

ISSA Proceedings 2010 - The Use Of The Script Concept In Argumentation Theory



1. Introduction. The English term script.

The origins of this paper are in the one we prepared for the 6th ISSA conference four years ago (Vega & Olmos 2007). There we talked in general about our proposed approach to enthymemes and enthymematic argumentation and mentioned the concepts of *cognitive environment* and *script* as referring to two different configurations of the kind of undeclared guide, resulting from a common background of knowledge and expectations shared by the agents, that might become the basis of the enthymeme's soundness and persuasiveness. We were acknowledging, thus, the possibility of at least analysing some enthymemes as based on *scripts*, referring, in particular, to those instances in which what is supposedly shared by arguer and audience is not so much a piece of information as a common *history* or the expectations about a usual behaviour that follows a familiar pattern, that is - according to a now rather extended use of the term - , a well known *script*.

Since then, we have felt that the concept itself needed some clarification as it is currently shared by several related fields and used within argumentation theory itself in various senses. So the main aim of this paper is to offer first a clarifying panorama of these different uses or meanings in order to better understand and situate our final choice and proposal, that is again the one related to enthymematic argumentation, along the same lines of our 2006 paper but, we hope, in a more refined and informed way.

In order to do this, we might begin with the semantics of the term *script* as it appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (1971, *Supplement* 1987). Here is a summary of this dictionary's entry:

Etymology: from Latin *scriptum* (neuter past participle of *scribo*, to write)

- (1) something written; a piece of writing (*Now rare*).
- (2) Handwriting, the characters used in handwriting.
- (3) A kind of writing, a system of alphabetical or other written characters.

- (4) *Law*. “The original or principal instrument where there are part and counterpart” (*script* and *rescript*).
- (5) In theatrical parlance, short for Manuscript (Written ‘*script*’), the text used.
- (5b) The typescript of a cinema or television film; the text of a broadcast announcement, talk, play or other material.
- (5c) *Tranf.* In *Social Psychology*. The social role or behaviour appropriate to particular situations, esp. of a sexual nature, that an individual absorbs through his culture and association with others.
- (6) An examinee’s written answer paper or papers.
- (7) An assistant to the film director.

We have first the proper and original sense of the term (1) – merely something written – of which (2) and (3) are rather immediate derivations. In (4) and (6) we find particular but non problematical applications of the original sense in fields familiarly associated with official writings: the legal and the educational contexts. Curiously enough, the now obsolete and rather attractive legal opposition between *script* and *rescript* could have been exploited in argumentation theory, but as far as we know, it hasn’t. Nowadays, though, the most extended and recognized meaning of *script* is the one developed in (5) and (5b) where the term has become specialized in cases in which we do not just have something written but, we could say, something “pre-written when used”, pre-written by someone and then uttered/enacted by others in contexts where such thing naturally happens (theatre, film, broadcasting). Sense (7) derives from sense (5) as referred, metonymically, to the person professionally taking care of the *script* in filmmaking.

But, as could be suspected, our theoretical interest is mainly centred on the *transferred* meaning labelled (5c). The *Dictionary* picks up here the use extensively made by social and cognitive psychologist of the term *script* in order to describe/explain such kind of behaviour (not necessarily discursive) in which we recognize a sequence pattern that’s been socially or culturally acquired. The term *script* loses, in this metaphoric use, its *textual* character while its *sequential* or *procedural* meaning is emphasized. There is, additionally, another kind of “transfer” here as, in this case, there is no recognized *author* of the sequence and it is life in society itself that provides it through social learning or endo-culturation.

This kind of transferred meaning of the term *script* was first developed by

psychologist J. H. Gagnon and W. Simon in 1968 as an adequate concept to deal with sexual behaviour (thus the *Dictionary's* remark in (5c)): "All human sexual experience is scripted behaviour. Without the proper elements of a script that defines the situation, names the actors, and plots the behaviour little is likely to happen [...] The scripts we bring to such (interpersonal) encounters are most typically non sexual". These same authors suggested the generalization of a such use of the term in their well know and widely read 1973 book, *Sexual Conduct: the Social Sources of Human Sexuality*: "The term *script* might properly be invoked to describe virtually all human behaviour in the sense that there is very little that can in a full measure be called spontaneous". But it was the work of R. C. Shank and R. P. Abelson, *Scripts, plans, goals and understanding: An inquiry into human knowledge structures* (1977) that modelled the way it was going to be understood and developed in cognitive psychology.

For Shank and Abelson *plan* and *script* represent elements of an individual's acquired knowledge that establish procedural links between necessities or goals and lines of action. Whereas *plan* is used for general knowledge about the adequacy between means and goals, *script* represents detailed knowledge associated with a particular situation, a repeated recognizable sequence that may become a social standard and, in its strongest sense and most extreme cases, may even become a ritual. In Shank and Abelson's work, the term refers thus to a cognitive structure that is hypothesized as being behind one's stereotyped behaviour. We act thus because we have acquired the corresponding knowledge about standard behaviour in standard situations. Again, there is no *author* of the script here, but just actors (enactors) who generally would not be able not give a proper account as to how they have learned it. Shank and Abelson's proposal was extremely successful and has been, ever since its publication, repeatedly quoted and extensively used within related fields. We can mention, for example C. Bicchieri's recent book on the nature of social norms where she claims that social norms are embedded in such cognitive structures as *schemes* and *scripts* (Bicchieri 2006, Ch. 2).

There is, nevertheless, a final twist in this story that, in our opinion, has become the source of some confusion. The close relationship between cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence (AI) studies has led to the widespread use of the term *script* also in this second field where it has acquired the much more concrete meaning of a "structure that represents procedural knowledge". More

concrete because, here, such structures are no more hypothesized operations of the mind nor unidentified “parts” of the brain but materially and symbolically well determined entities. In particular, they are usually written (in some format) lists of instructions creating a *program*. In computation, thus, a *script* is defined as a “mini-application or part of a program - usually a text file - containing a set of directions which perform the automatization of certain tasks” (*Wikipedia*). So in AI studies and computation it seems that we have reached a conjunction of two previously diverging meanings: the psychological sense of “procedural knowledge” together with the original sense of “something written” (a program). And here we have again the figure of the author, a person or a group of people that have done the writing.

With this wide panorama in mind, we can now explore our own field, argumentation theory, in order to take a look at the various ways in which the term *script* has appeared to different theorist as a suitable concept to be fruitfully applied in the understanding of argument. We have identified at least three different uses which we will describe in the following sections and which, we claim, should not be mistaken.

2. *The concept of script in Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL)*

The first use of the term *script* we have to review is related to computation studies and the application of ICTs to education. Within the field of what is currently called Computer Supported Collaborative Learning (CSCL) the term *script* appears once and again (Kollar *et al.* 2003) with the concrete meaning already mentioned in the previous section, that of a computer program which is, in this case, usually made explicit and visible to the users - the pupils working in collaboration - and which contains directions and prompts for a closely guided collaborative educational process. *Script* is used here as referring both to the computer program and to the educational sequence performed by the learners prompted by it.

The relationship between this use of *script* and argumentation studies comes from the fact that the desired emphasis on collaboration is also inducing a parallel accent on argumentation as it is in the process of questioning, criticising and justifying what is learned among the learners that such collaboration takes place. A. Weinberger, an important author in this field, has written about the different effects of what he calls *social* and *epistemic cooperation scripts* on collaborative knowledge construction (Weinberger 2003). For Weinberger, speaking in general

terms, “the underlying principles of script approaches are to *specify, sequence, and assign* activities to collaborative learners”, but he also establishes a useful distinction between more traditional *epistemic* scripts, structuring the basic tasks assigned to the learners as such (discussion and commentary of the educational contents), and *social* scripts, with instructions as to how to face these tasks and how to interact in collaboration (good practices). Weinberger and his collaborators (Weinberger *et al.* 2005) offer the following example of this distinction in the case of a group of students learning “attribution theory” in collaboration by examining a case study:

Table 1. Epistemic script prompts of study 1

Case information, which can be explained with the attribution theory

Relevant terms of the attribution theory for this case

Does a success or a failure precede this attribution?

Is the attribution located internally or externally?

Is the cause for the attribution stable or variable?

Does the concerned person attribute himself/herself, or does another person attribute?

Prognosis and consequences from the perspective of the attribution theory

Case information which cannot be explained with the attribution theory

Table 2. Social script prompts of study 1

Prompts for the constructive critic

These aspects are not yet clear to me

We have not reached consensus concerning these aspects

My proposal for an adjustment of the analysis is

Prompts for the case analyst

Regarding the desire for clarity

Regarding our difference of opinion

Regarding the modification proposals

As we can see, the *epistemic* script has to do with knowledge clarification and justification, the traditional tasks of scientific learning, whereas the *social* script emphasises communication, familiarity with the matter learned and effective persuasion and thorough agreement between collaborative learners. The important thing for us here is that the conclusion of Weinberger and his co-authors in this study is that “social scripts (that have to do with conversation, interaction and argumentation) work better than epistemic ones in collaborative learning”. Moreover, *epistemic* scripts may constraint too much the way learners are supposed to acquire their knowledge. They represent an excessively “guided” process that might restraint individual capabilities.

This conclusion in favour of the development of *social* scripts has led these authors to get deeper into issues as the importance, for collaborative learning in general, of acquiring, at some point, adequate argumentation skills. So in some other paper (Weinberger *et al* 2005b) they talk about the particular *scripts* used not in learning any possible matter but in learning argumentation skills proper. And here they resort to what’s available in computerized argumentation programs, where arguing is usually reduced to the acquisition and manoeuvring of argumentation schemes: either classical argumentation models (S. Toulmin’s, for example) and schemes (D. Walton’s) in the case of “single arguments” or, alternatively, sequence models for an argumentative interchange and discussion in dialectic settings. In both cases the learners are provided with a visual interface in which they have to fill up the blank spaces making a contribution that corresponds to a certain label: *e.g.* warrant, backing, etc., in the first option; argument, counterargument, integration, in the second one.

In all these cases, though, as already mentioned, the *script* is provided by the educators and their availability has nothing to do with social immersion. The “procedural knowledge” represented in such cases is the knowledge of the teacher as to the best way for the students to learn something. The *script* is a single, concrete, and fixed entity that might be refined by subsequent insight by committed pedagogues, but that does not present the interesting flexible and

plastic aspects of their socio-psychological counterparts. Although Weinberger's conclusions about the importance of *communicative* and *argumentative* scripts for collaborative learning might be of interest to argumentation scholars, this particular use of the *script* concept cannot be considered a real contribution to argumentation theory.

3. *Argumentative interaction as script enactment*

The second use we are to review of the term *script* in argumentation and related fields is almost the reverse of the first one. Whereas in the case of CSCL studies we were dealing with a particularly constrained and schematic *script* approach – in relation with the proposals of cognitive and social psychology –, in the following case, the use of the *script* concept tries to capture the widest possible sense of the term in what becomes probably and excessively “loose” approach.

In a 1992 paper entitled “Characteristics of Arguing from a Social Actor's perspective”, P. J. Benoit advanced the proposal that arguing itself should be redefined as the enactment of a socially shared *script* common to arguer and audience. This author tried to oppose, thus, other alternative characterizations of arguing as “taking part in a language game” or “performing a speech act” and maintained that her approach helped focusing on the *interactive* aspects of argumentation. Arguing would be, according to this proposal, “a socially recognizable activity responding to the predictions and expectations of the social agents involved and related to a shared system for organizing experience and refer to it in discourse”. This, for her, could be best characterized as the enactment of a *script*.

Of course arguing, in its many different variants, is something we can learn and acquire through social experience and, as such – as *e.g.* “standard behaviour in a restaurant”, which is Shank and Abelson's classical example – could be conceptualised as a case of following a learned *script*. But if we go back to Abelson's mature work (Abelson 1981) we can see his attempt to differentiate script theory from other approaches to behaviour as habit-theory and role-theory. “Role-theory”, he says, “tends to emphasize the web of social and institutional expectations constraining social performances, whereas a script-based theory is anchored in individual cognitive structures that may or may not mesh with the performance expectations of others” (Abelson 1981, p. 724).

What Benoit is trying to do with her “global ascription” of the *script* term to the

very complex, variegated, and constitutively multi-agent case of the activity of arguing could be better accomplished, in our opinion, with the use of a broader, richer term, as Abelson's "role-theory" or still better, in our opinion, "practice theory" (Rouse 2007). Rouse, for example, has defended the relevance of a normative - as opposed to a rule-governed or regularity-exhibiting - conception of practices in terms of "accountability to what is at issue and at stake in a practice", his main argument being that such a conception would allow us to understand practices and their normativity "without having to posit stable meanings, rules, norms, or presuppositions underlying the manifest diversity of social life". The use of the term *practice* and its plural *practices* as referring to the different variants of arguing, mediated by institutional settings, would allow us a better characterization of the interactive aspects of the argumentation processes. Even Benoit's wording when defining arguing as "a socially recognizable activity responding to the predictions and expectations of the social agents involved" responds to what could be better called a *social practice* than a *script*.

Moreover, in the already mentioned paper (Abelson 1981), Abelson differentiates between the psychological use of the *script* concept as ascribed either to *cognitive structures* or to *performative structures*. Although he admits and describes both uses in psychology, it is our opinion that the term works better in the cognitive case, as representing what has been acquired by a person through socialized but individual experiences and which is shared not in an absolute but in a partially overlapping way with other members of her same social group. For us, it is not so important that the *script* would be *enacted* at some point, something that would always be mediated by the particular situation and complicated by the many factors involved, as that it would be *retrieved* in some way from our stock of cognitive tools and probably reconstructed each time from past experiences.

Our suggestion is, therefore, to save the term *script* for an *individual*, though, of course, more or less shared, *cognitive structure*, sequential or narrative in contents (as opposed to other cognitive elements); a structure memorized in our minds and closely related to our individual, albeit socialized, learning experiences and retrieved (or reconstructed each time) for different purposes. Let us avoid, we suggest, both the loose understanding of the *script* term as describing complex, multi-agent, social behaviour and the restricted schematic idea of a fully pre-determined guide provided by others. Of course we are not saying that these

uses are wrong or do not respond to the semantics of the term *script*. On the contrary, what we have called the schematic meaning, widespread in computer science, is evidently closer to script's proper sense and presents a nearer analogy to the parlance of the performative arts. But the proposal of a rather metaphoric use of the term, as made by the social and cognitive psychologists in the 70's, is so attractive that we feel it could give place to very interesting results in different fields and, as we will see, also in argumentation studies.

4. *The script as a cognitive structure involved in enthymematic argumentation*

In our opinion, something very much like what's suggested in the previous section could be accomplished following the path of D. Walton's proposal, as made in a 2001 paper entitled "Enthymemes, common knowledge and plausible experience" - and re-exposed again, in 2008, "The three bases for the enthymeme: a dialogical theory". Here, Walton talks about *common knowledge* as one of six possible basis/criteria on which enthymemes may be founded and characterizes this *common knowledge* as "plausible presumptions about the ways things can be generally expected to go in a kind of situation that would (presumably) be familiar to anyone reading/listening to the argument" (Walton 2001, p. 101). He then adds that these plausible presumptions and reasonable expectations are based on "a background body of familiar and expected ways of doing things shared by speakers and hearers - *scripts* to use the term coined by Shank and Abelson" (Walton 2001, p. 109-110). This is finally, the use of the *script* concept as inherited from psychological studies that we would like to emphasize as more interesting and fruitful within argumentation theory; but, nevertheless we'll mention three points on Walton's approach that we feel could be improved and lead to a still better exploit of this concept.

First, Walton keeps repeating that this *common knowledge* is no proper knowledge really, but *plausibility*. In his own 2008 paper, he is somewhat more careful and specifies "it is no knowledge *in the philosophical sense*". Walton is referring here to the well known, mainstream epistemological definition of knowledge as a successful term, *i.e.* as "true, justified belief". He is very conscious, though, about the inadequacy of this concept of knowledge for argumentation theory, a field in which we deal with defeasible, arguable and in any case in-process-of-justifying knowledge. He himself, together with Godden (Walton & Godden 2007), tried to build an improved account of such concept in a paper explicitly entitled "Redefining knowledge in a way suitable for

argumentation theory". Our comment here is that we could probably avoid this difficulty by leaving aside an either fully successful or even a more defeasible but equally static concept of knowledge as-a-product, and by concentrating on a more operative approach to knowing as-an-activity. *Scripts* or other kinds of revisable ways of retrieving our stock of available information would be *cognitive structures* operative in cognitive processes regardless of their epistemological status.

Our second observation is that Walton is not really careful enough in assigning a precise meaning to his compound concept of "common knowledge understood as *script*" as something well differentiated from other criteria/basis for enthymemes. Thus, the non-exhaustive list of informal criteria for enthymemes, as given in his 2001 paper (Walton 2001, p. 96) goes as follows: 1) common knowledge; 2) position of the speaker; 3) custom, habit, normal ways; 4) conceptual links; 5) assumptions of practical reasoning and 6) innuendo and conversational implicature.

It is number 1) that is associated with *scripts* throughout the paper, but we must say that number 3) represents likewise something very close to what is usually retrieved in a script format, according to social psychologists. Moreover, the innuendo mentioned in 6) seems to be more a way of presenting partial information than a differentiated kind of basis for enthymematic argumentation. The effective reconstruction by the audience of an argument presented in an innuendo format could well be analysed as based on a standard narrative or *script* which the arguer trusts her audience to share, at least in its relevant aspects.

There is also an attempt in Walton's work to associate *scripts* with *plausible generalizations* as if a script was finally something like an aggregate of such plausible generalizations which are represented as statements predicting a *reasonable expectation* for a certain clause, other clauses given. But here we perceive a kind of atomism that might be negative for the fruitful exploitation of the *script* concept in our context if, finally, all we end up with is a bunch of plausible generalizations instead of something more complex as a partially common narrative whose main advantage is to evoke a more intricate game of expected relationships that might work in slightly different ways in each member of the audience (according to their different personal experiences) and yet be equally effective with many of them. So our proposal here is that we keep and exploit the overall sequential - though not necessarily linear - character of *scripts*

so that such concept would not be alluded to in describing any punctual likelihood but just used when the likelihood involved has to do with a more complex, particularly sequential and narrative setting. In this sense, the typical enthymematic argumentation based on a script would be, for us, one in which the likelihood or unlikelihood of a claim or a group of claims is supported by framing it into a narrative sequence (typically incomplete) so that the audience may retrieve from their own cognitive stock a suitable script to match it.

A final remark regarding this problem of clarification of the concept of *script* as used by Walton comes from the observation that he mentions AI studies and their use of the term *script* at several points (Walton, 2001, p. 93; p. 101) as something unproblematic and equally relevant to his approach as Shank and Abelson's conception, something that, as we have already seen, might cause some confusion.

Our third and more substantial point has more to do with the overall perspective adopted by Walton in his approach to argument studies in general and enthymemes in particular. His account favours what we may call the individual viewpoint of the arguer, ideally recovered by the analyst. He would like to be able to analyse and to complete the enthymeme that is in the arguer's mind and is very concerned with the problem of identifying her *used assumptions* as something different from the *needed assumptions* dictated by a too charitable reconstruction of the argument. For him, it seems, the only relevant *script* involved is the *script* effectively evoked by the speaker that must be grasped as such by the audience. But, from a more rhetorical, more *audience related* account of the enthymeme, as the one advanced by C. Tindale, for example (Tindale 1999; 2004), for whom the enthymeme is the kind of argument that necessitates the collaboration and co-authorship of the audience for its very existence, the effectively *used assumptions* would be those *retrieved* by the audience which, in our case, could be more or less overlapping *scripts* related to the different learning experiences of the individuals present in the audience.

