhibiting a single argument scheme. Walton supplies no rationale for his selection of schemes, and the order in which he presents them seems to a large extent arbitrary.

Q-set 2: On what principles are schemes to be classified? How are schemes to be distinguished by type?

Perhaps related to the questions about classifications are questions about the level of generality a scheme should exhibit. It is easy to imagine schemes of different generality for one and the same example of argumentation. For example, if I am fussing about my knee aching, and June says, among other things, "If your arthritis is bothering you, take some ibuprofen–it's what your doctor prescribed," which of the following is the correct, or the better, scheme for her argument?

4.
D prescribed treatment T for patient P's medical condition C.
D is an authority with respect to treatments for C-type conditions and about P's condition. So, it is presumptively reasonable for P to take T when in C.

5.
D prescribed action A to solve problem C. D is an authority with respect to dealing with C. So, it is presumptively reasonable to do A to solve C.

Clearly scheme (4) is less general or abstract than scheme (5), yet both seem exemplified in June's argument. What is the correct, or best, level of abstraction, and why? This issue is discussed in Kienpointer's *Alltagslogik* (1992), but Walton supplies no answers in his book.

Q-set 3: How general should an argument scheme be? How is the question of the correct level of generality to be properly decided?

Another topic that is not discussed by Walton is the connection between an argument scheme and its "associated" critical questions. He simply lists a set of critical questions for each scheme, but what motivates these questions? How is it to be decided which are the correct questions, and when a list of critical questions is complete?

Q-set 4: Which are the right kind, and number, of critical questions to ask with respect to any given scheme? How is that to be decided?

I have glossed over the fact that Walton talks sometimes of schemes exhibited in arguments and sometimes of schemes exhibited in reasoning. One wants to know how these are related. I have also followed Walton's convention of focusing on

schemes in presumptive reasoning/argumentation.

Q-set 5: Are there both argument schemes and reasoning schemes, or only one, and if the latter, which one? Or is there no distinction between arguments and reasoning?

As I have noted, in the book under consideration Walton devotes his attention to argument schemes for presumptive reasoning. Are there other types of schemes as well? Walton seems clearly to concede that possibility:

> We analyze only what we call presumptive argumentation schemes, ... Therefore, we do not include, for example, inductive arguments, part-whole arguments, or genus-species arguments, presuming that (by and large, at any rate) these types of argumentation are not presumptive in nature. (1996, 3)
> Certainly the problem remains of understanding how many of the most common of these [presumptive] argumentation schemes in everyday conversation are inherently different from the usual models of deductive and inductive reasoning . . . . (1996, 3)

If there are other kinds of argumentation schemes besides those for presumptive reasoning, then it seems that a general theory of argument schemes is needed to account for them all.

Q-set 6: How are presumptive argumentation schemes related to those for inductive or deductive reasoning? What is the correct general theory of argument schemes?

Finally, I would like to question some of the details of Walton's analyses of presumption and of argument schemes. In particular I question whether presumptive reasoning is "inherently tentative," "inconclusive" and "provisional" (Walton 1996, 42, ix, xi). I also would like at least to mention the possibility of questioning whether a context of dialogue is essential to the function of argument schemes, or presumptive or others.

Q-set 7: Are all the details of Walton's account of argumentation schemes for presumptive reasoning correct?

To sum up, among the tasks which a more complete theory of argument schemes than is provided by Walton would have to take on are the following, each task or set of tasks corresponding to one of the above seven question sets.

T1. Explain the descriptive and prescriptive functions of argument schemes and explain the ground of the normative force of prescriptive schemes. (Q-set 1)
T2. Identify the types of argument schemes and the principle(s) of classification for argument schemes. (Q-set 2) Among other things, determine whether there are inductive and deductive as well as presumptive argument schemes. If possible, prove a general theory of argument schemes. (Q-set 6)
T3. Address the question of the correct or appropriate level of generality of argument schemes. (Q-set 3)
T4. Explain what motivates the critical questions attached to an argument scheme, and how the correct or appropriate number and formulation of these critical questions is to be established. (Q-set 4)
T5. Explain what it is that schemes are appropriately predicated of – arguments or reasoning, or both. (Q-set 5)
T6. Offer critiques of some of the details of the account. (Q-set 7)

In the next section I will address all of these tasks except T3, and, except for some comments in passing, T2. Both T2 and T3 have been discussed in detail by Kienpointner (1992), and it would take me beyond the focus on Walton's account to examine that of Kienpointner.

3. Further developments

Argumentation and reasoning

There is by now, thanks particularly to the work of van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 1992), among others, general agreement among argumentation scholars that argumentation is a complex social, speech activity involving more than one party, with practical goals and subject to norms related to those goals. One cannot argue without at least an imaginary audience or interlocutor. Reasoning, on the other hand, whatever its social origins and functions, is a mental activity which can be performed privately. One can reason alone. Argumentation requires that its participants reason, so reasoning is necessary to argumentation; but one can reason without engaging in argumentation, so argumentation is not necessary to reasoning.

One type of reasoning is inferring–making the judgement that one proposition is implied by another or others (I use 'implied' broadly, to include "supported."). When Walton speaks of "presumptive reasoning," he is speaking of drawing presumptive inferences, or inferring presumptively. A person can infer without arguing (for example, you think to yourself, "I need to be alert tomorrow, so I'd

better get to bed early tonight."), but inferring is necessary to arguing, in several respects. Inferences are being made constantly by interlocutors engaged in argumentation in order to ascertain the nature of their activity and to sustain it. (For example: "Do we disagree?" "Which moves are permitted and appropriate at this point?" "Which is the best move for me at this turn?" The interlocutors must draw inferences to answer such questions.) At the heart of the activity of argumentation is the offering of and response to arguments in the more narrow sense of reasons offered in support of or against claims: the illative core of argumentation. Here the interlocutors draw inferences about what propositions imply other propositions and about what propositions the other person or the audience will likely deem to be implied by given propositions, and the arguments they offer to one another are in effect invitations to draw inferences (Pinto 1995, 276; Beardsley 1976, 5). These distinctions may be illustrated by describing selections of a generalization of a process of and argumentative dialogue.

6.

Proposition p implies proposition *q*. (Implication)
Person *A* judges that *p* implies *q*. (Reasoning)
A judges on the basis of facts (*a, b* and *c*) that interlocutor *B* accepts *p* and will accept that *p* implies *q*. (Reasoning.)
A invites *B* to accept *q*, on the grounds that *p* and that *p* implies *q*. (Argument)
B accepts *p*, but also accepts *r*, and judges that *p* and *r* imply *not-q*. (Reasoning.)
B invites *A* to accept *not-q*, on the ground that *r*, and that *p* and *r* imply *not-q*. (Argument)
A does not accept *t*, nor that *t* implies *not-r*, but believes on the basis of facts (*d, e* and *f*) that *B* accepts both. (Reasoning)
A invites *B* to accept *not-r*, on the ground that *t*, and that *t* implies *not-r*. (Argument)

Clearly, reasoning (that is, inferring) is integral to the use of arguments in argumentation, although as the last two moves listed above indicate, one can, in offering an argument, invite one's interlocutor to employ reasoning that one rejects oneself. So what are the schemes to which Walton refers schemes of? Are they schemes of reasoning or of arguments?
I think the answer must be: both, but inference is more basic. Whether or not the arguer draws the inference that he or she invites the interlocutor to draw, he or she recognizes the possibility of drawing that inference. Thus the presentation of

an argument presupposes a possible inference, and hence the instantiation of some possible pattern of inference. Thus, an inference scheme is logically prior to its use in any argument. Moreover, schemes that are prescriptive function to license inferences, so that is another reason for identifying them with inferences. On the other hand, in uttering an argument that invites the interlocutor to draw an inference, the arguer employs an instance of some pattern of argument, and so might be said to be employing an instance of an argument scheme. There is often no harm in shifting without notice from talk of inferences to talk of arguments, given the central role of inference in argument; but, given the difference between argument and inference, the two should not be conflated.

Walton's classification of schemes

Classifications are made with ends in view, and since there can be many compatible purposes for classifications, there are numerous possible compatible classifications. Walton is at pains to distinguish the schemes of presumptive reasoning from those of deductive logic and inductive reasoning. His principle of classification seems to be the strength of commitment to which the reasoner is entitled, given the premises, for each type of inference. When the premises deductively entail the conclusion, one is entitled to absolute confidence in the conclusion, given the premises. In contrast, Walton thinks, when the premises presumptively support the conclusion, one is entitled to have little confidence in the conclusion, given the premises–just enough confidence to shift the onus of refutation over to anyone who would still deny the conclusion. Walton has little to say about inductive reasoning.

Walton is on the right track, I believe, but he overstates the tentative character of presumptive reasoning. To be sure, some presumptions are supported only very weakly; but others are supported so strongly that it would be no less irrational to lack confidence in their conclusions than it would be to lack confidence in conclusions strongly supported by inductive reasoning. For example, if my doctor prescribes ibuprofen for pain in my arthritic knee, and he knows the condition of my knee, having examined it arthroscopically, and he is an expert on the deterioration of, and the onset of arthritis in, knee joints with damaged cartilage, and there's no reason to distrust his judgement in this case, and his prescription conforms with the standard medical judgement for such cases, and none of the contra indicators against taking ibuprofen apply to me at the moment, then his prescription generates an extremely strong presumption in favour of my taking ibuprofen for arthritic pain in my knee. Again, if Ann has promised to return Bob's

book on Monday, and if other things are equal, then unquestionably Ann has an obligation to return Bob's book on Monday. There is nothing tentative or weak about these inferences.

So I would suggest a slightly different principle than degree of confidence for distinguishing these types of inference. I think the salient difference is whether the conclusion is defeasible in principle, given the premises. In the case of deductive entailments, given the premises, the conclusion is not defeasible, in principle. In the case of inductive and presumptive reasoning, it is. The defeasibility criterion has the virtue of drawing the line sharply, while at the same time allowing that presumptive and inductive inferences can be extremely strongly supported, leaving no room for reasonable doubt or tentative commitments. Granted, this criterion fails to distinguish inductive from presumptive reasoning. I do not have a solution for that problem, but perhaps it is not a serious objection that they cannot be sharply distinguished.

The origin of schemes

Kienpointer (1992, 241) distinguishes between descriptive and normative schemata, but he is distinguishing between, respectively, schemes for arguments with descriptive premises and conclusions, and schemes for arguments with descriptive and normative premises and normative conclusions. That is not the distinction I mean to denote by the labels "descriptive" and "prescriptive." Instead, I have in mind the distinction between, on the one hand, a scheme that conveys the pattern of reasoning that someone actually used in a particular instance of reasoning or argument "on the hoof" (to use the useful expression attributed to John Woods), which entails no endorsement of that reasoning or argument, and, on the other hand, a scheme that portrays a supposedly valid or cogent pattern of inference or argument.

But where do schemes – descriptive or prescriptive – come from? Where do Walton and others get them? And where should they come from? In the literature on schemes many schemes seems to originate from discussion of schemes – in the literature! Thus, Kienpointner (1992) cites many mediaeval and classical sources for the schemes he describes. Walton does not explain the genesis of his list. He cites examples of actual argumentation for some, and provides invented examples for others. The assumption seems to be that the reader will find his invented examples plausible because they illustrate familiar patterns of reasoning or argument. But Walton also appears to take himself to be citing schemes well-known to his readers from the logical literature. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca

(1958) find in non-philosophical writing many of the schemes they describe.

To the extent that these authors provide descriptions of schemes in use, they are giving empirical reports of patterns found in actual or possible argumentation. To the extent that they are intended to be offering prescriptions for cogent reasoning or argument, their schemes must meet an additional requirement than simply to have been used. The issue of whether there can be an *a priori* theory of all possible cogent inference or argument schemes is too large to be broached here. However, it will have to be enough to note for now that any such theory will have to accommodate our logical intuitions about particular cases, from which it follows that unless and until such a comprehensive theory is produced, there is no shame in generating normative schemes from particular arguments or types of arguments in actual use that seem to us to be probatively compelling.

The source of the probative force of prescriptive schemes in general

Describing the schemes that have been used, and determining their cogency, are obviously different tasks. Similarly, since people reason and argue both poorly and well, a catalogue of the schemes that have been used, and a list of cogent schemes available for use, will have only some, but not all, schemes in common. The philosophical interest in schemes relates to the grounds or source of their cogency. What is the source of the probative force of a "valid" inference or argument scheme? The short explanation, I take it, lies in the irrationality of accepting the premises but rejecting the conclusion of an inference or argument instantiating a valid scheme. Consider the three broad classes of arguments or reasoning that Walton mentions.

