

# **ISSA Proceedings 2014 - Gender And Generative Argument: Locating The National Women's History Museum In The Landscape Of Public Memory**

*Abstract:* Historical memory is mediated through public argument that determines which histories are celebrated or silenced. This essay examines the effort of the National Women's History Museum [NWHM] to establish a significant physical site in Washington, D.C. by exploring in close detail how the case for women's history that NWHM addressed to the U.S. public developed by focusing in particular on the initial arguments that circulated when the Museum was founded in 1996.

*Keywords:* commemoration, generative argument, National Women's History Museum, public memory, women, women's history

## *1. Introduction*

Among the questions relevant to how historical memory is mediated through public argument, examining whose story is articulated as important, what aspects of history are deemed to deserve a monument or museum at a given time, and why certain aspects of a cultural history are commemorated are significant points of inquiry. In essence, public argumentatively negotiate what constitutes our "public memory," designating people, events, and actions that are deemed worthy of remembrance. In particular, the intersection of gender ideologies with the processes of commemoration is a primary locus of rhetorical controversy.

In 1996, Karen Staser envisioned that a museum devoted to women's history could be built on the National Mall in Washington, D. C. With a small group of volunteers, she founded an organization called "The National Museum of Women's History," dedicated to making her vision a reality. In 1997 they accomplished a lasting achievement by leading the effort to raise the "Portrait Monument" to the Capitol Rotunda from the basement, where the massive marble

tribute to women's suffrage had been consigned since it was given to the U.S. Government by in 1920. In subsequent years, the Museum mounted several small exhibitions and launched its "cyber museum" that features several curated exhibits about various topics such as women in espionage, woman suffrage, women in sport. What this young non-profit organization, now renamed as the "National Women's History Museum," did not foresee is that nearly 20 years after it's founding, they still would be seeking the required approval of the U.S Congress to lease, buy, or build a physical site that would house a women's museum on or near the their targeted area of the Mall.

This essay is part of a larger project that analyzes the public argument associated with the prolonged effort of the National Women's History Museum [NWHM] to establish a significant physical site in Washington, D.C. The organization has been successful in raising the necessary private funds to sustain the organization's efforts and in amassing bi-partisan supporters in the U.S. Congress, which ultimately must approve the NWHM's request to locate a building on or near the National Mall, but these overtures repeatedly were blocked by members of the Washington D.C. community or stalled in Congressional committees. My forthcoming larger study explores in close detail how the "case" for women's history that NWHM addressed to the U.S. public developed through several stages of argument and debate, as various sites have been considered, efforts blocked, and multiple legislation initiatives introduced. The portion of the NWHM engagement with public memory addressed in this essay focuses on the initial arguments when the Museum was founded and how it argued its case for the significance of women's history.

## *2. Public memory and sacred places*

Monuments and museums function as material evidence of the public debates to designate people, places, and events as important. The absence of certain individuals and their experience in such spaces indicates by implication the relative lack of significance placed upon them by those who have the power and means to control commemorative processes. As John Bodnar (1992) explains, public memory must be understood as an ideological system, "a cognitive device to mediate competing interpretations and privilege some explanations over others" (p.14). As a process that inescapably denotes the dominant values and perspective, critics who analyze these argument processes must "ponder the tensions between past and present - or more accurately, the tensions between

historical fidelity to the past and contemporary political motives in the present” (Reyes, 2011, p. 597). Public memory studies focus attention on the remembering and forgetting that swirls around public museums and memorials, an analytical process involving evocation of recursive and reflective processes. The contemporary studies of space and place invite contemplation of “preferred readings, undesignated space, and the ideological nature of the signifiers that become objects of desire, identification, movement, and authenticity” (Dickenson, Blair, and Ott, 2010, p. 33).

Consequently, public memory is a rhetorical process. As arguments circulate in the public realm, disputes arise especially over what should be commemorated, and where. Specific locations designate for public audiences particular notions about what is most worthy of memory, and these geographies are marked with conflicts. In particular, spaces deemed especially “sacred” become sites for public memory negotiations. These debates within publics can be identified by how their shared interpretations are represented in their discourses about a disputed site and by how those share interpretations evince traces of other discourses that they have pulled into their encounter with the these spaces. This is what Robert Aden (2012) refers to as “centripidal and centrifugal force” in the negotiation of memory. NWHM’s campaigns to shape public memory, engage battles on two such sacred grounds in Washington, D.C.: the Capitol Rotunda, specifically, the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Gender and race also are particular arenas of contention regarding who will be remembered and in what ways. Relevant to this study, entry into public memory has been particularly difficult for women on the National terrain of U.S. history and memory. For example, no comprehensive museum devoted to women’s history exists in the U.S. In Washington D.C., the Smithsonian Institution includes specific museums regarding American Indian history, African American and Asian Art, and a future museum devoted to African American history, but the only permanent exhibits in the Smithsonian that relate women’s history are devoted to the First Ladies’ gowns. Additionally, no statue of woman was installed in U.S. Capitol Rotunda until 1997. Consequently, the arguments undertaken by NWHM to claim a space for women’s history in the National Mall challenge ideological assumptions related both to sacred political space as well as the legitimacy of women to enter into these realms.

### *3. Generative argument*

The theoretical frame defining “generative argument” that is employed in this analysis of the Museum’s early arguments is derived from several linguistic and rhetorical theories. The “generative” most commonly is defined as capable of production/reproduction, from the Latin *generare*, to beget. A specific usage of the “generative” concept comes from generative linguistics that is related to the application of finite rules to produce all items generated from a specific starting point, formulated by Noam Chomsky (1965) to emphasize the association between deep structures and surface structures. This idea of generative as related to structures that are produced from root concepts provides a useful frame for thinking about the function of generative arguments.

A second useful conceptualization comes from Kenneth Burke from his book *Counter-Statement* where he discusses the function of the symbol as a generating principle. Burke states:

*As the symbol is ramified, Symbols within Symbols will arise, many of these secondary Symbols with no direct bearing upon the pattern of experience behind the key Symbol. These secondary or ramifying Symbols can be said to bear upon the underlying pattern of experience only in so far as they contribute to the workings of the key Symbol. In essence, the foundational symbol generates others, but always within a range that is limited by the meanings in this root symbol. (1968, p. 157)*

Considering how, in particular, generative argument functions in relation to questions of gender and identity politics, the key symbol or principle can be powerful if grounded in gender experience, but also limited by the cultural definitions associated with it. This makes appeals to gender as a root inherently evocative but also constrained. Gender, therefore can be a paradoxical root symbol, as generative symbolic action provides a means to identification and difference; its invocation as symbolic root also limits and defines rhetorical action. As Burke notes,

*Symbols will be subtilized in ways not contributory to the pattern. The weak King cannot be too weak, the manly Peasant cannot be too manly—thus we find the Poet “defending” to an extent the very character whom he would denigrate, and detracting from the character who is to triumph. Such considerations arise with the adoption of the Symbol, which is the conversion of an experiential pattern into a formula for affecting an audience. (1968, p. 157)*

For the generative arguments grounded in gender identities and experiences, this means that the discursive case generated from the root cannot stray too far from cultural roles and categories that are familiar to audiences; following Burke, the case for women's history cannot be too radical and cannot deviate too far from the cultural meanings embedded in the symbol itself. Hence, the NWHM finds itself bound by the very symbols that they must employ to argue the case for the importance of women's history and the need for such a commemoration in the National sacred spaces of Washington, D.C.

#### *4. NWHM'S generative symbols*

The NWHM encountered multiple debates over sacred terrain that emerged just after its founding. First, the Museum continues to meet with opposition from the U.S. Congress over its desire to locate its permanent building in the National Mall area. Second, the first campaign undertaken by NWHM regarded the relocation of a statue commemorating three women suffrage advocates from a basement room to the precious civic real estate of the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. NWHM hoped to use the relocation of the statue, known as the "Portrait Monument," as a way to establish legitimacy within political and philanthropic realms. Significant symbolic choices made by NWHM in relation to both public campaigns are found in the organization's early documents that make the case for women's history, where the root principles of the arguments emerge. The key generative root symbols are the definition of "woman" and "women's history."

Quite significantly, the Museum chose for its initial logo a visual representation of a sculpture of a woman. The figure is labelled on its base as being from 2500-4500 B.C., and is a very abstract representation, conveying a universal and ancient grounding for women's history. The image often formed the left border on the letterhead initially used by the NWHM and also was reproduced in other publications as a small logo next to the Museum's name. The Museum's early brochures also evoke symbols and descriptions that use an inclusive and universalizing narrative to define the key ideas of "woman" and "women's history"

First, the definition of woman reflects traditional cultural dictates. For example, an early brochure from 1996 states that: "The Museum's exhibits will showcase the specific achievements women have made in every area of human endeavour and celebrate their contributions as wife, mother, sister, daughter, healer, teacher, scientist, artist, entrepreneur, and leader" (NWHM, 1996a). Notably

absent from this list is any specific reference to political activity. Moreover, the term “contributions” functions to foreground women as always defined in relation to what they do for others.

The case that the Museum makes for what constitutes women’s history and the practice of commemoration also is broadly defined, apolitical, and celebratory. An early brochure states: “The Museum enjoys strong, nonpartisan support from congressional officials, women’s groups, political and business clubs, corporations, and individuals who share the vision for an institution that showcases women’s achievements” (NWHM, 1996b). Here, the word “showcases” indicates that women’s history is to be celebrated and seen, but not that it is an active dynamic force of change.

The Museum likewise depicted its supporters and its mission in similarly broad, yet circumscribed ways. One of its brochures claims that women’s groups “of all racial, ethnic, and political backgrounds support a museum that values women’s contributions in the home, work place, classroom, laboratory, and hospital – indeed, all places where women serve the nation on the earth, under, the sea, and in outer space.” (NWHM, 1996b). Certainly, the NWHM cast its definition of ‘women’ and ‘women’s history’ quite wide, but notably absent from these early statements is any direct mention of arenas related to political change, social protest, social justice, and cultural transformation.

Rather, the Museum’s traditional sense that women are mothers, wives, sisters, and healers, but not politicians, agitators, or legislators, reveals the way that the subsequent symbols generated from the initial symbolic invocation of “woman” in a universal sense served to limit the Museum’s articulation of scope and purpose. Hence, early brochures promote the Museum with the slogan, “Sharing Women’s Rich Cultural Heritage with Current and Future Generations” as opposed to “confronting, correcting, or repudiating.” An early fundraising letter also articulates what the Museum will do to address the need to recognize women’s history. In this set of statements, the generalized, yet also limiting, definition of “woman” and “women’s history” is implied in the actions that it will undertake: “exploring and celebrating the *contributions* women have made to community and civilization in their many roles such as mother, wife, sister, daughter, healer, teacher, and leader” (NWHM, 1996c).

In all, the Museum’s early promotional statements reflect a positive and

nonpartisan rhetoric of “celebration” and “valuing” rather than correction or accusation. Both the promise and the pitfalls of the symbols generated from the root definition of woman can be seen in the debate over the suffrage monument. In becoming involved in the campaign to raise the suffrage statue and install it in the “sacred” spaces of the Capitol rotunda, NWHM found itself engaged in two different disputes over the question of who belonged in those hallowed halls.

### 5. *Women enter the rotunda*

The 1920 Portrait Monument sculpture was commissioned by the National Women’s Party to commemorate the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gave women the right to vote. The 13-ton sculpture, which bears the likenesses of suffrage advocates Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott, was completed by Adelaide Johnson and given to Congress in 1921, which first refused it, then yielded to pressure from women’s groups and brought it into the Rotunda, held a gala for 5000 people, then banished it to a basement closet. Later it was installed in the Capitol Crypt, a passageway in the basement, and finally available to public view in in 1963. Four previous attempts to move the statue to the rotunda had failed (“Adelaide Johnson,” 2014; “Portrait Monument,” 2014).

After the NWHM initiated its campaign to move the statue, debate ensued over whether it “deserved” a place among the other all male statues in the sacred space of the Capitol rotunda. *Washington Post* columnist George Will, for example, stated: “Unfortunately the supply of greatness is, it seems, infinite, and the supply of choice Washington spots for homage to greatness is not. The supply of greatness long ago exceeded the supply of space for statues in the rotunda” (Will, 1997, p. C7). As Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci (1991) in their study of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial noted, such places are not closed texts: “these structures are not only symbolic of the conflict over appropriate commemoration; they constitute the actual historic residue of that conflict” (p. 277). In NWHM’s drive to move the Portrait Monument, deep cultural rifts regarding gender and race became visible.

The first dispute regarded making the claim for women’s place in the Capitol Rotunda. As anticipated, there was significant opposition to the legislative efforts to relocate the statue both within the Congress and in the press. As a marker of things to come in the persistent resistance it would encounter in its legislative campaigns to garner the necessary approval to locate the Museum on the

National Mall, both houses of the U.S. Congress had to approve a bill that allowed for the suffrage statue to be moved to the Rotunda of the Capitol. An additional barrier the statue advocates encountered was the increased costs for the actual raising resulting from a delay in this Congressional approval process. Still, by September 1996, the U.S. Congress had approved moving the statue, as long as the coalition of women's groups paid for the costs of the move.

This fundraising effort is where the National Museum of Women's History played a central role. By becoming involved in the campaign to raise the suffrage statue, the Museum hoped that it would generate interest and establish a base of support for its efforts, as later explained in a letter to members: "We chose the project to see if we could assemble a group of individuals who could not only move the statue and correct that piece of history, but also bring together people who would make possible a national Museum celebrating all of women's history, both nationally and internationally, from the dawn of time" (Staser, 1997). The universalizing language here indicates an optimistic, sweeping vision for the Museum's scope and definition of "women's history". Such broad strokes created a generative paradox for the Museum when a second, more focused controversy emerged during their drive to raise the suffrage statue. The mission statements and early case made for the museum is not overtly political, nor does it feature race, class or other distinctions. Hence, when a dispute emerged that brought the issue of race into sharp relief, it exposed the inherent problems in the rhetoric that the Museum had adopted.

When the Museum first entered into collaboration with other historical and Women's organizations to raise the statue, the effort encountered little opposition from these constituencies; in fact, universalized language of "woman" served to bind these groups in their efforts to allow the suffrage statue serve as the symbol for women in the prime political territory of the Capitol Rotunda. Much to the surprise of the Museum's board members, however, the most significant and sustained challenge to their Raise the Statue campaign came from another women's group, the National Political Congress of Black Women [NPCBW]. The group's president, C. DeLores Tucker, began circulating letters in October, 1996 that opposed moving the statue, arguing that any monument in the Capitol that commemorates women's suffrage must include a likeness of Sojourner Truth. Tucker's group proposed that the unfinished portion of the suffrage monument should be carved with Truth's likeness.



Tucker's insistence on Truth as the symbolic carrier of black women's history, requires a brief background. Truth, named Isabella, was born a slave in upstate New York, 1797; after she was freed, she lectured in east and Midwest regions, speaking at forums with other abolition and women's rights advocates. Truth frequently is invoked as a symbol for contemporary black feminists to depict their exclusion, especially the angry Sojourner Truth who reportedly interrogated her audience of White women with the question "ain't I a woman?" Although now widely disputed, this characterization comes from Frances Gage's 1863 account of a speech given by Truth in 1851. According to this report, Truth faced a hostile audience of women who did not want her to speak because they feared that the cause of women's rights would be harmed if mixed up with the issue of black rights (Gage, 1867, p. 4). This image of the angry Sojourner is the most widely known, having been anthologized in collections of speeches and frequently referenced by historians. It is the one most likely to be adopted by contemporary rhetors in search of an image of defiance (Mandziuk & Fitch, 2001). Hence, deeply embedded identity politics are at play between white and African American feminists.