The final idea we would like to offer is that it is precisely such flexible character of the *script* structure, as used by social and cognitive psychologists, that makes it so attractive and theoretically interesting for us. We could be dealing with a concept that is not so restricted as the term used in computer science, because it does not refer to something provided by others and "ready made" but has been learned through different living experiences and is, at the same time, more or less

shared by those belonging to the same society. On the other hand, we could count on a rather precise type of individually owned *cognitive structure* that might determine individual behaviour but that should not be confused with a multi-agent practice or performance as is the socially situated activity of arguing - as, to our view, happens in Benoit's suggestion.

Such a balanced sense of the *script* term might finally help better an *audience related* conception of the enthymeme than it really helps Walton's own account, where the script gets confused with other types of *hidden assumptions*. A *script*-based enthymeme would be successful as long as it is capable of evoking some kind of narrative setting, in principle shared by the individuals in the audience - at least a high percentage of them -

but, at the same time, learned through personal experience in a non fully explicit way, and so capable of adopting slightly different patterns, slightly different sequences, most of them, in the arguer's hope, compatible with the proposed argumentation. Within this approach, enthymematic argumentation based on socially acquired scripts would be taking advantage of the enormous possibilities of being able to be successful in front of a very diverse audience whose members, in this case, are not required to share a very precise and particular "missing premise", but just to be able to retrieve, from all their personal stock of learned experience, an approximately matching narrative.

This persuasive possibility is usually widely present (and duly exploited) in the evaluation of evidence in legal cases, as the experimental works of Pennington and Hastie on decision making (1986, 1988) have pointed out. These authors present a model for evidence evaluation in which cognitive representations of the evidence in the form of stories are produced, showing that subjects spontaneously tend to evaluate evidence in a legal judgment task by constructing an explanatory representation in the form of a narrative story. A more theoretically committed approach is the one represented by the work of Wagenaar, van Koppen and Crombag (1993 [1992]) on the role that "anchored narratives" - narratives that are sufficiently anchored in reality and experience - play within the psychology of criminal evidence. Bex *et al.* (forthcoming) finally try to clarify the panorama of evidence evaluation distinguishing between two approaches to reasoning with evidence, one argument-based and one story-based. As they think that both kinds of reasoning occur and are likewise relevant in most cases, they support a hybrid model that is the theoretical basis of their software formalization of evidence

evaluation in complex cases.

These modern approaches might shed light on discursive strategies that have been used for centuries in courts and assemblies. Thus, the legal speeches of Lysias (4th c. BC) show cases in which the partial reconstruction of a plausible narrative – a story considered sufficiently *eikōs* (probable) or at least *eikoterōs* (more probable) than the other part's account – becomes the basis of the defence or accusation. Taking in account the large and heterogeneous composition of the juries in 4th c. BC Athens – legal cases were conducted before 200 or more *dikastes* (Humphreys 2007) – the narratives used and reconstructed, that should allegedly match with the audience own experiences (their fairly overlapping *scripts*), had to recur to widely assumed social patterns. For example, Lysias' Defence Speech in the Eratosthenes Murder Case (Lysias I) takes advantage of such kind of socially patterned (stereotyped) conduct to interpret all the steps taken by the defendant during the day of the crime. A more interesting and complex case could be the one presented in Lysias XXV: a speech of defence against a charge for subverting the Democracy. In this case, belonging to the series of trials that took part after the defeat of the Tyranny of the Thirty (404 BC), Lysias wrote a speech for his client – defendants talked for themselves but were allowed to use speeches made by professional writers – in which he appealed to the audience vivid, recent and widely shared experiences in similar trials in such a way as to portray his own case as deviant regarding *the usual script*: “Now, I consider that I have a strong justification in the fact that, if my accusers were able to convict me of personal wrongdoing, they would not charge me with the misdeeds of the Thirty” (Lysias, XXV, 5).

In this final example, the narrative cognitive structure (script) supposedly (hopefully for the defendant) present in the individual memory of the different members of the audience – socially acquired through their massive albeit particularized experiences in other trials where strong cases of “personal wrongdoings” have been presented – is used as a counterargument to weaken and rebut the accusation's account as unlikely.

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Enthymemes: From Reconstruction To Understanding



1. Enthymematic resolution

Traditionally, an enthymeme is an incomplete argument, made so by the absence of one or more of its constituent statements. An enthymeme resolution strategy is a set of

procedures for finding those missing elements, thus reconstructing the enthymemes and restoring its meaning. It is widely held that a condition on the adequacy of such procedures is that statements restored to an enthymeme produce an argument that is good in some given respect in relation to which the enthymeme itself is bad. In a previous paper (Paglieri, Woods in press), we emphasized the role of parsimony in enthymeme resolution strategies and concomitantly downplayed the role of “charity”. In the present paper, we take the analysis of enthymemes a step further. We will propose that if the pragmatic features that attend the phenomenon of enthymematic *communication* are duly heeded, the very idea of reconstructing enthymemes loses much of its rationale, and their interpretation comes to be conceived in a new light.

In an obvious extension of the well-known distinction between what an utterance means and what an utterer means in uttering it, let us acknowledge a difference between an argument *as uttered* and an argument *as meant* or, for short, an uttered argument and a meant argument. (For ease of exposition, we allow “utterance” to cover speaking and inscribing alike.) We are interested in a class of arguments in which the uttered and meant are thought to be linked in a quite particular way, to be discussed in section 2. For ease of exposition let A^u symbolize an uttered argument and A^m the argument it means. When A^u is an enthymeme with respect to A^m , we will say that A^u “craters” A^m .

Among philosophers who investigate enthymematic discourse, there is considerable support for the idea that A^u communication couldn’t succeed except that, in taking the argument you meant from the redundant crater of it, your addressee *filled in* the crater. How else could he know the argument you mean if he is not able to give it full articulation, that is, a formulation that uniquely individuates it? (Or, in plainer terms, a formulation that fills in the blanks that constitute the crater.) Accordingly the task imposed by mainstream enthymeme-theorists is that of determining how blanks are to be filled, that is to say, determining the appropriate *enthymeme resolution* strategy.

The most popular answer, by far, is that the right filling-in is one that removes A^u ’s distinguished badness with least adjustment of it. This is a *minimalist badness-elimination strategy*, said to be both the strategy that gives the right filling-in and the strategy that addressees actually manage – somehow – to implement. Several versions of this strategy are discernible in the literature,

usually in connection with application of the principle of charity to enthymeme resolution (Scriven 1976; Thomas 1977; van Eemeren, Grotendorst 1982; 1983; 1992; Walton 2001; 2008).

We ourselves have come to think that this received view is mistaken (see Woods 2002; Paglieri 2007; Paglieri, Castelfranchi 2010; Paglieri, Woods in press). It is mistaken not only in its details. It is mistaken in principle.

2. Compact centers

The present authors are at one with those who see arguments A^u and arguments A^m linked in such a way as to satisfy the conditions that follow. While we think that these conditions have an undeniably attractive plausibility, we cite them with a provisionality proportional to the complexity of their subject matter.

ADVANCEMENT: Meant arguments are not themselves uttered but are advanced by uttered arguments.

Again, let A^u be an uttered argument and A^m a meant argument. Then A^u and A^m satisfy the advancement condition just in case, for any arguer S , in uttering A^u he advances but does not utter A^m . So we may say that utteredness is not closed under argument-advancement. For example, in standard conditions, utterance of the argument "Socrates is a man", "Socrates is mortal" advances the unuttered argument "All men are mortal", "Socrates is a man", "Socrates is mortal".

BADNESS: When uttering A^u advances A^m , there is a respect in which if A^m is a good argument, A^u is not. **[i]**

The respect in which the unuttered Socrates argument is good is its validity. It is in this same respect that the uttered argument is bad. It is invalid.

On the face of it, the badness condition is bad news. How, we might ask, can it be good communication practice to advance a good argument with a bad argument? Aren't bad arguments precisely what sensible people will take steps to avoid? For the class of cases presently in view, the answer is "No". It is "No" thanks to the fulfillment of a third condition.

TRANSPARENCY: Among co-linguals, S and $S\phi$, it is standardly the case that

when, in the absence of specific tutelage, **[ii]** S ϕ has an adequate lexical understanding **[iii]** of A^u then if, in uttering A^u, S advances A^m, S ϕ will on hearing (reading) A^u know that A^m is the argument meant. S ϕ will take it that, in uttering A^u, S is advancing A^m.

Not only is utteredness not closed under advancement, neither is argument-badness. The further importance of the transparency condition can be seen as follows:

TRUMPS: When the transparency condition is met, A^m's goodness trumps A^u's badness. So a bad A^u is a good *argument-advancer* if the A^m it advances is good in the respect that the A^u is bad.

A perfectly necessary question now presses for an answer. It is, so to speak, our "KANTIAN" QUESTION: What are the conditions that make possible the concurrent satisfaction of the advancement, badness, transparency and trumps constraints?

The single most important part of the answer to this question is:

CONTEXT-FREEDOM: When A^u and A^m are such as to fulfill the above conditions, there are no contextual or conventional elements in play save those required for an untutoredly correct lexical understanding of A^u.

It is easy to see what this condition seeks to exclude. Consider a not untypical example. At a boring party, Sarah says to her husband, "Oh, look, Harry, it's still early." "Right", says Harry, who goes off to collect their coats. Whatever the details of how, in uttering these words, Sarah managed to tell Harry that she wanted to go home, there was something more to it than whatever it takes for a Sarah-Harry co-lingual to have a lexical understanding of "Oh, look, Harry, it's still early."

Accordingly, the answer usually given to (or assumed for) the "Kantian" question is that, except for a quite particular kind of omission, A^u and A^m have the same lexical, syntactic and semantic constitution - that is, that A^u just is A^m with some blanks in it. This, in turn, occasions a further condition:

REDUNDANCY: When A^u and A^m are such as to satisfy the above conditions, A^m is a redundant version of A^u .

Concomitantly,

COMPACTNESS: When A^m is a redundant version of A^u , A^u is a compact version of A^m .

Redundancy and compactness are phenomena of interest to pragmatics, and have occasioned a large and interesting literature. A good deal of it deals with the compactness of craters achieved by removal of subsentential – typically morphemic – elements. For example, “Sarah was giv¹/₄ Harry the kiss of life when the ambulance arrived” is a compact crater of “Sarah was giving Harry the kiss of life when the ambulance arrived”, as is “Harry poured the honey ¹/₄ the nearest jar” a compact crater of “Harry poured the honey into the nearest jar”. What is interesting about *our* cases is that craters are created by the omission of sentential parts. When A^u is a crater of A^m , some of the sentences present in A^m will be absent from A^u . Either way, when the crater is compact, then in uttering the crater one advances the non-crater.

Notwithstanding the similarities, there are some important differences between the sentence-craters and argument-craters. One is that argument-craters are an untutoredly natural way of advancing complete arguments, but sentence-craters are not at all the untutoredly natural way of advancing complete statements.

3. Syntactic over-investment

We said in section 1 that the dominant view of enthymeme resolution in what we called the minimalist badness-elimination is a mistake. To see why this so, let's return to the original distinction between utterance and utterer meaning. Let f be a sentence and Ψ the statement meant in the utterance of f . Suppose that f is a crater. What is it a crater of? Strictly speaking, it is a crater of $f\phi$, which in turn is the *fully constituted* expression of Ψ . An example: If f is the sentence “Sarah was giv... Harry the kiss of life” then Ψ is the statement that Sarah was giving Harry the kiss of life, and $f\phi$ – the sentence that removes the crater in f – is “Sarah was giving Harry the kiss of life.”**[iv]** Now no one has seriously proposed that for these things to be true, $f\phi$ had to be good in a certain way and f had to be bad in that same way. That is, no one has required that $f\phi$ be *semantically* good and f

correspondingly *semantically* bad, that for f to advance $f\phi$, $f\phi$ must be true and f not true. Indeed, when it is the case that in uttering f one states that Ψ , it is hardly plausible to suppose that when f is true f can't be. This is a point worth emphasizing.

SEMANTIC REFLECTION: In cases of statement-making by way of sentential utterance, if f is a redundant crater of $f\phi$, then $f\phi$'s semantic properties are reflected back on f .

For example, if $f\phi$ means that Ψ , so does f ; and if $f\phi$ is true, so is f . It is well to note that in proposing the semantic-reflection condition, we have taken a large step. Not only is it not the case that, in matters of statement-making, meant statements must be true and redundant craters not. Neither is it the case, whatever the truth value of the statement meant, that its compact crater cannot also have it.

No doubt, not everyone will like the semantic reflection condition. So let's pause to consider what the case against it might look like. For one thing, we could note that in all strictness f is not a sentence, hence cannot be a true sentence even if $f\phi$ is true. So semantic reflection fails and deserves to fail.

How might all this have applied to arguments? Could we have floated a semantic reflection claim for A^u and A^m ? Could we have said:

SEMANTIC REFLECTION 2: If A^u is a redundant crater of A^m then A^m 's semantic properties are reflected back on A^u ?

If so, then *valid* or *invalid*, whatever held for A^m would also have held for A^u .

Of course, here too there is a counterargument. If one examines the cases which most occupy the attention of logicians, validity is the target semantic property, and validity is a matter of having the right logical form. There are cases galore in which the form that makes an A^m valid is missing from its compact crater A^u . Doesn't this overturn the present semantic reflection claim?

We will consider these objections in order, beginning with the proof that f 's failure to be a sentence precludes its truth even when the statement it advances is true. In the formal semantics of uninterpreted languages, the proof is perfectly

in order. Natural languages support a distinction between a sentence and the proposition it expresses. Artificial languages have no such distinction except in the limiting case in which it is stipulated that an uninterpreted sentence is its own statement. Truth is then defined for sentences and nothing else. Any string at odds with system's formation rules is disqualified for sentencehood, and likewise for truth.

Natural languages are different. Truth is defined for statements and *derivatively* for sentences. If f^* is a sentence and Ψ is the statement it expresses, then f^* is true if Ψ is. But suppose now that f is a compact crater which likewise expresses statement Ψ . Where is the gain in allowing f^* to be true on account of its expression of Ψ and f not to be true notwithstanding its expression of Ψ , given moreover that f just is f^* except for some of f 's redundant bits and pieces?

The question answers itself, and in so doing, helps us see that there are two features of compact craters to pay special attention to - their craterliness and their compactness. Craterliness is a syntactic property. Compactness is a *semantic* property. They are related in an important way. Here is how.

TRUMPS 2: Compactness trumps craterliness.

So if f^* expresses Ψ and is true when Ψ is, and f is a compact crater of f^* , f is true when f^* is.

It remains to deal with the second case, that is, the purported proof that when an A^m is valid, there are a great many cases in which A^u will be invalid, made so by the syntactic fact that its craterliness denies it the logical form that makes A^m valid. Here, too, it is necessary to point out that just as uninterpreted languages lack the distinction between a sentence and the proposition it expresses, it also lacks the distinction between a sequence of sentences and the argument it expresses. In natural languages, if a sequence of sentences expresses an argument and the argument is valid, one can say, derivatively, that the sequence of sentences likewise is valid. In uninterpreted languages, lacking this distinction, a sequence of sentences *is* the argument it expresses. And since validity is defined over syntactic features of those sentential sequences, nothing that fails to be a *bona fide* sequence of *bona fide* sentences is valid in those languages.

But, again, natural languages are different. If A^s is a sequence of natural language

sentences expressing the argument A^m , A^s is valid if A^m is. Suppose now that A^u is a redundant crater of A^s which likewise expresses argument A^m . Where is the gain in allowing A^s to be valid on account of its expression of A^m and A^u not to be valid notwithstanding its expression of A^m , given moreover that A^u just is A^s except for some of A^s 's redundant bits and pieces? Again, the question answers itself, and we have it anew that the semantic property of compactness trumps the syntactic property of craterliness.

4. Broadening the definition?

It is a notable consequence of present provisions that enthymemes are far from exhausting the class of arguments A^u for which the associated A^m is readily discernible. Consider the following:

- It is raining.
- So Eveline won't be driving to Calgary.

While untutored lexical competence doesn't suffice to pin down the meant argument, anyone who has that competence and is also familiar with Eveline and the character of rain in Southern Alberta would have no difficulty in knowing what argument is being advanced by this crater. (Let's suppose that part of what fills this hole is the knowledge that Eveline has a phobia against driving in the rain.) Much the same can be said for:

- There isn't any hydrogen in the atmosphere of the planet Xerxes.

ii. So there won't be any ice-crystals forming on its surface.

Anyone with basic school science will readily understand the argument advanced by this crater. This leaves millions of others who, even with an untutoredly competent lexical understanding of the crater's sentences, could not achieve this understanding.

In each case, A^m -specifications requires the satisfaction of two conditions: untutored lexical understanding of the relevant sentences, and untutored command of relevant non-linguistic situational factors. In contrast, enthymemes in our present sense are A^u 's that satisfy only the first of these conditions. This

raises an important question for the logic of enthymemes. Shall we persist with a definition that denies to large classes of cases exhibiting the features of the Eveline and Xerxes cases the status of enthymeme? Or should we try to widen the definition in ways that collect these two case and the afore-mentioned Socrates example under a more generous conception of enthymemehood?

Favouring the No-side is the traditional idea that the analysis of enthymemes is a matter for logic, for which the principal task is to determine whether an enthymeme and its associated A^m exhibit the same or a different relation of semantic consequence. If this is indeed the project, it might well be argued that the answer to this question should be determined by semantic facts alone rather than semantic facts supplemented by non-semantic facts about – as in our examples – Eveline’s clinical state and modern science’s insights into the molecular structure of water. On the other hand, cases such as these are genuinely interesting and they clearly bear some resemblance to enthymemes. And the desired generalization of enthymeme is easy to formulate, as follows:

If A^u is such that its meant argument A^m is discernible to anyone simply on the basis of what he already knows, then A^u is an enthymeme of A^m .

Since time presses, we propose the following accommodation: we shall persist with the narrow definition of enthymeme and yet leave it open to those who may wish to do so to reconfigure our claims in keeping with the more inclusive definition.

5. Some morals

If our reflections up to now can be made to stand, the central questions about enthymemes all cluster around semantic redundancy and compactness in argumentative contexts. Leading the list are these two:

- As we saw, in learning to argue, compact utterance is the earlier and more natural achievement, and it dominates over fully articulated utterance thereafter. What accounts for this? What accounts for this when learning statement-making reverses this priority, favoring redundancy over compactness?
- What are the semantic mechanisms underlying the semantic reflection property? In particular, what are the consequences, if any, of semantic

reflection for compositional semantics?

This pair of questions defines a large and wide-open research programme in scientific and philosophical linguistics. We ourselves are far from ready answers but perhaps it would not be premature to register a caveat. The caveat is that, whatever its details, the enthymemes project will not be much advanced by the practices and presumptions of the logical and argumentation theoretic mainstreams. For, if the semantic reflection condition holds true, and if the semantic property of compactness trumps the syntactic property of craterliness, then no reconstruction is needed for enthymemes, and their resolution strategy, whatever it turned out to be, must account for the easiness and lack of ambiguity in the typical understanding of enthymemes.

