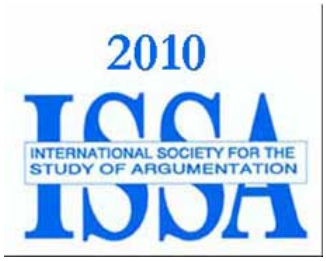
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Dancing, Dueling, And Argumentation: On The Normative Shape Of The Practice Of Argumentation



1. Introduction **[i]**

Do we have an obligation to argue? If so, where does that obligation come from and how does it bind us? Is the obligation to argue a moral obligation, or a prudential one, or is it perhaps an obligation of some other sort? These questions all fall within a more general sphere of concerns that I believe would be aptly labeled the sphere of *normativity in argumentation*. These questions are not the whole of this sphere of concerns, but they are important members of it—perhaps even essential starting points. In this paper I will address this sphere by arguing: 1) that we do have an obligation to argue, and 2) that the obligation to argue applies to us by virtue of our standing as co-participants in a convention of argumentation. My account has its basis in social philosophy, and so is somewhat unlike other contemporary views on offer regarding the obligation to argue. It will be worthwhile to begin with a brief review of these accounts before proceeding to my own.**[ii]**

2. Two Views of the Obligation to Argue

Most positive treatments of the obligation to argue are individualistic in their construction. In them the obligation to argue is treated analogously to moral obligation. This individualistic focus is understandable—it is a great aid in moving, via easy conceptual transits and analogies, between the familiar territory of philosophical ethics and the less-settled country of normative considerations about argumentation. That said, I wish here to think about the obligation to argue from the standpoint of the social and pragmatic context. I wish to think of the obligation to argue not as it applies to individuals in particular instances of argumentation, but in terms of *the practice of argumentation taken as a whole*.**[iii]** But is there any such thing as a practice of argumentation within which one could find an obligation to argue? At least the idea is not an entirely new one. In *Manifest Rationality* Ralph Johnson, for example, characterizes the

practice of argumentation as

…the sociocultural activity of constructing, presenting, and criticizing and revising arguments. This activity cannot be understood as the activity of any individual or group of individuals but rather must be understood within the network of customs, habits, and activities of the broader society that gives birth to it, which continues to maintain it and that the practice serves (Johnson 2000, pp. 154-5).

Johnson goes on to suggest that his view of practice is not unlike that of Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre's view is explicitly normative, sounding in as it does the idea that the form of the activity named by the practice is bound up with standards of excellence, and with particular goods embraced by anyone who sincerely does the activity. Of course in Johnson's case the activity is argumentation, and the value of manifest rationality gives life both to the standards that arguers (in theory) follow and to the goods that that arguers (again, in theory) seek via argument.

While this view of the practice of argumentation may fit the presentation of ideas in Johnson's work, it seems susceptible to an obvious attack. For it seems that persons do argue with different purposes in mind besides the upholding of rationality in communicative acts. Persons argue to impress or annoy or entertain one another, to slow deliberations down or speed them up, or just because they plain feel like it.**[iv]** Fred Kauffeld is one who seizes on this heterogeneity in the purposes of arguers. He holds that not only is it the case that persons engaged in argumentation cannot plausibly be cast as always aiming at the achievement of rationality in their discourse (even in ordinary cases!), but they have other discursive obligations that cannot be accounted for in terms of rationality (Kauffeld 2007). The latter of these charges is the more serious, since the first has an easy answer.

The first objection to Johnson's view– that persons argue for reasons other than to manifest rationality– involves a conflation between *a person's telos* in using argumentation and the *telos of argumentation in general*. Johnson's position can easily be defended from this objection by restricting its scope so that it applies only to the *telos* of argumentation in general. Then, if persons use argumentation for reasons outside of that *telos*, the case is no different than using one's shoe for a hammer, or the edge of one's desk for a bottle opener. Johnson could, if he wished, even go so far as to claim that those who argue for reasons other than the

manifesting of rationality are misusing argument. Of course this defense depends on there *actually being* a *telos* of argumentation in general! I shall return to that notion momentarily.

It is important to stress that Kauffeld's objection to Johnson's view is not that Johnson claims that we have obligations to manifest rationality when we argue Rather, Kauffeld objects to the notion that appeals to rationality can tell the whole story about why and how human beings legitimately deploy argumentation. It is this reservation that motivates the second half of Kauffeld's objection, namely that arguers bear discursive obligations to one another that are not directly related to considerations about rationality. How then does he think arguers incur obligations?

Kauffeld suggests that we incur obligations in argumentation through what he calls the *"Principle of Pragmatically Incurred Obligations"*: In serious human communication, pragmatically necessary presumptions are strategically engaged by openly manifesting addressee-regarding intentions and, thereby, incurring corresponding obligations (Kauffeld 2007b, p. 6).

The upshot of this principle is that arguers are obligated by what they *do*, not by the kinds of beings that they are, and not in virtue of considerations about the inner moral workings of argumentation considered as a practice. Kauffeld's inspiration, one might say, is not practices but promises. Drawing on Geoffrey Warnock's account of moral obligation, Kauffeld suggests that an arguer incurs only those obligations that she voluntarily takes on by clear indications to her audience that she intends to argue, and intends to be taken as arguing (Kauffeld 2007a, pp. 6-9). One of the obligations she thereby takes on is an obligation to display rationality in her argumentation, but the reasons for her entering into argumentation in the first place might have other motivations—a desire to display concern about a particular issue, say, or perhaps to advance a larger political or diplomatic strategy.

For Kauffeld, then, to argue is to put oneself into a particular relationship with one's audience– a relationship in which they, among other things, rightly expect (good) reasons to be given on behalf of the claims one advances. These expectations run in both directions, for to argue (at least in the ideal case) is also to construe the audience as fair, impartial, and rational, and thus to put *them* on notice that one expects one's arguments to be evaluated accordingly. For

Johnson, by contrast, to argue is to participate actively in an independently existing practice of reason-giving and evaluating that is embedded in a socio-cultural and an historical context that to some degree guides one's sensibilities for when argumentation is appropriate (or necessary), supplies the norms by which we critique not just arguments but arguers in their role as arguers in a given situation, and which animates argumentation through provision of a *telos* unique to it: the manifesting of rationality.

It can certainly be agreed that both Johnson's and Kauffeld's views capture important insights about the human activity of argumentation. The issue between them really is one of the location of the *telos* of argumentation. Does it rest with the speaker's *telos* in using argumentation, or does argumentation have it's own *telos*? If it is the former, then argumentation is like social dancing. It cannot be said to have a purpose beyond the situational purposes for which agents engage in it (e.g. for courtship, for enjoyment, for entertainment, or for bragging rights). If it is the latter, then argumentation is like dueling. It has an express *telos* of its own (in the case of dueling this is the settlement of disputes and the preservation of honor through regulated rather than unregulated violence) that is its *raison d'etre*, whatsoever the purposes of the individual persons who partake of the practice. Which then is it? Has argumentation its own *telos* or not?

In the remainder of this paper I wish to explore the possibility that it does. Certainly there is no denying that persons argue for their own reasons, just as they dance for their own reasons, but argumentation seems importantly to be disanalogous to dance. The practices of argumentation, though not identical, are remarkably similar across cultures (Harpine 1993; Suzuki 2008). Dance proliferates in truly wondrous variety. More to the point, cultures have used dance in a multitude of ways, whereas argumentation routinely tends to be used for the same tasks (on which more will be said soon).

Another difference between dancing and argumentation is that while one may at times be right to demand an argument from someone, one would never be in a position to demand a social dance *regardless of the preferences of the person or persons involved*. As one widely repeated source on the ettiquette of dancing puts it (the emphasis is mine):
The first thing to do when one is turned down for a dance is *to take the excuse at face value.* Typical social dance sessions can be as long as three to four hours, and there are few dancers who have the stamina of dancing non-stop. Everyone

has to take a break once in a while, and that means possibly turning down one or two people each time one takes a break (Nosratinia 2005).

By contrast, it often seems as though the giving of reasons is in order, that argumentation is what we *owe* to others or what they *owe* to us, and that sometimes the preferences of persons are worth contravening in order to get them to argue. There is no standing norm of argumentation that says that excuses must be taken at face value. In this respect argumentation is more like dueling, wherein refusals to particpate expose one to risks somewhat more serious than exclusion from the activity. I will have more to say on this in the later sections of this paper. For present purposes however, I take it that the possibility that argumentation has a *telos* is at least initially plausible enough to motivate the attempt to sketch it that I will make here. My proposal will turn on the attempt to characterize argumentation as a convention, after the fashion of David Lewis.**[v]**

3. Argumentation as a Convention

Convention, David Lewis tells us in the 1969 book of the same name, is a response to what he calls "coordination problems". To illustrate the nature of coordination problems Lewis provides several examples, including this well-known one from Rousseau:

Suppose we are in a wilderness without food. Separately we can catch rabbits and eat badly. Together we can catch stags and eat well. But if even one of us deserts the stag hunt to catch a rabbit, the stag will get away; so the other stag hunters will not eat unless they desert too. Each must choose whether to stay with the stag hunt or desert according to his expectations about the others, staying if and only if no one else will desert (Lewis 2002, p.7).

The general account of coordination problems that emerges from Lewis's examples is that they are, generally, …situations of interdependent decision by two or more agents in which coincidence of interest predominates and in which […] relative to some classification of actions, the agents all have an interest in doing the same one of several alternative actions.**[vi]** (Lewis 2002, p.24)

Note that 'coincidence of interests' does not mean 'identity of interests', here. It simply means that all the agent-parties to the decision share *at least some* interests. In a communicative setting we might think of these as being on the order of interests in being understood, interests in being able to speak, and so on.

Of course, coordination problems call for solutions, or at least strategies. Lewis argues that the strategies that emerge over time and become the regularities that we call convention will most often have begun as salient alternatives to the solution of a novel coordination problem. A salient strategy is one that stands out among the alternatives as unique—not uniquely good or bad, just unique. If successful, the strategy becomes a precedent for what to do in further, analogous coordination problems (this has the effect of bestowing a sort of salience by precedent on the strategy). Precedents are important not just because they are, in effect, immediately salient, they are important because the condition the *expectations* that all parties to analogous coordination problems have, given that they have at least some contact with the precedent. Precedents, then, shape the expectations of parties to a coordination problem, and thereby shape their actions as well. Over time, among persons who typically encounter the same sort of situation with some frequency they become the "default" set of strategies for handling that particular problem. They become *conventions*.**[vii]**

A convention, according to Lewis, is a regularity in the behavior of members of a circumscribed population that obtains when they find themselves in a recurring situation. In order for a convention to exist, it must be true that, and it must be common knowledge among members of the population that in almost any instance of the recurrent situation almost everyone will act in conformity with the regularity. It must also be true, and be common knowledge that almost everyone *will* conform to the regularity, and further, that doing so *will* satisfy the preferences of almost everyone regarding the alternatives in such situations. Finally, if a convention holds in the recurring situation then almost everyone will have a preference to act in accord with the regularity provided that everyone else does too.

Can we say that argumentation is a convention? I believe that we can. To see how, we must first describe the sort of recurring situation to which the convention applies. My hypothesis is that such situations are of a sort that calls for what I will call *rational doxastic coordination*. That is, they are situations that call for the production of cognitive equilibrium among multiple agents. In some cases this means the resolution of differences of opinion, in others it means only the achievement of a greater transparency among agents as to each others' viewpoints. The practical upshot of rational doxastic coordination is one of two scenarios: either agents will gain greater intersubjective alignment (their "maps"

of the "territory" will come to match to a greater degree), or they will gain a clearer understanding of each other's points of view (that is, even if their "maps" do not come to match, the parties to the argumentation will leave with a more informed view of how the others see the "territory"). The idea of cognitive equilibrium among agents is thus a family resemblance notion, of which multiple, diverse instances are possible. What holds the family together is that the coordination is achieved through the use of more or less cognitive methods of reasoning—via the giving, hearing, and evaluation of reasons for claims. It is when we find ourselves in coordination problems with others that call for rational doxastic coordination that we naturally gravitate towards argumentation as the method of choice for solving the problem.**[viii]**

In such situations we *do* argue, and it is at least somewhat common knowledge that this is what we do. That this is so is shown by the readiness with which we enter into argumentation in certain situations, even though no one ever tells us explicitly that argumentation is appropriate. Situations involving group deliberation over a range of possible actions, for instance, nearly always give rise to argumentation, even when things aren't that serious (e.g. when deciding which movie to see, or where to go to dinner). Our expectations in such situations quite naturally incline to the giving and evaluation of reasons for the proffered alternatives, and this is so regardless of whether or not anyone makes explicit an intention to argue. It is simply understood that this is what is happening. To adapt a famous line from William James, we simply find ourselves arguing, we know not (most of the time, anyway) how or why.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to think that argumentation accords with our preferences in such situations when one considers the other ways in which the coordination problem could be solved. The alternatives to argumentation in group deliberation situations aren't that palatable. Coercion or domination, such as silencing dissent by violence is one such alternative. Simply doing nothing and "letting whatever happens happen" is another. Still another might be settling things with a coin flip, or by a contest of strength. If the question were put seriously to people which of these methods they would prefer over argumentation in settings of group deliberation over non-trivial choices, it doesn't seem unreasonable to suppose that the answer would be "none".**[ix]** Too, it is worth pointing out that among the reasons for which persons abandon argumentation is a reasonable belief that others have done so already (or at least have done so with

regard to *them*).

If the account so far is a reasonable one, then it makes sense to think of argumentation as a convention. We therefore potentially have an alternative to Johnson's and Kauffelds's views of the obligation to argue. Recall that Johnson's obligations are rooted in our nature as rational beings, and hold primarily because our arguing manifests rationality. Kauffeld's obligations were rooted in the bilateral expectations a speaker creates (perhaps even imposes upon) an audience by indicating that she wishes to be taken as arguing. If we apply Lewis's model to the case of argumentation then a third, different story emerges.

On the Lewisian model, if we think of argumentation as a convention then the expectations we have are grounded neither in a morally salient feature of persons, as is the case on Johnson's view, nor in the act of will of a particular speaker, as is the case on Kauffeld's view. Rather, the expectations are grounded in the fact of the coordination problem being the sort it is, and the fact that there is a precedent for using argumentation in those sorts of cases of which persons generally are aware even if in ways they cannot always articulate. The Lewisian account, I think, is much closer to how we actually do things than the rivals I have discussed here. The choice, however, is not a mutually exclusive one between the three. Important aspects of both Johnson's and Kauffeld's views are consistent with the Lewisian picture. It is, in many ways, a middle ground.

To begin, it may be that Johnson's emphasis on rationality is correct given that a situation can be constructed as one in which argumentation is an appropriate solution only if the parties *do* hold an image of each other as rational beings with whom argumentation is at least possible. Johnson is also right in seeing argumentation as having a *telos*. It's just that the *telos* isn't rationality *per se*, but the resolution of coordination problems that call for rational doxastic coordination.

Likewise, Kauffeld's perspicuous description of the dynamic nature of the way in which argumentative burdens are assigned to the speaker and the audience can be retained even if we do not agree that those burdens are *created* by the speaker-audience relationship, but insist instead that those burdens arise naturally out of the precedent-based expectations of the parties. What Kauffeld will have given us then, is a picture of at least one of the sets of rules governing the giving and receiving of reasons for claims. One who declares an intention to

argue doesn't just create expectations in the minds of her audience as to the nature of her discourse, but frames the entire situation as one in which argumentation is appropriate. The audience probably knows this already, however, so her framing of the situation doesn't so much create the space for argumentation and its attendant obligations as it does emphasize to them that she is (correctly) following the appropriate convention and expects her audience to do so as well. In such occasions, where explicit emphasis is placed on the convention, all parties are held to higher standards perhaps than in ordinary cases, but the convention works as it always does. The difference between cases like those Kauffeld discusses (e.g. Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail") and more ordinary cases of argumentation is like the difference between intramural and competitive (i.e. collegiate or professional) football. The "game" is the same in its essentials, but the expectations in the competitive case are heightened, and the rules that govern the practice are attended to with more scrutiny.

But what of the obligations of individuals in argumentation, conceived of as a convention? Both Johnson and Kauffeld offer a robust grounding for these obligations. What does the Lewisian account offer?

4. Dueling Revisited: The Moral Dimension of the Obligation to Argue

At first blush, it may not seem to be much of an account at all. In fact, it one could be forgiven for criticizing the Lewisian account as morally deflationary compared to both Johnson's and Kauffeld's accounts. Both of their accounts provide moral resources for criticism of those who fail to live up to their argumentative obligations. On Johnson's view such persons are irrational. On Kauffeld's view such persons have betrayed the trust of their audience. As first impressions go, it simply doesn't seem that a Lewisian account carries the same sense of *gravitas*. What sanctions are there for derogation from convention?

Interestingly, Lewis allows for sanctions only when a convention is or involves rules (not all do). He cites game rules as the central example of what rules are, observing that they are partially constitutive of the activity of playing the game they define, and that "violation [of the rules] would be taken as decisive evidence of inability or unwillingness to play" (Lewis 2002, p.104). He is also quick to point out that the stipulated rules "are not the only conventions in the game. Any group of players will develop understandings—tacit, local, temporary, informal conventions—to settle questions left open by the listed rules." (Lewis 2002, pp.

104-5). These are two very important ideas for answering the objection: (1) that violation of the rules is evidence of inability or unwillingness to participate in the convention and (2) that the "game" is larger in scope than the stipulated rules that govern it.