The Museum board members who served as spokeswomen for the coalition to raise the statue were caught in the generalities of the universalizing rhetoric they had adopted, and consequently had little specific grounds from which to respond to the challenge from Tucker's group. As Museum Vice President Joan Meacham stated, "it has been very surprising that all of these problems have come up. It's just amazing" (Merida, 1997, p. A1). The Museum worked diligently both publicly and behind the scenes to resolve the conflict, but Tucker remained unmoved from her resolute stand, founded on a rhetoric of difference and defiance, for which the discourse of inclusion had no answer. Tucker's initial letter from October 18, 1996 sharply critiqued the politics of exclusion that marked the history of white and black women. After two pages in which she argues for Truth's historical importance and recounts how African American women were asked to defer their interests and made invisible by white women, she states: "when you raise the Woman Suffrage statue, we want to stand tall and proud with our children so that they will not receive a distorted and divisive image of history. But that will not be if Sojourner Truth is not sculpted into the space that is so rightfully hers" (Tucker, 1996a). Tucker ends the letter with a strong critique of the universalizing rhetoric that the Museum espouses: "There is the adage 'those who do not know their history are doomed to repeat it.' Likewise, women who do not know their history

are doomed to repeat it, too” (Tucker, 1996a).

In her letter responding to Tucker’s missive detailing the NPCBW protest, the Museum’s president, Karen Staser, first argued from circumstance: The contracts were signed, the Congress was in recess, and no evidence, as Tucker had claimed, existed that the unfinished portion was intended by the sculptor to be filled in with an African American woman’s likeness. Instead, Staser offers the idea that “a similar campaign to raise public awareness of the injustice suffered by Sojourner Truth should be undertaken” in the next congressional session (Staser, 1996). Second, Staser summoned the universalized sense of women’s history and echoed the positive tone of the early documents when she stated: “The one immutable fact that ties all women together is our history. Regardless of our rich and diverse causes, we all share the common need to bring that history to light” (Staser, 1996).

Despite some behind the scenes meetings with Tucker and the NPCBW, no resolution was reached; in fact, opposition to the raising of the statue accelerated even as the Museum and other advocates made plans for a June 1997 dedication. Tucker addressed a second letter directly to Sen. John Warner, chair of the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, under whose jurisdiction the statue legislation resided, in March 1997, in which she emphatically wrote: “when schoolchildren come to the Capitol Rotunda to see the statue....We do not want them to wonder why SOJOURNER TRUTH was not a part of the statue when she was a *leading* voice of the movement” (Tucker, 1997a). Interestingly, this account of history is itself a reconstruction of Truth’s importance that many historians would dispute, yet constitutes a recasting of the Truth narrative that white women excluded her and were hostile to her. Tucker ends with an emphatic statement: “We fully support the idea of the statue being raised, but only if it includes SOJOURNER TRUTH. OUR FIRM POSITION IS THAT NO STATUE SHOULD BE PLACED IN THE ROTUNDA WITHOUT SOJOURNER TRUTH!!!” (Tucker, 1997a).

As the conflict progressed, *Washington Post* reporter Kevin Merida noted in April 1997 that the dispute “is so vigorous it is beginning to divide women who normally are allies” (1997, p. A1). Merida’s article quotes Staser as stating, “This is a mess.... We are trying to heal our country and bring people together, and I am just heartsick over it.” In the same article, Tucker is quoted as responding to this unification language with an insistence on difference: “We just feel that the

bottom line is that it does not represent the suffragette movement....It's wrong and we are going to do everything we can do to stop it. We have been left out of history too much and we are not going to going to be left out any more" (Merida, 1997, p. A1). By May, the NPCBW was circulating a list of over 100 organizations that endorsed it efforts to block the statue. Even into June, as invitations had been issued and the statue was prepared for its relocation, The NPCBW protest continued; a June 6 memo contains a call for a meeting about the "Sojourner Truth issue" in which Tucker rejects the idea of a separate statue of Truth as akin to a re-enactment of the Plessy v. Ferguson separate but equal doctrine (Tucker, 1997b).

Clearly, the Museum and the NPCBW stances were irreconcilable because they were generated from two different root principles. For the National museum of Women's History, honoring Truth separately or later fit easily within its universalizing definition of "woman." However, because Tucker and the NPCBW started from difference and discrimination as root principles, there was no meeting point that would not leave them feeling demeaned. The opposition to the Museum's efforts exposed the contradictions in the notion of women's history and the difficult politics of race. As Dickinson, Blair, and Ott note, public memory debates are not necessarily comprised of pre-constituted opposing constituencies; rather, "publics emerge in relationship to discourses, events, objects, and practices" (2010, p. 15).

Ultimately the Portrait Monument was dedicated on June 26, 1997, and still resides in The Capitol Rotunda. In 2009, a bust of Sojourner Truth was installed in the Capitol Visitors Center, the culmination of the efforts begun by Tucker. Consequently, Truth does reside in the Capitol, but in arguably a less prominent "neighborhood". Somewhat ironically, the Museum obtained a bust of Truth in 1998 that it had planned to travel to different states as part of their commemorative efforts; the husband of one of its board members was the sculptor. Clearly this effort to showcase Truth was a response to the Tucker conflict, but the plan ultimately gained little traction, perhaps because the Museum's ownership of the bust was not quite absolute. After the bust travelled to the state Capitol in Georgia, and resided briefly in a few Congresswomen's offices, it was revoked by the artist and resides in his home.

## 6. *Conclusion*

Overarching this dispute over the Portrait Monument and the role of the NWHM

loomed the larger issue of commemoration in the sacred space, and questions about who deserved to be granted entry into that realm. Clearly, when the NWHM encountered a challenge to its universalizing definition of women and its inclusive view of history, it had difficulty responding to a specific challenge based in race and difference. Currently, the Museum, now known as the National Women's History Museum, continues its efforts on the second battle to bring women into the sacred space of the National Mall by building a permanent museum. Their legislation has been introduced during every session since 1996, but has yet to be passed by both legislative branches. As of September 2014 the NWHM legislation was approved by the U.S. House of Representatives, with the remainder of the year to mount a successful vote in the U.S. Senate. If approved, this legislation would establish a commission to study the need for the museum and an appropriate site.

The history of women may yet come to Washington, D.C., but the symbolic outlines of that history remain to be determined. The early arguments set out by the NWHM indicate how powerfully constraining the initial root concepts chosen can be for later rhetorical appeals. Given the generative constraints set out by its initial definitions and symbols, and their problematic generality, it is evident that the NWHM's rhetorical challenges will continue.

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**ISSA Proceedings 2014 - An**

# Epistemic Theory Of Argumentation For Intercultural Argumentative Dialogues

*Abstract:* In scenarios of legal pluralism, adjudicators cannot always generalize their cognitive standards because some of the reasons put forward only make sense in a cultural context. How can the adjudicators assess arguments that make sense in a culturally different worldview? The answer for this should include a method for the evaluation of the culturally-dependent arguments. I will evaluate the main theories of epistemic justification looking for the most compelling answer for this question.

*Keywords:* Epistemological theories of argumentation, legal pluralism, argumentation in intercultural scenarios, theories of justification, adjudication

## 1. Introduction

I believe that scenarios of legal pluralism pose certain question to theories of argumentation. Broadly speaking, scenarios of legal pluralism are either legal communities where the cultural diversity of their populations is legally recognized and protected such as Australia (Mabo and Others v. Queensland 1992) Canada (Canadian Multicultural Act 1985) or Colombia (Const. 1991), or international tribunals where legal agents (e.g., judges, juries, prosecutors, defendants, witnesses, and so on) belong to culturally differentiated groups (Cryer 2007; Kelsall 2009). In scenarios of legal pluralism, some of the conflicts involve members of culturally differentiated groups who justify their allegations with arguments that only make sense in the culture to which they belong. If the adjudicator does not share the same cultural worldview as the parts under litigation, how can he/she come to make a decision determining the parties' rights and obligations?

A simple picture of adjudication illustrates my point. It is commonly accepted that the resolution of legal disputes requires the application of the law in accordance with the facts alleged by the parties. Consequently, adjudication implies epistemological evaluations. To be sure, adjudicators assess litigant's factual reconstructions determining whether or not their beliefs are justified. If a legal

dispute takes place in a culturally unified scenario, the adjudicator becomes an archetypal epistemic agent. This means that he/she confers or denies justification based on the assumption that he/she and the parties are experientially and doxastically alike. Therefore, if he/she were undergoing the experiences alleged by the parties, and he/she would be justified in his/her beliefs, then the parties would be justified, too. In scenarios of legal pluralism, alternatively, adjudicators cannot generalize their cognitive standards because the alleged facts are reconstructed from culturally different views. That is to say that although the adjudicator and the parties are experientially alike, they are doxastically different.

If my diagnosis is accurate, how can the adjudicators determine the justificatory status of a belief inferred from a radically differentiated cultural view? The main theories of epistemic justification (i.e., foundationalism, coherentism and reliabilism) offer competing answers for this question. I will evaluate these accounts defending that reliabilism provides the best response. With this in mind, I will complete the following agenda. First, I will formulate the issue more carefully. In doing this, I will use some legal cases decided by the Colombian Constitutional Court. Second, I will reconstruct the three alternative answers provided for the theories of epistemic justification, and I will evaluate these competing accounts.

## *2. The problem*

As I take it, the problem of determining the justificatory status of a belief held from a culturally differentiated group emerges from intercultural argumentative dialogues where the positions under debate are a product of radically different worldviews. To clarify, the trigger of an argumentative dialogue is a difference of opinions between two arguers. The radical difference of the intercultural argumentative dialogues under scrutiny comes from the fact that the participants in these dialogues do not do have unified doxastic states because of their differentiated cultural perspectives. This is illustrated in the following case decided by the Colombian Constitutional Court.

### *Case 1*

(Argumentative Dialogues Arising from Radically Differentiated Cultural Views):

In 1997, the Colombian indigenous community, called Paes, was reported to the Colombian Constitutional Court by one of its members. A man was found guilty of the murder of another member of his community, and he was sentenced to sixty lashes by the Paes judicial authorities. He said this punishment was torture, and it

was illegal because under the Constitution of Colombia (Art. 12) and Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Art. 2), the cruel and inhumane punishments were banned. The Paes judicial authorities said this punishment was not torture; it was an act of purification. The Paes believed when one of them was lashed, a “ray touched them.” This magic touch produces two effects. First, the indigenous person’s crime is purified by the ray’s touch. Second, he/she can return peacefully to his/her community. As a result, the lashes are a ray that purifies and allows pacific coexistence in their community. (Colombian Constitutional Court 1997, T-523)

The epistemological evaluation to be made is whether or not the indigenous community is justified in believing that the aforementioned lashes are a “ray’s touch.” If this is the case, the punishment is not illegal. If it is not the case, the indigenous community is acting beyond its constitutional rights, and its actions ought to be stopped. To recall, the adjudicator is not supposed to confer or deny justification based on the assumption that he/she and the parties are experientially and doxastically alike. In fact, the adjudicator is expected to take the cultural differences seriously and evaluate the parties’ doxastic states in accordance with the cultural contexts to which they belong. However, how can such evaluation be done if, *ex hypothesi*, the adjudicator does not share the same cultural view with the parties? I will determine a specific methodology of work before answering this question below.

### *3. The methodology*

The evaluation to be done in this paper requires the specification of the conditions that foundationalism, coherentism and reliabilism have to fulfill in answering the issue under account. If any of these theories do not accomplish these conditions, the theory should be either corrected or abandoned. Since the idea is to evaluate an adjudicator’s assessment of justificatory status in contexts of legal pluralism, I will adopt the method suggested by Alvin Goldman (2003) to evaluate inferences in procedures of adjudication. Avoiding unnecessary complexities, I will quote the steps of such method. After the passage, some comments and adaptations will be made.

Step 1 - Select the inference procedure, R, as a target of analysis.

Step 2 - Posit an aim, or set of aims, A, of the legal adjudication system - for example, truth, or rectitude, of decision.



Step 3 - Determine how well the procedure R, would promote aim A.

Step 4 - If R would be ineffective or deficient in promoting A, identify some remedies that would make R perform better. (215)

Following Step 1, I am going to analyze three inference procedures (R). Each of them will be differentiated by the epistemological principle that is used in its evaluation. Specifically, R<sub>f</sub> will adopt the tenet suggested by foundationalism, R<sub>c</sub> by coherentism and R<sub>r</sub> by reliabilism.

Step 2, above, requires some clarification. For Goldman, theories of legal proceedings can take two forms – either they are pluralistic or unified (2005, 163-164). Pluralistic accounts hold that legal processes have different aims, no one of which is prior to the other (e.g., justice, impartiality, allowing coexistence, seeking the truth, protection of civil rights, etc.). Unified theories, in contrast, explain proceedings with reference to one main end. They do not hold that legal proceedings actually achieve the selected goal; better yet, they use it as an explanatory resource to clarify the main activities performed in legal proceedings. Within this second alternative, one can find pure unified theories and impure unified theories. Pure unified theories state that the legal practices taken into account are subsumable in one exclusive desideratum. Impure unified theories defend that although the aim of legal procedures is such an exclusive aim, it is possible to recognize alternative goals coexisting with the dominant rationale. To illustrate, Goldman himself adopts an impure unified theory of legal procedures. This allows him to defend that even though the main goal of the law is not the determination of the truth; it is truth-oriented. These are his words:

The aim [of legal procedures] is securing *substantively just* treatment of individuals. This depends on (1) the content of the law and (2) the genuine, or true, facts concerning the actions they (and others) performed and the circumstances of those actions. Thus, determining the truth about a person's actions is a crucial *means* to just treatment. (Goldman 2005, 164)

In the same way, I believe processes of adjudication in contexts of legal pluralism have one main aim (A), namely, to promote the coexistence between people who belong to different cultures. In achieving this goal, alternative aims have to be attained. First of all, the relevant laws have to be applied, (A1). Secondly, the alleged facts should be determined (A2). Thirdly, the different cultures have to be preserved (A3). Finally, the understanding of the cultures that constitute a

political community might increase (A4). Given that A1 and A2 are common goals for all legal proceedings, my analysis will focus on A3 and A4.

To conclude, Step 3 is the goal-promoting evaluation of the reasoning under consideration (i.e., Rf, Rc and Rr). To recall, if some of these accounts do not promote the constellation of aims that they should supposedly promote (i.e., from A1 to A4), it has to be either reformed or ruled out.

#### 4. *Three alternative answers*

Theories of justification are accounts that specify the conditions under which a person is justified in believing (Goldman 1976, 3). Following the standard pattern, a theory of justification adopts the next structure:

##### Individual Epistemic Justification

S is justified in believing that p if and only if (iff):

C1, C2 ..., Cn

Where S stands for a cognitive agent, p is for propositional knowledge, and C1 ... Cn are the conditions that transfer positive justificatory status. In Case 1 above, S is the Paes judicial authorities and p is “when a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray.” Therefore, the ultimate proposition is:

The Paes judicial authorities are justified in believing that when a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray.

I believe that foundationalism, coherentism and reliabilism suggest different conditions for the justificatory status of this proposition. A detailed reconstruction of these theories is beyond the specific goal of this paper. Better yet, I will make cautious generalizations showing how Rf, Rc and Rr could be used in processes of adjudication in scenarios of legal pluralism.

#### 4.1 *Foundationalism*

The main idea of foundationalism can be captured by the standard pattern as follows:

Individual Epistemic Justification 1 (Foundationalism):

S is justified in believing that p iff:

C1: p is derived from a basic belief, or,

C2: p is derived from a proposition which is, directly or indirectly, derived from a basic belief.