6. The enthymeme understanding problem

So far our conclusions on the nature of enthymemes have been mainly negative ones. We argued that *no reconstruction* is involved in understanding an enthymeme, since its A^m is directly advanced by its A^u , and any competent speaker will understand the former as the intended meaning of the latter. This implies that enthymemes *do not suffer of any semantic deficiency* with respect to their explicit counterparts, since semantics in natural languages refers to interpreted meaning, not to syntactic form alone, and the interpreted meaning of an enthymeme coincides with that of its explicit counterpart – indeed, a fully explicit argument can be said to be a “counterpart” of an enthymeme only by virtue of such identity of meaning. This is tantamount to saying that enthymemes are *semantically unambiguous*: they have non-ambiguous meaning to start with, and they do not need any supplementation in order to “acquire” or “disambiguate” their meaning.

However, it remains true that (i) the incomplete utterance of an enthymeme (A^u) typically admits of multiple syntactic reconstructions that would generate different fully explicit arguments, and (ii) the intended meaning of the enthymeme (A^m) coincides with the meaning of one of these possible reconstructions. Let us define a complete argument (A^c) as any syntactic sequence that describes a fully explicit argument structure. For every enthymeme, the A^u admits of multiple A^c s, and the A^m coincides with the meaning of one of these A^c s. This fact cannot be mere happenstance, and this leaves us with an important problem: how do we

select a unique A^m out of many A^c 's? The fact that we are good at this task does not remove the problem – on the contrary, it intensifies it. How do we immediately home in on A^m , without even bothering to consider other A^c 's as potential meanings of A^u ? How is that understanding A^u immediately implies knowing A^m ? What are the principles that make A^u *unambiguous*, with respect to its A^m , in spite of multiple syntactic ways of turning a non-argument sequence (A^u) into an argument sequence (A^c)? Let us call this the *enthymeme understanding problem* (EUP).

EUP is a challenge precisely because an enthymeme is not semantically ambiguous, even though the incomplete utterance that expresses it would admit of multiple argument-making completion sequences (let us call this property *syntactic openness*). So the question is: *why syntactic openness does not generate semantic ambiguity in enthymeme interpretation?* It is worth emphasizing that EUP does not imply that enthymemes need any reconstruction prior to their interpretation: enthymemes *have* unambiguous meaning to start with, and EUP simply poses the question of how they can be so semantically unambiguous, in spite of the syntactic openness of their utterance.

Notice that semantic openness does generate semantic ambiguity in statement-making: the main reason why “John ... a good friend of Mark” is more costly to process than its complete counterpart is because it is not immediately clear how to fill the gap, precisely because there are multiple candidate gap-fillers, e.g. “is”, “isn't”, “knows”, “loves”, etc. There must be something in enthymeme understanding that prevents similar difficulties, excluding all argument-making completion sequences but one as legitimate interpretations of A^u . A central task of a theory of enthymeme is to specify what is that does the trick with negligible costs.

Parsimony is a crucial factor in solving EUP. As noted above, the costs of understanding an enthymeme need to be lower than the benefits of uttering the argument compactly rather than redundantly, otherwise we would have the same situation observed in statement-making, where redundancy trumps compactness – whereas with argument-making the opposite is true. So we need a solution to EUP which does *not* typically impose high costs on the interpreter.

7. Familiarity and enthymeme understanding

EUP asks how a single meaning is so easily established for an enthymeme, among many potential candidates. In previous work (Paglieri, Woods in press) we suggested an answer that do not imply a specific focus on the speaker's intended meaning, but rather concentrates on the interpreter's background knowledge and inferential habits. We proposed that parsimony shapes the interpretative process, by imposing the path of minimal resistance: among the various possible A^c s of an enthymeme, the one that comes more readily available to mind is the one that determines its A^m . Notice that here 'availability' refers also to a certain inferential scheme, not only to the content of the unuttered premise. Consider for instance the enthymeme "All butterflies are short-lived, therefore the *Psittacula krameri* is short-lived". Here a competent interpreter will understand "The *Psittacula krameri* is a butterfly" to be part of A^m . This is not because the interpreter had any privileged access to this information beforehand, but rather because she was highly familiar with the following inferential pattern: From (Every X has property B) and (p is an X), it follows that (p has property B). It is familiarity with this inferential mechanism that biases enthymeme understanding, and not any previous knowledge on the matter under discussion. By the way, the *Psittacula krameri* happens to be a parrot, so it is neither a butterfly nor short-lived.

We have now reasons to introduce a distinction between two types of familiarity: *semantic familiarity* and *inferential familiarity*. Semantic familiarity refers to those implicit elements of the enthymeme which conveys facts already believed to be true by the interpreter. This case was already present in Aristotle's characterization of enthymemes, [v] and it is sufficient to account for enthymemes like "Socrates is a man, therefore he is mortal", where the missing premiss "Every man is mortal" is indeed known to any competent speaker. Inferential familiarity refers to the argument structure of A^m , of which A^u is a syntactically incomplete occurrence: such structure can be more or less frequently used by the interpreter, and thus more or less familiar to her. This kind of familiarity is crucial in understanding enthymemes with unstated premisses that are not known in advance by the interpreter, like the example just discussed: "All butterflies are short-lived, therefore the *Psittacula krameri* is short-lived". [vi]

If we move to consider the interplay of semantic and inferential familiarity, it is possible to outline a procedure that determines (with minimal costs for the

interpreter) the meaning of an enthymeme, given its incomplete utterance. Parsimony over semantic and inferential familiarity is achieved by sequentially applying the following procedure, until it stops:

(1) If there are one or more A^c s with premises that are not notoriously false for the interpreter (see definition below), then the one that maximizes inferential familiarity is selected and the procedure stops; in the unlikely case that more than one such premises instantiate argument structures of equal inferential familiarity, semantic familiarity is used to break the tie, giving priority to premises believed to be true over premises believed to be false or simply not believed.

(2) If all A^c s use premises that are notoriously false for the interpreter, then the one among them that maximizes inferential familiarity is selected (even if it produces a crazy argument), and the procedure stops; eventual ties are solved as described in (1).

Semantic familiarity serves two purposes: it *preliminary restricts the set of potential argument structures over which inferential familiarity is maximized*, by excluding from consideration at step (1) any interpretation relying on notoriously false implicit premises; and it *acts as tie-breaker* in the unlikely event that two equally familiar argument structures compete for the meaning of the enthymeme, by ruling in favor of the one which uses implicit premises that are more likely to be familiar to (i.e. believed to be true by) the interpreter.

Here “P is *notoriously false* for X” means that subject X believes P to be false and also believes that any sane co-lingual shares this belief in the falsehood of P. We need a notion of “notoriously false for X” because the weaker notion of “disbelieved by X”, i.e. believed false by X, would suggest that we hesitate in understanding enthymemes with (unuttered) premises we consider false, and this is certainly *not* the case. Faced with “There have been repeated terrorists attacks against Israel from groups based in the Gaza strip, so Israel has a right to invade the Gaza strip”, competent speakers would interpret this as implying that “Terrorists attacks gives a right to invade the territory where terrorists are based”, even if some of these speakers would consider this statement false, and thus the enthymeme unsound. What we resist understanding as a tacit premise in an enthymeme, unless as a last resort, are statements that are notoriously false to us, the falsehood of which we take as a matter of general knowledge. This

captures the fact that we have no problem in considering arguers to be mistaken, but we do have qualms in considering them to be deranged.

If we now turn back to concrete instances of enthymemes, we can see how their understanding is determined by parsimony over familiarity. “Socrates is a man, therefore he is mortal” is solved at the first step of the procedure: the premise “Every man is mortal” is both well known and it fits a familiar inference scheme, the Barbara syllogism. As for enthymemes that involve premisses unknown to us (but not notoriously false), like “All butterflies are short-lived, therefore the *Psittacula krameri* is short-lived”, these also are solved at step (1), whereas step (2) is reserved for blatantly crazy enthymemes, e.g. “I am happy, so Mars is not a planet”: lacking any other alternative to understand this enthymeme, the interpreter has to admit that it conveys the notoriously false corresponding conditional “If I am happy, then Mars is not a planet”.

Particularly interesting to discuss are *invalid enthymemes*: incomplete arguments that are understood as being not just unsound, but also invalid. Consider “Every Catholic priest is male, so John is a Catholic priest”. Assuming that its typical interpretation includes the unstated premise “John is male”, we do not want to say that inferential familiarity alone is responsible for such an interpretation. This would imply that a fallacious scheme of inference is more familiar to the interpreter than a perfectly valid one – namely, modus ponens (MP), that would make the argument valid (albeit unsound) by adding the corresponding conditional “If every Catholic priest is male, then John is a Catholic priest”. Saying that Affirming the Consequent (AC) is more widespread than MP in everyday reasoning and argumentation would be far too uncharitable towards the community of speakers. Again, it is the interplay of semantic and inferential familiarity that rules out MP and selects AC in this case. The fact that “John is male” is known to the interpreter, so AC is a viable candidate on step (1). In contrast, “If every Catholic priest is male, then John is a Catholic priest” is not just false, but notoriously so, and this rules out MP unless there is no other interpretation – which is not the case here. So the upshot is that correct interpretation in this case demands acknowledging the invalidity of the argument, even if MP in general is (hopefully) a more familiar inference rule than AC. The morale of this example is that we are more than ready to consider our fellow arguers to be inferentially mistaken, if this helps justifying a presumption of sanity for their beliefs.

Since only notoriously false premises are ruled out at step (1), there is a priority given to inferential familiarity over semantic familiarity. Consider a case like “The *Drosophila melanogaster* is short-lived, so it is a butterfly”. Here two A^c s compete for determining A^m : an argument including the tacit premise “All short-lived animals are butterflies”, which is false [vii] but instantiates MP, and another argument including the premise “All butterflies are short-lived”, which is true (if we define “short-lived” as being in between few hours and few months) but instantiates AC. According to intuition, the first option seems what is naturally understood in this case, while the second would be regarded as misconstruing the enthymeme: it seems clear that being short-lived is proposed by the speaker as a reason for the fact of being a butterfly, not vice versa. So here MP wins over AC even if this means understanding the enthymeme as including a false premise instead of a true one. This reflects the intuition, built in our procedure, that we are far more ready to consider our fellow arguers to be factually mistaken, rather than inferentially misguided.

We now see how the proposed procedure expresses an *ordering criterion* over the presumptions that we are ready to make towards each other’s enthymemes. In particular, this procedure assumes that, if possible, we take the arguer to be misinformed rather than non-consequential, and that in turn a mistake of reasoning can be presumed (and possibly condoned), if this preserves a presumption of sanity for the arguer.[viii] So we posit that:

ORDER OF PRESUMPTIONS: *sanity of mind* trumps *correctness of reasoning*, which trumps *truth of arguer’s beliefs*.

8. Last words

Perhaps all this will strike readers as too hard on the enthymeme resolution community. For isn’t an important purpose of enthymeme resolution argument reconstruction? Isn’t it also true, especially in philosophy, that there are cases galore of arguments that seem much in need of careful reconstruction, and true as well that, in its absence, our interest in assessing these arguments is seriously compromised?

Yes. Arguments are sometimes frightfully obscure or otherwise recalcitrant to ready assessment. But these recalcitrant cases present us with features that are not characteristic to the A^u/A^m dynamics. If in uttering A^u , S advances to $S\phi$ the

argument A^m , $S\phi$ and any typical co-lingual will understand A^u , and will typically know the A^m that S is advancing. In argument reconstruction cases the latter feature is always missing, and the former is also missing, not invariably, but with a notable frequency.

There is a brisker way of saying the same thing.

- Reconstruction is needed for recalcitrant arguments.
- The relation between a recalcitrant argument and its reconstruction is not that between an A^u and its A^m .
- So recalcitrant arguments are not enthymemes.
- So, whatever they turn out to be in detail, enthymeme resolution strategies are not argument reconstruction strategies.

Recalcitrant arguments call out for attention. Comparatively speaking, enthymematic arguments are pretty small beer. Better that we reserve our strategic energies for the things that require them. **[ix]**

NOTES

[i] We don't mean to overlook A^u s whose A^m s are bad in a respect in which the A^u s are also bad. But these are not our focus here.

[ii] This excludes cases in which A^m is literally coded in A^u -Morse, Omega, and so on.

[iii] One has a lexical understanding of a sentence just in case one's understanding is constituted by an understanding of its words and word order.

[iv] We are using "statement" and "proposition" interchangeably.

[v] "The Enthymeme must consist of few premisses, fewer often than those which make up the normal syllogism. For if any of those premisses is a familiar fact, there is no need even to mention it; the hearer adds it himself" (*Rhetoric*, I, 2, 1357a, 16-19).

[vi] Clearly inferential familiarity concerns competent *application* of a given inferential scheme, not the capacity to describe its structure or to assign it the proper logical label.

[vii] Notice that "All short-lived animals are butterflies" is false but not notoriously so, i.e. it is not a belief that we would normally consider as a sign of insanity, but rather just an indication of the arguer being misinformed. Compare,

for instance, with “I am happy, so Mars is not a planet” or “If every Catholic priest is male, then John is a Catholic priest”.

[viii] This is purely the result of an automatic procedure to determine, easily and effortlessly, the A^m of an enthymeme. So there is no need to postulate (as we do not, in fact) that arguers have the explicit intention of privileging mental sanity over inferential correctness over factual truth in their interpretation of the utterance: this is just an unintended effect of how our cognitive processes work, under the pressure of scant resources.

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Acceptance, Epistemic Concepts, And Argumentation Theory



1. Introduction

Within the field of argumentation theory, one central approach has been epistemically motivated. John Biro and Harvey Siegel, Christoph Lumer, and Alvin I. Goldman are some of the contributors to advocates of the epistemic approach. In general terms, the idea is to link argumentation theory to epistemology, that is, to the philosophical theory of knowledge. At the outset, this seems as a very good idea, especially if one defines the concepts of knowledge and argumentation using a concept of justification. The point I wish to argue is that despite the close relation of epistemic concepts and argumentation, the general theory of argumentation should be kept separate from epistemology in the sense that the general theory of argumentation as whole should not be defined in a way that restricts its application to knowledge only.

In section 2 I will describe the epistemic approach, or more accurately, some issues dealt with by Biro, Siegel and Goldman, that are relevant to my case. These include the definition of argumentation or argument, and especially within that definition the concepts of believing in truth of a claim (or truthlikeness or highly probable of a claim). Section 3 is titled 'A general argumentation theory', and there I will explain my view that a general argumentation theory is about the process and product of forming arguments, and that the issues within argumentation are not restricted to factual claims, but may include value claims. In section 4, I will shortly take a look at the domain of epistemology and a definition of knowledge. In section 5, I shall describe the domain of argumentation theory in terms of what kinds of points of views there are, and especially point out about value claims, that within philosophy there is an open dispute about the status of value claims, namely between cognitivists who claim that moral statements do have a truth value, and non-cognitivists who claim that

moral statements do not have a truth value. The upshot of this is that if argumentation is defined using the concept of truth, then in the case moral statements do not have a truth value they would be outside the domain of argumentation theory by definition. In section 6, I will take a look at the concept of acceptance and its relation to some epistemic concepts. Relying on the distinction of semantic/pragmatic I propose that argumentation theory is defined pragmatically using the concept of acceptance, not using semantic concepts. Section 7 deals with the critique of pragma-dialectics by epistemic approach, and the idea is to view how well judging arguments with criterion of truth seeking goes, and my conclusion is that it is not promising. In section 8 I present some additional remarks and state my conclusion.

2. The epistemic approach

In Siegel and Biro (1997) the epistemic approach is further developed from their earlier (Biro and Siegel 1992). They defend a normative approach (against a descriptive approach) and by this they wish to be able to make judgments on arguments in terms of their goodness or badness. Their idea is to 'cash out normativity in *epistemic* terms', and they straightforwardly state that 'arguments aim at the achievement of knowledge or at least of justified belief' (Siegel and Biro 1997, 278; original emphasis). Their position is even more clearly stated in their (2006, 94) where an argument is said to be good if it gives reasons to believe the truth of the conclusion. Siegel and Biro (2008, 192-193) find acceptability as described in the Pragma-Dialectical theory inadequate, and call for an objective epistemic theory (Biro and Siegel 2006).

Goldman (2003) also approaches argumentation with an epistemic mindset. He is much more modest than Siegel and Biro regarding the importance of the epistemic approach (that is, he allows for other approaches to have significant import to the study of argumentation; Goldman 2003, 52). However, he stresses the view that argumentation should be seen as aiming at justified beliefs, and he furthermore stresses the close relationship between justification of beliefs and truth. A belief is, according to Goldman (2003, 62), likely to be true, if it is justified.

Christoph Lumer has worked with the epistemic (or epistemological) approach in a number of publications (see, for example Lumer 2005a, 2005b), and positioned himself among the above mentioned Biro, Siegel, and Goldman on the one hand , and on the other hand criticized the pragma-dialectical approach on a number of

points (Lumer 2010). The key features of the epistemological approach are described by Lumer: 'An epistemological theory of argument is characterized by two features. 1. It takes the standard function of arguments to be: to lead the argument's addressee to (rationally) justified belief, i.e., to guide him to realize the truth or acceptability of the argument's thesis - where 'acceptability' is intended to be a broader term, meaning truth, high probability or verisimilitude. 2. It develops criteria for good arguments and argumentation on this basis, i.e., it designs them in such a way as to fulfil their epistemic function.' (Lumer 2005b, 213-214).

The critical examination of Pragma-Dialectics and its comparison to epistemic (or epistemological) theory by Lumer (2010) illuminates quite nicely what the epistemic approach is after. One recurring theme in the critique is the worry that Pragma-Dialectical theory is - possibly, in the end - consensualistic; that is, it does not provide sufficient criteria for evaluating arguments, but in the end the evaluation of arguments is up to an unqualified consensus among the arguers (Lumer 2010, inter alia 41, 67, et passim; for example, Lumer on page 67: Pragma-Dialectics is (partly) composed of 'unqualified and therefore unsatisfactory consensualism'). Whether or not this overall critique is apt, I will not take sides here; the point of mentioning this is just that it shows nicely what Lumer is after in the epistemic or epistemological approach: the function of argumentation is to reach knowledge (or justified belief) rather than consensus. Lumer concludes in his examination of the functions of argumentation that procedural rules of Pragma-Dialectical theory of discussion are the strong point, but the rules for argumentation *proper* are the weak point. (Lumer 2005a, 190; Lumer 2010, 67)

What is common, among many other things, for the above mentioned theorists in the epistemic approach is that they closely bind the concepts of justified belief and truth.

3. A general argumentation theory

By argumentation theory I mean a theory that deals with the process where claims and reasons to accept the claims are formed and/or put forward, and that deals with the nature of the relation of reasons and claims. I take the product of such process to be relevant to the study of argumentation. A number of definitions for argumentation could be cited, but I will settle with a fairly general definition due to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, 1): 'Argumentation is a

verbal, social, and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by putting forward a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the propositions expressed in the standpoint.' Even though someone might prefer a different wording and perhaps even disagree with at least part of this definition, I shall take it as a starting point for my treatment of argumentation and arguments. I shall stress that an important feature of Pragma-Dialectical approach is that the concept of *standpoint* is to be understood to cover without restrictions any subject matter: 'facts, ideas, actions, attitudes, or whatever' (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, 14); this is what I mean by generality.