In the case of a deductively valid scheme, the scheme derives its normative force or cogency from the fact that the truth of the premises of such a scheme guarantees the truth of the conclusion. Thus, to accept the premises, and yet refuse to accept the conclusion, is irrational by virtue of being strongly inconsistent. In acknowledging that the scheme is deductively valid, one is committed to accepting the conclusion if one grants the premises, so in granting the premises and refusing to accept the conclusion, one contradicts oneself.

In the case of an inductively strong scheme, I take it that the scheme derives its normative force or cogency from the fact that to accept the premises and grant the inductive strength of the scheme, yet deny the probability of the conclusion, is irrational by virtue of a somewhat different kind of inconsistency. For reasoning using inductively strong schemes, given the evidence, the conclusion is more

probable than any alternative; to acknowledge the inductive strength of the scheme is to admit as much, yet to deny the conclusion is to hold out for some less probable alternative. There is no self-contradiction here, since it is possible that the conclusion is false, given the evidence, for even the strongest inductive scheme. But unless the skeptic has some possible rebuttal in mind, he is holding that the less probable is the more probable.

In the case of a presumptively cogent scheme, it is plausible to understand its probative force in a similar fashion. The scheme derives its cogency from the fact that to accept the premises and grant the validity of the scheme, yet deny the plausibility of the conclusion–without suggesting that any conditions of rebuttal exist–is pragmatically inconsistent. Given a strong presumption, to refuse to accept the conclusion without denying the evidence or finding a rebutting condition, implies believing that there is some rebutting condition or circumstance for which there is no evidence. The skeptic in such a case is holding that the less plausible is the more plausible. In all three cases, the probative force of the scheme derives from one or another type of inconsistency involved, given the scheme, in accepting the premises, yet refusing to accept the conclusion.

The motivation and justification of the "critical questions" of presumptive schemes

In this connection, by the way, we can understand what motivates the critical questions that Walton and others (for instance, Hastings, 1963; Schellens, 1987; van Eemeren and Kruiger, 1987) take to be associated with presumptively cogent inference or argument schemes, and how they play the normative role they do. Given that a presumptive scheme is in principle defeasible, someone who reasons according to such a scheme wants to know how likely it is that the inference will be defeated in the given case. The so-called "critical questions" are simply information-seeking questions that inquire about the conditions or circumstances that tend to rebut inferences using that scheme. The presumption is strengthened to the extent that the answers to these questions indicate the absence of defeating or overriding conditions. That is why presumptive schemes have critical questions associated with them, and it is the reason that the probative force of a presumptive scheme is partly a function the answers to the critical questions associated with the scheme.

The role of the critical questions also explains why in some cases presumptively-supported claims care so plausible that to doubt them would be completely unwarranted. If answering all the critical questions associated with a cogent

scheme reveals that none of the rebutting conditions apply in a given case, then there is simply no reason whatever to deny the conclusion.

The source of the probative force of particular schemes But whence do particular prescriptive argumentation schemes derive their authority? What, for instance, is the justification of the argument from authority, or the argument from analogy, or the argument from consequences? Why do we accept appeals to expertise, or to similar cases, or to good or bad outcomes, as cogent? The general account of the rationality of presumptive reasoning sketched above does not explain the cogency of these particular schemes, although it indicates what to look for–namely, some source of inconsistency, in that particular type of reasoning, attached to accepting the scheme and the evidence but denying the conclusion.

Consider the argument from authority, one form of which is the argument from expert opinion. Why may we rely on the authority of others? The answers lies in an analysis of authority or expertise. A necessary condition of authority is knowledge. If someone has knowledge in an area, then among other things they know a number of propositions belonging to it. But a proposition cannot be known unless it is true. So there is a connection between the expertise of an authority and the truth of at least some of the propositions for which the expert vouches. Although this account drastically oversimplifies the appeal to authority, I think it is *au fond* the connection between authority, knowledge and truth that authorizes inferences from what authorities or experts claim to be the case to the plausibility of those claims.

Consider another scheme, one of the many forms of the argument from analogy: the argument from *a priori* analogy (Govier, 1987). This is an argument for a normative claim based on the similarity of two cases and the treatment already afforded one of them. An example? “Officer, you should not give me a speeding ticket, because although I was driving faster than the speed limit, you did not give those other drivers speeding tickets, and they were going a lot faster than I was.” Why may we appeal to such analogies? I suggest that the answer lies in the norm of justice or fairness. Fairness requires treating similar cases similarly. To the extent that fairness is a good, similar cases ought to be treated similarly. The argument from *a priori* analogy appeals to the similarity of other cases, presupposing the norm of fairness. (It follows that a complete justification of the scheme for *a priori* analogy would require a justification of fairness.) Unfortunately for the speeding driver, fairness is not the only value, nor always the highest ranking value, which is why the police officer is able validly to rebut

this particular argument: “There is a relevant difference between you and those other speeders,” he will say. “You are the one I caught.”

In general, I take it that for each prescriptive scheme we must be able to provide, either a general account of why schemes of that type are valid, as in the case of deductively valid schemes, or else an account of why that particular scheme is valid, as in the case of the schemes of presumptive reasoning, many groups of which are *sui generis*. In the latter kind of case, there must be some particular connection between the premise-set of the scheme and the conclusion which makes it in some way unreasonable in that kind of case to deny the conclusion while granting the premises, other things being equal.

4. Conclusion

It has been the aim of this paper to advance the theoretical discussion of the concept of argument or inference schemes, using the unsystematic approach of trying, first, to identify some unanswered questions that Douglas Walton’s account of argument schemes in his book, *Argumentation Schemes for Presumptive Reasoning* (1996) gives rise to, and second, to make some preliminary and tentative suggestions as to how to some of those questions might be answered. In that book, Walton focuses particularly on the schemes of presumptive reasoning and argument, but even within the narrower scope of his treatment, he seems to have left a number of vexing questions unanswered. I have tried to clarify the relation between argument and reasoning, in order to explain how it is possible to shift between talk of schemes for reasoning and argumentation schemes. I proposed a revision to Walton’s way of distinguishing deductive from presumptive schemes, in order to account for the fact that reasoning and arguments using presumptive schemes can be strongly compelling. Given that Walton’s list of schemes seems to drop from out of the blue, and that he seems to take their cogency for granted, I sought to account for both the origin of schemes and their probative force, both in general and in particular cases In the process, I proposed a way of explaining the motivation and justification for the critical questions Walton associates with presumptive schemes. Needless to say, I think that a philosophically complete and satisfying theory of argument and inference schemes remains to be written, although I think Walton’s book is an important step in that direction.

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Wrong With God?

Philosophy of Religion texts are often constructed by setting out the arguments for and then the arguments against the existence of the object of theistic belief. When presented thus, the writer's final position, if there is one, is likely to be a balancing of pro and con, an inconclusive, provisional preferring of one side to the other.

Theism is not conclusively refutable – a consistent story can be told in its terms. But neither can it be established by pure reason or by any weaker source. J.L. Mackie (1982) thought theism consistent though utterly incredible, but had to make room for it as a miraculous possibility. Some writers may even conclude with something like the position Penelhum (1971) once argued for: that both positions (theism and atheism) were internally coherent, and that there is no common ground (to use a phrase of Nagel's) on which their conflicting claims can be rationally adjudicated: "the theoretical assumptions that they may share are not sufficient, it seems, to allow useful debate between them on the basis of agreed standards. Each must see the world differently, one as God's world and the other as not.… No community of standards exists which would enable the kind of agreement we have argued to be possible about imagined cases, to be arrived at for the experience that the world in fact does offer. The deadlock is deepened by the fact that the believer and the unbeliever each has at his disposal, if he wishes to use them, explanatory devices for accounting for the alleged blindness or gullibility of the other" (89-90).

In this paper I want to explore a more radical approach which is not I believe frequently defended, though it might well be embra-ced by many thinkers if they were forced to choose among a variety of epistemological positions. The view is a slight extension of one expressed a good time ago by N.R. Hanson in a paper published in a memorial volume in 1967. But it seems not to have provoked much discussion.

The position I am concerned with says that theism is simply not a contender in the epistemological stakes. There are any number of utterly groundless hypotheses that no one in their right mind would consider taking seriously in giving an account of the nature of things, and that are only entertained, if ever, in philosophical discussions of the possibility of our being brains in a vat or living in

a 5-minute old universe. Theism, the view suggests, is no better than any of these. Intellectually, the Thomist God is in the same boat with the fantasies of debased "popular" belief, leprechauns or fairies.
Let me offer one example of the contrast. After hurricane Gilbert had wrecked a good part of the village I lived in, I was asked whether I thought it had been sent by God or by the Devil. Not wishing to open up the whole issue, I merely mumbled something about not thinking of either of these as responsible for the weather. For some believers, supernatural agents are among the causes that may be invoked for particular events or for explaining how things work; for the position I am examining, they simply do not arise.

This paper is an attempt to see what is involved in espousing what I am calling the Hanson position. I want to know what we are committed to if we want to say, in any particular argumentative context, that a whole way of approaching the issue can be ruled out without moving on to the sort of pro and con examination typical of the books I mentioned earlier. It is easy and tempting not to notice that we must have an account of this type of rejection, if we want to defend the rationality of our current beliefs and ways of proceeding cognitively. Working within a relatively homogeneous culture-circle, we can say, with Nagel, that "challenges to the objectivity of science can be met only by further scientific reasoning, challenges to the objectivity of history by history, and so forth" (1997: 21), but once we remember that we would not extend the same charity to astrology or Mormonism we see that we need not only to be able to account for developments within disciplines or areas of thought but also for the existence and winnowing through time of distinct "fundamental kinds of thought" (ibid.: 26).
When Quine and Ullian (1978) offer some guidance to the plain man about how to change his beliefs, the first virtue of a new hypothesis they offer is its conservatism – let it make the least disturbance to our overall picture. This might be sensible, once one is working within acceptable parameters or forms of thought, but it is not the kind of advice that would lead one to reject wholesale a type of discourse or intellectual practice.

One might wonder whether this way of putting the issue did not overemphasize a distinction between different disciplines and different stages or sub-stages of one discipline. Why not, for instance, see astrology as an aspect of astronomy, now superseded?
One reason might be that, for some people, it is not yet superseded. But another,

and this is the reason for using theism as the target of this paper, is that some differences between intellectual activities do just seem sufficiently weighty to require separate classification. Theism offers a very different picture of the world and its constituents from cosmology and quantum field theory.

One point that can be made is that the possibility of such wholesale rejection in effect requires us to deny that discourse is a seamless web, that in some sense everything is on par with everything else. (I am not claiming that anyone has ever said that this is how things are, though it seems to be implicated in much Wittgensteinian thought and it sounds like something a postmodernist might say.) One exponent of a view that seems incompatible with the Hanson approach is the late Paul Feyerabend (1989). In this paper, he begins with two assumptions that lead us into trouble:

a. that the facts and procedures constituting (scientific) knowledge are the result of specific and idiosyncratic historical developments;

b. that what has been found out exists independently of the circumstances of its discovery. Feyerabend uses these claims to assert that the Greeks knew that Athena and the other gods existed and behaved in particular ways, and that there is no rationally acceptable route to a position that says we have shown that they were wrong. What they knew they knew; it can be detached from the circumstances of their asserting it.

We, as it happens, no longer assert those bits of knowledge, but it is "history, not argument, [that] undermined the gods" (397). Criteria for existence do not come first, according to Feyerabend, but rather it is our ontological commitments that generate the particular and historically changing criteria for existence that we might be tempted to invoke.

This position seems to require something like a Parmenidean view that what we speak of we know, whatever it may be. The Hanson view cannot deny that people do speak of God or the saints or Krishna or that they engage in prayers and rituals that are conceptualised in theistic ways. But just as, I presume, all societies tell stories that they know not to be intended to be true, so on Hanson's view we must judge that some of what orthodox members of a society would classify with the pure truths are really to be put with the fairy-stories and tales of a never-never land. The principle that Feyerabend rejects – that only entities postulated by reasonable beliefs can be separated from their history – is close to the working assumption we all make in recognising a difference between ordinary names and empty ones, between real relations and intensional ones. These

differences are at root ontological. The logical differences (of what inferences each type will support) flow from and follow the ontological difference, and are not as it were given in the language itself. We may not invoke transhistorical criteria of existence, but we do presume a non-linguistic difference between language that refers to and characterises an independent world and language that floats free of the cosmos to conjure up imagined worlds.

Feyerabend might agree and insist merely that in the language we use to characterise an independent world, what we say is what we know. And, anthropologically, he is of course right. But part of what is claimed in claiming knowledge is that things are thus and so not merely for us with our specific history but for anyone, whether or not they can bring themselves to acknowledge it. We recognize the gap between word and world.

