

# ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Questioning The Fallacy Of Many Questions



## 1. Introduction

In June 2001, *BBC Newsnight* presenter Jeremy Paxman interviewed the Prime Minister of the UK, Tony Blair, about his past term. During this interview, Paxman posed the following question: “But you said ‘over the five years of a Labour Government we will rebuild the NHS.’ Did you underestimate the task?”. Blair subsequently responded, “I don’t think we underestimated the task”. Paxman, however, continued asking “Why say you could do it in five years?”, to which Blair unceremoniously replied with “We didn’t.” (*Newsnight*, 2001, June 5).

Interestingly, even though the Prime Minister seems to accept the presupposition that he stated his government would rebuild the National Health Service in five years by means of answering the interviewer’s initial question, he later openly rejects this proposition. The answer to Paxman’s follow-up question reveals an interesting property of the initial question: answering it apparently tricked Blair into committing to a proposition he did not want to be committed to.

Within argumentation studies, these type of questions have been treated in the extant literature under the general title *fallacy of many questions*. Consequently, Paxman’s initial question could be analysed as an instance of this fallacy. However, given that later on in the interview Blair admits he has said the Labour government would rebuild the NHS in five years on two occasions - Blair: “It [the statement about rebuilding the NHS in five years] is in the manifesto [of my Labour Party].”; and Paxman: “It was a mistake to say it [the statement] then?” Blair: “No. We do have to rebuild the National Health Service. We are doing it.” - Paxman seems to have been wholly justified in presupposing it in his question.

So how do we practically analyse such potential instances of the fallacy of many questions? To answer this question, we will first discuss the few definitions of the fallacy of many questions presented in the extant literature and their accompanying difficulties. Second, we will examine the possible approaches the argumentation analyst could take to evaluating the fallaciousness of these kinds

of questions. And third, we will present which approach s/he should take in the practical analysis of potentially fallacious questions and discuss the implications of this approach.

## *2. Literature Definitions*

The fallacy of many questions, also known as the fallacy of the complex question, is traditionally illustrated by the question "Have you stopped beating your spouse?" (see Robinson 1936, p.196; Oesterle, 1963, p.259; Hamblin 1970, p.38; Hintikka 1976, p.28; Walton 1989, pp. 36-75). This example nicely illustrates the difficulties the respondent is confronted with in answering this question: answering it in any fashion, whether affirmatively or negatively, commits the respondent to the presupposition that s/he has beaten his or her spouse. Further, challenging the question might be interpreted as undermining the questioner's credibility and can be thus impolite or otherwise face threatening. As this leaves the respondent with no reasonable chance to answer (or challenge) the question, this way of asking questions has been treated in the literature as fallacious. However, when it is perfectly clear from the situation that the respondent has been beating his or her spouse in the past, it would be strange to regard the question as a fallacy: the question includes a presupposition the respondent is committed to anyway. Although the fallacy of many questions is, therefore, context dependent, a definition of it would be helpful to analyse question-answer adjacency pairs in argumentative discussions.

Despite the frequent occurrence of the spouse-beating question as the fallacy's illustration, only a few definitions of the fallacy of many questions can be found in the literature. A rather descriptive definition is provided by Walton who holds that this fallacy occurs when a complex loaded question is asked that, if answered, traps the respondent into "conceding something that would cause him to lose the argument, or otherwise be unfavourable to his side" and is thus interfering with "the respondent's ability to retract commitments to allegations made by the other party who is asking the questions" (Walton 1999, pp. 379 and 382, resp.). So, "Have you stopped beating your spouse?" is fallacious because, if the respondent answers it directly, s/he becomes committed to the complex presupposition - more specifically, the conjunctive proposition (Walton 1999, p.381) - of having beaten his or her spouse and, presumably, this is a proposition s/he does not want to concede.

Even though this definition emphasises an important characteristic of the fallacy

of many questions, namely that answering such a question inherently means the respondent is committed to a proposition that s/he would not like to be committed to, it cannot sufficiently distinguish fallacious questions from non-fallacious questions. In argumentative discourse, one of the most straightforward ways to reasonably convince the opponent of a standpoint is indeed by demonstrating that the opponent's commitment to a particular proposition is inconsistent with opposing the standpoint at hand - even if this commitment is obtained by the opponent's answer to a question[i]. Imagine an interlocutor putting forward the standpoint "I have always treated my spouse well". If the antagonist in a discussion about this standpoint would subsequently ask, "Have you stopped beating your spouse?", and the protagonist would directly answer it in the affirmative or negative, then this complex loaded question is used to trap the protagonist into committing to the presupposition "I have beaten my spouse in the past". Since this commitment is disastrous for the defence of the protagonist's standpoint and the protagonist is unable to retract it, the posed question should be regarded as a fallacy of many questions in terms of Walton's definition. Yet, taken as the antagonist's argument - because you have been beating your spouse in the past, you cannot say that you have always treated your spouse well - the antagonist's question accurately points out the inconsistency that undermines the protagonist's case: it does not seem to be fallacious or in any way problematic.

The pragma-dialectical definition of the fallacy of many questions, by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992), may be more acceptable then as it enables the distinction between fallacious and non-fallacious questions. The pragma-dialectical theory proposes that this fallacy occurs when a questioner falsely presupposes a proposition as a common starting point by wrapping up this starting point in the question's presupposition (see van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, p. 152). Common starting points are defined as the ground shared by the questioner and respondent that determines whether their agreement is sufficiently broad to conduct a successful discussion (see van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, p.60). Therefore, in the spouse-beating question, the presupposition that the respondent has beaten his or her spouse is included as though it is a common starting point that is accepted by the respondent if s/he answers the question.

Hence, the pragma-dialectical definition of the fallacy of many questions enables the distinction between the non-fallacious version of "Have you stopped beating your spouse?" and its fallacious counterpart: the questioner does not falsely

presuppose that the respondent has beaten his or her spouse if it is perfectly clear that this proposition belongs to the starting points of the respondent, while it is fallacious if it does not belong to the respondent's starting points. However, can it always be determined if a proposition is correctly presupposed by the questioner? In other words, is it possible to establish every single starting point of the respondent in order to determine when the fallacy of many questions has occurred?

### 3. *Possible Approaches*

Since the fallaciousness of the fallacy of many questions comes down to falsely presupposing a starting point as a shared point of departure in a question's presupposition according to the pragma-dialectical theory, it needs to be examined when a presupposition is falsely assumed. In order to do so, we will outline the three distinct ways in which the argumentation analyst could account for this fallacy when analysing question and answer argumentation and show that only one of them, if refined, is appropriate.

First, it could be argued that a presupposition *always* falsely assumes a shared starting point because, in everyday communication, the questioner is never entirely sure of the respondent's starting points as they can never be made fully explicit: it is simply impossible to proceed in an argumentative discussion if every commitment were to be expressed before engaging in the discussion. Thus, it is possible to view all presuppositions contained in questions as fallacious.

As should already be clear from the previously noted context dependency of the fallacy of many questions, this view is too restrictive. The pragma-dialectical theory regards fallacies as communicative moves that frustrate the reasonable resolution of a difference of opinion (see van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, pp. 104-105), but not all questions that contain presuppositions hinder such a resolution. To take it to the extreme, is it even possible to have questions without presuppositions? Even the simplest yes-no question[**ii**] presupposes that the question can either be affirmed or negated; meaning that, under this possible approach, all questions could be analysed as fallacious, which would render it rather meaningless.

Moreover, in this view, the question "But you said 'over the five years of a Labour Government we will rebuild the NHS.' Did you underestimate the task?", in the *Newsnight* interview with Tony Blair mentioned earlier, should be treated as fallacious because it contains a presuppositions that was not put forward at the

beginning of the interview. This seems rather odd when taking into account that, in the remainder of the interview, the Prime Minister admits he is committed to saying that his government would rebuilt the NHS over five years. This demonstrates, in fact, that Paxman, as the interviewer, was right in presupposing the NHS proposition in the first place. Therefore, the initial question about rebuilding the NHS in five years could not have hindered the reasonable resolution of the difference of opinion between Paxman and Blair and could consequently not have been fallacious.

These issues might be avoided by taking the second possible approach in the analysis of question and answer argumentation. Accordingly, the argumentation analyst could assume that a question's presupposition can *never* falsely presuppose a respondent's starting point, since the respondent always has the opportunity to challenge the question if s/he does not want to be committed to the presupposed proposition. For instance, if ordinary non-spouse-beaters are asked "Have you stopped beating your spouse?", they could reply by asserting that they have never beaten their spouse and therefore that the question is not applicable to them.

Yet, the kind of difficulties that arise with this perspective resembles those of the previously discussed approach: it fails to make a distinction between those questions that are intuitively felt to be fallacious and those that are not. Some questions that are considered non-fallacious under this approach might frustrate the reasonable resolution of the argumentative dispute. If it is, for example, known that a respondent has never beaten his or her spouse, but this respondent does not reject the spouse-beating question - because s/he does not know how to reject it or does not want to make the impression of being uncooperative - the reasonable resolution of an argumentative dispute is hindered as the respondent was, originally, not committed to the presupposition that s/he now accepts by answering the question. The presupposition is hence smuggled in.

As a last option then, the argumentation analyst could regard questions as instances of the *fallacy of many questions only under certain conditions*. This view allows for several specifications like: a question is fallacious if the questioner knows that the respondent does not want to commit him- or herself to a proposition but intentionally presupposes it in a question anyway; a question is fallacious if the questioner does not ask whether the respondent agrees with the question's presupposition before posing the question; or a question is fallacious if the presupposition is not part of the starting points explicitly agreed upon before

starting question and answer argumentation.

Even though explaining the fallaciousness by these specifications is less restrictive than the previously discussed two (all-or-nothing) perspectives, difficulties with them might arise as well. For instance, the first specification we used to exemplify possible fallaciousness conditions - in which the fallacy of many questions occurs only if the questioner intentionally uses presupposition to which s/he knows the respondent does not want to be committed to - is infeasible: the argumentation analyst cannot possibly know the intentions of a questioner. If it is perfectly clear that a person has never beaten his or her spouse but a questioner still asks "Have you stopped beating your spouse?", it cannot be established whether this was asked with intent or just accidentally. Even explicitly establishing it afterwards provides the questioner with an opportunity to blatantly, but undetectably, lie about his or her intent. Moreover, it is questionable whether an intended falsely assumed presupposition would affect the resolution of a difference of opinion in a different manner than an unintended falsely assumed presupposition. What the respondent sees is what s/he gets: either a presupposition that s/he is committed to or a presupposition that s/he is not committed to.

The second example used to illustrate possible condition specifications - in which the fallacy of many questions is committed if the questioner does not ask for the respondent's agreement with the question's presupposition before posing the question - is both in agreement with Hamblin's idea that the spouse-beating question is "perfectly proper" if it has been preceded by the affirmatively answered question "Did you used to beat your spouse?" (Hamblin 1967, p.52) and with Krabbe's suggestion that, in a dialogue, insertion of the question "Do you have a habit of beating your spouse?" before the question "Have you stopped beating your spouse?" would render the question non-fallacious (Walton 1989, p.68).