Also, I take a general argumentation theory to be rich enough to describe the process of argumentation. Here also, I take the Pragma-Dialectical theory to cover the ground: argumentation proceeds from the confrontation via opening and argumentation stage to conclusion stage. A critical discussion (argumentation in the above sense) is related to a standpoint, and after one discussion, another discussion with the same difference of opinion can be commenced, should the parties choose to do so (though, to repeat the discussion with exactly the same background knowledge and values would be futile, but not so with different knowledge or values). (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, 60-62). What is also noteworthy in the Pragma-Dialectical theory is that also a discussion rule may be taken up and critically discussed. This is called a meta-discussion (ibid, 143), and it implies that the critical parties may also discuss about validity of argument schemes, or (if I have correctly understood the spirit of Pragma-Dialectics) even the whole argumentation theory.

4. What is epistemology and how to define knowledge?

Epistemology deals with theory of knowledge and justification, according to Robert Audi (2003, x). With this broad characterization, it is trivially true that if argumentation is defined as activity aimed at justification, then argumentation is related to epistemology, by definition. However, justification by these definitions is neither exclusively reserved for knowledge claims nor conceptually linked to truth.

Defining knowledge is not a trivial matter, neither is the question of the purpose of the definition. Walton and Godden discuss, with reference to argumentation theory, the traditional definition of knowledge as 'true belief plus something else', where the 'something else' may be a number of things; for example, justification

or evidence (Walton and Godden 2007, 6). In effect, Walton and Godden are actually dealing with a set of definitions, where each definition has in common true belief and they differ with respect to the 'something else' part. Nevertheless, Walton and Godden end up presenting a definition of their own for pragmatic purposes of argumentation theory: knowledge is 'justified acceptance of a proposition based on evidence and supported by rational argumentation to a specified standard of proof' (Walton and Godden 2007, 10). It could be said that the traditional definition is stricter, and it is more suitably thought of as an ideal than as a practical definition like the Walton-Godden definition. I will not discuss the merits of either definition, the mentioning of the set of traditional definitions (as Walton and Godden describe them) and Walton-Godden-definition of knowledge gives a glimpse of the spectrum of knowledge definitions. However, it is notable that Biro, Siegel and Lumer that I have taken to represent the epistemic approach, are closer to the traditional view, and especially notable is that truth is not mentioned in the Walton-Godden definition.

5. Value statements as points of views

An important question about knowledge is this: what is our knowledge about, that is, what sorts of things can be substituted for X in 'S knows X'? This question leads into philosophical debates about the nature of subject matters like facts, actions, and values, because the standpoints in argumentation can - generally speaking - be about these kinds of subjects. If acceptability of a standpoint is the goal of argumentation and we follow the epistemic approach in that acceptability is to be understood as truth or truthlikeness, then we should demand of the standpoints that they ought to be true or probable. But is this a reasonable?

Let me take, as an example of a standpoint, 'It is immoral to cheat on one's spouse'. Would it be possible to say that it is true (or false) that cheating on one's spouse is immoral? The answer ultimately depends on the philosophical view one takes regarding moral language. The issue is rather complicated, and this is reflected by the discussion around it (for a short exposition of that discussion, see for example van Roojen 2009). However, to establish the point, one does not need to go into the details of that discussion. A non-cognitivist would answer the question about the above-mentioned statement, that it is neither true nor false, since moral statements do not have truth values, and a cognitivist would answer that the statement is true (or false), just like other kinds of statements. In order to give a general idea, an emotivistic non-cognitivist could take the moral statement

to be more like an emotional cry similar to an accusation like 'You thief!'. The idea of seeing moral statements as not similar to factual statements, but rather as similar to something else, like a greeting such as 'Good morning', leads to the view that moral statements do not have a truth value (Ayer 1971, 110-111). A non-cognitivist could also take some other than emotivist interpretation, such as a variant of prescriptivism, but I will not go there. A cognitivist, on the other hand, could answer the question and say that the statement is true (or false).

The philosophical question of whether statements about moral (and perhaps other, such as aesthetic) values can be assigned a truth value or not is related to a number of philosophical issues. One bundle of issues is related to truth; for example, Hare (1993, 30) mentions the meaning of truth, the formal characteristics, the conditions of truth, and the function of usage. Also, whatever position one takes on the existence of (moral and other) values, that is, on ontology of values, a philosophical theory is needed. What I am saying, is that there are questions and positions one could tackle, there are open disputes on many fundamental questions regarding ethics; these issues are unsettled. So, going back to the question of whether it is reasonable to demand that 'acceptability' should be understood as 'true', or 'probable', it would seem wise to withhold from taking a stand, at least for the time being.

The point of bringing up the fact that these issues are unsettled within the field of philosophy, is that with respect to a general argumentation theory one is basically to choose between two possibilities: incorporate into the argumentation theory also a theory of ethics (understood widely), or keep argumentation theory neutral of any specific theory of ethics[i]. If an argumentation theorist constructs a theory that includes a very detailed theory of ethics, taking a strong stand on, say, the mode of existence of moral values or specific moral norms, then - if the argumentation theory includes an evaluative component - the theory would automatically cast a negative judgment on any statement that presupposes a rival ethical standpoint. This kind of situation would not be intrinsically contradictory, as it would only lead to a situation where for each philosophical position there would have to be a stand on argumentation theory as well (assuming, of course, that argumentation is seen as possible with regards to that philosophy). However, if a general, non subject specific theory of argumentation is to be sought for, then one should resist the urge of incorporating substantial positions into that theory. It should be noted about the philosophical discussion on ethics, that a general

argumentation theorist might want to study that argumentation, and the study should not be biased by the argumentation theorist's view on the ethical issues.

So, should there be an argumentative discussion about the morality of cheating one's spouse, and the parties would settle the dispute after a reference to, say, hedonistic grounds, then the argumentation theorist can not make an absolute judgment about that standpoint or the grounds by which the dispute was settled. Regarding the epistemic approach, if it is defined by theorizing about discussions that aim at justified beliefs that are true or probable, or discussions that tend to produce truths, then the approach by definition excludes discussions that rely on moral statements, should it turn out that it does not make sense to talk about truth (or probability) of a value statement. The point could be extended to cover for example political views and legal judgments as well, since it could be - generally speaking - said that they rely on values.

6. Acceptance, truth, and belief

A general theory of argumentation is not restricted by a specific subject matter, it covers factual statements as well as value statements. Of factual statements it is quite natural to say that they are true or false, but it is not evident that a truth value could be assigned to a value statement (as said before, philosophers disagree on this point). I understand the relationship between the concepts of truth and acceptance in such a way that one (in most, or normal circumstances) accepts truths; if I asked someone 'why do you accept the claim that Helsinki is the capital of Finland?', a natural response would be 'well, it is true, isn't it'. In normal circumstances (that is, no 'for the sake of the argument' - situation or argumentation competition or something similar is the case) we do not accept falsities. The same goes for beliefs and truths: we do not normally admit that what we believe is not true. (What are normal circumstances is admittedly vague. Furthermore, it has been shown that the issue is rather more complicated than exposed here. Paglieri and Castelfranchi (2007) present as their view that belief and acceptance are independent yet often coinciding, but still functionally distinguishable. I agree with much of what they say, including the view that belief and acceptance have different functions and that acceptance is best seen as having a pragmatic function rather than equating acceptance with, say, true belief; however I am not sure that belief has always an alethic function.) Likewise, we accept moral statements that we take to be *right* or *correct* (or what ever term you prefer) or even *true* (if one is a moral cognitivist). But the difference between

the concepts of *acceptance* on the one hand, and *truth, right, correct* etc on the other, is that acceptance is a pragmatic concept, and the latter are semantic concepts. Generally speaking, the pragmatic concept of acceptance refers to the discussion at hand, whereas the semantic concepts have a reference to reality beyond the discussion. One could point out that truth could be understood as not a matter of a relation of a proposition and reality, that is, there are other ways to understand the concept of truth[**ii**].

Acceptance can be viewed as a more general concept than just referring to assertions. As van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 25) present it in terms of speech act theory, a speaker that for example warns or advises someone or makes a request, has as an aim that the listener accepts the warning, advice, or request. In those cases, it would be rather stretching the concept of truth to say that accepting the request is the same as holding the request true. Even though this point does not go directly against the epistemic approach of argumentation, it does show that the usage of the term acceptance is more naturally suited to the pragmatic level than to the semantical level; this is a point of usage.

7. About the critique of Pragma-Dialectics by the epistemic approach

Biro, Siegel, and Lumer have critiqued the Pragma-Dialectical approach, which I take to be a general argumentation theory in the sense that it allows claims (or standpoints) to be about anything. One central issue they take to be a problem with Pragma-Dialectics is *normativity* (Siegel and Biro 1997, 281-284) or unqualified consensualism (Lumer 2010). Siegel and Biro propose that normativity should be understood epistemically, that is, 'good arguments *warrant* their conclusions', where conclusions are to be seen as justified beliefs or knowledge (Siegel and Biro 1997, 278). Lumer deals with the function of argumentation, and proposes an epistemological approach - that is - truth seeking approach to argumentation theory (Lumer 2010, 47-48).

It seems that, if it turns out (or at this point, if it is possible) that value statements are neither true nor false (or probable or improbable), then Biro, Siegel, and Lumer are in effect imposing on a general argumentation theory a restriction on the subject matter. To see where their view seems to lead, it is worth while taking a closer look. Let it be, for the sake of the argument at least, that truth and justified belief were understood widely enough to cover value statements, so that it would be sensible to say of a statement like 'it is not morally permissible to cheat on one's spouse' that it is true (or false), or in a restricted sense acceptable.

The point of this assumption would be to see whether it would make a difference, with regards to the demand of the normativity (in the sense Biro and Siegel present it) or rejection of unqualified consensualism (in the sense Lumer presents it). The epistemic approach demands that an argumentation theory should be able to give conditions of adequacy for an argument to be acceptable (objectively, or by standards that are justified with regards to truth). However, what sort of conditions of adequacy can one give for an argument for a claim 'it is morally not permissible to cheat on ones spouse'? For an argument to be acceptable, there would have to be an idea of what constitutes cheating, there would have to be acceptable notion of morality, and an idea of how cheating relates to immorality. Practically speaking, I can not see how in a general argumentation theory there could be any *substantial* view about what are the correct conditions for cheating, and unless this sort of substantial view is presented, there is no way of giving a judgment of the truth or acceptability of the statement. There could be formal ideas as to how the concepts in the premises and conclusion have to be related (say, a logical, or a conceptual relation could be a criterion). In principal, someone might propose a general theory where the exact criteria for cheating were in fact given, but for that kind of approach to meet the requirement of generality, it would have to be a theory of practically *everything*.

The point could be illustrated by taking a look at an argument Siegel and Biro in their (1992, 90-91) put forward. 'Two disputants are arguing about the upcoming election. Both agree that the most handsome [...] should be elected. They disagree at the outset, about which candidate is most handsome [...] but after some discussion, during which the rules of the code of conduct are honoured, the dispute is resolved and the participants agree that they should vote for candidate C.' Now, what Siegel and Biro are after here, is that a normative argumentation theory should judge this argumentation irrational. The problem is, in my view, that a general argumentation theory just can not take sides on a substantial matter like whether it is true or acceptable that the most handsome candidate is the one to be voted for, or, who *is* the most handsome candidate. It could be the case, that handsome people get their agendas through better than not-so-handsome people, and should it be the case that the agendas are not so different, then the disputants would be quite 'rational', according to standards of Siegel and Biro, if I am not mistaken. It would be too much to ask for an argumentation theory to include a view on how things in the world are and how things in the world should be. **[iii]** And I might add, even if this was demanded, it most

probably would result in a dispute among argumentation theorists about what is the matter of fact in very many cases. So, I gather that the critical account towards Pragma-Dialectics that Siegel and Biro present actually leads to a situation where the argumentation theory is a theory of everything, or if not, then a critical discussion about the issues would be in place in order to resolve the difference of opinion, in which case for example the Pragma-Dialectical view would suffice.

8. Conclusion and some additional remarks

A general argumentation theory that is not limited by a subject matter of an argument should take into account factual as well as value statements. It may be the case - depending on the philosophy of the nature of value - that value statements are not assignable a truth value. Therefore believing in the truth of a statement should not be a criterion of acceptability of all statements. I have not argued that truth should not be a criterion of knowledge. But I have argued (in section 7) that argumentation theory can not practically speaking take a stand on truth value of a specific factual statement, or the acceptability of a specific value statement (for example the aesthetic statement that a candidate is handsome or the statement that handsomeness is irrelevant to woerthiness of a candidate), which seems to follow from the discussion in Biro and Siegel (1992).

I have treated truth is a semantic concept, and by this I mean that it relates to reality; the truth value of a statement depends on how things are in the world. Argumentation theory can not include a view of how things in the world are (as it can not be a theory of everything). The situation is analogical for value statements: the semantics might be different from factual statements (which possibility I am referring to by bringing up the philosophical debate between cognitivist and non-cognitivists), but whatever the philosophy behind values, the semantical evaluation of a specific value statement is not the business of argumentation theory, and likewise for a factual statement. I wish to make a clear distinction between two separate points here: that truth in general is not (necessarily) a criterion for all possible statements is one point (which is what I wanted show with the argument on there being an open discussion between moral cognitivists and non-cognitivists). Another point (which is directed towards the theory due to Biro and Siegel) is that the truth value of a particular statement is not generally speaking the business of argumentation theory.

It is not perfectly clear what Toulmin means with his concept of 'logical type'

(Toulmin 1958, 13-14; van Eemeren et al 1996, 136-137), but from the examples Toulmin provides of statements belonging to different logical types I gather that it is close to what I am after when I refer to the possibility of value statements having different semantics than factual statements. In Toulminian terms, I think, my point could be rephrased as pointing to field-dependence of criteria of sound arguments.

Besides all this, there is an additional complication for a view that defines argumentation in terms of truth, namely situations where it is clear to all parties of the dispute and the evaluator that the statements they are dealing with are plainly *false*. One such situation could be a competition, another could be for educational purposes in a class room, and yet a third, a situation where one party just goes along to see if the other party can make a coherent case for a standpoint. For the sake of generality, I think that a theory of argumentation should be applicable to these admittedly non-standard cases. This does not necessarily pose a serious problem for an epistemic approach as such, if the approach is defining a standard function of argumentation. After all, a number of types of argumentation could be defined. Nevertheless, if generality is an issue, then truth can not be a defining characteristic for argumentation. This complication would not be so problematic for a theorist who would allow loosening of definition of argumentation (like Lumer, who admits also non-standard functions). But it would strictly speaking - I think - affect the definition in the sense that truth could not be the aim of any argumentation.

One further note I wish to make, is that I am not against theorizing about epistemic or epistemological issues in relation with argumentation; I think that, for example, when Lumer discusses the function of argumentation (Lumer 2010), he does talk about a very important area - knowledge. The role of argumentation in epistemology deserves attention, attention that it so far has not received too much (only recently did Walton and Godden (2007) bring up quite fundamental topic of defining knowledge with respect to argumentation theory, which shows that the area is still in need of research). The discussion of the definition of knowledge from the perspective of argumentation theory by Walton and Godden results in a refined definition, and a notable difference is that in the Walton-Godden definition truth does not play a role. From the perspective of epistemology, truth may certainly be of vital importance, and argumentation theory may have an important input for epistemology, but there should be a

division of labour between argumentation theory and epistemology, as their domains do not coincide. The relation of argumentation theory and epistemology should then be seen as complementary.

I will finish with one final remark. What about the semantic issues such as what are truth conditions of facts or correctness conditions for ethical statements, how does a general argumentation theory treat them? Well, the parties see if they agree upon the criteria appropriate to the subject matter. If they agree, they then go about on arguing on those agreements. If they do not agree, then they are free to take the criteria as the subject matter of a meta-discussion. An argumentation theorist may evaluate the argumentation and arguments in the following instrumentalist sense: Compared to criterion C, the argumentation or the argument meets (or doesn't meet) the criterion. C may be a general or specific criterion (but as I have argued on the limits of a general argumentation theory, a general theorist can not have specific stands on substantial issues), but the meta-discussion about the criterion C is open for discussion among argumentation theorists, *just as it is open for any arguer*.

NOTES

[i] One anonymous reviewer asks at this point 'Why is the relationship of argumentation theory to ethics any more of an issue than its relationship to other inquiries, like logic?' I am not quite sure what the reviewer is referring to. If the question is about *which* logic should the argumentation theorist adopt, my reply would be that a number of different logical systems may be applicable to argumentation (and arguments). If the question is whether *any* logic should be kept apart from argumentation theory, then my reply is that logic is a vital theory when describing relations of propositions between premises and conclusions. Elaboration of these issues is not possible here.

[ii] An anonymous reviewer brings this point up in one comment. I am under the impression that Lumer, Biro and Siegel would see truth as a relation between a proposition and world (I am not sure at all about this and I may very well be mistaken about the views of Lumer, Biro and Siegel, but for example in Lumer 2005a it may be gathered that a consensus view is contrasted to the view of Lumer's.)

[iii] An anonymous reviewer points out that the point of Biro and Siegel 'is that agreement on false or unjustified beliefs is not enough to make the belief worthy of acceptance; an argumentation theory needs to leave room for pointing out that

the belief is false or unjustified'. But Biro and Siegel do not explain why handsomeness is not a good criterion to vote for a candidate, they just say it is irrational or unjustified. The anonymous reviewer states that 'Siegel and Biro in their (1992) are not demanding that an argumentation theory include a substantive judgment on whether handsomeness is a relevant criterion for choosing among candidates in an election, but merely that the theory allow for normative judgments on such a question.' As I understand it, the judgment made by Biro and Siegel is unjustified. As I point out in the text there may have been quite good reasons behind the discussants; my point is that Biro and Siegel have to assume that there is no relevant connection between handsomeness and worthiness in order to make their judgment. To make such an assumption would – in a manner of speaking – make them participants of the discussion, or they would have to have an argumentation theory that included the information that 'handsomeness is irrelevant when deciding on a candidate'.

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Situational Constraints On Argumentation In The Context Of Takeover Proposals.



1. Introduction

The 2010 ISSA conference has proposed for the first time a panel session devoted to financial argumentation. This is an indication that argumentation scholars are exploring an increasing variety of social domains (cf. van Eemeren 2010; Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2009b), in which people make use of arguments in order to handle with differences of opinion, interpersonal conflicts and individual and collective decision-making. The relevance of argumentation for finance is mainly due to the numerous decisions that investors and companies are concerned with. The inescapable and high uncertainty surrounding financial activities makes reasoning and argumentation fundamental and particularly complex, because the data (information) from which decisions must be inferentially drawn are often incomplete or not fully reliable (cf. Grinblatt & Titman 1998). In particular, financial argumentation is significantly conditioned by the information asymmetry and conflicts of interest that constrain the relationship between corporate managers/directors and shareholders (cf. Healy & Palepu 2001). These aspects typically characterizing financial interactions make financial communication particularly interesting for argumentation scholars. In fact, as a result of agency conflicts, shareholders could question managers' willingness and ability to undertake value-creating business projects, and could thus cast doubt on the actual expediency of investing in the company; due to information asymmetry, investors may lack important premises to argumentatively support their own decisions and to critically assess managers' decisions. It is not by chance that corporate financial communication not only consists in the disclosure of relevant information that investors need in order to reason out their decisions and assess the behavior of managers/directors: companies often defend argumentatively their decisions and try to justify the investments and transactions that they propose.