The first point prepares the way for a kind of virtue-ethics of argumentation wherein a participant's character as an arguer is determined by the degree to which she shows willingness and ability to abide by all aspects of the convention of argumentation, both "written" and "unwritten".**[x]** The importance of the second point concerning the scope of the game, and thus the "unwritten" aspects of the convention cannot be overstressed. For it is only when we have them in view that we can see the mistake in endorsing any particular construction of the explicit rules of argumentation as eternal and binding. The rules are only a part of the larger practice. The practice itself continually evolves along with its socio-cultural (and yes, moral) context. It is the idea that there are "unwritten" guidelines (and this is just another way of expressing the point that the "game" is more than the rules that constitute it) that allows us to evaluate a person's argumentation behaviors on grounds that go beyond mere technical competence in stringing together chains of reasons for his claims, and thus allows our assessments of argumentative virtue to carry more substantive moral weight. This dual-aspect way of looking at the obligation to argue has something of a precedent. Kuno Lorenz was onto much the same idea when he wrote:

Hence, norms in argumentation are *technical norms* which when appropriate are called rational with respect to purpose; the norm of argumentation itself is a case of *practical norms*, that is, the actions following it—in our case certain sequences of social encounters involving arguments—exhibit ways of life of the agents concerned and don't serve further extrinsic ends. Internally they show 'intentions', externally they are 'behaviour', which, in traditional terminology, is expressed by saying that such actions are *constitutive* of the agents (Lorenz 1989, p.18).

If all this is right, then the sanctions one suffers for flouting the obligation to argue are to be labeled, as Lewis suggests, as either incompetent or unwilling to argue. These are not charges to be taken lightly. To briefly return to the metaphor of dueling, incompetence (usually due to age or infirmity) was one of the only excuses that one could legitimately deploy for not answering a challenge to one's honor (Wilson 1838). Even for those who do not believe in honor, it

should be easy to see that to be branded with incompetence as an arguer would be no small slight, and would have enormous practical implications among one's fellows, especially at work or in politics. One need only think of those circumstances in which it would be right to judge that a person was incompetent to argue in order to see what those consequences might be. For, truly incompetent argumentation means exclusion from participation in deliberative processes.**[xi]** In those cases the best the incompetent could hope for would be representation a competent advocate. Failing that, the only hope would be for deliberators who sincerely and honestly weighed one's own interests alongside the others under consideration. This, of course, is not something upon which one can always count.

The same is true of those who are unwilling to argue. Those who will not engage in argumentation when they should exhibit a kind of cowardice. Those who, by contrast, engage in argumentation too much or at inappropriate times show a kind of hubris, or pride that equally makes them unwelcome participants in collective deliberation, and likely candidates for marginalization. The bully is as unwelcome as the coward at times when deliberation is necessary. Thus one must not only be competent to argue, but willing to do so in those occasions that call for it. Otherwise one faces real setbacks to one's own interests and the interests of anyone one happens to represent. Hence there are substantial sanctions for failing to uphold the obligations of argumentation on the Lewisian conventionalist view, and the objection that it lacks the resources to frame the moral dimension of argumentation fails.

So there is a story to be told about the sanctions that come into play if one derogates from the norms of the convention of argumentation. Hence the norms of argumentation can be said to have at least some binding force on the Lewisian conventionalist account. Still, one might say, "so what?" Suppose we grant there is a convention of argumentation. What follows from that? There are also conventions for standing in line at the bank. What makes the norms that flow from the convention of argumentation (if we are prepared to grant such a thing) any more important or special than those of more ordinary social conventions? The convention of argumentation as a whole needs defense. This objection is a good one and it demands an answer. Though constraints of space make it impossible to give the answer here, I believe that the defense of the convention of argumentation ultimately lies with an explication of the function that this

convention is uniquely suited to perform.**[xii]** For now however, the purpose of this paper will be met if I have established simply that there is a Lewisian conventionalist alternative to the contemporary interpretations of the obligation to argue, and that this alternative merits further exploration.

NOTES

[i] This paper has benefited substantially from a number of discussions with people at various points over the last year, beginning with and especially Jean Goodwin, Ralph Johnson, Tony Blair, Fred Kauffeld, Bob Pinto, Hans Hansen, Constanza Ihnen, Kelly Webster, Frank Zenker and nearly everyone associated with the Center for Research in Reasoning, Rhetoric, and Argumentation at the University of Windsor while I was a Visiting Research Fellow there in the 2009-2010 academic year. Any errors here naturally are mine.

[ii] Certainly there are many argumentation theorists who are hostile to the notion that we have an obligation to argue. Jean Goodwin, for example, offers several strong arguments against the notion that we have such obligations (Goodwin 2001).

[iii] I am here using argumentation in O'Keefe's second sense, as "process" rather than "product".

[iv] That we should ever feel like it at all is interesting. An exploration of such feelings by evolutionary biology in the same vein as the recent research into heuristics and biases could prove very useful for argumentation theorists.

[v] In (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984) Franz van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst also consider Lewis's account—though they take quite a different position on it than I do here.

[vi] Unfortunately space limitations preclude a treatment of Lewis's more detailed, technical, and enlightening description of coordination problems in terms of coordination equilbria. For now, I direct the reader to Lewis' discussion in Chapter 1 of *Convention*.

[vii] There is an interesting parallel here with the way that heuristics are described in cognitive psychology.

[viii] It would be natural at this point to ask how argumentation came to be the method of choice for such coordination problems. It is my hunch that there is an evolutionary story to be told here that hinges upon the inability of non-argumentative methods of decision-making to handle novel situations of choice. At some point deferring to elders, or following the directives of mythological meta-narratives may simply have proved inadequate to the task at hand. One thinks

here of crisis situations, perhaps environmental collapses, encounters with heretofore unknown peoples, or unprecedented social upheavals as the sorts of instances in which persons would have found themselves driven to give each other reasons rather than to simply follow the guidance of whatever system of stock reasons was already in place in their society. In such situations group reasoning of the sort argumentation theorists study would have stood out as salient in Lewis's sense, and it is easy to see how over time argumentation could have taken on the status of a precedent that says "Where appeals to tradition and mytho-cultural meta-narrative are of no avail, the thing to do is enter into argumentation." Although this is just a hunch, I think it a rather plausible one.

[ix]_Deliberative democrats have long observed that properly conducted deliberations involving argumentation have numerous benefits, including a feeling among participants that their points of view have been respected, that the results of the deliberation are fair, that group solidarity has been enhanced, and so on. See, for example Dryzek's recent work. (Dryzek 2000)

[x] I owe the inspiration for the idea that moral qualities of character can be revealed in one's habits of argumentation to a CRRAR colloquium presentation by J. Anthony Blair.

[xi]There is an interesting flip-side to this coin. For inasmuch as one might worry about being saddled with a burden to answer every single argument one encounters, the account on offer here explains why that worry is unfounded. The arguments of advertisers and hardcore religious proselytizers, for instance, can be rejected on grounds of incompetence if one takes almost any dialectically-influenced view of argumentation. This is because such arguers typically have no intention whatsoever of adjusting their commitment stores, and indeed no intention of truly listening to any objection, challenge, or question for any purpose other than using it to deploy a pat counterargument. I would also argue that such arguers sometimes ply their "wares" in situations that do not call for argumentation at all, and thus fall well outside the boundaries of the convention of argumentation as described here.

[xii]I offer this account in a forthcoming paper in *Informal Logic*.

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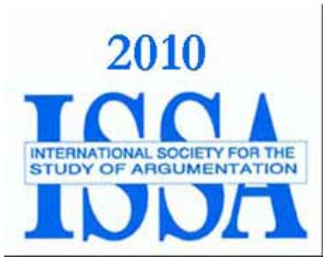
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Reasonable Non-Agreement In Critical Discussions



1. Introduction

In current scholarly literature both in and around the field of argumentation theory, a debate has arisen over the topic of disagreements. In particular, scholars are devoting attention to the issue of whether it is possible for two

parties engaged in a fully reasonable discussion to end their discussion without reaching an agreement on the acceptability of the point at issue. In the literature, such an outcome of an argumentative discussion is typically referred to by means of expressions such as e.g. "reasonable disagreement," (Feldman, 2006; Kelly, 2007) or "legitimate dissensus" (Kock, 2008). Opinions are divided on the issue of whether such an outcome of an argumentative discussion is possible.

In this paper, I refer to such an outcome of an argumentative discussion as "reasonable non-agreement."**[i]** Whether reasonable non-agreement is possible of course crucially depends on the underlying normative question of what in fact counts as reasonable discussion behaviour. With regard to this question, theorists differ substantially in their views, and it is this disagreement that gives rise to different answers to the question of whether reasonable non-agreement is possible.

In this essay I will focus on the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation theory and the pragma-dialectical conception of reasonableness. As opposed to other – less mature – theories of argumentation, the pragma-dialectical theory is equipped with an explicitly developed perspective of reasonableness. In pragma-dialectics, reasonableness is fleshed out through systematically formulated standards known as "rules for a critical discussion." From the pragma-dialectical perspective, argumentative moves are regarded as reasonable only if they do not breach any of the rules for a critical discussion. But what is the effect of these rules on the possibility of reasonable non-agreement? Or put more specifically: Do the rules for a critical discussion permit or prevent reasonable non-agreement? That is the general issue of this essay, which can be phrased somewhat more carefully in the following way:

Q: Is it possible for a protagonist and an antagonist conducting a discussion in full accordance with the pragma-dialectical rules for a critical discussion to end their discussion without reaching agreement on the acceptability of the standpoint at issue? In other words, is pragma-dialectical reasonable non-agreement possible?

The structure of this essay is broadly the following. In Section 2, I provide a very brief introduction to some presently relevant concepts of pragma-dialectics. Section 3 motivates the research question further by showing that the possibility of reasonable non-agreement depends directly on the underlying perspective of reasonableness adopted by the analyst. Particularly, I show how reasonable non-

agreement is *possible* from a so-called "anthropological perspective" of reasonableness, and how reasonable non-agreement is *impossible* from a "geometrical perspective" of reasonableness. This sub-conclusion is then used to pose the question of whether reasonable non-agreement is possible from a "critical perspective" of reasonableness – the perspective of reasonableness adopted by pragma-dialectics. Then, in Section 4, I provide a brief survey of selected passages from the pragma-dialectical literature. These passages give rise to the hypothesis that reasonable non-agreement should indeed be possible from a pragma-dialectical perspective of reasonableness. In Section 5, I loosely test this hypothesis by critically examining a recent pragma-dialectical analysis of the concluding stage of an argumentative discussion. In Section 6, I conclude that the example – at least according to my reading – does not achieve what it is meant to achieve, namely provide an example of a pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreement. Thus, despite the clues in the pragma-dialectical literature pointing to the possibility of pragma-dialectical reasonable non-agreement, it remains to be shown exactly how a reasonable non-agreement can occur within the limits of reasonableness circumscribed by the rules for critical discussions.

2. A Very Brief Introduction to Pragma-Dialectics

Due to space limitations, a full introduction to pragma-dialectics is outside the scope of this paper. It will, however, be useful to start out by considering a few basic concepts of the theory that are relevant for agenda of the present paper.

As mentioned, the pragma-dialectical conception of reasonableness is based on the rules for a critical discussion. These rules constitute the basic framework of the ideal model of a critical discussion. By viewing argumentative discourse from the perspective of the ideal model, it becomes possible to analyse and evaluate argumentation starting from explicit standards (namely those embodied in the rules) rather using muffled intuitions. When viewed from the perspective of the ideal model, argumentation is always an attempt at resolving a difference of opinion between a protagonist affirming the acceptability of a standpoint and an antagonist doubting the acceptability of that standpoint. (Note: that argumentation is always viewed as an attempt at resolving a difference of opinion does not imply the empirical claim that real-life arguing is always and only about resolving a difference of opinion). A resolution of a difference of opinion entails either (1) that the doubt pertaining to the standpoint at issue is overcome in a reasonable way, i.e. in accordance with the rules for critical discussion, or (2) that

the standpoint at issue is retracted because the protagonist realises that it cannot stand up to the criticisms of the antagonist.

The resolution process, i.e. the discussion, will ideally pass through four stages: the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage and the concluding stage. The confrontation stage is where the difference of opinion becomes manifest. The opening stage is where the procedural and material starting points of the discussants are agreed. The argumentation stage contains the actual argumentation proper in the form of a sustained attempt at overcoming the antagonist's criticisms of the acceptability of the (sub-)standpoint(s). The concluding stage is where the result of the discussion is pronounced.**[ii]**

Together, the rules for a critical discussion cover all four stages mentioned above. The rules make it possible to conduct a reasonable argumentative discussion by ruling out certain obstacles to a resolution. One of the key principles of a critical discussion relevant for the present purpose of this paper is the observation that making contradictory statements is not allowed, for if it were then "talking about disputes loses its point" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 17). As van Eemeren and Grootendorst note (2004, p. 58, fn. 38): "Dialectical approaches to argumentation place a lot of emphasis on the need for consistency. In accordance with Popper's critical rationalism, the scrutiny of statements is generally equivalent to the tracing of contradictions, because if two contradictory statements are maintained, at least one of them has to be retracted." So, we note (and this is important for the later argument) that being committed to a statement and its contradiction is impermissible according to the conception of reasonableness found in the pragma-dialectical ideal model and therefore unreasonable.

With this brief overview of some of the presently relevant pragma-dialectical concepts, let me move on to a discussion about perspectives of reasonableness. Particularly, I would like to consider how different perspectives of reasonableness make it either possible or impossible for two parties to finish a reasonable discussion without agreement on the standpoint at issue.

3. Perspectives on Reasonableness

At the basis of any normative view of argumentation is a concern with the question of what counts as acceptable argumentation. The answer to this question again depends crucially on the underlying philosophical perspective on

reasonableness adopted by those passing judgment. Toulmin (1976, ch. 2-4) famously defined three broad perspectives on the notion of reasonableness.

First, there is the *geometrical perspective* on reasonableness. When viewed from this perspective, argumentation is only acceptable if it lives up to very strict standards. Particularly, in order to be acceptable, the argumentation needs to start from true premises and proceed with absolute certainty from these premises through to an undisputable conclusion. Such a view of reasonableness is for instance embodied in Descartes' philosophy and leads, if consistently applied, to scepticism due to the so-called Münchhausen Trilemma (see Albert, 1985, pp. 16-21 and van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 131).**[iii]**

Secondly, and in contrast, there is the *anthropological perspective* on reasonableness. According to this perspective, the acceptability of argumentation simply depends on whether or not the audience judging the argumentation happens to find the argumentation persuasive. This dependence on changeable, tacit and informal evaluative standards of different audiences therefore in an important sense leads to a relativistic view on reasonableness.

Thirdly, as a kind of middle ground, there is the *critical perspective* on reasonableness, in which argumentation is regarded as acceptable if it coheres with certain rules for the critical testing of positions, given that these rules are (or at least aspire to be) simultaneously problem valid as well as conventionally valid (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 16-17).**[iv]**

The geometrical and anthropological views of reasonableness have some interesting corollaries pertaining to the possibility of ending a reasonable discussion without reaching agreement on the point at issue. To see this, consider the following thought experiment: If we imagine a discussion carried out in full accordance with the strict standard of reasonableness embodied the geometrical perspective, is it then possible to think of a way of ending a reasonable discussion with no agreement on the acceptability of the issue at the centre of the discussion?**[v]** The answer is no. If two parties cannot agree on the acceptability of the point at issue in a discussion governed by a geometrical conception of reasonableness, then this must be because at least one of the parties is somehow mistaken with respect to the application of the formal system by use of which the point at issue is being tested. For an analogy of this view, think of a context of arithmetic: If two parties suddenly find themselves in disagreement with respect

to whether 234 x 12 = 2808 and they cannot agree on whether or not a calculation of the indubitable givens on the left sign of the equality sign lead to the result proposed on the right hand side of the equality sign, then this must necessarily be because at least one of the parties is somehow applying the rules of arithmetic wrongly. If there is disagreement, at least one person must be in error. From the perspective of geometrical reasonableness, then, the initial doubt with respect to the acceptability of some point at issue must necessarily end in agreement after the relevant compelling procedures have been applied to test the acceptability of the point at issue. If not, then an unreasonable move must have been committed along the way.

From the anthropological view, things look rather different. To see this, consider another thought experiment. This time image a discussion carried out in full accordance with standards of the anthropological view of reasonableness. Is such a discussion capable of ending with no agreement on the disputed issue, if all the (potentially very relativistic) requirements of the anthropological view are followed? The answer this time is positive. This is because the anthropological view comprises not of one strict standard, but rather several audience-dependent standards all of which are reasonable from within their own relative perspective. If two parties discuss an issue and this results in no agreement on the acceptability of the view at issue, then this is not necessarily because an unreasonable move has been performed by one of the parties along the way. Rather, the failure to reach agreement might plausibly be due to the different evaluative standards held by the two parties in the discussion. After all, it is very possible that each person in the dialogue views the argumentation adduced as being persuasive to different degrees. And there is nothing wrong with this from the anthropological perspective. So ending a reasonable discussion with no agreement on the point at issue is definitely possible from this perspective.

But what about the *critical perspective*? The theory of pragma-dialectics embodies a conception of critical reasonableness in the form of rules for critical discussion. An interesting question therefore is whether it is possible to finish a discussion carried out in accordance with these rules without reaching agreement on the point at issue. The answer is not immediately clear. After all, the critical perspective – and thus pragma-dialectics – incorporates elements from both the geometrical perspective and the anthropological perspective (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 16). Since ending a reasonable discussion without

reaching agreement on the point at issue is impossible from the geometrical perspective, but possible from the anthropological perspective, it takes further investigation to assess whether the critical perspective allows for ending a reasonable discussion with no agreement on the standpoint at issue.