So our next question could be: can we find, within the resources of a widely shared conceptualisation of things, a reason for adopting the Hanson classification of ways of speaking? Here Hanson himself seems to slide from the extreme position I have characterised above – theism simply isn't a contender – to a much weaker one, that we can rule theism out because we have examined everything that can be said in its favour and found it all wanting. As he says, outside logic and mathematics, the best reason for supposing that X does not exist is that there is no good reason to suppose that it does, and that requires us to have examined putative reasons. But that puts God in the same intellectual position as phlogiston whereas the more extreme view, suggested by Hanson's examples, puts God with Santa Claus. We do not argue children out of belief in Santa Claus, by pointing out its inherent absurdities; we simply let them grow out of it since we don't think it worth arguing against. It is the more extreme position that I am interested in and wish to draw to the attention of argumentation theorists – the context in which we think there is no point to arguing.

One obvious way in which we could defend the adoption of this stance, from a particular time, is that we have in fact done the comprehensive examination of putative reasons. Nowadays, phlogiston is about as absurd as Santa Claus; it is, in our culture, the paradigm example of a non-existent and bizarre theoretical notion.

But we recognise that, in a different intellectual climate, it warranted serious investigation. One might then think that Archbishop Ussher may have had some reasons for thinking the world to have begun in 4006 BC, but no one has ever had

a reason to suppose it began five minutes ago. Philosophers may find illumination in examining the latter supposition, but the absence of any positive support rules it out for serious consideration elsewhere. But once again, this would put the theistic framework back among the potentially viable contenders – since Ussher's time, we have concluded that his reasons are baseless, but they were viable for him.

Even if, pace Feyerabend, that were historically accurate, it diminishes the interest of the Hanson position, since it becomes no more than an application of the normal procedure that once something has been established we don't need to keep re-establishing it. The interest of the Hanson view is in seeing whether there are cases where we are justified in never taking the view seriously (or would have been if that had been our stance).

One requirement of such a position, if it is to connect with actual views rather than the deliberate fantasies of the philosophers, is the point that merely being believed by somebody, or even by a very large number of people, is in itself no reason at all in support of a belief. For all the popularity of principles of charity, that point seems quite right to me. Some sorts of common belief are indeed likely to be true, but others equally widespread have a content that gives us no reason to suppose them reliable.

What we find is a perfectly understandable deference to what people think, so some widespread beliefs are discussed respectfully while others of the same sort but socially more marginal may be mocked or simply ignored. I have characterised the position I am looking at as an extension of Hanson's since he too adopts this respectful approach -he was writing for a Catholic journal in fact – but his comparisons suggest the extension: the question of God's existence is compared with that of the Loch Ness monster and Shrangli-la.

To have examined the reasons offered and found them wanting is then one way, but an uninteresting one, of ruling out the continued exploration of an issue. One might, however, understand Hanson's "no reason for" claim more positively, as it were, as claiming in effect that we can see directly that there are and could be no reasons for a certain position. In the case of theism we might want to contrast two broad contexts:

a. supernatural interventions in this world, such as some of the battles in the Iliad, or resurrection, or zombies, or some understandings of prayer or of charismatic personalities;

b. the disengagement of more theological views from any nearby portion of space-

time. In the former case, there is at least something accessible to us that is being explained or accounted for. If there is more in heaven and earth than is dreamt of in some of our philosophies, then we might wonder whether there is something very unusual that plays an explanatory role.

But to treat supernatural entities like opposing chiefs of staff is to analogize from known purposes (known virtually only from human cases, with a few animals thrown in) to purposiveness or "marks of order". Thunderbolts and hurricanes can be traced to earlier states of affairs, if even a butterfly's sudden escape from a predator. Destruction wrought by B52s requires a chief of staff; wind and rain doesn't. There is no need to invoke such an analogy. There is no sign of the supposed agents, only the significance for us of the collocations of things. As agents ourselves we could imagine an agent wanting to bring such a collocation about, but in the absence of any sign of their independent existence we have, speaking now for the educated minority, given up invoking them. We might also note that the gross ego-centricity (or species-centricity) of many theistic explanations is sufficient to rule them out of court by a kind of "golden rule" – if we suppose God is on our side, our opponents have exactly the same reason to suppose the opposite.

In the case of (b), where nothing close by is to be accounted for in its particularity, we can ask not merely 'would X explain or fit with Y?' but 'is there any independent reason to suppose X and its links with things that would explain or fit with Y?' This seems close to the version of Occam's Razor that Russell so frequently espoused: can we get by without X? A different but related query would be 'is there anything to be explained here?' Much theistic discourse can seem unmotivated narrative. The form of argument I am suggesting here has a link with the mode of argument Mackie (1977: 36) extracted from moral relativity. Not, different moral systems show the subjectivity of morality, but rather: what is needed to explain the different moral systems? If moral truths are otiose, then scrap them. Another take on this approach is Dawkins' (1993) suggestion that we can see the etiology of intellectual viruses as distinguishing them from intellectually benign conceptions.

There is also another Mackean point that can be made. Mackie objected to the queerness of supposedly objective evaluative properties. Looking at the kinds of entity we use to account for the universe as we now know it, we can surely add that the type of being characteristic of theism is a remarkably unmotivated and

odd kind of entity. In this we could follow Bernard Williams' old argument that Christianity at any rate cannot escape ultimately unintelligible claims in linking humanity and godhead in its distinctive way (1955). Of course, more needs to be said to articulate the way in which a theistic god differs too much from the fields and forces of contemporary physics. But one point is that theism invokes a type of explanation of occurrences that is radically different from those of dynamics – by appeal to will or intention rather than prior conditions. We are happy to use appeals to will in the narrow context of human action, while not understanding exactly how they mesh with the physicalist story we think can also be told, but once again we have no reason to extend the range of events to be thus explained to the whole unfolding of the cosmos.

I have suggested, then, that we might be able to offer an account of what is going on when we assume that a particular claim is a non-starter. It has nothing going for it; it invokes bizarre and idle oddities. If these characterizations are true, then the suggestion is that we are indeed justified in not bothering to open the argument, not countering the case that believers put up.

Of course, as a matter of history, we have not hitherto treated religion so derisively. It may seem farfetched to argue that we should have done so, and given the complexity and ingenuity of theistic argumentation I am certainly not convinced in my own mind that that is the proper attitude to adopt towards theism, though I wish it were. But perhaps I may make a pragmatic point here also: it seems to me that we need more argument than we are usually offered for equating what theistic argument is meant to give us positively with the objects of actual theistic belief. One can see "natural theology" as changing the question as much as a route to defend some existing system of belief. A decent life has little to fear from natural theologians; it has perhaps quite a lot to fear from actual religions.

Looking at religion sociologically (epidemiologically) it is evident that the way of life comes first, ideology issues from practice and may later influence it. In many spheres of action, people like to invoke a backing for their particular practices. An exercise routine is not enough for some; it must be justified or rationalized by reference to obscure entities. To the extent that practices spawn such "narratives" they invite the Russellian Occam's razor. The Hanson attitude does not merely record what is conventionally thought; it asks, do we need it for any intellectual purpose? Then, the fact that some beliefs are incorporated in widespread and well funded traditions and that others are the idiosyncratic

invention of a deranged mind remains as the only significant difference, in intellectual weight, between them. We write books about the Thomist God and not about leprechauns or zombies, purely for sociological reasons.

The moral I am pointing to is that a stance that says we can simply ignore a possible hypothesis or way of looking at things must go beyond passive tinkering with inherited belief-systems and begin to interrogate them. It must bring with it some notion of what explains what, and what can be taken to be more secure, epistemologically. Whether or not theistic religion is actually in this position, the point has been to use it as a conspicuous and provocative case for examining the possibility and the assumptions that are needed to adopt this stance in any area.

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Abolitionist Reconstructions Of July Fourth

The Fourth of July, writes Howard Martin, was "the most important national ceremonial during the last century" in the United States (1958: 393). July Fourth occasioned the largest gatherings of the year in many communities, and was celebrated with picnics, ceremonies, fireworks, songs and speeches, which typically reveled in the mythic past and glorious prospects of the nation. But "the nation" was variously imagined by Americans on July Fourth (Anderson 1983: 13-15). Americans held divergent attitudes toward the holiday and used the occasion of the Fourth to contest ideas about national character, principles, and policies.

The United States prior to the Civil War bore few institutional expressions of its (increasingly fragile) unity. There was no official flag or anthem, and holidays were largely local or state, rather than national, observances. The Fourth of July was a unique national ritual, publicly enacted in local communities. During the American Revolution, July Fourth celebrations supplanted colonial celebrations of the monarchy (such as the King's birthday), through which the colonists had declared their loyalty and identity as British subjects.

The Fourth of July expressed new national identities rooted in independence (Branham, in press). In 1778, Congress gave its official sanction to the Fourth, and the following year ordered that "the chaplains of Congress be requested to prepare sermons suitable to the occasion" (*Journals* 1779: 204). These sermons typically celebrated the revolution as the crucible of the republic, the shared and defining heritage of an otherwise heterogenous people. "It was the Revolution, and only the Revolution," Gordon Wood writes, "that made them one people. Therefore Americans' interpetation of the Revolution could never cease; it was integral to the very existence of the nation" (1992: 336). July Fourth was the principal occasion for the public contemplation of the revolution and the country it had produced. By the War of 1812, organized Fourth of July celebrations had spread from urban areas to settlements across the United States.

But American observances of the holiday were far from uniform. "What, to the American slave," Frederick Douglass asked, "is your Fourth of July?" On the same

date when communities across the country gathered to sing patriotic songs and listen to speakers laud national achievements, abolitionists and other reformers met to consider the failure of the American Revolution to secure liberty for all Americans. By the mid-1830s, the Fourth of July had become the most important annual occasion for abolitionist meetings. Abolitionists sought to subvert conventional celebrations of the Fourth. They adopted many of its rituals, but converted its symbols and themes to support the abolitionist cause. The result was what Stuart Hall has termed a "negotiated version of the dominant ideology" that was "shot through with contradictions" (1980: 137-138). The Fourth of July presented the best recurring opportunity to reveal these contradictions, to contest American policies by reference to national principles. Abolitionists reconstructed the Fourth of July, using the accepted premises and symbolic resources of the occasion to "argue the nation."

1. Independence Day

Formal Fourth of July observances were inevitably devoted to the consideration of American national identity (Boorstin 1955: 377). To celebrate the nation's independence was to justify its separate status and distinctive character, and to do so on July Fourth located the nation in the founding principles of the Declaration. In its songs, symbols, and speeches, the Fourth provoked mass participation in rituals celebrating "shared" national myths and memories (Wyatt-Brown 1991: 35). Some July Fourth observances had a religious tone, "commemorated," as John Adams had hoped, by "solemn acts of devotion" (Travers 1997: 15). In the early 19th century, many July Fourth ceremonies followed the form of a Protestant church service, conducted "by priests appointed," as the editors of *The Liberator* later commented, "under the name of orators" ("Independence Day" 1860: 1). The holy text of the Declaration of Independence was read and the sermonic oration was delivered, interspersed with prayers and hymns. "The ubiquitous salute to the day," Martin observes, "had the ring of an invocation, a call to worship" (1958: 394, 399). The Fourth of July was "the political sabbath," the highest holy day for an American civil religion in which the United States was envisioned as "God's New Israel," a divinely favored nation with a distinctive mission in the world (Larson 1940: 14; Bellah 1967: 3-21; Cherry 1971). Local Fourth of July ceremonies were often partisan and militaristic (Kammen 1991: 49).

Speeches capped most community celebrations of the Fourth. These were touted

by some as “the highest form of American oratory” (Larson 1940: 12). Hundreds of Fourth of July speeches and sermons were published as pamphlets and newspapers, and some were widely distributed and reviewed in literary journals. To be selected as a community’s Fourth of July speaker was an honor. Speakers looked for meaning in the occasion and strove for eloquence, but too often waxed formulaic, grandiloquent, and clichéd. The term “Fourth of July oratory” came to be, as Ohio Senator Stanley Matthews lamented, “a hissing and a byword, a scorn and a reproach” for speeches that made bombastic appeals to patriotism (1879). Independence Day orators praised the revolutionary past and dreamed of America’s shining destiny (Martin 1958: 399-401). “The fourth of July,” George Bancroft told his Springfield, Massachusetts, audience on July 4, 1836, “was the day on which the people assumed power, and proclaimed their power to an admiring world” (Larson 1940: 20). Orators extolled the institutions and rich resources of the ever-expanding American territory, lacing their speeches with biblical allusions and parallels to the greatness of Greece and Rome. July Fourth was typically an occasion for patriotic boastfulness.