This paper shows this by focusing on the argumentative interactions entailed in takeover proposals - or takeover bids - (see also Green et al. 2008; Olson 2009; Palmieri 2008a&b), which constitute one of the most relevant activities of the financial market. In a takeover bid, one company - the bidder - proposes to the shareholders of another company - the target - to sell their shares in exchange for cash or bidder's shares (cf. Ross et al. 2003). The directors of the target company, who may either endorse or oppose the bid, should publish a document in which their opinion is expressed and argumentatively based (cf. Easterbrook & Fishel 1981; Sudarsanam 1995; Haan-Kamminga 2006). Indeed, because shareholders are less informed and often less skilled than corporate directors, the quality of their decision-making largely depends on how the proposal is communicated, in particular which information bidder and target directors make available and which reasons they give to justify their position.

When target directors recommend shareholders to accept a takeover proposal, the offer is called *friendly*, while a bid that directors recommend to reject is called *hostile*. In hostile offers, bidder and target directors advance two opposite standpoints, thus making shareholders' decision even more dilemmatic (cf. Brennan et al. 2010). In this paper I compare friendly and hostile bids made to companies listed in the UK stock market, to show how the two different argumentative situations (van Eemeren 2010) entail different strategic maneuvers that bidder and target directors activate in order to bring the eventual decision towards the desired outcome.

2. The communicative interactions implied by takeover bids

Through a takeover bid, the bidder aims to obtain the control over the target so that the two companies can be combined through merger or acquisition. The bid coincides with a public proposal made to target shareholders, i.e. those people who have invested in the company by buying shares. The ownership of listed companies is dispersed across hundreds of investors so that it is practically impossible to negotiate a deal with each of them individually. Thus the bid represents an instrument with which to reach all shareholders and seek their approval. If shareholders accept the offer and sell their shares, the control over the target is transferred to the bidder. The new board and executive team assume the delicate task of integrating the two businesses in order to realize the benefits expected at the outset.

The public offer is often preceded by negotiations involving both firms' managers

and directors (cf. Bruner 2004; Duhaime & Schwenk 1985). It goes without saying that, in case of agreement in the pre-offer phase, the bid will be friendly. Similarly, a bid which follows unsuccessful negotiations will be hostile. Pre-offer negotiations, however, are not necessary, as the bidder may immediately and directly address target shareholders. In this case, the bid is named *unsolicited* and its friendly/hostile mood (Morck et al. 1988) depends on whether the target board recommends acceptance or rejection of the offer.

From an argumentative viewpoint, the bidder necessarily holds the standpoint that accepting the offer would be expedient for target shareholders. We could consider it a *virtual standpoint* (van Eemeren et al. 1993: 104-105), entailed by the felicity conditions of the speech act “to propose” (cf. Colombetti 2001): by making a proposal, the speaker is committed to the claim (i.e. the standpoint) that the proposed action is expedient for the hearer. Of course, a proposal might be insincere. In this case, the speaker proposes something that he/she actually believes it is expedient only for him/herself, though the opposite belief is externalized.

It is not by chance that “pro-shareholders” and “pro-managers/directors” reasons are distinguished within the impressive literature in financial economics which discusses the motives behind takeover bids (cf. Trautwein 1990; Shleifer & Vishny 1991; Berkovitch & Narayanan 1993; Andrade et al. 2001). In fact, managers/directors should, in line with their institutional commitments, pursue a takeover only if this is expected to benefit the company and, in particular, its shareholders. However, because of agency problems, their decision to acquire another company might be due only to motives of personal benefit, such as power, prestige, etc. (cf. Amihud & Lev 1981; Morck et al. 1990). A takeover bid benefits bidder shareholders if the implied acquisition increases the value of their shares. This can occur because the combination produces synergies, i.e. additional value which could not be created without the acquisition (cf. Damodaran 2005: 3). The possibility to obtain synergies allows the bidder to pay a premium (i.e. a price above the value of the target), which coincides with target shareholders’ gain and constitutes the main rationale for tendering their shares. Obviously, it might also be the case that the bidder pays an excessively high price (i.e. a price including a premium which cannot be recovered by the synergies produced by the acquisition), so that only target shareholders will gain (cf. Roll 1986). However, it is also possible that the bidder decides to acquire a company because the latter is

undervalued by the stock market (cf. Shleifer & Vishny 2003). In this case, the bidder and its shareholders would gain while target shareholders would lose.

Instead, the speech act performed by the target board corresponds to an advice (recommendation), in which an entailment of benevolence is certainly involved, but the propositional content can refer either to the acceptance of the offer or to its rejection. In fact, the board is not proposing a deal, but, in relation to a proposed action, is recommending the best course of action to the decision-maker. If directors recommend the acceptance of the offer, they are committed to the virtual standpoint that this is expedient for target shareholders; otherwise, their implicit claim is that rejecting the offer would be desirable.

Numerous studies have also been devoted to the motives behind target directors' recommendation to shareholders (Easterbrook & Fischel 1981; Walkling & Long 1984; Sudarsanam 1995; Rhodes-Kropf & Viswanathan 2004). Similarly in this case, motives coinciding with the fulfillment of the institutional commitments towards shareholders (the shareholders-welfare hypothesis) are distinguished from decisions affected by agency problems (the management-welfare hypothesis). In particular, it is suggested that target managers and directors could be concerned with the implications of the acquisition on their job position rather than with maximizing shareholder value.

Now, since target shareholders are less informed than managers and directors (asymmetric information), they often lack the premises for determining whether an offer is expedient, whether the bidder is paying an adequate price, whether the board's recommendation is credible, etc.

In order to empower target shareholders' decision-making, strict takeover rules exist in all developed financial systems, imposing communicative (disclosure) and non-communicative commitments on companies. In my analysis I focus specifically on bids addressed to companies listed on the UK stock market, as it is the Europe's most active takeover market. In the UK, takeover bids are subject to the *City Code on Takeovers and Mergers*, which implements the *European Directive on Takeover Bids* (cf. Haan-Kamminga 2006).

The City Code represents a framework for conducting the *bid*, establishing, in particular, the kind of information that must be disclosed, who and when should disclose such information, and defining appropriate standards of care when

publishing a document. In fact, echoing the European Directive, the City Code states that “shareholders must be given sufficient information and advice to enable them to reach a properly informed decision as to the merits or demerits of an offer” (Rule 23).

As one of its purposes is to avoid inequalities of information among investors (see *General Principle 1* and *Rule 20. Equality of information*), the Code emphasizes the importance of absolute secrecy before any public announcement is made (*Rule 2.1*) and requires an announcement to be made in any case when rumors and speculation emerge (*Rules 2.2; 2.5*).

Once a statement is published, the *offer period* begins, during which the companies concerned are subject to the commitments imposed by the Code. An important distinction must be drawn between the *announcement of a possible offer* (*Rule 2.4*) and that involving a *firm intention to make an offer* (henceforth, *firm intention announcement*) (*Rule 2.5*). The former, usually made by the potential target, does not pre-commit the potential bidder; instead, the firm intention announcement, unless special circumstances materialize, must be followed by the offer, which is formally made with the publication of the offer document.

The bidder must cover numerous points in the offer document, including the financial terms of the offer and the consequences of the implied combination for the target company, its management and employees. The Code recognizes in this way that the takeover bid is more than a trading of securities, as it brings about a corporate combination which might significantly affect the target company and its stakeholders. Furthermore, a burden of proof is imposed, as the long-term commercial justification of the offer should be stated (*Rule 24*).

After the offer document has been issued, the Code requests target directors to advise target shareholders by publishing a document in which the directors express an opinion about the offer and state the reasons for forming such an opinion (*Rule 25*).

Therefore, two fundamental interactions occur during the offer period: one between the bidding company and the target shareholders, in which the former makes an offer to the latter; the other between target directors and shareholders, in which the former gives advice to the latter. Both interactions envisage

argumentation, as the Code requests the bidder to motivate the offer from a commercial viewpoint and the target board to argumentatively support its opinion.

3. Comparing argumentation in friendly and hostile offers

The friendly/hostile distinction is particularly relevant when we consider these two interactions from the argumentative point of view, in relation to the issue *p*: “*should target shareholders accept the offer?*”. In fact, a friendly offer entails the bidder and the target boards of directors holding the same positive standpoint *+/p*: “*target shareholders should accept the offer*”; instead, a hostile offer brings a different confrontational trigger (cf. van Eemeren & Garssen 2008:12): the bidder virtually holds the previously indicated positive standpoint (*+/p*), while the target board, by recommending the rejection of the offer, has to defend the opposite standpoint *-/p*: “*LSE shareholders should not accept (reject) NASDAQ’s offer*”. Notably, in relation to this issue, the City Code only imposes a burden of proof on the target board.

As the (in-)expediency of an offer is far from being immediately evident, shareholders will at least cast doubt on these standpoints. Thus, in both friendly and hostile offers, target shareholders assume the role of antagonist within an argumentative discussion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992, 2004), which envisages two different initial situations within the two types of offer.

In order to compare how the two different situations are argumentatively dealt with, I have considered several cases of UK takeover bids made in the 2006-2010 period. In this paper I will focus on two prototypical cases: the friendly bid made by *BAE Systems* to *Detica* (July 2008) and the hostile bid that *NASDAQ* made to the *London Stock Exchange* (December 2006). Both offers were in cash. The first one was accepted, while the second one was rejected by shareholders.

An important difference between friendly and hostile cases emerges already when we consider the relevant texts published during the offer period. As Table 1 shows, the crucial communicative events in the friendly case (the acquisition of *Detica* by *BAE Systems*) consist of two documents: the firm intention announcement and the offer document. Moreover, an inspection of these two texts reveals that the content of the offer document is largely anticipated in the announcement (cf. Palmieri 2010).

BAE-DETICA (friendly)		NASDAQ-LSE (hostile)	
28.07.08	Announcement of firm intention to make an offer	20.11.06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement of firm intention to make an offer • LSE's response to NASDAQ's announcement • NASDAQ's response to LSE's rejection
31.07.08	Offer document	12.12.06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer document • LSE's Rejection statement
		19.12.06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSE's 1st defense circular • NASDAQ's response statement
		08.01.07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASDAQ's 1st response circular • LSE's response statement
		18.01.07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSE's 2nd defense circular • NASDAQ's response statement
		23.01.07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASDAQ's 2nd response circular • LSE's response statement • NASDAQ's response
		05.02.07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSE's 3rd defense circular • NASDAQ's response statement

Table 1. Documents displayed in friendly and hostile bids.

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The reason why the friendly case does not include a document specifically devoted to the target directors' reasoned opinion is that the latter is included into the bidder's documents (see later).

The hostile case is evidently more complex, since the views of the bidder and the target directors are communicated separately: the firm intention announcement is immediately followed by the statement from the target, while the offer document is – so to say – replied to by the defense circular, through which the target board attempts to persuade shareholders to reject the offer by argumentatively justifying its position. Moreover, further response statements are published, by means of new announcements (press releases) or circulars to shareholders. As Haan-Kamminga (2006) suggests, hostile bids entail a battle between the two boards, which can be fought at three levels: (1) a financial battle, in which the target board tries to make use of various anti-takeover measures, which regulations try to prevent as much as possible; (2) a legal battle, in which the companies litigate in a court; (3) a communication (or media) battle. From Table 1, it can be seen that a communication battle has been fought by the London Stock Exchange (LSE) and NASDAQ.

The two different situations can be seen from the beginning of the offer period. In fact, friendly offers typically begin with a *joint* announcement:

1. *The boards of directors of BAE Systems and Detica announce that they have reached agreement on the terms of a recommended cash offer to acquire the whole of the issued and to be issued share capital of Detica (BAE-Detica, firm intention announcement, 28.VII.2008).*

From this statement we infer that the public offer was preceded by a successful

negotiation involving managers and directors, in which, presumably, argumentation was relevantly involved as is typically the case in negotiation dialogues (cf. Walton & Krabbe 1998).

In the hostile case, two distinct press releases were issued: NASDAQ individually announced its intention to make an offer (ex. 2), then the LSE board reacted on the same day by publishing its own announcement (ex. 3):

2. The Board of NASDAQ announces the terms of Final Offers to be made by NAL, a wholly owned subsidiary of NASDAQ, for the entire issued and to be issued share capital of LSE. (NASDAQ, firm intention announcement, 20.XI.2006).

3. The Board of London Stock Exchange Group plc (the "Company") rejects Nasdaq's final offer to acquire the Company for 1243p per share in cash. The Board firmly believes that the proposal, which represents only a 2 per cent premium to the market price at the close of business on 17 November 2006, substantially undervalues the Company and fails to reflect its unique strategic position and the powerful earnings and operational momentum of the business. (LSE, Statement re: Nasdaq final offer, 20.XI.2006).

3.1. The argumentative coordination in friendly bids

As Table 2 shows, the offer document is divided in two parts, the first being the letter of recommendation from the target board and the second being the letter from the bidder representing the formal offer. Most of the paragraphs of the target letter (e.g. "the offer", "irrevocable undertakings", "United Kingdom Taxation", etc.) actually coincide with those contained in the bidder's, as the former reports the same text of the latter and explicitly refers to it (through expressions such as "as stated in BAE's letter"; "Your attention is drawn to the letter from BAE Systems Holdings on pages 10 to 20").

Part I: Letter of recommendation from the Chairman of Detica Group plc (pp. 6-9)	Part II: Letter from BAE Systems (Holdings) Limited (pp. 10-26)
1. Introduction	1. Introduction
2. The Offer	2. The Offer
3. Background and reasons for recommendation	3. Irrevocable undertakings and interests in Detica
4. Irrevocable undertakings	4. Information relating to BAE Systems
5. Break fee arrangements	5. Information relating to Detica
6. Management and employees	6. Background to and reasons for the Offer
7. Detica Share Schemes	7. Financing of the Offer
8. United Kingdom Taxation	8. Intentions regarding Detica, mgmt. and employees
9. Further information	9. Detica Share Schemes
10. Action to be taken	10. Break fee and Implementation Agreement
11. Recommendation	11. United Kingdom taxation
	12. Overseas Shareholders
	13. Procedure for acceptance of the Offer
	14. Settlement
	15. Delisting, comp. acquisition and re-registration
	16. Further information
	17. Action to be taken

Table 2. Macro-structure of the BAE-Detica's offer document (31 July 2008).

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2008).

Two paragraphs immediately capture the attention of the argumentation analyst: “Background and reasons for the offer”, located in the bidder’s letter (par. 6) and “Background and reasons for the recommendation”, located in the target’s letter (par. 3).

The first one focuses on the reasonableness of the acquisition, as the reasons that led to the decision of pursuing the offer are exposed:

1.4. Background to and reasons for the Offer

BAE Systems has identified the national security and resilience (NS&R) sector as an evolving and growing sector benefiting from increasing priority government attention. A strategic objective of BAE Systems is to establish security businesses in its home markets. While BAE Systems has been developing plans for substantial organic investment to pursue growth NS&R opportunities in these markets, the proposed acquisition of Detica provides an economically attractive and accelerated implementation of its strategy to address these opportunities.

[...] The combination of Detica’s well established customer relationships and technical capabilities together with BAE Systems’ system integration capabilities will result in a depth of financial and technical capability to address growth opportunities and better serve customers in the NS&R sector.

[...] BAE Systems’ existing activities and structure will provide a platform for Detica to apply its capabilities into the US Homeland Security market.

The business combination is expected to benefit from strong growth, consistent with the anticipated growth in the sector, and from cost synergies including benefits from more efficient internal investment. BAE Systems believes these benefits will enable the acquisition to achieve a return in excess of BAE Systems’ cost of capital in the third full-year following completion. (BAE-Detica, *offer document*, p.12, 31.VII. 2008)

The acquisition is seen as subservient in realizing a “strategic objective of BAE”, in line with an identified business opportunity (lines 2-3). In particular, the acquisition is expected to efficiently improve BAE’s means for realizing its goals (lines 7-9). The integration of the two companies’ respective strengths is emphasized and the benefits that BAE would bring to Detica are also indicated

(lines 14-15). The bidder expresses its belief that the acquisition will produce a superior (bidder) shareholder return (lines 18-21).

Through all this information, the writer activates a pragmatic argumentation (Walton 1990, Rigotti 2008), in which the conditions for a happy joint action are made explicit: the realization of a goal benefiting both agents, the compatibility and integration of their respective means and even their improvement (cf. Rigotti & Palmieri 2010) .

The issue tackled in this paragraph concerns the expediency of the combination implied by the offer for the two companies involved and not the financial attractiveness of the offer for target shareholders. As BAE's bid was in cash, meaning that Detica shareholders would cease to invest in the company, one could be tempted to conclude that these arguments developed by the bidder are actually addressed to bidder shareholders and to the stakeholders that would be affected by the combination. Without overlooking the presence of a multiple audience during the offer period (notably in this respect, the City Code requests the offer document and the target board's opinion to also be sent to employees), I argue that there are two aspects that make the content of this paragraph relevant to the decision that target shareholders should make. Firstly, shareholders, as owners of the company, could also be concerned with the social and organizational implications that would occur in case of acceptance of the offer. Indeed, this is probably in the spirit of takeover rules, which request that shareholders receive information about the after-deal company. Secondly, as mentioned previously, a premium in the offer price can only be justified if the implied combination produces a value superior to such a premium. Otherwise, either the price is excessively high or the bidder is attempting to buy an undervalued company. In the latter case, target shareholders would probably reject the offer. Following this interpretation, the bidder should dispel suspicions of undervaluation by convincing target shareholders that the proposed corporate acquisition makes sense from a financial viewpoint.

That said, we remark that neither Detica shareholders nor the bid itself are explicitly mentioned in the paragraph. In other words, the financial attractiveness of the offer is not directly discussed, as the focus is rather the possible acquisition that would follow the offer.

Indeed, the reasons why Detica shareholders should accept the bid are given by

Detica directors in a specific paragraph of their recommendation letter:

1. 5. Background to and reasons for the recommendation

Detica's business strategy has been to become the pre-eminent consulting provider servicing the counter-threat agenda in both the UK and the US. [...]

As a result of its success in executing this strategy, the Detica Group has delivered compound annual growth of 39 per cent and 25 per cent in revenues and adjusted diluted earnings per share, respectively, over the five year period ended 31 March 2008. This growth in the business has been predominantly organic, supplemented by acquisitions including, most recently, those of DFI in 2007 and m.a.partners in 2006.

Current Trading and Outlook

The current financial year has started well with the Detica Group performing in line with the Board's expectations. [...] Detica's UK Government business continues to perform very well [...] As a result, the outlook for the Detica Group remains good and the Board's expectations for the current financial year remain unchanged.

The Offer

Notwithstanding the Directors' confidence in the prospects for the Detica Group, the approach by BAE Systems and level of the Offer is such that the Directors believe it provides Detica Shareholders with certainty of value at an attractive level, which reflects both the quality of the Detica business and its standing in its markets, and that Detica Shareholders should have the opportunity to realise their investment in Detica. In addition, the Directors also recognise the benefits and enhanced opportunities available to Detica and its employees as part of the enlarged group since it will have increased resources to compete more fully and will benefit from the significant international footprint that BAE Systems will bring.

The Offer represents a premium of approximately 57 per cent to the Detica closing price of 281 pence on 17 July 2008, being the last business day prior to the announcement by Detica that it had received a preliminary approach which may or may not lead to an offer being made for Detica; approximately 66 per cent. to the volume weighted average closing price of approximately 265 pence per Detica share for the one month period to 17 July 2008; and approximately 70 per

cent to the volume weighted average closing price of approximately 259 pence per Detica share for the six month period to 17 July 2008. (BAE-Detica, *offer document*, p. 7, 31.VII.2008)

In the first part, the board stresses the high growth achieved both organically (i.e. by implementing its business strategy) and inorganically (i.e. by small acquisitions). Then, the good prospects for the near future are confirmed. Such a very positive outlook is however offset by the value of BAE's offer. A "notwithstanding" indicates precisely that the good past and future performances of the company are not sufficient to reject the proposal in the given terms.