Two expressions need clarification, namely, “basic beliefs” and “directly or indirectly.” I will start with the last one. Foundationalism suggests that the justification of a belief depends upon the propositional relation between it and other propositions that confer justification. Hence,  $p$  is justified if it is inferred from another justified proposition,  $p_1$ . Similarly,  $p_1$  is justified if it is drawn from the justified proposition,  $p_2$ . Equally,  $p_2$  acquires its justified status from another justified proposition,  $p_3$ . Thus, the evaluation of the justificatory status of a proposition implies following the path of propositions in which the ultimate belief relies on. Since this tracking of justification cannot be done ad infinitum, foundationalism determines a point in which the chain of justification is anchored. In other words, these are the foundations of justification, or the basic beliefs. These are propositions with the salient feature that they confer justification, but they need not be justified by other propositions because they are justified themselves. In the history of philosophy, several alternatives have been suggested as basic beliefs: clear and distinct ideas, mathematical or logical truths, spontaneous formed beliefs, and so on. Contemporary epistemology suggests that perception is a basic belief. To justify this, they propose the following principle:

### *Seeming Principle*

If it seems to  $S$  that  $p$ , then  $S$  is prima facie justified in believing that  $p$ .

Practically, I believe that there is a computer screen in front of me because it seems visually to me that that is the case. Given that I do not need a justificatory proposition when it seems to me that I am looking at a computer screen, the belief that I am looking at a computer screen is basic. Furthermore, since this belief depends upon the external world, it yields knowledge.

Putting all this together in Case 1, if the constitutional judge had used the  $R_f$  model to evaluate the justificatory status of the belief held by the Paes judicial authorities, the following structure would have been obtained:

### Inference Procedure 1 ( $R_f$ ):

The Paes judicial authorities are justified in believing that when a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray iff:

C1: “When a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray” is derived from something we perceive, or,

C2: “When a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray” is derived from a proposition which is, directly or indirectly, derived from something we perceive.

Based on this structure, the constitutional judge would deny the justificatory status of the ultimate proposition. The reason for this verdict is that this adjudicator, in normal conditions, cannot verify whether or not the Paes judicial authorities derived their belief from some perception. From the judge's view, what is perceived is a man who is receiving lashes from another man, but not a ray. The Paes judicial authorities interpret the perceiving lashing ritual as if a ray touches the man, but it is not derived, directly or indirectly, from any sensorial experience. Therefore, the Paes judicial authorities are not epistemically justified in believing that when a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray.

I believe *Rf* does not promote the aims of adjudication in contexts of legal pluralism. Specifically, it does not promote A3 because the requirement of sensorial experience limits the Paes culture to the sensorial experiences of the judge. Using the Seeming Principle, given that for the constitutional judge, it does not seem that a ray is touching a person when that person receives lashes, the judge does not have any reason to think that Paes judicial authorities are justified in such a belief. Consequently, *Rf* does not promote the coexistence between people who belong to different cultures because it reduces one culture to the other. Apparently, coherentism could offer a better alternative because it does not focus on sense experiences, but on systems of beliefs. This alternative has to be evaluated carefully.

#### 4.2 *Coherentism*

Coherentists, unlike founderentists, claim that epistemic justification is not linear, but holistic. That is, epistemic justification does not go back from the ultimate proposition to be justified to the previous justificatory propositions. Instead, epistemic justification has to do with holistic relations of systems of information. In other words, coherentism is the view that holds the following formula for epistemic justification:

Individual Epistemic Justification 2 (Coherentism):

S is justified in believing that p iff:

C1: p belongs to a coherent set of beliefs.

In this model, the justificatory status of the ultimate proposition is conferred by the coherence relations it has with the system of beliefs it belongs to. That is, S's system of beliefs. The main issue for coherentism is to explain the nature of coherence relations. Old fashioned coherentism used to require that a particular

belief should cohere with the whole doxastic system of the individual whose belief was being evaluated. However, contemporary coherentists realized that this requirement was too strong because any incompatible belief would make the whole system incoherent. That is why contemporary coherentists adopt a moderate position claiming that coherence is predicated of a specific sub-system of beliefs, and not from the whole system of them. This allows to compartmentalize systems of beliefs preserving their coherence against particular inconsistent beliefs (Kvanvig 2012b).

How can an adjudicator evaluate the coherence of a belief inferred from a radically differentiated cultural view? I am not offering substantial answer for these question here. For the present purposes, it suffices to imagine two situations which outline a possible answer. To begin, in Case 1, the judge could determine, with the help of an expert anthropologist, the core of the Paes's beliefs system. Secondly, performing some basic logical (or probabilistic) operations, the adjudicator could verify if the p coheres with this system of beliefs. These ideas constitute  $R_c$ , as follows:

Inference Procedure 2 ( $R_c$ ):

The Paes judicial authorities are justified in believing that when a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray iff:

C1: "When a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray" is coherent with the Paes judicial authorities' set of beliefs.

Coherentism has been traditionally criticized with the isolation argument. Broadly speaking, since the mere coherence between propositions confers justificatory status, the external world does not matter. However, the isolation problem does not necessarily weaken coherentism as such. Instead, it is a threat for coherentists' theories that do not include perception within their concept of system of beliefs (Kvanvig 2012a, 63). I claim, however, that the isolation problem represents a threat for coherentism in scenarios of legal pluralism. To recall, the failure of  $R_f$  is that it is too strong. That is, since it demands perceptual experience for all justified beliefs, then A3 is not promoted. With the mere coherence requirement, this problem seems to be overcome because perception does not play a strong role in epistemic evaluation. The problem is that now A4 is not promoted. To clarify, if there are not external standards for justification, the understanding between cultures is impossible.  $R_c$ , therefore, does not only lead to the isolation from the external world, but also creates epistemic bubbles.

### 4.3 Reliabilism

As a first approximation, reliabilism suggests that:

Individual Epistemic Justification 3 (Reliabilism):

S is justified in believing that p iff:

C1: p results from a reliable cognitive process.

Two concepts need to be clarified, namely, “reliable” and “cognitive process.” Goldman defines cognitive process as a function with inputs that have beliefs as outputs (1976, 13). Two types of processes are important here. First, the belief-dependent processes have other beliefs as inputs. Second, the belief-independent processes do not have other beliefs as inputs. While perception is a good example of the latter, memory or inference are good instantiations of the former. Following this terminology, Goldman introduces more distinctions. There are two kinds of beliefs. A belief-independent belief is the output of a belief-independent process. A belief-dependent belief is the result of a belief dependent process (13-14). Consequently, perceptual beliefs are instantiations of belief-independent beliefs, and the conclusion of a deductive argument is an example of a belief-dependent belief. Finally, reliability is “the tendency of a process to produce beliefs that are true rather than false” (16). While in belief-dependent processes reliability depends on the truth of the inputs, in belief-independent processes, reliability is categorical. From these distinctions, reliabilism suggests two forms for evaluating justificatory status.

First,

Individual Epistemic Justification 3 (Reliabilism 1):

S is justified in believing that p iff:

C1: p is a belief-independent belief, and

C2: p is the result of a categorically reliable process.

Second,

Individual Epistemic Justification 3 (Reliabilism 2):

S is justified in believing that p iff:

C1: p is a belief-dependent belief, and

C2: p is the result of a conditional reliable process.

According to this second form,  $R_r$  adopts the following structure:

Inference Procedure 3 ( $R_r$ ):

The Paes judicial authorities are justified in believing that when a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray iff:

C1: "When a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray" is a belief-dependent belief, and

C2: "When a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray" is the result of a conditional reliable process.

C1 is correct because, as I pointed out previously, the ultimate belief in this case is no product of direct perception, but of a cultural interpretation. That is, the Paes judicial authorities' belief that "when a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray" depends on the beliefs of the Paes community. The constitutional judge, therefore, has to evaluate C2. For instance, he/she has to appraise the process of reasoning used by the Paes judicial authorities, or the memory that they have of their traditions. Due to the fact that this sort of evaluation is not perception-dependent, the constitutional tribunal does not have to rule out the Paes judicial authorities' ultimate beliefs. Even if the Constitutional judge does not share the input beliefs of the Paes culture, this adjudicator can evaluate the process of reasoning done by the Paes judicial authorities. Now, there is an epistemic achievement when cognitive agents reason properly or recall memories in an accurate way (Lyons 2012, 8). By the same token, assuming that the Paes judicial authorities got their inferences right, or recalled their traditions in the right way, the constitutional judge can attribute a positive epistemic status to their belief-dependent beliefs.

## 5. Conclusion

If my analysis is correct, reliabilism offers the best answer for the problem of the evaluation of justificatory status of beliefs in multicultural scenarios. On one hand, Foundationalism does not preserve cultural differences. On the other hand, Coherentism leads to epistemological relativism. With Reliabilism, on the contrary, it is possible to achieve A3 and A4. To be sure, with Rr it is possible to achieve A3. For one thing, the Paes judicial authorities are not reduced to the seemings of the Constitutional Court. For another, the adjudicator is not reduced to the Paes culture either. Rather, the point is that the Constitutional Court should reason contrafactually. In other words, the question the adjudicator should ask is: if I were undergoing the experiences of the Paes judicial authorities, would the belief that "when a man receives lashes, he is being touched by a ray" be justified? *Ex hypothesi*, the constitutional judge is not a member of the Paes

community, but given the psychological similarities between him/her and the members of that indigenous community (e.g., the two of them reason, have intuitions, make inferences, and the like), if the constitutional judge were conditionally justified, then the Paes judicial authorities would be conditionally justified, too. With Rr it is also possible to achieve A4. Some epistemologists claim that understanding is not factive. That is, the value of understanding is not in the truth of the propositions understood, but in the grasping of the explanatory connections of those propositions (Kvanvig 2003, 200). Given that Rr allows for conditional justification, the truth of the beliefs of culturally differentiated groups is not an obstacle for the intercultural understanding.

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2014 - Argumentation In Bulgarian Political Virtual Forums And Social Networks**

*Abstract:* This study examines specific features of the argumentation in virtual political forums and social networks. The subjects of research are political forums and Facebook groups as a part of the civil protests in Bulgaria over the period of two years (2012-2013). The main goal is investigation on arguments used by Bulgarian citizens in virtual dialogues, appropriateness and effectiveness of argumentation. The second goal includes survey of specific verbal, visual and multi-modal arguments used in the social networks.

*Keywords:* argumentation, visual and multi-modal arguments, political virtual forums, social networks

## *1. Introduction*

The new Bulgarian state has reached 135 years of independent history and form of government since 1879. From 1945 to 1991 (during socialism) the form of government was a specific kind of republic (the People's Republic of Bulgaria). The Constitution from July 1991 states that Bulgaria is a parliamentary representative democratic republic. The multi-party system was established after 45 years of socialist and totalitarian government. A transition towards a pluralistic and democratic society is taking place.

Bulgarian political communication plays a role in the civil society; it continues to be a function of the state institutions and political parties. Political and civil

rhetoric practices and influence have immensely grown during the Bulgarian civil protests and demonstrations (1989, 1990, 1996–1997). Political communication has transformed since 2010 and Bulgarian citizens voice their demands in more definite forms combining direct, media and virtual channels. Bulgarian citizens largely use the Internet as a tool for increased social activities in the civil society. The participants in the *protests* in Bulgaria (2012–2013) use Facebook as an instrument of civic activity and acceleration of the protests. The protesters use Facebook as virtual tribune and Internet forums as virtual discussions where they raise topics and conduct dialogues.

## 2. Hypothesis and research questions

The hypothesis initiating the present search is that the argumentation in the Bulgarian political forums and social networks during the protests from 2010 to 2013 goes through different transformations as a result of technical, technological and social factors. In addition, the traditional kinds of arguments are transformed; virtual communication includes verbal, visual and multi-modal arguments and has achieved new forms of display. The manners and modes of presenting the ideas have changed as a result of the changes in the attitudes of the e-communicators and protesters. Bulgarian virtual civil communication has diverse forms of manifestation and characteristics.

The aim of the current study is to try to give answer the following research questions:

- \* What was the significance of virtual forums and social networks during the protests?
- \* Which are the main features of virtual forums?
- \* Which rhetorical figures, arguments and tools did the protesters use purposefully to convey their main messages, influence the public conscience of the citizens and mobilise them to support their ideas?
- \* How verbal, visual and multi-modal arguments create opportunities to persuade Bulgarians to participate more actively in the civil society events?

## 3. Theoretical frame

Aristotle has fundamental contribution to rhetoric and argumentation: *Rhetoric* (Aristotle, 1986) and *The Topics* (Aristotle, 1998) and the focus is on verbal manifestations of the arguments. Studies of rhetoric and argumentation have been conducted throughout the centuries and they have undergone a kind of

renaissance in the 20th and 21st century. Stephen Toulmin published the book *The uses of argument* in 1958; Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca announce their position to give a new meaning to the rhetorical heritage in the book *The new rhetoric: A treatise on argumentation* (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969). Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst presented their standpoint concerning the argumentation in the book *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation. The Pragma-dialectical Approach* (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2006). We will also draw on the basic definitions of the arguments and in particular the terms *Pro Homine*, *Ad Populum Arguments*, *Arguments from Authority*, *Arguments against Authority* explained by Leo Groarke and Christopher Tindale in the chapter “Ethotic Schemes” of the book *Good Reasoning Matters! A Constructive Approach to Critical Thinking* (Groarke & Tindale, 2012: pp. 307-340).

The studies of the arguments and argumentation have intensified in the latest two decades and scientists start to investigate visual arguments. Antony Blair published the article *The Possibility and Actuality of Visual Arguments* in 1996. The author continued developing the research on this topic and he published the article *The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments* in 2004. Other scientists have displayed their individual positions on visual arguments in a series of quality papers: *Outlines of a Theory of Visual Argument* (Birdsell & Groarke, 2008: pp. 103-113), *Iconicity in Visual and Verbal Argumentation* (Hoven, 2011, pp. 831-834) etc. Leo Groarke reconceptualises Toulmin’s position and he expresses his position in the article *Five theses on Toulmin and visual argument* (Groarke, 2009: pp. 229-239). Leo Groarke and Christopher Tindale give a definition of visual arguments in the dictionary of the book *Good Reasoning Matters! A Constructive Approach to Critical Thinking: Visual arguments are arguments that convey premises and conclusions with non-verbal images one finds in drawing, photographs, films, videos, sculptures natural objects, and so on. In most cases they combine visual and verbal cues that can be understood as argument.* (Groarke & Tindale, 2012: p. 455). We are in agreement with the above definition, especially with the position that verbal and visual cues are combined to support the process of understanding the arguments and we will use it as a part of the theoretical background of this study. Other researchers have announced the results of researches on visual arguments. George Roque focuses on the political rhetoric in visual images (Roque, 2008: pp. 185-193). Jos van den Broek, Willam Koetsenruijter, Jaap de Jong, Letitia Smit write about the functions of the visual

language (Broek et al., 2012: pp. 32-39). Jens Kjeldsen applies a cognitive, contextual, and reception-oriented approach analyzing the visual argumentation in Scandinavian political advertising (Kjeldsen, 2007: pp. 124-132) and he investigates the roles of visual tropes and figures as a way of creating visual argumentation again on the field of the advertising (Kjeldsen, 2012: pp. 239-255). All of them have their singular contributions to the theory of visual argument and the methodology of its research.