Independence Day songs and speeches often proclaimed the success of the American Revolution in securing liberty for all Americans, despite obvious exclusions (Bellah 1975: 88). In slave-holding Charleston, South Carolina, John J. Mauger’s oration on July 4, 1817, celebrated (without conscious irony) the day as one on which “millions of freemen assemble in commemoration” of the “Birth Day of American Freedom” (Larson 1940: 17). Speaking in the same city on July 4, 1820, where two years later Denmark Vesey would plot the armed revolt of those enslaved there, William Lance could say without blushing that his country countenanced “no *distinctions* of rank, no *degrees* of right, to tarnish the *natural equality* for which” the nation’s founders “fought and conquered” (Martin 1958: 395). Even when Fourth of July orators decried conditions of tyranny and oppression elsewhere, most portrayed their own country as one in which such conditions had been eradicated. In his July 4, 1823, address, Horace Mann imagines the “Great Being” who, when scanning the globe, finds that there is “one spot alone” where no despot dares lift his hand to pluck a leaf from the tree of liberty” and where every heart thrills to its glories. “That spot,” he concludes, “is our country; those hearts our own” (Larson 1940: 16).

Fourth of July boasts of America’s status as a beacon of liberty to the world were deeply offensive to many abolitionists. How could America be a “land of the free”

when millions were enslaved? Writing about the celebratory events of July 4, 1831, William Lloyd Garrison condemned national self-congratulation: "We have lived to see once more our nation's Jubilee! Millions hailed it with exultation!. . . The orators of the day, as usual, recounted the many and great blessings which have been vouchsafed unto us. . . They eulogized in no measured terms our civil constitution, and indulged, as our predecessors have done, in high anticipations of our future greatness and glory. Who did not partake in the feelings of the occasion? Who did not join heartily in welcoming the day? But there are some, 'tis believed, who rejoiced with trembling. All ought to have done so." To "rejoice with trembling" is to recognize the fundamental paradox of American history, Garrison explains, that "while we have been vaunting our free institutions, and claiming for our country the admiration of the world, as the birth place of liberty, the asylum of the oppressed, we have been holding two millions of our fellow men in the most abject servitude" (*The Liberator* 1831: 119). Those who truly loved freedom and abhorred slavery, Garrison insisted, could not celebrate the Fourth of July in good conscience.

The Fourth of July was invested with a variety of ideological, cultural and racial meanings. For many Americans, Black and white, it was a "whites only" celebration. The liberties celebrated on July Fourth were white liberties. African Americans were denied the "self-evident" rights expressed in the Declaration of Independence, and restricted both from white visions of the nation and from participation in its ceremonial observances. The Rev. Dr. Dalcho, a slaveholding minister from South Carolina, insisted that:
"The celebration of the *Fourth of July* belongs *exclusively* to the white population of the United States. The American Revolution was a *family quarrel among equals.* In this, the NEGROES had no concern; their condition remained, and must remain, unchanged. They have no more to do with the celebration of the day, than with the landing of the Pilgrims on the rock at Plymouth. It therefore appears to me, to be improper to allow these people to be present on those occasions" (*Anti-Slavery Record* 1835: 115). Some free African Americans in the North observed the Fourth of July, honoring Crispus Attucks (the "first to die for freedom") and the Revolutionary War service of Black soldiers. But those enslaved or free in the South were generally prohibited from participation in white July Fourth activities (Sweet 1976: 262-263). Advertisements for the Independence Day program at Charleston's Vauxhall Gardens in 1799 made explicit that there would be "no admittance for people of color." By the beginning of the nineteenth century, white

mobs in the northern states regularly attacked African Americans on July Fourth (Travers 1997: 150, 143). Many anticipated the Fourth of July with apprehension and fear.

African American orators, poets and songwriters attempted to show white audiences what July Fourth was like for Black people.

William Wells Brown, who had himself escaped from slavery, shocked his several thousand listeners in Framingham, Massachusetts, on July Fourth, 1859, when he began his speech by reading aloud an advertisement from a recent issue of the *Winchester (Tennessee) Journal*. It announced the sale, on July 4, that very day, of an enslaved African American woman and her children, "together with a top buggy, and several waggons and horses." The Fourth of July, he informed the audience, was "the high-market day for slaves throughout the South. . .the day when more slaves were to be sold under the hammer than any other." To the slave, Brown said, the Fourth of July is "more dreaded than almost any other day of the year" (*Liberator* 1859).

Black abolitionist orators addressing predominantly white audiences at Independence Day observances frequently asked their listeners to consider the occasion of July Fourth from the perspective of one enslaved. How would one in chains feel about celebrations and songs proclaiming the nation's freedom? In what is perhaps the speech's most quoted passage of his 1852 address in Rochester, New York, Frederick Douglass (who had himself escaped from slavery) re-visions the Fourth from this perspective:

"What, to the American slave, is your Fourth of July? I answer: a day that reveals to him, more than all the other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty an unholy license; your national greatness swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciations of tyrants brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to Him mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety and hypocrisy – a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States at this very hour" (Foner and Branham 1998: 258).

Early abolitionists, particularly African Americans, condemned conventional observances of the Fourth of July. Religious and political leaders urged people to

boycott them. “The festivities of this day,” Rev. Peter Williams, Jr., preached in New York on July 4, 1830, “serve but to impress upon the minds of reflecting men of colour a deeper sense of the cruelty, the injustice, and oppression, of which they have been the victims.” Williams asked his listeners to donate the amount of money they would normally spend in celebrating the Fourth to support instead the emigration to Canada West by African Americans driven out of Cincinnati (Foner and Branham 1998: 115). The national Black convention of 1834 voted to urge African Americans not to participate in public celebrations of the Fourth . The editors of *The Colored American* in 1838 suggested that a slave whip should be unfurled as the national symbol on the Fourth, instead of the American flag (Quarles 1969: 122). Abolitionist orators attempted to raise their audiences’ awareness of their own privilege, and to temper their willingness to celebrate it while other Americans were denied liberty.

Conventional Fourth of July orators routinely characterized British rule as oppressive and tyrannical, and the American rebellion as a quest for liberty. But many American abolitionists did not share either belief. Some African Americans, such as H. Ford Douglass in his July Fourth oration of 1860, went so far as to say that they “would rather curse than bless the day that marked the separation” of the colonies from England, for had they remained British subjects, African Americans would have been freed in 1834 when Britain abolished slavery in the colonies (*Liberator* 1860: 1). The American abolition movement had been shaped in large part by its British counterpart. Beginning in 1826, British abolitionists had petitioned parliament in favor of immediate emancipation, and produced a torrent of pamphlets, newspaper articles and speeches in support of their cause. By late 1830 it was apparent that parliament would pass the measure. American newspapers reported the deliberations of the British parliament and anti-slavery activists quickly decided, as the New York *Whig* editorialized on September 23, 1831, “that this kind of reform needs to begin in our country.”

American anti-slavery activists adopted many ideas from British activists, mining British anti-slavery propaganda for facts, arguments, and rhetorical strategies that might be used in the American campaign (Barnes 1933: 29-33). British abolitionist speakers toured the United States and American speakers toured and raised funds in Britain. The success of the British abolitionists in persuading parliament to abolish slavery in the colonies in 1833 was hailed as a model for the prospects of American abolitionism. Antebellum African Americans were more

likely to extol Britain or Canada, rather than the United States, as a "land of liberty." They celebrated August 1, the date on which British slavery in the West Indies was abolished, and other dates of abolition or slave trade suspension (such as January 1 and "Juneteenth"), more often than they did the Fourth of July (Martin 1984: 53; Quarles 1969: 124-125; Wiggins 1987: xix-xx).

But anti-monarchism had been a potent force in American politics since 1775, and the Revolution was for many Americans the defining event of American national identity. The Fourth of July remained the most popular American holiday, and the occasion when national principles and texts were most regularly invoked in public ceremonies. Although most committed abolitionists by the mid-1830s felt they could not participate in standard rituals of national glorification, many also believed they could not merely ignore the holiday. The Fourth of July offered unique rhetorical opportunities for interrogating national practices, and abolitionists crafted a variety of approaches by which they might both use and distance themselves from the occasion, arguing for national change rather than self-satisfaction (Branham and Pearce 1985: 19-36).

2. July Fifth

African Americans sometimes held parallel ceremonies on the Fourth itself. On July 4, 1827, New York emancipated its slaves, and celebrations were held in African American communities throughout the state and beyond. In Rochester, New York, the emancipation act and a copy of the Declaration of Independence were read aloud, followed by an oration by Austin Steward. Steward carefully distinguished the proceedings from other Independence Day observances. He had been born in slavery and reminded his audience that while they enjoyed their freedom in New York, "we should remember, in joy and exultation, the thousands of our countrymen who are to-day. . . writhing under the lash and groaning beneath the grinding weight of Slavery's chain." "We will rejoice," he advised, "though sobs interrupt the songs of our rejoicing, and tears mingle in the cup we pledge to Freedom" (Foner and Branham 1998: 107). The following year, Steward emigrated to Canada.

In order to differentiate their celebration of New York's emancipation from the national holiday and to avoid physical attacks from drunken whites on July 4, many African Americans held their observances on July 5 (Quarles 1969: 119-122). This postponement also represented the fact that the liberties celebrated by white Americans on the Fourth had not yet been extended to them. Peter Osborne explained to his New Haven audience on July 5, 1832, that "on

account of the misfortune of our color, our Fourth of July comes on the fifth." Only when the terms of the Declaration of Independence were "fully executed," he explained, "may we then have our Fourth of July on the fourth" (Foner and Branham 1998: 124). July Fifth became a common meeting date for gatherings that featured speeches, music, and organizational elections. It was an occasion when, as Leonard Sweet writes, African Americans "could symbolically express their alienation from the promises of July 4 (1976: 259). July 5 provided critical distance from July 4, yet its proximity made commentary on the Fourth inevitable.

The most famous July Fifth denunciation of the Fourth is undoubtedly Frederick Douglass's brilliant oration, "What, to the Slave is the Fourth of July?," delivered in Rochester, New York, in 1852. The passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 and its enforcement in Northern states the following year made no place within American borders safe for any African American. Bounties and a lack of due process meant that even "free" Blacks were falsely charged and sent into slavery (Martin 1984: 59). Rochester was an important stop on the Underground Railroad and the Douglasses offered many fugitives their last American shelter before crossing the border into Canada. In 1851, Douglass hid three men who had shot and killed the slaveholder who pursued them. Despite the man-hunt mounted for them, Douglass personally made the perilous drive with the fugitives to the boat that would take them to freedom in Canada (Bontemps 1971: 194-196). When he accepted an invitation the following year to deliver a Fourth of July oration in Rochester, Douglass explained his alienation from the occasion: "I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity, and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought light and healing to you, has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth of July is *yours*, not *mine*. *You* may rejoice, *I* must mourn" (Foner and Branham 1998: 255).

Douglass feels he can take no part in the national celebration. He is an "aliened American," as Joshua Simpson puts it. From the outset of his speech, Douglass distances himself from his predominantly white audience, even those who oppose slavery. Douglass makes clear that their subject positions are very different. "The freedom gained is *yours*," Douglass tells his white listeners, "and you, therefore, may properly celebrate this anniversary." Douglass delimits the "liberty" and

"equality" typically proclaimed on the Fourth, revealing that these are privileged rather than universal conditions in America (Lucaites 1997: 47-70). Douglass compares the expectation that African Americans would join in the celebration of July Fourth and the singing of patriotic songs that accompany it to the predicament of the ancient Israelites during their exile in Babylon. He quotes Psalm 137: "For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion." Douglass asks, in the words of the Israelites, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?;" How, he insists, can we sing a song of freedom in a land where we are not free? Whatever song Douglass is to sing on this day, he explains, must pierce the melody of "national, tumultuous joy" with "the mournful wail of millions, whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are today rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them." The song he sings in this strange land, then, must itself be strange, estranged from dominant ideology and custom.

African American abolitionist Joshua McCarter Simpson composed just such a song in "Fourth of July in Alabama," set to the tune of "America" and published in his collection, *The Emancipation Car*, two years after Douglass' speech. Like Douglass, Simpson imagines the holiday from the perspective of one enslaved. He includes a prefatory paragraph, explaining that the song is "the meditation and feelings of the poor Slave, as he toils and sweats over the hoe and cotton hook, while his master, neighbors, and neighbors' children are commemorating that day, which brought life to the whites and death to the poor African."

Though cannon's [sic] loudly roar,
And banners highly soar –
To me 'tis gloom.
Though "lads" and "lasses" white,
With face and spirits bright –
Hail thee with such delight,
With sword and plumes.
I hear the loud huzzas,
Mingled with high applause,
To Washington.
The youth in every street,

Their notes of joy repeat;

While Patriots' names they greet,
For victory won.
Brass bands of music play
Their sweet and thrilling lay,
Which rend the skies;
Old fathers seem to feel
New animating zeal,
While tones of thunder peal
On every side.