Based on the principle that "Detica Shareholders should have the opportunity to realise their investment in Detica" and on the presumed fact that the offer provides an attractive and certain value, the directors implicitly conclude that accepting the bid is preferable than continuing to invest in Detica as a standalone company.

The argument *from alternatives* is exploited here: "given two mutually exclusive actions - X and Y - if X is better than Y, X should be chosen". What makes tendering a better alternative is, according to Detica directors, that BAE's offer is in cash, which provides certainty, and that the price is very high. The latter aspect becomes a sub-standpoint that is justified through a comparison between the offer price and the pre-offer market price, which would demonstrate that a premium is included in the bid. More precisely, three different values are computed which, according to the reference day that is chosen, imply different levels of premium (lines 29-37).

This argumentation presupposes a general opinion (*endoxon*, see Rigotti 2008) that market prices are reliable indicators of Detica's value. Such an endoxon is combined with more specific data concerning the share price of Detica before the offer, whose computations are actually taken from the paragraph indicating the terms of the offer ("The offer"), which appears both in the bidder's letter and in the target's letter (see Table 2). Through the *model of critical discussion* (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004) we can reconstruct an *opening stage*, in which the Detica board assumes the burden of proving that the offer price is attractive and establishes the just mentioned endoxon and data. In the *argumentation stage*, these material starting points become the premises which, once conjoined, activate an inferential connection (cf. Rigotti & Greco Morasso 2010) which

allows directors to conclude that the offer is financially attractive.

Therefore, in friendly bids, the task of argumentatively defending the expediency of the offer in front of target shareholders is mainly accomplished by the target board. The bidder focuses on the justification for the implied acquisition (whose possible relevance for target shareholders has already been explained) and, remarkably, does not make its virtual standpoint explicit. Instead, the bidder seems to rely on the target directors' recommendation, which is explicitly referred to at the beginning of its letter:

6. Your attention is drawn to the letter of recommendation from the Chairman of Detica in Part I of this document, which sets out the reasons why the Detica Directors [...] consider the terms of the Offer to be fair and reasonable and unanimously recommend that all Detica Shareholders accept the Offer. (BAE-Detica, *offer document*, p.1, 31.VII.2008)

In other words, a distribution of tasks emerges between the two boards: the justification of the acquisition is a task entrusted to the bidder while the reasons for preferring to tender are developed by the target.

This distribution of tasks shows respect for each other's province and institutional role, which gives a better position to know. In particular, the assessment of the two alternatives (to sell or to continue investing) requires a valuation of the target's standalone prospects, which target managers and directors are in the best position to make. This argumentative coordination reflects the nature of the deal as a negotiated transaction between the two management teams, which in turn led to a friendly offer. It seems that the bidder has devoted all its argumentative efforts to convincing target managers/directors to endorse the bid. Once this consent has been obtained, the bidder addresses target shareholders but refrains from advancing its main standpoint, namely that shareholders should accept the offer, and from argumentatively supporting such claim.

3.2. The argumentative battle in hostile offers

A substantially different scenario occurred in the NASDAQ-LSE case, as can be deduced from Table 1. Pre-offer negotiations have been unsuccessful and the coordination of the two sides' positions is absent: NASDAQ's firm intention announcement does not include LSE's reasoned opinion and the offer document does not contain a letter from the LSE board.

The bidder's argumentative strategy is clearly affected by the T-directors' rejection. In the offer document, the bidder still defends the reasonableness of the implied combination:

7. Reasons for the Final Offers

[...] The combination of NASDAQ and LSE will bring together two of the world's leading groups in the global exchange sector to the benefit of their respective users and the wider global financial community [...] (NASDAQ, *offer document*, 12.XII.2006)

However, unlike that found in friendly offers, the "hostile" bidder also argues in favor of the offer acceptance as these two examples show (the second referring to the hostile bid made by Centrica to Venture) :

8. An attractive offer which fully reflects both LSE's standalone prospects and an appropriate premium [...]. An offer price of 1,243 pence per LSE Ordinary Share represents:

- a 54 per cent. premium over the Closing Price on 10 March 2006, the Business Day immediately prior to LSE's announcement that it had received a pre-conditional approach from NASDAQ, as adjusted [...]
- a 40 per cent. premium to NASDAQ's indicative offer price of 9 March 2006, as adjusted for the LSE Capital Return;
- a 2 per cent. premium over the Closing Price on 17 November 2006, the Business Day immediately prior to the date of the announcement of the Final Offers (NASDAQ, *firm intention announcement*, 20.XI.2006)

9. Centrica believes that the Offer represents a compelling opportunity for Venture Shareholders to realise the value of their Venture Shares in cash at a significant premium to Venture's pre-bid speculation share price and at a time of continuing economic uncertainty and market volatility. (Centrica, *firm intention announcement*, 10.VII.2009)

If we compare these two examples with example (5) we find numerous similarities, in particular the focus put on the certainty provided by the offer and the attractive value of the bid computed by relying on the pre-offer share prices. The fundamental difference is that, in BAE's bid, these arguments are developed by the directors of the target (Detica), while in NASDAQ and Centrica's bids, the bidder put them forward after having advanced its standpoint. Thus, an

evident attempt to replace the target directors in their advisory function has evidently been made, which seems to be a prelude to the institutional replacement that typically occurs after a hostile takeover succeeds. The reaction of the target directors can be seen in Table 1: the LSE Board makes use of a special text typology, the *takeover defense circular*, which is exclusively adopted for unfriendly proposals. It is a document of about 20 pages, combining written text, figures, graphs etc. The defense circular is characterized by an explicitly argumentative intention. The standpoint is already declared on the cover page, where it is spelled out as a directive speech act (e.g. "Reject NASDAQ's offer"). In the letter introducing the document, the board also assumes the burden of proof (typically with a sentence like "in this document we explain why we believe that you should reject the offer"). For reasons of space, I shall focus on one specific aspect, namely the value of the price offered, which represents a crucial issue in hostile bids. While the bidder defends the attractiveness of the offer price on the basis of pre-offer share prices (as the target board does in friendly bids), the target relies on alternative methods. Implicitly, the endoxon stating that market prices are reliable indicators of value is questioned, so that another kind of data must be invoked (in the opening stage) in order to determine the standalone value of the target and to infer (in the argumentation stage) the expediency or not of the offer. The method used by the LSE board is based on a particular form of analogy argument, in which the value of LSE is estimated through a relative valuation based on the *price-to-earnings ratio* (P/E) of comparable companies.

10. *Standalone value is not being recognized*

Nasdaq's offer of 1,243 pence per ordinary share represents a multiple of 24.7 times the Exchange's forecast adjusted basic EPS for the 12 months to 31 December 2006. This values your company below the trading multiples of virtually all other major listed exchanges. [*graph comparing the P/E ratio of numerous other exchanges*](LSE, *defense circular*, p. 9, 19.XII.2006) The rationale behind the use of earnings multiples is based on the assumption that the relation between *stock price* and *earnings* (P/E ratio) should be the same for companies sharing some essential characteristics, in particular growth, risk and cash flows (cf. Damodaran 2005). Therefore, by applying the P/E of such similar companies to the earnings of LSE, we obtain an estimate of the LSE price. Thus, at this point the crucial issue is to establish the set of similar companies (peer group). In fact, by considering or excluding some firms in the peer group, the eventual result might differ significantly. It is not by chance that, in its response document,

NASDAQ criticizes the choice made by LSE:

11. The analysis in the LSE Defence Document is based on 2006 P/E multiples for many different types of exchanges from all over the world. [...] we question why a cash equities exchange chooses to compare itself with businesses as diverse as a commodity futures exchange, a derivatives and physical energy marketplace and an electronic derivatives and options exchange. (NASDAQ's response, 8.I.2007)

Having refuted the endoxon on which the LSE's value case was based, NASDAQ selects the data which correspond to its own criterion of selection (cash equities exchange). In this way, a different value is obtained which would bring to conclude that the offer actually includes a premium. Interestingly, an intense discussion by distance now takes place, as LSE reacts again by giving further reasons - based this time on an *appeal to expert opinion* - why its value case was actually correct:

12. Nasdaq wrongly claims that the Exchange's peer group is restricted to European exchanges. This is not the view of financial experts who have provided "fairness opinions" for recent precedent exchange transactions [*a list of analysts' opinions follows*] (LSE, *second defense circular*, p. 14, 18.I.2007).

4. Conclusions

The analysis of friendly and hostile takeover proposals, which was discussed in this paper, allows comparison of argumentation in two different situations of the same type of social interaction. Friendly offers envisage a situation in which the two arguers have already found an agreement. This brings a coordinated public argumentation where the decision-making audience is addressed. Each side limits itself to tackling the sub-issue that its institutional position allows to deal with at best and for which the regulation has imposed a burden of proof. Thus, the proposal maker refrains from arguing in favor of its proposal, because this is already done by someone being in a better *position to know*. In hostile offers, the argumentative "rate" increases, as more texts are published and more specific arguments are advanced in support of the standpoint. This suggests that companies engaged in a takeover deal consider argumentation as a relevant instrument in realizing their objectives. An argumentative battle emerges in which each side seeks to impose its own analysis against the other's one. In particular, the endoxa on which the other side bases its own argumentation are criticized in order to prevent some information from becoming the premises of

arguments that would prove the opposite standpoint. More generally, it emerges that argumentation is extremely important in determining which information is relevant in financial decisions. The analysis of takeover bids clearly confirms that financial communication cannot be reduced to the disclosure of private information. Numerous data, being private or already public information, acquire or lose their relevance by being argumentatively elaborated.

NOTES

[i] In modern public corporations shareholders elect the Board of Directors who hire the executive managers and monitor them on behalf of shareholders. In practice, however, directors are more closely related to managers rather than shareholders. The Chief Executive Officer is usually also a member and sometimes even the Chairman of the Board of Directors. In any case, conflicts or disagreements between managers and directors are rarely externalized so that, from an argumentative viewpoint, they advance and defend the same standpoint in relation to an emerging issue. For this reason, in this paper managers and directors are not systematically distinguished, although they cover two different institutional positions.

[ii] In financial economics, the relationship between corporate managers/directors and shareholders has been typically interpreted in the framework of agency theory (Ross 1973; Jensen & Meckling 1976). An agency relationship arises when one person (the principal) engages another person (the agent) to perform a service on his/her behalf. This agreement, which in general entails a certain delegation of decision-making, is subject to several conflicts of interest, as the agent, if not properly incentivized, might be tempted to pursue his/her own goals instead of being fully committed to the interests of the principal.

[iii] From a legal point of view, in a merger one company is absorbed into the other and ceases to exist. Instead, the acquisition of the majority or all the shares brings the delisting of the acquired company, which becomes a subsidiary of the acquiring one. Economists as well as financial professionals usually adopt the terms *merger*, *acquisition* and *takeover* interchangeably, because the distinction is often relevant for law or accounting and less for the business and financial implications on the relevant stakeholders. On this point, see also Bruner (2004: p.1); Grinblatt & Titman (1998).

[iv] Sometimes, it also happens that an activist shareholder openly manifests disagreement with one of the advanced standpoints, even trying to persuade

fellow shareholders to accept/reject the offer. For an example of such mixed discussions, see Palmieri (2008b).

[v] This research is based on my PhD dissertation (Palmieri 2010), in which ten cases of friendly bid and ten cases of hostile bid have been considered.

[vi] In my PhD dissertation I have shown that every paragraph of the BAE's firm intention announcement ("The Offer", "Irrevocable Undertakings", "Information relating to BAE Systems", "Information relating to Detica", "Background to and reasons for the Offer", "Background to and reasons for the recommendation", "Recommendation", "Financing of the Offer", "Management and employees", "Detica Share Schemes", "Disclosure of interests in Detica relevant securities", "Break Fee and Implementation Agreement", "Delisting, compulsory acquisition and re-registration") reappears in the offer document with the identical content.

[vii] Hostile takeovers are often disciplinary (cf. Grinblatt & Titman 1998, pp. 674-675): the bidder intends to remove existing target managers and gain from a better management of the firm's assets.

[viii] In the cases considered in my PhD dissertation (Palmieri 2010), I found two different strategies adopted by target directors in order to prove the price's inadequacy: relative valuation of the target standalone value, which is based on analogy reasoning, and asset revaluation made by an external valuer, which is based on an appeal to authority.

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Gwen Ifill: Moderator Or Opponent In The 2008 Vice-Presidential Debate?



The October 2008 Vice-Presidential debate between Senator Joe Biden of Delaware and Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska drew over 70 million US viewers to their television sets. It was the second most watched political debate in the modern era of televised debates, surpassed only by the 80 million viewers for the Carter-Reagan debate in October of 1980. The Biden-Palin debate had a higher viewership than the first McCain-Obama debate or the George HW Bush-Geraldine Ferraro debate of 1984 which had previously held the record for the most viewed Vice-Presidential debate in

American political history (Bauder).

By late September 2008 there was widespread speculation in the mainstream press that Sarah Palin was not prepared to participate in a Vice-Presidential debate. In the period leading up to the debate, she had very few unscripted public events. And, her performance in mainstream media interviews heightened the concern that Governor Palin was not prepared for high office. Against this backdrop, an important element of the McCain campaign's pre-debate preparation was an orchestrated effort to place the moderator, Gwen Ifill, into an adversarial role. In making this move, Governor Palin was provided a rhetorical location from which she could successfully dismiss many of the inquiries made by Ms. Ifill during the debate.

In this instance, traditional debate theory can be used to unpack the relationship between the moderator, a designated member of the press, and the political candidate. Gwen Ifill was transformed from a debate moderator into an opponent for many who observed the debate. The McCain team nurtured the expectation that Ifill would join with Joe Biden to question Governor Palin's fitness for office. In many respects this was the same rhetorical transformation of a journalist's role found in the 1988 Vice-Presidential debate between Dan Quayle and Lloyd Bensen (Weiler). This instance differs from the 1988 Bensen/Quayle debate, in that the characterization of the debate as the Republican candidate versus the media and the Democratic candidate was an orchestrated element of the pre-debate preparation by the McCain campaign.

In the 2008 Vice-Presidential debate, Republican partisans attacked the moderator's objectivity. This line of argument created a situation in which the moderator was perceived as favoring Biden and opposed to Palin and hence Ms Ifill could not press Governor Palin for evidence of her claims or contest her non-factual statements. The result was that Governor Palin delivered answers that were not responsive to questions and she spoke directly to the television audience unmediated by the debate context, which resulted in turn in a more favorable showing by Palin than the content of her answers might have warranted.

This particular case study hints at a recurrent tension that surfaces each time a moderator is selected for a general election debate. In the last four election cycles, the vast majority of these debates have been single moderator debates (Schroeder). The moderator is asked to participate in an event that is planned and

structured by the two major parties. Those parties must approve the moderator and that person may feel a need to satisfy the parties to receive consideration in future iterations of these high profile events. Yet, the moderator is usually a noted journalist who is also expected to serve the interests of the viewing public. The moderator must satisfy the hosts while serving the public interest.

The political parties take a risk when selecting a moderator. For example, the most noteworthy moment in the 1988 election cycle was when CNN newsman and debate moderator Bernard Shaw asked Michael Dukakis how he would have reacted if his wife were raped. The answer Dukakis provided to this rather personal question led some to question his sense of human warmth. While this particular essay does not provide a theory of the argumentative role that a moderator should play in a debate, it does highlight the impact that a compromised moderator can have on the development of argumentation in a political debate.

By framing the debate as a 2 on 1 exchange, Sarah Palin was free to redefine the 2008 Vice-Presidential debate as an opportunity to speak directly to the American public rather than as an argument on a defined set of topics with Joe Biden. In response to an early question in the debate about medical care, Governor Palin revealed this strategy for the viewership: "And I may not answer the questions that either the moderator or you want to hear, but I'm going to talk straight to the American people and let them know my track record also" (Commission on Presidential Debates, p. 7). Palin signaled early on in the debate that she would not answer some questions and Ifill did little to facilitate an argumentative clash between the two contestants.

A review of the transcript, using some elements of the theoretical frameworks constructed by Rowland (1986) and Riley and Hollihan (1981), provides insight on the types of arguments Palin used in the debate. In reviewing the debate for complete, partial, and non answers to questions, this study finds that Governor Palin did not answer one-third of the questions asked in the debate. Additionally, when one looks at the types of arguments used by Palin in the debate, there are few if any instances in which she uses evidence to buttress her claims.

Given that a number of recent Vice Presidents have assumed the Presidency, one might assume that the ability to construct arguments under pressure is a skill we would look for in our candidates. Unfortunately, we do not always look at the

Vice-Presidential debates as a moment to validate the choices of running mate by a Presidential nominee or on the argumentative capacity of the Vice-Presidential contender. In many instances, Vice Presidential debates are both political and academic afterthoughts. This analysis is one of only a handful of studies that look at the argumentation in Vice-Presidential debate and in particular the Biden-Palin debate of 2008 (Benoit & Henson).

The remainder of this paper will be divided into three sections. The first traces Governor Palin's ascendancy to the national political stage. The second section describes the evolution of the pre-debate strategy to define Gwen Ifill as an opponent rather than a moderator for the debate. The third section reports on Ifill's performance in the debate and the argumentation strategies deployed by Palin in response to Ifill's questions.

1. Governor Palin's Entry to the National Political Stage

There are a number of explanations for the number of viewers who tuned into the Biden-Palin debate in 2008. At that time, a widely held position was that the slotting of the first presidential debate into Friday night, a night of limited television viewership, explained the low numbers for the McCain-Obama debate. The assertion was that the outsized viewership tuned into the Biden-Palin debate because it was the second debate in the series and it was broadcast on a Thursday night, a night that regularly produced large numbers of television viewers. Given the state of the US economy in September of 2008, and the McCain decision to suspend his campaign days before the first debate, one would have expected very high viewership for the McCain-Obama debate.

People did not watch the Biden-Palin debate simply because of the placement of the first Presidential debate on a Friday night. Sarah Palin was, and is, one of the most charismatic politicians in American public life. Despite her position as the failed Vice-Presidential candidate for a ticket that lost in what many consider a rout, Sarah Palin remains popular today. For example, a review of her Facebook page in June of 2010 found 1,672,554 friends. In contrast, Mitt Romney, a politician who some believe may be the early favorite for the Republican nomination in 2012, has 382,612 friends on his page. She remains a powerful political force in the United States. In a Newsweek article entitled "Saint Sarah" Lisa Miller (2010) lays out a compelling case that Sarah Palin is revitalizing the Evangelical Right in American politics by remaking that movement in her own image. While there is disagreement over her influence in politics, no one would

contest the claim that she is a presence on the American political scene in 2010.

Looking back from our current vantage point, it is quite clear the reason for the high ratings of the debate was the curiosity about and interest in Sarah Palin. She was selected to serve as the Republican Vice-Presidential nominee the day after the Democratic Convention in August of 2008. This was an effective tactical move by the Republicans to tap down the media attention on the newly minted Obama/Biden ticket. She quickly became a national phenomenon. Palin's public and personal life in Alaska were scrutinized by the media. We learned that that her son left high school and joined the military and that her high school aged daughter was expecting a child. A widely read political blog, The Daily Kos, went so far to claim that Sarah Palin was the grandmother rather than the mother of her newborn child Trig.

