

ISSA Proceedings 1998 - Rhetorical Prolepsis And The Dialectical Tier Of Argumentation



In contemporary studies of argumentation, no development is more important than the decline of the formal deductive model and the rise of informal logic. The formalist perspective, dominant through most of this century, holds that an argument consists of propositions related to one another as reason or reasons to a conclusion. Thus, Irving Copi, in a classic formulation of this concept, defines an argument as “any group of propositions of which one is claimed to follow from the others, which are regarded as providing evidence for the truth of that one” (Copi 1961: 7). Conceived in these terms, arguments exist in isolation from their contexts and are to be studied in terms of the formal relationships between reasons and conclusion. Their social and political dimensions are set to the side. Over the past several decades, in a broad interdisciplinary and international movement, the formalist approach has been criticized by scholars interested in developing a more flexible and more socially responsive approach to argument. Proponents of this approach do not deny the existence and significance of formal structure, but they insist that form alone is not adequate to give a realistic account of how arguments work. From this perspective, argument should be studied through an informal logic that considers the motives, goals, and social contexts that condition the process of arguing. Thus, Trudy Govier, defines argument as “a set of claims that a person puts forward to persuade an audience that some further claim is true” (Govier 1987: 1).**[i]** On this account, and in contrast to Copi’s position, arguments are used for and by people; someone is trying to do something to others, and the agents and audiences involved in this activity are essential rather than incidental to the nature of argument. An important corollary of this approach is that arguments must be studied within two tiers. The first tier relates to core structure and yields a formal account of an argument as a product. But this tier cannot account for rational persuasion, the goal of argument as process, since arguments actually surface within a competitive field.

As Ralph Johnson has explained, the participants in any argumentative situation “know that there are objections to the Arguer’s position. Indeed the Arguer must know this herself and so it is typical to attempt to diffuse such within the course of argument. If she does not deal with the objections and criticisms, then to that degree her argument is not going to satisfy the dictates of rationality.... Hence if the Arguer really wished to persuade the Other rationally, the Arguer is obligated to take account of these objections, these opposing points of view, these criticisms” (Johnson 1996: 354; see also Walton 1990). In short, beyond the structural level, an argument must engage a dialectical tier in which it competes with other arguments for rational assent.

On Johnson’s account, argumentation must be dialectical if it is to be rational, and the dialectical process entails positioning and structuring arguments within a controversy. This view explicitly stresses the agonistic dimension of argument and implicitly recognizes its grounding in social situations, and both of these features indicate a strong affinity between dialectical argumentation and rhetoric. In fact, Johnson’s description of the dialectical tier in argument seems to echo one of the traditional precepts of rhetorical lore – the figure of thought most often called *prolepsis*.

It is no surprise that Johnson and other informal logicians fail to note the connection between prolepsis and their own work on dialectic. Prolepsis is an ancient and persistent item in the rhetorical lexicon, but it occupies an obscure and seemingly technical place within that lexicon, and over time, it has been called by different names, defined in strikingly different ways, and divided and sub-divided into a labyrinth of even more technical terminology (see Dupriez 1991: 355-56.) Nevertheless, the basic idea conveyed by the figure is quite simple, and once we strip away the technical baggage, we can hardly miss the affinity between the strategy it indicates and the dialectical interest in argument expressed by informal logicians. Prolepsis is a figure of anticipation; in using it, the speaker or writer anticipates and forestalls objections (Lanham 1991: 120), or as Abraham Fraunce puts the point in plain, old Elizabethan English, prolepsis occurs “when we present and meet with that which might be objected and do make answer to the same” (Fraunce 1950: 100). This concern about identifying and responding to objections is closely related to Johnson’s view of how dialectical arguers proceed.

In noting and emphasizing this affinity between prolepsis and the dialectical concept of argument, I do not mean to suggest that the two are equivalent. A

strategy for producing particular arguments has a much different status than a philosophically derived norm for evaluating argumentation in general. Nevertheless, I think it significant that informal logicians, as they come to grips with the social dimensions of argument, invoke ideas that connect rational processes with strategic considerations and with aspects of the traditional rhetoric of persuasion. The relationship between rhetoric and argumentation has become an issue of some significance in recent years (Wenzel 1987, 1990; Hansen 1997), and a careful consideration of rhetorical strategies like prolepsis might offer a concrete basis for specifying this relationship. In what follows I want to make a tentative first step in that direction.

My own study of the rhetoric of oratory also encourages this effort. As I have read and reread the texts of canonical orators such as Demosthenes, Cicero, Burke, and especially Lincoln, I have become increasingly impressed by the way that they construct and position themselves within a universe of discourse. The eloquence of these authors, I have come to believe, is, in some part, a function of their skill in representing, framing, and resolving controversies within the boundaries of a single discourse. This skill entails the development of an effective voice in multi-vocal contexts, and therefore I think of it as a matter of dialogic placement. As the term dialogic suggests, dialectical argument is only part of this process; other elements, especially the imaginative use of language, are also required. Nevertheless, a dialectical sensibility – a well developed capacity to recognize and encounter argumentative objections – seems a necessary condition to achieve this rhetorical skill.

Rhetorical figures, perhaps because of their traditional association with style, have received scant attention from contemporary students of argumentation. **[ii]** Yet, in the canonical oratorical texts, such figures appear prominently and recurrently as strategies of dialectical placement. Prolepsis is the most obvious figure of this type, but there are a number of others including:

1. *prosopopoeia* in which a speaker gives voice to an inanimate object or a person not present and constructs a dialogue in which the personified other raises points that are answered or refuted (Quintilian IX.2.30);
2. *correctio* in which a speaker articulates a point and then retracts it through self-correction (Lanham 1991: 42); and
3. *hyperbole* in which a speaker makes a plausible case for an exaggerated argument supporting her position so as to encourage acceptance of a weaker but still sufficient argument concerning the same position (Lanham 1991: 87;

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 290-91).

In all these instances, the figure works “dialectically” by placing an argument within a field of arguments. These figures often have additional functions as they help position the speaker in reference to other, competing speakers- and thus they may become strategies of dialogic, and not just dialectical, placement. But the argumentative function is an important part of the dialogic process, and the study of how these figures work in oratorical texts should offer some insight into the practical workings of argument at the level of the dialectic tier.

Of all the orators I have studied, I have found that Lincoln uses these figures the most often and with the most telling effect. Eventually I hope to conduct a detailed study of how they function in his prose, but in this paper, I have only enough space to analyze one text - an early speech in the corpus of Lincoln’s oratory. This text offers a useful example of how prolepsis operates rhetorically and suggests some of the complex ways in which rhetorical functions merge with aspects of dialectical argumentation.

The “Address to the Young Man’s Lyceum,” delivered on January 31, 1838, is one of the earliest of Lincoln’s speeches for which we have a reasonably complete text. The speech is of interest for many reasons (see Jaffa 1982: 183-235, Thurow 1976: 20-37, and Forgie 1979: 55-88), but I want to concentrate on just one characteristic - the way that Lincoln positions his own ideas, arguments, and sentiments in relation to his audience. This effort to encompass the audience is a hallmark of Lincoln’s rhetoric, and in his later, more famous, and more subtle speeches, Lincoln’s texts seem to absorb the audience and context in an almost seamless performance (see Leff 1988, 1997). In the “Address to Young Man’s Lyceum,” the same rhetorical sensibility appears, but it is executed less skillfully and is easier for the critical reader to detect, and the most obvious tactic Lincoln uses is a prolepsis.

The theme of this address is “the perpetuation of our political institutions,” and in the introduction, Lincoln argues that the threat to existing institutions does not come from outside sources but from within the American community. Specifically, he maintains that the threat takes the form of disregard for law and resort to “the wild and furious passions” of the mob as substitute for the “sober judgment of Courts.” Instances of this “mobocratic spirit” are so many and so far spread throughout the country that Lincoln claims it would be tedious to recount “the horrors of all of them.” Instead he refers to two instances, one in Mississippi, the

other in St. Louis, to illustrate his point.

In making the point, Lincoln presents a complex rhetorical development that incorporates both argumentative and stylistic features. Because of its argumentative complexity and because of the importance of its wording, I need to quote extensively from the passage in question: In the Mississippi case, they first commenced by hanging the regular gamblers: a set of men, certainly not following for a livelihood, a very useful, or very honest occupation; but one which, so far from being forbidden by the laws, was actually licensed by an act of the Legislature, passed but a single year before.

Next, negroes, suspected of conspiring to raise an insurrection, were caught and hanged in all parts of the State: then, white men, supposed to be in league with the negroes; and finally, strangers, from neighboring states, going thither on business were, in many instances, subjected to the same fate. Thus went on this process of hanging, from gamblers to negroes, from negroes to white citizens, and from these to strangers; till, dead men were seen literally dangling from the boughs of trees upon every road side; and in numbers almost sufficient to rival the native Spanish moss of the country, as a drapery of the forest.... [In the second case in St. Louis] a mulatto man, by the name of McIntosh, was seized in the street, dragged to the suburbs of the city, chained to a tree, and actually burned to death; all within a single hour from the time he had been a freedman, attending to his own business, and at peace with the world....

But you are, perhaps, ready to ask, 'What has this to do with the perpetuation of our political institutions?' I answer it has much to do with it. Its direct consequences are, comparatively speaking, but a small evil; and much of its danger consists, in the proneness of our minds to regard its direct, as its only consequences. Abstractly considered, the hanging of the gamblers at Vicksburg, was but of little consequence. They constitute a portion of the population, that is worse than useless in any community; and their death, if no pernicious example be set by it, is never a matter of reasonable regret with any one. If they were annually swept from the stage of existence, by plague or small pox, honest men would, perhaps, be much profited by the operation. Similar too, is the correct reasoning in regard to the negro at St. Louis. He had forfeited his life, by the perpetration of an outrageous murder, upon one of the most worthy and respectable citizens of the city; and had he not died as he did, he must have died by the sentence of the law, in a very short time afterwards. As to him alone, it was well the way it was, as it could other-wise have been. But the example, in either

case, was fearful.... Thus by the operation of this mobocratic spirit, which all admit is now abroad in the land, the strongest bulwark of any Government, and particularly those constituted like ours, may effectually be broken down and destroyed - I mean the attachment of the People. Whenever this effect shall be produced among us; whenever the vicious portion of the population shall be permitted to gather in bands of hundreds and thousands, burn churches, ravage and rob provision stores, throw printing presses into rivers, shoot editors, and hang and burn obnoxious persons at pleasure, and with impunity; depend upon it, this Government cannot last (Lincoln 1989: 29-30).

The first step in this development is a vivid description of the horrors of mob action in the two instances. With that phase completed, the audience might expect Lincoln to press on to his conclusion. But he does not. Instead, he invokes prolepsis and raises an objection to the emerging logic of his position: "But you are, perhaps, ready to ask, 'What has this to do with the perpetuation of our political institutions?'"

In response to this question, Lincoln distinguishes between the direct and indirect consequences of mob action. The direct consequences, he asserts, are not so horrible, and he proceeds not simply to raise an objection to the cases he cited but to present them in a different light, to reframe them through a different set of terms. Note that in the Mississippi case, the gamblers, in the first version, are engaged in a lawful, if somewhat disreputable business, but in the second, they are dismissed as "worse than useless," and their deaths, other things being equal, would occasion "no regret with anyone." "Similar too," Lincoln adds, is the case of the "negro at St. Louis." In this restatement of the case, the mulatto named McIntosh becomes a nameless "negro", and while in the first description he had been a "freeman, attending to his own business, and at peace with the world," he now emerges as an outrageous murderer who had he not "died as he did, he must have died by the sentence of the law in a very short time afterwards."

Lincoln completes the prolepsis by refuting the objection he has just formulated. For this purpose, he considers the indirect consequences of vigilante justice and argues that mob rule always sets a fearful example. Once set in motion, it proceeds through its own momentum, punishing the innocent as well as the guilty, and continuing "step by step, till all the walls erected for the defense of person and property of individuals are trodden down, and disregarded." These outbursts encourage the lawless in "spirit to become lawless in practice," and they demoralize good citizens who seek to abide by the law but who must lose

faith in a government unable to protect them. In the end, the “mobocratic spirit” breaks and destroys the strongest bulwark of a free government – “the attachment of the People.”

In one sense, the passage that I have just summarized takes the form of a simple prolepsis. Lincoln states a position, then raises an objection to it, and ends by refuting the objection. But something more than that is also at work. This rhetorical development not only moves through a sequence of propositions, but it also orchestrates the emotions of the audience. Lincoln begins with a warning against mobocracy phrased so as to illustrate its horrors concretely and vividly. Then, he does not simply raise an objection, but he seems “to give in to the prejudices of the audience” (Thurow 1976: 26), as he re-presents his examples in language that justifies the mob and turns anger against its victims. And finally he surmounts both of his earlier perspectives through sober consideration of the remote, indirect consequences of mob action. In short, Lincoln seeks to move the audience from anger against the inhumanity of the mob, to vicarious participation in its energy, and then to an elevated position from which it might control either one of these emotional responses.

This development dramatically enacts one of the main themes of Lincoln’s text. Repeatedly and with special emphasis at the end of the Address, Lincoln maintains that the nation can be preserved only through rational means. While passion once helped form America, it “will in future be our enemy. Reason, cold calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense” (Lincoln 1989: 36). The section on mob rule embodies this principle. It demonstrates that a merely emotional reaction against mob rule offers no remedy to the problem of disrespect for law. Such a response is hardly better than the emotions that drive people to mob action, since, in both cases, passion controls our response to a specific situation. What is needed instead is the discipline of reason and a habit of mind that turns from the direct emotions of the moment to rational considerations of long-term and indirect consequences. And this discipline is embedded in the rhetorical action of the text. What we witness is not the destruction of an opposing position but its absorption into a synthetic perspective. Lincoln accommodates his audience by elevating it, and in the process, he turns prolepsis into a strategy for transcendence.

Viewed in the context of Lincoln’s oratorical career, the Lyceum Address foreshadows a notable feature of his rhetoric – the scrupulously careful placement of his own ideas, arguments, and sentiments into a social context; his own

position emerges in and through a network of controversy, and it is constructed a way that seems to subsume rather than to destroy or dismiss alternative positions. Consequently, his rhetoric typically works to highlight and celebrate controversy by embodying it and directing it toward a synthetic end; the competition of rival arguments evolves toward a point where cooperation seems possible and desirable.