4. Pragma-Dialectical Indications of Reasonable Non-Agreement

Such further research might of course be carried out in a number of ways. Krabbe (2008) provides an interesting example of one such way. By scrutinizing the rules for a critical discussion, he reaches – in a "top-down" fashion – the conclusion that reasonable non-agreements are in no way possible in a pragma-dialectical critical discussion; if the two parties reach the concluding stage, they are forced to either agree that one and only one party "wins", or they break the rules. In this essay I adopt a different, more "bottom-up" oriented, strategy than Krabbe. I concur with Krabbe that the rules seem at first glance to rule out the possibility of reasonable non-agreement, but I remain open to the possibility that the rules can somehow be interpreted in such a way that they do in fact (in a way yet to be discovered) permit reasonable non-agreements. I examine an example provided in a recent pragma-dialectical publication that is seemingly supposed to exemplify a reasonable non-agreement. The aim is to see whether the example indeed can be reconstructed in such a way that it fulfils the two conditions of a reasonable disagreement: (1) the concluding stage is completed without agreement on the standpoint at issue, and (2) no rules are broken. This quite charitable method of investigating the possibility of reasonable non-agreement in critical discussions is driven by some quotes in the pragma-dialectical literature that seem to me to indicate that the conception of reasonableness in the pragma-dialectics should in principle permit reasonable non-agreements.

I begin my exposé of such passages with the earliest manifestation of the pragma-dialectical theory (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984). In this work, van Eemeren and Grootendorst describe the four stages of the ideal model embodying the rules for a critical discussion. In their discussion of the concluding stage, they note the following (1984, p. 86; original emphasis):

A discussion designed to resolve a dispute will have to be concluded with an answer to the question of whether the dispute has been *resolved (stage 4)*. Naturally, not every discussion will automatically lead to the resolving of the dispute, and it sometimes happens that when the discussion is over the protagonist still takes the same attitude and the antagonist still has his doubts,

without either one of them being open to an accusation of irrationality.

An important thing to note here is the use of the word 'irrationality.' For our purposes, this is practically synonymous with 'unreasonableness,' since van Eemeren and Grootendorst assume that the discussants have the sole aim of resolving the difference of opinion according to the rules for a critical discussion. If this is indeed the case, then performing unreasonable moves (i.e. moves that are impermissible from the perspective of the ideal model) can be said to amount to a kind of irrational behaviour, since it goes against the goal of each discussant. In this light, it should be clear that pragma-dialectics in the quote is leaning heavily toward a commitment to the existence of pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreement. However, on the basis of the above quote we should not quite yet be prepared to conclude that pragma-dialectics is indeed committed to the existence of reasonable non-agreement from within its own perspective of reasonableness. One point of potential concern is the use of the phrase "without either one of them being open to an accusation […]" Here, a dual interpretation of the expression "being open" is possible. Either it means that (1) from the perspective of the ideal model of a critical discussion, there is no basis for accusing any of the parties of performing any unreasonable discussion moves. Or it means that (2) it sometimes happens in real-life discussions that one (or more) of the parties in the discussion refuses to give up their position despite facing accusations of irrationality which are justified from the perspective of pragma-dialectics.**[vi]**

So, on the second reading, the pragma-dialectical quote from above could be referring merely to a real-life situation in which the parties are really behaving unreasonably, although they refuse to admit that this is the case. Granted, this interpretation seems a bit far-fetched – especially given that van Eemeren and Grootendorst use the terms 'protagonist' and 'antagonist.' The use of these technical terms implies that we are talking not about real-life situations, but rather about the ideal model of a critical discussion. Still, it remains that it is possible to interpret the quote in a way that does not commit pragma-dialectics to the existence of reasonable non-agreement. Instead of concluding anything on the basis of this quote, let me therefore move on to look for more indicators as to which of the two above interpretations is the more likely.

A very interesting passage on the sufficiency of the pragma-dialectical rules for a critical discussion for resolving disputes is expressed in van Eemeren and

Grootendorst (2004, p. 134). In the passage we learn that:
The rules of procedure that apply to the different stages of a critical discussion are problem-valid because each of them makes a specific contribution to solving certain problems that are inherent in the various stages of the process of resolving a difference of opinion. Of course, the rules cannot offer any guarantee that discussants who abide by these rules will always be able to resolve their differences of opinion. They will not automatically constitute a sufficient condition for the resolution of differences of opinion, but they are at any rate necessary for achieving this purpose.

This quote seems supply further evidence to the reading that pragma-dialectics is committed to the existence of reasonable non-agreements. After all, since it is clearly expressed in the quote that the rules governing the stages of the ideal model are not alone sufficient for achieving the purpose of resolution, it seems to be a corollary that it is somehow possible for two discussants to be completely in line with all the rules for a critical discussion and still reach no agreement on the standpoint at issue.

The last passage to be highlighted is from van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, and Jacobs (1993, p. 26). In this work we find what is probably the most unequivocal evidence of the supposed existence of pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreements. The passage contains the following assertion:
An ideal system for resolution of disputes must be capable of […] ending with […] a mutual recognition that no agreement is (currently) attainable.

And on the next page (my emphasis):
The concluding stage fixes the outcome of the discussion: either a resolution or a decision that no resolution can be reached.

Now there can be no doubt: If the ideal model for a critical discussion is considered to be an "ideal system," (and this certainly would seem to be the case) then it follows that two discussants acting in full accordance with the rules for a critical discussion must be capable of ending with no agreement on the standpoint at issue.

5. An Example of a Pragma-Dialectical Concluding Stage Non-Agreement
The previous section showed a collection of passages from the pragma-dialectical literature, which give rise to the hypothesis that it is possible for two parties

following all the rules for a critical discussion to end their discussion without reaching agreement on the standpoint at issue. Especially the last quote seemed to firmly commit pragma-dialectics to the existence of pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreements. But how might such a discussion outcome look? That is the question I deal with in this section. To do so, I examine an example of a supposedly reasonable non-agreement from a recent publication in pragma-dialectics about indicators of argumentative discourse, namely van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2007, p. 223-226).

The example goes as follows. Two friends are having an argumentative discussion about whether or not to go on holiday. One party adopts the standpoint that they should go on holiday, and the other party adopts the contradictory standpoint that they should not. This means from the perspective of the ideal model that the confrontation stage has given rise to a so-called mixed dispute in which both parties are committed to the acceptability of their respective (and mutually contradictory) standpoints. To defend her standpoint, one party adduces the argument that "it is a psychological necessity for both of them to get away from it all in whatever way." The other party adduces the argumentation that "there is no money for a holiday of any kind." (p. 226). So far, so good. But consider the following issue: According to van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans, in this discussion both of these arguments are taken to be "conclusive" by both discussants (p. 226). But how can this be? Normally, if an argument is conclusive, this obliges the antagonist to give up his doubt with respect to the standpoint at issue and commit himself (through an assertive speech act) to this standpoint (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004, p. 154 and p. 195). But if that happened here, we would be in a strange situation indeed. Namely one in which both parties (1) have given up their original doubt with respect to their opponent's standpoint and (2) adopted the standpoint of their opponent. So, the party who before maintained that the two should go on holiday would now be committed to the standpoint that they should not, and the party who before maintained that the two should not go on holiday would now be committed to the standpoint that they should go! This kind of "double resolution" with a switching of the standpoints and commitments does not seem to be the right way of analysing cases of reasonable non-agreement. The explanation of the holiday example provided by the authors is not of much help:

[I]n a mixed dispute it may occur that both parties are entitled to maintain their standpoint at the end of the discussion. While classical logic does not allow two

opposite statements to be true (or untrue) at the same time, viewed dialectically, it is quite possible for two opposite standpoints to be tenable (or untenable) on the basis of the discussion that has been conducted. This becomes visible exactly because the discussion is analytically broken down into two discussions resulting from a non-mixed dispute.

This quote seems puzzling. It is clear that according to the pragma-dialectical theory, any real-life mixed dispute needs to be analytically broken down into two non-mixed disputes before a systematic evaluation is possible. However, performing this analytical operation does still not explain how two contradictory standpoints end up being tenable on the basis of one and the same empirical discussion, even given that the actual empirical discussion was mixed. After all, we may assume that the pragma-dialectical emphasis on consistency we encountered earlier extends beyond the narrow theoretical confounds of the analytical realm into the real-life behaviour of real arguers. If this very reasonable assumption (that any given real-life arguer is not permitted to commit himself to two contradictory propositions in one and the same real-life discussion) holds, then it is outright unreasonable for two contradictory standpoints to become simultaneously tenable on the basis of the same empirical mixed discussion, since this would imply that both discussants were committed to contradictory standpoints in their real-life discussion. And, again, as mentioned earlier: if we allow for real-life discussants in mixed discussions to commit themselves to contradictory propositions, then we end up with grim prospects of real-life resolution of differences of opinion. After all, we learn that no discussion may "contain any propositions that are inconsistent with other propositions. Otherwise it would always be possible to successfully defend any arbitrary standpoint against an attacker, which inevitably renders the resolution of a difference of opinion impossible." (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 145). So, even though the example briefly analysed in this section is supposed to show a case in which both parties are entitled to maintain their standpoints at the end of the discussion, I do not see how this is possible without disregarding one or more of the standards of reasonableness implicit in the pragma-dialectical model.

6. Conclusion

The issue of this essay was whether it is possible for two discussants behaving fully in accordance with the pragma-dialectical rules for a critical discussion to complete their discussion without reaching agreement on the standpoint at issue;

in other words, whether pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreements are possible. Taking an alternative approach to that of Krabbe (2008), I investigated the issue by attempting to reconstruct an example of a supposedly reasonable non-agreement in such a way that it constitutes a dialectical path to the completion of the concluding stage without any breach of the pragma-dialectical rules. The reconstruction showed that the example could not be reconstructed so as to be an instance of a pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreement, since it violated requirements of consistency. The "bottom-up" approach chosen in this paper does not enable me to conclude categorically that pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreements do not exist. It does, however, enable me to conclude that it still remains to be seen whether and, if so, how it would be possible for two discussants to follow all the rules for a critical discussion and complete this discussion with no agreement on the standpoint at issue.

NOTES

[i] I prefer this stylistically somewhat suboptimal term, since it avoids a certain implication of the term "disagreement", namely that it only pertains to what is called "mixed disputes" in pragma-dialectics.

[ii] This superficial overview of the basics of the pragma-dialectical theory is based on van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, pp. 42-68).

[iii] Descartes famously captures the geometrical perspective on reasonableness, when he states in the introduction to his "Discourse on Method" (1637/2008, p. 51): "… I deemed everything that was merely probable to be well-nigh false."

[iv] Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, p. 6, fn. 8) point out, again following Toulmin, that the geometrical view seems to be prominent in logical approaches, the anthropological perspective seems to be prominent in rhetorical approaches and the critical approach seems to be prominent in dialectical perspectives. While there is undoubtedly some empirical support for this categorisation, I prefer not to put too much emphasis on this. I believe, like van Eemeren and Grootendorst, that e.g. logical approaches can espouse a critical perspective of reasonableness, just like I believe it is possible for rhetorical approaches to adopt a critical perspective.

[v] Here we assume, along with the proponents of the geometrical view, that it is indeed possible to proceed from premises known to be true beyond doubt. This is of course a highly controversial epistemological position, which both Popper (1971, 1972, 1974) and Albert (1985) have pointed out relentlessly.

[vi] This reading is, however, complicated by the fact that van Eemeren and

Grootendorst use the expression “when the discussion is over,” which – as far as the ideal model is concerned – implies that all four stages have been completed. If all four stages have been completed, there is no real point in launching an attack on the adversary and accusing him of being irrational. Analytically, the accusation of irrationality would have to be regarded as part of the discussion itself, wherefore it does not make sense to talk about the accusation as happening after the discussion. However, another reading of the phrase “when the discussion is over” could be “after the argumentation stage,” which in a way could be said to contain the “discussion proper.”

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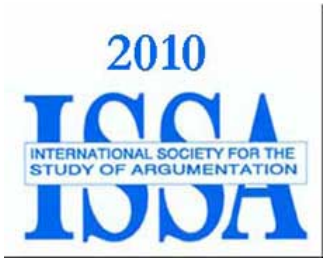
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Epistemic Foundationalism and Aristotle's Principle of the Absolute



1. Turtles all the way down

According to an ancient Hindu myth, the earth is a flat disc resting on the back of a tiger. The tiger stands on an elephant, and the elephant in turn stands on the carapace of Chukwa, a gigantic tortoise. The obvious question 'What is Chukwa standing on?' was already posed by John Locke in the seventeenth century and again by William James two centuries later (Locke 1959, p. 230, p. 392; James 1931). Not that Locke and James were particularly interested in an answer: it seems that they simply wanted to make fun of a cosmogony that reduced the world to an exotic version of the Grimm's Bremen Town Musicians.

A variant of this myth is to be found in the first lines of Stephen Hawking's bestseller *A Brief History of Time:*

"A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public

lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the centre of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: 'What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.' The scientist gave a superior smile before replying: 'What is the tortoise standing on?' 'You're very clever, young man, very clever', said the old lady. 'But it's turtles all the way down!' (Hawking 1988, p. 1)

The idea of an infinite sequence of turtles supporting the earth is, if anything, even more absurd than that of one reptile doing the job. An infinite set of turtles, assuming that they could exist, would after all still need to stand on some ground. What could that ground be? Not a turtle, for every turtle has another turtle under its feet. But it can be nothing other than a turtle, after all *it's turtles all the way down.*

Throughout the ages philosophers have thought it obvious that such unending series of reasons are absurd. Whether it be turtles that stand on other turtles, or events that arise from other events, or actions performed for the sake of other actions: in all cases it is thought to be incoherent that such a series might consist of an infinite number of steps. At some point the series will have to stop: either at a turtle that supports but is not supported, or at an event that causes but is itself uncaused, or at an action for the sake of which all other actions are performed, but that itself is performed for its own sake.

A veto on a *regressus in infinitum* is a *Leitmotiv* that resounds down the ages throughout the annals of philosophy. Innumerable proofs of God's existence depend on this proscription. Even philosophers who expressed doubts about it, such as Kant in his discussion of the antinomies, thought it better to go quietly along with the embargo. Clearly the tendency to call a halt to threatening endlessness is deeply anchored in our cognitive apparatus.

In his inaugural dissertation as an extraordinary professor in Amsterdam, the logician and philosopher Evert Willem Beth subjected this tendency to searching scrutiny (Beth 1946). The prohibition on infinite series or sequences is, according to Beth, a crucial component of traditional metaphysics. Moreover, Beth sees much evidence that this ban on infinite sequences is mostly implicit and not openly addressed. He himself goes on to make it fully explicit in what he calls

‘Aristotle’s Principle of the Absolute’ (APA):
“Suppose we have entities *u* and *v*, and let *u* have to *v* the relation *F*; then there is an entity *f*, which has the following property: for any entity *x* which is distinct from *f*, we have (i) *x* has the relation *F* to *f*, and (ii) *f* has not the relation *F* to *x*.” (Beth 1968, p. 9).

In symbols:
($u) ($v) $F(u, v) \rightarrow$ ($f) (“x) [$x \neq f \rightarrow \{ F(x, f) \ \& \ \neg F(f, x)\}$].

Applied to our turtles, this principle would say that, if turtle *a* is supported by turtle *b,* and *b* by *c,* and so on, there must be a turtle *f* that (perhaps indirectly) provides support for turtles *a,b,c,* and so on, but which itself is not supported by any of the other turtles.

Of course no-one takes this turtle example seriously. And indeed, the illustrations of the principle that Beth gives of APA are historically more responsible. Here are three of them.

(1) Interpret ‘*a* has the relation *F* to *b*’ as ‘*a* comes into being through *b*’. Then the absolute entity *f* is that through which all others come into existence, but which does not exist by virtue of any of the other entities. Beth argues that this *f* has all the characteristics of the *archè* in the sense of Presocratic philosophy.
(2) Interpret ‘*a* has the relation *F* to *b*’ as ‘*a* is desired because of *b*’. Now *f* becomes the *summum bonum,* i.e. the Supreme Good in the sense of Aristotle and of the Mediaeval church fathers.
(3) Interpret ‘*a* has the relation *F* to *b*’ as ‘*a* is moved by *b*’. In this case *f* is Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover, i.e. that which sets all else in motion but remains itself unmoved.

However often APA has been applied in philosophy, including natural philosophy (for Beth suggests that Isaac Newton uses it in his arguments for absolute space), the principle itself is of course invalid. This can be simply shown by giving a counterexample. Take for *a,b,c,…* the integers (positive, negative, and zero), and interpret ‘*a* has the relation *F* to *b*’ as ‘ *a* is larger than *b*’. Then APA leads to the false conclusion that there is an integer, *f*, that is smaller than any of the other integers.

The fact that APA is not valid does of course not imply that it sometimes cannot lead to true statements. Indeed it can. If one changes the domain of *a,b,c,…* from

that of the integers to that of the natural numbers, 1,2,3,… only, then there is indeed a natural number that is not larger than any of the others, namely 1.
Accordingly, the lesson that Beth draws is not that APA is worthless, but that it has to be applied with care. It depends on the nature of the relation *F*, and nature of the domain *a,b,c,…* whether APA leads to a correct conclusion or not. Under the interpretation of *F* as 'is larger than' the conclusion is correct if *a* and *b* are the natural numbers, but incorrect if *a* and *b* are the integers.

2. A chain of reasons

Why am I explaining this matter? Not merely to laud Evert Willem Beth, but to draw attention to recent developments in epistemology.
An important question in modern epistemology is what it means to say that a given belief or proposition is *justified* by another belief or proposition. In an epistemic chain a proposition p_0 is justified by another proposition p_1 that, in its turn, is justified by a third proposition p_2, and so on. Another way of expressing this is by saying that a reason for p_0 is p_1, and a reason for p_1 is p_2, and so on. Exactly as in the case of the turtles and the examples of Beth, the question arises whether this chain can extend indefinitely. Does an infinite sequence of reasons make sense?
Most epistemologists assume without much debate that such an endless chain is absurd. The majority of these philosophers insist that the chain must terminate in a ground that is not justified by another proposition, but is true, or is probably true, *tout court.* These are the epistemic *foundationalists,* who number among their ranks giants like Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Berkeley, and in the first half of the 20th century C.I. Lewis and Moritz Schlick. In the second half of the 20th century foundationalism lost some ground, but it has in the last few decades made a strong comeback, witness books with titles such as *Resurrecting Old-Fashioned Foundationalism* (DePaul 2001).