Governor Palin was favored by many conservative Republicans because of her opposition to abortion, support of tax cuts, and commitment to the use of Alaskan oil to resolve the energy crisis in the United States. Her selection to serve as the Vice-Presidential nominee for the Republican Party in 2008 was an effort, by the McCain campaign, to mobilize the conservative base of the party. Palin was a strong pro-life advocate with a Down Syndrome infant child who energized the base of the Republican Party. In the first twenty-four hours she was on the ticket, the McCain web site saw a seven fold increase in traffic and it collected \$7 million dollars in on-line contributions (Baltz & Johnson). In the first few weeks after her selection, Sarah Palin was able to breathe life into the sagging McCain campaign. In early September, some polls showed the two campaigns in a statistical dead heat.

Her media interviews in mid-September did little to enhance her reputation with political moderates and her popularity waned. Her initial national television interview was with Charles Gibson of ABC News. While Palin was the celebrity de jour, Gibson avoided questions that would have highlighted that status. He focused on her knowledge of international and national issues. When the interview was over, the focus of the media and public's attention was on her understanding of the Bush Doctrine and not the questioning technique of Gibson. Additionally, she uttered the sentence that some people in Alaska could actually see Russia and that monitoring Russian activity was a part of the foreign policy agenda for a Governor of Alaska.

Palin's second national television interview was with Katie Couric of the CBS Evening News. In this interview, the governor was unable to identify a United States Supreme Court case, other than *Roe v Wade*, which she disagreed with. Palin was also unable to identify any vote that John McCain cast in a twenty-six year career that called for additional banking regulations. This was a problem for the campaign due to the state of the US economy in October 2008. Governor Palin declined to identify a newspaper she read on a regular basis when questioned by Couric about her reading habits. Finally, she once again articulated the oft ridiculed argument that Alaska's proximity to Russia established a foreign policy expertise for a Governor of that state. Voters from across the political spectrum expressed serious concern over Palin's performance in the multi-day Couric interview. Moderates and some conservatives worried that Palin was not prepared to hold national political office. Following the Couric interview, a noted Republican commentator, Kathleen Parker (2008), called for Palin to step down from the Republican ticket.

The interview was followed by a spoof done by the comedian Tina Fey on Saturday Night Live (SNL), a weekly US television comedy show. The Fey impersonation was widely circulated on the internet and led to a spate of Fey guest appearances on SNL where she played the role of Palin. One reason the Fey impersonation was so successful was that she used Palin's language verbatim to answer the questions about the state of the economy. Such answers were supplemented by clearly absurd statements, including a hope that the numbers of foreigners working at the United Nations could be reduced.

The poor performances in the Gibson and Couric interviews, combined with Tina Fey's remarkable impersonation seriously eroded Palin's approval with many in the voting public. In the period immediately following her selection, Governor Palin's approval ratings topped out in early September at around 50%. Her positive ratings exceeded both those of John McCain and Barack Obama. Her meteoric rise in national politics in August and September was followed by a near total collapse in her popularity. While most conservatives continued to support Governor Palin, she found herself with little political support outside of the Republican base.

2. Framing the Debate for the American Public

The harsh light of the national media attention had undermined Palin's public standing and there were reports that it impacted her debate preparation. After

joining the campaign, Palin began preparation by construction and studying a stack of index cards. The picture of someone studying groups of index cards should be a familiar one for people who engaged in intercollegiate debate before the emerging era of paperless debate. These cards had a varied set of facts and names that the Governor studied regularly. A sympathetic member of the McCain team reported that the memorization of facts for the debate was indeed undermining her confidence and preparation. The Governor was being schooled in facts with little attention paid to the method of delivering an argument (Baltz and Johnson p, 358).

In late September, the McCain debate preparation team decided to take control of the sessions from Palin's handlers and moved them to the McCain ranch in Arizona. While in Arizona, the number of people with access to the Governor was restricted. The McCain campaign was aware of the damage created by the suspect interviews and they adapted the preparation in the week leading up to the Vice-Presidential debate. According to the Wall Street Journal, the McCain team worked to eliminate the communication patterns that had eroded her rhetorical effectiveness in public interviews (Langley).

The team had about a week to prepare Palin for a debate that was governed by a set of rules that differed from those agreed upon for the Presidential debates. The Vice-Presidential debate format was negotiated between Democrats and Republicans only after each party had selected a nominee. Throughout the fall, the McCain team pressed for a format that limited the time that a candidate would have to answer a question. In the end, individual answers were limited to ninety seconds with a two minute follow-up period in the debate. This compares to two minute answers with a five minute follow-up for the Presidential debates.

This more restricted format was helpful when preparing Palin for the debate. Her initial answers could be brief and a two minute follow-up meant she would not be required to articulate heavily evidenced answers to questions. The preparation team could provide Palin with a number of arguments on topics she excelled at, and in many cases, she could simply redefine a question to provide answers that played to her strength.

A potential vulnerability associated with this format was that a moderator could elect to ask a set of questions that while not identical, would solicit a repetitive set of answers from the candidate. This was the situation that Dan Quayle

confronted in 1988 when the journalists asked him a set of overlapping questions about his fitness for high office. In this instance the focus of the debate turned to Quayle's qualifications for office and he was left to repeat the same answer over and over again. With each set of repetitive answers, his credibility was further eroded. Under these conditions, narrowing the debate to that one controlling proposition undermined the contestant.

Interestingly, while the format for the Vice-Presidential debate was negotiated after each candidate was selected by the respective campaigns; the moderator was announced in mid-August when the details of the Presidential debates were unveiled. Included in the memorandum of agreement was the designation of moderators for the three Presidential debates, Bill Moyers, Tom Brokaw and Bob Schieffer, and the moderator for the Vice-Presidential debate, Gwen Ifill.

Gwen Ifill was the host of the Public Broadcasting System's weekly television panel discussion of national politics, "Washington Week" and a senior correspondent on the national television political commentary program, "News Hour." She was a protégé of the late Tim Russert of NBC News and a frequent participant on a staple weekly program of American political commentary television, Meet the Press. Additionally, Ifill had served as the moderation of the 2004 Vice-Presidential debate between Vice President Dick Cheney and Senator John Edwards. While some Republicans complained about her treatment of Cheney in that debate, most pundits believed she performed effectively in the 2004 Vice-Presidential debate. Gwen Ifill remains an anomaly in the world of politics. She is an African American woman with a successful track record as a journalist in both the print and mass media. The political commentator, Howard Kurtz (2008), believed that it was her personal identity that allowed her to ask important public policy questions of Cheney and Edwards in 2004 that others might have ignored. Her question about HIV/AIDS in the African American population led the audience to understand that neither candidate had considered this public health crisis.

In the days leading up to the debate, Ifill's contract for a book on the 2008 campaign cycle became the subject of controversy in some political circles. *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama*, was scheduled for release on January 20, 2009. It was described as a review of the modern African-American politician and included chapters on Barack Obama, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick and Cory Booker the Mayor of Newark New Jersey. The contract

was reported as early as May 8, 2008 in a *Philadelphia Inquirer* interview with Ms. Ifill (Schaffer). A cursory internet search in the summer of 2008 would have found the *Inquirer* article or the pre-sale for the book on Amazon.com.

The popular conservative web page World Net Daily released a story entitled “VP Moderator Ifill releasing pro-Obama book” on September 30, 2008. This headline was quickly picked up by the Drudge Report and the story spread into the blogosphere. The McCain campaign and its surrogates affirmed Ifill’s journalistic professionalism and her capacity to moderate the debate. But, the campaign’s statements were constructed in a fashion to authenticate the suspicions of Republican partisans. John McCain’s commented that he believed that Ifill would be objective but reiterated that the disclosure of the book contract wasn’t helpful (Rutenberg). His comments were circulated on Fox News, the media outlet that was running a number of stories about the Ifill controversy in the days before the debate. Sarah Palin told Sean Hannity, a conservative talk show personality, that the Ifill controversy would simply encourage Republicans to try even harder to get their message out to the public. Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, a regular surrogate speaker for the McCain campaign, stated that that Ifill could be fair in moderating the debate. He did, however, raise doubt by about Ifill by suggesting that a moderator who wrote a book in support of McCain might be forced from the post. Giuliani was explicitly tying this controversy to the larger political narrative that the mainstream media in the US attacks political conservatives and protects political liberals. While it is likely that some Republican partisans may have deployed the media bias argument against another journalist holding the moderator post, Ifill’s financial motive added a great degree of force to the claim. To borrow from the language of academic debate, in this particular instance there was a strong link to the widely circulated impact of the left leaning media in American politics. The comments of McCain, Palin and Giuliani that commentators on cable television networks and in the blogosphere would lay bare the interests that undermined Ifill’s position as moderator (ABC News).

This controversy provided Fox News with a couple days of programming. Megyn Kelly and Bill Hemmer fleshed out the financial investment that Ifill had in the outcome of the election (Fox News, America’s Newsroom). An Obama win would certainly lead to greater sales of the book and financially benefit Ms. Ifill. Bill O’Reilly, host of the O’Reilly Factor, complained the Gwen Ifill refused to take his

call for an interview and called for her to step aside (Fox News, O'Reilly Factor). Greta Van Susteren provided a coherent case against Ifill's selection to moderate the Vice-Presidential debate. Her rationale was that while the book's existence may have been in the public domain, Ifill had an obligation to disclose the potential conflict before accepting the moderator's post. Van Susteren suggested that journalists should be expected to follow the ethical code prescribed for lawyers in the US (Fox News, On the Record). The call for Ifill to withdraw was a constant refrain on the FOX Network in the days leading up to the debate.

Ifill's treatment by media personalities on Fox News seemed tame when compared to the comments on talk radio and blogs. Rush Limbaugh, the most successful radio personality in the US, began a segment of his show by reporting to the audience that Ifill was "totally in the tank" for Obama. Later in his monologue Limbaugh asserted that Ifill was on the front line of the feminist assault on Sarah Palin (Limbaugh). The phrase "in the tank" osculated in the blogosphere. The political blogger, Michelle Malkin (2008), published a piece titled "Debate, Tanked." In the post she wrote: "But there is nothing moderate about where Ifill stands on Barack Obama. She's so far in the tank for the Democratic presidential candidate; her oxygen delivery line is running out". She proceeded to outline what she believed was an orchestrated effort by Ifill to financial benefit herself with a book about Obama. For Malkin, it was a financial motive that caused Ifill to withhold the status of her book deal, when offered the opportunity to moderate the debate.

Ms. Ifill was transformed from a journalist into an Obama apologist with a financial interest in his success. Andrew McCarthy (2008) summarized this position in an on-line essay: "Ifill has shed whatever patina of objectivity she had to become Obama's amanuensis. In the process, she has shrewdly designed a commercial transaction that gives her a hefty stake in the outcome of the election - if Obama wins and the inauguration book roll-out goes as planned, she'll make a bundle".

An effect of the line of attack on the moderator, in the three days leading up to the event, was summed up by a liberal blogger, Cenk Uygur (2008), in a Huffington Post entry: "These attacks against Gwen Ifill are so transparent. I don't know why we're even having a legitimate discussion about their validity. The McCain campaign is desperate to have the moderator of the VP debate go easy on Palin. So, they are working her over, ahead of time". The strategy of

redefining Ifill as an opponent rather than a moderator may have effected Ifill's approach when dealing with the inevitable Palin misstatements in the nationally televised debate. Furthermore, Palin was provided license to ignore the question of a moderator whose impartiality had been compromised in the firestorm leading up to the debate.

3. Debate and Argumentation in the Vice-Presidential Debate

While Palin's arguments may not have differed significantly with another moderator, the Ifill controversy provided her with political cover following the debate. She had a plausible reason to avoid Ifill's questions. Ifill was both a member of the left leaning press and someone with a vested interest in an Obama victory. There were a conflicting set of reports on Ifill's performance in the debate. Many in the mainstream media suggested Ifill did a commendable job under trying circumstances. And, interestingly many of the voices who complained about Ifill before the debate were silent on the question in post-debate commentary. Perhaps, their silence reflected that the pre-debate tactic was successful. There were some commentators who suggested that the tactic had succeeded and Ifill had failed to serve as an effective moderator. Lenny Steinhorn, a political communication professor at American University, alleged that Ifill had abdicated her responsibility by failing to ask probing questions. His position was that a debate was more than a joint press conference, and it was not a communicative exchange in which the moderator pushed the candidates to test their fitness for high office (Gough).

Interestingly, Ifill's own comments following the debate hint that she had abdicated the responsibilities of a moderator. On Meet the Press she stated that the role of the moderator was to control the debate. However, she then went on to point out that the decision to avoid or answer questions resided with Palin and Biden in the debate. While Ifill defended her performance in the debate, her comments point to her constraints that night in St. Louis. To avoid sparking a post debate controversy, she was forced to restrict the role that a moderator often plays in a debate. Ifill seemed to have defined control of the debate as nothing more than regulating the length time each candidate would get to speak. Ifill was fully aware that she had ceded, to Palin, control over the content of answers to questions in the debate. In response to a query from Tom Brokaw about Palin ignoring questions in the debate, Ifill was quick to confirm that "she blew me off" (NBC News).

In reviewing the transcript of the debate, there are few, if any, instances in which Ifill probed the candidates. The most obvious use of a follow up took place when Ifill waited more than 30 minutes before asking a second set of questions about the Office of Vice President. In that particular instance Ifill did not highlight the fact that Palin could not accurately describe the constitutional obligations of a Vice President.

Joe Biden found himself alone in pointing out the factual inaccuracies of Governor Palin in the debate. When answering the question about the role of the Vice President, Biden reminded the audience that the Vice President does not preside over the Senate as Palin had suggested. And, rather than targeting Palin, Biden then redirected the answer to assail the job Dick Cheney had done as Vice President in the Bush Administration. Biden had made the factual correction without victimizing Sarah Palin.

In answering another question, Biden implied that Ifill wasn't fact checking the Alaska Governor. When Palin delivered an answer on Afghanistan that bore little resemblance to the reality of the situation, Biden implored Ifill to check Palin's answers. Biden began a foreign policy answer with the statement "With Afghanistan, facts matter, Gwen (Commission, p.24)." The moderator was reduced to a time keeper and Governor Palin was free to either ignore a question she was not prepared for or she could simply produce an answer with very little evidence.

Ifill bore little resemblance to what we might consider a moderator or judge in a debate. Absent a moderator focusing the debate on questions of public policy with an expectation that answers would contain both warrants and evidence, Palin was free to respond in a less traditional fashion. A review of the transcript of the debate provided additional support for the conclusion that the appeals used by Palin were not regularly found in a political debate.

Dating back to the 1960, argument scholars, debate coaches and political debate scholars have undertaken a variety of analyses of the debates. This essay utilizes elements of the approaches used by Rowland in his essay on the Carter-Reagan debate and the work of Riley and Hollihan who reviewed the same debate to assess the quality of Palin's argumentation. When looking at the 1980 transcript, Rowland identified full answers, partial answers, and non-answers to questions. His essay called into question a widely held position that Jimmy Carter was a

more substantive debater than Ronald Reagan. Before and after that 1980 debate, the media reported on the debate as a clash between Carter's substance and Reagan's style. Rowland's conclusion was that Ronald Reagan, and not Jimmy Carter, won the 1980 debate when one employed the standard of complete, partial, and non answers.

A review of the 2008 Vice-Presidential debate using an independent critic was employed to assess Palin's argumentation. The evaluator read some samples of answers from previous debate that met the criteria of complete, partial and full answers before assessing the debate transcript. I then followed up that assessment by reviewing the debate to provide a second glimpse at the answers to Ifill's questions. The finding in this case was that Sarah Palin answered a total of 29 questions for Gwen Ifill. Six of the answers were determined to be full answers. Thirteen of the answers were determined to be partial answers. Finally, ten of the answers were determined to be non answers.

In this particular debate, the widely held expectation that Palin would not answer the questions with the specificity exhibited by Joe Biden was validated. Joe Biden answered 28 questions for Gwen Ifill. Fourteen of his answers were identified as complete answers. Nine of his answers were determined to be partial answers. And, there were five instances in which Biden did not directly answer Ifill's question. Early on in the debate, Palin suggested that she might not answer the moderators question and she intended to speak directly to the American people. This analysis confirms that she elected to follow that path on numerous occasions during the debate.

Beyond looking at whether Governor Palin answered particular questions, there are some interesting results when one looks at the types of support she uses when addressing questions. Riley and Hollihan produced a content analysis of the arguments in Presidential debates which they applied to a number of debates including the Carter-Reagan debate. Their system was based, in part, on the work of a political scientist, John Ellsworth (1965), who looked for "rational" arguments in the Kennedy-Nixon debates of 1960. The argument types coded in the Riley and Hollihan essay were clustered into three categories: Analysis: Any statement of a position supported by reasoning and/or discussion of consequences is classified as analysis. Declarative/Declaration: Any statement which neither reasons nor offers a discussion of the consequences nor offers evidence for support of the statement is classified as declaration. Evidence: Any statement that utilizes evidence in a

non-analytic fashion to support a position either specially espoused or assumed to be espoused by the candidate is classified as evidence.

The Biden-Palin debate was reviewed to see what types of statements Governor Palin made when responding to the moderator's questions. In the debate, there were 20 instances in which Governor Palin used statements of declaration when addressing Gwen Ifill's questions. There were four instances in which she used analysis to support her statements. The reviewer found no instances in which evidence was deployed by Governor Palin. My review of the transcript found two instances in which Palin used evidence to craft an argument. Joe Biden's argumentation patterned differed significantly from that of the Alaska Governor. The reviewer found one instance of declarative argument, two instances of analysis used to buttress the argument and ten cases in which Biden deployed evidence in support of his claim.

The substantive analysis of this debate resulted in two interesting findings. First, Governor Palin did not answer one-third of the questions asked by the moderator in the debate. Without the moderator controversy that preceded the debate, this might have been the focus of the post-debate commentary. Fortunately for Governor Palin, Ifill was viewed by many as an opponent rather than a moderator. And, for those of us who have judged more than a few debates, the Vice-Presidential debate looked like a cross-examination period in many intercollegiate debates. Often debaters do their best to avoid answering opposition questions and they are only forced to do so because of the presence of a moderator. For many viewers, the Vice-Presidential debate did not have a moderator, just a series of contestants. So, questions simply went unanswered. Second, in most cases, Governor Palin did not deploy evidence to answer questions. In place of evidence, Governor Palin deployed conclusions without warrants and folksy stories drawn from stump speeches to directly address the American voters.

While this study highlights some shortcoming in Palin's argumentation, it does not presume to declare Biden the winner of the debate. Many voters were probably tuning into the debate for something other than recitation of a substantive set of policy arguments. With the failed mainstream media interviews and the Tina Fey impersonation serving as the backdrop to this event, the expectations for Governor Palin were extraordinarily low and even a marginal performance could have been described as effective. Viewers monitoring the debate in the hopes of watching Palin implode on national television left

disappointed. And, given that was the expectation for many of the 70 million viewers, the night was a relative success for Governor Palin.

The debate served as a moment in which Governor Palin elected to remind the audience that she was a mother who was committed to improving the lives of middle class Americans. In this instance, the political handlers let Sarah be Sarah. Rather than defended the policies of Republicans and the Bush Administration, Palin told the voters that she was a soccer mother who polled other soccer mothers about pocketbook issues and she even had a “shout out” for a third grade class assigned to watch the debate. This rhetorical approach allowed Governor Palin to present little if any real evidence for her positions in the debate.