Following the principle of terminological clarity we will outline the concept 'multi-modal argument' as it is applied here in the terms of Leo Groarke who says that:

*The fundamental reason for accepting multi-modal arguments is the root notion that an argument is an attempt to support a conclusion by presenting evidence for it - something that can clearly be done in ways that extend beyond premises and conclusions understood as declarative sentences. To take only a few examples, I may try to convince you of some claim by presenting photographs, drawing a map, pointing to something, telling a story (fiction or non-fiction), showing a film, painting a picture, and so on and so forth. Our lives are replete with situations in which evidence for some point of view is presented in these and other ways that do not neatly correspond to the verbal paradigm that was always stressed in traditional accounts of argument (Groarke, 2013: p. 34).*

The author explains that:

*At a time when the development of digital communication is making it easier to transmit images, sounds, and even physical sensations, it is not surprising that arguments increasingly incorporate non-verbal elements that can be communicated in this way. Especially in such a context, recognizing multi-modal arguments is one way to broaden the scope of our general account of argument, taking us one step further in the development of a thick theory (Groarke, 2013: p. 36).*

For the purposes of this study will also give brief information about the other kinds of argumentation. Marcin Lewiński introduces and explains the terms 'argumentation design' and '*computer-mediated design*'. He presents in the table 3.1 the three different computer-mediated argumentation designs (de Moor & Aakhu, 2006: p. 97): *issue networking, funnelling, and reputation* (Lewiński, 2010: p. 38). The pattern 'provide quote or link' exists to use hyper-linking which

is “a simple technological affordance that has become a vital part of online culture” and adds that this “entry level online-specific mode of attacking the propositional content of argumentation” (Lewiński, 2010: pp. 140-141).

We are in agreement with these statements and we will use these terms adapted to the aim of the current research.

#### *4. Research design*

My empirical sources for the present study are selected out of 4 sub-corpora including the topic ‘protests’: Facebooks groups „Occupy Bulgaria”, Протестна мрежа - Protestna Mreža - Protest network; sites ‘Dance with me’ <http://www.danswithme.com/>’, ‘No Oresharski’ <http://noresharski.com/>; ‘Solidarnost’ <http://solidarnost.tv/public/life/goriva/>; forums <http://forum.clubpolitika.com/>; <http://www.investor.bg/forum/forumdisplay.php?f=11>; hash tags #Оставка (#Retirement), #протест (#protest), #България (#Bulgaria), #Идвайте (#Come along).

The study is based on a grounded analysis of 200 posts and 200 posters, photos, parodies, caricatures from these sites selected from the period between January 2012 and December 2013 from 4 protests: against high prices and the national protest against outrage, against the monopolists of energy - December 2012 - January - April 2013, against the nomination of Peyevski for the position of director of the State Agency of National Security (SANS) - 14 June 2013.

The specific features of virtual discussion, the behaviour of e-participants and the factors that determine the dialogues are outlined in the beginning of this study. After that the focus is on the sources of arguments, kinds of arguments and their specific uses in virtual forums and Facebook groups. The research includes analysis of five kinds of arguments - Argumentum ad Hominem, Pro Homine, Argument of Authority, Argument against Authority and Argumentum ad Populum on verbal, visual and multi-modal levels in virtual environments.

#### *5. Factors, sources and kinds of arguments*

In general social networks are the result of a couple of circumstances such as: developing and improving technological opportunities for communication; access to new ideas, web-based information, electronic resources and database serving millions of people the world over. This is valid for social networks used by

Bulgarian citizens. The protesters broadcast the appeals and civil demands to virtual audiences and they try to persuade them for civic action using different kinds of arguments. Bulgarian virtual political forums contains posts, dialogues between e-communicators, and mix of rhetorical figures, verbal, visual and multi-modal arguments. Argumentation design and computer-mediated argumentation have changed, and words, terms and short sentences have been gradually mixed with visual and multi-modal arguments. The forms of the political communication of protesters found in the virtual environment are heterogeneous. The social networks and virtual forums play a significant role during the protests against the politicians, governing classes, and the government itself; Bulgarians have moved from passive behaviour to active citizenship; from recipients of political messages to participants in the different formats of virtual communication. The virtual forums are transformed to a mixed format and it contains personal positions and critical discussions. In their turn, discussions between members the virtual political forums include some sub-dialogues on such topics as: government, political parties, political system, monopolists, oligarchy, connections between government and monopolists, law system, prices, ecology etc.

The analysis shows that most of the debaters prefer the reputation model which every participant in virtual forums is committed to follow while vowing their proposals and arguments, and thus has a personal stake in the process of argumentation. This argumentative design presupposes the frequent uses of personal civil experience and explicit defence of the main thesis based on one or two items of proof.

We can generalize that the participants of the forums did not use too many and too different arguments. They preferred the following sources: dictionaries, history, statistics, blogs, media and in particular online media, social networks, legal documents, and personal experience. The *netizens* explained the origin of the proofs. The pattern 'provide quote or link' is generally applied and shows clearly the source of arguments. E-debaters use this pattern as an ethotic argument and they demonstrate the credibility of the proof. Some of the participants have adopted their argumentative and digital competence in the forums. Bulgarian netizens as participants in the Facebook groups prefer short sentences, and verbal expressions are typical features of the appeals; they consist of negative connotations, polar evaluations of the state institutions, political leaders, big corporations which are monopolists in Bulgarian business spheres

and market. From argumentative standpoint the telegraphic style is appropriate during the virtual discussions; the e-communicators posted short messages on the walls of Facebook groups because they understand that the Bulgarian citizens avoid complicated argumentation. Written and visual arguments on the wall of Facebook groups are displayed in front of hundreds or thousands of people in Bulgaria and Bulgarians the world over. Some of the arguments are created spontaneously by protesters; most of them are selected from personal experience and they are acceptable for most citizens who avoid the sophisticated argumentation style of the Bulgarian politicians. The topics of virtual forums are initiated by netizens and the communication is carried out on horizontal level. The positions are presented by netizens who accept the Facebook groups as virtual tribune and they combine the arguments according the situation and concrete aims. The freedom of speech, the digital competence and the active citizens' behaviour establish new opportunities for virtual civil communication in Bulgaria after 2012.

#### 6. *Verbal arguments*

The protesters in Bulgaria accept the Internet as an instrument of mobilisation and organisation; they post messages, publish about events and call up activities on the wall of Facebook groups and in the virtual forums. During the summer protests in 2013 e-citizens started to use hash tag # and some of these groups were #Оставка (#Retirement), #протест (#protest), #България (#Bulgaria), #Идвайте (#Come along). Virtual civil oratory includes clear words, short sentences and the leaders of the protests avoid sophisticated verbal style. The protesters include new terms in their messages, most protesters are anonymous authors in the social networks but they identify themselves in the virtual forums. Most protesters have argumentative skills and digital competence.

Verbal Pro Homine Argument has relatively new application in virtual civil communication in Bulgaria. The protesters see themselves as moral, competent and active citizens. From their point of view civil society could develop better and more effectively if the politicians and state institutions accept their idea for: *civil participation in the decision making process, institutionalization of the civil participation, and civil control over state institutions*. The protesters demonstrate maturity and they focus on some suggestions in connection with the elections concerning their transparency and outlining a modern way to organise the national election campaign. The e-communicators present in the virtual forms the

arguments supporting their civil demands: *equal access to media during election campaigns, new organization of the elections including new kind of voter lists and new electoral rolls; transparency with regard to the connection between parties, institutions and corporations, two mandates as a member of the Parliament, new Constitution, etc.* These arguments are not a part of the sophisticated ideological communication; they are proofs of a process of growing conscious activities of the civil society in Bulgaria.

Other kinds of verbal arguments are found on the posters and they are posted on the Facebooks walls by Bulgarians who live and study abroad. E-communicators used a combination of Argument from Authority and the Ad Populum Argument. They accept themselves as Bulgarian citizens and they support the protesters: *We are away but we support you. We are with you. From Spain*", "*Students from Manchester are with you*". They have arrived at the conclusion that they are netizens and that the frontiers and barriers are past because social networks create good opportunities to express their positions as Bulgarian citizens. The sense of belonging is effect of this persuasion. Virtual civil citizenship is a new phenomenon in the contemporary Bulgarian political life. Verbal argumentation related to it reveals in new circumstances.

Verbal Argument against Authority is preferred by the protesters when they want to express their disappointment with Bulgarian politicians. For example they write on their Facebook wall: *„You are not sufficiently intelligent to manage us”, „Go voluntarily! You have a choice now! Next we shall use force!”*. Some of these verbal arguments were created during the street protests, the messages and arguments were shared very rapidly across social networks. Other slogans and arguments were written online and e-communicators broadcast them to protesters. It is possible to conclude that there are two ways to share the arguments: from street to social networks and from social networks to square demonstrations. We can go to the assumption that it is a relatively new manifestation of *argumentation design* and *computer-mediated design*.

Most of the protesters have profiles in social networks, so they create virtual groups. Digital Bulgarian citizens publish posts, photos, video clips; they share and broadcast them across the social networks. The dialogue takes up three different levels: real, virtual and a combination between the two. For example, an expert in psychology who is a member of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) evaluates the e-citizens as *‘internet vagabonds’*, *‘internet lumpens’* and he abuses



them. The Argumentum ad Hominem activates the protesters who write on the posters and on the wall of the social network Facebook the following slogans: “*I am not an Internet lumpen!*”. The protesters combine Argumentum ad Hominem with analogy and they compare the politicians from BSP with politicians from Egypt, Turkey and China who limit the access to the Internet and appreciate the social networks as tools for mobilising citizens during the protests. The Bulgarian protesters understand that the social networks create broad opportunities for them to be active digital citizens yet at the same time they insult the psychologist named him “psycho”, “red rubbish” etc. The Argumentum ad Hominem is used by the politician against virtual groups which are fluid but the protesters prefer personalization and they direct the Argumentum ad Hominem against one man.

Summarising, we can draw the conclusion that different kinds of verbal arguments created by the protesters have wide application in virtual space and the argumentative skills developed offline are shifted and transferred online.

### 7. Visual arguments

Visual Argument *Pro Homine* is not used by the protesters very often but it has proven very effective. The portrait of Vassil Levski, one of the celebrated historical figures of Bulgaria, is preferable to construct argument *Pro Homine*. The charisma of Levski as a leader from the Bulgarian Revival (and to be more precise from the late 19th century) is a solid argument and it persuades Bulgarians to be more active citizens and netizens. On the poster published on the Facebook wall the title “National protest against outrages” is combined with the portrait of Vassil Levski and Levski’s appeal “Трябва да се жертва всичко, па и себе си” (“Everybody should sacrifice everything, even himself”).

The scheme of Argument *Pro Homine* is presented by Leo Groarke and Christopher Tindale:

Promise 1: X says y.

Promise 2: X is knowledgeable, trustworthy, and free of bias.

Conclusion: y should be accepted.” (Groarke & Tindale 2012: 308).

The scheme of the visual argument presented on the Facebook wall is the same:

Promise 1: Levski says that we should sacrifice everything in the name of our freedom.

Promise 2. Levski is knowledgeable Bulgarian hero, notable and moral man.

Conclusion: The appeal to sacrifice in the favour of Bulgaria should be acceptable.

The second poster includes the same type of argument and the protesters use the portrait of Ivan Vazov who is a famous Bulgarian writer and poet from the 20th century. The portrait is used to help reach the conclusion that the protest will change the situation in Bulgaria in the second decade of the 21st century.

When the aim is to consolidate and reinforce the persuasive effect, the protesters combine two portraits constructing Visual Argument Pro Homine and combine it with analogy. The protesters use the portraits of political leader Levski and patriotic writer Vazov and they add the verbal messages: *Bulgaria for Bulgarians. Levski and Vazov are heroes. Go and support them!*

To take another example, the octopus is a preferable visual proof to persuade virtual audience that the oligarchy and mafia control the economy in Bulgaria. This visual sign has the role of an *Argument against Authority*. E-protesters use the faces of politicians and they combine them with the octopus. The memory about the Italian movie "Octopus" (*La Piovra*), which is very popular in Bulgaria, supports the persuasive effect.

One and the same visual element can have different argumentative uses depending on the virtual communicator's aim. For example a map of Bulgaria is used both as an *Argument from Authority* and as an *Argument against Authority*. In the case when the protesters has positive attitudes as Bulgarian citizens they use the coloured map or combine the map with the official flag or with the state emblem. They try to persuade Bulgarians that we can be proud of our country and that the official sings express that we are citizens of an independent state. On the contrary when the protesters prefer to express negative connotation and to reveal the lack of morality and ethics of Bulgarian politicians, they use the map painted only in black and white. Additionally they transform the picture of the map using Photoshop and they give it the form of a sheep combining it with the written words and figures of politicians, banks, monopolists who milk the state visually presented as a sheep.

Another preferred symbol used as visual *Argumentum ad Hominem* is a hat. The hats used as visual elements fall into three groups: the first one is typical for a soldier of the Soviet Army and Sergey Stanishev as leader of the Bulgarian Socialistic Party is wearing it, Volen Siderov as a leader of the nationalistic party

is wearing a hat typical for Nazi soldiers and Lyutvi Mestan as a leader of the ethnic party of the Turkish minority has a red fez.

Summarising, we can say that visual arguments have persuasive effect and Bulgarians accept them as an interesting manner to lay civil demands in front of hundreds of citizens.

### 8. *Multi-modal arguments*

The persuasive power of multi-modal arguments posted during the protests on Facebook walls or in virtual forums is great.

In the beginning of our study of multi-modal arguments we selected 3 posters from the corpora which contain the element 'index finger' used as a combination of Argument from Authority and the Ad Populum Argument. The application of two arguments is an appeal for mobilisation, taking an active position and participation in the political processes.

In the first poster the visual element 'index finger' is combined with the verbal appeal „Спрете да се оплаквате от държавата! Променете я! Защото вие сте държавата!“ (Stop complaining about the state! Change it! Because you are the state!). The sentences look like a paraphrase of Kennedy's appeal "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country".

E-protesters use index finger which directs to active position combining well-known visual element and figures from a different age, state and political system. In the second and third posters the protesters have paraphrased the celebrated posters from the USA and the Soviet Union and they are used too but in Bulgarian political and virtual contexts. Uncle Sam encourages them to take part in the street protests or to paint monuments from the socialism as a way to express their position against the manipulation by the government of the Bulgarian Socialist Party which is a part of the government (June 2013-August 2014): „Ти истински демократ ли си или не? Боядиса ли днес паметник?“ (“Are you a true democrat or not? Have you painted a monument today”). A young soldier from the Red Soviet Army pointed towards the viewer and said in English “What do you occupy?”

Parallel and analogy support persuasion because the multi-modal arguments are decoded easily and fast, despite the mixture of historical periods. The multi-modal arguments combine Argument of Authority and Argument Ad Populum and the

digital competence and display skills of the protesters and netizens make the argumentation more impressive and persuasive. The E-protesters have digital and IT competences and they prefer to paraphrase and adapt the posters from famous USA movies creating new kind of argument. The combinations of politicians' faces are different and the creators of the posters express negative attitudes while they use multi-modal variants of Argumentum ad Hominem against the political leaders.

One of them is based on the movie "Miserable". The faces are of Oresharski - prime-minister, Ahmed Dogan - former leader of the Movement for rights and freedom, Volen Siderov - nationalistic party leader, and socialist leader Sergey Stanishev. A second poster displays the faces of 10 political leaders, two Bulgarian presidents and state men in the place of the heroes of the movie „Ocean's Eleven". The multi-modal Argument ad Hominem is not against one politician but against the politicians from all parties, and it is a specific manifestation of attitude in the context of the protests because Bulgarians are disappointed with the political elite and accept that socio political manipulation of the broad public is a result of the lobby activities of certain leaders, and that Bulgarian politicians have stopped working on the common ideals coming into reality. This multi-modal Argumentum ad Hominem has had powerful effect on the protesters.

Argumentum ad Hominem has some other manifestation on the multi-modal level of application. A particular explication of this argument is directed against political leaders and the posters published online present the waltz dance of the political leaders Sergey Stanishev (the Bulgarian Socialist Party - BSP), Volen Siderov (Nationalistic party 'Ataka') and Lyutvi Mestan (the Movement of Rights and Freedom - MRF - ethnic party), Boyko Borosov (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria - CEDB). The political context is that lobbyism, lacking in transparency and coulisse negotiations and stipulations make the dialogue between politicians and citizens difficult. The visual image is enlarged; it combines with verbal Argument ad Populum „*Dance with me to the end of BSP, MRF, Ataka, CEDB*".