This comeback should not surprise us. For foundationalism is a position that has a great intuitive appeal. Indeed, what is more natural and obvious than the idea that our knowledge is grounded, that one cannot go on and on with justification. Moreover, it seems that, as Jonathan Dancy has it: "if all justification is conditional …, then nothing can be shown to be actually … justified" (1985, p. 55). A proposition p_0 whose justification is conditional on that of p_1, whose justification is conditional on that of p_2, and so on, *ad infinitum*, is not justified at all, so it

seems. If we want to justify p_0 at all, the sequence of justificatory propositions will have to terminate at a source from which the ultimate justification springs (cf. Gillet 2003, p. 713).

However, choosing foundationalism means no more nor less than opting for Aristotle's Principle of the Absolute in the field of epistemic justification. And the lesson of Evert Willem Beth was that this principle, however intuitively plausible it may be, does not always lead to a correct conclusion. Sometimes it does, but sometimes it does not: it all depends on the domain in which it is applied, and the relation between the elements in the domain. Let us look more closely both at the domain and the relation. We will then find out whether APA applies or not.

3. Truth and probability

The nature of the domain that applies to an epistemic chain is obvious enough: it is that of propositions or beliefs in propositions. At first sight the identity of the relation seems clear too, it is that of epistemic justification. In an epistemic chain, proposition p_n is justified by proposition p_{n+1}, so p_{n+1} is an epistemic reason for p_n.

The matter is however not so simple. What exactly do we mean when we say that one proposition is a reason for another? What is the precise nature of the justification relation? Today the answer to this question differs from what used to be thought. Epistemologists in the past generally supposed that justification is some sort of inference: to say that p_n is justified by proposition p_{n+1} meant for the traditional epistemologist that the truth of p_n is inferred from the assumed truth of p_{n+1}. Modern epistemologists have a different approach. They stress "the widely accepted point", in the words of Jeremy Fantl, "that justification comes in degrees" (Fantl 2003, p. 537). In other words, justification is seen as a gradual concept: it can be more or less. Consequently, present-day epistemologists are more sympathetic to the view that justification is to be understood in probabilistic terms rather than as a form of inference. Below we shall consider chains of justification both according to the old interpretation of justification, and according to the new probabilistic interpretation. We will see how epistemic chains of infinite length fare in both cases.

First the old understanding: epistemic justification as a form of inference. The inference may be deductive or inductive, but here we will concentrate on deductive relations.**[i]** Is it coherent to maintain that a chain of deductive

implications could go on and on indefinitely? We saw that Dancy thinks not. If one justifies p_0 by pointing out that it follows deductively from p_1, and p_1 by showing that it deductively follows from p_2, and so on, then that means, according to Dancy, that there is no justification of p_0 at all.

Dancy presumably means that we *can never know* if p_0 is true or false if the chain of implication is infinite in extent. If this is what he means, he is not necessarily right. It all depends on what the negations of the various propositions in the chain imply. If p_{n+1} implies p_n and $Øp_{n+1}$ implies $Øp_n$ for all n=0,1,2,..., then the chain is one of bi-implications, and so all the propositions are together either true or false. Indeed, in this case we would not know which was the case. But if $Øp_{n+1}$ implies p_n instead of $Øp_n$ for all n=0,1,2,..., then all the propositions in the chain are true. This may not be a very interesting situation, for all the propositions would be tautologies, but it is a case in which we would know the truth value of p_0.

What happens to an infinite chain when justification is interpreted as a probabilistic relation that satisfies the Kolmogorov axioms, as many modern epistemologists are wont to do? The great majority of contemporary epistemologists still think that an infinite chain of justification makes no sense, but not everyone agrees as to why this is so. Sometimes it is thought that the probability associated with a proposition is necessarily *undefined* if the chain is infinitely long (Dancy), and sometimes it is claimed that it is defined, but is necessarily *zero* (Lewis 1929, pp. 327-328; Lewis 1952, p. 172). In the first case the probability of p_0, say $P(p_0)$, has no value, and in the second, $P(p_0) = 0$.**[ii]**

In recent years I have argued that these claims are incorrect (Atkinson & Peijnenburg 2006; 2009; Peijnenburg 2007; Peijnenburg & Atkinson 2008). Modern foundationalists of all stripes, whether they think that an infinite series of probabilistic relations must lead to probability zero or to none at all, are mistaken. Not only is it possible that such an infinite series leads to a definite and sensible value, it is in fact a very common situation. The assumption that we need to make is that the conditional probabilities along the chain obey the following inequality:

$$P(p_n|p_{n+1}) > P(p_n|Øp_{n+1}),$$

for all n. This is a very natural assumption indeed. It states that p_n is more likely

to be true if p_{n+1} is true than if p_{n+1} is false, and thus that p_{n+1} makes probable p_n. For p_0 to be *justfied* we require in addition that the resulting probability $P(p_0)$ is greater than $P(\emptyset p_0)$, and often one requires more than this, namely that $P(p_0)$ be greater than some agreed upon theshold of acceptance, say 0.9.

Under the above inequality, the usual situation is that $P(p_0)$, and indeed all the unconditional probabilities $P(p_n)$ in the chain, have well-defined, nonzero values. Aristotle's Principle of the Absolute thus generally fails in the case of chains of probabilistic justification. True, there *are* sequences of conditional probabilities in which $P(p_0)$ is undefined by the infinite series, and others where $P(p_0)$ is defined by the infinite series but is zero. But far from being always the case, such sequences are demonstrably very exceptional special cases. The generic situation is that in which the unconditional probability of p_0 is well-defined and nonzero, even if the justification of p_0 consists of an infinite chain of conditional probability statements.

It will be clear that epistemic justification in a probabilistic context is much more interesting than it is when justification is conceived as implication. As we saw, in the latter case the possibility of an infinite series leading to a well-defined probability was restricted to an exceptional and not very interesting state of affairs. When the series is one of probabilistic justification, however, the matter is precisely reversed. Now it is the norm that an infinite series leads to a well-defined and significant probability, and exceptions are rare and not very important.

The reason that we can often complete an infinite probabilistic series is that the contribution from the conditional probabilities, $P(p_n|p_{n+1})$ and $P(p_n|\emptyset p_{n+1})$, becomes smaller and smaller as n becomes larger and larger. This does not mean that the conditional probabilities themselves need to tend to zero, for they could even tend to one, or they may indeed become smaller: that is of no import. The essential thing is that their contribution to $P(p_0)$ becomes smaller and smaller as n increases, and that the infinite series of probabilities is always convergent. Elsewhere we have proved that the sum of the series indeed always converges and that it differs from $P(p_0)$, the probability of the target proposition, only in very exceptional cases (Atkinson & Peijnenburg 2010).

Another interesting consequence of these results is as follows. Suppose that the epistemic chain in a particular case *is* finite, but *very* long. Because of the finitude, there must be a last proposition, say p_{1000}, separated from p_0 by a 999 links. For the foundationalist p_{1000} is the ultimate ground on which the justification of p_0 rests. After all, it is p_{1000} that justifies p_{999}, and p_{999} that justifies p_{998}, and so on. To determine $P(p_0)$ we need to know not only all the conditional probabilities, but also the unconditional probability $P(p_{1000})$. At first sight this looks like grist to the foundationalist's mill, but the opposite is in fact the case! The numerical contribution of the probability $P(p_{1000})$ to $P(p_0)$ will generally be very tiny, for $P(p_{1000})$ is multiplied by a coefficient that involves all the conditional probabilities along the entire chain, and this coefficient is small. The lion's share of the contribution is provided by the conditional probabilities alone, without hardly any help from $P(p_{1000})$. The 'ground' p_{1000} may be very probable, even certain, $P(p_{1000}) = 1$, or very improbable, even absent, $P(p_{1000}) = 0$; all this makes very little difference to the calculated value of $P(p_0)$. It should be clear that this fact flies in the face of the foundationalist who insists that the series, and the probable truth of the proposition in question, is completely supported by one solid foundation.**[iii]**

In conclusion, I have claimed that an infinite chain of propositions that support one another epistemically is not absurd. The situation is however radically different if epistemic support is construed as implication on the one hand, or in probabilistic terms on the other. As we have seen, an infinite epistemic chain almost never leads to a *truth value* as such for a target proposition, but almost always to a *probability value.*

4. Two objections

One might cavil at the above conclusions in two ways. The first complaint could be to claim that I have merely shown there to be a conceptual, but not a physical possibility of an infinite epistemic chain. Is this not simply a mathematical trick? The second, related objection is that the argument tells us nothing about the world.

Concerning the first objection, it is of course true that we are not able to give unlimited reasons for our reasons *sub specie aeternitatis*. We are mere mortals who have only a limited time at our disposal. Unending epistemic chains in *this*

physical sense are for practical reasons impossible. The interesting objections against infinite regression do not have to do with this physical impracticability, but rather an imagined conceptual impossibility (Post 1980). Surprisingly this does not refer to our inability to argue for or retain an infinite *number* of thoughts or reasons, for many foundationalists are quite happy to admit that this is in some sense possible. Fumerton, for example, admits roundly that "we do have an infinite number of beliefs" (Fumerton 2001, p. 7). What foundationalists deny is that all these beliefs could be tacked on to one another in an infinite chain in such a way as to lead to a well-defined (generally gradual, i.e. probabilistic) belief. They deny, in other words, that we can *complete* an infinite epistemic chain: "we cannot complete an infinitely long chain of reasoning" (Fumerton 2004, p. 150; 2006, p. 40). Or in the formulation of Robert Audi:
"For even if I could have an infinite number of beliefs, how could I ever know anything if knowledge required an infinite epistemic chain?" (Audi 1998, p. 183).

Above I asserted (and elsewhere I have demonstrated) that one can indeed have knowledge that presupposes an infinite epistemic chain; knowledge of a unique value for a probability, $P(p_0)$, is obtained from the consideration of an infinite, convergent series of conditional probabilities. Although *coming into possession* of the knowledge involved a conceptual exercise (namely the summation of a convergent series), the knowledge itself is not a mere conceptual business. It tells us something about the material world.

This brings us to the second objection. *Have* we really learned something about the empirical world if we have computed a probability on the basis of an infinite series? I can most readily explain how this can be so by giving an example. Imagine colonies of a bacterium growing in a stable chemical environment known to be favourable to a particular mutation of practical interest. The bacteria reproduce asexually, so that only one parent, the 'mother', produces 'daughters'. The probability that a mutated daughter descends from a normal, not mutated mother is known to be very small (say 0.02); but the probability that a mutated daughter descends from a mutated mother is on the other hand high (say 0.99).

Let p_n be the proposition: 'the ancestor in generation n, reckoned backwards from the present, was a mutant'. We are told further that each batch develops from a single, mutant ancestor. In this situation, in which the conditional probabilities are the same from generation to generation, $P(p_0)$ is equal to a geometric series

that can be summed explicitly. Imagine a batch to be sampled after, shall we say, 150 generations since the seeding of the batch. The original great-great-grandmother, in generation 150 before the generation sampled, is known to be a mutant, so $P(p_{150}) = 1$, and we find that $P(p_0)$ is perfectly well defined: it works out to be 0.670.

Now we can just as easily calculate $P(p_0)$ on the assumption that the number of the preceding generations of bacteria was not 150, but infinite. We now have a geometric series with an infinite number of terms; but it can nevertheless be completed in the sense that its sum can be calculated exactly. We compute two thirds, which is only half a percent less than the 0.67 that we obtained using the assumption that the ancestor in the 150^{th} generation was a mutant. Evidently we have made a very useful statement about the empirical world.

At this point, a foundationalist objecting to infinite chains might argue that our story about the bacterial colonies is not an example of infinitism at all. For no bacterium has an infinite number of ancestor bacteria, if only because of the fact of evolution from more primitive algal slime, which had evolved from earlier life forms, which sprang from inanimate matter, which originated in a supernova explosion, and so on, back to …. to what? To the Big Bang? But it seems that the Big Bang may well not represent a beginning, in view of the deformation of spacetime. The whole point here is precisely the question whether or not there was a starting point. The foundationalist's postulate that in the bacterial case there was a start begs the question.

NOTES

[i] Whereas deductive relations are clearly nonprobabilistic, inductive connections may be regarded as first steps towards a full understanding of justification in probabilistic terms. The latter remains however a matter of debate, since contemporary epistemologists are not in agreement on the sort of probability central to inductive justification.

[ii] As is well known, the concept of probability that satisfies the Kolmogorov axioms is open to several interpretations. For the purpose of this article it does not matter which interpretation is favoured, although it would be natural to think of probability as degree of belief.

[iii] John Turri has argued that foundationalists are not committed to finite epistemic chains, let alone to the idea that such chains must have a solid

foundation (Turri 2009). Elsewhere it has been argued that Turri's argument rests on a confusion between the limit of a series and its ground (Peijnenburg and Atkinson, forthcoming).

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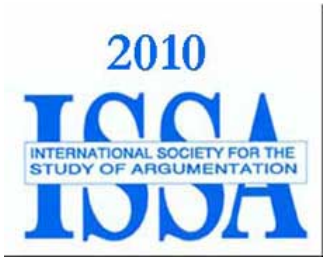
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – How Authors Justify Their Participation In Literary Interviews: Analyzing The Argumentative Dimension Of The Interview Through Its Interactions



Disinclination to participate in interviews is common to some authors, for whom this kind of journalistic practice contradicts with the raison d'être of a writer, which is to express herself via her novels and other writings. The interview challenges this idea by shedding light on the image of the author and her personality, in a way that

sometimes casts a shadow over her works. But literary interviews are telling, not only because of what they disclose on the author of the novels we love to read, but also because they may reveal other aspects, world views, attitudes towards literature, and so forth. In this particular paper, we choose to focus on ways in which reluctant authors justify their choice to be interviewed during the interview. The theoretical framework in which we discuss this is based on three elements.

One has to do with the literary interview and its significance to the study of literary criticism. As a genre which brings to the fore the personality of the writer, it has been subject to criticism and belittling (Barthes 1984; Deleuze 1977), even by the writers themselves. Hence some authors are reluctant to be interviewed, as we shall see in specific cases. Furthermore, little was thought of it as a framework where knowledge can be produced. However, in the recent decade, a few studies (Rodden 2001; Lavaud & Thérenty 2004; Yanoshevsky 2004, 2009), actually show its importance. In particular, Yanoshevsky has demonstrated through the study of the verbal interaction that takes place during the interview, how theoretical information about writing is processed and conceptualized (Yanoshevsky 2004, 2009).

The second is the project which is of particular interest to argumentation scholars. It concerns the argumentative approach developed by Amossy (2000, 2005, 2009), entitled Argumentation dans le discours (Argumentation in Discourse), to which we will refer here as ADD. Most approaches to argumentation (various approaches to rhetorical discourse like van Eemeren 1984, 1992, 2008; Leff 1997; Plantin 1990, 1998) concentrate on discourse aiming specifically at persuasion (speeches, pamphlets, conflict resolution or mediation, advertisements, etc.). However, ADD chooses to address not only discourses having an explicit argumentative aim, but also those comprising an argumentative dimension, like news reports, novels, etc. (Amossy 2005, p. 13). According to this approach, such discourses, too, belong to the realm of persuasion insofar as they tend to orient the audience's ways of seeing and judging the world, or their reflection on a given problem (Amossy 2000, p. 29). It is in this theoretical context that we choose to place the study of the literary interview. In this paper, our aim is thus not so much to ask whether the author's interview can be considered as a literary genre. Nor will we deal with the question of whether it is worthwhile to be studied per se, which to us is a given.

But rather, we view it here as a verbal interaction, in the framework of which meaning is negotiated: the cooperation between interviewer and interviewee yields a certain knowledge of the author , and produces, via the interaction, ways to view literature. It is in this respect that the literary interview can be viewed as a discourse conveying an argumentative dimension.

The third element, inseparable from the two previous ones, is the adoption and adaptation of interactionist perspectives, within the study of the interview. Elaborated by Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni **[i]** , this approach examines speech acts "in context […] and within a sequence of acts that are not randomly linked" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005, p.53; our translation). It emphasizes the dialogic and dialogical character of the interview in which participants "build together a more or less coherent discourse" and at the same time "establish between themselves a certain type of relationship (of distance or proximity, hierarchy or equality, conflict or collusion), which continues to evolve over the course of interaction" and contributes to the co-construction of meaning (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005, p. 68; our translation).

By combining the three elements, we demonstrate through the analysis of the interaction of the author and her interviewer, how justification takes place. We identify the interlocutors' communicative strategies such as paraphrasing [relances], introduction of new themes [consignes] (Blanchet 2004), evading the question, as well as other strategies which have not been listed in the current literature on conversation analysis, like theorizing and theme extension. We also look into the interlocutors' positioning, i.e. the fact that they are alternatively situated in the dominating/ subjugated position (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1992; Yanoshevsky 2009), and their cooperation strategies (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1992, pp. 141 – 155), such as challenges and the co-constructing of an agreement. In the course of the analysis we also take into account what Genette (1987) calls paratext, that is, the prefaces to the interviews, and other relevant writings by the same authors. This allows us to show how justifying one's participation in the interview is the result of the interaction within the interview, but is also produced by the text surrounding it.

We demonstrate the above by studying sequences of interviews with two authors Milan Kundera and Andrei Makine. Both authors are known for being hostile to interviews. While Kundera rejects the genre in general, both authors are averse to highlighting the author's personality, rather than his works.