Nevertheless, such a confirmation requirement is problematic. As stated before, each question has a presupposition and thus, when asking if the respondent agrees with the question's presupposition, another question is raised about which the questioner has to ask for the respondent's agreement with its presupposition accordingly. In other words, the questioner is confronted with the undesirable choice between continuing this confirmatory process infinitely or cutting it off at some arbitrary point.

Even if we would assume that we could theoretically warrant the idea that the respondent's confirmation only needs to be obtained about the presuppositions made in the questioner's primary question, this might not always be practically possible and, worse case scenario, elongate the discussion to such an extent that its reasonable resolution is frustrated. First, a question like "Have you stopped beating your spouse?" not only presupposes that the respondent has been beating his or her spouse in the past, but also that s/he has a spouse, is capable of beating this spouse, understands what is meant by the question, understands how to answer the question, etc. As several such presuppositions can be distinguished, the respondent should be asked to confirm each of them. Yet, this is not always practically possible due to time constraints, social conventions, or politeness considerations. Additionally, in the worst-case situation, the questioner asking each of these questions might obscure the point of his or her discussion with the respondent to the extent that its resolution is hindered, rather than promoted.

In reaction, the argumentation analyst could regard the fallacy of many questions to be committed under the conditions specified in the thirdly mentioned example - the fallacy of many questions occurs if the question's presupposition is not part of the common starting points explicitly agreed upon before starting question and answer argumentation - amounting to a compromise between the first two possible all-or-nothing approaches. Although this definition will keep argumentation analysts from an infinite workload, it touches upon the core problem regarding the fallaciousness of the fallacy of many questions: not all the propositions the respondent wants, or does not want, to be committed to can be made explicit before starting an argumentative discussion.

#### *4. Practical Approach*

So, we seem to have arrived at an impasse: our discussion of the possible approaches the argumentation analyst could take in his or her analysis of potential instances of the fallacy of many questions shows that it cannot always be determined whether a proposition is correctly presupposed by the questioner as it is not always possible to establish every single starting point of the respondent; yet, knowing the propositions that constitute the common starting points of the discussants is essential to determining whether the fallacy of many questions has been committed. However, although the analyst cannot know all the propositions that do and do not belong to the commitment set of the discussants, s/he can distinguish two cases in which the parties' starting points are perfectly clear.

The first case occurs when one party explicitly states, before starting a

discussion, to which starting points s/he wants or does not want to be committed to. For example, if a respondent stated that s/he has never beaten his or her spouse, it is fallacious to presume the opposite in a question's presupposition. Yet, since starting points may remain implicit in everyday discussions - leaving the questioner to assume the respondent's commitment to the presupposition of his or her question - this situation occurs only limitedly.

Yet there is another situation where it is clear what the starting points are, or better said, what starting points the parties are not committed to. The parties involved in a critical discussion know that their standpoint is never part of the opposite party's starting points and thus presupposing these standpoints in questions directed to the other party would be fallacious. Imagine having a discussion about the standpoint "He has beaten his spouse". Here, the protagonist would act fallaciously when asking "Has he stopped beating his spouse?", because the antagonist is not committed to this presupposition - if s/he were, there would not have been a difference of opinion in the first place.

This second situation is described substantially in the extant literature as the *begging the question fallacy* - also known as *circular reasoning* or *petitio principii*. According to the pragma-dialectical theory, the discussion party committing the *begging the question* fallacy hinders the reasonable resolution of a difference of opinion by presenting a proposition that amounts to his or her standpoint as a common starting point in the argumentation advanced in support of this standpoint (see van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992, p.153). Consequently, in question and answer argumentation, this takes place when a discussant presents his or her standpoint as an agreed upon presupposition in a question posed to the respondent.

Because the fallacy of many questions only occurs in argumentative interactions between two or more discussants and can always be distinguished if the presupposition comes down to the same thing as the questioner's standpoint - rather than on the limited occasion that a question's presupposition constitutes the opposite of the respondent's starting points that were made explicit beforehand - the fallacy of many questions is, in the practical analysis of argumentative discourse, essentially the dialectical version of the begging the question fallacy.

## 5. Implications

With respect to the *Newsnight* interview question: "But you said 'over the five years of a Labour Government we will rebuild the NHS.' Did you underestimate



the task?"; and Blair's subsequent challenge of the question's presupposition, reconstructing the argumentation shows that Blair defended a standpoint like "Labour's policies did not fail". Consequently, the presupposition "Blair said 'over the five years of a Labour Government we will rebuild the NHS'" is not the direct opposite of Blair's standpoint - it can only be used to argue against this standpoint by demonstrating, for a start, that rebuilding the NHS has failed in the five year time period. Therefore, Paxman did not beg the question in posing his question.

However, the question could still be an instance of the fallacy of many questions if Blair made explicit in the present discussion that he is not committed to the starting point that he pledged to rebuild the NHS in five years before the question was asked. Yet, he did not do so, which means that Paxman did not commit this fallacy either.

Interestingly, although Paxman's question cannot be analysed as fallacious, the question and answer argumentation concerning rebuilding the NHS in five years seems to obstruct the resolution of the argumentative dispute. As elucidated by the interviewer's questions, the Prime Minister's contradictory commitments - Blair first accepts the proposition about pledging to rebuild the NHS over five years of his Labour government by saying that he had not underestimated this task, then explicitly denies this proposition, and subsequently accepts it again by both admitting that it is in his party's manifesto and asserting that stating it was not a mistake - hinder the reasonable resolution of the dispute between Paxman and Blair. Consequently, a fallacy is committed, but the present analysis shows that it is Blair who acts fallaciously by misusing unclearness about his commitment - or absence of commitment - to the proposition about rebuilding the NHS, rather than Paxman in asking the question that clarified this.

## *6. Conclusion*

So, in order to establish how the argumentation theorist should analyse potential instances of the fallacy of many questions, we established what this fallacy practically comes down to in argumentative discourse.

In accordance with the pragma-dialectical theory, it was argued that questioners commit the fallacy of many questions if they falsely presume the respondent's commitment to a proposition in the questions' presupposition: questions that presuppose propositions the respondent is not committed to hinder the resolution of a difference of opinion between the questioner and respondent.

Practically seen, a clear-cut case in which the argumentation analyst can establish

that this fallacy is committed is when a question's presupposition is identical to the standpoint of the questioner in the discussion at hand. Because, from an analytical perspective, this is the only straightforward case in which fallacy of many questions can always occur in argumentative exchanges and because there needs to be a communicative interaction between a questioner and respondent for this fallacy to be committed, the fallacy of many questions is essentially the dialectical version of the begging the question fallacy in argumentation analysis. So, if a question's presupposition is essentially the same as the questioner's standpoint, then this presupposition is falsely assumed and the fallacy of many questions is committed.

However, to take all the situations into account in which questions can be analysed as instances of this fallacy, the exceptional case in which the respondent made clear s/he does not want to be committed to the question's presupposed starting point before the question is asked in the discussion also needs to be regarded as an instance of the fallacy of many questions. This is provided for by, next to recognising that this fallacy occurs as the dialectical variant of begging the question, recognising that the fallacy of many questions is committed if the respondent put forward the starting points to which s/he does and does not want to be committed to before a question is posed, while the questioner presupposes the opposite of these commitments in his or her question anyway.

## NOTES

**[i]** Elucidating commitments by means of questions is empirically shown to be part of the standard pattern of confrontation in argumentative discourses (van Eemeren et al. 1993, p.43).

**[ii]** A yes-no question in which the pragmatic presupposition is the same as its semantic presupposition.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Aesthetic Argument: Moving Beyond Logic



## 1. Introduction

On April 4, 1968, Robert Kennedy was spreading his message that “*Most people in America want to do the decent thing,*” across Indiana with his presidential primary campaign (Witcover 1997, p. 151). However, that vision was being coldly questioned on this same day in Memphis, Tennessee, where Martin Luther King, Jr., was supporting striking black sanitation workers. King and his crew abandoned their daily work to go to dinner at the home of a local minister. A few minutes before six o’clock, a chauffeured car arrived outside, when King decided to step outside on his second-floor balcony of the Lorraine Motel. One shot exploded and shattered the jaw of Martin Luther King, Jr. as he stood on his balcony outside Room 306. The shot exploded and the street fell quiet. King collapsed to the floor of the balcony, one foot caught in the railing and blood gushing from a three-inch tear in his face. King was rushed to

St. Joseph's Hospital where he was pronounced dead at five minutes past seven (Witcover 1997, p. 153).

Rioting or racial disturbances exploded that night and over the next two days in such major cities as Washington, D.C., Boston, New York, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Detroit, and Chicago, as well as in over a hundred smaller cities and towns (Witcover 1997, p. 157). Cities burned and people raged. Racial division hit the streets in fervent form. Hundreds of U.S. cities were surrounded by the National Guard troops as fires erupted and looters took to the streets. President Johnson quickly moved Federal troops into the nation's capital. Newspapers reported that Federal troops - some sources said 10,000 - were poised for possible deployment. In Chicago, "Police reported more than 150 arrests in connection with disturbances throughout the city and more than 200 persons were treated in hospitals for injuries" ("Troops Patrol," 1968). In Michigan it was the youths, which took to the streets as they marched on the City-County building, who were confronted by an armed police force at every turn. Massachusetts was also under the watch of the National Guard, which surrounded the Greater Boston area with police, as they sealed off downtown streets and businesses. Philadelphia, similar to Boston, took precautionary measures to halt vandalism by groups of looters and Tallahassee closed Florida A&M University in effort to head off violence ("Troops Patrol," 1968). Memphis, the city of King's assassination, also was victim to racial violence: "Police reported a sniper opened fire on a white man's car on Interstate 95 .... A fireman received slight injuries battling fires in a variety store. More than 25 firebombings were reported in several hours" ("Troops Patrol," 1968). Unlike these other U.S. cities, Indianapolis, Indiana, remained calm in spite of King's assassination.

Political campaigning is what brought Robert Kennedy to Indianapolis on April 4, 1968; however, mere chance and what some have called a miracle placed him in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods of the city to relay the horrific news that the great civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. Accompanied by the announcement of the tragic Memphis shooting, Kennedy (1968) added:

So I shall ask you tonight to return home, to say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King, yeah that's true, but more importantly to say a prayer for our own country, which all of us love - a prayer for understanding and that compassion of which I spoke.

The Indianapolis crowd dispersed "... quickly and in an orderly fashion" ("Branigin's Favorite," 1968). Rather than reactions steeped in violence the people of Indianapolis, did in fact, maintain a peaceful composure that illuminated Kennedy's plea for "... *understanding and compassion towards one another*" (Kennedy, 1968). Such an extraordinary historical moment - when Indianapolis remained nonviolent where many other cities did not - raises questions regarding emotional argumentation, rhetorical effects, situational context, and opportunities for convergence between a rhetor and audience, or what is entailed in a dialogic rhetoric.