In his later speeches, this tendency is developed less obtrusively and more skillfully than in the Lyceum Address. The sequence of literal objection and response conveyed through prolepsis is displaced by other dialogic figures. This development culminates in his most famous speeches, the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural, where prolepsis (the correction of someone else) gives way to *correctio* (self-correction). But the evolution of Lincoln's dialogical sensibility is a topic for another paper.

In this paper, I hope to have illustrated the complexity of prolepsis and its relevance for those interested in the dialectical tier of argument. The Lyceum Address reveals that prolepsis is not simply or necessarily a technical instrument of rhetorical style; it can become a complex principle that coordinates the logical, emotional, and stylistic dimensions of a discourse while it also positions the discourse within a field of controversy. Prolepsis, then, functions as a figure of dialogic placement since it negotiates the interplay among language, argument, audience, and context that is central to rhetorical practice.

Finally, I want to return to the issue of the relationship between rhetoric and argumentation that I raised earlier in this paper. My study of prolepsis emphasizes an important affinity between rhetoric and dialectical argumentation: Both operate in the medium of controversy, and to achieve their ends, both must engage opposing positions. But the rhetorical task, as I have tried to sketch it, entails management of elements that extend beyond argument *per se* and that enter into the social conditions surrounding it. Thus, Lincoln does not simply place his argument in context. He also constructs a persona for himself and orchestrates the sentiments of his audience. These rhetorical concerns represent a controversy in relation to the speaker and the social\political positions he occupies. Because it is designed as an intervention in the social context itself, rhetoric seeks not just to present and position arguments but to influence the conditions that affect reception of arguments. Hence, whereas dialectic deals with competing arguments within a field of rational controversy, rhetoric ultimately deals with relationships among arguers within a field of social interaction.

It is this distinction between argument and arguer that I consider as a key to understanding how rhetorical action may be distinguished from dialectical argument. But to support this hypothesis, I would have to argue at greater length and to inquire into many more instances than the one I have considered in this paper. For the moment, I can only hope that the hypothesis is sufficiently plausible to justify further inquiry into the dialogic and dialectic dimensions of argument, and more specifically, that it might stimulate scholars to take a fresh look at the figures of rhetoric, to examine them in terms of how they are manifested in actual cases, and to consider how they might help us develop a thick conception of rhetorical argumentation and its connection with informal logic.

NOTES

i. In later editions of this book Govier has modified this definition. In the fourth and most recent edition (1997: 2), she writes that: 'An argument is a set of claims that a person puts forward in an attempt to show that some further claim is rationally acceptable.' This later definition does not differ as obviously and dramatically from Copi as her earlier one, but the basic difference persists.

ii. An exception in this respect is Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969: 168-179. But as they approach the figures argumentatively, they insist on bracketing their stylistic dimensions. For reasons I hope to make clear later in this paper, this categorical distinction between style and argument overlooks the complexity of the way the figures operate in practice and occludes some interesting and productive questions about the relationship between dialectical argument and rhetoric. These limitations may account for the failure of other argumentation scholars to pursue the line of inquiry opened by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - Teaching Logic: How To Overcome The Limitations Of The Classroom



Dobie Gillis: You mustn't take all these things so literally. I mean this is just classroom stuff. You know that the things you learn in school don't have anything to do with life.

Polly Espy: Dicto Simpliciter (Shulman 1951: 61).

Dobie has been devoting their dates to teaching Polly the informal logic that he thinks she needs in order to be up to his standards. When he finally is satisfied with her progress and tries to transform their relationship from “academic to romantic,” she frustrates him by finding fallacies in all of his overtures. Out of desperation, he attacks his own lessons by warning Polly against treating as fallacious outside the classroom something that is fallacious inside of it. His warning comes too late. Nevertheless, if she is serious in labelling his romantic overtures as fallacious, then she is wrong to do so because Dobie is only expressing his interest in her and hoping that she will return it, not arguing for anything. If Polly has misused his lessons, Dobie bears some responsibility for it because, in common with many other teachers, he has not tried to compensate for the fact that lessons on the fallacies are likely to encourage students to look for mistakes even before they consider what the speaker or writer could be saying or doing.

In this paper I make some suggestions as to how logic teachers can overcome the limitations of the classroom. The first section proposes that students consider the significance of the results that cognitive psychologists have obtained when they give subjects certain logic problems to solve. When students see how predictable it is that mistakes will be made, they may want to ask how the classroom contributes to their own failure to master logic. The second section proposes that students be given lessons that are self-critical or critical of other lessons in logic.

An ingenious and imaginative way of introducing logic is offered as an illustration of the kind of lesson that students be asked to critique. The third section is about how to teach students to give a critical reading to an argument. A letter to the editor is quoted, and, to overcome the limitations of the classroom, it is proposed that students be assigned the roles of different parties to the argument. The paper concludes with some observations about the values that should inform critical analysis of argumentation.

1. Why do students do so badly in logic?

Students in a formal logic class have problems that can be surprisingly persistent, and these problems tend to be the focus of our pedagogy. They struggle with negations in compound statements, applications of the concept of validity, the truth table for the conditional, and equivalences that involve the use of 'only', 'if', and 'unless'. Some students, notably those with backgrounds in mathematics or science, don't have these problems. Nevertheless, research reveals that almost everyone, even teachers of logic, fail the Wason Selection Task, and some cognitive psychologists have concluded that we are programmed to be in cognitive dissonance with how we should be thinking, a matter thoughtfully discussed in Manktelow and Over (1990: 149-58).

I invite my students to think critically about this research by including versions of the Selection Task on the 'pre-test' given to the students. For example:

Shown below are drawings of four cards. Each card has a letter on one side and a number on the other side. Here is a rule about these cards: *if there is a vowel on one side, then there is an even number on the other side*. Which of the cards do you have to turn over to decide whether the rule is true or false?

E - K - 4 - 7

Because most students do not give the 'correct' answer, 'E' and '7', and because they give so many different answers, they will be interested in thinking about why they go wrong.

Cognitive psychologists have experimentally verified that a different wording of the problem makes a difference. They have found that subjects do much better when the Selection Task is presented in versions that are more like problems someone may actually confront, for examples, as sales receipts with the amount of the purchase on one side and a place for the signature of the manager on the other, where the rule that subjects are asked to work with is that a purchase over a specified amount requires the manager's signature.

However, experimenters have been troubled by the likelihood that the subjects who do better with these more realistic versions are not relying on purely *logical* considerations. To test this possibility, experiments have been designed to see whether or not there is a 'facilitation effect', i.e., where subjects seem to be relying on their own knowledge or experience. Cheng, Holyoak, Nisbett and Oliver (1986) have suggested ways for teaching logic differently based on the results of some of these experiments, but their work is critiqued in Cosmides (1989), and the issues that divide them, together with a helpful review of much of the research done on the Selection Task may be found in Manktelow and Over (1990).

Ironically, the emphasis on the facilitation effect serves to raise a doubt as to whether we ever do or should rely on purely 'logical' considerations when reasoning, except when in the classroom (or when doing brain teasers). 'Logical' considerations seem to be in back of the use of the conditional in the statement of the rule, and I think that students should complain about its use, as they should complain about the reference to it as a 'rule'.

When it comes to some of the more realistic versions of the Selection Task, this reference to a rule and the use of a conditional make sense: we can understand how there might be a rule in a department store about how much a purchase has to be before it requires the signature of the manager. However, there is no activity in terms of which the reference to a rule makes sense in the card version of the Selection Task other than an activity that is like the one mathematics students engage in when asked to state the principle, for example, behind the generation of a specified sequence of numbers.

When I ask students to think about why they have gone wrong, I suggest that they consider whether it is the use of the conditional that has misled them. Its use is mystifying, suggesting as it does that there is some reason for expressing things conditionally. "If there is a vowel on one side there is an even number on the other." This seems to suggest that there is some underlying connection. However, the real reason why the conditional is being used is that according to logic the rule that takes that form is equivalent to another version of the rule that is easier to understand and does not employ a conditional, namely, that a vowel is not paired with an odd number. Why, then, state the 'rule' as a conditional? The unfriendly answer is that logicians and cognitive psychologists are insensitive to the significance of the fact that the forms that they count as equivalent would not be substituted for one another when people actually talk to each other, and so

they do not take responsibility when the substitution ends up confusing people. Next, I invite students to ask what can be done to compensate for the limitations of the lab or classroom. Unlike the experimenters, as a teacher I *want* students to make the right selections. So I ask them to reword the Task question to make what is being asked clearer. Here is a possible rewording: "There are four possibilities: vowel/even; vowel/odd; consonant/even; consonant/odd. Which cards would you have to turn over in order to determine that the possibility of vowel/odd has been ruled out?"

Some students might still not make the right selections. If this happens, there is an explanation for why they do not that experimenters seem to ignore, namely, that the students are suffering from what might be called the dumb class syndrome. This is a condition that affects students who can apply certain lessons when called upon to do so outside of the classroom but are paralyzed or unable to function when inside it.

My suggestion is that the Selection Task be taught as a lesson on how the classroom (or laboratory) has built in limitations. Students can be asked to reflect on the influence of the context in which the Task is presented on rates of success or failure. They also can be helped to see how the 'correct' answers are counted as correct only because the Task is understood in terms of a specialized discourse, and that there is a problem applying the results to actual discourse.

There is value in teaching formal logic, despite what the lessons I have been proposing in this section might suggest. I doubt that there is much practical applicability for lessons on formal validity or on equivalences, let alone lessons on algorithmic facility with truth functional or quantificational schemata. However, I think that lessons in formal logic can be valuable in helping students to become more aware of the significance of how things are worded, especially when a determined effort is made to supplement logic lessons with other lessons that compensate for the limitations of the classroom.

The most important lesson in formal logic is usually taught before any of the lessons that I have referred to in this section, the lesson on what an argument is and how to read and formulate it. It tells students to think about what, if anything, is being argued by asking whether the arguer is taking a position, and, if so, what that position is and what support is being offered for it. In the next section, I suggest that the lesson be used to illustrate itself, and I show how this might be done by a critique of an intriguing way of introducing logic.

2. *What a Difference a First Day Makes*

The lesson I have chosen, because it is so pedagogically appealing, and because it deals with some of the central concepts of logic, is one proposed by Alan Penczek (1996). I come to the first class a bit late, and behave as I normally do. After removing various items from my briefcase, looking for chalk, and erasing the blackboard, if necessary, I ask:

How many of you believe that I am the instructor of this course?

I can expect the class to react with surprise and laughter. I repeat the question, and ask the students, by a show of hands, to indicate whether they believe that I am the instructor. Most will raise their hands, and I confront those who don't and ask them:

Who *do* you think I am?

Presumably, the question is sufficiently intimidating that I can go on to say that every student has concluded that I am the instructor. I keep a straight face and do not admit that I am the instructor while I act like one by telling the class that each of them has engaged in a "piece of (inductive) reasoning," whose "conclusion" is that I am the instructor.

Penczek's next instruction is that I write 'He is probably the instructor in this course' on the blackboard with a line over it, and then tell the students the following:

You have come to believe that I am the instructor of this course, and we are calling this your *conclusion*. However, you must have had some reasons for calling this your conclusion, and we will call these reasons *premises*. These premises together with this conclusion make up an *argument*. Can anyone suggest some of the premises that you might have used in coming to this particular conclusion? That is, why do you believe that I am the instructor? (p. 122).

The premises are supposed to cite what I did when I came into the classroom - went to the front of the classroom, put my briefcase on the desk there and removed some items from it, erased the blackboard, and asked them a question - and I am to state each 'premise' as a declarative sentence in the third person. Then I point out that the argument is an enthymeme and that when supplied with a missing premise - 'people who have turned out to be instructors have looked and behaved as he did' - the argument is inductive because it is possible for the premises to be true when the conclusion is false if, for example, I turn out to be

an unhappy ex-student who is pretending to be the regular teacher.

Penczek's pedagogy seems likely to get the attention of the students and engage them. The lessons I proposed in the previous section ask students to explain why they make the mistakes they do in logic; the lessons I am proposing in this section ask the students to think about why they have so little trouble learning what Penczek is teaching. Of course, when a lesson is as successful as his lesson promises to be, it is harder for students to think about it critically.

To help them to do so, I ask them to consider how they would react when they are standing before a receptionist's desk and are asked by the person behind it, "Do you believe I am the receptionist?" I want them to see how disconcerted they would be by this question. Are they not supposed to stand there? Is the receptionist saying that she has too much to do? Is it the wrong desk?

I ask them why they were so obliging and did not challenge me to explain why they did not do with me what they would have done with the person behind the desk, namely, ask, "Why are you asking me that question?" They might answer by saying that they assumed that the question was part of a classroom exercise, and I ask them to formulate this explanation as an argument. What I really want to suggest to them is that it is questionable that the explanation should be formulated as an argument. After all, what is being explained is why students did not behave a certain way, not what support they could have had for some conclusion they have drawn.

Why is Penczek interested in what they believe? This is the next question that the students should be asked, and they will need some help in order to give the right answer, namely, that by getting them to answer the question about what they believe about me, the question of what reasons they have for this belief can be raised:

what they are supposed to believe, namely, that I am the teacher, can thus be considered the conclusion of an argument whose premises are the justification that they have for that belief.

I ask them to formulate Penczek's argument for the claim that they do believe that I am the teacher even when I behave as I normally do on the first day of class if do not identify myself as the teacher, but do not ask them who they think I am. Here is how they might formulate it:

The students are in the scheduled room at the scheduled time for Elementary Logic.

You went to the front of the room, put your briefcase on the table and took items

from it, erased the blackboard, and addressed the class.

So, the students believe that you are the teacher of their Elementary Logic course.

Next, I try to help the students to see that it is not clear how to understand the conclusion or how the premises provide support for it. I ask them to consider how it is possible that I am not the real teacher. Here is what they might come up with:

“You are an ex-student who saw and removed a notice on the classroom door that said that the class has been cancelled, and you decided to pretend to be the teacher” or “You and the real teacher are collaborating in playing this prank on us.”

Given either of these scenarios, the students may be said to *believe* I am the instructor to indicate surprise or satisfaction at how well the masquerade is going. Here saying that they believe it means that they do not suspect anything. However, the students do not have an argument for not suspecting anything; saying that they suspect suggests that they did not even consider the possibility that I am not the teacher, let alone draw a conclusion about it.