1. Milan Kundera and the Interview

1.1. Author's rights and the interview

From 1985 on, French speaking author of Czech origin, Milan Kundera, decided to refuse giving interviews to the media, unless they appear in written form. Despite that, and breaking his own rules, he accepted a conversation with Lois Oppenheim in 1989 **[ii]**. A writer herself and a university professor, Oppenheim is known for her work on Beckett and Butor, as well as for her interviews with numerous writers, amongst whom avant-garde authors.

As an interviewer, Oppenheim was well aware of Kundera's unwillingness to participate in interviews. Oppenheim therefore opens the conversation with an explicit question concerning his lack of enthusiasm. She first reminds her reader (by talking to Kundera and for the protocol) that the writer condemns "the interview as it is traditionally practiced", and notes his decision " not to grant any more interviews unless they are accompanied by your copyright". She then expresses solidarity with Kundera ("I understand your frustration…") and accepts the distinction the author has drawn between dialogue where there is a real give and take, a sincere sharing of thoughts on issues of mutual interest, and interview, where only those questions of interest to the interviewer are posed and only those answers that serve his purpose are reproduced… (Oppenheim 1989, p.7)

This opening, considered as part of the so-called "Face Flattering Acts" strategies**[iii]** , enables Oppenheim to win over the good-will of her interlocutor and to weaken his resistance. As Blanchet would have it:

The main thing in strategies and tactics [of the interview] is to diminish the factors that are susceptible of inhibiting the communication during the interview and to increase the factors which contribute to it (2004, p. 146).

At the same time, Oppenheim challenges Kundera by asking questions in a way which casts doubt upon the latter's decision not to give interviews ("Nevertheless, I wonder if you are not somehow depriving your public in restricting the interviews you grant to those that you will co-edit?"). Kundera willingly responds to the challenge and retorts by confirming his dislike of the interview. The confirmation is followed by an explanation of such a negative attitude towards the genre: it is because the published text is reported by a journalist who becomes thus the "proprietor" of the discourse. Such a situation, according to Kundera, gives way to approximations, inaccurate citations and perversions, things which a writer cannot possible accept: 'An author, once quoted by a journalist, is no

longer master of his word; he loses the author's right to what he says." The interview's major faults are imprecision and the author's lack of power with regard to the interviewer. In other words, Kundera resents the interview because it fails to convey the author's intentions.
However, Kundera's response does not end here. He goes on to provide a solution that will enable him both to avoid the embarrassment of a traditional interview, and yet not to renounce entirely this practice:
The solution, however, is easy and, I hope, agreeable to you : We have met, you and I ; we have spoken at length ; we have agreed to the subjects that interest us ; you have composed the questions ; I have composed the answers and we are adding at the end a copyright. (Oppenheim 1989, p.7)
We can see that Kundera's reluctance is mitigated by reviewing the rules of the interview. Kundera's proposal here can be interpreted as a new communication contract to which he and Oppenheim should abide during the current interview.

Hence, the genre's rules are redefined during the interview and are inserted in a larger theoretical framework, namely Kundera's thought on Author's copyright, rewriting and the author's control of his text. Reframing thus the question, Kundera achieves a dominant position in the interview, which in theory is reserved for the interviewer. He seems to play the interviewer's role by dictating the rules and by doing so, he thus justifies his participation. Oppenheim is voluntarily game ("This seems entirely reasonable to me. In fact, I can't see what more could be wanted than the guarantee of authenticity that the copyright provides."). Thanks to her compliance, complicity is established between the interlocutors, contributing thereby to the productive continuity of the dialogue.

We have previously mentioned the need to look into the paratext of the interview in order to further investigate the question of justification. Indeed, we studied the preface to Oppenheim's interview with Kundera. It is here that we can find an explicit reference to the "initial communication contract", which – according to Blanchet (2004, p. 149) "has very important consequences on the way to achieve" an interview. In the preface, Oppenheim starts out by explaining her view of the author's interview ("To esteem an artist is to esteem his art, not his person") and her expectations vis-à-vis the interviewee ("the modesty of his responses […] and the steadfast refusal to ever, even momentarily, take refuge behind any sort of facile rhetoric…"). This meta-discourse on the interview is followed by specific observations she makes on her interview with Kundera:

The scope and purpose of the interview ultimately derived from our conversations were refined, however, by a mutual interest in particularizing, in clarifying a number of concrete, and not necessarily related, points of interest. (Oppenheim 1989, p.7)

Thus, the preface is the place where the contract of communication is defined. Besides the fact that it has a bearing on the interlocutors' positioning game ("mutual interest" implies a more or less equal relationship between the participants), it also determines the way the reader should read the interview.

1.2. "The novelist is not a public figure"

The explanation supplied by Kundera during the interview on why he rejects this genre – because of the loss of the mastery on the expression of his thought – is accompanied by other justifications, as he explains in another interview: "the novelist is not a public figure obliged to speak of all the small and big problems of the moment" (Chantigny 1987; our translation). Kundera repeats here an idea he has previously expressed in his 1985 Jerusalem Discourse, where he makes a distinction between a novelist and a writer:

…novelist, I am not saying a writer. The novelist is he who, according to Flaubert, wants to disappear behind his work […] It is not easy today, where everything of minor importance has to pass through the unbearably illuminated scene of mass media, which contrary to Flaubert's intention, make the work disappear behind the image of its author. (Kundera 1986, p. 186; our translation)

In fact, in his correspondence, Flaubert often turns to the idea that "art […] needs to remain suspended in infinity […] independently of its producer" (1995, vol. 13, 27.03.1852, p.174) and a "novelist does not have the right to express his opinion of whatever it is" (1995, vol. 14, 05/06.12.1866, p. 315). On the one hand, this idea is part of Flaubert's vision of art, and on the other hand, it is a criticism directed towards his contemporaries or predecessors, especially Balzac**[iv]** . As for Kundera, by appealing to Flaubert's authority, he implicitly positions himself against the interview tradition as it was introduced and developed by French journalist Jules Huret, at the end of the nineteenth century in France. As a founder of the genre, Huret was mainly interested "in the personality of the writer with whom he met and whose portrait he vividly traced" (Royer 1987, p. 18; our translation).

In response, the interviewer uses paraphrasing (Blanchet 2004), with a take on

Kundera's concession: "In your prize of Jerusalem speech you have said: […] by taking on himself the role of public figure, the novelist endangers his work which might be considered as a simple appendix of his gestures, his declarations, his taking a stand…" Do you still think that?" Kundera confirms this idea laconically ("more than ever"), but uses the occasion to expand his reflection on the issue:
The Agelasts, whatever one may say, are always in power…the word Agelast means: he who never laughs, who doesn't have a sense of humor. It is in this context that I have quoted this remarkable Jewish proverb: Man thinks, God laughs. Rabelais himself had heard God's laughter. Hence, his terror and his hatred of the Agelasts of his time, just as we should be fearful of those of our time. […] Only laughter, God's laughter, can save the individual (Chantigny 1987; our translation)

Siding with Rabelais, Kundera thus implicitly justifies his participation in this dialogue: one should save the world, we should therefore speak, we should make sure the voice of those who laugh are heard. At the same time, it is precisely by an answer which does not respond to the question asked, that the interviewee proceeds in reversing once more the roles, as he takes again the dominant position in the interview.

It should be noted that in the preface to this interview, the interviewer writes:
Can you imagine a writer who settles for writing nice books and refuses all interviews with those Misters and Missis of the press? Hence like a sly [sournois] hypocrite, I ask him to kindly write a dedication in his last book (ibid.; our translation)

This preface's double meaning is of significance. First, by revealing to the reader his own slyness, the journalist regains the dominant position that was initially his, but was confiscated by his interlocutor during the interaction. Secondly, this starting point, different from the one posed by Lois Oppenheim in the interview we analyzed earlier, can provide justification for reversing the roles: given that this is not an interview but a conversation**[v]**, one shouldn't have to abide to the normative laws of interview, and dialogue takes place spontaneously.
Despite the initial difference between the two situations (determined and concerted interview in the first case vs. spontaneous conversation in the second), the interviewee uses the same justification strategies in both cases, that is, the reversal of roles and the integration of ideas which surpass the questions posed by the interviewers. These strategies allow him to gain back his position as an

author and to present his point of view on questions which seem of importance to him.

2. Andrei Makine and the Interview

A French writer of Russian origin, Andrei Makine is equally negative about the interview, which to him, as for Kundera, is a place where the author's reputation is celebrated. For the sake of justifying his hostility, he, too, appeals to Flaubert's authority**[vi]** : "to speak of one self is a petit-bourgeois temptation which one should always resist […]. If not, one becomes miserable, looking to sculpt out one's own statue" (Thibeault 2004; our translation). Why then give interviews? While justification is never really made explicit, it seems to lie in what he says during interviews with journalists. As an example, we chose Makine's interview with Catherine Argand, a *Lire* magazine journalist and an expert on author interviews**[vii].** It is perhaps her expertise that allows her to constantly keep her dominant position throughout the interview, as we can see in the introduction of new themes, requests for precision, and reformulations.

Her command of the interview is visible from the onset, as she announces a provocative theme, which may be considered as a challenge for the interviewee: "It seems like you are not very sociable or talkative…" (Argand 2001, p. 24; our translation). Makine chooses to ignore this challenge and responds in a generalization in which he compares Russian civilization – silent and grounded on the "ontological communion" of souls – and the French one belonging to a discursive culture "worried about controlling the world"(p.24). The inference allows him both to avoid a direct response to the interviewer's question and to regain his own place, by continuing to discuss the essence of literature. By not providing a direct answer he continues to refrain from speaking in personal terms while developing themes in which he is particularly interested:

… when one writes [in Russia], it is for the sake of saying something very important, […] to establish a communion between the souls, the hearts, human beings. The novel's ideal is that one is unable to say anything about it…(Argand 2001, p.24; our translation)

Using this strategy of avoidance Makine is able to confirm his dominant position because he is able to outdo his interlocutor's expectations by offering an unexpected point of view.

The interviewer then challenges Makine once more (in an effort to take hold of

her dominant position) and asks for a clarification of the meaning of a word “soul, a word which is rarely used by French contemporaries…” This time, the writer cooperates with his interviewer and tries to explain to her the reasons for his love for this word:

I like this word “soul”, because it avoids social, professional, racial etiquettes […]. It is the story of my novel by the way, of a man without characteristics who manages to get rid of everything that society has imposed on him, like denominations. It is a stripped soul under the skies (ibid., p. 24; our translation).

Nevertheless, he remains silent with regard to Argand’s remark on contemporary French, that is, he uses a strategy of avoidance. By choosing to respond to some questions and themes while ignoring others, he once more regains his strong position in the interview. The short discussion on the soul’s liberty is followed by a series of rephrasing on the meaning of Makine’s works and the role of literature. These questions tend to side with Makine, enabling him to render explicit his thoughts on literature. He cooperates voluntarily with the interviewer and gives several definitions of what literature is to him**[viii]** .

Argand’s dominant position is also evident in the frequent paraphrasing of Makine’s replies. For instance, Makine’s reflection on “the stripped soul under the skies” is met with the following paraphrase: “In other words, existential liberty?” (p. 24) or:

Makine : … When I describe the battle field […], I speak of bodies that stink and groan and it isn’t art for art sake . Do you know that in a battlefield it is not the odor of blood which dominates?

Argand : Er, no…

Makine : It is excrements, exploded intestines.

Argand : Shit, to put it crudely? (ibid., p.25; our translation)

These two deliberately provocative paraphrases, where the interviewer seems to get a hold on Makine’s vocabulary, give the impression of a stranglehold on the interview by the interviewer, who seems to know where she is heading. The objective of these paraphrases seems to be to force Makine out of his own territory and perhaps to extract from the writer opinions and ideas which he would not have otherwise shared or discussed during the interview. However, Makine does not comply with these attempts to extract responses. Instead, he constantly manages to introduce into the conversation themes he considers worthy of being elaborated, such as literary creation, the language of literary

works, and literary thought on society and Man. In fact, following the question on "shit", Makine revolts against the sinking of language and indulges in a thought on French language. His obsessive revisiting of the same themes is significant. It seems like the need to expose them to the public explains and justifies the author's participation in an interview, where he nevertheless expresses his dislike of the genre.

During their conversation and by recurring to the strategy of definition, Argand tries to define Makine as a rebel ("Wouldn't you be a rebel?"). While confirming this definition, Makine extends the discussion:

The writer has the power to recreate time, to abolish it, to dominate it by words; the power to recreate a being according to his own experience. He is the only one capable of transforming reality, that is to see it as it is under the golden, silver or copper layers shown by TV on the one hand and intellectuals subjugated to political, media and sociological discourses on the other. Sub-culture floods the air and the screens. By promising happiness, songs, millions, it works like a mental drug… Literature is the last square of resistance in face of the dumbing down machines. It is the last safe haven of free thought… (ibid., pp.25-26; our translation)

Makine's generalization here contains a grain of provocation. We can see how, while accepting the interviewer's definition, he takes advantage of it for his own sake: he wants to discuss the role of literature in contemporary culture. Thus, despite the dominant position held by the interviewer during most of the interview (it is she who determines the questions and their order, the demands for clarifications, the paraphrasing etc.), Makine confirms his dominant position too, by constantly subverting the meaning of the questions and bringing the discussion back to things he considers cardinal.

We have seen how from the moment Makine accepts to be interviewed, he advances his own agenda. Since he is convinced that the novel should neither be intellectualized nor theorized (Authier 2001), his thoughts on literature and its role in contemporary society cannot be expressed directly in his novels. He then uses the interview as a framework to develop his own literary theory. In this way, Makine's reader can find in the interview not only a certain physical presence of the writer, but first and foremost a fresh outlook on literature, which complements his previous works.

3. Conclusion

The application of interaction analysis to the literary interview, for the purpose of exposing the argumentative dimension of discourse shows that despite their explicit hostility to the interview as a genre, the authors implicitly justify their participation in the interview. Using different strategies, they manage to turn the interaction into something that corresponds with their aims or points of view. In both cases discussed, the interviewees benefited from the exchange because they were able to discuss their respective viewpoints. Thus, Kundera redefines the roles of the interlocutors as he wishes and appeals to the authority of other renowned writers (Flaubert and Rabelais) to justify his position vis-à-vis the interview. Makine chooses the strategy of avoidance and generalization in order to ignore the topics suggested by the interviewer and emphasizes themes he believes are of importance.The interview thus becomes an additional framework for the authors, where they can develop their non-published ideas or propose their own interpretations of their works.

In addition, in both cases it was found that the respective positions occupied by the participants during the interaction are constantly reshuffled. Despite the efforts of the interviewers to occupy the dominant position, strategies such as paraphrasing, reformulation of the game's rules, theme extension, and avoidance of questions allow interviewees to switch to the dominant position and justify thereby their participation in the interview. This provides an additional explanation of the interviewees' dominant position: as the interview is the product of a constant interaction, whose objective is to obtain information from the interviewee for the benefit of the reader, interviewers often follow the interviewees' initiatives.

Finally, the analysis can benefit from an understanding of the paratext. Thus, the inclusion of interview's prefaces in Kundera's case enables us to see how the author's dominance is counter-balanced by the interviewer's constant quest to control the interaction, by way of introducing a preface that orients the reader's perspective.

We have thus seen how the analysis of the interview enables us to solve the apparent tension between the author's reluctance to take part in an interview and his actual participation in the interaction. It is within the interaction itself that the arguments in favor of such participation are produced.

NOTES

[i] It should be stressed that this perspective has already been initiated by

Goffman's sociological theory that studies face-to-face interactions and according to which "the individual will have to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally express himself, and the others will in turn have to be impressed in some way by him" (Goffman 1969, p.2).Without going into the details of Goffman's theory, however, it should be noted that Goffman is concerned not only with speech but with all social behavior in a given context as it is reflected in the gestures, facial expressions or clothing (Amossy 2010, p.26).

[ii] One should note that even prior to his decision not to give any interviews Kundera has always chosen his interviewers with great care. Some of the more renowned include Alain Finkielkraut, Guy Scarpetta, Normand Biron, and Philip Roth.

[iii] This term is a positive variant of "Face Threatening acts" (FTA) first conceptualized in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). It has been taken up and developed through the analysis of verbal interactions by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1986; 2005). It takes into account not only negative speech acts, which threaten the faces of the interlocutors (the FTA) but also the positive acts which she calls "rewarding Face Flattering Acts" (FFA).

[1v] Regarding Flaubert's contempt of public life, cf. Wall 2006.

[v] The journalist does not introduce himself as one to Kundera, neither does he ask him to participate in an interview, but he pretends to be a simple reader who tries to engage in a conversation with his favorite author. This is why we claim that the rules of the interview as such are not really applicable here.

[vi] This quotation seemingly represents a reformulation of Flaubert's idea expressed in his letter Alfred le Poittevin: "The only means not to be unhappy, is to lock up oneself in Art and not to consider at any price all the rest; vanity replaces all when it is seated on a large basis" (Flaubert 1995, vol.12, 13.05.1845, p. 449).

[vii] Among her interlocutors we can find Pascal Quignard, Michel Houellebecq, Linda Lê, Annie Hernaux.

[viii] "Let these people speak, these phantoms of ordinary life confined to the limbs [sic.], give them life, it has been for me a true literary challenge" (p. 25); "To me it is the writer's task: to show that beyond the troops of victims or idiots, there were rebels and men who did not comply with their role as hangmen" (p.25); "Today, only literature can synthesize, avoid quick schematizing, abusive generalization" (p.25), etc.