Both social commentators and citizens in the audience claimed that Kennedy's speech was the primary reason why violence did not befall Indianapolis. Since then few rhetorical critics, historians, and political scientists have examined Kennedy's address to see why it may have had this profound effect. The review of literature specific to Kennedy's announcement of King's assassination presents a problem of isolated rhetorical effect, because, to date all of these inquiries have focused only on Kennedy's verbal message (Murphy, 1985, 1990; Nordlund, 1968).

This speech, to anyone who has seen it, realizes that its power lies beyond the words. Abie Robinson (2006), Indianapolis resident, remembers what it was like to be in the audience that fateful April night in 1968:

I was in that astonished crowd the night we learned of the assassination of Martin Luther King from the Senator Robert Kennedy. I remember the intense emotion that enveloped everyone present, the profound grief, the disbelief, the despair followed by anger and a desire to retaliate, but the inspiring impromptu speech given by Senator Robert Kennedy that tragic night caused us to reflect on the life of Martin Luther King and what he proclaimed to be the right response to violence. I believe it was a super-natural power, which caused us not to respond in lawlessness, but to hold on to the principles and ideas of non-violence that were the bench mark of Martin Luther Kings' legacy.

Robinson's memory of April 4, 1968, as a participating audience member, illustrates that there are multiple layers of rhetorical effectivity operating in the experience of Kennedy's Indianapolis announcement. King's legacy of non-violence is absolutely present in Robinson's memory and he accredits this to "... the inspiring impromptu speech given by Senator Robert Kennedy ..." (Robinson, 2006). Thus, in support of discursive focused work, Robinson's memory points to

Kennedy's inspirational words and how they worked to maintain peace and seek out reconciliation.

However, and more importantly for the nature of this project, Robinson (2006) remembers "... the intense emotion that enveloped everyone present ...," which moves the rhetorical effect beyond Kennedy's words. Robinson (2006) remembers feelings of "profound grief ... disbelief ... despair." He felt angry, he desired for retaliation. And then Robinson (2006) remembers a turning point, a moment of reflection upon these feelings. He rejected the anger and urge to retaliate, and "... believes it was a super-natural power ..." that quelled violence in Indianapolis. This recollection illustrates that both verbal and nonverbal features, such as emotion and feelings, contributed to the overall experience of the April 4, 1968 announcement. Thus, consideration of Kennedy's appearance in Indianapolis following the assassination of King needs to be expanded beyond his spoken words.

This project offers that restricting our vision to the traditional and dominant views of argument is limiting and constrictive. That is, argumentation's traditional concern with discursive effectivity limits our critical insight. Though logic is a fundamental mode of argumentation the other, peripheral and perhaps non-logical, modes are more often than not involved in the argument. And in the case of Kennedy's Indianapolis speech the persuasive force of his argument is driven by the presence of emotional non-discursive (or non-verbal) appeals. Considering the emotional state of Kennedy and his audience, therefore, becomes as relevant as the logistic reasoning of his address.

The emotional mode points to Kennedy's sincerity, the visceral indicating the role of the physical body, and the kisceral lends itself to the intuitiveness of Kennedy's response as well as the non-sensory elements, such as the contextual moment of the speech act or "the once-occurrent act of being," to use a Bakhtinian phrase. In connecting Kennedy's words to the overall event, it is less likely that those present in Indianapolis at Kennedy's speech on April 4, 1968 would remember what exactly was said. Rather, it is more likely that those present would remember the emotional-volitional tone of the entire event. This also moves the rhetorical effect beyond Kennedy's words. Both the sense of understanding apparent in Kennedy's gestures, tone, and words along with the shock, yet understanding, among individuals in the audience gives one an overall feeling of the dialogic moment. Thus, in his success of connecting the experience of the announcement of Dr. King's assassination to the individuals actively experiencing

it, Kennedy was able to overcome ambiguity and create a dialogic moment through emotional argument. The project concludes by considering what is entailed in a dialogic rhetoric, one that fully integrates the logical, emotional, visceral, and kisceral modes of argumentation. I suggest that Kennedy's address is exemplar of such a rhetoric that may in turn be the basis for further theoretical development.

## *2. Analysis: Four modes of argumentation*

Following is an effort to understand the "peripheral" through a critical analysis of Kennedy's April 4, 1968 speech. The analysis will integrate Gilbert's (1997) conception of the "peripheral modes of argument" with examples from a historically significant speech act. First this analysis will briefly illustrate the logical mode of argument found in Kennedy's address followed by the consideration of the difficulties of assessing the peripheral modes of argumentation. Then the analysis will turn to the emotional, visceral, and kisceral elements that drive the rhetorical effect beyond Kennedy's words. To note, however, this is not to suggest the each of these modes of argument exist in isolation to each other. Rather, all four of these modes work concurrently to create a more comprehensive understanding of the communication interaction.

### *2.1 The logical*

The first of the four modes of argument presented in the work of Gilbert (1997) is the logical. This mode can be understood as "... arguments [that] are based on an appeal to the linear patterns that lead us from one statement or set of statements to a claim. These arguments are linguistic, dialectical and classically identified as serial predictions" (Gilbert 1997, p. 84). For example, consider a short example of Kennedy's address through the lens of the logical mode. Such an analysis would consider Kennedy's argument in terms of his claim, data, warrant, and/or backing:**[i]**

A claim is a statement that you are asking the other participants to accept. This includes information you are asking them to accept as true or actions you want them to accept and enact. For example Kennedy (1968) claims:

But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in this country want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all human beings who abide in our land.

Kennedy puts forth that racial reconciliation is possible and provides data as the

grounds for the real persuasive force of the argument. Data is the truth on which the claim is based. Kennedy (1968) grounds his claim by evoking the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice for between fellow human beings, he died in the cause of that effort.

Furthermore, a warrant links data to a claim, legitimizing the claim by showing the data to be relevant. The warrant may be explicit or implicit. It answers the question of why the data presented means that your claim is true. Kennedy (1968) continues:

We can move in that direction as a country, in greater polarization - black people amongst blacks, and white amongst whites, filled with hatred toward one another. Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend, and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread out across our land, with an effort to understand, compassion and love.

By acknowledging King's legacy of nonviolence and compassion, Kennedy provides his Indianapolis audience with a powerful truth to warrant his claim toward racial reconciliation. Finally, the backing (or support) to an argument gives additional support to the warrant by answering different questions. Kennedy (1968) quotes Aeschylus and evokes the wisdom of the ancient Greeks to provide additional support for his overall claim toward racial reconciliation:

My favorite poem, my favorite poet was Aeschylus. He once wrote: 'Even in our sleep, pain which cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God. Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and make gentle the life of this world.'

Utilizing a Critical-Logical model, this example illustrates how Kennedy's message can be viewed in a categorical linear manner of A, B, therefore C. However, to merely reduce Kennedy's message to its linguistic terms "... is to negate both the method and purpose (conscious or not) of the move" (Gilbert 1997, p. 80). While illustrative of the discursive force of Kennedy's speech, the previous analysis does not account for the radical shift in context that occurred in a moment when the Kennedy campaign, planning for a political rally, heard of King's death. The claim, data, warrant, backing categorization does not consider the emotions apparent in Kennedy's delivery of the message (tone, vocal pauses, hand gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.) nor does it consider the "feelings" of the audience



in the act of experiencing the announcement of King's assassination. Thus, the peripheral modes of argument must be considered to incorporate nondiscursive elements that occur in actual communication interaction.

## 2.2 *The "peripheral" modes*

Before turning to the "peripheral" modes of argument which include the emotional, visceral, and kisceral (Gilbert, 1997), it is important to note the problems and difficulties inherent in attempting to translate nondiscursive forms of argument into discursive language. The issue is the "translatability of nonverbal communications ... into linguistic terms" (and relating it to a premise or claim) allowing for the identification of an argument (Gilbert 1997, p. 80). However, as Gilbert (1997) posits, "The kind of information presented may defy direct translation, but that does not mean it is not an argumentative move" (p. 80). Because of the difficulty of this translation of nondiscursive argument into discursive language the contextual implications of the argument "... and, perhaps, the personal and social histories of the arguers" needs to be considered (Gilbert 1997, p. 80-81). Thus, the timing and announcement of King's death as well as the social history of Kennedy, himself, will be fundamental in evaluating the emotional appeals of the April 4, 1968 address.

### 2.2a *The kisceral*

The kisceral mode of argument derives "... from the Japanese term *ki* meaning energy, life-force, and connectedness, which covers the intuitive and nonsensory arenas" (Gilbert 1997, p. 79, 86).**[ii]** The kisceral involves sub-sensory elements, like feelings of apprehension, as well as considers the context of choice-making. The kisceral mode of argument "... is a synthesis of experience and insight" (Gilbert 1997, p. 87). The intuitiveness of Kennedy's response is illustrated by revisiting the immediate context prior to Kennedy's announcement. Leaving Ball State University for the Hoosier capital, Robert Kennedy was sitting in his chartered plane when he received startling news that Martin Luther King, Jr., had been shot in Memphis. *New York Times* reporter Johnny Apple told him. Kennedy "sagged. His eyes went blank," recalled Apple (Thomas 2000, p. 366). Before more details were available, the plane took off for Indianapolis. Kennedy instructed Fred Dutton, one of his assistants, to find out two things immediately upon arrival at Weir Cook Airport in Indianapolis. What was King's condition, Kennedy wanted to know, "and the state of the city's Negro wards, in the midst of which ... [he] was scheduled to hold a large street-corner rally" (Witcover 1969, p.

139).

Kennedy's plane landed in Indianapolis at 8:40 p.m. (thirty-five minutes past the announcement of King's death). As Dutton hurried to the airport police office to make several calls, Kennedy waited aboard the plane, scribbling some notes and undoubtedly questioning whether he should continue with his visit to the African American neighborhood. When Dutton returned, his report was dreadful; King was dead. As for the situation in the African American wards in Indianapolis, they were calm. The news of the assassination had not reached them yet.

On the way to the site, Kennedy sat silently for long minutes. "*What should I say?*" he finally mumbled. Dutton mentioned only the obvious, the need to stress nonviolence and faith in racial reconciliation. Kennedy fell into silence again (Witcover 1969, p. 140). His questions suggest that he was still unsure about what he should do or say, but he remained determined to deliver the message.