Multi-modal argument has been used quite recently in virtual civic communication, digitalisation and new kind of behaviour of the social networks accelerating its manifestations.

## 9. Conclusion

Most Bulgarian protesters are citizens in the traditional sense, and at the same time they are netizens who accept virtual forums and Facebook groups as a place where they discuss the topics initiated by them. Most participants in the virtual forums have digital competences and they combine them with good argumentative skills applicable in virtual environments. They follow the good practices of the computer-mediated design; they prefer the pattern 'provide quote or link' because it is a way to confirm that they use correctly the sources of arguments because credibility is an important factor to persuade virtual audiences.

The netizens avoid verbosity and prefer a combination of two or three arguments. The virtual debaters in the forums often use *Argumentum ad Hominem*, *Argumentum ad Populum*, *Argument against Authority*. It is reasonable because the protesters want to persuade hundreds of people of Bulgaria that the politicians do not follow moral principles and they have stopped working in favour of the citizens and the country. The protesters use *Pro Homine Argument* and *Argument for Authority* picturing themselves as moral people, active citizens and members of the civil society in Bulgaria. The virtual audience easily decodes and understands the sense; the ethotic arguments have strong persuasive effect.

Bulgarian citizens gradually improve their argumentative skills and take part in the political virtual forums; they mix verbal and visual arguments and create multi-modal arguments. The protesters appreciate virtual forums as *virtual agora* or *e-agora* as some researchers prefer to call it avoiding etymological ambiguity based on the meaning of virtue (Apostolova 2014: 71), the dialogue is semi-formal, and the argumentation is simple. The freedom of speech and new technological circumstances determine a new model of behaviour, new attitudes to write, prepare, design, share and broadcast very easily and fast the information and argumentation across the social networks.

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2014 - The Role Of “Ethos” In Presidential Argument By Definition**

*Abstract:* This paper examines “ethos” in conjunction with an orator’s use of argument by definition. Scant research exists regarding the use of definition in an oratorical situation by a notable figure holding a position of power. This paper argues that the American president’s position and institution are additional elements of ethos that may enhance or detract from his ability to successfully employ a definition of “x.”

*Keywords:* ethos, American president, argumentation, persuasion, definition, argument by definition

## *1. Introduction*

Ragsdale & Theis III (1997, p. 1281) point out that research on the American presidency as an institution embraces a long-standing position that the “key feature of the office is the president” and that these studies often focus on “how presidents differ - in personality, leadership, and decision-making.” This paper shifts the focus toward the Office and Institution of the American Presidency as an extension of how presidents employ *argument by definition* and its subsequent implications for the concept of *ethos*.

Substantial literature exists about the role of ethos in the fields of argumentation and rhetoric, political science, history, and philosophy, among others, but scant

research exists regarding the use of definition in an oratorical situation by a notable figure holding a noteworthy, powerful position of leadership. This paper rectifies that oversight by examining definitional usage based from the perspective of the office, or the daily job, and institution, or the storied, gloried executive branch, of the American presidency.

This paper confects ideas, theories, and positions from the communication studies, political science, political theology, philosophy and comparative literature disciplines, particularly the works of Lee Sigelman, Ruth Amossy, and David Zarefsky, to examine how presidents extend beyond defining “x” via their personal ethos, to the American presidency’s office and institution as additional definitional means in order to obtain their intended objective. It begins with a review of the difference between argument from definition and argument by definition. It then summarizes what is known about the President as a definer before examining argument by definition from the office and institutional standpoints. The paper concludes with positive and negative implications when definitions of these types are engaged.

## *2. Argument from definition and argument by definition*

This paper is a follow-up to my 2010 ISSA paper presentation discerning between *argument from definition* and *argument by definition* (see Minielli, 2011), using the American presidency as the interlocutor example. The previous paper argued that argument *from* definition places the intellectual locus on the definition itself whereas argument *by* definition shifts the locus to the orator or user of the definition. The previous paper claims that “Individuals who define (create) or redefine (modify) a word or phrase when engaging in argument by definition often garner significant power and control that could become problematic if left unchecked” (p. 1299)

A section of my previous paper argued that institutional legitimacy, or the power of institutions to advance definitions, is well noted in argumentation scholarship. Referencing competing definitions of “X,” Schwarze (2002, 139) argues that, in addition to persuasion and coercion, “in the realm of public policy, the empowerment of a definition is dependent on the legitimacy of the institution authorized to define the term” and that “institutional arguments justify the acceptance or rejection of a particular definition” (p. 143). Titsworth (1999, p. 183) notes the power resulting from public institutional definitions “‘privilege[s] the perspectives of those in power,’ resulting in not only a legitimization of those



perspectives, but also becomes a ‘mechanism of hegemony where institutional power over the individual [is] expanded.’” But scant research in presidential rhetoric exists. Institutional legitimacy has been addressed in presidential crisis literature, including power (Windt, 1973; Young, 1992), institutional failure (Zagacki, 1992; Brummert, 1975), and presidential personalization of and blending with institution (see Gonchar and Hahn, 1971, 1973; Gibson and Felkins, 1974). This paper adds to what remains an understudied area.

### 3. *The American president as definer and his occupational roles*

The American president enjoys some level of privilege when it comes to advancing definitions. Jamieson (1988, p. 240) points out that “in some settings the ethos of a speaker is sufficient to sustain a case,” meaning his ability to define is accepted based on the man serving as president and nothing more. Neustadt (1990, p. 11) famously recognized the importance of presidential ethos when he claimed that “Presidential power is the power to persuade.” Zarefsky (1986, p. 1) extends Neustadt by arguing that when it comes to presidents, “the power to persuade is, in large measure, the power to define.”

The paper posits that advances of technology coupled with a no-holds-barred media approach analyzing every aspect of the contemporary American presidency has transformed the definitional nature of the American presidency and has expanded from the “person” occupying the office to include the office and its institutional nature. Hart (1987, p. 202) states that “because rhetorical skills have been highlighted so often during the last forty years, they have changed how people view the executive branch of government itself.” One reason why it has changed is the heightened visibility and public awareness of the President’s different roles.

#### 3.1 *Presidential roles*

The president’s traditional roles are largely known. For example, the president is the *Commander-in-Chief*, or head of America’s military. From a rhetorical perspective, Zarefsky (2004, p. 616) suggests that when a president defines a situation as a “crisis,” the ensuing supportive response by Congress and the public is immediate, and thus allows the president to take on “the persona of the commander-in-chief.”

The president is also known as *Chief Executive* or the *Head of State*. Bose and Greenstein (2002, p. 186) state that “As head of state, the American president is a

symbol of unity. Like a constitutional monarch, he is expected to be a noncontroversial representative of the entire nation.” They (2002, pp. 186-187) also refer to the president as the *Nation’s Chief Political Leader*, arguing that

*As the nation’s chief political leader, however, he must engage in the intrinsically divisive prime ministerial tasks of political problem solving. The tendency of presidents to sully their public images by conspicuous displays of politicking may be one reason why their public support often erodes in the course of their presidencies.*

Coe & Neumann (2011, p. 142) state that the American president “is the reference point - among journalists and citizens alike - for much of America’s international conduct.”

The president is also known as the *Constitutional Leader*, as identified by Caesar, Thurow, Tulis, and Dessette, among others (Dorsey, 2002, pp. 5-6), although that role may not be as well known. Zarefsky (1997, p. 6), referencing Basso (1994), states that “‘constitutionality’ has a strong effect in determining what kinds of problems are and are not considered within government’s legitimate scope....” Subsequently there have been several studies examining the president’s Constitutional role and its gradual expansion, most notably Schlesinger’s 1973 book *The Imperial Presidency*.

A related but lesser known role is what I call *Civic Duties*, based on Goodnight (2002, p. 201). Goodnight argues that

*all presidential leadership is a civic art constituted by public enactments of the presidency. Civic performances distinguish each administration as the executive deploys inherent and implied powers within the federal arenas of shared and separated authority. Individual presidential actions constitute individual interpretations of Constitutional text, original intent, and historical practice in light of contemporary governmental and political constraints and opportunities. Collectively, administration performances achieve the shape and significance by virtue of the public arguments among all those whose prerogatives and responsibilities are affected by the policies and fortunes of a presidency.”*

He continues, arguing that

*it is fair to say that the signature of a specific rhetorical presidency is constituted*

*in the ongoing emphasis, interpretation, and enactment of a democratically elected candidate within and against the expected roles of chief executive, legislative leader, opinion/party leader, commander in chief, chief diplomat, and member of the first family of the United States - as these performances unfold to meet and cross the elite and public expectations of an era* (2002, p. 204).

Beyond these traditional roles, scholars have identified additional ones. Older ones include Lowi's *The Personal President* (1986) and Stuckey's *Interpreter-in-Chief* (1991), and newer ones highlight Nelson's *Evolving Presidency* (2007), Edward's *Strategic President* (2009), Beschloss's *Presidential Courage* (2008) and the latest edition of Greenstein's *Presidential Difference* (2009).

In addition to heightened awareness of presidential roles is increasing scrutiny of presidential oratory as it is often viewed as a means of exerting presidential power and leadership.

### 3.2 *Presidential oratory*

A president's definitional usage is also contingent on the rhetorical events he is participating. His definition of "x" depends largely upon the traditional characteristics of rhetorical criticism: the situation, the speaker, and the audience. A fourth characteristic, the media, is also examined as it now contributes to definitional usage and degrees of acceptance.

#### 3.2.1 *The situation, the speaker, and the audience*

Sigelman (2001, p. 11) suggests that there are three types of presidential addresses: ceremonial occasions, international issues, and domestic issues. Referencing Campbell & Jamieson (1990), he notes that presidential addresses vary widely in substance and style. Inaugural addresses, for example, constitute a rhetorical genre quite distinct from war messages. He argues that presidential addresses have a common goal of unifying the nation behind the president, but different circumstances may lead a president to pursue different means of achieving that goal" (p. 10) In other words, the "oratorical" situation itself carries with it pre-established presidential ethos, like the Inaugural or State of the Union addresses. Sigelman (2001, p. 4) does warn that "major addresses are subject to a number of generic expectations (Campbell & Jamieson, 1990), but these are so bound up in the situated identities of the presidents who deliver the addresses that the two cannot be really separated."

The speaker is a second traditional analysis element of rhetorical criticism. Sigelman (2001, p. 4) identifies what he calls the *presidential persona*, and states that it is found in occasions where presidents were most highly motivated to exercise special care in self-presentation. Rice (2010, p. 9) points out that “it is the language of the speaker that is used to establish his character.” Citing Leary (1995), Sigelman (2001, p. 2) states that “the incentive to make the ‘right’ impression varies as a function of the publicness of the performance and the perceived importance of the role.” Referencing Schlenker (1986 p. 27), Sigelman further states that “those who are publicly performing a highly salient role tend to be especially aware that they are presenting ‘evidence for others to contemplate, evaluate, and respond’”

Sigelman’s observation highlights a third traditional element of rhetorical criticism, namely the audience. He argues that “in the era of the ‘public relations presidency’ (Brace & Hinckey, 1993, p. 382), when presidential leadership increasingly consists of ‘going public’ in a full-dress campaign mode to maintain public support (Kernell, 1986), impression management becomes an ever more vital governance tool” (2001, p. 16). He also also states that “as Schlenker and Weigold (1992, p. 155) remind us, what is ‘as important, if not more important, than the public or private nature of a performance is the audience that is salient to the actor at the time of the performance.’”

### 3.2.2 *The media*

Sigelman (2001 p. 18) introduces the element of the media when he points out that there are “degrees of publicness” with regards to a president’s oratory: “differences between, say, a televised speech to the nation and a briefing session with reporters, or between an informal work session with trusted advisors and a scheduled meeting with a delegation of dignitaries.”

Zarefsky (1997, pp. 6-7) states that there are several ways one definition can be more effective than another. One way would be for the definition to be associated with a dramatic event that generates a “new frame of reference.” Predominantly, Zarefsky points out, “what determines the acceptability of a frame is a more prosaic series of questions that relate to its political acceptability, comprehensiveness, and authoritative grounding.” He continues by arguing that “These factors not only determine the definition of an event as a public problem but answer the question of who ‘owns’ the problem.” Referencing Rochefort and Cobb (1994) and Portz (1994), Zarefsky points out that “Problem ownership

means domination of the way a concept or social concern is thought of and acted upon.”

As such, due to the advent of heightened role knowledge and greater access and awareness of him through the media, a leader like the American president may no longer be able to rely solely on his own personal ethos for definitional usage. Increasingly American presidents are extending or borrowing credibility from other related areas like the *office* and *institution* of the presidency. The rest of the paper addresses the “how” they are doing this and its ramifications, based on the work of Ruth Amossy.

#### 4. *Amossy and institutional ethos*

Ruth Amossy, in her 2001 essay entitled “*Ethos* at the Crossroads of Disciplines: Rhetoric, Pragmatics, Sociology,” examines ethos from the orator and institutional perspectives. Amossy argues that the orator’s prior ethos and the ethos created through the oratorical act “are related to the authority derived from an exterior institutional status” (p. 9).

Amossy (2001, p. 20) states that “the construction of an ethos in the discourse often aims to displace or modify the prior image of the speaker. In some cases, the speaker can heavily rely on the prior ethos; the speaker only has to confirm a preexisting image he or she sees as appropriate to persuasion goals. In other cases, the speaker has to erase dimensions of his or her person that are not altogether clear to the public.” In this sense, an orator like a president may borrow from institutional ethos if his prior ethos is not strong enough to support his goals. In some instances the institutional ethos can be used to replace a less than satisfactory prior ethos as well. Amossy (2001, p. 21) states that “the status enjoyed by orators, together with their public images, delimit their authority at the moment they take the floor. Yet the construction of the image of self within the discourse has, in turn, the capacity to modify the prior representations and to confer credibility and authority upon the speaker,” meaning oratory does have the power to alter a speaker’s ethos. Amossy (2001, p. 21) argues further that “it contributes to the production of new images and helps to transform positions in the field while participating in the field’s dynamic” and “the discursive ethos thus produced seeks to procure for the speaker a long-term benefit which could well make a difference.”

While Amossy points out several benefits associated with institutional ethos, it

would foolish to believe that some negative effects do not exist when a president extends beyond his “self” when employing and justifying definitions. The next section examines how a president uses the office and the institution of the presidency to enhance his definitional attempts of “x” beyond personal ethos.

### *5. The “office” and “institution” of the American presidency as additional defining entities*

For purposes of this paper, I am differentiating between the office of the presidency and the institution of the presidency. When I refer to the office, I am referencing the “job.” This includes the daily activities of the president in the White House like staff meetings, policy work, and decision-making. We’ll call this the “job persona.” When I refer to the institution, I am referencing the “symbolic” nature of the presidency, including its Constitutional designation and often rhetorical references to its history, its stature, prestige and prominence, as well as its domestic and international placement in the political world. Ragsdale & Theis (1997, p. 1282) support this position when they state that “as an organization achieves stability and value, it becomes an institution.”

#### *5.1 The office of the American presidency*

Little research exists on the daily job of the president from a definitional standpoint. Tulis (1987, p. 7) points out that many political scientists see the evolution of the “modern executive” to include “the regular active initiation and supervision of a legislative program, the use of the veto to oppose legislation as a matter of partisan policy rather than of constitutional propriety; the development and ‘institutionalization’ of a large White House staff; and the development and use of ‘unilateral’ powers, such as executive agreements in place of treaties, or the withholding of documents from Congress under the doctrines of ‘executive privilege,’” although Tulis sees these developments as a more of a “maturation” than an evolution of the institution (p. 8). Media reporting of the “job persona” has served to increase public awareness of “the job” as well as the president’s various roles. In addition, the widespread use of the Internet now allows interested parties access to the President’s daily events through the President’s Daily Schedule available online at [whitehouse.gov](http://whitehouse.gov) (see “White House Schedule – September 15, 2014). In many ways the “job” portion of the Presidency has become more transparent and accessible.