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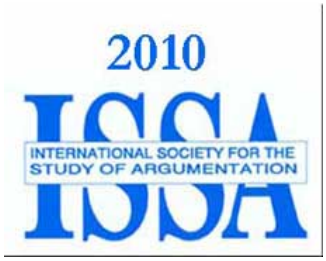
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – From Liberation To Liberty: Strategic

Ambiguity And Politicization in Berlusconi's 1st Liberation Day Speech: "April 25: A Honor And A Commitment"



Italy is the country I love. Here I have my roots, my hopes, my horizons. Here I have learned, from my father and from life, how to be an entrepreneur. Here I have acquired my passion for Liberty. . . . Never as in this moment does Italy . . . need people with a certain experience, with their heads on their shoulders, able to give the country a helping hand and to make the state function. . . . If the political system is to work, it is essential that there emerges a *pole of Liberty* in opposition to the left-wing cartel, a pole that is capable of attracting to it the best of an Italy that is honest, reasonable, modest.

Silvio Berlusconi, "Let Us Build a New Miracle"

The *People of Liberty* is a movement of women and men who believe in *Liberty*, want to maintain their *Liberty*, and identify themselves in the values of the Party of European People: the dignity of the person, the centrality of family, *Liberty* and responsibility, equality, justice, legality, solidarity. The People of *Liberty* was born in *Liberty*, from *Liberty*, and for *Liberty* so that Italy, respectful of its traditions and national unity, could increase its *Liberty*, justice, prosperity and become truly supportive.

Silvio Berlusconi, "People of Liberty Statute"

1. Berlusconi's second thoughts on Liberation Day: April 25, 2009

Many journalists and politicians described April 25, 2009 as a watershed moment in the history of the Italian second Republic. Indeed Liberation Day 2009 seemed to symbolize a turning point in Italian political life: For the first time in fifteen years the controversial Italian Prime Minister and media tycoon, Silvio Berlusconi, participated in the sixty-fourth celebration of Liberation from Nazi-Fascism.

Berlusconi's participation greatly surprised the Italian public: During the previous year there had been a heated debate between Silvio Berlusconi, leader of *Popolo della Libertà* (PdL) and Walter Veltroni, ex-leader of *Partito Democratico* (Pd), about the continued and disrespectful lack of participation of the right-wing coalition in Liberation Day celebrations. **[i]** The controversy centered on Berlusconi's April 25 meeting in *Palazzo Grazioli* with Giuseppe Ciarrapico, a PdL senatorial candidate in the upcoming national elections and a notorious admirer of the Fascist period. **[ii]** During the month of March, Ciarrapico's candidacy, supported by Berlusconi, generated great embarrassment inside and outside of Berlusconi's party because of Ciarrapico's nostalgia for Fascism and his open admiration for Benito Mussolini.**[iii]** Berlusconi's rejection of the invitation to participate in the national Liberation celebration, and his meeting with the neo-Fascist and future PdL Senator on Liberation Day, have been perceived and interpreted by the Democratic Party as an open insult to both democracy and the Liberation that is celebrated on that day.

In response to this criticism, Berlusconi dismissed the accusation of the Pd as "a mean and vulgar controversy" and foreshadowed his argument about the necessity for a national pacification around the divisions between parties and individuals concerning the Resistance and the Liberation. Berlusconi, often referred to as *Cavaliere* or Knight, replied to critiques and to the accusation of a lack of a serious political conscience, saying that his thoughts about the Liberation Day were at that point quite clear: It was time for the Liberation Day to become a celebration of Liberty for the whole Italian people, a celebration that should transcend the sole recognition of the merits of the Resistance and become, definitively, a celebration unifying the Italian people around the achieved liberty of all.**[iv]**

On April 25, 2009, Berlusconi, consistent with the previous year's declarations, finally joined the celebration of the Liberation Day for the first time. This event was remarkable, not only because it was the first time that this happened, but also because Berlusconi decided to celebrate Liberation Day in Onna, the destroyed town in Abruzzo, which was the epicenter of the deadly earthquake that struck the city of L'Aquila on April 6, just a few weeks earlier. In these painful days for the region of Abruzzo and for Italy in its whole, the Prime Minister found the perfect strategic rhetorical situation to participate in the celebration for the first time.**[v]** Onna, the destroyed little town outside of L'Aquila, had been the

hometown of a famous Partisan Brigade and it also suffered from an attack by Nazis during the Resistance. Its recent destruction by the earthquake, and its history as a site of Resistance provided Berlusconi with a reason not to miss again the celebrations of Liberation Day. The context of pain and desolation and the need for national cohesion to face the dire tragedy in Abruzzo provided the Prime Minister with the occasion to present his revision of the celebration of Liberation: For Berlusconi April 25 in Onna became, as forecasted in 2008, "Liberty Day."

2. Reading the Speech: from Liberation to Liberty

The speech Berlusconi delivered in Onna is strategic: On the one hand, Berlusconi finally recognized the "fundamental value of the Resistance for our nation" and for the Italian democratic and republican Constitution.**[vi]** This important statement allowed Berlusconi to open up a dialogue with the left-wing party in a moment of extreme political division and public discontent.**[vii]** On the other hand, Berlusconi felt the urge to recognize the value "of those who fought for the wrong side" as well, thus balancing his nod to the left-wing coalition worldview and his own party worldview. Recognizing the value of those who fought for the wrong side is indeed a direct reference to the proposal by the PdL to make the financial benefits of the *Partigiani* (the Resistance Partisans) and the *Repubblichini* (those who fought defending the Fascist Republic of Salò) equal under law.**[viii]**

In the introduction of his speech Berlusconi sets up the ideological shift from *Liberazione* (Liberation) to *Libertà* (Liberty). Liberation as such is, paradoxically, mentioned only once in the very first sentence and then subsequently replaced, and subsumed by Liberty, which is used instead throughout the whole speech until the very end, when Berlusconi, in his concluding remarks mentions Italy, the Republic, and April 25 defined as "the celebration of all Italians who love liberty and want to stay free" and "the celebration of the reconquest of Liberty." *Liberazione*, in other words, literally disappears from the speech to make space for a more Berlusconi-friendly concept, *Liberty*. Its absence in the conclusion of the speech is very significant as well because it marks a definitive absorption into the idea of *Libertà*.

At this point it may be useful to venture briefly beyond the borders of this text and take a look at the passages in the epigraph of this essay.**[ix]** Ginsborg, in his 2004 book about the Prime Minister, transcribes Berlusconi's first television speech in 1994, which marked the beginning of his political career (Ginsborg, 2004, p.65).

In this excerpt, Berlusconi positions the rise of his "pole of liberty" against the "left-wing cartel." Liberty, in fact, seems to be the leading motif of Berlusconi's political campaigns. Consider, for instance, the very first lines of the statute of Berlusconi's political Party, *Il Popolo della Libertà* (we can see that "Liberty" is always included even in the name of the party, "the pole of Liberty," or "the house of Liberties," or "the people of Liberty"): It is evident that for Berlusconi the concept of Liberty is not only central in the expression of his political creed, but it also assumes a symbolic value as it represents the key belief around which all of the politics of his party supposedly align. Moreover, in Berlusconi's rhetoric, this central belief of Liberty represents an expression of dissent, disagreement, refusal, and distance from the left-wing party. Therefore, it is clear that Berlusconi, in his Liberation Day speech, is not using the term "Liberty" in a neutral way: Liberty is the vehicle that brings Berlusconi's ideology into this speech, transforming this ceremonial/epideictic oration into a controversial political statement.

The use of the theme of Liberty in Berlusconi's first Liberation Day creates a strategic ambiguity in the aim and scope of the speech that merits closer examination of the text. I argue in what follows that the introduction of the theme of Liberty creates a significant semantic shift from the theme of Liberation that promotes different themes appealing to different political orientations and allows different interpretations to arise.

This particular case represents an anomaly in the reception of Berlusconi's speeches because the reactions of public opinion are surprisingly unified and cross-partisan between the center-left and the center-right, with the only exception being the reaction of the extra-parliamentary Communist Party. Thus, the majority of political forces appreciate Berlusconi's speech, but this appreciation revolves around different interpretations of Berlusconi's statements on Liberation Day. The center-left, in fact, praises Berlusconi's oration, but not for the same reasons as the center-right: the interpretations of the speech by these two groups in Berlusconi's audience are quite different, but at the same time they converge in a bi-partisan praise of the text.

Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech is thus an example of the kind of "polysemy" that Leah Ceccarelli defines as "strategic ambiguity." Ceccarelli asserts that this kind of polysemy occurs when a text is rhetorically designed by its author to allow different groups in the audience, characterized by different ideologies and

attitudes, to see different meanings arising from the same text. Each group reads the text as supporting its own beliefs and ideas and all of the groups converge in its praise because of their divergent interpretations. Polysemy, Ceccarelli explains, "is the existence of determinate but nonsingular denotational meanings," and "strategic ambiguity" is that specific kind of polysemy that "is likely to be planned by the author and result in two or more otherwise conflicting groups of readers converging in praise of a text" (Ceccarelli, 1998, pp. 399-404). As I anticipated earlier in this paragraph, the shift from the use of "Liberation" to the use of "Liberty" is the main rhetorical strategy that enhanced the strategic ambiguity of Berlusconi's speech.

In the next paragraphs I will explain in detail how the Prime Minister puts this strategy in practice, politicizing an epideictic oration by introducing his partisan ideology in the Liberation Day Speech, and crafting consensus by providing different paths of interpretations to his different ideologically oriented groups in the audience. Believing, like Brummett, that rhetorical theory and method are not to be separated from the understanding of everyday living, and assuming that their functions can be described as "heuristic" and "moral" (Brummett, 1984, p. 364), I hope to provide with this analysis a reading that augments our understanding of this speech in the context of Berlusconi's broader political discourse.

3. <Liberty> as an Ideograph

In 1980 Michael McGee attempted to reconcile two apparently opposite currents of thought: symbolism or the "philosophy of myth" as interpreted and practiced by Kenneth Burke and materialism or the Marxist concept of ideology. Myth and ideology are not to be considered as opposites for McGee. They should instead be considered as "supplemental" rather than "alternatives": Symbolism and its focus on language and socially constructed realities should be taken into account along with the materialist approach and its focus on the impact of material phenomena that influence the construction of social reality (McGee, 1980, p. 3). McGee proposed a theoretical model that accounts both for ideology and myth, a model that links rhetoric and the emphasis on language to ideology and the emphasis on power and political consciousness. McGee introduced the concept of "ideograph" to deconstruct the false dichotomy of symbolism/materialism. He states: "I will suggest that ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and

behavior. Further, the political language which manifests ideology seems characterized by slogans, a vocabulary of ideographs easily mistaken for the technical terminology of political philosophy"(p.6). Ideographs are therefore to be considered, according to McGee, as being the "building blocks of ideology," a "one term-sum of an orientation" (p.7). They always contain a unique ideological commitment that is expressed in real discourse whenever they are used, so that they function as agents of political consciousness.

Berlusconi, during his fifteen years of political activity, shaped an idea of Liberty that is peculiar to his political party and it is this specific idea, or "ideograph," that we need to understand in this context in order to reveal the meaning(s) of the Prime Minister's first Liberation Day oration. <Liberty> is initially disguised as a neutral term in an epideictic context, and its purpose at the beginning is to invisibly politicize a typically non-controversial and non-deliberative kind of discourse, the epideictic oratory, that is the macro-genre to which this speech apparently belongs.**[x]** Therefore, its first function is that of pushing politics, namely Berlusconi's ideology, into a controversy-free and deliberation-free environment (celebration of the historical memory of the Liberation).

Furthermore, we can explain the cross-partisan reception of this speech with the audience's level of awareness of the ideological burden carried by the <Liberty> ideograph. The reaction of those who recognized that it was not a neutral term generated an interpretation that is different from the interpretation of those who instead believed in the neutrality of Berlusconi's argument for the creation of a new national feeling around the universal and unifying value of Liberty.

If language is a "mechanism of power" as Palczewski puts it (Palczewski, 2003), and as McGee and other scholars suggest, then Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech deserves to be analyzed to thicken our understanding of how language and ideology together can become tools of oppression when used by a skilled orator in order to manufacture consent, or tools of liberation and awareness for the public and for the rhetorical critic.

4. Contrasting Ideographs in an Epideictic Frame

Liberation Day speeches in general, with no exception for Berlusconi's, belong to the macro-genre of the epideictic discourse. Aristotle in his treatise about rhetoric defined the epideictic discourse as the third kind of oratory in addition to forensic and deliberative (Chase, 1961, p. 293). "Epideictic" designates a macro-genre

characterized by an oration that expresses praise and blame and this macro-genre is made up of three distinct sub-genres: *encomium* (praise and blame), *panegyricum* (festival orations), *epitaphios logos* (eulogies). The existence of this macro-genre can be justified by the fact that typically the three micro-genres are associated with ceremonies/rituals, featured a display of the orator's mastery in public speaking, and focused on praise and blame (Jasinsky, 2001, p.209). Moreover, while in deliberative and forensic rhetoric the audience is called to make clear decisions and this is defined by Aristotle as "judge." In epideictic discourse the role accorded to the audience is less clear but the term often used to indicate it is "spectator" (Murphy, 2003, 609).

Condit's article about the Boston Massacre speeches is an exhaustive review of the literature about epideictic discourse and it is also an attempt to categorize this genre in a functional and more comprehensive way. Each of the three reasons mentioned above to justify the existence of the macro-genre of epideictic are, according to Condit, incomplete in describing the actual category of this genre. Therefore Condit rejects a univocal definition for epideictic and advances instead a "functional" definition which identifies a set of characteristics that are expected to be found (in part or all) in the epideictic discourse. Thus, she proposes "epideictic discourse can be located by its tendency to serve three functional pairs: definition/understanding, display/entertainment, and shaping/sharing of community" (Condit, 1985, p.288). In Condit's functional pairs the first term refers to the speaker and the second term to the audience. Also, the paradigmatic epideictic is that which features all three elements and can be defined as a "communal definition."

Berlusconi's speech is epideictic because it is a commemorative speech; secondly, its purpose, in concert with Berlusconi's symbolical act of joining the celebrations, is that of "finally building a new unitary national feeling" and to finally overcome the internal divisions of the Italian people in relation to this important event of our history. It also definitely expresses praise and blame. Berlusconi says in this speech: "Communists and Catholics, Socialists and Liberals, Monarchists and Actionists, facing a common tragedy, wrote, each for their part, a great page of our history." He also says he wants to "remove from this celebration the character of opposition that the revolutionary culture gave it in the past and that today divides more than it unifies." Denotatively, it is a speech that wants to define a new community, united around the reciprocal

acknowledgement and appreciation of the values of the Resistance, an important movement of Italian political heritage. It surely wants to create a new unity as well, through a new communal definition of a democratic nation founded on the values of the Resistance as opposed to totalitarianisms. Moreover, this speech generates an understanding of two troubling events, the Nazi attack on the town of Onna, symbolically associated with its recent destruction by the earthquake of April 6. Berlusconi claims that the Italian people can once again face the destruction and the sorrow and can get through the catastrophic event of the earthquake exactly as it did after the catastrophic destruction caused by the Nazi attack in the 1940s. He makes sense of the natural catastrophe as an unforeseen event that the Italian people can overcome with solidarity and unity. In developing this communal definition, the speech also shows an eloquence that appealed strongly to its audience, especially the audience present in Onna on April 25 in the very place of the devastation. The location of the speech in fact allowed it to have a strong pathos effect.

Thus, this speech seems to have an incontrovertible epideictic veneer. Nevertheless some passages do not fit in the context of an epideictic discourse and reveal the fact that Berlusconi is using a controversial appeal within an epideictic speech, politicizing it by encouraging the audience to embrace the core value of his own political party. Put simply, Berlusconi makes an attempt to appropriate the epideictic genre typical of the Liberation Day commemorative speeches in order to serve his partisan political interests.**[xi]**

Berlusconi's move is, in fact, the partisan politicization of this epideictic oration. He politicizes it mainly through the introduction of the ideograph <Liberty> as a substitution for <Liberation>. By introducing the ideograph <Liberty> in the speech, Berlusconi introduces his political party and his political creed and frames them as forces of unification, as agents for the creation of a new unitary national feeling. He says, "A commitment, that needs to enliven us, is the need not to forget what happened here and to remember the horrors of totalitarianisms and of the suppression of Liberty."**[xii]** Introducing <Liberty> instead of <Liberation> at the beginning, as the counterpart of totalitarianisms, is very effective and gives us a sense of circularity when, at the end, Berlusconi cheers for the celebration of April 25, defining it as "the celebration of the reconquest of Liberty". He says in fact: "Long live to Italy! Long live to the republic! Long live to April 25, the celebration of all Italians who love Liberty and want to stay free!

Long live to April 25 celebration of the reconquest of Liberty."

These two passages taken together give us a good sense of what Berlusconi is doing in this speech. At the beginning and at the end, where we would have expected to hear the word <Liberation> we only hear <Liberty>. The latter is presented by Berlusconi as the supreme value of which Liberation has been only a momentary symptom, important, but not to the point of being the focus of the speech. When I claim <Liberation> is an ideograph that is in direct opposition to <Liberty> in the Italian political landscape, I am associating the former with a left-wing ideology and the latter with the right-wing and neo-liberal one, the *Berlusconismo*.

The leftist connotation of <Liberation> goes back to the Resistance itself, which was an anti-Fascist movement made up of people of different political orientations united around common opposition to Fascism and Nazism in the early 1940s. The political force numerically more relevant and more active for the Resistance was the Communist group. Inside the *Brigate Partigiane* (Resistance Brigades) there were also Christian Democrats, Socialists, Liberals, Anarchists, Monarchists, and Actionists, and all these people fought together with the Allies against Fascisms, invasion and oppression. Throughout the years this revolutionary and mythic character of the Liberation period has represented an important cultural background especially for the left-wing coalition and the radical left that regularly celebrate the anniversary of the Liberation and the sacrifices and merit of the *Partigiani*. In the course of time, the absence of the right-wing leaders in the celebration of this important historical moment for the Italian republic confirmed and reinforced the leftist connotation of Liberation Day. A symptom of this characterization is perhaps the fact that the official national newspaper aligned with the Communist Party in Italy is called precisely *Liberazione* (Liberation).