Yet we have got no song.
Where is the happy throng
Of Africa's sons?. . .
How can we strike the strains,
While o'er those dismal plains,
We're bleeding, bound in chains,
Dying by scores?

While e'er four million slaves
Remain in living graves,
Can I rejoice,
And join the jubilee
Which set the white man free,
And fetters brought to me?
'Tis not my choice.

O, no! While a slave remains
Bound in infernal chains
Subject to man,
My heart shall solemn be –
There is no song for me,
'Till all mankind are free
From lash and brand (1854: 41-42).

Because "America" was strongly associated with the Fourth of July (the occasion on which it premiered in 1831 and for which it remained a favored text), it was frequently parodied or reconstructed at abolitionist observances on that date. The abolitionists crafted dozens of alternate versions of "America," some designed

specifically for use on July Fourth, to distinguish between national boasts and realities (Branham 1996: 623-652). Simpson's song describes the familiar sounds and customs of July Fourth, but from the perspective of one enslaved. He sings of his inability to join in the performance of national songs, saying: "There is no song for me." For Simpson, it is a holiday celebrating the "jubilee/ Which set the white man free/ And fetters brought to me." He is not within the compass of those liberties celebrated. Simpson's first-person lyric dissents from the imaginary national unanimity of the Fourth. He chooses not to sing of America as a "sweet land of liberty" so long as "four million slaves/ Remain in living graves." Simpson replaces the falsifying words of Smith's "America" with his own song of freedom.
Simpson, Douglass, and other abolitionists sought to construct a critical observance, rather than celebration, of the Fourth of July. They used the occasion to interrogate and subvert its conventions and sacred texts, such as "America" and the Declaration of Independence, which provided poignant intertextual referents for the abolitionists' own messages (Watson 1997: 91-112). In their own songs and speeches, abolitionists strove to reconstruct the Fourth of July, to make use of its rhetorical opportunities and invest it with new meanings.

3. Reconstructing the Fourth of July

The Fourth of July was always a political occasion, as conventional Fourth of July ceremonies reinforced the legitimacy and power of the state. But celebration of the Fourth of July was never universal or uniform. Its observance varied dramatically by region, year, race, and political orientation. Many groups, including trade unions and political parties, held their own Fourth of July gatherings, with particular meanings. Beginning in the 1790s, Philip Foner has written, American trade unionists celebrated the Fourth as their day and drank toasts to "The Fourth of July, may it ever prove a memento to the oppressed to rise and assert their rights" (1976: 1). Trade union gatherings used the occasion to draw attention to the oppression of workers, to lament the unfinished business of the Revolution, and sometimes proposed alternative Declarations of Independence to replace or supplement the original document. In Boston, the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans held competing Fourth of July celebrations to rally their members (Travers 1997: 11). Frances Wright's "scandalous" Fourth of July orations of 1828 and 1829 combined appeals for a variety of radical reforms, including women's rights, sexual liberty, and abolitionism (Eckhardt 1984:171). She viewed July Fourth as the ideal occasion for appeals to social reform. She denounced patriotism as a sentiment that "surely

is not made for America" and argued that the Fourth was a day best devoted to "celebrating protests against it" (1836: 195, 181).

The Fourth of July was used by a variety of political groups to grant legitimacy to their causes by aligning their diverse visions of the future with the myths and principles of the Revolutionary past. At the same time, reformers contested and refashioned the meanings of the Fourth and the national texts it celebrated. Abolitionists made use of the Declaration of Independence almost from the moment it was issued. African American minuteman Lemuel Haynes reprinted the Declaration on the title page of his 1776 pamphlet on "Liberty Further Extended; or, Free Thoughts on the Illegality of Slave-keeping," arguing that according to its principles, America must "let the oppressed go free" and recognize the "undeniable right" of the African American to liberty (Newman 1990: 2-4).

The Fourth of July was used to protest slavery at least as early as 1783, two months before the Treaty of Paris was signed. At a celebration of American independence in Woodbridge, New Jersey, according to an account in the *Newark Eagle*, a prominent local physician mounted the platform along with fourteen whom he had enslaved and emancipated them on the spot, citing the principles of the Declaration of Independence: "As a nation, we are free and independent, – all men are created equal, and why should these, my fellow citizens, my equals, be held in bondage?," he asked; "From this day, they are emancipated" (Nell 1855: 164). On July 4, 1791, four years after ratification of the Constitution, George Buchanon, M.D., a member of the American Philosophical Society, delivered *An Oration Upon the Moral and Political Evil of Slavery* at a public meeting in Baltimore of the Maryland Society for the Abolition of Slavery. Buchanon's speech was dedicated to Thomas Jefferson and invoked the language of the Declaration in support of abolition. His speech was widely circulated in pamphlet form and read by President George Washington, among others (1793). The universal human rights proclaimed in the Declaration, and its justification of resistance to oppression, made the Fourth of July an irresistable opportunity for anti-slavery activists to argue for reform based upon accepted premises.

The earliest regional and national efforts to encourage local anti-slavery observances of July 4 were undertaken by the American Colonization Society. The American Society for Colonizing of the Free People of Color in the United States was founded in 1816 and had may eminent supporters, including James Monroe, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay and Francis Scott Key, the author of "The Star-

Spangled Banner." Its efforts to promote the emigration of free African Americans to Liberia were at first supported by many white anti-slavery activists and a few African Americans, who despaired of ever gaining equality in America. The Colonization Society's prejudicial rhetoric, however, which urged whites to support the removal of free Blacks as an inherently inferior and troublesome group, soon produced unified opposition (Quarles 1969: 3-8). In the 1820s and 1830s, the Colonization Society sponsored annual Fourth of July meetings, using the occasion to wrap their controversial programs in the garments of patriotism. These were the colonizationists' best attended and most lucrative fund-raising events (Hay 1967: 129-130, 132; Friedman 1975: 188-189).

On July 4, 1829, at a ceremony sponsored by the American Colonization Society in Boston's Park Street Church, twenty-three year-old William Lloyd Garrison delivered his first major public address against slavery. Garrison would soon abandon the colonizationists and denounce their schemes to deport free blacks to Africa as racist and supportive of slavery. In this speech, he was already far more militant than most colonizationists. He denounced the Fourth of July as "the worst and most disastrous day in the whole three hundred and sixty-five." Yet Garrison made much use of the occasion in his speech, finding support in the Declaration of Independence for his thesis that slavery was a national sin, and contrasting the hypocritical proclamations of national virtue that characterized conventional celebrations of the Fourth ("that pompous declamation of vanity, that lying attestation of falsehood, from the lips of tumid orators, which are poisoning our life-blood") with national realities (1852: 46; Thomas 1963: 92-101).

From 1830, Garrison and many other anti-slavery activists denounced slavery as a sin and embraced the goal of immediate emancipation. They made astonishingly rapid gains in membership and organization. The New England Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1832, and the American Anti-Slavery Society began the following year. States and towns formed their own anti-slavery societies, which sent delegates to regional and national conventions. The network of organized anti-slavery activities expanded from 47 societies in 1833 to more than 1,000 in 1836 (Richards 1979: 108). The new abolitionist movement drew upon the religious fervor of the revivals that had swept America during the Second Great Awakening of the 1820s. The revivals had preached of personal salvation and national perfectionism, invigorating an array of social reform movements. Most abolitionists initially believed moral suasion to be the key to individual and

national redemption. Abolitionism became a form of evangelism, and its proselytizers sought to spread the word through publications, revival-style meetings, and songs. They encouraged national reform by reference to national principles and texts, which they argued were at odds with the practice of slavery. The Fourth of July seemed to many abolitionist leaders the ideal opportunity to interrogate national pretensions and promote social reform.

Garrison's *Liberator* and the intensification of abolitionist activities in 1831 fueled efforts to organize alternative observances of July Fourth. Black abolitionist Anna Elizabeth of Philadelphia published "A Short Address to Females of Color" in *The Liberator* on June 18, 1831, noting the suggestion "by some of our best friends" (Garrison chief among them) "that the approaching fourth of July be set apart, by us, as a day of humiliation and prayer." She asks African American women to join her in acting accordingly (98). July 4, 1831, was probably the first Independence Day on which abolitionists organized counter-observances across localities and states in competition with those of the colonizationists. At an observance in Lynn, Massachusetts, on that day, orator Alonzo Lewis proclaimed the appropriateness of the occasion for anti-slavery appeals, noting that "On a day like this, it is highly suitable to speak of whatever has a tendency to advance or retard national honor, happiness and prosperity" ("Independence and Slavery" 1831: 94-95.

In the next issue of *The Liberator* (July 9, 1831), Garrison criticized non-abolitionist observances of the Fourth. He denounced the hypocrisy of conventional celebrations: "Our love of liberty increases with the multiplication of our slaves." Despite the fact the the American "slave population is larger by sixty thousand souls than it was at the last anniversary;" Garrison asked, "when have we made so extensive and boisterous a parade of our patriotism?" Garrison voiced particular disdain for the July 4, 1831, sermon by Lyman Beecher in favor of colonization, in which Beecher urged "every man, woman child to put their hands into their pockets, and contribute money" for "the removal of the whole colored population to Africa" (111). Criticism of conventional and colonizationist observances of the Fourth would become a standard feature of abolitionist rhetoric and a basis for differentiating their own Independence Day events.

July Fourth was a holiday with very different meanings for different groups of Americans. Although there had been scattered prior uses of the occasion by abolitionists, it was still associated with a wide variety of reform causes. Garrison and others began a campaign to seize the day for antislavery purposes. In *The Liberator* three weeks later, Garrison reprinted a column in which the editor of

the *Lynn Record* argued that "no day, perhaps is better adapted to urge an appeal" on behalf of those enslaved "than the Fourth of July." Beginning the following year, Garrison and others promoted annual counter-observances of July Fourth. Abolitionists sought to make the day their own, a day when many Americans would contemplate the paradoxical proclamations of freedom amidst the continuing practice of slavery.

Anti-slavery uses of July Fourth competed with uses of the occasion for other causes. Some of these (such as colonization) were contrary to abolition, while others (temperance, for example) were causes supported by most abolitionists. Recognizing that Independence Day had already been employed by temperance activists and other reformers to promote their causes, Garrison argued in the *Liberator* that anti-slavery activities should be given the highest priority in use of the day. For other causes, he explained, "there are other seasons quite as appropriate and just as useful." But July Fourth offered unique opportunities for anti-slavery organizing, he insisted, and those in bondage should "have the first and highest claim upon our sympathy and aid on Independence Day." "It should be made 'The day of days' for the overthrow of slavery," Garrison concluded, "as formidable to domestic as it ever was designed to be to foreign tyrants" (*Liberator* 1852: 106).

From 1833 through the beginning of the Civil War, July Fourth was the most important annual meeting day for abolitionists, marked by huge gatherings, speeches, songs, and fund-raising. *The Liberator* on 28 June 1834 carried notices for six anti-slavery Fourth of July observances in three states, and in 1835 listed sixteen. These were largely local affairs, although some invited notable outside speakers and advertised to attract attendance from other communities. The New-England Anti-Slavery Society, for example, sponsored a regional anti-slavery meeting on July 4, 1834, in Boylston, Massachusetts, attended by delegates from several states ("Fourth opf July" 1835). But the logistical difficulties and expens of travel prevented large-scale regional gatherings until the development of rail lines. In the interim, abolitionist leaders urged the proliferation of local observances "in every place where a society exists for the furtherance of this holy and patriotic work" (Libertas 1835: 94). Anti-slavery Fourth of July activities were designed to motivate anti-slavery sympathizers to take concerted action, and to contribute financially through "free-will offerings." July Fourth anti-slavery activities also appealed to the unconvinced. "Many new volunteers enrolled themselves under the banner of immediate emancipation" as a result of these

gatherings, Garrison claimed in 1836 (111). Antislavery activists regarded July Fourth as an occasion that offered unique rhetorical and organizational opportunities.

Just as conventional Fourth of July ceremonies linked local communities together in the invocation of nationhood, so too did anti-slavery gatherings, which connected local communities with national issues. At the Plymouth County (Massachusetts) Anti-Slavery Society's July Fourth observance in 1837, hymn by George Russell set to the tune of "America" asked:
Shall Despotism sway,
Its iron sceptre *here*,
Our lips to close?
Sons of the pilgrims! Say!
Will ye proud lords obey,
And ask *them* when ye may
The *truth* disclose? (Russell 1837: 128).

Russell's song asks those gathered to consider the national Congressional gag rule as a restriction on their own speech, and to see in their local heritage (as "Sons of the Pilgrims") a national responsibility.