Zarefsky (2004, p. 611) claims that “because of his prominent political position and his access to the means of communication, the president, by defining a

situation, might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public.” He also states that “If, as Hargove (1998, p. vii) suggests, the president’s job is to teach reality through rhetoric, then the president emerges as the chief national definer of situations” (2002, p. 35). In other words, the *office* becomes an additional source for presidential definitions beyond the individual. Increasing awareness and access translates into a better informed audience that may gain definitional understanding due to the amount of explanatory information available to provide readers with context and heightened understanding. Substantially more literature exists addressing the *institutional* part of the presidency, or what Hart (1987, p. 6) calls the “institutional persona.”

### 5.2 *The institution of the American presidency*

It is here where I think presidential definitions that focus on rights and responsibilities of the executive branch over the legislative and judicial branches resides as presidents often invoke the symbolic nature and historical legacy of the presidency as support for their definitions in their public communication. It also here at this level where many scholarly works examining presidential actions within and beyond the Constitution take place, like Aberbach, Peterson, & Quirk’s 2007 essay discussing their theory of “the unitary Executive,” based on George W. Bush’s presidency, which argues “sweeping constitutional and policy-making prerogatives to the chief executive” instead of executive agencies and “without congressional or judicial interference and contrary to prevailing scholarly conventions about checks and balances in the separation-of-powers system” (p. 516).

Tulis (1987, p. 13) argues that presidential rhetorical practices are “reflections and elaborations of underlying doctrines of governance.” Ragsdale and Theis’s (1997, p. 1314) study concludes that the American presidency “emerged as an institution in the late 1970s” from its organizational roots. Schlesinger (1973) details the institutional emergence in his 1973 book entitled *The Imperial Presidency* as part of his indictment of the Nixon administration’s overreaching interpretations of presidential power. Hart (1987, p. 100) points out that one aspect of Nixon’s essential communication theory was to “speak for the institution, not oneself.”

Zarefsky, (2002, p. 22), referencing Skowronek (1993 p. 20), claims that “Successful leaders, while responding to their situation, are those who can ‘control the political definition of their actions, the terms in which their places in

history are understood.” Zarefsky argues that from this view, “leadership is the control of meaning or interpretation given to actions.” Tulis (1987, p. 13) argues that presidential rhetorical practices are “reflections and elaborations of underlying doctrines of governance.”

As Zarefsky (2002) reiterates his claim that “the power to speak is the power to define” in his discussion of the ambiguous “Puritan’s conception of Americans as the chosen people” and the Monroe Doctrine (p. 32), he argues it is the power to have others listen and respond to a leader of another nation. That power shapes not only our foreign policy but America’s relationships with other countries. It establishes parameters and levels of isolation as well as involvement. It illustrates the power of framing, defining that frame, and responding in the manner that the President deems as most appropriate for that frame. As Zarefsky indicates, “Blessed with moral superiority, established as the ‘beacon on the western shore,’ we have the mission of persuading others by precept and example. And, because of our unique position, other nations will listen to us. By proclaiming what we wish to achieve, we have the power to make it so” (p. 33).

Hart (1987, p. 208) also notes a stronger, independent executive branch due to the rise of the media. He points out that the presidential institution is less interdependent with the other two governmental branches. He states that in the past, “

*the president needed the other institutions of governance in part because they controlled the rhetorical forums. He needed a political party for his convention speech, the Congress for his budget messages, state caucuses for his campaign speeches, the press for his news conferences. With the rise of television and, more important, with the president’s growing sense that he is in control of what he says as well as of why, when, and where he says it, the chief executive has become considerably less interdependent.*

#### *6. Implication of presidential definition from the office and the institution of the American presidency*

The changing landscape of access and information of the American presidency suggests that scholarly examination of the executive branch needs to evolve and expand as well. Many of the advantages of a president defining from the ethos of *office* or the *institution* are the same for definitions employed from ethos as a *person*. All three are used to draw attention to, highlight its importance, or



enhance the credibility of definition of “x” as well as elevate “x’s” status, importance, or prestige.

Scholars have noted several additional advantages. Hart (1987, p. 53) points out that in the case of Lyndon B. Johnson, “legislation was action, the best sort of action - accomplished action. And Lyndon Johnson likes action.” As a result, Hart (p. 52) claims Johnson knew that “no matter who authored a bill and no matter who pushed it through congressional committees, it was the speechmaker who would receive credit for the legislation heralded” and that “a new piece of legislation had to be ‘performed’ for the mass media,” in a ceremonial oratorical situation, “so as to give that piece of legislation a fair chance at being successful.” In addition, Hart (p. 87) points out that the American presidency is “a respected institution in the United States.” When a president suffers from poor credibility, he can refer to and borrow from the institutional stature for needed ethos.

Other advantages include imparting vision (Holmes, 2007, p. 418; Andrews, 2002, p. 1236), exerting power (Hart, 1987, p. 110), obtaining goals (Zarefsky in Dorsey, 2002, pp. 20- 24; Hart, 1987, p. 81; Cummins, 2010, p. 192), manipulate history and legacy (Zarefsky, 2002, p. 37), unifying the nation (Andrews, 2002, p. 124), and identity shaping (Coe and Neumann, 2011, p. 140; Andrews, 2002, pp. 131-141).

Rice (2010, p. 10) argues that a subset of presidential ethos is a “wielding” one, which is “the use of ethos as a persuasive tool for some other goal.” He further argues that “there are certain modes of persuasion that rely more heavily (or entirely) on the pre-existing symbolic store of leadership ethos to accomplish their persuasive ends” (p. 30). Rice claims that one way “wielding” ethos is present and used in through the nature of the presidential office. Such examples of “wielding” include “going public” and working the “bully pulpit” in different ways to define the terms the audience uses to define a political or social reality - and thereby the nature of their views of that reality” (pp. 30-31). As such it is possible that presidents who are suffering from low public opinion poll numbers or support will invoke the *office* or the *institution* as additional methods of drawing attention to or gaining acceptance and support for the president’s definition of “x.”

My 2010 ISSA paper generated three critical observations. First, the mythical power of the office of the presidency as an institution substantially contributes to presidential pressure. Zagacki (1992, p. 53) claims that “institutions are so

molded by underlying myths of American superiority, presidents cannot handle failure for it would imply they are incapable of reconciling the nation to its ultimate historical purpose.” Second, personal presidential perspective of “x” is important. Brummert (1975, p. 256) argues that former president Richard Nixon’s institutional definitional approach of deflecting criticism and personal attacks depicted the president seeing himself as reacting to evil and not part of the evil family. Third, Kiewe (1994, p. xxxiii) notes that the presidency, as an institution, typically ignores the long term impacts of the occupant’s crisis rhetoric, preferring its enactment to garner immediate image considerations and to secure quick policy goals. If Zagacki is correct, it can be argued that presidential failure whether rhetorical or otherwise is a paramount concern which may contribute to a president’s preference for short-term gains over long-term goals, as Kiewe suggests. It may also explain why presidents are expanding beyond the self when defining “x.” There are several negative effects to expanding that definitional base. Zarefsky (1997, p. 5) accurately points out that

*definition of terms is a key step in the presentation of argument, and yet this critical step is taken by making moves that are not themselves argumentative at all. They are not claims supported by reasons and intended to justify adherence by critical listeners. Instead they are simply proclaimed as if they were indisputable facts.*

In other words, presidents often define without proffering evidence or some type of factual or statistical support to back up their assertions. The past personal and institutional personas have afforded the American president with the means of speaking as an unchecked authoritative figure whose information is regarded as factual, accurate, and truthful. But as technology has rapidly increased the speed of information dissemination as well as broader public access, presidents need to be more cautious about what they say, the language they employ, and the evidence they use to support their definition of “x.”

A second negative effect is the widening playing field for argumentation and criticism. Instead of two traditional areas to attack, namely the personal and institutional personas, a third one now exists. As such, the media, public, and other concerned individuals have more territory to scrutinize and attack. Subsequently, by providing a wider definitional base, presidents now need to be defend that widening base and refute arguments or counter positions. As any debater knows, the more material presented means more material subject to

questioning, refutation, and attack. This could prevent a president from achieving his goals, attempts at domestic or international unity, or exerting power.

A third negative effect is a change in advantages. For example, a widening base for a definition of “x” does not necessarily mean an improved presidential stature or increased favorability. For example, Dorsey (2002 p. 17) argues that “While the executive office obviously bestows the status of leader and voice of the nation on whoever holds the office, simply occupying the position does not necessarily mean that successful leadership will follow.” Along the same vein, heightened awareness and more instantaneous access to information suggests it has become harder for a president to forge, shape, or manipulate his identity, image, historical standing, and overall legacy. Collectively, these observations suggest that further analysis of the office’s role in definitional argument as well as the changing institutional role is necessary.

## 7. Conclusion

Goodnight (2002, p. 205) argues that “Debates over what the president did, could, should, or will do constitute legitimization disputes over the uses of power and thus inevitably shape and reshape the domestic and foreign policy landscapes of democratic policies. These rhetorical efforts constitute the public argument of an American presidency.” As presidents continue to define words or events using language that invites wide public support, they have become increasingly confronted with unprecedented information knowledge and access that could alter their definitional approach.

By expanding on a previous ISSA paper analyzing the difference between argument from definition and argument by definition, this paper examines how presidents are widening their definitional bases from *personal* or *institutional* personas to include what I call the *job* persona as a means of providing additional reasons or forms of support when they define “x.” Ruth Amossy’s argument that rhetoric allows a president to transform or modify a pre-existing image supports this paper’s position that a widening presidential definitional base is being employed to help a president substantiate his vision of “x” toward others. This expansion carries with it both positive advantages and negative effects. As we become more firmly entrenched in the 21st century, it appears that the contemporary American president is broadening his definitional base to compensate for eroding traditional definitional base that has been diminished by technological advances and quicker information dissemination.

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2014 - Euro: Past Arguments For The Contemporary Debate On European Currency**

*Abstract:* My paper aims to investigate the debate on European currency and the connection between two different rhetorics: one emerged during the last French presidential election in 2012 and the other occurred during the transition from franc to euro in 1998-2002. My paper underlines that the contemporary crisis of the European monetary construction has been represented by some types of arguments emerged when euro was proposed, on 1998. I explore the relation between definition and argumentation.

*Keywords:* argumentation in discourse, definition, discourse analysis, euro, French language, presidential election.

## *1. Introduction*

My contribution will first expose a short history of the European currency so as to underscore the principal and more recent steps of the euro. A place will be given to the confidence value of the European money which is one of the main items of the related debate. Later on, I will show two main characteristics of the corpora that I analysed: the discursive nature of the construction of the euro transition

and the two different political and economical periods of time in France (2002 and 2012) covered by data in my hand. After this comment, I will introduce the theoretical framework of my analysis based on the idea of the argumentation as a call-back mechanism: some argumentative designations, used during the latest French presidential election linked to the euro crisis, recall the previous debate on euro. I will express and explain this circularity through some examples. I will then conclude looking at the semantic intersection between argumentation and lexicon.

## *2. The European currency*

In December 1991, the European Council decided to shape an economic and monetary union in the Dutch city of Maastricht and later confirmed it in the Treaty on European Union (the so-called Maastricht Treaty). Economic and monetary union brought the European Union (EU) one step further in its process of economic integration, which started in 1957 when it was founded. In 1998, the European Central Bank (ECB) was established and, six months later, the stage three of Economic and Monetary Union was launched. On 1 January 1999 the euro replaced the former European Currency Unit (ECU). Euro banknotes and coins began to circulate on 1 January 2002.

The monetary shift from national to European currency is part of contemporary history and of the construction of Europe, not only from a monetary point of view. Since the creation of the ECB in 1998 until the introduction of the euro in 2002, the European currency has been a political challenge, which had peoples to be first convinced, reassured and trained. This event, taken in the history of European integration, required two different but quite complementary efforts.

On the one hand, the protagonists of monetary integration of Europe pursued and built confidence, which is essential in making people comfortable with the new currency. I can consider national currencies, in fact, as symbols of national identities. Money thus embodies a range of cultural and memory references. The first problem with the new currency has been that euro is not immediately identifiable to a single nation: so, it needed bigger endeavors in order to enforce trust and identity. For these reasons, its “discursive” aspect, associated to its material presence[i], is relevant for my analysis.

On the other hand, European citizens from the first eleven member countries have permanently changed an age-old practice: the use and, therefore, the name



of their national currency. In France, this change sounded even more complicated by the etymological triad “Franc-France-Français” (Franc-France-French) which was at stake. We will see now how important is the time factor conceived as a sort of link between the present and the past argumentations.

### 3. *The corpus*

#### 3.1 *Subject of the discourse*

From our perspective, the study of the euro cannot be separated from the speeches that had been produced and characterized its birth and launch. The transition to the euro in terms of its discursive construction means to examine the role of language. More specifically, it means to analyse the emergence of events related to memory, culture and history of a given society. The construction of the monetary Europe went through the use of language. Moreover, its existence, until 1 January 2002, was linked to the discourse of economic and political actors who either supported or opposed to its launch. Nowadays, the debate related to the European monetary union is deeply linked with the topics that have been used during its launch: political and monetary sovereignty, supranational bank (ECB), national and European identities, etc.

During the first period, from 1998 to 2002, the major aim of the euro defenders analysed was to build confidence on Euro: his creation, launch and arrival occupied, from a discursive and media point of view, an important period of time giving rise to mass production and circulation of discourse. In a similar way, the euro opponents tried to destroy the arrival of the new currency by emphasizing the lacks of the new currency. Both positions had to develop a discourse which had largely preceded the arrival of the euro. With reference to the studies of Sitri, we can consider the transition to the euro as an *objet de discours* (subject of the discourse) which reveals aspects of traceability in history:

*l'objet de discours est conçu ici comme une entité constitutivement discursive, et non pas psychologique ou cognitive: constitué de discours et dans le discours – discours où il naît et se développe mais aussi discours dont il garde la mémoire – il est par là-même pris dans la matérialité de la langue* (Sitri, 2003, p. 39).**[ii]**

In 2012, during the French presidential election, political speakers recovered some arguments used ten years before. The members of the political parties as well as the argumentative recycle were in fact the same; sometimes candidates in

2012 election simply used same arguments of the past confirming the memorial value of these arguments.

### 3.2 *The French context*

Two issues pushed Jacques Chirac to request a new ballot in June 1997: on the one hand, European targets, including introduction of the euro and, on the other, different positions within the government. The victory of the left coalition (PS, PC, Left Radicals, Greens) inaugurated the period of the third political cohabitation with Lionel Jospin as Prime Minister. The presidential election took place between April 21 and May 5. In the first round, Jean-Marie Le Pen was positioned behind Jacques Chirac and before Lionel Jospin who suddenly announced his withdrawal from political life. On May 5, Jacques Chirac was re-elected President for five years. During the government of Lionel Jospin, there have been three ministers of Economics: Dominique Strauss-Kahn, Christian Sautter and Laurent Fabius. On January 1, 2002 the euro officially began circulating.

The tenth birthday of the European currency in 2012 has been characterised by a strong financial and political crisis which reinforced the opponents of the euro project. During the French presidential election, the first round ended with the selection of François Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy. Hollande won the second round. The candidates' discourses had to face up the financial topic of the crisis of the euro mostly because of the lower political legitimacy of the monetary Europe. The tenth anniversary of the euro and the argumentative strategies used during the presidential election make this period of time particularly interesting for my research.