“What reasons do you have for thinking that I am the teacher rather than an impostor?” This is the question Penczek seems to want me to ask the students. It is not the original one I was to ask them, because everything cited as the premises for my belief, such as what I did with my briefcase or the blackboard are things that an impostor is just as likely to do. Even so, the students may come up with some answers to this new question that can be turned into premises, such as “An impostor is unlikely to ask this question because it would give him away.”

If they do try to answer, then I ask them to consider the fact that they are answering a question that I do not really have. To see why this is significant, I ask them to consider when or how something might turn on the question of whether or not I am an impostor. If my status as the teacher needs to be determined, then they can contact the Philosophy Department or do some other checking outside the classroom, which is not the best place for such detective work. However, since I do not really have the question when I ask them whether they believe I am the teacher, then obviously nothing could turn on answering it, and so, there is no real basis for understanding the answer or determining the support for it.

However, any lesson that is critical of how a logic lesson does not compensate sufficiently for the limitations of the classroom should make clear why the lesson

is worth criticizing. So, I take pains to make clear that there is nothing distinctive about what Penczek is teaching. Almost all logic teachers would refer to the student's 'reasoning' as an 'argument', and would applaud Penczek for trying to identify the 'premises' for the 'conclusion' that he says that the students have drawn. Others use different illustrations, but they, too, do nothing to compensate for the fact that these illustrations are devised for the classroom and are not to be understood by imagining how they might be taken from actual discourse.

What turns on the failure of logic teachers to compensate for it? I hope that students will ask this question. If they ask it, then an answer can be suggested: the failure is significant because it reinforces a mistaken conception of argument and reasoning according to which an argument does not need to be understood as a response to anyone or anything. "Do you believe that I am the instructor?" The students are to answer this question without having any idea how it arises or why they are being asked it. So, any answer that they give will reveal more about the limitations of the classroom than about what they really think or believe.

Penczek's pedagogy engages students by using their responses to illustrate the lesson he is teaching. I am proposing that students be encouraged to think critically about what they are being taught. However, they may be frustrated by the teaching of a lesson like Penczek's when it is subjected to critical examination. To avoid that happening, they need to be told how valuable Penczek's lesson is just because it can be criticized, how it is a strength rather than a weakness of the lesson that it gives them something to think about while succeeding in introducing them to certain concepts.

However valuable it may be to encourage students to think for themselves even about what they are being taught, the real value of a logic course is that it helps students to think critically about actual arguments. The next section makes some proposals about how to overcome the limitations of the classroom when dealing with such arguments.

3. Giving a critical reading to actual rhetoric

The hardest thing to teach when it comes to argument analysis is how to determine whether an argument is being given, and, if so, how to paraphrase that argument. In this section I suggest some pedagogical techniques that may be used to help students learn to read more critically.

Let me explain why I think there is a need to supplement what students are usually told about how to interpret an argument, namely, that they should identify the position that is being taken and the support, evidence or reasons being

offered for that position. They are instructed to restate the argument as a series of declarative sentences, as premises followed by a conclusion. They are told to supply any and all missing premises (or, if it is unstated, the missing conclusion). Although the advice can be useful, it is of limited value without a lot of other advice, except when applied only to the contrived examples often used in the classroom. To see why, consider this letter to the editor in the *Portland Oregonian* (March 13, 1997).

If faced with making an end-of-life request for physician-assisted suicide, I want to make my own decision. If assistance in making this decision is necessary, I want to choose my advisers carefully.

I am not a Roman Catholic, so I do not want the pope or his hierarchy to participate in making my decision. I do not want evangelicals, with their idiosyncratic reading of scripture, to participate in the process.

It is incredible that people who are not wanted and have no place in my daily life think they have a right to stand by my death bed and tell me how to die. Although well-intentioned, I want these people to mind their own business. My personal and painful decision is not their business.

(signed) Fred Ratzburg

The usual lessons reading an argument do not yield good results when applied to this letter. If students are encouraged to take him literally, then the position he seems to be taking is that he does not want Catholic priests or evangelicals to advise him when he is dying because he is not a Catholic, he does not accept the evangelical Bible interpretations, and these priests or Evangelicals are not his friends and do not have a place in his daily life.

Ratzburg is not a Catholic and does not trust the interpretations of the Bible by evangelicals that they rely on when talking about moral dilemmas like physician assisted suicide. Ratzburg does not have any members of the Catholic hierarchy or any evangelicals as friends or family. So, Ratzburg does not want these religious people to participate in the decision he will be making about asking a physician for help in killing himself.

This formulation of his argument seems faithful to what he says, but the statement of the conclusion could be improved upon to reflect the fact that he is saying that these religious people have no business telling him what he can do.

So, priests and evangelicals should not participate in the making of his decision whether to ask a physician for help in killing himself.

However, something significant seems to have been lost by this replacement of Ratzeburg's voice by that of the reformulator. How he expresses himself and what that reveals about why he is giving the argument is an important clue to what he is arguing, as is whom he is addressing, or what he is writing in response to. Even if we want students to focus on the issues he might be addressing, they need to be reminded of the significance of the fact that any reformulation or restatement of the argument is likely to ignore something of importance to the reading of the argument.

Moreover, the restatement, especially if it takes the premises-and-conclusion form, tends to encourage a pernicious form of logic-chopping. By reducing Ratzeburg's letter to a sequence of sentences we make it easier for it to be dismissed, when what we should be doing is finding ways to illuminate the issues he is raising. Because the focus is on the restatement, rather than on what he is giving us to think about, the formulation of premises that are too abstract or general or obviously unwarranted is encouraged.

To reveal to students what may be lost in translation I propose that they be assigned the roles of the different parties to the argument: Ratzeburg; a spokesman for the Catholic Church; an evangelical Christian; a non-religious person opposed to euthanasia; and a supporter of euthanasia who is religious. (Another teaching technique has groups of students rather than individuals play the different roles.) The objective is to enable students to give a critical reading of an argument by recreating in the classroom the conditions that would prevail when the arguer was available to respond when his argument is critically analyzed.

Although it is not possible to anticipate what will happen in the panel discussion, certain developments might take place. Ratzeburg may be challenged to explain why he is targeting the Church or whether he thinks that it should not speak up or try to influence people on a matter it cares deeply about. He may be defended on the grounds that his real concern is that public policy not be decided on religious grounds, and this defense may be questioned by citing non-religious objections to mercy killing or by attacking what seems to be a pro-choice argument for assisted suicide, perhaps by questioning whether doctors are the right people to determine whether their patients are in their right minds when they ask for help in killing themselves.

If the panel discussion is very successful it will provide the students with things to think about. The rest of the class can be asked to evaluate the panel discussion:

How might the panelists have improved on what they said? How responsive were they to each other's points? The students also can be asked to say what they now think is at issue. Is the issue pluralism? Is it the role given to the doctor? The objective of the panel discussions, or any other pedagogical expedient that the teacher utilizes, should be to help in identifying what is at issue in the argument together with the issues raised by the argument.

After the panel discussion, encourage the students to try to paraphrase his argument. "Try to say in your own words what Ratzeburg is saying." This is the first step in paraphrasing. "Try to state the argument in a way that best reflects the thinking of the arguer." This should be the second step. The paraphrase should make relevant references to the rhetorical context of the argument, and it also should make clear what there is to think about.

Ratzeburg is writing out of his exasperation with the lobbying done by the Church and other opponents of euthanasia who are evangelical Christians. To dramatize his dissatisfaction with their role, he depicts them as wanting to be by his bedside when he is dying to influence his decision about how he is going to die. This dramatization makes it seem as though their role is the issue, and so appeals to anyone in his audience who shares his worries about the lobbying by powerful religious groups, despite the fact that it is highly unlikely that he favors muzzling the Church.

However, there is more to his argument than the appeal to a certain anti-religious sentiment: he seems to be offering a version of a pro-choice argument for euthanasia. Even though religious people may reject physician assisted suicide as an option; others should be free to do what they want to do. Ratzeburg seems to assume that the only opposition to euthanasia is on religious grounds, that there is no need for him to speak to any of other objections to physician assisted suicide. His argument sees pluralism as the issue and objects to the use of religious imperatives to determine social policy.

Whether or not the student is successful at paraphrasing, the attempt at doing so is important because it makes the student a participant in the argument.

Although I cannot claim from my experience with the use of these techniques that students are usually very insightful or perceptive in the critical readings that they give to the argument, I believe that it is important that the techniques be used to compensate for the limitations of the classroom. When we restate or even paraphrase Ratzeburg's argument we can't help removing something of him from the argument, and these techniques help to do something to get his voice back.

There is another reason for the panel discussion approach. Because the argument is being discussed in the classroom, students (and teachers) are encouraged to suppose that they can think critically about an argument without asking themselves why they are doing so. Teachers may insist that the real object is to shed light on what is at issue in the argument, but their practice often makes it seem as though the objective is to sit in judgement of the argument. However, when we think about the goals of argument analysis, models other than one where there is a battle or contest with a possible winner or loser recommend themselves. I am thinking, in particular, of the conflict resolution model, according to which our concern when reading an argument is to find a way to bring people together. Consequently, our paraphrase of the argument should speak to the concerns and interests of different parties to the dispute.

We should try to address what bothers Ratzeburg, namely, the power that religious groups have in influencing public policy, and the need to acknowledge that we live in a pluralistic society. At the same time, we can remind him that he should not assume that the opposition to euthanasia comes only from those who have theological objections to it, however idiosyncratic those objections or the scriptural basis cited for them might be. By doing so we can speak to at least some of the concerns of opponents of euthanasia. My suggestions about how to resolve the conflict may not turn out to be successful, but they seem to be informed by better values than is the attempt at giving a reading whose objective is the reaching of a verdict - valid or invalid; correct or incorrect - on the argument.

These remarks about the objectives of a logic class lead in the next section to a discussion of the values that should be embodied in a critical thinking class.

4. The Paradox of Teaching Critical Thinking

There is something paradoxical about the charge we are given as teachers of logic or critical thinking. We are to teach students to think for themselves. To do so we have to rely on certain lessons, and the lessons have a certain built-in authority. Students are being told to think for themselves while at the same time they are encouraged to learn certain lessons that someone else has thought up for them. This apparent paradox is another reminder of how important it is to try to compensate for the limitations of the classroom.

In this paper, I have offered some suggestions about how to teach students to think for themselves. In the last section I offered a proposal about how to teach students to read an argument critically that made them participants in their own

education. In the sections before that I advocated the use of lessons that were self-critical, critical of other lessons in logic, or that asked students to think about why they were not getting the 'right' answers. Even a self-critical lesson is a lesson, and unless students come to make

the criticisms on their own, they will not really be thinking for themselves. Although there always is a risk of their losing confidence in what they are being taught when the lessons are criticized, the goal is to help students to see how any real discoveries they make grow out of their own struggles.

Another way to compensate for the limitations of the logic classroom is by teaching certain values by example: *respect* for the views of the opposition; *imagination* and *compassion* to see things from other perspectives; *courage* to anticipate objections to your own views; *integrity* to admit when you do not understand or are wrong; *responsibility* for making your own views clear or defending them when they are challenged. Although I am convinced that the real object of a course in critical thinking is to inculcate these values, telling students to have them when they think critically is not very good teaching, unless the teacher can embody them.

This point was lost on Dobie when he was giving Polly logic lessons to bring her up to his intellectual standard. Not only was the project a foolish one because of the presumption that logic lessons could accomplish this end, but it also provided evidence of how little respect or even liking he really had for her. Further evidence of his sexism is provided by the circumstances that led to his dates with Polly. He had traded his roommate, Petey Bellows, what he thought was a worthless raccoon coat, which Petey badly wanted because it had come back in style, for the assurance that Petey was no longer going to pursue an interest in Polly. As the story is ending Dobie discovers that she will not be his girlfriend because she had promised Petey she would go steady with him. After he calls Petey a "liar," "rat" and "cheat," only to be reproached by Polly for *poisoning the well*, he tries to be calm:

All right, you're a logician. Let's look at this thing logically. How could you choose Petey Bellows over me? Look at me - a brilliant student, a tremendous intellectual, a man with an assured future. Look at Petey - a knothed, a jitterbug, a guy who'll never know where his next meal is coming from. Can you give me one logical reason why you should go steady with Petey Bellows? I certainly can. He's got a raccoon coat (Shulman 1951, 61).

These are the last lines of the story. The ending is funny, but at whose expense? By citing as a 'logical reason' the fact that Petey has a raccoon coat, Polly reveals

herself to be a faddist, which Dobie earlier referred to as the “very negation of reason” and “acme of mindlessness.”

However, the joke really is on Dobie because his lessons have made Polly less “agreeable,” i.e., less vulnerable to his intimidation and manipulation. She is sufficiently independent that she is even prepared not to be logical when there is no reason for her to be. When Dobie asks for a logical reason why she should go steady with Petey, perhaps she should have challenged the assumption behind his question, namely, that she needs a logical reason for liking Petey and wanting to go steady with him. Rather than make this rather pedantic point, she left it up to readers to make the point for her. Dobie supposed that the mastery of logic lessons has something to do with being smart or intelligent. What he failed to realize is that more, much more, is involved than being a good student of logic. You need to know when it is appropriate to apply the lessons and when it is not appropriate, and you need to have such values as respect, imagination, compassion, courage, integrity and responsibility.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - The Argumentative Analysis Of Literary Works And Its Importance In Teaching Argumentation



Teaching argumentation not only serves the purpose of making us aware of the ways we use to resolve controversies in a rational manner. It also aims at making us more reflective about the general understanding we have of things. In order to achieve this it is convenient to put argumentations in a different context and treat them as part of a process in which different protagonists make known and defend their points of view. In other words, each argumentation should be considered as a segment of a longer dialogue in which the participants not only accept that their points of view can be questioned, and, eventually, refuted, but also submit themselves to critical norms in order to reach this goal.

My purpose is to show that establishing this frame of reference for argumentation analysis takes the form of a philosophical dialogue.