The spread of rail lines in the 1840s and 1850s enabled the physical as well as rhetorical consolidation of anti-slavery forces. Anti-slavery July Fourth rallies in some cases attracted thousands of participants. In his 1886 memoir of anti-slavery activities in Maine, Austin Willey recalled that "the fourth of July had been much used" in "the cause of liberty to which it belonged, and with great benefit." On July 4, 1847, anti-slavery meetings were held throughout the state, "in groves and churches, with speeches and music, the women preparing the picnic." By July 4, 1852, improved transportation, as well as the impetus to anti-slavery organizing provided by passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, enabled the Maine societies to stage an enormous anti-slavery rally. The featured speaker was Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. An estimated "six to ten thousand" people convened in a grove near East Livermore. Normally used for Methodist camp-meetings, the grove was festooned with banners bearing mottoes (including "No Compromise With Slavery," "The Daughters of Freedom Opposed to the Nebraska Bill," and "Temperance and Liberty"), and pictures of Aunt Chloe and Uncle Tom's cabin. Those assembled listened to speeches and anti-slavery songs, followed by a picnic lunch, then more speeches and resolutions (Willey

1886: 318, 442-445).

From 1852 through 1860, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society sponsored huge annual "Anti-Slavery Celebration[s] of Independence Day" in rural groves. Five thousand people from throughout Massachusetts attended the July 5, 1852, gathering at Abington "to listen to the speeches of freemen, and sing the songs of freedom" ("Anti-Slavery" 1852: 119). Horses and carriages "stood almost innumerable in the shade of the trees" and "booths well filled with wholesome viands, but containing nothing which could intoxicate, stood all around." African American abolitionist Charles Lenox Remond was elected president of the day's gathering and delivered the principal oration (*Liberator* 1852).

Beginning in 1853, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society held large annual July Fourth meetings in Framingham. Framington's Harmony Grove was a popular tourist attraction in the 1850s for urban residents who wished to spend a day in the country, rowing on the lake or perhaps playing round-ball or cricket on the adjoining field (Herring n.d.; *Gleason's* 1852: 384). "The Grove itself," Rev. Elias Nason recalled, "consists of several acres of tall, majestic pine, oak, maple and chestnut trees, whose spreading branches form a dense and grateful shade" from summer's heat. "The squirrel leaps from bough to bough; the song birds fill the air with melody" (Potter 1896: 1). The air of Harmony Grove was also filled with speeches. Anti-slavery and temperance meetings were held in a natural ampitheater, 250 feet long and 150 feet wide, that seated over a thousand people. Special trains carried attendees from Boston, Worcester, and other towns and cities for the July Fourth rallies. These were frequently all-day affairs. The thousands who attended the Framingham event in 1857, for example, "spent some six hours in the various exercises appointed for the occasion" ("Anti-Slavery Celebration" 1857). Speakers included Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Charles L. Remond, William Wells Brown, Frances Ellen Watkins, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson (*National* 1857). The Framingham Anti-Slavery Fourth of July rally gained national attention in 1854, when Garrison first burned a copy of the Fugitive Slave Law, then a copy of Judge Edward G. Loring's decision approving the seizure of Anthony Burns as a fugitive slave. Finally, he burned a copy of the U.S. Constitution, which he pronounced a pro-slavery "covenant with death and agreement with hell." The crowd erupted in a mixture of cheers and hisses (Garrison and Garrison 1885: 412).

The Framingham rallies intensified the national debate over slavery. "It has been said that a small nest of hornets attending strictly to business can break up a

camp meeting," Edgar Potter, curator of the Framingham Historical Society, wrote in 1896, and the Framingham rallies "kept the whole country in an uproar" (1896: 2). The rallies incorporated some elements of traditional Fourth of July gatherings but differentiated their purposes. Like traditional gatherings, abolitionist observances of July Fourth featured oratory, music, family picnics, political campaigning, banners and national symbols. Abolitionists capitalized on established conventions of the holiday in order to reconstruct its meanings and purposes.

4. Arguing the Nation

Those who wished to highlight the inconsistencies between slavery and national principles could ask for no better occasion. "A people yet suffering under oppression," Garrison explained, "should use all occasions when the word FREEDOM is spoken, to remind themselves and each other they have it not" ("Independence" 1860). On a practical level, July Fourth was one of the few dates when large-scale attendance could be secured for day-long meetings. In urban areas, at least, it was a day free from labor and commerce, when most people were free to attend. The primary attraction of July Fourth, however, was rhetorical. It held powerful associations and made available certain symbols and lines of argument that were less poignant on other occasions.

In his July 5, 1852, Rochester address, Frederick Douglass oppositionally decodes the symbols, themes, and conventions associated with July Fourth, turning the occasion against itself. He subverts the characteristic elements of the generic Fourth of July oration. He too invokes the Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, civil religion, the flag, and the American landscape, and he too speaks of the nation's singularity. But Douglass revises these concepts and symbols. He refigures, for example, the concept of national unity traditionally expounded on the Fourth by speaking of the nation as "unified" in evil by the passage of the Fugitive Slave law, through which "slavery has been nationalized in its most horrible and revolting form." The United States is defined by its national support of slavery. "By that act," he explains, "the power to hold, hunt and sell men, women and children as slaves remains no longer a mere state institution, but is now an institution of the whole United States. . . coextensive with the star-spangled banner and American Christianity." Douglass, like most conventional Fourth of July orators, proclaims the singularity of the nation, but by insisting that "for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival" (Foner and Branham 1998: 258).

In their own observances, abolitionists incorporated many of the themes and symbols associated with July Fourth. Polemicists of all sorts used the Fourth of July to identify their own causes with the American Revolution, as Ronald Reid has observed, emphasizing their own contributions to the Revolution, drawing parallels between the Revolution and their own causes, and purporting to continue or complete the Revolution through their proposed reforms. “It is peculiarly proper,” anti-slavery orator James Eels of Ohio observed on July 4, 1836, “to link together these two American Revolutions, and to celebrate the triumph of one and the progress of the other, at the same Anniversary; for they are intimately allied, and have relations so closely interwoven, that they could not well be separated” (Reid 1978 68-69, 70).

Abolitionist speakers and writers praised the colonial revolutionaries who took up arms against the British oppressors. Their narratives emphasized those aspects of the American Revolution most analogous to the anti-slavery campaign. Abolitionists drew parallels between their numbers (three million colonists then, three million enslaved now), objective (liberty), their animating principles (“that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. . .”), and their willingness to die for their freedom. The Declaration of delegates at the 1833 National Anti-Slavery Convention, for example, recast the story of the American Revolution as one in which “three millions of people rose up as from the sleep of death, and rushed to the strife of blood; deeming it more glorious to die instantly as freemen, than desirable to live one hour as slaves” (“Declaration” 1833: 426). By drawing parallels between the Revolution and their cause, abolitionists made use of the mythic structure through which the Fourth had long been conventionally celebrated. But Douglass and others recast the roles in the Revolutionary morality play. It is the abolitionists, he argues in his July 5, 1852, Rochester address, who are most akin to the “agitators and rebels” who led the Revolution of “the oppressed against the oppressor.” Those now in power, who hate “any great change (no matter how great the good to be attained, or the wrong to be redressed by it),” are today’s tyrants and Tories (Foner and Branham 1998: 250-254). The Revolution is thus refashioned as a justification for the radical actions of the abolitionists.

Linguistic references to the American Revolution were woven throughout the speeches and promotional materials for anti-slavery July Fourth gatherings. A notice for the July 4, 1860, event in Framingham was headlined “THE

INSURRECTION OF 1776!" and urged "all who hate despotism in the garb of Democracy and Republicanism as well as of Monarchy, and would overthrow it by every weapon that may be legitimately wielded against it" to assemble" (*Liberator* 1860: 90). Linking the Revolution to abolitionism was made easier by the hyperbolic language used to describe the patriot cause. The Fourth of July was "the glorious day – / When slavery's clouds were chased away," a poet wrote in the *Florida Herald* in 1829 (82). The Revolution was justified as a response to tyranny, "breaking the chains" of British oppression. The metaphoric description of British colonialism as bondage and slavery suggested obvious connections to the abolitionist cause. Conventional Fourth of July orations regularly analogized the Revolution to the Israelites' providentially guided escape from Egyptian bondage (Hay 1967: 192-193). Abolitionists made the simple leap from figurative and Biblical bondage to literal contemporary slavery, which they argued meant that their cause was even more noble than that of the American Revolutionaries. The grievances of the colonists, delegates to the National Anti-Slavery Convention declared in 1833, "were trifling in comparison with the wrongs and sufferings of those for whom we plead." "Our fathers," they explained, "were never slaves – never bought and sold like cattle – never shut out from the light of knowledge and religion – never subjected to the lash of brutal taskmasters" ("Declaration" 1833: 426-427. The colonists had less cause to revolt, abolitionists argued, than did they.

Pro-slavery forces accused abolitionists of fomenting slave rebellions, although many abolitionists denied the charge. While abolitionists drew parallels between their own cause and the principles of the American Revolution, most differentiated their tactics. The Revolution was "effected by the sword and bayonet," James Eels explained on July 4, 1836, but abolitionists would succeed through "argument and persuasion" (Reid 1978: 70). In an 1848 song, "The Liberty Army" (set to the tune of "America"), the abolitionist singers pledged: "No bloody flag we bear;/ No implements of war,/ Nor carnage red shall mar/ Our victory" ("Liberty" 1848: 194). Some abolitionists, however, embraced not only the principles but the means of the American Revolutionaries. July Fourth presented a unique rhetorical opportunity to defend armed resistance to slavery. Those enslaved staged hundreds of revolts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in efforts to gain their freedom. These uprisings were sometimes violent and were greatly feared by whites. Abolitionist orators and writers drew upon the threat of further uprisings in order to alarm their listeners

and prod them to action. Rev. La Roy Sunderland's *Anti-Slavery Manual*, a pocket handbook of facts and arguments used by many anti-slavery speakers in the 1830s, includes accounts of twenty-four slave rebellions from 1712 to 1831. Speakers were instructed to present these "facts demonstrating the danger of continued slavery," which made further violent rebellions inevitable (1839: 86-91).

Abolitionists regularly invoked the prospect of slave uprisings on July Fourth, a day in which rebellion was celebrated by most Americans. Conventional Fourth of July celebrations often included military parades and themes. Orators praised the willingness of the Revolutionaries "to conquer or die" in armed resistance to British oppression. Some abolitionists, such as Garrison, asked, "Do they not fear lest their slaves may one day be as patriotic as themselves?" ("Walker's" 1995: 77). The Fourth of July, he argued, must not only "embitter and inflame the minds of slaves," but "furnish so many reasons" why "they should obtain their own rights by violence" (*Liberator* 1831: 120). In an oration delivered in Lynn, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1831, as "America" premiered in nearby Boston, Alonzo Lewis warned his listeners that they must emancipate those enslaved before they "deluge our southern cities with blood" ("Independence and Slavery" 1832: 24). That same day, Nat Turner had originally planned to stage his Virginia uprising, the bloodiest in American history, before illness forced him to postpone it (Aptheker 1943: 297). In the South, July Fourth was a common occasion for acts of resistance and retaliation by those enslaved (Travers 1997: 148).

By whatever means, abolitionists and other reformers argued that the duty of the current generation was to complete the unfinished American Revolution. Members of the 1833 Anti-Slavery Convention pledged their support "for the achievement of an enterprise, without which, that of our fathers is incomplete" ("Declaration" 1833: 426). The Declaration of Independence was regarded as a statement of principle, rather than an accomplished vision of the nation (Reid 1978: 70). July Fourth was an occasion on which abolitionists, as well as those who attended conventional celebrations, rededicated themselves to the nation's founding principles. "An Appeal to American Freemen" (1859) consisting of four stanzas set to the tune of "America" and designed for use at anti-slavery July Fourth observances, instructed celebrants to initiate a second American Revolution, to: "Light up again the fires/ Once kindled by your sires/ In Freedom's cause (Justitia 1859: 104).

Although July Fourth was popularly referred to as the "Nation's Jubilee,"

celebrating the “birth of freedom,” abolitionists denied this, insisting that the “day of jubilee” was yet to come. Abolitionists used the Fourth to expose the failure of America to fulfill its founding principles, and to dream of a future day of emancipation. The military success of the American revolutionaries against overwhelming odds offered assurance to anti-slavery workers that their struggles would also some day succeed. In his 1836 song, “Day of Jubilee,” set to the tune of “America,” A. G. Duncan imagined the celebration that one day would be.

Roll on thou joyful day,
When tyranny’s proud sway,
Stern as the grave,
Shall to the ground be hurled,
And freedom’s flag unfurled,
Shall wave throughout the world,
O’er every slave (87-88).