When Kennedy and his committee arrived in the Indianapolis neighborhood in which he was to deliver his address, it was apparent that the crowd had not heard the news of King's death. According to an *Indianapolis New* reporter, "Most of them had been waiting for Kennedy for two hours in the 30-degree drippy weather" ("Kennedy Calls," 1968). There were plenty of Kennedy banners and the usual cheerful mood of a political gathering. Kennedy, grim-faced, stepped out into the chilly night, huddled in a black topcoat. He asked the local organizer of the rally if they had heard the news of King's death. The organizer replied, "No, we have left that up to you." Adam Walinsky, Kennedy's speech writer, dashed up to deliver a hastily outlined speech, but Kennedy nodded him off and drew from his pocket some crumpled notes that he had written himself (Thomas 2001, p. 366). Kennedy (1968) begins to speak:

Ladies and gentlemen, [clears throat], I am only going to talk to you just for a minute or so this evening because I have very sad news for all of you [His voice catches, perhaps a slight cough or effort to clear his throat]. Could you lower those signs please? [There are screams out from individuals in the crowd, still in a political rallying mood]. I have some very sad news for all of you, and I think sad news for all of our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and was killed tonight in Memphis, Tennessee." [Kennedy's voice fades as he announces the location of King's death and cries from the crowd overtake the moment. Cries of "No!" and gasps of disbelief come from several members of the audience. The screams echoed, the

wailing was illustrative of raw disbelief. Cries of sorrow escaped individuals in the audience as Kennedy paused, resuming slowly, pausing frequently].**[iii]**

The kisceral mode consists of sub-sensory experiences. Kennedy's intuition that emerged is evidence of the kisceral mode and even he, in that moment, might not have been fully aware of the kisceral implications. However, what is of importance is that Kennedy embraced an intuitive drive to continue forward with his trip into the urban community. The contextual moment of a speech act is unique and cannot be recreated to evoke similar kisceral feelings. Rather, the once-occurrent act of being in the moment is an essential component of Kennedy's rhetorical effectivity on April 4, 1968. Kennedy's gesture to speak out, in spite of numerous warnings, also speaks to the visceral mode of argumentation.

### 2.2b *The visceral*

The visceral mode of argumentation "...stems from the area of the physical" (Gilbert 1997, p. 79). This mode can be displayed through the body, through nondiscursive means, as well as, can exist prior to the linguistic, logical model. To consider the visceral mode of argument apparent in Kennedy's address is to consider that it was Kennedy's physical actions that moved the argument. His behavior, along with his physical embodiment of the announcement, is the significant contributor to the overall rhetorical effect of the April 4, 1968 speech act.

As previously mentioned the four modes of argument can often be found working in conjunction to each other. Of particular interest, at this point of the analysis, is consideration of the feeling of fear as a combination of the kisceral and visceral. Kennedy's hesitation to continue forward with this trip into the African American neighborhood despite warnings from police officials, family members, campaign staff and friends illustrates the kisceral function of argumentation. Further, the slow pace of Kennedy's physical delivery also illustrates this hesitation. Watching Kennedy pull at the envelope in which the hastily outlined speech was written is indicative of the nervousness embedded in Kennedy's body. Not knowing how the audience would react to the announcement of King's death reasonably places Kennedy's body at the mercy of his audience. As such, feelings of anxiety, fear, and nervousness present themselves as part of the overall composition of Kennedy's argument.

Due to the rise of violent racial outbreaks across the United States - even in the absence of such a tragedy as King's assassination - several indicated that they

feared for the safety of Kennedy's own life if he were to continue on with his trip. Kennedy's gesture highlights his rejection of racialized notions of African Americans as violent as well as illustrates a rhetorical interruption in which Kennedy places his white body in a racialized space. Kennedy, by placing his white body in a racialized space created a zone of vulnerability. This vulnerability was a familiar feeling for the African American audience who had historically put their bodies on the line during the civil rights movement. By placing his body in a racialized space, along with his delivery (tone, gestures, voice, and eye contact), Kennedy illustrated his sincerity through performance and displayed the emotional modes of seriousness, grief, and hesitation.

On the evening of April 4, 1968, the weather was cold and rainy as the political rally quickly shifted to a space of mourning upon the announcement of King's assassination. King's death ruptured the moment and the weather reflected it. Kennedy through his embodiment sensed the mood of the crowd, what Bakhtin calls response to the other. And before an emotion-filled, impressionable Indianapolis audience, Kennedy had to alter his rhetoric to fit a tragedy no one could have foreseen.

Further, how the audience received the news of King's death is of interest. More than likely, those present in the audience would remember the visceral feeling associated with that moment. William Crawford, now a 70-year-old Indiana state representative, in 1968 was a young and impatient member of Black Radical Action Program. "He was in the audience that night, and he and his friends might have 'struck the match' over King's slaying," reported Higgins ("A Tribute," 2006). Recalling the visceral and emotional elements of the reaction of the audience, Crawford remembers:

.... as the sky darkened and a light rain fell, the crowd shook with sorrow and anger when Kennedy told them King had been shot. But after hearing Kennedy's words of peace and nonviolence, 'our reaction was one of prayer ... Unlike other communities, we did not strike a match. We did not pick up a gun ("Keep MLK's message," 2006).

In similar form, John Lewis, Civil Rights Activist, recalls: "The words ... they just ring ... they'll just chill your body. And he [Kennedy] did, not in a ... loud ... but almost in a prayerful manner [delivered the news of King's death]" (Lewis 2004, *RFK* film).

In these remembrances it becomes apparent that the rhetorical effect of

Kennedy's address is a combination of bodily experience, Kennedy's words, and his tone. The situational context and Kennedy's gesture (of speaking) and delivery also play a role in the once-occurrent experience. Kennedy never looks down from the audience which can be seen as the expression of sincerity through his face. This facial connection with the audience remains throughout the entirety of his speech and continues while he is departing from the stage (The Nostalgia Company, 1998). Kennedy's hand gestures continually point directly at the crowd and then back to him. This highlights, vividly, the connection of Kennedy and the audience experiencing the event at the same time. The back and forth motion of his hands imitates the back and forth exchange as he delivers his response *for* the audience.

### 2.2c *The emotional*

Passionate appeals were always theorized in classical rhetorical tradition as an intrinsic rhetorical proof (*pathos*), however, ironically public address and communication scholarship have consistently, over time, moved to a more literary-criticism or textual approach. The peripheral mode concerning emotion allows for reflection upon the rhetorical canon of delivery that appears to have escaped the attention of many communication scholars. The emotional mode of argument is concerned with the "realm of feelings ... [and] involves the illustration by use of [one's] body and human emotional devices" along with words" (Gilbert 1997, p. 79, 83). The emotional argument of April 4, 1968 can be found in Kennedy's sincerity which is illustrated through his delivery as well as through the "emotional-volitional" tone of the overall event. **[iv]** Beyond Kennedy's words, the tone of the speech act was just as important in creating the emotional argument.

In light of such a tragic announcement, not what was said but how Kennedy chose to say it is of just significance. Bakhtin's emotional-volitional tone "... seeks to express the truth [*pravda*] of the given moment, and that relates it to the ultimate unitary, and once-occurrent unity" (Bakhtin 1993, p. 87). To further illustrate the emotional argument of Kennedy's address this analysis will turn to consider Kennedy's delivery.

The Kennedy voice is distinct and the calming tone displayed by Kennedy in announcing the death of Dr. King was familiar to the 1968 Indianapolis crowd. From the moment Kennedy began to speak, the somber, yet sincere, emotional mood swept over the interaction. Kennedy's opening utterance, along with the

remainder of the speech, was delivered at a slow pace while Kennedy maintained consistent eye contact with the audience. The slowness of his pace is illustrative of Kennedy's seriousness, his grief, and of his hesitation (an example of the visceral mode of argument).

The seriousness of the situation is relevant in considering that Kennedy's initial appearance to this audience was scheduled as a political rally. Thus, when Kennedy (1968) says, "*Could you lower those signs please?*" and repeats "*I have some very sad news for all of you...*" it is evident that he is changing the overall emotional-volitional tone of the entire event from one of a politically rallying mood to one more attuned to seriousness. Further, the slow pace of Kennedy's voice and how it fades immediately following his announcement of the location of King's death reflects the grief, along with shock and disbelief, of Kennedy's own emotional reflection of King's death as he was actively announcing it.

Evident by the eloquence and sincerity put forth by Kennedy's tone, one is reminiscent of his older brother, President John F. Kennedy. To evoke the memory of the past President who had fallen victim to an assassination only a mere five years previous to this tragic announcement had the power to evoke great emotional feelings from many Americans. Not only was the audience reminded of President Kennedy via the similarities apparent in his brother's delivery, by drawing upon his own personal experience, Kennedy spoke out of his own brother's assassination in hopes of identifying with his audience and aligning possible feelings and emotions that were apparent in the Indianapolis crowd. Kennedy (1968) said:

For those [Kennedy sweeps his hand across his body in acknowledging those individual present in front of him] of you who are black [audience cries out in disbelief] and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust of the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I would only [points to the crowd] say that I can also feel in my own heart [Kennedy points to his heart] the same kind of feeling [points to the crowd]. I had a member of my family [points to the crowd] killed, but he was killed by a white [points to the crowd] man. But we have to make an effort [points to the crowd] in the United States, we have to make an effort [points to the crowd] to understand, to get beyond or go beyond these rather difficult times.

Emotional arguments are fundamental to human argumentation. They communicate to us elements that logical arguments do not. "These include such

elements as degree of commitment, depth, and extent of feeling, sincerity, and degree of resistance” (Gilbert 1997, p. 84.). The crowd appeared to sense the commitment of Kennedy and this can be evidenced by his physical delivery. In support of this claim, *Time* reporter Joe Klein (2006), has recently contended: One senses, listening to tape years later, the audience’s trust in the man on the podium, a man who didn’t merely feel the crowd’s pain but shared it. And Kennedy reciprocated: he laid himself bare for them, speaking of the death of his brother – something he’d never done publicly and rarely privately .... The silence had deepened, somehow; the moment was stunning.

### 3. Conclusion

Though important to consider, the words of Kennedy’s address do not stand alone in the creation of the rhetorical effect. Rather, moving the analysis beyond logic allows for a more real account of what happened in Indianapolis on April 4, 1968. Though the logical mode would be contributing to the traditional study of rhetoric it also would drastically rupture an encompassing view of the rhetorical effect. The “feelings” associated with the overall once-occurrent act of experiencing the announcement of King’s death would be unaccounted for. To begin such an encompassing investigation is to account for both the discursive and the “peripheral” or nondiscursive communication elements that drive the persuasive appeal of Kennedy’s speech act. Similarly, work involving dialogic rhetoric should also be open to the insight that such a multi-faceted analysis would bring. Understanding a rhetor’s spoken words is an essential step to the evaluation of one side of the dialogic pair. Where dialogic rhetoric takes a step further is by investigating the receiver of the message as well as the relationship between the two. Thus, a dialogic rhetoric would benefit from aesthetic argumentation in which the entire situational context of the communicative act is taken into account. [v]

Whether Kennedy’s address helped quell violence in Indianapolis as violence erupted in cities across the nation cannot be answered in the absolute sense. However, investigating Kennedy’s address through a phenomenological account of argument allows for a better understanding of how rhetorical effectivity is both verbal and nonverbal. Kennedy’s Indianapolis speech demonstrates a way in which honorable aspirations via words *and feelings* can be achieved through communicative interaction.

This project was in effort to identify the ways in which peripheral modes of argumentation are conceptualized, described, and analyzed. The theoretical

payoff is a new account for argumentation and rhetoric – one that fully integrates the logical, emotional, visceral and kisceral modes of argumentation. **[vi]** Kennedy's April 4, 1968 Indianapolis appearance is an exemplar account of how an encompassing view of the rhetorical effect can contribute to the study of argument. Kennedy's sincerity that was reflected through the peripheral modes of argument as well as through the heartening remarks, delivered from a few small notes Kennedy pulled together on the somber ride from the Weir Cook airport to an Indianapolis basketball court, remain one of the most moving moments of U.S. history.