In a philosophical dialogue it is assumed that the arguers are motivated by the search of truth and, consequently, are interested in determining whether their points of views are indeed correct. In view of this objective they seek the interlocutors' collaboration, expecting them to provide alternative points of view and in this way enrich the questioning of the arguments offered. From this perspective, arguments come to be part of a cooperative dialogue in which, together with offering reasons, the interlocutors' objections have to be pondered. This dialogue is philosophical in that it leads to a broader reflection on the subject in question, that is, it leads to questioning ourselves about all possible viewpoints on the subject, not just the ones originally formulated. Moreover, dialogue has thus a specific direction: it is aimed at providing a global overview of all the aspects that ought to be considered in analyzing a given argumentation.

Therefore, in teaching argumentation, a reconstruction effort is required. When examining argumentation, one ought to act as if between the proponents of the argumentation and oneself a dialogue was taking place and one should,

consequently, be able to question them. This can be accomplished by means of presenting alternative arguments and making conjectures about the possible answers to those objections. By means of this procedure, some presuppositions can be made explicit which permit to reflect about what really is at stake in the proposed argumentation. Thus, the teacher can guide a process of reflection that emerges from the discussion. If, on the other hand, the teacher fails in conducting this process, the student tends to close his/her mind. In other words, instead of getting a broader vision of things, that leads to a better understanding of the problems, the student usually learns the strategies that serve to reinforce his/her own beliefs, without having to submit them to critical questioning. The student doesn't feel stimulated to develop a process of reflection that allows him/her to criticize his/her own prejudices.

In order to understand how this ultimate educational goal of argumentation analysis can be frustrated, it is necessary to consider the usual strategies that are followed in the course of a class on argumentation.

Undoubtedly, learning to argue well requires, above all, training. The principles permitting to decide whether or not an argumentation is reasonable, ought to be contrasted with the usual ways of arguing in everyday experience, so that the student can appraise by his/her own judgement the value of those principles. In order to facilitate this training, it is necessary to have a great number of examples at hand. In this respect, the written press is a never ending source of examples of argumentations that can be analyzed. From a pedagogical perspective, using these examples has the additional advantage that it permits to connect the issues debated in the press with the students' interests and in this way help them develop a critical attitude towards the press. If everything works as expected, the students analyze the argumentation examples, just as they appear in the press, and, by means of the dialogue process that the teacher organizes, are guided to reflect using their own critical judgement on the various standpoints on the issue at hand.

Unfortunately, what happens in practice is that the press fails to provide the plurality of perspectives required to produce a sufficiently broad reflection on the issues that are being debated. What the press exhibits, I refer specifically to the Chilean press, are usually argumentations that have not been formulated in view of generating dialogue. On the contrary, those who formulate them are usually trying to put an end to the discussion by expressing what they think to be the last word on the issue, banning further reflection and quite often concealing the real

interests and prejudices that are at stake. For this reason, the most debated issues are presented in a superficial, unilateral and depressing way. Besides, they quite often consist of personal attacks or disqualification of the opposing view. The little importance ascribed to reflection leads to the reiteration from time to time of almost the same argument almost in the same way. This is especially frequent as regards to issues like abortion, divorce, death penalty and pornography. Because of this, the press abounds in fallacious argumentations. In this context, it is difficult to produce the kind of reflection at which the teaching of argumentation aims. It is hard for the student to connect the principles that permit to judge an argumentation's correctness with a process of reflection that entails putting in question the student's own assumptions.

I would like to quote the following example in order to illustrate more clearly this difficulty.

Background: From 1994 on, the lack of interest of Chilean young people to participate in the democratic process initiated in 1989 became manifest. Despite the fact that the percentage of young people who fulfill the age requirements for voting is so high that they could be decisive in the outcome of any election, the young people do not participate in them and many do not even register for voting. This fact motivated an ample discussion on the causes of this juvenile lack of interest in politic participation. As a reaction to it, a young person wrote the following letter to the editor.

Juvenile apathy

Mr. Editor: As a young person I was attracted by the article on juvenile apathy and thought about writing you a letter in relation to it. But I got bored.

This example illustrates, I think, that in using the press as a means for training people in argumentation strategies, there is the risk of separating these strategies from the process of reflection that constitutes the final goal of that teaching. Moreover, the reading of the press without the guidance of an accompanying process of reflection may help to disseminate a skeptical conception of life in which every point of view is equally valid and, as a consequence, every person has to limit him/herself to care for his/her own personal interests.

This result is paradoxical, since what the teaching of argumentation aims at producing is an enrichment of the student's personal experience, which means getting a broader conception of things, considering a plurality of perspectives and permitting a more autonomous reflection about which perspectives are more

reasonable and deserve to be adopted.

What has been said could be misunderstood as a suggestion in the sense that the teacher should guide the student to adopt a desired conception of things. Of course, the risk of conducting an indoctrinating process is always present, but what I am trying to propose is very different from it. It does not aim at imposing a given conception, but at providing a plurality of viewpoints, in order to bring into light and discuss their presuppositions. The problem is: how can the teacher bring up this plurality of perspectives if the different viewpoints required for it are not available in the actual argumentations that are found in the press?

My suggestion in this respect is that we ought to be able to rescue the issues debated in the past that are preserved in the literary tradition. There we can find, exposed in literary language, points of view that can be relevant to the present situation. In this way, if we manage to incorporate those argumentations from earlier times into the present debate, we could promote a discussion of many of the cultural presuppositions that are on the foundations of present argumentations.

As stated earlier, to give sense to a set of argumentations we may consider them as a part of a fictional dialogue. In the same way as we are able to do this with the present argumentations as they appear in the press, we should try to reconstruct the argumentations explicitly present in the literary tradition and incorporate them into this dialogue. In this case, since the purpose is to provide new perspectives, the danger of indoctrination on the part of the teacher is kept away. In many cases, a literary work, especially a novel, develops a dialogue which refers, implicitly or explicitly, to a controversy. In that case, we can assume that the author expects the reader to go beyond the character's private ideas and try to understand the intersubjective truths that he/she believes.

In other words, in some cases, in order to understand a character we have to understand which conceptions of things he/she is willing to defend as an objective view of reality. Consequently, it is necessary to understand the argumentations that he/she develops in support of his/her views.

On the other hand, the argument developed in a literary work constitutes a guide to introduce us into (and, therefore, to stimulate us to understand) the reality created by such literary work, since the argumentation analysis reveals the objective reality reflected by the perspectives of the different characters.

To exemplify the strategy that I am suggesting, I shall refer to two important works of literature that belong to the universal patrimony. "Don Quijote de la

Mancha" by Miguel de Cervantes and "The Name of the Rose" by Umberto Eco. By means of them, we can see some of the difficulties that can be faced and resolved.

In the work "Don Quijote" we find the following passage:

"All this is so, answered Don Quijote; but we cannot all be monks and many are the roads through which God conducts his own people to heaven; chivalry is religion; many saint knights are in (God's) glory.

Yes, answered Sancho, but I have heard that there are more monks in heaven than wandering knights.

That happens, answered Don Quijote, because the number of religious men is greater than that of knights. Many are the wandering, Sancho said.

Many, answered don Quijote, but very few are those who deserve the name of knights." (Don Quijote, Part I, chapter 37).

Commentary: Don Quijote wants to defend the cause of wandering knights, as far as an authentic road to sanctity. His argumentation is quite simple. It shows that, although there are few wandering knights that are saint, this is due to the fact that the sample considered (all the wandering knights) is also small. Therefore, the conclusion he infers is reasonable. Nevertheless, in order to make his argumentation clearer, it is necessary to supply an implicit premise stating that "Not all monks are saint".

To Sancho's rebuke that there ought to be considered a greater sample of wandering knights, Don Quijote replies that the cases to which Sancho refers are not relevant. Therefore, he cannot be accused of committing a hasty generalization.

Don Quijote's argumentation, then, despite the fictional character of the context, satisfies the requirement of a reasonable argumentation. Through his argument, Don Quijote attempts to compel us to see the world in a spiritual perspective, even though this perspective is not supported by a large number of people. To decide whether such perspective is correct it is necessary to examine the rules of behavior that it proposes. In other words, it is not enough to say that only few people behave in that way.

What is most important for our purposes is that the premises from which Don Quijote starts in his argumentation not only show the presuppositions that he considered to be true, but, in addition, that he assumes that all people should consider them in the same way.

What the premises do, in short, is to describe the reality in which Don Quijote is

immersed. In other words, the argumentation shows us the kind of comprehension of things that Don Quijote as a literary character has. But this is not only a personal way of looking at things, but a conception that he expects to be shared by all and that can, therefore, be submitted to judgement by general norms. This is the reason that he aims at consistency in his argument. Therefore, it is legitimate to ask oneself not only what is the reality that the character sees, but also what are the conclusions that he would be ready to draw from his conception.

Nevertheless, Don Quijote's argumentation leaves some points unresolved. In fact, since the argument is developed by means of a comparison, from the fact that few wandering knights deserve the name of such, it would follow, by analogy, that few monks deserve the name of such. Whether Don Quijote aimed at asserting this or not is something to be debated. At this point the argumentative analysis must be completed by a literary analysis.

I am obviously not intending to maintain that only by means of an argumentation theory can we clarify the sense of a literary text. A different kind of analysis is required for this purpose. Nevertheless, the presence of argumentation, even in a literary context, makes the use of argumentative analysis legitimate, in the sense that in that analysis we apply the norms that we use to evaluate everyday argumentation. Furthermore, the conclusions that can be derived constitute an important clue to help us understand the literary character that is arguing and, in general, to understand more clearly the sense of the text.

In other words, the otherwise predominantly descriptive approach to literary analysis constitutes no obstacle for analyzing the argumentative fragments of a text from a normative perspective. In the above example, although Don Quijote's argumentative intention is not altogether clear, I imagine that the critics may nevertheless consider that the implicit consequence that I have pointed out ought to be added to the many other resources that Cervantes uses to criticize the church of his time. Let us turn now to another example taken from Umberto Eco's "The Name of the Rose".

Background: The Inquisitor Bernard de Gui has just finished the process in which he condemns the cellarist as heretic. He reflects then on the process.

"There are five probatory clues that make it possible to recognize those who are in favor of heresy.

First: those who visit in disguise the heretics when they are in prison;

second: those who lament their being imprisoned and have been their intimate

friends during their lives (in fact, it is difficult that the heretic's activities had passed unnoticed to someone who has been his acquaintance for long time);

third: those who maintain that heretics have been condemned unjustly, despite the fact that their guilt has been demonstrated;

fourth: those who look with bad eyes upon and criticize the men who persecute heretics and preach successfully against them. And these can be discovered by their eyes, their nose, the expression they try to dissimulate, because it reveals their hatred towards those for whom they feel resentment and their love for those whose disgrace they lament.

Fifth and last clue is the fact that, once the heretics have been burnt, they collect their bones turned into ashes and make of them an object of veneration...

But I also attribute a great value to a sixth sign, and I consider clearest heretics' friends those in whose books (although they do not offend directly against orthodoxy) the heretics find the premises from which they derive their evil reasonings. And while he said that, his eyes were fixed on Ubertino. All the franciscane legation understood perfectly what Bernard was saying". (From the Spanish translation, 1989, p. 474-475).

Commentary: Bernard de Gui's observations can be considered as a mere pretext to shed guilt on Ubertino, and to all franciscans, in passing, because their works can be considered as a starting point for the heretics' propositions. Gui's discourse is undoubtedly a threat, but it is expressed in the shape of an argument. If we submit it to analysis, we can understand - by means of the conclusions that he is ready to draw - de Gui's peculiar way of understanding the world.

Seen from an argumentative perspective, Bernard de Gui is trying to arrive at a conclusion by means of irrelevant symptoms. In so doing, he commits the fallacy of "guilty by association". One may suppose that this is only a strategy he uses to put his enemies against the wall. But this does not seem a thorough interpretation, although a more careful analysis of the literary text should provide the final word on his real intentions. In my interpretation, Bernard de Gui does not distort reality on purpose as a strategy that permits him to defeat his opponents. Just as it was the case with Don Quijote, he presupposes that reality is as he sees it and that everybody should, consequently, see it in the same way. In other words, if he distorts the facts, it is because he sees them distorted. In his worldview reality is divided between the enemies and the partisans of the church. His authoritarianism and the personal attack he directs to the church's opponents is a consequence of his way of seeing things, a way in which there is no room for

a humanitarian attitude: everything has to be submitted to the black and white test.

From a pedagogical perspective, knowing Bernardo de Gui's personality, and specifically his manner of arguing, help us to understand what happens to all persons who commit this fallacy, that is, it helps us understand their mind and to make explicit the presuppositions that allow them to reduce, in such a drastic manner, the complexity of things.

To sum up, when analysing a literary work where argumentation is present, we can use the same kind of analysis that we would use in contemporary everyday argumentation. However, in order to grasp the meaning that this argumentation has in view of apprehending the whole sense of the literary work, of course, one has to go beyond the mere argumentative analysis. Nevertheless, their ways of arguing, and especially our being able to determine whether they are correct or not, are fundamental clues for understanding how the characters perceive reality. My contention is that literary works can, in certain cases, help to make manifest some cultural presuppositions. That is, they can provide us with alternative points of view which help us by contrast become aware of our own way of understanding things. This brings us back to our starting point.

In contemporary controversies in Chile that touch upon moral aspects, there is a predominant tendency to argue from positions based on the belief that there are only two mutually exclusive alternatives. For instance, on the one hand, the family's protection and, on the other, the individual's autonomy. Thus, the controversy takes the shape of a dilemma: either you accept moral tradition and take a conservative position, or you accept a modern moral and are in danger of maintaining a relativistic position. Stated in this black and white fashion, the debate becomes stagnated and it becomes impossible to present new perspectives that may lead us to criticize and to reconsider both positions.

My proposition is that the presentation of an argumentation taken from literary sources may be provocative of the reflection needed to overcome this stagnation. Chilean literature preserves certain postulates that are basic to our moral tradition. In some Chilean novels, that are known to all Chilean students, the characters discuss in certain passages about moral behaviour. I think that if one could extract those argumentations from their literary contexts, they could serve to formulate different points of view that could contribute to enrich contemporary controversies.

In order to supply an example of how this is possible, I have taken some excerpts

from "Martin Rivas" by Alberto Blest Gana. This is a very important Chilean novel, published in 1862, that narrates some facts occurred between 1850 and 1857 and which are related to the failure of a liberal revolution. The moral position portrayed by Martin Rivas, however, will not be affected by the political changes and so, it expresses a standard moral position that will persist in Chilean society. My intention is to select a few passages and reconstruct them as an argumentation that is not alien to the literary context.