Duncan displaces the language, occasion and featured melody of Independence Day celebrations. A true Independence Day, he insists, is contingent and deferred, but possible through concerted action. Abolitionists used the Fourth of July to reimagine the nation as a “sweet land of liberty” in fact as well as in song.

5. Conclusion

The thousands who attended the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society’s Framingham rally in 1859 heard Thomas Wentworth Higginson announce that “This is our day – our Fourth of July. We can claim it, if nobody else can” (“Address” 1859). Abolitionist counter-observances of July Fourth were more than alternative, self-contained events. Abolitionists saw themselves as transforming the occasion, “redeeming the Nation’s birth-day from the utter perversion and desecration which it everywhere suffers at the hands of a degenerate and time-serving people” (“Anti-Slavery Celebration” 1857). Abolitionists sought to reconstruct July Fourth, changing its meanings and implications for a broader public. July Fourth and July Fifth were occasions on which abolitionists “argued the nation,” contesting common conceptions of national character and reconstituting national identities.

Abolitionists sought to problematize participation in conventional Fourth of July celebrations. They equated participation in conventional July Fourth celebrations and the singing of national songs with support for slavery. “We’ll meet beneath no gilded arch with pomp and show and pride,” the participants in Framingham’s

July 4, 1860, anti-slavery meeting declared, refusing "To chant the songs of freedom, while we swell Oppression's tide" ("Our Fourth" 1860). Abolitionist orators, songwriters, and poets sketched scathing portrayals of conventional Independence Day speeches and celebrations, in part to differentiate their own efforts on that date. If the most important function of conventional Fourth of July celebrations was, as Len Travers has written, "to mask disturbing ambiguities and contradictions in the new republic, overlaying real social and political conflict with a conceptual veneer of shared ideology and elemental harmony," the primary function of abolitionist Fourth of July observances was to reveal these contradictions and strip away the veneer of harmony (1997: 7). Abolitionists hoped that their audiences would reflect on the irony of the terms ("liberty," "freedom," "independence") and texts (such as the Declaration of Independence or the song "America") used to celebrate the Fourth in a land of slavery. They publicly desecrated national symbols and subverted patriotic texts on the Fourth, when doing so would be most shocking and, they hoped, thought-provoking.

By the Civil War, July Fourth gatherings were regarded by abolitionists such as William Wells Brown as "the most important meetings held during the year." It was an occasion that drew large crowds and exposed ironies that "deepened the impression" upon those who attended (*Liberator* 1859). The Fourth offered rhetorical resources less effective on other occasions, enabling the abolitionists to draw parallels between the American Revolution and their own cause. Abolitionists employed patriotic appeals as premises from which to argue for reform. Like other Americans on July Fourth, many voiced their loyalty to cause and country. But the country to which the abolitionists pledged loyalty was not the United States as presently constituted. Decades before the Gettysburg Address and Reconstruction, abolitionists imagined a future reconstituted nation without slavery. "That's my country, that's the land,/ I can love with heart and hand," James Russell Lowell writes; "Of her glories I can sing" (1857: 127). Those who attended anti-slavery gatherings on the Fourth joined together in singing of their mutual commitment to create a "land of liberty" where none yet existed, a commitment that would eventually find expression in civil war.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Bad Reasoning, Good Humor

This paper focuses on the rhetorical-hermeneutical aspects of production and understanding of a text containing fallacies generating humor. My emphasis is on deceptive or misleading discourses as a means of creating witty remarks. Humor certainly involves a mistake or deviation, a vice or a flaw; but the error involved is not censurable or damaging, but harmless and good.

In working on the theme of that which is comical in rhetoric and about rhetoric, I noticed how the possible classifications of fallacies, that is to say forms of reasoning which despite being logically unacceptable appear to be persuasive and efficient, are similar or can be juxtaposed with the possible taxonomies of those mechanisms which generate humor. There are at least as many types of humor as there are bad arguments, that is fallacies. And perhaps it is no coincidence that for this very reason there is no satisfactory theory of fallacies, not even a

satisfactory theory of humor.
The first sketches of a theory of humor used in conversation and of humor understood as wit (humor as it is used by an orator and humor as it is studied by a rhetorician) can be found in Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian.

Hilarity that sparks off a fallacy is not something to be ignored; the jibe, the jest, the comical element all have their use in disputes, because, as Gorgia rightly advised, "we should kill [or confound] our opponent's seriousness with our ridicule and his ridicule with our seriousness" (Aristotle 1924: 1419b 3-5). In this same context Aristotle observes that "the majority of jests arise from metaphors and from being able to surprise through the use trickery" (Aristotle 1924: 1412a, 18-19). Such trickery can come about in three ways:
– with single words (words used with a different meaning from that which is expected, as in play on words, double meaning);
– with unexpected actions (surprising developments);
– with speeches which create an illusion which induces the belief in the reality of something which in fact does not exist (as in the case of what we call fallacies).

It is possible to distinguish three types of humor:
1. the humor added as something which "ornates" ideas,
2. the humor inherent in the theme considered and
3. the use of humor introduced in order to divert attention away from the argument.

Rhetoric is, as a matter of fact,
1. an art of ornate speech,
2. an art of funny communication
and
3. a science of persuasive communication.

Further support and sympathy for the ancient idea of solidarity between humor and fallacies can be found in Cicero: "Serious thoughts can also nearly always be drawn from the same source of laughter, of whatever kind it may be" (Cicero 1920: II, 248. See also: II, 216-219) and in Quintilian: "All loci offer proof of an equal opportunity [for jests]." (Quintilian 1949: VI, 3, 65).
The idea that all jests and jokes are, on close inspection, imitations of serious operations is given further support by Richard Whately: "Jests are fallacies … palpable enough to fool no-one, but characterized by that similarity of argument

needed, by contrast, to amuse …. There are different kinds of jokes and railleries which, as we will see, correspond to different kinds of fallacies." (Whately 1975: ch. III, § 20; footnote on p. 202).

In short, as the austere Ludwig Wittgenstein once remarked, "a serious and good philosophical work could be written that would consist entirely of jokes" because, in his words, "humor is no mood, but a world-view". There is however no need for authoritative quotations to realise that fallacies can also be fun. A great deal of plays on words, of witty remarks and of humor in speech derives from deliberately misleading arguments.

1. The fallacy of humor

In the same way as Groucho's jokes also infect the investigator of nightmare, Dylan Dog, similarly humor is appreciated even in a serious debate. But when it is used to divert attention and with the intention to mislead it can become a dangerous fallacy, because it is difficult to confute a relaxing smile or a laugh which involves you. At the very most, if one is strong and able, one can control its effects.

A famous example is the exchange of witty remarks between the bishop Samuel Wilberforce, a resolute opponent of Darwinism, and Thomas Huxley, a tireless advocate of the theory of evolution (1860): "Is it through your grandfather or your grandmother that you claim your descent from a monkey?"

The prompt reply Huxley gave was: "I have no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for my ancestor. I should feel ashamed if my grandfather were a man a like you, who, despite your learning, plays relevant scientific questions down by means of inopportune rhetoric and digressions."

In creating controversy with a detailed project proposed by the American president Th. W. Wilson at the Paris peace conference (1919), Georges Clemenceau sarcastically cried: "Fourteen points, fourteen points! Why the Lord Almighty had only ten?"

Possible reply to the "why?": Ten Commandments were enough for the Lord, for the very reason that he is omniscient as well as omnipotent. Clemenceau's joke nevertheless leaves a mark, a sign of hilarity on the faces of those participating in the conference and the impression that Wilson came across as being pretentious and full of himself.

Humor is a weapon to use when in public. You enjoy the jest and forget the argument for a while, or even definitely. It is however important that the audience

you are addressing is already well predisposed towards the person who makes use of such jests, otherwise you run the risk of having the witty remark interpreted as mockery and it could turn against you.
Moreover a sense of limit and of opportunity is important, a sense which comedians often lack, to stop the speakers from exploiting the clash between the seriousness of the argument and the lightness of tone as a sign of indifference and lack of care: "I don't know to what extent his wit will be appreciated by those present" (protesters, rioters or dissenters). Those who wish to acquire the skill of this kind of fallacy can study the speeches of the slyest politicians.
The reply of a singer to a critic who asked her, in an insistent manner, to name a person she considered to be vulgar: "Sorry, what did you say your name was?" – The irrelevance here is more in the question of the interviewer than in the prompt reply of the person questioned. The first woman member of the English parliament, Nancy L. Astor, obtained this right also because of her ability to face diversionary moves with even better and fitting ones:
"My dear viscountess, what do you know about agriculture? How many toes has a pig?"
"If you want to know, take off your shoes and count them!"
A bystander is more impressed by this kind of reply than by any reasoned explanation.

Simple figures of speech, such as irony, can also stand for irrelevant humor. Napoleon the Third, who was ridiculed by Victor Hugo in the libel entitled *Napoléon le Petit* (1852), didn't reply with another libel, but with a simple: "Napoléon le Petit par Victor Hugo le Grand". Beneath the game of wit and words, we sense the presence of an argument that tends to minimise, through irony, Hugo's value and consequently the value of his libel. (see Reboul 1991: 138-39)

2. The humor of fallacies
I don't know whether there are practical textbooks by inventors of jokes, but no doubt there are techniques the most common of which are precisely those based upon an infraction of the rules of correct reasoning. Someone rightly said that which infuriates and makes a pure logician cry, makes a natural logician laugh. Firstly, words can be worked upon so as to exploit their natural ambiguity. For example: If aesthetics is the study of what is beautiful, anaesthetics must be the study of what is ugly.

This is the same phenomenon that gives rise to the formal fallacy known as “the four terms” or the informal one of ambiguity. Another method consists in inverting or overturning a link: “Why did you put your foot under mine?” – asked to the person whose foot has been trodden on.
Or a causal link can be pushed to the extreme:
“It’s true that worries make you grow grey much quicker. I know someone who is so apprehensive that even his wig turned white.” “She’s so hopeless at gardening that even her silk flowers wilt.”
Finally, pseudo-logical reasoning can be constructed, as in the following argument where a combination of sense and nonsense is obtained by associating a plausible finalistic explanation with an implausible definition.
“The desert: sand is laid on the ground so that the camel, an animal that is unstable on its legs, cannot acquire new humps when it falls.”
“It has been ascertained that the elderly first begin to lose their memory and then their sexual desire. One thus concludes that an eighty-year-old can make love, but without recalling who he is making love to.”
In order to examine how a taxonomy of fallacies can be used as a sketch for creating a joke, transgressing the etiquette of sound reasoning, let us introduce an operational -didactic classification and distinguish between five kinds of fallacies:
I. Formal fallacies
II. Informal linguistic fallacies
III. Informal fallacies due to the omission of relevant elements
IV. Informal fallacies due to the intrusion of irrelevant elements
V. Informal fallacies due to unwarranted presuppositions.

I. Formal fallacies
Some reasonings seem like valid arguments, but in reality the consequential chain is interrupted or broken. Typical examples of fallacies which contain an error in their logical form consist in *affirming the consequent or denying the antecedent*.
The delightful joke of the novice logician is based on this kind of vice: the logician explains to a friend the meaning of logic by deriving, in the following order, from the fact of owning an aquarium, the love for fish, the love for the sea, the love for free, easy, naked women. The friend takes the consequential reasoning to heart and starts to have doubts concerning the sexual habits of a third friend who doesn’t own an aquarium. Here humor arises from the incorrect use of a syllogistic concatenation distorted by the negation of the antecedent.

II. Informal linguistic fallacies

The generating mechanism of this kind of humor is quite simple: a term that has several meanings is used as though it had only one. Example:

Inflation has been arrested. The accomplices must be found. He is clearly ambitious and wants to go a long way. We can help him by giving him a transfer as far away as possible.

Another example of a fallacy of ambiguity associated to one of composition is the witty question and answer: "Why do white sheep eat more than black sheep?" "Because there are more white sheep than black ones." The answer is funny because in playing on the possibility of referring to all sheep as a whole instead of referring to one, the expectation of those who instinctively gives an interpretation in the latter sense is immediately deviated.

III. Informal fallacies due to the omission of relevant elements

"Daddy, Daddy, I don't want to go to Ireland! "

"Shut up and keep swimming".

Here the relevant information appears at the end. The technique used is known as "derailment": the sentence runs smoothly until we are unexpectedly informed that father and son are swimming across the channel.

IV. Informal fallacies due to the intrusion of irrelevant elements

Examples:

A verbal agreement is not worth the paper it's written on. People think the tobacco business is easy. That all we do is use ads to create addicts. But what other industry could show a profit after killing 400.000 customers every year? (Wasserman)

V. Informal fallacies due to unwarranted presuppositions.

The guest, turning to the English baron who has just confessed to having only played polo once and to having found it boring, to having only watched a play once and to having found that boring too…: "I assume, baron, that you have an only child". This is a good example of analogical fallacy and of dry British humor.