## NOTES

**[i]** This brief example utilizes Stephen Toulmin's (1969) model of argumentation which identified elements of persuasive argument as well as provides useful categories for argument analysis.

**[ii]** Gilbert (1997) takes "... the liberty of introducing a new term here in order to afford sufficient breadth without at the same time using terminology generally in disrepute. That is, the kisceral covers not only the intuitive but also, for those who indulge, the mystical, religious, supernatural and extrasensory. 'Kisceral' is chosen in order to have a descriptive term that does not carry with it normative baggage, like, for example, 'mystical' or 'extra-sensory'" (p. 79).

**[iii]** Video and audio recordings of Robert Kennedy's Statement on the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in Indianapolis, Indiana, April 4, 1968, are available for review in the video series Great Speeches or on the video The Greatest Speeches of All-Time and online from the archives of the JFK library or from [americanrhetoric.com](http://americanrhetoric.com). Video footage of Kennedy's address from Great Speeches is cut short and two paragraphs near the beginning and end of the text is lost in their rendition. However, the video footage that is provided allows for visual reference to Kennedy's non-verbal indicators such as gestures and facial expressions. The video also provides a brief glimpse of the audience. The online recordings of Kennedy's April 4, 1968 speech, though lacking visual reference, gives a clearer, more complete audio version of the address. Several renditions are taken into account in this analysis. See Lloyd Rohler, educational consultant, The Educational Video Group, (1989), Great Speeches: Volume V and The Nostalgia Company, (1998), The Greatest Speeches of All-Time, Rolling Bay, WA: SoundWorks, USA, Inc. For online audio renditions see Robert Kennedy, Statement on the Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., (Indianapolis, Indiana, April 4, 1968 -, accessed 10 November 2003); available from



<http://www.cs.umb.edu/jfklibrary/r040468.htm>; Internet or visit [americanrhetoric.com](http://americanrhetoric.com).

**[iv]** Mikhail Bakhtin presents the concept of the “emotional-volitional tone” in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. V. Liapunov and ed. M. Holquist & V. Liapunov (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993).

**[v]** Time and space do not permit a fuller discussion of dialogic rhetoric here. This portion of the project allows only consideration of what a dialogic rhetoric is and what it entails. Furthermore, how the peripheral modes of argument work to provide a more encompassing view of the situational context (which includes the speaker, audience, and the relationship between the two) allows for further theorizing of dialogic rhetoric.

**[vi]** It is important to remember, however, “...that no claim is being made for exclusivity. It is unlikely that any argument is purely in one mode, and it is practically certain that any argument can be twisted out of its natural shape and into some arbitrary mode” (Gilbert, 1997, 82).

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Evaluating Attacks On The Credibility Of Politicians In Political Debates**



## *1. Introduction*

When analysing political argumentative discourse, we regularly come across attacks on the credibility of the participants in the discourse. By discrediting tactics, politicians intend to discourage their colleague politicians and the general public from supporting the standpoint of their opponent. In Dutch media it is suggested that the use of personal attacks in

Dutch political debates has increased under the influence of international politics.**[i]** Although there is no empirical evidence for this claim, very recently there have been several examples in Dutch politics in which the credibility of politicians has been subject of debate.

On June 24 2006 for instance, the Dutch progressive liberal party, Democrats 66 (D'66), organised elections in order to find a new party leader. The two most prominent candidates were the current Minister for Government Reform and Kingdom Relations, Alexander Pechtold, and chair of the parliamentary party, Louisewies van der Laan. In one of the debates in the build-up to the elections, van der Laan stated that her opponent Pechtold, had completely lost his credibility. First of all because Pechtold, when he was a minister, had agreed on the Uruzgan mission whereas, on an earlier occasion, he had said that under no circumstances he would agree on that mission. Secondly, because he characterised himself as an analytical person, whereas, according to van der Laan, this is not in keeping with the way in which he had profiled himself in an interview, claiming to be 'a man who often shoots and some shots are successful'. After the debate, Pechtold was furious about these accusations: 'she portrayed me as person who lacks credibility: that is damaging for me and for the party'.

In that same period, the credibility of the Minister of Immigration was under attack. On 15 May 2006, the Dutch parliament called an emergency debate to discuss the decision by Immigration Minister Rita Verdonk, to revoke the Dutch nationality of the Somali-born Dutch politician, Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Most MPs didn't agree with the Minister's standpoint. They questioned her credibility and suggested that Verdonk had ulterior motives for defending this standpoint at this particular moment: she was accused of trying to boost her chances in the race to become the new leader of Conservative Liberal Party by taking this decision

Questioning an opponent's credibility in a political debate often involves an ad hominem argument. From a pragma-dialectical perspective, an attack on the credibility of the opponent may be regarded as a violation of one of the ten rules for critical discussion, the so-called freedom rule. This rule formulates the fundamental right to advance or criticise any desired standpoint without being hindered in any way. Attacking the opponent personally may constitute an infringement on this right. When analysing and evaluating political debates, it may, however, be difficult to decide when an argumentative move is indeed an infringement of the freedom rule. In this contribution I will look into the ways in which the credibility of a politician may be challenged and what complications may occur when deciding on the fallaciousness of these challenges. First I will

look into what criteria there are to determine credibility. Then, I will discuss some examples of how the credibility of political opponents is challenged in parliamentary debate. Finally I will discuss some difficulties when classifying a personal attack as being a fallacy.

## 2. *Criteria for credibility*

The credibility of a protagonist of a certain standpoint may be criticised in different ways. In literature on argumentation and communication we come across various criteria for determining a person's credibility. Empirical studies in the field of political communication suggest that (source) credibility is made up of expertise and trustworthiness. In a research on negative political advertising by Yoon, Pinkleton and Ko (2005), the anchors for *expertise* include experience, knowledge, skills and qualifications. The researchers measured *trustworthiness* using the criteria honesty, reliability and sincerity.

In literature on argumentation, Govier (1999: 26) brings forward that in a normative sense, a person's credibility may be defined as his or her worthiness to be believed. It depends on a person's sincerity, honesty, and reliability. **[ii]** A person is normatively credible if and only if he or she is honest and is in an appropriate position to be a believable asserter of claim made.

When discussing ad-hominem arguments, van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992: 110) state that an opponent's credibility may be seriously undermined by portraying him as stupid, unreliable, inconsistent or biased. Walton (2006: 122) says that attacking the other party's honesty or sincerity may lead to the conclusion that a person lacks credibility as an arguer who can be trusted to play by the rules.

All these different criteria as to how the credibility of the protagonist of a certain standpoint can be established, increased or undermined can be placed under two headings. The first criterion is *competence*: relating to expertise, reliability, being well informed, knowledgeable and adequately prepared. The second is *trustworthiness*: relating to honesty, fairness, sincerity, faithfulness and unbiased. In political science and in political practice, the credibility of politicians is considered of great importance. It might even be argued that the credibility of individual politicians is to a large extent decisive for the quality of a democracy. According to Munnich (2000: 20) the very impression of a politician hiding something, having ulterior motives or promoting his own interests devalues the legitimacy of political decisions. This view is in line with one of Habermas's

critical standards for deliberative politics, which is that everyone participating in a political discourse should express his or her views in a truthful way (Steiner et al, 2004).

The importance of credibility and related concepts in the eyes of politicians themselves can be derived from an empirical research that was carried out by van den Heuvel, Huberts and Verberk (2002). Thirteen different values were distinguished as belonging to the ethics of politicians and civil servants. When Dutch politicians were asked to select the three values that are most important for their own behaviour, they first of all selected honesty (60% mention this value), followed by integrity and openness (both 39.2%). Expertise (26.1%) was considered significantly less important. **[iii]**.

The ways in which standpoints and arguments in a political debate are formulated, too, may indicate the awareness of politicians of the importance of their credibility. When a politician anticipates doubts about his competence affecting his credibility, he may present a standpoint or an argument by making use of phrases such as 'to the best of my knowledge', 'to the best of my ability' or 'if I am well-informed'. When he anticipates doubts on his trustworthiness he may accompany a standpoint or an argument with formulations such as: 'I won't beat about the bush', 'in all candour', 'in all fairness' or 'with hand on heart'. These 'indicators for the awareness of the importance of credibility' are also used in non-political argumentative discourse. According to Fetzer (2002: 187), however, compared to most other types of argumentative discourse, the concept of credibility is even of greater importance in a political-discourse-setting because of its mediated and therefore public status.

Given the importance of the concept of credibility in political argumentative discourse, it is only to be expected that, notwithstanding their formal and institutional context, attacks on the credibility of politicians do indeed occur in parliamentary debates (Plug, 2007).

### *3. Discussing the credibility in parliamentary debates*

The corpus of Dutch parliamentary debates over the past five years (2001-2006) contains some examples of attacks on the credibility of opponents, either by discrediting their competence or by discrediting their trustworthiness. First I will present some examples of personal attacks on the competence of opponents. Then, I will present an example of an attack on the trustworthiness of an opponent.

*Competence: inadequate expertise*

The example under (1) contains a fragment of a debate on Dutch tax plans for 2005, in which State Secretary Wijn defends the standpoint that the VBP-tax (corporate income tax) should not be lowered:

(1)

State Secretary Wijn: (...) Last Monday I argued extensively that, in my view, the psychology of a lower VBP-tax will rank us once more among those countries in which people wish to establish businesses. This has not been proven by means of any model.

Mr Crone (Labour party): We should *always* be wary of *economists putting forward psychology as proof*.

(Proceedings of the House of Representatives, 18 November 2004)

In this case, MP Crone is criticising not so much the expertise of State Secretary Wijn as a politician, but as an economist. Crone is of the opinion that Wijn cannot bring his claim, as it were, since he is an economist who uses arguments from the field of psychology, which is not his field. He formulates his accusation as a general principle that is not only true for the economist Wijn, but for all economists. **[iv]**

*Competence: inadequate preparation*

In the next debate (2) between van Baalen (Member of Parliament for the Conservative Liberal Democrats) and Timmermans (Member of parliament for the Labour party), van Baalen suggests that Timmermans's standpoint need not be taken seriously since Timmermans is not well prepared.

(2)

Mr van Baalen (Conservative Liberal Democrats): I suspect that the haste *characteristic* of members of parliament has prevented you from reading the cabinet's letter. This letter clearly states that the European Parliament, (...) will have more control, not less.

Mr Timmermans (Labour party): I do not need to be lectured on what to read or what not to read. You should refrain from personal attacks. Why not proceed with the contents?

(Proceedings of the House of Representatives, 4 December 2003)

Van Baalen suggests that haste is typical for all members of parliament. And since haste is part and parcel of an MP's job, it should not be used as an excuse.

*Competence: insufficiently knowledgeable*

In a debate on an inquiry into expenditure for public health care (October 8, 2004), a difference of opinion arises between Kant (Socialist party) and Weekers (Conservative Liberal Democrats) on whether the study on the subject suggests that money has been spent ineffectively. Weekers is of the opinion that this conclusion could indeed be read between the lines of the study. He therefore thinks that it is important to see if more could have been done with the same amount of money. Kant does not share his opinion:

(3)

Ms Kant (Socialist Party): (...) You yourself have just said that this has not been investigated, yet you do draw conclusions from this study. Obviously money has not always been spent effectively, but this is a conclusion which cannot be drawn on the basis of this study.