Background: One of the main characters, Rafael San Luis, a bankrupt aristocrat, introduces Martin Rivas, the main character of the novel, to the house of Mrs. Bernarda Molina, who is the mother of Adelaida, Edelmira and Amador. Although Mrs. Molina was not a member of the aristocracy, she used to give parties at her home that imitated the aristocratic gatherings, in the hope of marrying our her daughters to someone important. Despite her intention, since the girls did not belong to the aristocracy, they were exposed to be taken as objects of amusement and seduction by the young aristocrats who came to the house looking for entertainment. The situation furnishes a portrait of the Chilean society of the time and, consequently, Martin Rivas' judgement of that situation becomes a moral judgement of his time's society, which probably could be extrapolated to contemporary Chilean society.

The novel's relevance for Chilean culture is confirmed by the critics who consider that Martin Rivas is the work most read in Chile by the most diverse social groups (Goic, 1976). Martin Rivas' moral judgement must be extracted from the dialogues in the novel. All the relevant ones however take place in a single night.

"Martin Rivas looked upon his friend from this new perspective, which contrasted with the melancholic seriousness that he had always observed in him before. He thought that he could perceive something forced in the impulse that San Luis put in pretending to experience an unparalleled joy.

Are you really having fun?, asked Martin.

Real or faked, it doesn't matter too much, answered San Luis with a little exaltation in his voice, what really matters is to be able to stultify yourself" (p. 71)
"(...)Among this people (said San Luis), loves proceed faster than through the studied preliminaries that lovers use in the large ballrooms before they go on to the first declaration of love. The resort to gazing, resource that bashful and silly lovers employ, is almost superfluous in this setting. Do you like a girl? You just tell her directly. Do not think that her answer will be as frank as you may expect. Here, and in relation to matters touching upon the heart, the woman wants to be

forced and she will not answer but halfway.

I must tell you Rafael, said Rivas, that I cannot find much amusement here.”
(p.74)

“There was a chair next to Edelmira (Mrs. Bernarda’s daughter) and Martin sat on it. I have not seen you taking much part in the entertainment, said the girl.

I am not very much fond of noise, Miss, said he.

Then I gather you must have been displeased.

No; but I realize that I do not have the character for these entertainments.

You are right; I, who have seen so much of them do not seem to be able to get used to them.

Why?, asked Martin feeling his curiosity aroused by the girl’s words.

Because I feel that we lose our dignity in them and that the young gentlemen, who, like yourself and your friend San Luis, come here, only see us as an entertainment and not as persons worthy of yourselves.

I think that you are mistaken in this respect, at least as far as I am concerned. And since you speak to me so frankly, let me tell you that a while ago, when I looked at you I thought I could guess from your expression exactly what you have just told me.

Oh! Then you noticed it.

Yes. And I must tell you that I liked your displeasure. And I thought with deep feeling that you were suffering for your situation.

As I told you before, I have never been able to get used to these parties that my mother and brother like. There is too much difference between gentlemen like you and us. Therefore, there cannot be uninterested and frank relationships between us.”(p. 77)

“(…) For us, answered Edelmira sadly, there is not love like the love you offer to the rich girls. Maybe those on whom we are so crazy as to put our eyes on them, are the ones who most offend us which their love and who make us know the unhappiness of not being able to be contented with those who are around us.” (p. 77)

“Haven’t you had a good time at all?, asked him (Rafael San Luis).

I saw you a while ago talking to Edelmira. She is a poor unhappy girl who feels ashamed of her own people and hopes for someone who may consider her worthy, at least in matters of the heart.

What I have been able to gather about her feelings from the short conversation we had, has made me feel sorry for her, said Martin.

Poor girl!

Do you feel sorry for her?

Yes. She seems to have delicate feelings. And she seems to be suffering.

That is true. But, what can you do? It will be one more heart that will be burnt for coming to close to the light of happiness, said Rafael with a sigh.

And later, slipping his fingers through his hair, he added: It is the story of the moths, Martin, those who do not die keep forever the marks of the fire that burnt their wings. Well! I seem to be making poetry, it is the alcohol speaking through my mouth." (p. 83)

My purpose, of course, is not to make a literary analysis of these dialogues, but to reconstruct them as a fictitious conversation between Rafael San Luis and Martin Rivas that is congenial to the literary context of the original.

Dialogue

Are you having a good time?, asked Rafael San Luis.

Not much, answered Martin, What about you?

Of course I am, answered Rafael.

Your joy doesn't seem real to me, insisted Martin.

And so what?, said Rafael, If you are able to stultify yourself, it does not matter whether your fun is faked or real.

Don't you really mind to seduce Adelaida, continued Martin, although you are really in love with another woman?

Rafael did not answer but remained thoughtful.

Don't you think that she may suffer?, insisted Martin.

No. I think she is enjoying it, answered Rafael. And don't think that she is an easy woman to conquer, she is not the kind that surrenders easily. But she belongs to a different social class. In respect to love affairs, she likes direct questions, but she enjoys giving halfway answers.

Even if it is so, said Martin, I don't think that what you do is correct.

Why?, asked Rafael.

Because she may suffer, said Martin. You treat her as if she were an object for your entertainment. You don't worry whether she feels humiliated or lowered in her dignity.

I don't think so, said Rafael.

You don't think that love requires a frank and sincere relationship between two people?

I don't think there can be love, answered Rafael, between people from such different social backgrounds. Besides, if she really were to fall in love, she is

bound to suffer, as all those who fall in love are.

Martin kept quiet immersed in his own thoughts.

Don't you think that you would enjoy seducing Edelmira?, asked Rafael.

Why do you ask that? said Martin.

Because I know that you like her, answered Rafael.

Yes, I find her attractive, said Martin, but I must treat her with respect, as she deserves to be treated.

Do you think that if you fell in love with her, asked Rafael, you would marry her?

I don't know about that, answered Martin.

This interpretative dialogue is not aimed at interfering with the literary meaning of the novel. Whether Martin Rivas personifies a romantic hero representing a naive morality or an ideal of romanticism more moderate or more realistic in opposition to Rafael San Luis, whether he portrays love in opposition to social interests or simply the reject of the bourgeoisie's ideals, is something that escapes our analysis. It belongs to the literary analysis.

What the dialogue intends is to make manifest Martin Rivas' moral position. As we can see, the dialogue ends with Martin Rivas' confusion about his own feelings. In the novel, Martin Rivas does not marry Edelmira. He marries Leonor, an aristocratic girl whom she really loves. So, it remains unclear whether he thinks that Edelmira, because of her social position, and despite the feeling of respect that he has for her, ought to remain in a situation of inferiority.

Argumentation

Martin Rivas' argumentation can be developed in the following way: Martin Rivas proposes the view that "It is incorrect to seduce a woman". He supports his view giving three different reasons: (a) "You can hurt her feelings", (b) "You can lower her dignity", as a response to San Luis's suggestion that some women, as Adelaida for instance, might enjoy being seduced, and (c) "Every woman deserves to be treated with respect", as a more solid moral reason.

The reason (c), however, is unclear because it is too basic and general. Of course, it is a good support for (a), but its connection with the implicit proposition (d) "Every woman deserves to be loved", which is a consequence of a more egalitarian moral principle, is ignored in the novel.

In this way Martin Rivas can establish a basic criterion to judge the morality of human relationships. This criterion is very specific about some kind of moral damages, like hurting people's feelings, but ignores those other moral damages

that come from social class discrimination.

Martin Rivas' doubts can be introduced in the Chilean contemporary discussion and be used to present the dilemma whether or not we are willing to create a completely egalitarian society and to accept all the consequences derived from this. This approach would provide a different perspective to analyse the moral arguments that come up in public debate in Chile.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - How (Not) To Argue With 'Fundamentalists'. On The Problem Of Arguing Without A Shared Basis



In 1997 the German philosopher Hubert Schleichert published a book, which became a kind of philosophical bestseller in Germany. It is titled *Wie man mit Fundamentalisten diskutiert, ohne den Verstand zu verlieren. Anleitung zum subversiven Denken* (Schleichert 1997)[i]. Schleichert's book sketches a general theory of argumentation and offers a conception of *subversive argumentation* as a means to deal with the problem of fundamentalism. His discussion of this problem primarily deals with historical examples, in particular the fight of the Enlightenment against Christian dogmatism. One of Schleichert's heroes is Voltaire, who seems

to exemplify what Schleichert means by subversivity.

In this paper I will outline and discuss Schleichert's approach with respect to some systematic conceptual issues, concerning in particular the problem of argumentation without a shared basis. After discussing Schleichert, I will briefly give some suggestions for a more adequate approach to this problem.

1. *Schleichert's approach*

1.1 *A positivist concept of argumentation*

It is obvious that Schleichert adopts a "positivist concept of argumentation". At the outset he introduces a distinction between the normal standard-case of argumentation and the non-standard-case. In the *standard-case* a thesis is logically derived from a set of sentences, i.e. the arguments. An argumentation is correct if the arguments are true and the inference is logically valid, or can be transformed into a valid one by adding acceptable premisses. In order to convince someone by argument, there have to be at least some sentences which are already accepted or turn out to be acceptable. These sentences, shared by both sides, constitute the argumentation-basis and may function as a resource for reasons and objections. Schleichert regards in particular sentences which express fundamental values, judgements, beliefs and principles as belonging to the argumentation-basis.

If there is no sufficient argumentation-basis shared by the opponents we have the *non-standard-case*. However, the positivist concept of argumentation rules out this non-standard-case as a case of argumentation in the strict sense. The lack of a shared argumentation-basis must, at the end, lead to a breakdown of the discussion. And, indeed, this often is the case. The fact that people, at least sometimes, continue to argue without a shared basis appears as a curious phenomenon in the positivist framework. From a logical positivist point of view, the efforts of these people are hopelessly in vain.

It is one of Schleichert's merits that he, in spite of adopting the positivist view, does not stop at this place. Instead, he asks for an *explanation of this curious phenomenon* and distinguishes four lines of explanation. We may, first, assume that the discussants simply overestimate the possibility of argumentation and are victims of this illusion. Second, the participants may mutually negate their principles. But this kind of *external criticism* is not really argumentation, since it can neither hope to convince the opponent, nor rest on a commonly shared principle. Both explanations of the phenomenon remain compatible with the positivist picture according to which real argumentation is impossible in non-

standardcases. What is explained, here, is why the participants may falsely believe to have a discussion while, in fact, there is no argumentation at all.

Schleichert's third explanation is that arguers may still try to gain a shared argumentation-basis by means of *internal criticism*. ("... wird versucht, doch noch eine gemeinsame Argumentationsbasis zu gewinnen; dies ist der Fall bei der »internen« Diskussion bzw. Kritik." Schleichert 1997: 64). Internal criticism, as conceived by Schleichert, accepts the basic assumptions of the opponent, interpretes them in a different way, and tries to show internal contradictions in his view. Schleichert obviously thinks of internal criticism as including a kind of *pretended acceptance* of the opponent's basis, if only pretended »for the sake of the argument«. Given, that the acceptance were sincere, we didn't have a non-standard-case at all. However, this line of explanation, again, does not call the presupposition of a shared basis into question.

Only the fourth explanation admits the possibility of discussions in which a shared argumentation-basis is not necessarily required. The discussants may argue subversively. *Subversive argumentation* is different from an exchange of logically valid reasons and objections. ("..., kann man sich mit dem ideologischen Gegner auch anders als nur in einer logisch zwingenden Argumentation wirksam auseinandersetzen. Das soll mit dem Ausdruck »Subversivität « bezeichnet werden." Schleichert 1997: 65) As conceived by Schleichert, subversive argumentation neither is logically conclusive, or refuting, nor does it require a preceding acceptance of the opponent's fundamental convictions. It aims at *undermining* his ideology by showing drastically what he really believes, by showing bare facts that are embarrassing and painful for the opponent, and by showing alternative views. Subversive argumentation opens an external view and aims at the effect of shaking the creditability of the opponent.

1.2 *Arguing with the fundamentalist: Subversive Argumentation*

Schleichert then discusses internal criticism and subversive argumentation as means to argue with fanatic fundamentalists. Here, he points at dangers of internal criticism and advocates subversivity as superior. What does Schleichert have in mind when he talks about discussing with fundamentalists? And what does he mean by "fundamentalism"? Surprisingly enough, Schleichert in a sense defends fundamentalism. He does not accuse fundamentalism of perverting or distorting valueable religions or ideologies, but he insists that fundamentalism is more consequent than rather tolerant and pragmatic versions of the same

doctrines. By going back to the roots and sincerely taking the original sources as radical as they are, *fundamentalism reveals the real character of the respective ideology or religion.*

According to Schleichert, a basic principle of fundamentalism is that the truth has a privileged status above all false teachings and opinions. This alone, however, is not distinctive of fundamentalism. The fundamentalist additionally believes that he *knows the truth* and that he is justified by a higher authority (divine inspiration, a holy text, historical necessity, etc.) to use even violent means for pushing this truth through. Fundamentalism, therefore, is essentially opposed to tolerance. Nevertheless, fundamentalists also use argument. Schleichert warns us to underestimate the intelligence and rationality of fundamentalists. If examined *internally*, their argumentation is far from being inconclusive or irrational. Moreover, Schleichert suggests, that within the respective religious or ideological frame, fundamentalist positions are even more rational than rather liberal or tolerant interpretations of the dogmas.

This is where Schleichert sees the *dangers of internal criticism*. Internal criticism accepts, or pretends to accept, the basic beliefs of the fundamentalist, as the basis of argumentation and participates in the interpretation of, say, the holy texts. Schleichert believes that, since there are no objective criteria to decide about interpretations, such discussions will endlessly go on and lead, almost unavoidably, to subtleties which are unintelligible for a broader public. Even if the internal critic may demonstrate inconsistencies, this will never shake the fundamentalist's faith, but lead to reinterpretations of the text. So, playing the game of the enemy, the internal critic has no chance to overcome the criticised ideology. Internal criticism, Schleichert concludes, may, at best, contribute to some initial phases of a non-standard-discussion.