Another example of the presence of fragile assumptions which tamper with the conclusion turning the implicit reasoning into something witty, is the rebuke that Gogol puts in the mouth of one of his characters in addressing a subject, a rebuke which could have easily been pronounced by an Italian judge of our day: "You steal too much for a functionary of your degree". The error and humor rest on the

untenable parallel created between the professional hierarchy and the hierarchy of crimes.

Needless to say an error in our reasoning, a blunder, is not by itself sufficient to generate comical effects: 2 + 2 = 5 makes no-one laugh; 0 + 0 = 8 can make us smile when we realise that the two 0 symbols can be combined to form the number 8 by a gestalt switch. An error can become comical when it is really deviating, surprising, not common and flat -astonishment is the source of knowledge and surprise is the essence of humor – and secondly, not censurable or in any case harmless.

Everyone knows that laughter is a distinguishing mark of humanity; laughter is in the first place the distinguishing mark of rationality, insofar as it is a consequential reaction and an inferential logical elaboration, and secondly, insofar as it denotes behaviour that presupposes an act of creative reconstruction. As a matter of fact, in all reported cases of humor, the fallacy rooted in the reasoning must be appreciated if laughter is to be triggered off. This can only happen thanks to the creative integration that no machine and calculation can and will ever be able to perform. Inverting the title of a collection of jests of a philosophical nature, edited by John Allen Paulos (1985), *I think, therefore I laugh*, we could equally and more aptly say: I laugh, therefore I think.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 – Wittgenstein And Cognitive Psychology

Wittgenstein's philosophy of psychology has often been characterized to be behavioristic. On the other hand, the rise of cognitive psychology partly resulted from a critique of behaviorism. It seems that there is an incompatibility between Wittgenstein and cognitive psychology. The thesis that they have only hostile relationship seems to be supported by the work of Rom Harre.**[i]** According to Harre, Wittgenstein's philosophical-psychological doctrine would refute the possibility of artificial intelligence. In this article, however, I will argue that such a thesis that there is a-zero-sum game relationship between Wittgenstein and cognitive psychology has to be modified. Certainly, Harre's thesis is correct insofar as the "strong AI" is concerned. But this does not exclude a positive cooperation between Wittgenstein and cognitive psychology, if one just maintains the "weak AI." Namely, in terms of John Searle's distinction of the strong AI and the Weak AI, one can well develop a different picture of the relationship between Wittgenstein and cognitive psychology. In order to support my thesis, I will mainly focus on the clarification of the connection between Wittgenstein's conception of logical compulsion and P. N. Johnson-Laird's mental-models theory of inference. Since "thinking" is a key concept for Wittgenstein's philosophical psychology as well as for cognitive psychology, my clarification should concretely demonstrate in what way a positive dialogue between them can be possible. In particular, this should also provide a concrete example for showing how the weak AI approach can contribute to the development of philosophical psychology.

1.

In *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* Wittgenstein writes, "In what sense is logical argument a compulsion? –'After all you grant this and this; so you must also grant this!' This is the way of compelling someone. That is to say, one can in fact compel people to admit something in the way – Just as one can e.g. compel some to go over there by pointing over there with a bidding gesture of the hand." (§ 117) It is well known that here Wittgenstein tries to show that inference

is basically a kind of skill or practice. But one can also clearly see that Wittgenstein approaches the phenomenon of logical inference from a "third person" standpoint. Namely, he construes the "logical must" in terms of "order-giving." Even in speaking of "order-obeying," Wittgenstein does not dig out its internal structure from a "first person" standpoint. In addition, Wittgenstein is satified with his explanation to leave out the account of the way how these orders operate. To be sure, in terms of speech act theory, one might say that Wittgenstein traces the source of logical compulsion back to the illocutionary force. In this sense, his account of the "inexorability" of logic is purely "linguistic" in character. For Wittgenstein, a logical compulsion is in reality not merely psychological.

On the other hand, Johnson-Laird provides us with a cognitive psychology of inference.9 In terms of mental models, Johnson-Laird shows concretely how logical thinking in daily life proceeds. It is remarkable that Johnson-Laird's mental-models approach reveals that people make inference without recourse to rules of logic. On the contrary, the rise of laws of logic merely results from the search for systematic principles governing validity, after people find difficulties in inference.**[ii]** That is to say, the employment of logical principle of inference is only secondary. Such a phenomenological fact shows that the authority of the laws of thought is not merely linguistic in character. Rather, the ultimate source for the laws of inference lies in the thinking-competence of the people. In this manner, Johnson-Laird's mental-models theory of inference unfolds the working of the mechanism of our reasoning process. This also clearly demonstrates the strength of cognitive psychology.

Johnson-Laird's result certainly has impact upon Wittgenstein's thesis concerning the logical compulsion. However, this implies not a total negation, but rather a modification, of Wittgenstein's position. First of all, insofar as people, in particular, children, are able to reason without recourse to any laws of inference and the rise of laws of inference merely results from the reflective control, it is impossible to construe the authority of the laws of inference purely in terms of linguistic conventions. However, regarding the employment of the logical laws in the complicated inference as well as in training courses, Wittgenstein's explication is still valid. To be sure, in general, the logical compulsion is psychological as well as linguistic in character. Furthermore, it is true that Johnson-Laird is a fan for the strong AI. He explicitly claims, "The mind can be

modelled by a parallel automaton that contains a model of itself."**[iii]** However, as far as his theory of mental models is concerned, Johnson-Laird makes no actual appeal to the strong AI. As a matter of fact, Johnson-Laird employs computer modelling merely in order to test the feasibility of the working hypotheses about mental models. He also stresses that "their credibility will be tested by experimental studies."**[iv]** So, what is actually operative in his theory of mental models is only the weak AI thesis.

2.

Although Wittgenstein explicitly declares that "a machine surely cannot think" (PI, § 360), in accounting for the hardness of the logical must, he appeals to "the action of a machine." (RFM, § 122) Indeed, he also speaks of the logical machine. In order to give warning against the following picture: "'But I can infer any what actually does follow' – That is to say, what the logical machine really does produce", Wittgenstein appeals to the "ideally rigid machine." (RFM, §119) Obviously, Wittgenstein limits himself to the level of hardware of the logical machine. Namely, he fails to realize that it is the software or program which plays the prominent role in determining the action of a logical machine. It is mainly because Wittgenstein was living in a pre-computer age. Hence, it might be unfair to charge Wittgenstein of ignoring the distinction between hardware and software. But this does not exclude the necessity for us to supplement Wittgenstein's position. To be sure, from Wittgenstein's negative answer to the question "Could a machine think?", it can be clearly seen that there is an incompatibility between Wittgenstein and the strong AI. But, insofar as he does not refrain himself from appealing to the logical machine in accounting for the hardness of the logical must, one can assert that Wittgenstein has indeed already implicitly adopted the weak AI.

Certainly, with our contemporary knowledge of computer, one must add that it is the program which finally guarantees the hardness of the logical must. In any case, this should lend support to our thesis that there is a positive cooperation between Wittgenstein and the weak AI.

3.

In characterizing thinking as a kind of skill or practice, Wittgenstein primarily focuses himself to the dimension of performance. Although he admits that "there is even something in saying: he can't think it" (RFM, § 116), he does not enter into the dimension of competence. Namely, in being concentrated on thinking as a

performance, Wittgenstein overlooks thinking as a competence. Wittgenstein explicitly claims, “The laws of logic are indeed the expression of the ‘thinking habits’ but also of the habit of thinking. That is to say they can be said to show: how human beings think, and also what human beings call ‘thinking’.” (RFM, §131) Here one can clearly see that for Wittgenstein, the laws of logic mainly serve for the performance of thinking. But in order to vindicate Wittgenstein’s these that “The propositions of logic are ‘laws of thought’, ‘because they bring out the essence of human thinking’ –
to put it more correctly: because they bring out, or show, the essence, the technique, of thinking. They show what thinking is and also show kinds of thinking” (RFM, § 133), it is necessary to add that here as “laws of thought” the laws of logic are normative in character. However, even with such a granting of the normative status to the laws of logic, being the laws of thought they do not provide any descriptive information concerning the internal operation of reasoning as a cognitive process. Indeed, a satisfactory account of “what thinking is” must also include the task of unfolding of the thinking as competence. Accordingly, one might say that Wittgenstein is strong in accounting for the performative aspect of thinking, but weak in explaining the dimension of thinking as competence. In this sense, his theory of the essence of thinking is incomplete.

On the other hand, Johnson-Laird’s theory of mental models provides an explanation of the functional organization of our reasoning process. In particular, this theory not only explains “how children acquire the ability to make inference,” but also allows that “people are able to make valid inference, that is, they are potentially rational.”**[v]** Accordingly, cognitive psychology of reasoning can well be regarded as a supplement to Wittgenstein’s philosophical psychology. No one would deny Wittgenstein’s thesis that “the language is itself the vehicle of thought.” (PI, § 329) One might also agree with his doctrine that “Thinking is not an incorporeal process which lends life and sense to speaking, and which it would be possible to detach from speaking.” (PI, § 339) According to the traditional view, “the thoughts are already there (perhaps were there in advance) and we merely look for their expression.” (PI, § 335) It is the major contribution of Wittgenstein to refute such a traditional view. However, what Wittgenstein has done is only to provide us with a clarification of the ontological status of thinking. Namely, his theory is basically ontological in character. In focusing on the question of what is the being of thinking, Wittgenstein does not account for the epistemological process of thinking. That is to say, he does not clarify how people

“derive conclusion from a certain premise in a syllogism”, for example. On the other hand, Johnson-Laird points out that “The theory of mental models is intended to explain the higher process of cognition, in particular, comprehension and inference.”**[vi]** Here one can see that only by taking Johnson-Laird’s theory of mental models into consideration that a more complete account of “how human beings think” can be expected.

Regarding the question “Is thinking a kind of speaking? (PI, § 330), Wittgenstein seems to answer positively. That is the reason why his followers like Rom Harre maintain that thinking is speaking. Nevertheless, one should give warning against this position. As far as it serves to deny the thesis that ”Thinking is an incorporeal process, “it is acceptable. But it cannot be extended to signify any elimination of the autonomy of thinking in favour of speaking. As Leibniz points out, “That A is the same as B means that one can be substituted for the other in any proposition without loss of truth.”**[vii]** Obviously, “John is a good speaker” is not necessarily identical with “John is a good thinker.” Moreover, we know that some famous logicians have difficulty in speech. Indeed, starting with the Leibnizian salva veritate principle, one can enumerate many counterexamples to the thesis that thinking is speaking.

To be sure, as far as its performance is concerned, thinking has to be incorporated into speech. However, this should not blind us to the distinction between “the ability to think” and “the ability to speak.” A playboy, who is skilful in speech, might not be able to draw conclusion correctly in a simple syllogism. This should show that thinking-competence must be distinguished from speaking-competence. It is mainly because Wittgenstein limits himself to the dimension of performance that he fails to realize such a distinction. It is only when we go beyond the dimension of performance and enter into the dimension of competence that we can realize the distinction between “the ability to think” and “the ability to speak.” In sum, in spite of the inseparability between thinking and speaking, they are essentially different kinds of competence. Such a difference points to the necessity of the introduction of an investigation of thinking-competence. The strength of cognitive psychology lies exactly in its exploration of our mental competence.

My above investigation shows that in terms of a Chomskyan distinction between performance and competence, one not only can provide appropriate topological determinations for Wittgenstein’s philosophical psychology and cognitive

psychology, respectively, but also can find a way to bridge them together. As far as the relationship between Wittgenstein and cognitive psychology is concerned, one can reach the following conclusion: There might be an either/or relationship between Wittgenstein and the strong AI – as it is demonstrated by Rom Harre, but there is a cooperative relationship between Wittgenstein and the weak AI. That is to say, there can well be a positive relationship between Wittgenstein and cognitive psychology.

NOTES

i. Cf. Harre, 1988.

ii. In brief, according to Johnson-Laird, a general procedure for making inference mainly includes the following three steps: (I) "Construct a mental model for the first premise." (II) "Add the information in the second premise to the mental model of the first premise, taking into account the different ways in which this can be done." (III) " Frame a conclusion to express the relation, if any, between the 'end' terms that holds in all the models of the premises." (Johnson-Laird, 1983, 97-101)

iii. Johnson-Laird, 1983, 476-477.

iv. Ibid, 11

v. Ibid, 66.

vi. Ibid, 446.

vii. Leibniz, 1966, 52

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