Mr Weekers (Conservative Liberal Democrats): Ms Kant, *you always think* that all problems in this country will be solved by spending large sums of money. I maintain that it is not just a matter of money (...) At the same time it has, in part, to do with a lack of effectiveness and I would like to have focused on that aspect. That is my position and that is what I read between the lines of the study.

(Proceedings of the House of Representatives, October 8 2004)

In this discussion Weekers is portraying Kant as an ignoramus when it comes to serious economic problems. In doing so, he does not only ignore Kant's standpoint, he also commits a straw man by suggesting that she only argues for more money for public health care.

*Trustworthiness: unfairness*

Under (4) an example is given in which two members of Parliament (Halsema and van Aartsen) clashed in an emergency debate on the occasion of the resignation of the Minister for Administrative Reform, de Graaf. The disagreement focused on the question of de Graaf's reasons for resigning.

(4)

Ms Halsema (the Green Party): Mr President, (...) Mr de Graaf clearly indicates that he made his decision today, not yesterday. The decision was made because

there was no longer any prospect of reaching an agreement over the electoral system. (...)

Mr van Aartsen (Conservative Liberal Democrats): Mr President, Ms Halsema's fantasies know no bounds. Her contributions are all very interesting but do not make any sense at all. *And they have a familiar ring to them.* (...)

(Proceedings of the House of Representatives, 23 March 2005)

Here, van Aartsen disagrees with Halsema when she claims that Minister de Graaf decided to resign because of the attitude of the coalition partners concerning the electoral system. Van Aartsen does not reject her standpoint by means of sound arguments, but by portraying her as a person who is making things up and is therefore an unreliable discussion partner.

#### 4. *The fallaciousness of personal attacks*

From literature on personal attacks and ad-hominem arguments it becomes clear that there are serious difficulties with regard to criteria that should be used when deciding on the fallaciousness of an attack on a person's credibility. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1995) criticise the criterion 'relevance' that is used in the Standard Treatment and that qualifies the ad hominem as a fallacy of relevance. They consider the notion of relevance unclarified and therefore as the origin of the problem of the many exceptions to the rule that an *argumentum ad hominem* is a fallacy.

According to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1995), an *argumentum ad hominem* is not fallacious on the grounds that it is an argument with irrelevant premises. In their pragma-dialectic approach, a personal attack in argumentative discourse should be interpreted as a fallacy if it hinders the resolution of a disagreement by undermining the other party's right to advance or criticize a standpoint. This 'right to speak' may be violated by all three variants of the *argumentum ad hominem*. In the *abusive* variant the protagonist denigrates the other party's intelligence, expertise or good faith. In the *circumstantial* variant the protagonist suggests that the other party has personal interests in adopting a particular position. In the *tu quoque* variant, moreover, the other party is confronted with inconsistencies in his opinions or actions. The general criterion that applies to all three variants is whether a party has said something that is calculated to undermine the other party's position as a credible discussion partner (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1995, 226).

An evaluation of the examples from parliamentary debates presented in the last



paragraph, reveals that proponents of personal attacks do not address the (sub)standpoint that is brought forward by the other party but, instead, question the credibility of the other party as the protagonist of the (sub)standpoint. Such an attempt to ignore the standpoint and exclude its proponent from the discussion clearly hinders the resolution of the standpoint and should therefore be interpreted as an *argumentum ad hominem*.

In the pragma-dialectical approach there are no exceptions to the rule that an *argumentum ad hominem* is a fallacy; the term *argumentum ad hominem* is used solely for the fallacy of an incorrect personal attack. However, this does not mean that there are no situations in which a personal attack may well be justifiable. These situations may depend on the institutional context in which the attack is brought forward. In the following I will demonstrate how the institutional context in which parliamentary debates take place may be of influence on the evaluation of attacks on a politician's credibility.

#### *4.1 Questioning a politician's credibility in view of a certain standpoint*

A protagonist of a personal attack may be of the opinion that his doubts about the credibility of his opponent hinder the resolution of the difference of opinion on the subject that is under discussion. This criticism on the credibility of the protagonist of a certain standpoint may then be interpreted as an attempt to discuss if the correctness conditions (i.e. the sincerity conditions) for advancing a (sub) standpoint are met. The standpoint defended in this sub-discussion would be that the protagonist 'does not believe that his opponent believes in the truthfulness of the standpoint the latter advanced.' A discussion on this standpoint could be seen as part of the opening stage of a critical discussion in which parties try to find out whether there is sufficient common ground to make a resolution-oriented discussion profitable. Van Eemeren et al (1993: 27) points at this possibility when they say that the opening stage of a discussion can be seen as representing both a "repair" function and a reflexively open possibility of meta-discussion or sub discussion. The authors emphasise that participants in this sub-discussion have the same argumentative obligations as those in the main discussion.

In the examples from parliament I discussed earlier, the arguers don't seem to live up to these obligations. For the acceptability of the standpoint at hand it doesn't matter whether a politician, on an earlier occasion, didn't do his homework or wasn't trustworthy. Only if it can be justified that the proponent's credibility is injured with respect to the standpoint that is under discussion, we may assume that we are not dealing with an *ad hominem* argument.

The possibility to start a sub-discussion on whether preconditions are fulfilled may however be restricted by institutional customs and regulations. In parliamentary debates these restrictions are supervised by the President of the House of Parliament. In a parliamentary debate (20 March 2001) in which a State Secretary argued in favour of the necessity of certain changes in the Dutch civil code, an MP of the Conservative Liberal Democrats replied that these changes could not yet be discussed because 'the State Secretary had not been quite prepared for this subject'. This attack could have been meant as an attempt of the MP to start a sub-discussion on a precondition that should be fulfilled in order to discuss and decide on changes in the civil code. The President of the House of Parliament rejects this sub-discussion as follows: 'On behalf of the Chamber I state that we take it for granted that matters are always well prepared, in much the same way that we assume that members of government always properly prepare issues at hand.' The preparedness of MPs or members of government may obviously not be brought under (sub)discussion: it is presupposed that these politicians are well prepared.

#### *4.2 Questioning a politician's general credibility*

According to van Eemeren en Grootendorst (1992, 114), there are indeed situations in which a personal attack on the credibility of a discussant is justified, for example when the standpoint at issue has a direct bearing on the person of one's opponent. In a discussion on whether a person is acceptable as a witness and should be allowed to the legal process, serious grounds for doubting his good faith cannot be neglected. The arguer, who sustains these grounds by pointing out that this person has a vested interest, doesn't commit an *argumentum ad-hominem*, since these personal characteristics are crucial for a person holding the position of witness in a trial.

This situation corresponds to one of the examples that were presented in the introduction (paragraph 1). The example is about the debate in which van der Laan attacks the credibility of Pechtold. Van der Laan brings this attack forward to defend the standpoint that Pechtold is not the right politician to hold the position of party leader; her criticism against his inconsistency is used to question the qualifications of a politician to become the number one candidate of a political party. Since the personal attack is not an attempt to restrict his freedom of speech or exclude him as a discussion partner, it is not a fallacious argumentative move. However, this does not mean that the argumentation cannot be criticised. In the context of a parliamentary debate, the credibility of a member of

government may be questioned by way of a motion of no confidence. In Dutch parliament the Second Chamber, as well as the First Chamber, has the task to review government policy. An unwritten basic principle of the Dutch parliamentary system that is closely related to this task, is the rule of confidence. This means that a member of government or the government as whole should resign if they no longer enjoy the confidence of the Second Chamber. It is an essential constitutional rule that has evolved in the course of time and now is considered to be customary law.

For most of her duties, Parliament has to rely on information that is provided by the government. Therefore, confidence of the Second Chamber will certainly be violated if it finds out that the information provided by a member of government is incorrect, incomplete or suppressed. What is important is if a member of government reasonably could have known (but didn't know) or in all fairness could have taken action (but didn't). Loss of confidence comes to light in a debate, when a majority of the Second Chamber carries a motion of no confidence.

In this situation, the discussion in parliament is not about the standpoint that a member of government is not credible as a protagonist of a certain standpoint. The discussion is about the standpoint that a member of government is not credible as a representative of the government. This difference becomes clear if we turn back to the discussion on the credibility of Immigration Minister Verdonk. In the parliamentary debate on the nationality of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Verdonk's credibility was questioned in view of her standpoint in that particular case. In that discussion, the accusation of having personal interest in bringing forward her standpoint on the Dutch citizenship of Hirsi Ali should be interpreted as an *argumentum ad hominem*. The personal attack on the credibility of the Minister undermined her right to advance a standpoint.

However, some days after the parliamentary debate on the nationality of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, there was a debate in which Verdonk's credibility as a Minister was discussed by way of a motion of no confidence. In this discussion, a personal attack on her credibility could very well have been justified because the majority of parliament had decided that the position of the Minister was, at that moment, subject for discussion.

The decision on the fallaciousness of a personal attack in political debates may thus depend on the propositional content of the standpoint under discussion: whether or not the position of a politician is at stake in the discussion. In the context of a parliamentary debate, the institutional rules determine if and under

what conditions the position of a politician may be brought up for discussion.

## NOTES

**[i]** In a Dutch newspaper, NRC Handelsblad (May 18, 2002), journalist Michele de Waard writes: 'The Netherlands has become a bit more European. Political polarization, discrediting tactics, hate campaigns: our neighbouring countries are already used to it. (...) In Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Belgium making personal attacks is part of the political game in their parliaments.

**[ii]** In contrast to normative credibility, Govier (1999: 26) distinguishes rhetorical credibility: the extent to which one is regarded as believable, and is believed, by others.

**[iii]** This empirical study on ethics was carried out among 1687 politicians and civil servants with an average response of 40.7%.

**[iv]** Ilie (2004: 77) gives a similar example from a British parliamentary debate that took place in the House of Commons in June 1998. In this debate Conservative MP St. Aubyn discusses the higher rate of tax, when the Liberal Democrat MP Burnett brings forward the following: 'Did the hon. Gentleman get a degree in mathematics? I cannot understand his preposterous extrapolation.' According to Ilie, derogatory statements focussing on a political adversary's education standards, and implicitly IQ levels, are not too uncommon in the House of Commons.

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Equality In Utilitarian Reasoning Or: How Useful Is The Pragma-Dialectical Approach As An Analytical And**

# Critical Tool?



## 1. *Moral Equality*

In normative reasoning, equality still is a popular point of departure. Actions, policies, drafts and so on may be defended or rejected because they support the principle of equality or not. As a common place, loaded with mostly positive connotations, it has evoked in ethical, political and legal theory a lot of controversy about, among other things, its meaning, its scope and its relation to justice. Therefore, Ronald Dworkin (2000, p. 2) qualifies 'equality' as an essentially contested concept: "People who praise it or disparage it disagree about what they are praising or disparaging." As different as they are in other respects, all contemporary political theories seem to share some basic notion of *moral equality* (Kymlicka 2002, p. 5).