Only *subversive argumentation*, Schleichert insists, may bring the fundamentalist entirely into discredit by showing embarrassing and painful facts as well as consequences of the fundamentalist ideology. Subversive argumentation may call cruel practices by their name and avoid to cover them by a veil of religious or ideological interpretation. Since it is an essential feature of fanatic fundamentalists not to be impressed by arguments, Schleichert recommends to address subversive argumentation not primarily to the fundamentalist himself, but rather to a public which is less infested by the ideology. The subversive strategies may vary with the different grades of the public acceptance of fundamentalism. If a majority supports the fundamantalists, subversive

argumentation may disguise as internal criticism ironically pretending to accept the dominating ideology. If fundamentalism is rather weak, subversive argumentation may overtly make a fool of the fundamentalist.

One of the techniques of subversive argumentation is what Schleichert calls "substitution *salva absurditate*". His example is Voltaire 's discussion of the Augustinian principle »*credo quia absurdum est*«. ("I believe, because it is absurd".) Voltaire contrasts the context of theology with the context of the court. If a witness reported that the accused was, say, at two places at the same time, and insisted that this is the more certain the more it is absurd, he would be judged as a lunatic. According to Voltaire, the *theological principle* means that, what appears absurd and impossible in our eyes, does not so in God's eye. Revelation, miracles, and religious faith belong to a *different sphere* than witnessing in the context of human affairs. Schleichert, however, assumes that Voltaire merely *ironically* draws this conclusion, while in fact he shows the madness of the religious principle. According to Schleichert, Voltaire's emphasis on the difference between the spheres is *hypocritical*. He pretends to accept the religious principle, but at the same time undermines it. By substitution *salva absurditate* he shows how bizarre the religious principle really is. Assuming subversive hypocrisy, Schleichert reads Voltaire in such a way that, what is literally said, means exactly the opposite.

2. Making Sense of Schleichert's approach

2.1 Conceptual Incoherences

There are many grave conceptual problems in Schleichert's approach. Most of them are connected with the idea of subversive argumentation.

Schleichert, again and again, repeats the positivist doctrine that what may count as proper argumentation has to be logically sound. If an inference is logically inconclusive, we do not have an incorrect argumentation, but no argumentation at all. However, subversive argumentation, as advocated by Schleichert, is not conclusive in the logical sense, not logically compelling. Here, there are no conclusive arguments. ("Beim subversiven Argumentieren (...) werden Argumente vorgetragen, die (...) im Sinne der Logik nicht konklusiv, logisch zwingend sind. Konklusive Argumente gibt es an dieser Stelle nicht." Schleichert 1997: 115) Now the question arises: Do we have two kinds of argumentation, conclusive and non-conclusive ones? Schleichert cannot have both, a positivist concept of argumentation and subversive argumentation. The positivist view entails that subversive strategies of influencing an audience's opinion cannot count as

argumentation. The idea of subversive argumentation requires a non-positivist concept which allows for taking non-conclusive moves as arguments.

Another conceptual problem concerns Schleichert's use of "fundamental" and the concept of an argumentation-basis. At many places Schleichert refers to fundamental beliefs and principles arguers *subjectively* take as certain and immune against revision. These certainties are constituted by education and rarely change in the adult's life. More or less, we are held captive by these fundamentals. At other places Schleichert gives a rather *functional* characterisation of the argumentation-basis as an intersubjectively shared reference point. What may function as such an argumentation-basis may vary from discussion to discussion. Whether there is an intersubjective basis of discussion depends on whether there is an overlap of the participants' pre-given sets of beliefs and principles. It is, again, subversive argumentation that does not fit in, since it is designed as a kind of argumentation that does not *presuppose* an overlap, but may make an impact on fundamental beliefs. If subjective fundamentals can be influenced by arguing without a shared basis, this may suggest a rather dynamic view including the possibility of transforming and even creating the argumentation-basis within the discussion.

A third conceptual problem concerns Schleichert's distinction between an *internal* and an *external* discussion which is crucial for the distinction between internal criticism and subversive argumentation. Internal criticism, Schleichert suggests, accepts the fundamental beliefs and principles of the opponent, but interpretes them in a different way. If internal criticism is supposed to be a kind of non-standard-argumentation, the acceptance of the opponent's basis must be either only »for the sake of the argument« or even entirely pretended. Merely pretended acceptance, however, may also be a strategy of subversive argumentation, which operates from an external position. Subversive argumentation, though implicitly negating the opponent's fundamentals, in certain cases ironically pretends to accept them. So, we are left with the problem how to distinguish between internal criticism in the strict sense and subversive argumentation disguised as internal criticism. Schleichert may reply that subversive argumentation remains external in so far as it operates by irony or hypocrisy. The subversive arguer hides his external standpoint from the opponent while he shows it to the audience. This reply, however, amounts to distinguishing internal criticism from external subversivity with reference to *different addresses*; it does not explicate the internal/external-difference with respect to the relation between the arguers.

Before I draw some consequences of my discussion I would like to confess that I do *not really accept* Schleichert's subversive argumentation as a genuine species of argumentation. My main reason is that subversive argumentation does not acknowledge the opponent as a partner in searching the truth and that it hides, and thereby immunises, its own background-beliefs by playing a game of disguise and pretention. Such strategic games do not fall under the concept of argumentation. In my preceding discussion of conceptual problems I accepted the idea of subversive argumentation only »for the sake of the argument«. By a kind of "internal discussion", I wanted to show how one can arrive at overcoming positivism, if one starts within Schleichert's approach. Schleichert's idea of subversivity breaks through positivist restrictions of the concept of argumentation. Argumentation must not necessarily have the shape of a logical derivation. Arguing does not necessarily presuppose shared beliefs and principles, but may change or even create it's own argumentation-basis. These conclusions seem to contradict some of Schleichert's explicit claims, but I would like to support them. Perhaps, they can be made compatible with Schleichert, if we read him like he reads Voltaire, viz. as a subversive thinker.

2.2 A Sketch of a Subversive Interpretation

It is not very probable that an experienced philosopher like Schleichert is not aware of the conceptual tensions in his book. If this is so, it would be most charitable to interpret his approach in such a way that the conceptual incoherences make sense. Schleichert even may have produced them in order to show something that he does not explicitly say. Such an interpretation would amount to reading the book itself as *exemplifying* subversive argumentation. Seen in this way, Schleichert would criticise rationalist rather than religious ideologies. Even if the author did not intent this, it could be worthwhile to read the book along these lines.

Let us suppose, Schleichert himself argues subversively trying to show something that contradicts what he literally says. Like Voltaire, Schleichert could be a hypocritic who tries to undermine the positivist view of argumentation by showing it's absurdity. If this were the case, the conceptual incoherences would make sense. Schleichert would show us, the third party, how absurd the positivist doctrine of argumentation is. Moreover, the message of the book would turn into the opposite. Schleichert presents himself as a pioneer of tolerance and openness, while he does so in a rather rigid and almost intolerant way. He does not show the slightest charity towards internal religious discussions; he pretends to regard

fundamentalism as the real face of Christianity. His caricature of Christianity as fundamentalism is so crude and overdrawn that one could suspect that he in fact wants to show how dogmatic, intolerant and hostile the absurd picture of religion is that some radical atheists or rationalists draw, that he wants to show that the fanatic critics of fundamentalism are rationalist, or atheist, or positivist fundamentalists themselves. He would not primarily show how, but how not to argue with fundamentalists.

3. Argumentation-basis: A Dynamic View

Before I finish let me briefly return to the problem of an argumentation-basis. Schleichert has drawn a picture of an overlap: Some belief or principle can serve functionally as an argumentation-basis, if it belongs to the overlapping domain of the participants' subjective fundamental beliefs and principles. I would like to replace this picture by a more dynamic one.

Following Wohlrapp (Wohlrapp 1998) and others, the fact that fundamental beliefs and principles become very deep-rooted and stable within subjective positions, can be described as a result of a process of *framing*, i.e. a process of coming to see something *as* something and act accordingly. Such ways of seeing and acting to some extent exclude other ways of framing. We cannot see and treat, say, the same mountain as a holy site and as a resource for copper-mining at the same time. When such ways of seeing and acting have become unconscious, and thereby have gained some stability we may call them *frames*. It is characteristic of such frames that we are unable to see what is outside of them. Arguers may have very different frames, according to which they see and treat the matter they are discussing about. Although they hope to convince each other by giving and asking for reasons, this hope may be disappointed systematically. Their very different frames may prevent them from finding any argumentation-basis.

However, in a discussion we do not deal with isolated sentences. *By arguing discussants express their frames*. Their argumentative moves are particularly connected by being embedded in such frames. Expressing their frames in the discussion, the participants may become aware of the fact that their frames are *limited* and that there are alternative ways of framing the matter. And this may be a first step in the process of arguing without a shared basis: the *acknowledgement of the frame-difference*. This means to get some distance from seeing one's own view as a self-evident natural thing.

A second step may be the effort to *explore and understand* the internal coherence

of the opponent's frame by anticipatory practices. (Cf. Lueken 1991) As Wittgenstein said, "It is not single axioms that strike me as obvious, it is a system in which consequences and premises give one another *mutual* support." (Wittgenstein 1969: § 142) The more we explore the web of mutually supporting beliefs expressed by the opponent's argumentation, the more we understand his way of framing the matter. Such processes of learning distinctions and related practices can be regarded as part of or accompanied by argumentative exchanges.

A further, third step may be to *integrate the different frames*, at least partially. This is, of course, the most difficult step. But such integrations of ways of seeing sometimes happen in discussions. This often shows itself in *reinterpretations* of already expressed claims. Thereby, things may be made coherent that previously appeared as incompatible. The search for or construction of analogies between the involved belief-systems may further such an integration. Therefore, arguments by analogy, and disanalogy, are significant here. (Cf. Mengel 1991)

Following these lines an argumentation-basis may stepwise be established in an argumentative exchange that started without a shared basis. This dynamic view may perhaps also open our minds for possibilities of arguing with fundamentalists. Acknowledging frame-differences, seeing ourselves as being, to some extent, kept by frames, and adopting an argumentative attitude that allows for learning even from fundamentalists, we may have a chance to overcome hostility and solve conflicts with fundamentalists not only by strategic means of deception and power, but also by argumentation.

NOTES

i. In English: 'How to Argue with Fundamentalists Without Losing One's Mind. A Guideline to Subversive Thinking'.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - The Normative Structure Of Adjudicative Dialogue



If you ask them, most people will say that disagreements should be resolved through dialogue. If you ask them what this means, however, you are less likely to get a straightforward answer. While commitment to dialogue as a mode of conflict resolution is widespread, most of us are less than clear about what this commitment entails. What

does it mean, exactly, to discourse dialogically?

In the heat of discursive contestation, we tend to focus on the matter at issue, and attend little, if at all, to the normative structure of dialogue itself. This contributes, I think, to a general lack of clarity concerning the norms in question. Here theory can aid practice by shedding light on the norms that govern adjudicative discourse. By stepping back from particular disputations and articulating the otherwise tacit knowledge that underlies and structures them, the theorist can sharpen and reinforce basic intuitions about the process. In this paper, I aim to show that resolution-oriented discourse has a distinctive normative structure that is partially subject to theoretical explication.

It is not an *ethic* of disputation, but a *logic* of disputation, that I am after here. I am interested in how various dialectical gambits alter the structure of obligations and alternatives that disputants face as the dialogue unfolds. Like any other logic, a logic of disputation must strike a balance: it must capture some of the richness

of the practice being modeled, yet still cast core structures into bold relief; it must be relevant to concrete discursive contexts, yet abstract away from the particularities of such contexts; it must do justice to the complexity of reason-giving discourse, while bringing simplicity and clarity to our understanding of it. A good way to reconcile these constraints is to model reason-giving discourse as a kind of game. After identifying a useful typology of moves, we clarify the conditions under which moves of each type are permitted. Finally, we characterize the normative implications of each move-type in terms of its “effects” on the distribution of discursive commitments and entitlements. Such a logic, I believe, can facilitate what Robert Brandom calls “deontic scorekeeping” - the keeping track of discursive commitments and entitlements (Brandom, 1994). Since this is an important part of resolution-oriented discourse, a logic of disputation can actually enhance our capacity to resolve disagreements dialogically.

Dialogical disputation begins when one party to a discussion expresses disagreement over, or an inability or unwillingness to go along with, some claim or assumption made by another. Before describing the process that ensues, we need to identify the dialectical resources available to the disputants. Already we know something important about this, for in order even to disagree, the interlocutors must first share a language. Donald Davidson has shown us that, to share a language, people must share a large number of beliefs in common (Davidson, 1984). To share a language is also to jointly recognize a large number of what Brandom calls “material inference proprieties” (Brandom, 1994). Put simply, there will be a variety of inferential transitions that both participants will be predisposed to recognize as appropriate or valid. We can depict this shared background - or “common ground,” as I like to call it - using a Venn diagram, as the intersection of two necessarily overlapping belief-sets. It is to elements of this set that participants must ultimately appeal in their attempts to gain dialectical leverage.

There are three kinds of inference relevant to our story: permissive, committive, and incompatibility. **[i]** Two sentences are related by permissive inference whenever entitlement to one entitles one also to the other. For example, entitlement to ‘There is smoke rising from yonder chimney’ generally carries entitlement to ‘There is a fire in the fireplace beneath’ (barring some unusual circumstance like the presence of a firetruck outside the building). Two sentences

are related by committive inference whenever commitment to one commits one also to the other. For instance, commitment to 'Fido is a dog' commits one also to 'Fido is a mammal.' Two sentences are said to be incompatible whenever commitment to one precludes entitlement to the other. For example, commitment to 'The sea is green' precludes entitlement to 'The sea is colorless.'

The centrality of the notions of commitment and entitlement in this account makes it a good idea to define them more precisely. To be committed to a claim is to be obliged to defend it discursively (in the standard case, by presenting supporting reasons or evidence), if appropriately challenged. One undertakes discursive commitments primarily by asserting, and one divests oneself of discursive commitments by withdrawing or renouncing claims formerly asserted. Roughly speaking, then, one is committed to whatever one has asserted and not withdrawn, plus whatever follows from these, via committive inference. (It is worth mentioning that, in real life, actions other than speech-acts can also carry discursive commitments. Showing up late can mean that one has some explaining to do, for example. While the non-discursive undertaking of discursive commitments is an important phenomenon, and well worth further study, it will not occupy me further here.)