In contrast, for Italians, <Liberty> is now indissolubly associated with Berlusconi's political party specifically, and with the larger right-wing coalition. As a counterpart of the newspaper Liberation, Italians also have a national newspaper called *Libero* (meaning "free") that is openly aligned with Berlusconi's PdL and with his neo-liberal political orientation.**[xiii]** The absence of <Liberation> from Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech and its replacement with <Liberty> must therefore be taken into account seriously. Berlusconi crafted a speech around his political ideology that is conveyed in the text by the ideograph <Liberty>. Also, by completely eliminating the ideograph <Liberation>

Berlusconi is also dismissing the leftist ideology usually associated with this recurrence.

Moreover, other passages do not fit in the epideictic genre and that contribute to politicize Berlusconi's speech. For instance, Prime Minister links the Resistance tradition to Italy's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan:
"Today the young generation is facing new challenges: to defend the Liberty conquered by their fathers and broaden it always more, being aware of the fact that without Liberty there is no peace, no justice, no well-being. Some of these challenges are planetary and we are committed together with other free countries in the fight against terrorism, in the fight against fanatic fundamentalism, in the fight against racism, because Liberty, dignity, and peace are rights of every human being, everywhere in the world. This is why I want to remember the soldiers at work in the mission of peace abroad, and in particular all those who died during these noble missions. There is an ideal continuity between them and all of the heroes who sacrificed their life more than sixty years ago to give us back our Liberty in security and in peace."

In this passage Berlusconi suggests the continuity between the Resistance partisans and the soldiers supporting the American "missions of peace" in Afghanistan and Iraq. This statement is controversial. Berlusconi's military support for the USA had been granted in the face of strong opposition by Italy's left-wing coalition. Associating these soldiers to the *Partigiani* who fought for the Italian Liberation is therefore risky for the reception of the speech and an anomaly in the context of this genre of oratory. Berlusconi advances a parallelism that could result in a very controversial response depending on the ideology of the spectators, eventually jeopardizing the main purpose of his speech, which is, as mentioned above, to craft a new communal and unitary national feeling. Another example of politicization of the epideictic discourse in this speech is represented in another controversial passage: "Today we have to remember all of the fallen, even those who fought for the wrong side sacrificing in good faith their life to their ideals for a cause already lost. This does not mean of course neutrality or indifference. We are, all free Italians are, on the side of those who fought for the Liberty, for our dignity and the honor of our country."

This passage directly refers to the then political proposal of the PdL of making equal under law, in terms of financial benefits, the *Repubblichini* of Salò (those people who during the Liberation's civil war fought to defend Benito Mussolini in

his last bulwark, The Republic of Salò), and the *Partigiani* who fought for the Italian Liberation from Nazi-Fascism. Obviously this statement in the Liberation Day speech is highly controversial given that it betrays the very essence of Liberation Day, which is the celebration of the anniversary of the Liberation from the Fascist regime and the Nazi occupation in Italy on April 25, 1945.

All of these examples confirm that Berlusconi's purpose in this speech goes far beyond the sole celebration of Liberation Day. He attended the celebration with a political aim, and this is made evident in the text of his speech. Berlusconi pushes politics into this apparently commemorative speech and he even proposes a change of name of this historical celebration.

The politicization of Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech through the use of the ideograph <Liberty> represents yet another rhetorical success for Berlusconi. The speech has in fact been received with cross-partisan praise and only a few critiques, like the disagreement on the change of the traditional name of the celebration from a portion of the left-wing. An exception, in this context of widespread consensus, is represented by the harsh critique of the radical extra-parliamentary Communist Party that expressed its dissent and disagreement through the newspaper *Liberazione.*

5. Conclusion: The "watershed moment" revisited

By coming to understand how Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech works rhetorically, I offer a solution to the disputes around this speech: a rhetorical analysis helps us understand how and why a highly controversial text received praise by Berlusconi's followers, and even more surprisingly by his opponents. Participating in the Liberation Day celebrations was a risky undertaking for the Prime Minister, on the one hand because his participation could have potentially been interpreted as an inappropriate celebration of the left by the leader of the right, and on the other hand because it could have been interpreted by the left as an appropriation of the celebration by the right.

Neither of these eventualities materialized. On the contrary, both the center-left and the center-right appreciated Berlusconi's speech despite his overt use of the rhetorical situation generated by the earthquake to appropriate the celebration and to propose a historical and political revision of April 25.

The analysis of this text from a rhetorical perspective provides an explanation of

the uncommon reactions to Berlusconi's speech by disclosing the stratified meanings enmeshed within it that have been able to generate different interpretations in different publics characterized by different ideological commitments and worldviews. Indeed my analysis makes sense of the odd reaction of the Pd to Berlusconi's attempt to appropriate of the Liberation for his partisan aims and acknowledges the motivations behind the center-right's step toward the recognition of the Liberation. PdL's opening was indeed possible only insofar as Berlusconi would negotiate carefully between a partisan historical revisionism and a partial opening to the values and figures of the left.

Finally, the analysis of this speech from a rhetorical perspective also offers a solution to the disputes in the press and in the public opinion about the actual significance of Berlusconi's participation in the Liberation and about its symbolic and material consequences. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister's use (whether he was aware or not) of strategic ambiguity, necessarily puts the description of this event as a "watershed moment" for the Italian political life in perspective.

NOTES

[i] PdL is an acronym for *Popolo della Libertà*, the name of Berlusconi's Party. I translate it in English as "People of Liberty." Pd is the acronym for *Partito Democratico*, the name of the main Party in the opposition's coalition, in English "Democratic Party."

[ii] "25 Aprile, Duello Veltroni-Berlusconi. Il leader Pd: sfregio alla Democrazia," *La Repubblica Online*, April 25, 2008. *http://www.repubblica.it/2008/04/sezioni/politica/25-aprile-celebrazioni/veltroni-sfregio/veltroni-sfregio.html* (accessed May19, 2010).

[iii] "Pdl, è polemica su Ciarrapico e il Fascismo," *Il Corriere della Sera Online*, March 10, 2008. *http://www.corriere.it/politica/08_marzo_10/ciarrapico_bufera_a26bb7d6-ee9b-11dc- bfb4-0003ba99c667.shtml* (accessed May 19, 2010).

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[iv] Cavaliere" (Knight) is an order of merit of the Italian Republic, received by Mr. Berlusconi in 1977. He is very often called by this name.

[v] Considering Bitzer's concept of "rhetorical situation," it seems obvious that Onna's setting for the speech presented the "exigency" of a rhetorical discourse rooted in historical commemoration and mourning. Nevertheless this speech seems to respond to a different and very specific need of the Prime Minister, that he tried to mask under a genuine attempt to advocate for a new national unity in a moment of difficulty for the nation. Belusconi's need, the actual exigency that inspired this oration, is the constant political need of crafting consensus around his controversial persona and around his internally divided coalition.

For literature on the concept of "Rhetorical Situation" see: Loyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric,* 1(1968): 1-14. Richard Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 6 (1973): 154-161. Barbara Biesecker, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from within the Thematic of 'Différance'," *Philosophy & Rhetoric, 22(1989):110-130.*

[vi] Berlusconi Silvio. "25 Aprile: un onore e un impegno," *Il Corriere della Sera Online*, April 25, 2009. *http://www.corriere.it/politica/09_aprile_25/discorso-berlusconi-25-aprile-onna_00e34c08-31b6-11de-98f0-00144f02aabc.shtml* (accessed May 22, 2010).

All the citations from Berlusconi's speech are from this article. All translations from the speech are mine.

[vii] It is important here to consider the problematic context around the Prime Minister's persona: the sex/divorce scandal is about to explode publicly, the controversy with the press and the tension with the opposition are already high while the country is facing an unexpected catastrophe a few months before the G8 Summit is scheduled to take place in Italy.

[viii] I translate *Partigiani* with "partisans." In this context partisan does not have a connotation of bias, it is just the name given to the Resistance patriots.

[ix] About the passages in the epigraph, the first one is retrievable in: Silvio Berlusconi, "Costruiamo un Nuovo Miracolo," *Il Giornale*, January 27, 1994.

For a commentary on this speech and its staging, see: Deni and Maresciani, "Analisi del primo discorso di Berlusconi. Indagine semiotica sul funzionamento discorsivo," in Livolsi and Volli (editors), *La comunicazione politica tra prima e seconda Repubblica*, (Milan: 1995), 227-41.

The second passage is retrievable in the Pdl's website: "Statuto del Popolo della

Libertà. Articolo 1," *Il Popolo della Libertà Official Website. http://www.ilpopolodellaliberta.it/notizie/arc_15377.htm* (accessed May 19, 2010). For both passages, the translations from Italian to English are mine. Moreover, I added the emphases on the occurrence of the term "Liberty."

[x] Condit, *The Functions of Epideictic,* 1985. For more about Epideictic, see: J.R. Chase. The Classical Conception of Epideictic. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 47, (1961): 293-300. James Jasinski, "Rearticulating History through Epideictic Discourse: Frederick Douglass's 'the Meaning of the Fourth of July to the Negro,'" in *Rhetoric and Political Culture in Nineteenth Century America*, ed. T. W. Benson (East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1997), 71-89. Jhon Murphy. ""Our Mission and Our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11th,"*Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2003): 607-32.

[xi] For a controversial use of epideictic oratory, see: Jhon Murphy. "Our Mission and Our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11th", *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 6. 4 (2003): 607-32. In this article Murphy talks about Bush's use of epideictic to subvert deliberation and serve his own partisan interests post 9/11.

[xii] N.d.A. All the translations from Italian throughout this article are mine.

[xiii] *Liberazione Online*. *http://www.liberazione.it/* (accessed May 19, 2010). *Libero Online, http://www.libero-news.it/* (accessed May 19, 2010)

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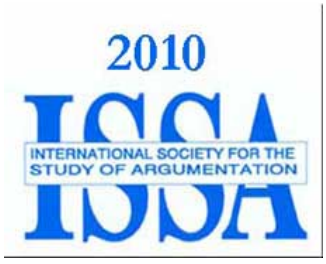
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – A Doctor's Argumentation By Authority As A Strategic Manoeuvre



1. Introduction

Argumentation can play an important role in medical consultation. Central to medical consultation is a patient's health related problem and a doctor's medical advice, diagnosis and/or prognosis concerning this problem. Especially when such advice, diagnosis and/or prognosis can be expected to have a big impact on the patient, a doctor might assume the patient to be hesitant to immediately accept his claim(s). The doctor could attempt to overcome such hesitance by presenting argumentation. For instance, a doctor who advises a patient to drastically change his diet might attempt to make such advice acceptable by arguing "Your cholesterol level is too high".

The context of a medical consultation does not just enable the doctor to present argumentation; it also affects the way in which the doctor provides this argumentation. Medical consultation is a regulated institutionalised

communicative practice that is conducted in a limited amount of time. The health related problem that is central to such a consultation might be of vital importance to the patient, making the discussion of this problem potentially emotion laden. Furthermore, the doctor and patient differ in the amount of knowledge and experience they possess about the patient's health related problem. As a result of these characteristics, the argumentation by a doctor in medical consultation typically differs significantly from that in, say, informal argumentative exchanges.

Because of a medical consultation's limited amount of time and the fact that the doctor can be considered an authority on the patient's health related problem, a doctor might decide to present argumentation by authority in support his claim(s). After all, the patient has acknowledged the doctor's authority on medical knowledge by requesting a medical consultation, so it could be effective for a doctor to refer to this authority in support of his medical claim(s). On the other hand, a doctor's argumentation by authority could essentially exclude the patient from the decision making process about the patient's health related problem. This would limit the patient's autonomy, reflecting a paternalistic form of the doctor-patient relationship that goes against the idea that medical consultation should be based on *shared decision-making* by the doctor and patient (see, on paternalism, Roter & Hall 2006; and, on shared decision making, Légaré et al, 2008; Frosch & Kaplan 1999). To what extent can a doctor's argumentation by authority then be regarded as reasonable?

To determine the extent to which a doctor's argumentation by authority in medical consultation can be regarded as reasonable, it is necessary to first provide a detailed account of a doctor's rationale for presenting this kind of argumentation. Based on the extended pragma-dialectical theory, I shall provide such an account by analysing a doctor's argumentation by authority as a *strategic manoeuvre*. Concretely, I shall, first, discuss the extended pragma-dialectical theory. Second, I shall provide a description of what I regard as argumentation by authority. Third, I shall examine a doctor's argumentation by authority as a strategic manoeuvre, focussing on the doctor's selection from topical potential, adaptation to audience demand and the presentational devices that he employs when presenting authority argumentation.

2. The extended pragma-dialectical theory

According to the extended pragma-dialectical theory, developed by Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (Van Eemeren, 2010; and Van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999; 2000;

2002a and 2002b), a discussion party always strategically aims at obtaining the dialectical goal of reasonably resolving a difference of opinion and, at the same time, at obtaining the rhetorical goal of resolving this difference of opinion in his own favour. To pursue these goals, the discussion party *manoeuvres strategically*. In other words, he simultaneously makes a selection from the topical potential, adapts to audience demand and uses particular presentational devices in each of his discussion moves to obtain his dialectical and rhetorical goals.

The term *topical potential* refers to the collection of issues that a discussion party could discuss at any particular point in an argumentative discussion (Van Eemeren, 2010, p. 95). The topical potential depends on the context in which the discussion is conducted and the discussion stage in which a discussion party wants to make a contribution. A discussion party selects from the topical potential in, for example, the argumentation stage by choosing a particular propositional content (from all possible propositional contents available in the context at hand) for the argument that is to be presented and choosing to give this argument a particular justificatory force (from all possible justificatory forces available in the context at hand). A doctor might, for example, support a medical advice by choosing to refer to himself as an authority on the patient's health related problem as the argument's propositional content and choosing to give it the justificatory force that is captured in the premise "If an authority on the patient's health related problem says X, then X is the case".

In addition to selecting from the topical potential, discussion parties simultaneously try to adapt their discussion contributions to *audience demand* (Van Eemeren, 2010, p. 94). They attempt to adjust their moves to the opinions and preferences of their intended audience in order to create rapport with this audience. A discussion party's audience consists at least of one interlocutor who acts, or is presumed to act, as the opposing or doubting discussion party.**[i]** The audience could also consist of a multiple audience, in which case the discussion party addresses not only his *primary audience* (consisting of the interlocutor(s) that he mainly wants to convince), but also of a *secondary audience* (consisting of the interlocutor(s) that he does not necessarily want to convince, but all the same listen to the discussion party) (see Van Eemeren, 2010). In a discussion between a paediatrician, a child patient and the patient's parent, for instance, the paediatrician and parent might regard each other as their primary audience, while viewing the patient as their secondary audience.**[ii]** To convincingly adapt

to audience's demand, a discussion party will adjust his strategic manoeuvres in a way that optimally agrees with the (multiple) audience's starting points.

For optimally conveying discussion moves, discussion parties use *presentational devices* in each and every discussion contribution (Van Eemeren, 2010, p. 94). Van Eemeren (2010, p. 120) states "Although in strategic maneuvering it may be more conspicuous which stylistic choice is made in one case than in another, cases that are stylistically "neutral" do not exists, so each choice always has an extra meaning". Discussion parties use presentational devices – such as word choice, sentence structure and rhetorical figures – to achieve the rhetorical and dialectical goals that they pursue in the discussion stage at hand. Their use of presentational devices, in other words, strategically frames their selection from topical potential and adaptation to audience demand. For instance, a patient might indirectly justify his request for a medical consultation by stating "I read about it on the internet and they advise you to see your doctor if it doesn't change in a fortnight", rather than directly arguing "I've suffered continuously from it for a fortnight, so I'd like to get your advice on it".

Although from an analytical point of view, a discussion party's selection from topical potential, use of presentational devices and adaptation to audience demand can be analysed separately, in actual argumentative discourse, all three aspects work together at the same time. A discussion party selects to address a certain topic in his discussion contribution because of what he thinks the audience prefers in the context at hand by the stylistic means he deems most suitable in this context. Based on this idea, a doctor's argumentation by authority will be reconstructed and evaluated in the remainder of this study. However, before starting the actual reconstruction and evaluation of a doctor's argumentation by authority, let me clarify what I understand by such argumentation.

3. The argument scheme of argumentation by authority

To accurately reconstruct and evaluate a doctor's argument by authority, it is necessary to provide a description of this kind of argumentation first. The standard pragma-dialectical theory provides a good starting point for this. In this theory, authority argumentation is regarded as a subtype of the argument scheme based on a symptomatic relation (see Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 160; and Garssen, 1997, p. 11). A pragma-dialectical argument scheme denotes a conventionalised way of representing how the content of an argument relates to

the content of the (sub)standpoint in support of which the argument is presented (see Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 96; and 2004, p. 4). In symptomatic argumentation, this relation is such that the content of the argument is given as a sign for the acceptability of the standpoint (see Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 97 and Garssen, 1997, pp. 8-14). The argumentation "She must be a doctor, because she wears a white coat" is an example of symptomatic argumentation. In this argumentation, the discussion party (rather simplistically) regards "wearing a white coat" as a sign of "Being a doctor".

In subtypes of argument schemes, the pragma-dialectical main types are used in a specific way. The subtype's soundness conditions are, therefore, specifications of the soundness conditions for the corresponding main type. A discussion party who uses authority argumentation, for example, presents the agreement of a supposed authority with the discussion party's standpoint as a sign of the acceptability of this standpoint (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p.163; Garssen, 1997, p.11; and Schellens, 2006, p.6). It takes the form "He must be ill, because the doctor said he was and doctors are credible authorities on diagnosing people's illnesses". Authority argumentation is consequently considered to be a subtype of symptomatic argumentation. According to Van Eemeren (see 2010), one of the soundness conditions for authority argumentation is that the authority referred to in the argumentation is recognised as pertinent to the issue under discussion.**[iii]** This condition can be regarded as a specification of the soundness condition that applies to all symptomatic arguments, namely that the symptom mentioned in the argument is necessary for that which is mentioned in the standpoint.