In 2012, the presidential election permitted me to investigate the debate on European currency within the electoral discourse of the French candidates. Therefore, my choice emphasizes the time factor of the discursive event 'euro' and highlights the abundance of media production, following the notion of *moment discursif* (discursive moment) elaborated by Moirand (2007) which means:

*étudier la circulation des mots, des formulations et des dires, en particulier la façon dont "ça " parle, "ça" circule d'un article à un autre, d'une émission à une autre, d'un genre à un autre, d'un média à un autre. Mais si l'on s'interroge sur la façon dont ils circulent autant que sur ce qu'ils "disent", c'est parce qu'on s'interroge également, au-delà de la traçabilité des mots, des formulations et des*

*dire, que l'on vise, sur la mémoire, le rappel et l'oubli des dire qui sont produits, ou transmis, par les médias.* (Moirand, 2007, pp. 4-5).**[iii]**

Although the two moments analysed have produced different amount of speeches on euro and the European challenges are varied from 2002 to 2012, I consider the political event of presidential election and the evolutive progression of euro as relevant subjects in order to build a comparative study.

#### 4. *Argumentation in discourse*

In regards of the theoretical framework, my study investigates the arguments in discourse by casting light on the processes that users implement. Namely, the discourse can be considered as the concrete result of the statement in context. My methodological approach addresses the debate on the euro as a game of positioning, a dialogic process and a resistance to challenge. As quoted by Plantin,

*L'argumentation est la confrontation, sur un mode polémique ou coopératif, d'un discours et d'un contre-discours orientés par une même question.* (Plantin, 1996, p. 72).**[iv]**

The issue (*question*) mentioned by Plantin corresponds, in my case study, with the acceptance or refusal of the euro. The two periods of time analysed and the speakers involved in the debate produce discourses with an argumentative *visée* or purpose as stated by Ruth Amossy:

*la simple transmission d'un point de vue sur les choses, qui n'entend pas expressement modifier les positions de l'allocataire [dimension argumentative], ne se confond pas avec l'entreprise de persuasion soutenue par une intention consciente et offrant des stratégies programmées à cet effet [visée argumentative]* (Amossy, 2009, p. 33).**[v]**

Both in 2012 and in 2002 the speakers analysed had to persuade their audience of the political position they occupied in supporting or opposing euro. In 2002, speakers were involved in the monetary transition; in 2012, the financial crisis of euro and European monetary construction pushed candidates to express their position on euro. Therefore, we need the context in which discourses are produced in order to understand their creation and use and for this reason I consider argumentation dialogical and rich of intertextual and interdiscursive elements.

#### 4.1 *Definition and argumentation*

We need now to highlight two kinds of arguments which play their role on the notion of definition. On the one hand, the argument by definition concerns the concepts as such with specific distinguishing features (such as legal definitions).**[vi]** It is sometimes called argument by essence. On the other hand, the argumentative definition recaps a significant amount of data that clearly expresses the speaker's position.**[vii]** Through this kind of argument one can recognize opponents and their replies as well as express his/her own position, inferring so the dialectic value of the argument. Following Plantin,

*la définition argumentative consiste à définir un terme de telle sorte que la définition exprime une prise de position, favorable ou défavorable, vis-à-vis de l'objet défini* (Plantin, 1996, pp. 53-54).**[viii]**

Far from being comparable to the argument by definition or to the argumentative definition, I think that the adjectival designations assigned to the euro summarize two opposed political positions and involve different interdiscursive references. Given that, any argumentative analysis should question the words used by speakers, as Plantin remembers in 1996:

*la présence structurante du discours de l'un dans le discours de l'autre est à la base de l'hétérogénéité du discours argumentatif apparemment le plus monologique* (Plantin, 1996, p. 75).**[ix]**

The corpora analyzed are, in fact, made by monological speeches which maintain an argumentative mechanism which links past and present by linking one corpus to the other. Moreover, as stated by Robrieux,

*certaines termes du vocabulaire politique fournissent sans doute les meilleurs exemples d'imprécisions sémantiques due à leur charge affective et aux connotations qui s'y rattachent* (Robrieux, 2007, p. 149).**[x]**

I want to underline that speakers use evaluative terms in order to drive the comprehension of their audience and, on the other hand, in order to clarify the meaning that they assign to a word. We cannot talk about definition based on etymology or dictionary definition but I argue that the lexical and semantic choices made by the speakers analysed reveal consensual or debatable reactions. As pointed by Amossy in 2009:

*le mot est à prendre aussi bien dans le cadre de l'interaction [...] que des rapports consensuels ou polémiques qu'il entretient avec les autres mots du discours dans un espace où les énonciations se croisent et se répondent* (Amossy, 2009, p. 158).**[xi]**

In order to explain this specific perspective, I will present two different pair of adjectives which summarize similar argumentative positions.

#### 5. "Single" or "common" currency

The first set of examples is linked to the difference between two adjectives referred to currency: "single" and "common." During the launch of the euro, the European currency went through a sort of 'definitional step' which led to the use of the word "euro". From the 1960s until the early 2000s, the value of the currency name has been the subject of debate among Member States of the European Union. The adjectives associated with the euro (e.g. "community", "parallel", "common" and "single" currency) reported thus fundamental passages in European history, economics and politics. They photograph explicitly different visions of Europe. Until the December 1995, when the name was chosen,**[xii]** each European official document took explicit position by choosing one term instead of another.

For example, the quotations from the opponents, determined against economical "supranationality" of the euro, defended the "common" currency and not the "single" currency. On the other hand, the contemporary debate on European currency regenerates past arguments associated with the issue of supranationality and financial reliability of the euro. Indeed, the political programs of the French candidates to the presidential election of 2012 contained the topic *la sortie de l'euro* (the withdrawal from the euro) linked to the financial crisis of the PIIGS countries (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece, and Spain). The lack of economic solidarity among the members of EU as well as the increasing method of austerity enforced by the ECB renew the debate on euro in 2012.

The following examples are organised as a double track which confirms the cyclic nature of the argumentation even within the same political party, as for example the National Front. Marine Le Pen, current leader of the party, uses the expression *monnaie commune* (common currency) and *monnaie unique* (single currency) as his father, former leader of the party, did more than ten years before:

*Nous envisageons la possibilité de conserver l'euro monnaie commune [...] ça n'aurait pas les inconvénients qu'à la monnaie unique [...] la possibilité de conserver une monnaie commune ce que nous rejetons, contestons formellement c'est cette monnaie unique.* (M. Le Pen, 27/11/2011).**[xiii]**

*Oui à une monnaie commune, symbole de la coopération fraternelle des Européens. Mais alors franchement, très franchement, non, mille fois non, à la monnaie unique."* (J.-M. Le Pen, 1/05/1998).**[xiv]**

Even if the political context of the French presidential election of 2012 has changed, the use of the adjectives "common" and "single" revitalised the former debate of 1998. The circularity of these argumentative signals is useful to the persuasive aim of the speakers. In other words, they exploit some of the most common arguments of the past against euro to concentrate their speeches and to underline the interdiscursive value of their political position.

The same mechanism is stated within another couple of examples linked to the Citizens' Movement, a party guided by J.-P. Chevènement :

*une mutation si possible harmonisée de l'euro qui de monnaie unique pourrait devenir monnaie commune* (Chevènement, 24/06/2011).**[xv]**

The speaker postulates the need to switch from a single currency to a common one. He is using the same couple of adjectives of the past, as reported in the following example:

*S'agissant de l'euro, aujourd'hui monnaie commune, je m'interroge sur le fait de savoir s'il ne serait pas raisonnable d'y regarder à deux fois avant de plonger, le 1er janvier 2002, dans la monnaie unique* (Chevènement, 21/05/2000).**[xvi]**

Here I want to emphasize the role played by a problematic link between the ideas of single and common currency. As mentioned above, the single euro is, according to the Marine and Jean-Marie Le Pen, the currency of the capital markets and ECB while the common currency could become a slogan for cooperation between European countries. In other words, a common currency means to them an exchange other than financial transactions.

Other contemporary political French speakers enrich the adjectival meaning of "common" and "single" by adding other adjectives, as Jean-Luc Mélenchon did in

2011:

*la France devra œuvrer au renforcement de la coopération monétaire en proposant le passage du SME à la “monnaie commune européenne” (et non plus “monnaie unique”)* (Mélenchon, 10/04/2011).**[xvii]**

The speakers of 2012 regenerate the previous debate of 1998-2002 by using the definitional contrast between “common” and “single.” The use of dictionary in this case has not great interest: what is really important is to take into account the political interdiscourse which can better define the value of the words “single” or “common.”

#### 6. “Strong” or “weak” euro

A second topic which summarizes another argumentative value refers to the strength or the weakness of the euro. On the one hand, the strength of the euro against the dollar is assigned to different degrees: behind the dollar, at the same level of importance, or in a contrast to it. This comparison is taken by opponents to the euro as a scale of “monetary subordination” against the dollar. Both can be measured only in relationship with the dollar and, occasionally, with the yen. Fabius explained this concept in 2001:

*l’euro est à la fois un symbole politique majeur de l’Europe qui se construit, un gage de paix, un pôle de force face au dollar et demain sans doute face à une monnaie ou à un panier de monnaies asiatiques* (Fabius, 23/01/2001).**[xviii]**

According to its supporters, euro embodies the European alternative to the dollar and the yen and it is presented as the currency of the first world power. Therefore, if one refers to the opponents to the euro, it is considered as a subaltern currency compared to the dollar. From an argumentative point of view, the lexical selection of the adjective “strong” or “weak” implies that two visions of the euro project are subsumed: on the one hand, a currency which can defend Europe from financial crisis, unemployment, increase in the price of consumer goods; on the other, the second vision of euro is linked to the idea that a money cannot survive outside a state, as De Villiers argued in 2001:

*Si l’euro est si faible aujourd’hui, c’est non seulement parce que les banquiers ne s’entendent pas entre eux sur la baisse des taux d’intérêt, mais que derrière cela, une monnaie qui n’est pas adossée à un Etat, un peuple, une nation, n’a pas de chance de survivre autrement que comme une monnaie faible* (De Villiers,

7/04/2001).**[xix]**

I think that the topic of the euro strength or weakness can be analysed by using the previous argumentative protocol. In other words, we can extrapolate the argumentative inference of each quotation through the interdiscursive relation existing between the single adjective and the persuasive aim of the speaker. As we may read in the following quotation, the strength and the weakness of euro are related to the dollar :

*La faiblesse de l'euro fait couler beaucoup d'encre, mais le MDC l'ayant souhaitée ne la déplore pas. Nous l'avons posé comme une des conditions de possibilité de l'euro, avec l'inclusion des pays d'Europe du Sud. Un euro large devait immanquablement contribuer à ce qu'il fût faible. [...]*

*Depuis deux ans, ce qui se passe montre clairement que la faiblesse de l'euro n'est que l'envers de la force du dollar. En effet, il suffirait d'un dollar faible pour des raisons décidées par le trésor américain (ce fut le cas au début de la décennie 90) pour que l'euro remonte. Ce n'est pas nous qui décidons, en dernier ressort, de la force ou de la faiblesse de l'euro. Cette faiblesse révèle surtout l'inconsistance de l'idée politique qui sous-tend le projet de l'euro (Chevènement, 21/05/2000).**[xx]***

The opposition to euro expressed by Chevènement is linked to the political inadequacy of the project of the monetary Union. On the contrary, during the past French presidential election, some candidates used these adjectives in order to renew the opposition between euro and franc, as Sarkozy did in 2012:

*Si nous sortions de l'euro pour revenir au franc, nous devrions rembourser notre dette en monnaie forte avec une monnaie faible (Sarkozy, 29/03/2012).**[xxi]***

The use of the adjectives “strong” or “weak” are then linked to the political context in which they are used. In short, the semantic referent within the speech of Sarkozy is completely opposite to the *trop forte* (too strong) within Marine le Pen's quotation:

*le problème majeur de l'euro c'est que c'est une monnaie beaucoup trop forte pour notre économie (M. Le Pen, 27/11/2011).**[xxii]***

The positive semantic charge of the adjective “strong” (the euro according to



Sarkozy) becomes a negative semantic shift for the argumentative aim of the speaker (the euro according to M. Le Pen). The leader of the National Front prompts for a sort of monetary equality between euro and franc. The argumentative purpose of the speakers analysed needs to be redefined on a regular basis and adapted to the political context and position of the candidate.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to highlight two main points of my paper. First of all, the study of a discursive object as the euro requires special attention to the periods of time analysed and to the selected speakers. The periods of time and the speakers in my paper are linked insofar as they condense chronological differences but very close political and economic issues. Moreover, even if the speakers produce monologic speeches, at the same time they mobilize other discourses pronounced before their single utterance.

Secondly, from a theoretical point of view, I assume that I cannot use the argumentative typology based on the definition and I think that the argumentative analysis does not investigate the lexicon itself. Though, I think that the lexical selection operated by a speaker makes possible her/him to guide and model her/him the argumentation. As stated by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca,

*Parfois le choix d'un terme sera destiné à servir d'indice, indice de distinction, de familiarité ou de simplicité. Parfois il servira plus directement à l'argumentation, en situant l'objet du discours dans une catégorie mieux que ne le ferait l'usage du synonyme* (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 2008, p. 201).**[xxiii]**

The adjectives “common” and “single”, “strong” or “weak” represent a choice I made to explain my analysis, but the two corpora present many other possible “couples” which testify that a public debate can generate circular argumentative strategies.

## NOTES

**i.** In 2002, notes and coins of the euro showed an iconographic message of ‘subtraction.’ In other words, images and templates chosen by the ECB will leave no room for heated debates. On the one hand, the representation of monumental works of different architectural styles demonstrated the desire to build a strong and sustainable image of eternity. On the other hand, the notes and coins ‘empty’ of architectural images left a space of ‘non-recognition’ among citizens within the

euro area. As explained by Carbonnier (1998), the images printed on the notes and coins represent sovereignty.

**ii.** “The subject of discourse is considered here as a constitutively discursive entity, not psychological nor cognitive. Since it is produced by speeches and within the speech – where it was born, developed and memorized – it is thereby rooted in the materiality of language.” (All the following translations from French to English are by the author).

**iii.** “Studying the movement of words, formulations, and sayings, particularly how ‘it’ speaks, ‘it’ flows from one article to another, from one issue to another, from one genre to another, from one medium to another. But if we ask ourselves about how they circulate as much as what they ‘say’, it is because we are also asking about the recall and the oblivion of sayings produced and transmitted by media, beyond the traceability of the words, formulations and sayings.”

**iv.** “The argumentation is the confrontation – either on a controversial or on a cooperative manner – of a speech and an opposite speech oriented by the same issue.”

**v.** “the mere transmission of a point of view on things – which expressly does not intend to change the positions of the addressee [argumentative dimension] – needs to be not confused with the will of persuasion supported by the conscious intention and strategies programmed for this purpose [argumentative purpose].”

**vi.** As an argument by definition we propose the following article of the Madrid European Council (december 1995): “the specific name euro will be used instead of the generic term ‘ecu’ used by the treaty to refer to the european currency unit.”

**vii.** We propose two conflicting examples of argumentative definitions: “L’euro est une victoire de l’Europe” (Euro is a victory for Europe – Chirac, 31/12/2001) and “L’euro, c’est le vol de la démocratie” (Euro is the theft of democracy – Pasqua, 02/01/2002).

**viii.** “The argumentative definition is made in order to define a term so that the definition expresses a position, favourable or unfavourable, related with the object defined.”

**ix.** “The structuring presence of someone’s speech in the speech of others is the basis of the heterogeneity of the argumentative discourse, even in the apparently most monological discourse.”

**x.** “Certain terms in the political vocabulary probably provide the best examples of semantic inaccuracies due to their emotional charge and connotations which are attached to it.”