To be entitled to a judgment is basically to be [rationally] permitted to employ it discursively: to use it as a premise, for example. (Or to act upon it in other appropriate ways - here again we encounter an important bridge between the discursive and the non-discursive.) Some entitlements are presumptive: players begin the game with default entitlements or judgments that do not stand in need of justifying. These judgments are properly thought of as rationally in order unless some reason for doubting them surfaces. Other judgments must be redeemed or justified if entitlement to them is to be had. The stock of entitlements, then, begins the game non-empty, and expands whenever judgments are redeemed or justified, and shrinks whenever judgments are undermined or refuted.

It is not easy to identify the precise contours of the stock of default entitlements. Fortunately, it is not necessary to pin this down. For interlocutors invariably bring to the encounter their own unique conception of what one is entitled to assume, assert, and take for granted. If they are open-minded and persuadable, the dialogic encounter will often compel them to alter this conception: to add judgments that appropriate reason-giving performances can secure, and to delete judgments that appropriate reason-giving performances can undermine. In this way, interlocutors are compelled to take on new commitments and abandon old

ones: to in effect modify the substance of their conceptions of entitlement.

Because the norms that govern rational discourse reinforce commitments that can be dialogically upheld and put pressure on commitments that cannot, they are well-suited to bringing about convergence in belief. It is their nature to foster consensus regarding what one is entitled to and what one ought to be committed to. Jurgen Habermas is right when he writes that the ideals of mutual understanding and unrestrained consensus are embedded in the norms that govern reason-giving discourse (Habermas, 1984: 287ff). To say that a certain kind of discourse has resolution or consensus as its “inherent telos,” however, is not to say that it serves these ends at the expense of truth. It is certainly possible for the interest in agreement to conflict with the interest in truth, but the two interests can also coincide. If we assume that both parties to our dialogue are honest and sincere, open-minded and persuadable, and that both want the dialogic encounter to render a verdict that is as close to the truth as they can make it, then we can treat the strictly non-identical dialogical ends of resolution and truth as functionally coincident.

In the skeletal version of the reason-giving language-game to be articulated here, there are five basic move-types: assertion, challenge, defending, withdrawal, and concession. An *assertion* puts a claim forward and commits the person making the assertion to it. A *challenge* is directed against an assertion or assumption (called its “target claim”), indicating disagreement or irresolution, and *suspending entitlement* to its target, pending an investigation. A challenge puts the claimant in the position of having to defend the claim or assumption challenged. A *defending* is meant to redeem an entitlement that has been suspended or is at issue. A *withdrawal* renounces a previous commitment, taking the claim withdrawn “off the table.” A *concession* essentially withdraws a challenge, signaling the challenger’s newfound willingness to accept the point at issue.

It proves analytically useful to subdivide the categories of challenge and defending. Some challenges present one or more *reasons against* the claim they target. For example, a prosecutor might confront a defendant with eyewitness accounts that contradict his testimony. Following Lance (1988: 59ff), I call such challenges “assertional.” The reasons against I call *grounds for doubt*. The idea here is to present assertions that are (a) difficult to deny, and (b) incompatible with the target claim, in order to undermine entitlement to the target claim. In general, assertional challenges take the form ‘How can you say that P, when R?’ where P is the target and R the grounds for doubt. (It simplifies matters to focus

on the case where R is the lone ground for doubt.)

The other possibility is that a challenge presents no such grounds for doubt. Again, following Lance, I call these challenges “bare.” Bare challenges simply ask the claimant to provide reasons *for* the claim targeted. A bare challenge might take the form ‘How do you know that P?’ where P is the target-claim. (Note that this typology of challenges is analytically complete, for a challenge must either present grounds for doubt or not, there is no third option.)

We must also distinguish two kinds of defending. A defending is a move intended to redeem entitlement to a claim at issue, and typically follows on the heels of a challenge. What I call a “direct” defending takes the challenge it is a response to as well-posed, and presents reasons that purport to redeem entitlement to the claim it targets. The idea is to present assertions that (a) permissively entail the target-claim, and (b) are themselves entitlements. An “indirect” defending, by contrast, attempts to show that the challenge it is a response to is somehow misposed (for example, that it presupposes falsely) – that it ought not to be regarded as suspending entitlement. In effect, an indirect defending is a challenging of a challenge. (Note here that this typology, too, is analytically complete, for a defending must either accept the challenge as well-posed or not, there is no third option.)

Dialogical disputation commences when one party (“the challenger”) issues a challenge and the other party (“the claimant”) responds with a defending rather than an immediate withdrawal. By attending closely to the type of challenge and the type of defending, we can characterize the structure of the normative “field” – the pattern of obligations and options that will structure the ensuing dialogue. There are four possible combinations of opening moves: a bare challenge followed by a direct defending, a bare challenge followed by an indirect defending, an assertional challenge followed by an indirect defending, and an assertional challenge followed by a direct defending. I will examine them in that order.

Suppose, then, that a challenger issues a bare challenge and the claimant elects to defend directly. For example, ‘How do you know that a second trimester fetus is a living human being?’ might prompt the direct defending: ‘Well, a fetus has a heartbeat and brain activity by ten weeks.’ Here the claimant has presented what supporting reason for the claim at issue. The question we must ask is this: what effect does such a “move” have on the structure of the normative field?

The primary effect is to change what is immediately at issue. The question of the target claim's epistemic status is temporarily set aside, and attention shifts to the supporting reasons. Two questions arise about them: First, is the claimant entitled to these claims? Second, do they confer entitlement on the target claim? These questions correspond, respectively, to what traditional argumentation theory would call the explicit and suppressed premises of the claimant's justificatory argument. These now take center stage, and the issue becomes whether they are tenable. If the challenger concedes that both are tenable - that is, if he is unwilling to challenge the claimant on either point - then he is rationally obliged to concede the target claim. If willing to challenge the claimant on either point, however, he needs to do so. In terms of our example, he might reply, 'It is not clear to me that a heartbeat and brain activity are enough to make a fetus a human being.' Here the challenger has targeted the inference from the supporting grounds to the target claim, indicating that there is a question about whether that inference is in fact entitlement-conferring. The suppressed premise that articulates the inference (specifically: 'If a fetus has a heartbeat and brain activity, then it is a human being') becomes the new point at issue, and the original question awaits the outcome of the embedded issue.

As challengers and claimants avail themselves of certain dialectical options, and neglect others - offering this supporting reason rather than that, or targeting this assumption rather than that one with a challenge - they together navigate the discussion out onto one or another branch of a vast "game-tree," which can be thought of as representing all the different ways the dialogue might play out. As the interlocutors steer the discourse out onto the branches on the tree, unresolved issues are bracketed, and embedded issues are taken up. This corresponds to movement "up" the tree - away from the "trunk" and towards the branches. Resolutions are effected when this movement is reversed: premises and/or inferences on which embedded issues hinge prove mutually agreeable, and logic compels either a concession or a withdrawal. Open branches of the game-tree are in this way closed off, embedded issues are resolved, and disputants can return to the embedding issues (represented here as larger supporting branches) with an expanded common ground - a broader basis for building consensus.

Let us see turn now to the case of a bare challenge followed by an indirect defending. Suppose, in other words, that a challenger issues a bare demand for evidence and the claimant wishes to contend that such a demand is inappropriate or misposed. Can a bare challenge, which hazards no grounds for doubt, be misposed?

Certainly. Bare challenges represent a powerful move in the language-game because they purport to saddle the claimant with a justificatory burden without exposing the challenger to any comparable risk. (Because no grounds for doubt are involved, the challenger does not need to worry about defending them.) Yet this power comes at a price: the right to issue bare challenges must be theoretically circumscribed or the game becomes unbalanced. The regress skeptic, who seeks to defeat all claims to knowledge by simply iterating bare challenges until supporting reasons give out, is the hypothetical embodiment of the fact that the reason-giving language game breaks down if the right to issue bare challenges is not kept within appropriate bounds.

Bare challenges are only appropriate when the burden of proof is on the claimant. For if the claim challenged is presumptive, or reasonably taken for granted, it is not up to the claimant to provide reasons *for* the target claim, it is up to the challenger to provide reasons *against* it. It takes an assertional challenge, in other words, to undermine a presumption. Hence bare challenges that target presumptions are misposed. For example, the bare challenge 'How do you know that you have ancestors?' is inappropriate for falsely presupposing that the onus is on the claimant. 'How do you know that the earth has existed for many years past?' is similarly misposed.

Indirect defendings to such bare challenges can take a very simple form: 'It seems probable enough. Why do you doubt it?' Such a response neatly shifts the onus back where it belongs (or seems to the claimant to belong). Typically, such a move will elicit a brief indication of why the challenger understands the target claim to be unworthy of being asserted. In effect, this amounts to his sharing his grounds for doubt - to the challenger's replacing his bare challenge with an assertional one. The dialogue can then unfold as outlined below. The interesting case here occurs when the challenger does not take on the onus of disproof, but simply insists that the burden lies with the claimant.

To prevent our dialogue from degenerating into a series of refusals to shoulder the onus of proof (or disproof), we need to stipulate a non-subjective measure of presumptiveness, or immunity to bare challenge. My proposal is this: if the claim at issue is reasonably likely, given the information available to both interlocutors (i.e. as reckoned on the common ground), then the claim is presumptive, and the onus is on the challenger. If not, the claim is non-presumptive, and the onus is on the claimant.

The virtue of this proposal is that it instructs disputants that might otherwise remain at loggerheads to begin sharing the elements of their background knowledge that incline them to think that the claim at issue ought, or ought not, to be treated as presumptive. Typically, this will uncover the bit of background knowledge *possession* of which leads one to think of the claim as *prima facie* reasonable (or unreasonable), and the non-possession of which leads the other to think the opposite. When this happens, the question of onus has already been resolved: the onus *did* lie on the possessor, but the sharing of it shifted the onus to the disputant who just learned of it. If it turns out that it is the claimant who possesses the decisive bit of information, then her sharing of it should be regarded as a direct defending of the claim at issue, and the dialogue should proceed as outlined above. If it turns out that it is the challenger who possesses the decisive bit of information, then his sharing of it should be regarded as an assertional challenge, and the dialogue should proceed as outlined below.

So let us turn now to disputations that begin with assertional challenges. The distinctive feature of an assertional challenge, of course, is its grounds for doubt. An example would be: 'Your claim that our moral dispositions are largely inherited seems unlikely, given their extreme malleability.' The primary normative effect of such a challenge is to change what is immediately at issue. Once again, the question of the status of the claim it targets gets put on the back burner, and attention shifts to the grounds for doubt. Two questions about them arise: First, is the challenger entitled to these grounds for doubt? Second, are these grounds for doubt in fact incompatible with the target claim? As in the case of direct defendings, these questions correspond to the explicit and suppressed premises of an argument - only this time it is a falsifying argument based on an incompatibility, rather than a justifying argument based on an entitlement-conferring inference.

If the claimant feels compelled to concede both the grounds for doubt and their incompatibility with the target - that is, if she is unable or unwilling to challenge either one or the other - then she is rationally obliged to withdraw the target claim. In terms of our example: 'Perhaps moral dispositions are not inherited after all.' On the other hand, if she is willing to challenge the challenger on either point, she needs to do so. The result is an indirect defending of the target claim. She might do so in this case by saying: 'But the malleability of our moral dispositions is itself adaptive, and provides further evidence of their genetic basis.' Here the claimant has raised the question of whether 'Our moral

dispositions are malleable' is genuinely incompatible with 'Our moral dispositions are largely inherited.' This, then, becomes the new point at issue - a new branch of the game tree will have opened up - and until a concession or withdrawal closes it off, the issue will remain unresolved.

When a claimant offers a direct defending in response to an assertional challenge, she attempts to redeem the target claim by providing reasons *for* that simply outweigh the assertional challenge's reasons *against*. For example, if my claim that Bill was in Copenhagen last month is challenged with: 'But Bill said he was not going to Copenhagen,' I could respond directly by saying: 'Yes, when I talked to him there, he told me that his plans had changed.' Here the stronger evidence of Bill's presence in Copenhagen simply overwhelms the weaker evidence of his absence. Direct defendings in such cases are functionally equivalent to direct defendings offered in response to bare challenges, and the norms that govern their appraisal differ in no serious particular.

This completes my survey of the four possible combinations of opening moves and their normative implications. The branches of the game-tree continue to multiply and expand outwards from here, and though I cannot discuss all of them, the branching process and the norms at work are precisely those I have already discussed: the basic structure of challenge and response is the same, though the point at issue will have shifted. If disputants can keep track of where they are in the game-tree (which branch they are on), remember which entitlements are at issue, and which entitlements hinge on which others, then when their shared background begins to compel withdrawals and concessions, branches of the game-tree will close, and simple logic will compel the adjustments to commitments and conceptions of entitlement that will move the disputants toward consensus.

This is not to say that consensus or agreement is guaranteed, for the common ground may be insufficiently extensive to draw forth the requisite concessions and withdrawals. Pride, ego, or closed-mindedness may also prevent resolution. But if there is enough common ground, if the disputants approach the exchange in the right spirit, and if they are clear about the normative structure of adjudicative dialogue, they stand a good chance of resolving their dispute amicably, and broadening their understanding of the matter at issue.

NOTES

i. Here again I follow Brandom.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - The Concept Of Argumentation In Peter Singer's 'Practical Ethics'



Introduction

Peter Singer's "Practical Ethics" is - at least in Germany - one of the philosophical books of the last decades having gained the biggest public attention. It is discussed rather controversially by people with most different academic and social backgrounds. But so far, it seems to me, there hasn't been an elaboration from the perspective of argumentation theory. This is surprising as Singer explicitly conceives ethics in a way that "allows reason an important role in ethical decisions."(PE 8)

I agree with Singer on this as far as the words used are concerned; but I am not sure, if we understand them in the same way. There are several related questions to answer that will help to understand, what it may mean to allow reason i.e. argumentation an important role in ethical decisions: How does Singer argue himself? What emerges thereby as his notion of argumentation? Are there alternatives? What are the effects of the different conceptions of argumentation on the notion of ethics?

As these questions mix very much I won't be able to answer them separately one by one. Starting with the first I will touch the others in order to come up with a

more or less round picture of the whole issue.

My paper has four sections. The first section extracts argumentative traits from Singer's book. The second one introduces two concepts of 'argumentation'. The third section will confront the argumentative traits with these concepts revealing differing evaluations. In the last section I will show relations between formal argumentative aspects of the "Practical Ethics" and material ethical ones.