Moral equality can be defined as the prescription to treat persons as equals, that is, with equal concern and respect, instead of simply treating them equally, which would often lead to undesirable consequences (Dworkin 1977, p. 370). To recognize that human beings are all equal does not mean having to treat them identically in any respects other than those in which they clearly have a moral claim to be treated alike. Opinions diverge concerning the question what these claims amount to and how they have to be balanced with competing claims (based on, e.g., the principle of freedom). How should goods be distributed if we set out to treat people as equals?

For lack of space, we will restrict ourselves in this paper to one current type of normative reasoning, starting from the general concept of moral equality. The utilitarian conception of equality will be addressed, since it still constitutes, implicitly or explicitly, the normative background from which many people in daily life defend or reject equality claims. **[i]**

According to Bentham, who founded utilitarianism, the interest of all should be treated equally without taking into account the content of the interest and possible differences in people's material situation because nobody counts more than any other person. From a utilitarian perspective, morally justified actions are those that maximize utility. This conception of equality will be analyzed by means of the pragma-dialectical approach. By applying it on a concrete normative discussion, we expect to get an indication of the general usefulness of this approach as a analytical and critical tool. Although the pragma-dialectical

approach has primarily been applied to legal reasoning, there is no a priori reason why it could not be applied to other types of normative reasoning as well. **[ii]** Any kind of discussion can be subjected to a pragma-dialectical analysis as long as the discussion aims at resolving a difference of opinion, irrespectively whether the difference of opinion concerns factual statements, value judgments, or normative standpoints (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, p. 57).

After a short presentation of the utilitarian view on equality (section 2), we will – building on Van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1992) in particular – reconstruct the schemes of argumentation that underlie the given type of normative reasoning and show which critical questions follow from these schemes of argumentation (section 3). Next, these critical questions will be compared to the criticism that the utilitarian view has evoked in scholarly debates (section 4). What, if anything, does it add to the existing repertoire of objections? Subsequently, possibilities and limitations of the pragma-dialectical approach will be discussed (section 5). In dealing with normative issues such as moral equality does it really help to pose critical questions derived from argumentation schemes? Does the pragma-dialectical approach succeed in performing its self-acclaimed heuristic and critical functions? Van Eemeren & Grootendorst (2004: 59) describe the heuristic function as “being a guideline of analysis” and the critical function as “serving as a standard in the evaluation.” In the final section we will focus on the ideal of reasonableness to which the pragma-dialectical approach is dedicated (Feteris 1989, pp. 8 ff.; Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, especially chapter 6). Can it contribute, as it claims, to a rational and reasonable ending of debates? And, moreover, by committing itself to the ideal of reasonableness, can it maintain its formal and neutral character?

## *2. A Utilitarian Conception of Equality*

In many ethical theories, some notion of equality plays a central role. For example, utilitarians like Mill and Bentham and deontologists like Kant and, more recently, Dworkin share a commitment to the idea of equality of persons. In utilitarianism, people are equal in the value accorded their preferences and goals, whereas Kantian theory considers persons to deserve equal respect. Also, as Dworkin has suggested in his theory of rights, the notion that everyone possesses fundamental and inviolable moral rights is one way of giving expressions to the idea of equality. In each of these theories, it is a requirement of morality that people should be treated equally, regardless of individual differences. As

explained above, we focus in this paper on the utilitarian conception of equality. Utilitarianism is commonly recognized as having a strong intuitive appeal. Its general assumption is that an action is morally acceptable if and only if that action brings about the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. The Utility Principle requires that we perform actions that produce the maximum possible happiness. To determine an action's moral value, one has to add up the total happiness to be produced, subtract the pain involved, and then determine the balance, which expresses the moral value of the act. By doing so, one calculates in a literal sense what ought to be done morally. The utilitarian insists that the main question is always: 'What should I do now?' and not 'What has proved generally valuable in the past?'

### *Case*

A small firm needs a store clerk. For this job there is a male and a female applicant. The woman is slightly more qualified, but the firm chooses the man. The reason for this decision is that the woman is married recently and that there is a chance that she soon will become pregnant. From the past, the firm has some negative experiences with pregnant employees. It does not do well for the work atmosphere, since staff members complain about repeatedly being asked to do the heavy work, such as carrying heavy boxes from the stock room. An employee's pregnancy prevents her from doing her job, so the firm has to try to modify the workplace which is not so easy for a small firm. And in addition, she will have pregnancy leave which has to be paid by the firm. In order to survive the firm has to prevail using the available budget for investments rather than for the payment of pregnancy leaves.

Most utilitarians believe that following a general rule (e.g., do not to discriminate against women because of pregnancy) does not always promote the general good. **[iii]** They consider a discriminatory action to be justifiable in a context of competition in which a small firm has to survive, if this action will lead to the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. While utilitarianism may have unequal effects on people in cases like this, it can nonetheless claim to be motivated by a concern for treating people as equals (Kymlicka 2002, p. 37). In the calculation of the total happiness each person's happiness counts equally, since each person's interest should be given equal consideration: everyone counting for one, no one for more than one (Hare 1984: 106). Utilitarianism endorses this general egalitarian principle according to which each person's life



matters equally. However, it goes against many widely shared intuitions about what it genuinely means to treat people as equals. Therefore, it has been criticized by many philosophers, amongst whom, Dworkin and Rawls. Rawls (1971, p. 27) states, for example, that the interpersonal balancing of benefits and harms that utilitarianism allows ignores the separateness of persons, and this does not contain a proper interpretation of moral equality as equal respect for each individual. Dworkin (1977, p. 234) argues that the egalitarian principle of the utilitarianism conflicts with our common understanding of equal treatment, since in the utilitarian calculation both the personal preferences (preferences about what I do or get) and external preferences (preferences about what other people do or get) are taken into account and have all equal weight. He argues that external preferences should be ignored, because if external preferences are counted, then what I am rightfully owed depends on how other think of me (Kymlicka 2002, p. 38).**[iv]**

### 3. A *Pragma-Dialectical Reconstruction*

An important issue in normative ethics is the assessment of the moral acceptability of various options for action. It has often been said that ethical theory arises because we need to *defend* our moral judgments. To demonstrate by means of an ethical theory that one is justified in holding a moral view requires making one's principles explicit and defending those principles systematically (see, among others, Beaucamp 2001). Ethical theories are clearly argumentative in their nature, because the positions taken are always defended by argumentation. The necessity of argumentation in ethics is not under discussion, but most ethical literature pays no attention to formal aspects of argumentation. In order to evaluate the usefulness of a formal approach to normative reasoning, we will confront the utilitarian conceptions of equality sketched above with the pragma-dialectical argumentation schemes developed by, among others, Van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1992), Kienpointner (1992) and Schellens (1985). These argumentation schemes are accompanied by critical questions that need to be evaluated when the soundness of the arguments are assessed. More specifically, the goal of our exercise is to see to what extent the standard ethical criticism of the utilitarian conception of equality coincides with the standard critical questions that accompany the argumentation schemes used in the defense of these conceptions. We will start from the normative standpoint that 'action A is morally acceptable'. As will be shown, different argumentation schemes are used in these arguments. To assess whether a particular argument is sound, it may be

useful to reveal the underlying argumentation scheme, because specific critical questions follow from these schemes. By posing these question, one may get an indication which supportive arguments are need to sustain a given normative position.

In a utilitarian line of reasoning, the means-ends argumentation scheme occupies a central position. From a given end the means are derived that are supposed to realize that end. This argumentation is non-deductive, because the conclusion is not embedded in the premises. There may be other means to realize the end, so the choice for means  $y$  is not a necessary one. By implication, when we apply the means-ends scheme, we must make a reasonable case for the choice of means  $y$  at the expense of others.

### *Means-ends scheme*

If you wish to achieve end  $x$ , then you must carry out action or measure  $y$ .

### *Formal*

- $x$  (the end)
- carrying out action or measure  $y$  (the means) realizes the end  $x$  (means-end premise)
- So: do  $y$

### *Critical questions*

1. Does action or measure  $y$  indeed realize end  $x$ ?
2. Can action or measure  $y$  be carried out?
3. Does execution of action or measure  $y$  lead to unacceptable side effects?
4. Are there no other (better) actions to achieve  $x$ ?
5. Is the end acceptable?

In utilitarianism, the end can be summarized by the well-know dictum: the greatest happiness for the greatest number; the means to achieve this end is a certain action. The end is formulated in very abstract way, but, applied to a specific situation, it becomes more concrete. The action that has the best consequences leads to the highest degree of happiness for the greatest number of people. In utilitarian theory, the end is formulated such that the fifth critical question is put out of the question: the utilitarian end is worth striving for by definition, at least according to defenders of this view. Depending on the context in which such an argumentation is used, the critical questions are of greater or lesser relevance. The most relevant critical question in a utilitarian

argumentation is the first one: Does means  $y$  actually realize objective  $x$ ? For example, does the discrimination of the female applicant by offering the job to the male applicant actually leads to the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people?

Two matters are of importance to answer this question. Firstly, we must demonstrate that the action leads to the expected consequences and, secondly, that these consequences give the best result, that is, the greatest happiness for the greatest number. The first question involves a causality argumentation scheme, because expected consequences are derived from a certain action. In other words, a causal link between the action and the expected consequences is posited.

### *Causality argumentation scheme*

This argumentation scheme is based on the fact that certain expected consequences can be derived from a certain situation or action.

### *Formal*

- $p$
- ' $p$  causes  $q$ ' or ' $p$  has  $q$  as a consequence' (the causality imperative)
- So:  $q$

### *Critical questions*

1. Will the given situation or action indeed lead to the expected consequences?
2. Have no issues been forgotten, for example, with respect to the expected consequences?
3. How do you determine the expected consequences and can it be defended?

Subsequently, we need to demonstrate that these consequences give indeed the best result. This is determined by means of a comparative assessment. This judgment can be made, if the expected consequences of all possible actions have been determined (in which a causality argumentation is used each time), so that these actions can be compared. In the above case, two options of action have to be considered: the job is offered either to man or to the woman. Using a kind of cost-benefit analysis, the best option is selected. According to Bentham, money is a suitable means that allows for a comparison of the expected consequences. By definition, the best option will lead to the greatest happiness for the greatest number. Moreover, this comparative judgment is sustained by an argumentation

in which the critical question 'Can we express all consequences in money?' is applicable.

Because it is impossible to determine the expected consequences of all actions in many situations, some utilitarians make use of another end: the sum of the total usefulness (pleasure) and uselessness (pain) has to be positive. By means of this criterion, we can determine whether a certain action is morally acceptable, without having to consider all other possible actions.

#### *4. What Difference Does It Make?*

Despite its intuitive appeal, the utilitarian conception of equality has been criticized severely from many different normative positions. In this section, we will discuss various important objections that have been brought forward against them in ethical and political theory and try to connect them with the objections that can be deduced from the critical questions that follow from the underlying argumentation schemes discussed in the previous section. Our purpose is to find out whether these critical questions cover all of the main objections raised so far and whether they add something new and interesting to the existing canon of criticism. What difference does the pragma-dialectical approach make in assessing the argumentative force of the utilitarian conception of equality?