Example (1) illustrates how a discussion party can use authority argumentation in actual practise. In this example, a paediatrician (D) discusses the diet of a child patient (C) with the patient's mother (M) and father (F). The child patient is a little boy suffering from asthma.

Example (1)
Excerpt of an argumentative discussion between a paediatrician (D), the mother (M) and father (F) of a child patient (C) who suffers from asthma (example obtained from the database compiled by the *Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research*, my transcription and translation, original conversation in italics)

1 D: By the way, I have to say that, about his, about what he eats, I'm not really

concerned to be honest.
(*Ik moet trouwens zeggen, over zijn, over wat hij eet maak ik me niet zoveel zorgen eerlijk gezegd*.)

2 M: No.
(*Nee*.)

3 D: Look, I can imagine that, as mother and father, you are concerned, but if I look at the way he's grown. Well, one of those things you need for growing well is eating well …
(*Kijk, ik kan me voorstellen dat als moeder en als vader je je zorgen maakt, maar als ik kijk naar hoe hij gegroeid is. Nou één van die dingen die je nodig hebt om goed te groeien, is goed te eten…*)

4 M: Yeah.
(*Ja*.)

5 D: So he has had, he has had a sufficient amount in the past few months, so…
(*Dus hij heeft, de afgelopen maanden heeft hij genoeg gehad, dus…*)

6 F: Yeah.
(*Ja*.)

7 D: In that respect, it isn't the most necessary thing for me to say: well, you have to eat. A little [incomprehensible].
(*Wat dat betreft is het ook niet het meest noodzakelijke vanuit mij om te zeggen: nou, je moet eten. Een beetje [onverstaandbaar].*)
[…]
18 M: No, but yeah, things are sometimes being said about it and in the end you also think like: what should I do here? Right? One says this. The other that. And then you also think like:
(*Nee, maar ja hè, er wordt wel eens wat over gezegd en op het laatst denk je ook van: wat doe ik hier nou? Hè? De één zegt dit. De ander dat. En dan denk je ook van:*)

19 D: It's also good to come here then.
(*Dan is het ook goed om hier te komen*.)

20 M: "I've had enough." You just don't know what you have to do in the end.

(*“Ik ben het nou zat.” Je weet op het laatst niet meer wat je moet.*)

21 D: No, that, I can imagine that and, erm, well, if you encounter problems with that again, just say “I’ve been to the pediatrician”…
(*Nee dat, dat kan ik me voorstellen en, uhm, nou, als u daar weer problemen mee heeft, zeg maar gewoon “Ik ben naar de kinderarts geweest”…*)

22 C: Eeweeeeeeeeee.
(*Iewieeeeieeeee.*)

23 D: I’ve studied for it, which is the case. And, erm, he said…
(*Ik heb daarvoor geleerd, dat is ook zo. En, uhm, die heeft gezegd…*)

24 C: Pfoof.
(*Pfoef.*)

25 D: “We do that this way” and …
(*“Dat doen we zo” en…*)

26 M: Just stop that [to child].
(*Hou jij [kind] eens even op.*)

27 D: And [incomprehensible] with evidence: he’s growing just perfectly, which is the most important issue.
(*En [onverstaanbaar] met bewijs: hij groeit gewoon perfect, dat is het belangrijkste.*)

28 C: Pfoof, lelelelele.
(*Pfoef, lèlèlèlèlè.*)

29 D: Haha, little tyke.
(*Haha, mooi kereltje.*)

In *example (1)*, the doctor presents the standpoint that he does not believe it necessary to change the child patient’s diet (turn 7). The doctor states that he is not concerned about the patient’s diet (turn 1), indicating that the patient’s parents should not be either. He subsequently argues why they should not be concerned: the patient has grown well in the past few months, so he must have eaten well (turns 3 and 5). The mother nonetheless continues by indirectly expressing doubt about the doctor’s advice; she knows that people hold views that

contradict the doctor's advice and would be confused if she were confronted with them (turns 18 & 20). In reaction, the doctor presents his authority argument. He argues that it is good that he mother has come to him then (turn 19), because he is a paediatrician and has studied for providing medical advice on issues such as her son's diet (turn 23). In other words, he uses authority argumentation by stating that "You should disregard other people's advice on the matter of changing your son's diet, because I say so and I am a credible authority on this matter (as I am a paediatrician and I have studied for it)".

Instantiations of authority argumentation such as the one in *example (1)* are quite similar to appeals to *ethos* as described in the literature on rhetoric. In these authority arguments as well as in appeals to *ethos*, the discussion party refers to his own capacity or character to make his standpoint more acceptable. The rhetorical term *ethos* is, however, not only restricted to discussion moves by which a discussion party explicitly refers to himself as the authority on the issue under discussion, but the term *ethos* is also more generally applied to the impression a discussion party gives when presenting argumentation, for instance, by his overall fluency. Because of this difference and because the doctor in *example (1)*, in principle, presents a statement by an authority as a sign of the acceptability of his standpoint, I prefer to think of the doctor's reference to his authority in *example (1)* as an instance of authority argumentation.'

The instances of authority argumentation in *example (1)*, difference from authority arguments in which a discussion party refers to the authority of a third party when presenting authority argumentation. Such an argument nonetheless relates in the same way to the content of the standpoint as the doctor's authority argument in *example (1)*; the unexpressed premise for both amounts to a statement like "X is a credible authority on Y". These authority arguments, consequently, not constitute distinct subtypes of symptomatic argumentation in terms of the pragma-dialectical theory. To nonetheless denote the difference between the two, I propose to call them kinds of authority argumentation. I shall use the term *argument from authority* exclusively for the kind of authority argumentation in which the authority referred to is a third party, and the term *argument by authority* for the kind in which the authority referred to is the discussion party that presents the argumentation.

Distinguishing between these kinds of authority arguments helps to determine the strategic advantages of presenting authority argumentation. For each kind, it can

be specifically determined how the authority argument furthers the discussion party's purchase of his dialectical and rhetorical goals. Additionally, based on the distinction between the two kinds of authority arguments, the general soundness criteria can be specified for a particular context – thereby making them specific soundness criteria. For example, to evaluate when a doctor can soundly use an argument by authority in medical consultation, the soundness criterion that the authority referred to should indeed posses the professed authority (Van Eemeren 2010, pp. 202-203; Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, pp. 136-137; and Woods & Walton 1989, pp. 15-24) can be specified by reference to the qualifications that a doctor should have obtained before being able to practise medicine or a particular branch of medicine.

4. A doctor's strategic use of argumentation by authority

Based on the distinction between the two kinds of authority argumentation, the doctor's rationale for chooses to present argumentation by authority can be examined. What alternative strategic manoeuvres could a doctor have performed at the time that he chose to argue by authority? What are the strategic advantages of presenting an argument by authority?

To see what alternative strategic manoeuvres a doctor could have performed when he chose to argue by authority, the distinction between an argument's *propositional content* and its *justificatory force* is useful. According to Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, p. 144), single arguments can vary in the propositions that they consist of (their propositional content) and the relation that is expressed between the standpoint and the argumentation in them (their justificatory force). For example, in the argumentation "He must be ill, because the doctor said he was", the propositional content consists of the proposition "the doctor said he was ill" ("X says Y"), while the justificatory force is captured in the argument's unexpressed premise "doctors are credible authorities on diagnosing people's illnesses" ("X is a credible authority on Y"). By presenting such argumentation, the discussion party chooses this particular propositional content for his argumentation from the topical potential that consists of every possible proposition that he can think of and he selects this particular justificatory force from the topical potential that consists of all the possible justificatory forces that he can think of.

The idea that a single argument can vary as to its propositional content and its justificatory force means that there are, theoretically speaking, three alternative

topical choices available to a doctor at the moment that he chooses to present an argument by authority. First, the doctor could have chosen to present an argument with the same justificatory force as the argument by authority, but with a different propositional content (*figure 1b*). The doctor then still chooses to present an argument based on the justificatory principle "X is a credible authority on Y", but the "X" in this argument is not the doctor himself. An example of such an argument would be "He should go on a diet, because the genetic counsellor said that he runs a high risk to get diabetes". This alternative, in fact, comes down to the kind of authority argumentation that I call argumentation from authority.

Figure (1)

A schematic representation of the topical choices available to a discussion party in the argumentation stage of an argumentative discussion. The topical choices are described in terms of the similarity with ("=") and difference between ("≠") the justificatory force ("JF") and propositional content ("PC") of the argument by authority (a) and of alternative strategic manoeuvres (b, c and d)

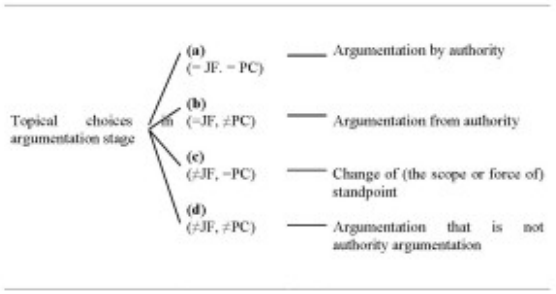


Figure 1

Second, a doctor could choose to present an argument with a different justificatory force than the argument by authority, but the same propositional content as the argument by authority (*figure 1c*). The doctor then chooses to present an argument based on the proposition "X says Y", but not in combination with the justificatory principle "X is a credible authority on Y". An example of such an argument would be "I was right about him all along, because I said that he runs a high risk to get diabetes".

Note that, if the doctor were to present an argument of the kind (≠JF, =PC), he necessarily changes the (scope or force of the) standpoint in the argument by

authority that he would otherwise have presented. This is due to the fact that, because the doctor chooses to use a different kind of justificatory force than in the argument by authority but also chooses to use a propositional content that is identical to the one in the argument by authority, an argument of the kind (≠JF, =PC) can only be logically valid if the standpoint that the argument supports is different from the one in the argument by authority. Concretely, in the example "I was right about him all along, because I said that he suffers from diabetes", the justificatory force is captured in the premise "If I said he suffers from diabetes, I was right about him all along", which means that the advanced standpoint has to be "I was right about him all along" to make the argumentation logically valid.

Third, a doctor could have chosen to perform a strategic manoeuvre that neither has the same justificatory force nor the same propositional content as the argument by authority (*figure 1d*). Opting for this alternative inevitably means that the doctor does not present authority argumentation. Instead, he could present other symptomatic arguments, causal arguments or analogy arguments. An example of such an argument would be "He should go on a diet, because he has a BMI of 32".

For the purpose of discussing what the topical potential amounts to when a doctor chooses to present an argument by authority, the alternative strategic manoeuvre of presenting an argument of the kind (≠JF, =PC) is irrelevant. Arguments of the kind (≠JF, =PC) require a change of the doctor's standpoint. Yet, by discussing the topical potential when a doctor presents an argument by authority, the topical potential that needs to be examined is the potential from which the doctor selects during the argumentation stage of an argumentative discussion. The standpoint that the doctor advances should therefore be considered as a given. This means that changing (the scope or force of) a standpoint cannot be regarded as a selection from the topical potential in the argumentation stage. At the moment that a doctor chooses to present an argument by authority, the topical potential that he selects this argument from hence consists of presenting an argument by authority (=JF, =PC), presenting an argument from authority (=JF, ≠PC) or presenting non-authority argumentation (≠JF, ≠PC).

What strategic advantage does a doctor's choice for presenting an argument by authority have over the alternative strategic manoeuvres in the topical potential? Let me examine this, by means of the doctor's argument by authority in *example (1)*. Recall that the doctor in *example (1)* argues that the patient's mother should

disregard other people's advice on the matter of changing her son's diet, because he say so and he is a credible authority on this matter (as he is a paediatrician and has studied for it) (turns 19 & 23). Given that the doctor presented an argument by authority rather than performing the alternative strategic manoeuvres depicted in *figure (1)*, it can be assumed that he thought this argument to strategically be the best selection from the topical potential available to him. To determine what the doctor's rationale behind this could be, the audience demand that is placed on the doctor in this fragment of the medical consultation should be taken into account.

In the argumentative discussion in *example (1)*, the mother, as a representative of the child patient, takes upon her the role of the doubting antagonist of the doctor's advice. The doctor tries to take away her doubt by presenting argumentation in favour of his advice, which makes him the protagonist in this discussion. By indirectly presenting her doubt (in turns 18 and 20), the mother can be regarded as not only expressing her doubt about the acceptability of the doctor's advice, but, in fact, also expressing her doubt about the doctor's professional capabilities. If she were sure about the doctor's professional capabilities, she would not have mentioned the different advices that others give. So, the audience demand that the mother places on the doctor in this part of the argumentative discussion consists of a request for further justification of the advice to refrain from changing her son's diet as well as a request for further justification of why the doctor should be regarded as the credible authority on this matter.

In terms of the options in *figure (1)*, just presenting argumentation from authority (*figure 1b*) or just presenting argumentation that is not authority argumentation (*figure 1d*) might take the mother's doubts about the acceptability of the doctor's advice away, but not necessarily her doubts about the doctor's professional capability. Recognising that the audience demand that mother places on the doctor in this excerpt also implies doubt about the doctor's professional capability next to doubt about the doctor's advice indeed seems to request from the doctor that he presents argumentation by authority (*figure 1a*) in combination with other argumentation (so, argumentation from authority or argumentation other than authority argumentation). The argument by authority could rebut the mother's doubt about the doctor's advice (by indicating that the doctor is a credible authority, because he is a paediatrician and has studied for advising on medical

issues) and the other argumentation could rebut the mother's doubt about the professional credibility of the doctor (by taking away the criticism that makes his advice unacceptable, because he is a credible authority). Moreover, in this example, the doctor additionally refers to his earlier argumentation that the patient grows just perfectly (turn 27). The doctor thereby stresses that he has good reasons for giving the medical advice.

The idea that the doctor selects to present an argument by authority to adapt to audience demand in *example (1)* is reflected in the doctor's use of presentational devices. In the consultation, the doctor strikingly refers to himself in the third person singular when presenting his argument by authority (in turns 21 and 23) and only continues in the first person singular to assure that he really studied for providing advices like the one about the child patient (in turn 21). Baring in mind that the medical consultation can be characterised as a cooperative conversational exchange, the doctor's choice for these presentational devices can be explained by politeness considerations. In contrast with argumentative discourse such as a presidential debate, this means that the doctor can be expected to limit the mother's potential face loss. Presenting his argumentation by authority in the third person makes it seem as though the doctor's argument is not directed at the mother, but at the other people that give different advice. So, the doctor only indirectly counters the mother's doubt about his professional capability to adapt to the audience by mitigating potential threats to the mother's *positive face* (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 62).**[iv]** Indeed, he does so in a similar manner as the way in which the mother presents the doubts to the doctor herself (in turns 18 & 20).

By an analysis such as the one I have just provided for the doctor's argumentation by authority in *example (1)*, a doctor's argument by authority in medical consultation can be analysed in general. It provides a systematic and context sensitive means to examine the strategic functions of this manoeuvre, which makes it possible to evaluate the doctor's argument by authority in detail.

5. Conclusion

In medical consultation, argumentation may play an important role. A patient's health related issues, and the doctor's medical advice, are central to such a consultation. A patient's (potential) hesitance about such advice could be overcome by the doctor when providing information about the patient's health problems and argumentation in support of (parts of the) advised treatment(s).

The context of the medical consultation affects the manner in which the doctor and patient discuss health related issues. A doctor has to conduct the medical consultation in an efficient manner. During a consultations, he might not only have to provide the patient with a diagnosis, prognosis and/or medical advice, but also has to fully inform the patient about the reasons for the diagnosis, prognosis or advised treatment option(s), alternative treatment option(s) and consequences of refraining from treatment. This can be particularly complex given that the doctor's medical claims about the patient's health related issues might have a big impact on the patient and are, therefore, potentially emotion laden. What is more, the participants in a medical consultation characteristically differ in the amount of knowledge they possess about, and experience they have with, the health issues in question.

As a result of these characteristics of medical consultation, a doctor may present argumentation by authority. After all, the patient recognizes the doctor as an authority on health related problems by virtue of requesting a medical consultation. So, the doctor's presentation of an authority argument in which he refers to himself as the authority could be quite effective.

By means of the analysis of an example of medical consultation taken from actual practice, I show that a doctor's argument by authority could indeed constitute an opportune selection from the topical potential available to the doctor, which – when conveyed by appropriate presentational devices – a doctor could make to adapt to audience demand. Based on this analysis, I argue that the extended pragma-dialectical theory provides a systematic and context sensitive means to examine the strategic functions of the argument by authority in medical consultation.

NOTES

[i] This is recognised in the pragma-dialectical principle of *socialisation*, according to which an argumentative discussion is always an interactional process that is conducted between two or more interlocutors (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p.10).

[ii] Note that a discussion party does not necessarily have to consider the party that he directly faces as his primary audience. This is only the case if the discussion party regards that party as the audience that he first and foremost wants to convince. For example, in a televised presidential debate, the presidential candidates can be considered as constituting each others' secondary

audience, while those who watch the debate on television can be considered as the candidates' primary audience (see Van Eemeren, 2010).

[iii] The other soundness conditions for authority argumentation that Van Eemeren (see 2010) list are that (1) the person referred to in this type of argumentation indeed possesses the professed authority, (2) the discussion parties in principle agree on referring to authority in the discussion, (3) the authority referred to is about a subject-matter that falls within the area of the authority's expertise and (4) the authority is correctly cited at a place in the discussion where this is relevant.

[iv] According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 62), a person's "positive face" can be defined as "the want of every member that his [or her] wants be desirable to at least some others".

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