1. Argumentative Traits in Singer's "Practical Ethics"

There is one pivot in Singer's ethical thinking. It is what he calls "the principle of equal consideration of interests" (ECI). The ECI, he asserts, is the adequate expression of universalisability and a sound basis of equality. (PE 19) It formulates the ethical postulate not to be selfish and it incorporates - and by this is intended to be resistant against - the fact that men are individuals and differ as such.

Singer grounds this principle on a kind of utilitarianism enabling him to say: "The essence of the principle of equal consideration of interests is that we give equal weight in our moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by our actions." (PE 19) Singer renounces arguing profoundly for his utilitarian position. He admits that his view "is not the only possible view of ethics" (PE 8) and he maintains that it "may be treated as no more than a statement of the assumptions" (PE 8) on which his elaborations are based. To confirm the ECI there are three major examples of argumentation presented using the ECI as a premis. The examples refer to racism, sexism and a fictional society enslaving those that score low on IQ tests. The structural core of the three arguments is merely identical. I will therefore present just the first one to show, what they are like:

P(1) Who does not give equal weight in his moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by his actions acts morally wrong.

P(2) Racists give more weight to the interests of members of one race than to the interests of members of another.

C Racists act morally wrong.

The major premis of this classical syllogism (barbara) states the ECI. The minor premis describes features of racists in terms of the ECI. The conclusion says lapidarily that you shouldn't be a racist. There won't be controversy that this argument is valid in the sense that if the premisses are okay the conclusion is

okay as well.

The particularity of this syllogism is, though, that the conclusion is out of question. On the other hand the major premise is just an assumption. And as we recall this argument is presented in order to confirm the ECI viz. the major premise. Singer uses the large consensus regarding the evilness of racism to corroborate the ECI by showing that being used as a major premise of an ethical argument it leads to the desired result. To harden this corroboration he works with a couple of structural identical arguments employing the ECI as major premise as I already remarked. **[i]**

Then Singer turns to the more problematic issues. Again he merely uses the same structure of argumentation namely the Barbara syllogism with the ECI as major premise to establish the conclusions. But now the ECI is no longer treated as a pure assumption. In these cases it is rather employed to make a controversial conclusion plausible. The range of topics being treated in this manner is wide and I will pick one where the structural identity with the example above is particularly obvious. In other instances the argumentative structure is less pregnant in so far as Singer refines and differentiates the premisses and conclusions in various admirably subtle and sophisticated ways. But where he talks about equality for animals this isn't necessary and he frequently points at the analogy to the racism argument. Here is the core of the argumentative structure:

P(1) Who does not give equal weight in his moral deliberations to the like interests of all those affected by his actions acts morally wrong.

P(2) Speciesists give more weight to the interests of members of one species than to the interests of members of another.

C Speciesists act morally wrong.

Perhaps nobody wants to be called a speciesist anyway, but Singer makes clear what it amounts to avoiding this label: e.g. as citizens of modern urbanized societies we would have to more or less cease eating meat. (PE 45ff.) I will not discuss this attitude here, just point at the moral impact of this demand in Singer's opinion: "If we do not change our dietary habits, how can we censure those slaveholders who would not change their own way of living?" (PE 56) This is apt to make some of us gourmets blush.

With this admittedly not very theoretical remark I will leave the exposition of some argumentative traits in Singer's book. I will return later in section 3 to the

presented examples after going into some more general aspects of the matter.

2. Two Notions of Argumentation

This section will roughly sketch two concepts of argumentation. The first notion is the one that is especially in English speaking countries common and seems almost self-evident. I will call it the "PPC concept" of argumentation (cf. Wohlrapp 1990: 232). According to this notion an argument consists in a set of premisses and a conclusion. The argumentative sequences extracted from Singer's book that I have presented in the last section I have put in a form matching this conception.

The PPC concept is modeled obviously after a logical implication where the form of the antecedens and the form of the succedens govern a clearly defined relation between them. Accordingly the argumentative force is understood by the PPC concept as a kind of transfer of truth from the set of premisses to the conclusion warranted by the quasi logical form. Hence from the perspective of the PPC concept the best kind of an argument would be a deductive one where the truth of the premisses is transferred to the conclusion without any loss. But on the other hand informal logicians frequently have hinted at the relative poorness of this sort of argument due to its not coming up with any new information.

To conceive argumentation according to the PPC model means, to look for the structure of premisses and conclusions in a speech or text in order to grasp its argumentative content.

In contrast to this structure oriented concept I will now introduce a more action oriented approach (cf. Wohlrapp 1995 and 1998b, Mengel 1995: 135-161, Ch. 6). Instead of looking for a certain structure in speeches or texts we can ask for certain actions. There are three actions typical of argumentation: posing a thesis, substantiating and rejecting. The action of posing a thesis includes reformulating a once expressed thesis, in this way developing a follower thesis. The single actions attempting the substantiation of a thesis are called the giving of reasons, the single actions towards rejecting it objections.

On first sight we might relate the thesis of this concept to the conclusion of the PPC concept and the reasons to the premisses. This is not entirely wrong, but there are conceptual differences that shouldn't be underestimated. We already saw that the concept of posing a thesis has a potential dynamic component by including the possibility of generating a follower thesis. Furthermore, reasons in this model are not linked to the thesis in a logical or quasi logical way like the premisses to the conclusion in the PPC concept. Reasons are methodical steps on

a way from a necessarily assumed theoretical basis to the thesis. This basis contains established knowledge as well as current procedures and concepts. By “methodical steps” I understand actions that successively furnish conditions for the insight into the thesis. A very obvious difference to the PPC concept is the conceptualisation of objections (cf. Wohlrapp 1987). And the objections, explicitized or not, play an important role, because they are the actions that motivate substantiation. Without objections there seems to be hardly any need and no clear goal for argumentation.

A clue of this notion of argumentation is that it accounts for the possibility to integrate such objections: the dynamic concept of posing a thesis allows for reformulations of a previously expressed thesis incorporating the “wisdom” communicated by an objection. In the course of this generally the underlying theoretical basis is affected. It receives a sort of an “update”.

We see that there is not only a movement in one direction - like the transfer of truth in the case of the PPC concept. Besides the successive affording of conditions from the basis to the thesis there is also a supporting movement the other way round from the strengthened thesis back to a rearranged basis. As a consequence argumentation is not just understood as a probative procedure, but at the same time as an explorative action. This way good argumentation may very well be informative.

Harald Wohlrapp has called this aspect of forth and back in argumentation its “retroflexivity” (Wohlrapp 1990: 224[**ii**] and 1998a) Hence I will call this notion of argumentation the “retroflexivity concept” in contrast to the PPC concept. If we want to express the retroflexivity of argumentation in terms of the PPC concept, we might say that not only the premisses support the conclusion but also vice versa an accepted conclusion its premisses: Premisses and conclusion constitute a system of mutual support. With these distinctions in mind we can now turn back to Singer’s argumentation.

3. Singer’s Argumentation and Retroflexivity

We remember that in Singer’s book we are confronted with two manners of argumentation nevertheless being structurally identical. They form the Barbara syllogism with the ECI, the principle of equal consideration of interests, as their major premiss. The difference of the two manners is that in one case, e.g. racism, the conclusion is commonly accepted while the ECI is treated as an assumption, in the other, e.g. speciesism, the ECI is used to support a controversial conclusion.

Reading Singer, who is very aware of himself being arguing, the impression is almost undeniable that he understands argumentation according to the prevailing PPC concept. So it is not surprising that he treats the part of his book, where he tries to establish the ECI and its utilitarian background, in a very tentative and cautious way using modest formulations etc.. This is the part using the first manner of argumentation (racism), which does not seem to match very well with the PPC concept, as there is no transfer of truth from the premisses to the conclusion.

Consequently Singer seems to view himself on firm ground when he turns to the more controverse issues and he uses his syllogism in the normal way. I already gave a taste of the rigidness of his dicta in these contexts. His argumentation here presents itself as an apodictical inferring to conclusions that not everyone likes to accept despite the feeling that he is forced to.

So the PPC concept makes the first manner of argumentation trying to establish the ECI seem relatively weak, the second manner using the ECI seem rather strong.

On the background of the retroflexivity concept the whole issue appears almost totally inverted. In this view the support of the ECI by means e.g. of the commonly shared disregard of racism is not peculiar at all. To demonstrate that it would be possible to use the ECI as a support of an affirmed attitude is doubtlessly a step on a way of insight into this principle.

But as an effect of the more dynamic conception of retroflexivity it is not as easily possible to separate the two manners of argumentation. Notably they are concerned with the same kind of topics and will therefore partly ground on the same theoretical basis. The retroflexivity concept of argumentation leads to taking the different PPC instances chiefly for components of a larger argumentation about the ECI. This means that on one hand indeed the instances with a very plausible conclusion strengthen the ECI, but on the other hand the instances with a problematic conclusion weaken it again. Every argumentative attempt of Singer's, ending up with a controversial result, makes the ECI with its utilitarian background less trustworthy.

From this point of view one would expect Singer to become more cautious with his attitude and formulations in this part of the argumentation, but - as we saw - the opposite tendency is to be noticed. Not the successive probation of the ECI makes it seem stronger and stronger, but only constant mention and use of it. Frequent repetition of an opinion is a very old rhetorical device - just think of

Cato's famous "cetero censeo..." - but it is not regarded as a very noble argumentative means. In our examples, i.e. racism and speciesism, the mere rhetorical aspect receives support by Singer's coining the expression "speciesism" in analogy to the expressions "racism" and "sexism". This way the pejorative connotation of the latter will tend to be transferred to the former, effecting the evaluation of the matter in case.

This maneuver with expressions is probably intended, but I don't believe that Singer is aware of the repetition effect. I rather suppose, his view is too much prestructured by the PPC concept. So I won't blame him for playing bad rhetorical tricks on us. But the whole case shows that an inadequate notion of argumentation is not just an argumentation theoretical flaw, but it may be apt to misrepresent the very topic of argumentation as well. **[iii]**

4. Argumentation in Ethics: Mementos

In this last section, devoted to relations between ethical issues and their argumentative treatment, I will become more tentative, because this is not the place and there is not enough space for an exhaustive elaboration of this topic. But I feel obliged to at least give hints and perspectives for further reasoning about these matters. The discovery of the considerable doubtfulness of the ECI by looking through the glasses of the retroflexivity concept of argumentation should turn our attention back to the foundation of the ECI. We have to ask if there are further objections to it besides the possibility to generate questionable ethical demands by means of the ECI.

As far as I see, there are two major targets for objections in the formulation of the principle:

1. the assignment of interests is a problem,
2. it is not absolutely clear, what it is to "give equal weight" to "like interests".

Regarding the first problem I can't help viewing the notion of interests as a very private, subjective category. My interests are first of all only accessible to me myself, yours only to every single one of you yourselves. So my assignment of interests to you is for a rule dependent upon your conveyance of them to me. If we knew each other very well, I might be fit for good guesses in this respect or if I took you as a group and not every single, individual one of you. The two sources for the quality of these interest guessing are our communication on one hand, "if we knew each other very well", and me recognising myself in you on the other, not taking you individually, but as representing an abstract self analogous to me.

To render possible the intended wide range of the ECI Singer cannot just rely on these two possibilities. Instead he objectivates the category of interests in a substantially naturalistic manner. This way he is able to extend the unmetaphorical use of the word interest without problems to unconscious men in very different life situations from his own as well as to animals.

Nevertheless the naturalisation of a concept like "interest" raises problems. Friedrich Kambartel has introduced the term "grammatical threshold" (grammatische Schwelle) into the discourse about changing concepts in such a way (Kambartel 1989: 71). He takes up Wittgensteins use of the expression "grammatical" and states that such grammatical thresholds lie in between the lingual means of two entirely different fields of language use. The naturalisation of the concept of interest would mean the nivellation of a grammatical threshold in this sense with possible grave ethical consequences. On this way we might end up considering the "interests" of tamagochis.

I cannot elaborate this any further here for the stated reasons. I just wanted to show the kind of objections Singer would have to cope with in order to establish the ECI, confirming it as much as to allow it to bear all the questionable ethical demands.

Probably even more problematic are the objections that focus on the idea of giving "equal weight" to "like interests". As I have already remarked, Singer holds the ECI to be capable of showing "why the most blatant forms of racism, like that of the Nazis, are wrong."(PE 20). But why shouldn't the Nazis have argued: What is the interest not to suffer of a few million jews in comparison to the interest of generations of mankind to lead a sublime life?

This illustration points to three interacting shortcomings:

1. Interests have to be criticisable. But as the ECI is conceptualised as a principle, there is no basis for such a criticism within Singer's system.
2. The quantifyability and summarisability of interests is questionable even though Singer claims that precision is not necessary (PE 53). Here we eventually face again the naturalism issue.
3. To engage in the utilitarian calculation act - regardless wether you calculate interests or happiness or whatever - distracts from the qualities of actions as it presupposes a quantification.

All these possible targets of objections would not be grave, if the ECI were just a

rule of thumb among others. But Singer introduces it as the ethical principle. As such it has to be pertinent for all the possible single instances of moral reasoning. To me it seems that the interpretations of the single situations being necessary to allow this pertinence generally presuppose a considerable amount of moral judgement which can't be backed by the ECI, too.

I suppose that a major motivation to conceive the ECI as a principle is the wish to make ethics accessible to argumentation. If you have principles you have secure premisses for e.g. syllogisms. But we have seen we are not forced to adopt a notion of argumentation being dependent on the existence of confirmed premisses. If we can assume some kind of a theoretical basis there is enough to start reasoning. Argumentation itself has the potential to extend, modify and confirm - or dismiss - this basis as far as necessary by its explorative aspect. We'd better rely on this aspect in ethical reasoning instead of paving one way streets leading into blind alleys.

NOTES

i. It is certainly possible to analyze Singer's argumentation using a different form from the barbara syllogism. Singer's frequent reference to the analogy of the speciesism argument - where the barbara structure is obvious - shows, though, that he himself is understanding his argument in this way. As I am concerned with his notion of argumentation I have to analyze accordingly.

ii. In this article Wohlrapp seems to restrict retroflexivity only to special cases of argumentation. Further research shows nevertheless that cases without retroflexivity seem to be rather exceptional. Cf. Mengel 1995: 196-199.

iii. I want to underline that I don't argue against the PPC structure as an analytical tool - how could I, using it myself in this paper. It is the restricted notion of argumentation resulting from an more or less exclusive orientation from this structure that I want to stigmatize.

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