This rhetorical technique served, and continues to serve, Sarah Palin well with the conservative base of the Republican Party. However, the use of personal anecdotes as a replacement for evidence when discussing the economy did little to assure moderate voters that she was capable of leading the country. Her folksy charm was not effective when discussing issues that included Middle East policy and nuclear doctrine (Calellos).

The commentators were quick to point out what Palin herself suggested and this study affirmed; Governor Palin did not engage the moderator’s questions. In reviewing the debate the *Los Angeles Times* Media Critic Mary McNamara wrote: “Indeed, with her “bless his/her hearts” and knowing laughs, Palin may have invented an entirely new rhetorical style: random folksiness. Each bit of lighthearted “Sarahness” was followed by a Serious Face as she got down to the issues. Or at least the issues she was comfortable with. . .Palin pronounced early on that she wasn’t necessarily going to answer questions but would instead address the American people directly” (McNamara, 2008, p. A16).

Further, this paper hints at an innovative strategy that can be deployed when a candidate with a low national profile and limited experience is pushed onto the national stage. A campaign can succeed when it further exacerbate the asymmetry between debate contestants. By redefining the debate to be a 2 on 1 exchange, the McCain campaign afforded Governor Palin with the ability to effectively ignore questions. In this debate, the moderator was disempowered and elected not to ask follow up questions or press Governor Palin to clarify factual inaccuracies. Perhaps, most importantly for Governor Palin, conservatives viewing the debate were inoculated against the liberal media and its

representative, Gwen Ifill, by the controversy in the pre-debate public dialogue.

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Argumentation: Problems Of Style And The Contribution Of Kenneth Burke



In the fourth ISSA Conference in 1998, George Ziegelmueller and Donn Parson proposed a perspective on what constituted linguistically sound arguments. It included provisions that (1) it conforms to the traditional field invariant standards of inductive and deductive argument, (2) is based upon data appropriate to the audience and field, and (3) is expressed in language that enhances the evocative and ethical force of argument. What was missing was the development of the third characteristic of linguistically sound arguments: the problem of language.

There has always been some division between logos and lexis. From the time of Aristotle, whose view of argument validity is determined by the underlying notion of mathematical validity, to Stephen Toulmin, who chose to substitute the jurisprudential model for the mathematical model, logos was still the dominant approach to argument. One of the arguments Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca make is that formal systems of logic, which are dependent on mathematical reasoning, seem unrelated to rational evidence. They therefore propose a new look at argumentation - a new rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 3-9).

The problems of language in argument are susceptible to numerous approaches, but the approach of Kenneth Burke may be an effective one in discerning "language that enhances the evocative and ethical force of argument." He suggests that key to understand the concept of lexis is the examination of tropes, and that examination be broader than in their typical literary context. In *The Grammar of Motives* essay, "Four Master Tropes," Burke explores four "literal" or "realistic" applications of these tropes, as their substitutions:

For metaphor we could substitute perspective;
For metonymy we could substitute reduction;
For synecdoche we could substitute representation;
For irony we could substitute dialectic (Burke, *Grammar of Motives*, 503).

None of the approaches to these tropes at first glance seem terribly revolutionary.

Metaphor, for Burke, becomes “a device for seeing something *in terms of* something else. It brings out the thisness of that, or the thatness of a this” (Burke, GM 503).

In his discussion of irony, he attempts to separate Romantic irony, in which the relation of superior of inferior is always present, to “true irony” which reverses the situation. “True irony, however, irony that really does justify the attitude of ‘humility,’ is not ‘superior’ to the enemy...True irony, humble irony, is based upon a sense of fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one needs him, is indebted to him, is not merely outside him as an observer but contains him within, being consubstantial with him” (Burke, GM 514). We shall later discuss how argument and the use of tropes in argument can create consubstantiality.

1. *Metaphor*

Our initial focus on tropes was on the metaphor, which (we then thought) was the trope of tropes for Burke. This was in part because metaphor had feet in both the literary and logical tradition, starting with Aristotle. Two problems arise. The first is that Aristotle wrote of the metaphor in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. In the *Poetics* he states that “Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy.” (*Poetics*, 1457b6-9). Paul Ricoeur makes the observation that in both works, “Metaphor is placed under the same rubric of *lexis*.” Whether the metaphor performs the same function in poetics as in rhetoric is more complex, as Ricoeur argues:

The duality of rhetoric and poetics reflects a duality in the use of speech as well as the situations of speaking.

We said that rhetoric originally was oratorical technique; its aim and that of oratory are identical, to know how to persuade.

Now this function, however far reaching does not cover all the uses of speech.

Poetics - the art of composing poems, principally tragic poems - as far as its function and its situation of speaking are concerned, does

not depend on rhetoric, the art of defense, of deliberation, of blame and of praise (Ricoeur, 12).

Metaphor was the “foundational trope” for Burke (Tell, 37) from the time of *Permanence and Change* (1937) when he “developed at some length the relationship between metaphor and perspective” (Burke, GM 504). When in this work he discusses Bergson’s “planned incongruity” and its resulting “Perspective by Incongruity,” the metaphor as a naming process thrived. (The very creation of “perspective” by incongruity indicates its metaphorical nature.) His discussion of “Word Magic” and the creation of the scapegoat in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941) continued the tradition. Burke’s shortened discussion of the metaphor in *Grammar of Motives* (1945) should not confuse us, since he had discussed the metaphor in prior works. He goes so far as to consider all language development through metaphor: “Language develops by metaphorical extension, in borrowing words from the realm of the corporeal, visible, tangible and applying them by analogy to the realm of the incorporeal, invisible, intangible; then in the course of time, the original corporeal reference is forgotten, and only the incorporeal, metaphorical extension survives” (Burke, GM 506). Since perspective became a key term for Burke and was produced by metaphor, it is easy to see why it could be considered his “foundational trope.”

2. *Metaphor and Deviation*

A theory of language and metaphor developed by Jean Cohen may be helpful in explaining the power of metaphor. He posits that there is a stratum of language which excludes figuration. As Paul Ricoeur comments in explaining Cohen’s approach, language “consists in choosing as point of reference not absolute degree zero, but a relative degree zero, i.e., that stratum of language usages that would be the least marked from the rhetorical point of view, and thus the least figurative. This language exists; it is the language of science” (Ricoeur, 139-40). Cohen considers the metaphor a violation: “Metaphorical meaning is an effect of the entire statement, but it is focused on one word, which can be called the metaphorical word. This is why one must say that metaphor is a semantic innovation that belongs at once to the predicative order (new pertinence) and the lexical order (paradigmatic deviation)” (Ricoeur, 156-157). The creation of metaphor is a disturbance; it is a deviation from degree zero. The reaction to the metaphor, the reduction of deviation from degree zero takes us to audience, and to the enthymeme, which we will explore for its ability to provide methods of

understanding of all four tropes, and the reduction of deviation created by each.

3. *Irony*

In Burke's discussion of irony, the focus is on the irony-dialectic relationship. He illustrates the concept with a comparison to relativism; he argues that relativism sees everything "in but one set of terms" - "in relativism there is no irony." His discussion seeks to separate Romantic irony, in which the relation of superior to inferior is always present to "true irony" which reverses the situation. Burke develops a discussion of Falstaff as a "gloriously ironic conception" because it creates a sense of identification; Falstaff identifies himself with the victims. Rather than steal a purse, he would "join forces with the owner of the purse" (Burke, GM 515). The distinction is that he displays true irony, which is based on humility and kinship; it creates consubstantiality. When Burke takes as one part of the definition of humans that they are "Rotten with Perfection" he has not only created a metaphor but done so by joining it with irony. In *Permanence and Change* (1937) in which even the title embraces irony in its substitution of "and" for "or," he treats of "Perspective by Incongruity" whereby one takes the opposite view. "These are historical perspectives, which Spengler acquires by taking a word usually applied to one setting and transferring its use to another setting. It is a 'perspective by incongruity,' since he established it by violating the 'properties' of the word in its previous linkages" (Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 90). He would equate this incongruity with dialectical irony, and feature its humility. Perspective by incongruity links to Burke's comic frame which "should enable people to be observers of themselves, while acting" (Burke, ATH, 171). Irony becomes one of the chief devices for operating within the comic frame; as such, irony is an ultimate corrective.

4. *Metonymy and Synecdoche*

There is no clear cut distinction separating the master tropes, and for Burke this aids rather than impairs the understanding. He observes that "A reduction is a representation. If there is some kind of correspondence between what we call the act of perception and what we call the thing perceived, then either of these equivalents can be taken as 'representative' of the other. Thus as reduction (metonymy) overlaps upon metaphor (perspective) so likewise it overlaps upon synecdoche (representation)" (Burke, GM 507).

Burke presents a standard definition of synecdoche, with 'such meanings: part for the whole, whole for the part, container for the contained, sign for the thing

signified, material for the thing made (which brings us nearer to metonymy), cause for effect, effect for cause, genus for species, species for genus, etc. All such conversions imply an integral relationship, a relationship of convertibility, between the two terms”(Burke GM 507-8). In a series of letters between Burke and John Crowe Ransom, a dispute arose over whether the tropes operate differently when used by the scientist and the poet. Ransom’s insistence met Burke’s stubborn refusal to separate scientists and poets as users of the master tropes. One clear distinction occurs between metonymy and synecdoche in the exchange. Burke argued that “the lesson of metonymy is that language is always already metaphorical and thus poets and scientists can be placed in the same metaphoric bin” (Tell, 41). Metonymy, for Burke, becomes a strategy “to convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible (Burke 506). When we speak of “the heart” to describe “the emotions,” we are engaging in a metonymic reduction. As such it is a device of “‘poetic realism’ - but its partner, ‘reduction,’ is a device of ‘scientific realism’” (Burke GM 506).

The overlap between terms is discussed with Burke’s observation that “a reduction is a representation” (Burke, GM 507). Tell comments that “if metonymy is the reduction from the immaterial experience of shame to the material experience of colored cheeks, synecdoche is the ‘conversion upwards’ by which the poet understands that the colored cheeks represent shame...It is synecdochic conversion upwards that ‘induces’ the audience to overcome the limitations of language. Metonymy limited language by restricting it to ‘metaphorical extension’; synecdoche overcomes this limitation by inducement” (Tell, 43). This may be a major reason that Burke argued to Ransom that synecdoche should be considered ‘Trope No. 1” (Tell, 43) in contrast to earlier positions in which the metaphor would have held that rank. Burke notes, however, that metonymy may be treated “as a special application of synecdoche” in part because “a reduction is a *representation*” (Burke, GM 509). Since synecdoche is the trope of representation, and since all reductions create representations, we might consider synecdoche the dominant trope for Burke.

5. *The Representative Anecdote*

The concept of the representative anecdote is a key to Burke, for it relates to the major tropes. He begins the section in the *Grammar of Motives* with the now famous observation that in selecting vocabularies of motives, we search for “faithful reflections of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that

are selections of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a deflection of reality” (Burke, GM 59). He develops the anecdote with a comparison of dramatism and behaviorism. His complaint against behaviorism is that its anecdotes are not representative of the complexity of human motives. “A representative case of human motivation must have a strongly linguistic bias, whereas animal experimentation necessarily neglects this” (Burke, GM 59). Initially his discussion of the representative anecdote includes the relation between synecdoche and metonymy: “It is enough to observe that the issue arises as soon as one considers the relation between representation and reduction in the choice and development of a motivational calculus” (Burke, GM 60).

Burke’s purpose is both to develop the representative anecdote and demonstrate how it is the appropriate form to encompass dramatism. But what must it include? It must be “supple and complex enough to be representative of the subject matter it is designed to calculate. It must have copes. Yet it must also possess simplicity, in that it is broadly a reduction of the subject matter” (Burke, GM 60). In this sense, then, it functions as a metonymy. Burke selects drama as his representative anecdote; he thinks it meets these requirements. Dramatism has another characteristic: it features “the realm of *action*” in comparison to “scientific reduction to sheer *motion*” The anecdote must also become a summation, “containing implicitly what the system that is developed from it contains explicitly” (Burke, GM 60).

Brian Crable suggests that the representative anecdote may in fact be the summing activity of all four master tropes. He argues that in any inquiry, “the inquiry’s process of selection and reduction can result in either *reflection* or *deflection*. In the first case, the anecdote is a *representative* anecdote; in the latter, it is merely *informative* (Crable, 324). The problem, he asserts, is that deflection forces one to look “away from one’s subject matter in hopes of seeing it more clearly—and it therefore leads to an inadequate, incomplete interpretation and observation of the subject at hand” (Crable, 325). He illustrates the deflective anecdote as a cookie cutter which creates special patterns but which leaves remaining dough to be discarded.

His position is that a representative anecdote combines all four tropes. “A representative anecdote goes further, however than an informative or deflective anecdote—incorporating not merely perspective and reduction, but also

synecdoche and irony. A representative anecdote is characterized by all *four* major tropes” (Crable, 325).

6. Epistemic Functions of the Four Tropes

In an excellent article on the epistemic function of the four master tropes, Dave Tell explores seventeen exchanges between Burke and John Crowe Ransom, then editor of the *Partisan Review*. Part of the argument centered on Ransom’s belief that “scientific knowledge” and “poetic knowledge” created incommensurable epistemologies and Burke’s rejection of that position. In addition, Tell explores each of the tropes’ epistemic functions. “At the very least, then, language for Burke is epistemic; it creates meaning. The lesson that knowledge is perspectival, the tutelage of metonymy is that language demands such perspectivism, and the exhortation of synecdoche and irony is that knowledge is inescapably rhetorical” (Tell, 37). One might then consider how these tropes function to create that meaning.

Knowledge is produced by the creation of tropes. The metaphor, for example, in Aristotle’s writings “conveys learning and knowledge through the medium of the genus” (1410b13). This leaning is produced by understanding the substitution of one term for another. So in the relationship of terms, the metaphor becomes a deviation from that relationship. The metaphor, in the opinion of Paul Ricoeur, “destroys an order only to invent a new one” (Ricoeur, 334). Yet the invention must be recognized to create that knowledge, for each metaphor contains new information; it either redescribes or recreates a new reality. Creating this new reality is a joint project of the rhetor and audience. This process of metaphoric understanding is included in Lloyd Bitzer’s definition of the enthymeme: “a syllogism based on probabilities, signs, and examples, whose function is rhetorical persuasion. Its successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of speaker and audience, and this is its essential character” (Bitzer, 409). While not all enthymemes are metaphors, all metaphors function enthymematically. For a metaphor to function as a comparison, or create perspective, the grounds on which the comparison is based must be “available” to audiences.

The effect of any of the master tropes occurs in relation to its audience. The creation of the metaphor, for example, is a joint effort of rhetor and audience; it may use the name of signs, probabilities and examples. It may then occur as part of an enthymeme and may be negotiated in the same way aspects of an enthymeme are negotiated. For a metaphor to function as a comparison, the

grounds on which comparison is based must be available to the audience. While Richard Moran is focusing on the metaphor, his observations apply to all the master tropes:

Such imaginative activity on the part of the audience contributes directly to the rhetorician's aim of persuasiveness....

But the crucial advantage here is not simply the surplus value obtained by having others work for you, but rather the miraculous fact

That shifting the imaginative labor onto the audience makes the ideas thereby produced infinitely more valuable rhetorically

than they would be as products of the explicit assertions of the speaker (Moran, 396).

Moran's description of the use of metaphor and its value to the rhetor are strikingly similar to Bitzer's description of the possibilities of the enthymeme. "It is because the implications of the imaginative activity of the audience themselves that the ideas elicited will borrow some of the probative value of their personal discoveries, rather than be subjected to the skepticism accorded to someone else's testimony" (Moran, 396). Thus an audience gains pleasure from completing a rhetor's enthymeme; it may gain both pleasure and knowledge from understanding a rhetor's metaphor. Hence one can "double their pleasure" by understanding that tropes function enthymematically. While there is always the possibility that the enthymeme may not be completed, or the audience gain pleasure, when successful it increases the audience estimate of the rhetor: they praise the rhetoric by praising themselves.

A similar concept of the function of tropes is formulated by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in *The New Rhetoric* (1969) in their concept of "presence" in argument. They see presence as an "essential factor to argumentation" because "through verbal magic alone," a rhetor can "enhance the value of some of the elements of which one has actually been made conscious" (Perelman-Olbrechts-Tyteca, 116-7). Presence becomes the quality arguments possess to varying degrees, endowment them with a sense of immediacy, of importance, even of urgency. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest the key is the imagination, with a nod to Bacon. One way to talk about presence is to say it is the clothing on the argument, and their suggestion of available strategies to create presence include the metaphor, synecdoche and amplification. Clearly the creation of presence by trope is an exercise in "verbal magic." The statement could have come from

Kenneth Burke.

Jean Cohen's writings demonstrate how metaphors create deviation from a "relative degree zero, i.e. that stratum of language usages that would be the least marked from the rhetorical point of view, and thus the least figurative" (Ricoeur, 140). Referring to the poet, Cohen observes "The poet plays upon the message in order to change the language. Should he not also write: the poet changes the language to play upon the message?" (Ricoeur, 154). Would Burke's rhetor act any differently, creating the metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony to play upon the message? The act of reduction of deviation is one method for creating consubstantiality between rhetor and audience. Ricoeur extends the position: "If all language, all symbolism consists in 're-marking reality,' there is no place in language where this work is more plainly and fully demonstrated. It is when symbolism breaks through its acquired limits and conquers new territory that we understand the breadth of its ordinary scope" (Ricoeur, 237). While Ricoeur limits his focus to metaphor, my argument is that tropes, especially Burke's master tropes, are the way that, enthymematically, arguers recreate or remake reality. For that reason, both Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's notion of presence and Burke's dominant notion of master tropes and how they "escape literature" to cover all means of symbolic acts, give import to these symbols in arguments.

In *Kenneth Burke and the Conversation after Philosophy*, Timothy Crusius makes the claim concerning tropes in Burke's writings: "For Burke all language use, including the philosophical and the scientific, is dependent upon tropes" (Crusius, 56). Part of Burke's argument with Ransom was over the nature (or existence) of scientific tropes. Burke believed that even scientific discourses "are dependent on 'root metaphors,' analogies that inform entire movements in philosophy and what Kuhn calls paradigms in science" (Crusius, 60-1). So a rhetor may engage in a dialectic: "you tell me your metaphor and I'll tell you mine." There is always the possibility of the dialectic of dueling metaphors. "Show us, Burke suggests, what your metaphor can do - how much it can account for. We'll put our metaphors to collective testing and critique. And we will find in the process that, relative to a given interest, some metaphors are in fact better than others" (Crusius, 63).

Similar dialectical testing can occur with metonymy and synecdoche. And since there is an overlapping, and there is no clear line between the tropes, the possibility of such testing is always present. Since dialectic is the substitution for irony, the ironic possibilities of tropes always linger. To the extent the

representative anecdote is the combination of tropes, the trope of tropes, the trope sufficient for Burke to encompass dramatism, it functions as the method of consubstantiality. "The anecdote prompts the audience not only to induce knowledge from a reduction, but also to see further reductions from which they might induce further knowledge" (Tell, 47).

In sum, the tropes in Kenneth Burke are epistemic; their creation is enthymematic; the reduction of their deviation is a method of consubstantiality. There will not necessarily be agreement. As Crusius observes, "Nor does Burke's conversation end in agreement.... Our goal may be to prevail or to reach consensus, but we rarely do, and even when we do, agreement is almost always short lived. That is why the conversation is unending." (Crusius, 56). So we may enter or exit the conversation on Burke. With our tropes. If Burke's reading of history is as argument, our reading of Burke, our conversation with Burke, will be about argument, tropologically presented, of course.

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