**xi.** “The word needs to be taken in the context both of the interaction [...] and of consensual or controversual relationships that it has with other words of the discourse in a space where enunciations/utterances cross and reply to themselves”.

**xii.** The debate on the name of the European currency was resolved during the Economic Council of Madrid in 1995 where the European currency was finally called “euro.” The point 2 of the final resolution stressed the importance of the name of the new European currency.

**xiii.** “We envision the possibility of keeping the euro as a common currency [...] it would not have the disadvantages that the single currency has [...] the possibility to preserve a common currency, what we reject formally it is this single currency.”

**xiv.** “Yes to a common currency, a symbol of fraternal cooperation of Europeans. But then frankly, quite frankly, no, a thousand times no to the single currency.”

**xv.** “A possible harmonized mutation of the euro which will become, from single currency, common currency.”

**xvi.** “Speaking about euro as a common currency today, I wonder whether it would be unreasonable to think twice before diving in the single currency on 1 January 2002.”

**xvii.** “France must work to strengthen monetary cooperation by proposing the passage of the EMS to the ‘common European currency’ (rather than ‘single currency’).”

**xviii.** “Euro is a major political symbol of Europe that we are making: a promise of peace, a pole of strength against the dollar and, tomorrow, maybe, against asian currency or against a bunch of asian currencies.”

**xix.** “If the euro is so weak today is not only because bankers do not agree among themselves on the lower interest rates, but also because, behind that, a currency which is not supported by a state, a people, a nation has no chance to survive except as a weak currency.”

**xx.** “The weakness of the euro spilled much ink, but the MDC do not regret it. We had set it as a condition of possibility of the euro, with the inclusion of southern European countries. A large euro would inevitably contribute to his weakness [...] For two years, what is happening clearly shows that the weakness of the euro is only the other side of a strong dollar. Indeed, a dollar weak for reasons decided by the United States Treasury (as was the case at the beginning of the 90s) would be enough to let the euro rise. We do not decide, eventually, about the strength or weakness of the euro. This weakness mostly reveals the inconsistency of the

political idea behind the euro project.”

**xxi.** “If we leave the euro back to the franc, we should pay back our debt in a strong currency with a weak currency.”

**xxii.** “The major problem with the euro is that it is a far too strong currency for our economy.”

**xxiii.** “Sometimes the choice of a term is intended to serve as an index, index of distinction, familiarity and simplicity. Sometimes it will serve more directly the argumentation, placing the object of discourse in a better category than it would have been the use of a synonym.”

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2014 - The Agentive Approach To Argumentation: A Proposal**

**Abstract:** This paper outlines an agent-centered theory of argumentation. Our working hypothesis is that the aim of argumentation depends upon the agenda agents are disposed to close or advance. The novelty of this idea is that our theory, unlike the main accounts of argumentation, does not establish a fixed function that agents have to achieve when arguing. Instead, we believe that the aims of argumentation depend upon the purposes agents are disposed to achieve (agendas).

**Keywords:** Agent, agent centered theory of argumentation, function of argumentation

## *1. Introduction*

The main goal of this paper is to outline an agent-centered theory of argumentation. Our working hypothesis is that the aim of argumentation depends upon the agenda agents are disposed to close or advance. The novelty of this idea is that our theory, unlike the main normative accounts of argumentation (i.e., rhetorical, dialogical and epistemological theories of argumentation), does not establish an a priori function that agents are expected to achieve when arguing. Instead, we believe that the aims of argumentation depend upon the purposes agents are disposed to achieve (i.e., their agendas). The problem with fixing an a priori function for argumentation is that some argumentative practices do not fit into the proposed end. Our concern is that when an agent does not aim for the fixed function of argumentation, his/her argumentative practice could be misunderstood or overlooked. That is why our agentive theory suggests that the

agendas agents are disposed to close or advance by means of argumentation determine the goal of such communicative activity. If our intuitions are right, our account shows some promise understanding of a broader diversity of argumentative practices than each of the normative theories of argumentation individually considered.

Given the formal constraints of this presentation, we are not going to do a thorough reconstruction of each of the normative theories of argumentation. Instead, we are going to do cautious generalizations. First, we are going to make explicit the principle that normative theories of argumentation use to fix the putative goal for argumentation. Then, we will use a counter-example showing that the methodology of fixing an a priori function for argumentation is wrong. Finally, we will present the main concepts of our approach and show how it deals with the proposed counter-example.

## *2. The normative theories of argumentation*

The normative theory of argumentation is an account providing responses to different issues concerning the analysis and evaluation of arguments. In dealing with the problem of the function of argumentation, normative theories fix an a priori goal that agents are suppose to satisfy. Three main claims are the object of our analysis.

- (1) The goal of argumentation is to persuade (e.g., Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969; Tindale, 2004, Zarefsky, 2014).
- (2) The goal of argumentation is to achieve a consensus resolving a difference of opinion (e.g., van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, van Eemeren, 2010).
- (3) The goal of argumentation is to establish truth and justified belief (e.g., Lumer, 2005a; 2005b)

The problem with fixing the aim of argumentation beforehand, is that some argumentative practices do not adjust to the fixed goal, and, consequently, the theory analyzing and evaluating argumentation tends to misunderstood or overcome such argumentative practices.

Let's take a look at one fragment of the following counter-example proposed by Marianne Doury in the paper "Preaching to the Converted. Why Argue When Everyone Agrees?" For future reference, we will refer to Doury's case as CAR RESTRICTION. In Doury's words, this case is meant to show that "the goal of

persuasion is but one goal among others that can be assigned to argumentation, and that, as a result, persuasion cannot be considered as the central element in the definition of argumentation” (2012, p. 100). To contextualize, CAR RESTRICTION is a transcription of a conversation between a vendor (hereafter *V*) and two clients (hereafter *C1* and *C2*). All of them have seen each other before, but they know very little about each other.

## CAR RESTRICTION

*V*: Actually, what do you think of the law, er ... we were actually talking about er... this law, there, that was just voted, that is in effect, you know, the law about traffic restriction for odd-even numbered license plates for the cars.

*C1*: Listen, I will tell you what I think, for Paris, we should be doing this all the time.

*V*: All the time.

*C2*: Exactly. We all agree then.

*C1*: I find this a great idea. First of all because at last, every day, there is already a maximum number of people who could find a way to organize their transportation... People do not need their cars all the days!

*V*: The opposition parties, actually, were against it at the beginning and we do not hear them speak anymore, now.

*C2*: They showed women who...who were actually commuting in the car of their friends, of a friend who came to pick them up; they can do this all the time.

*C1*: Of course! There are people...well, the problem is, that there need to be jobs or... or certain obligations that allow one to leave at a fixed time and to return at a fixed time. For example, in my case, this is not possible. But, ninety-nine percent of the time, I do not take the car!

*V*: Yes, you are all the time using public transportation.

*C1*: Exactly. ... (Doury, 2012, p. 101).

According to Doury, CAR RESTRICTION is just an example of argumentative situations in which a controversy is proposed, and even though all the arguers agree on one same view, they provide arguments for their positions (p. 103). To be sure, the controversy is posed by the vendor when asking “what do you think of the law ... about traffic restriction for odd-even numbered license plates for the cars?” The agreement between the arguer becomes explicit when *C1* states “... we should [impose the restriction for odd-even numbered license plates for cars] all the time,” *V* assents saying “All the time,” and *C2* responds claiming “Exactly.

We all agree then.” Finally, without a detailed reconstruction, some of the arguments put forward are the following. C1 “finds [the idea of imposing restriction for odd-even numbered license plates for the cars all the time] great” because, in her words, “at last, every day, there is already a maximum number of people who could find a way to organize their transportation”. Additionally, from her perspective “People do not need their cars all the days.” C2 agrees with [the idea of imposing restriction for odd-even numbered license plates for cars all the time] because [with this restriction “[t]hey showed women who ... were actually commuting in the car of their friends [that] they can do this all the time.”

For Doury, CAR RESTRICTION is a counter-example against the idea that the aim of argumentation is persuasion. Shortly, if “to persuade” is defined with the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “to move by argument, entreaty, or expostulation to a belief, position, or course of action,” then persuasion is not the goal of argumentation in CAR RESTRICTION. The reason for this is that one cannot “move” someone to believe something that he/she already believes. To clarify, the point is not that persuasion is never the end of argumentation, but to provide a negative instance for the claim that all argumentation aims to persuade.

We believe that CAR RESTRICTION also is a counter-example for the claims that all argumentation aims to resolve a difference of opinion, and that all argumentation aims to the establishment of justified true belief. To recall, from the pragma-dialectical approach, argumentation arises from a disagreement and ends with the dissolution of the different of opinions. Yet, in CAR RESTRICTION the argumentation does not finish with the agreement. Rather, that is trigger for the arguments put forward by the participants of the conversation. Similarly, CAR RESTRICTION presents a counter- example for the epistemological theories of argumentation because in it the arguers are not epistemically justified in believing that the restriction for odd-even numbered license plates for the cars should be imposed all the time. One of the features of knowledge is that it is factual, but the aforementioned proposition is not. Therefore, there is not knowledge to be established in CAR RESTRICTION.

### *3. The agentive proposal*

Our proposal is that the problems posed by CAR RESTRICTION are explicated if we understand argumentation as a type of agenda an agent has. Briefly put, for our presentation purposes here, an arguer is an agent, and the purpose or objective he/she is trying to attain by arguing is his/her agenda (cf. Gabbay &



Woods, 2003; 2005). The closure of each of these agendas is bound by a group of *conditions of execution* (CE). That is, requirements that, if satisfied by the agent, would count as an achievement of the agenda. These requirements include, in the case of epistemic agendas, things like time, information, computational capacity, and methodological strategies (Woods, 2013). Notice that CE are found in varying degrees. Broadly speaking, the most stringent extreme of the spectrum only authorizes belief formation when all possibilities of error are ruled out - including miscalculation - and/or complete information is achieved, while the other extreme allows for fallibilist belief formation with incomplete information. For instance, when argumentation takes place in scientific discovery, its aim can be taken to be the fixation of a justified (and, optimistically, true) belief. Yet such a demanding goal is not a requirement for argumentations that are directed towards practical purposes, such as putting a hypothesis under probation or justifying a practical decision against a background of incomplete information.

In contrast with other approaches mentioned above, we think the purposes of arguing vary accordingly with the agendas and sub-agendas advanced by the agents. This implies that arguing is an activity performed by agents embedded in other activities and as a part of the requirements of the fulfilment of other agendas. By the same token, arguing presupposes other agendas agents need to achieve if they want their argumentation to be successful. For instance, agents need to capture the attention of their addressees, as well as being warranted that these addressees do understand their arguments. For our present concerns, however, it suffices that we distinguish four kinds of agendas in which the act of arguing can intervene. These agendas are not presented in the spirit of showing an exhaustive list, but only as an example of the fruitfulness of our approach. The agendas in question are:

\* *Agendas of epistemic arrival* (AEA), which aim at forming a particular belief. This is the case where people argue in order to create a belief (cf. Peirce, 1877). To be sure, a paradigmatic case of this kind of agenda is the verification of a scientific hypothesis, and in this sense, there must be some expectations about the grade of strictness of its justification and veracity. Of course, normative epistemological approaches provide an account of these kinds of examples. But not all AEA are so. If you have to engage in argument in the absence of complete information in order to take an immediate course of action, as e.g. in an emergency room, then to maintain the strictness of a scientific epistemic arrival

would demand more time and, accordingly, the delay would turn out to be fatal – literally. There are times when, given the risks at hand, to aim at effecting an immediate educated guess is better than to wait for a warranted but temporally mediated truth. Still it is also true that sometimes you can try to close an *AEA* by simply asking somebody for information, as in the case of looking for an address in a new city (testimony references). As this last example shows, however, not all *AEA* are accomplished via argumentation.

\* *Agendas of epistemic defensibility* (*AED*), which intend to present and defend (to other agents) a belief previously fixed by the arguer via the closing of an *AEA*. This includes the cases of political harangues, prosecutor accusations, and attorney’s allegations among others. Notice that these agendas do not seek to fixate the arguer’s own beliefs, but those of others. In this sense, *AED* are paradigmatic cases of persuasion. As such, they naturally fall under the jurisdiction of rhetorical theories of argumentation. Of course, an *AED* can be sincerely pursued or not. Thus, one can defend a belief, or defend a pretended belief, as in the case of the counsellor who does not believe in the innocence of his/her client.

\* *Agendas of epistemic maintenance* (*AEM*), which aim at ratifying a belief previously fixed by the arguer via the closing of an *AEA*. This is clearly a case in *CAR RESTRICTION*. Yet it is important to stress that in this example, it is simply not part of the arguer’s agenda to review whether the belief is proper knowledge (the epistemological way), whether it ought to persuade others (the rhetorical way), or whether there is a difference of opinion to resolve (the pragma-dialectical way). On the contrary, the arguers advance their arguments in order to have a surplus of reasons for maintaining and preserving a particular epistemic position. And the peculiarity of this scenario is due to the fact that multiple agents carry out the agenda in a joint manner. But there are no obstacles for an *AEM* to be an individual agenda (as in Peirce’s ‘tenacity’ method for fixing belief) or a collective one (as many Colombians agreeing with the conclusion that James Rodriguez is the best player of the first round or stage of the 2014 World Cup – we imagine the Dutch people might feel the same about van Persie or Robben). In any event, the collective case can become a mechanism of ideology preservation.

\* *Agendas of epistemic obstruction* (*AEO*), which aim at preventing the proper attainment of epistemic agendas by other agents. For instance, when you distract someone in order to avoid them from focusing on some problem (e.g. by arguing

about some irrelevant topic), or when one prepares a diversion (e.g. by admitting herrings as premises in the argumentative scenario) you are preventing the proper attainment of epistemic agendas by other agents. In the first case, the obstruction consists in hindering or delaying a proper belief formation on the part of the other agent. In the second, it consists of facilitating the other agent in the formation of a false belief. However, in the last case, there is no pro or con persuasion as such, in the sense that it can be any of them. Notice that what is at stake is an epistemic agenda, yet not because the agent has an intrinsic epistemic agenda, but because he/she is interested in the epistemic agendas of his/her addressee. Of course, this instance of an *AEO* is a source of possible error in epistemic agendas and as such it does not need to always be achieved by means of arguing.

Let us observe that all these agendas (*AEA*, *AED*, *AEM*, and *AEO*) are actually sub-agendas, that is, agendas that are carried out as a means with respect to an ulterior end. In this sense, their role is primarily 'methodological' (in the etymological sense of the word). Indeed, in the examples discussed above, *AEA* serves as a means for determining truth, saving a life, or arriving at some place. In the *AED* examples, persuasion is pursued in order to obtain votes or to make a decision about the innocence or culpability of someone. In *AEM*, arguing serves the self-assertion of the arguer's belief system. And in *AEO*, arguing functions as a strategy for weakening the potential course of action of other agents. In this sense, this approach explains why arguing is not an end in itself most of the time. Although it can be imagined of as an immediate agenda, as when agents argue as a way of training in argumentation; argumentation is an activity agents engage in order to obtain things different to more arguments.

Finally, our proposal is encompassing enough as to admit different types of epistemic agendas, but equally it is rigorous enough as to not admit relativism: insofar agendas are things that can be achieved totally, partially, presumptively, etc., their fulfilment can be evaluated as adequate or inadequate, better or worse, properly or improperly closed, etc.; and by keeping in mind the *conditions of execution* (CE) and the *degrees of strictness* with which an agenda has to be undertaken, our proposal helps to clarify, in an unified perspective, why there are different epistemic 'contexts', what they are and how to identify them (issues that Doury leaves underspecified), and why they bring varied —although, occasionally, mixed - results. All these topics, however, deserve another paper.

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