In normative discussions, four kinds of objections are recurrently being raised against the utilitarian line of reasoning and the conception of equality on which it is based. **[v]** Firstly, it is argued that happiness, which utilitarianism strives to maximise for all people involved on an equal basis, cannot be measured objectively. Different persons get their pleasure from different things: some people may primarily want to increase their amount of money, whereas other people may be more interested in spiritual growth. If it is possible to agree on a general acceptable standard for measuring happiness - e.g., the financial costs and benefits of a certain action, as Bentham suggested - it is not always possible to make an exact calculation.

Consequences of an action are often uncertain, unpredictable or simply unknown. In the example given above, it could turn out that the woman, even though she is absent from her work during her pregnancy and parental leave, is, all things considered, more useful to the company because she is slightly more qualified in social, organisational and intellectual respects than the man. A purely quantitative (financial) assessment of happiness may be too simplistic, because, for one thing, not all valuable things in life can be expressed in terms of money. If we, following Mill, try to assess happiness in a qualitative way, the problem of

comparison arises: how to balance one good against the other? For example, by prohibiting the cutting of tropical wood, one may at the same time save nature and deprive native people of their main source of income. What makes one kind of pleasure (in this case: nature protection) more valuable than other kinds (such as earning money)? General accepted standards for answering this question are lacking. Goods may even be, as some claim, incommensurable (Kymlicka 2002, pp. 17-18).

In the pragma-dialectical approach, this kind of objections can primarily be traced back to both the means-ends and the causality argumentation scheme that underlies utilitarian normative reasoning. In particular, the critical question 'Does action *y* indeed realize end *x*?,' connected to the means-end scheme, is relevant here, together with the critical questions 'Will the given situation or action indeed lead to the expected consequences?' and 'How do you determine the expected consequences and can it be defended?,' following from the causality scheme. The discussion at this point focuses on the instrumental side of utilitarian reasoning: given the desirability of the end or expected consequence - i.e., 'the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people' -, by which means can it best be achieved? In case a qualitative assessment of happiness is made, a critical question derived from the comparison argumentation scheme can be invoked: to which extent are the goods at hand comparable?

Secondly, the end itself can be called into question. It is argued that happiness is not the only or the most important standard of justice. Some actions may increase the over-all happiness in a society, but may be considered unfair or unjust on other grounds. For example, the killing of a cruel dictator will undoubtedly contribute significantly to the pleasure of his subjects; however, this act still constitutes murder. In a utilitarian line of reasoning, basic human rights may be violated, if the positive consequences of an action exceed the negative ones. This point of criticism corresponds to the critical question 'Is the end acceptable?,' following from the means-ends argumentation scheme in the pragma-dialectical approach. Closely connected to this point, some authors have argued, thirdly, that utilitarian calculations may result in an unfair distribution of pains and pleasures in a society.

According to Rawls (1971), utilitarianism cannot do justice to fundamental differences among people. In applying the Utility Principle, one has to conceive of society as a whole and to take into consideration only its total happiness. Thereby,

the question of distributive justice disappears fully from view: any distribution of goods is justifiable, however unequal (e.g., some people may be very rich, whereas other people can barely survive), as long as the general happiness is maximised. Moreover, utilitarianism can lead to the suppression of people: if it adds up to the total sum of happiness, people may – despite Bentham’s own intentions – be abused, and even put to slavery. This criticism is reflected in the critical question ‘Does the execution of action  $y$  lead to unacceptable side effects?’, connected to the means-ends argumentation scheme in the pragma-dialectical model.

Finally, utilitarianism is accused of being based on a wrong conception of equality (Kymlicka 2002, pp. 37 ff.). On the one side, it excludes special obligations one may have to particular people, for instance, to friends or family members, or to people to whom one has made a promise. All these moral ties have to be ignored, if a person is equal to any other person and may only count as one in the utilitarian calculus. On the other side, it includes preferences of a dubious moral nature: preferences that someone has with regard to other people (or external preferences) and preferences that exceed one’s fair share of goods (or selfish preferences). In the first case, it may be justifiable on utilitarian grounds to make people suffer for the perverse pleasure it gives to other people (or animals, e.g. in bull fighting). In the second case, it becomes possible to get more goods or resources than other people and more than they rightfully deserve, on the sole ground of maximizing the over-all happiness.

This criticism cannot be easily accommodated into the pragma-dialectical model, since it does not address, or not directly, the means-ends relation or the causality scheme in utilitarian reasoning. It may be connected to the critical question ‘Have no issues been forgotten, for example, with respect to the expected consequences?’, following from the causality argumentation scheme, but that seems very far-fetched. Moreover, utilitarianism is not attacked here for its consequences, but for its ‘inherent’, supposedly untenable, conception of equality. Another possibility is to reconstruct the inclusion of illegitimate preferences as unacceptable side-effects within the means-ends scheme, but that does not do justice to the principal character of the critique: a supposedly wrong conception of equality is not just a ‘side-effect’ of an action based on utilitarian grounds, but is, according to Kymlicka and others, a fatal flaw at the heart of the utilitarian theory. Except for the critical questions mentioned, the argumentation schemes underlying utilitarian normative reasoning do not generate any interesting questions.

## 5. *Possibilities and Limitations of the Pragma-Dialectical Approach*

After having compared the criticism that the utilitarian conception of equality have evoked in normative theory with the critical questions that follow from the underlying argumentation schemes, we may get an indication of the possibilities and limitations of the pragma-dialectical approach. In finding and articulating criticism to a particular normative position, is it really helpful or necessary to engage oneself in a reconstruction of the arguments exchanged? As the comparison above indicates, the pragma-dialectical approach serves its self-acclaimed function as a heuristic device: it is capable of generating questions that cover many points of criticism that have been raised against the two conceptions of equality. Thereby, it may provide a good starting point for criticism. If one aims at making a 'quick scan' of the possibly problematic aspects of a given position, it surely makes sense to uncover the underlying argumentation schemes and pose the corresponding critical questions. Applied to utilitarian normative reasoning, the basic questions present themselves on a silver platter as soon as the underlying means-ends and causality argumentation schemes are identified: 'Is happiness maximization an acceptable end?,' 'By which means can it be achieved?' and 'Are there any unacceptable side-effects?'

On the other hand, the pragma-dialectical approach does not - and does not pretend - to give any clue whatsoever to answer the critical questions that it generates, nor does it give any real guidance in evaluating the competing answers to the same question. For example, questions like 'Is happiness maximization an acceptable end?' or 'Does it constitute a better normative principle than, e.g., Kant's categorical imperative?' cannot be answered from within a pragma-dialectical approach. That has to be settled in the critical discussion itself, but on which grounds? The only guidance the pragma-dialectical approach gives, is a set of procedural rules for a critical discussion, such as "The antagonist has conclusively attacked the standpoint of the protagonist, if he has successfully attacked either the propositional content or the force of justification or refutation of the complex speech act of argumentation" (rule 9b, Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, p. 151). However, standards for a *substantive* assessment of the quality of the arguments exchanged are lacking - When can an attack, e.g., be called 'successful'? In this respect, it is and remains a purely formal approach, devoid of content. That is one of the reasons why the pragma-dialectical approach is of limited use in a critical discussion as well as in a didactical context: after the critical questions have been identified, it remains fully unclear, both for the scholar and the student, how to proceed.

Moreover, pragma-dialectics is not able to discover all the basic questions that a normative position may raise. The last fundamental point against utilitarianism was missed, namely, that it is - according to Rawls, Dworkin, Kymlicka, and others - based on a wrong conception of equality. Apparently, not all critical questions can be derived from or connected to an underlying argumentation scheme. Or, if one is able to find an applicable argumentation scheme after inventive reconstruction, one may still arrive at rather general critical questions, which are not very helpful in finding and articulating criticism. E.g., the critical questions 'Have no issues been forgotten, for example, with respect to the expected consequences?' and 'How do you determine the expected consequences and can it be defended?', both connected to the causality argumentation scheme, are so vague and undirected that they lack any interesting critical potential. However, it may be said that it is too much to ask for completeness on this point: the pragma-dialectical approach may be still valuable if it generates, though not all, *many or the most* of the basic questions that a normative position has to account for. In our analysis given above, we were able to trace back three out of four basic questions per normative position to the underlying argumentation schemes.

A final and more serious limitation is that the critical questions the pragma-dialectical approach is able to come up with, are of a relatively trivial nature and are not capable of generating any interesting points of criticism outside the existing canon. One does not need to reconstruct the underlying argumentation schemes, to ask oneself whether happiness should be the ultimate goal in life, as utilitarianism claims, or that there may be other goals worth striving for. What does this approach add to the criticism that can be found, without too much effort, by using one's, academically or otherwise trained, common sense? Without this common sense, one would not even be able to recognize the applicable argumentation schemes in the first place nor could one raise the corresponding critical questions in a sensible way; in the best case, one could only generate very general questions in a mechanical way but remain blind to the critical possibilities they might offer. Equipped with common sense, however, a person is sensible enough to develop criticism, without having to engage herself or himself in tiresome reconstruction work.

## 6. *The End of Reasonableness*

On a more general and fundamental level, the pragma-dialectical approach can be criticised for endorsing a false ideal of reasonableness: it is based on the illusion



that all debates can *in principle*, if the pragma-dialectical rules are respected by all parties involved, be settled by rational argument, that is by a fair exchange of opinions, founded on established facts and good reasons. Thus it fails to appreciate that, in the end, all interesting normative matters, that is, matters that involve basic notions of human existence, cannot be settled by means of argumentation. Every normative position presupposes metaphysical axioms, which cannot be put into question and which cannot be proven 'without reasonable doubt' either.

One of the constitutive axioms of the pragma-dialectical approach itself is an assertion that, by necessity, contradicts its own rule of non-contradiction: "Protecting certain standpoints and immunizing them against criticism are thus out of question" (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, p. 36 fn.). It is precisely this 'putting out of the question the putting out of the question' that makes the pragma-dialectical project possible: standpoints that are beforehand excluded from the discussion have to be excluded (except for the standpoint that excludes the exclusion of all other standpoints), otherwise there can be no "rational" and "reasonable" critical discussion and, ultimately, no dialectical resolution of the debate in consensus. However, this contradiction shows that full argumentative openness to competing claims is impossible. One can never be open to claims that put one's own mode of existence into question and that conflict with one's core convictions. Pragma-dialectics has to commit itself to the ideal of reasonableness, despite the inevitable contradiction it generates, because otherwise it would no longer be able to play its self-assigned role of a formal and neutral referee of critical discussions. **[vi]** Whether reasonableness really "exists" or constitutes a valuable ideal cannot be settled argumentatively; it is a presupposition that simply has to be taken for granted.

Similarly, the discussion between competing conceptions of equality cannot be settled by means of argumentation. As Kymlicka (2002, p. 44) argues, the question of equality "is a moral question whose answer depends on complex issues about the nature of human being and their interests and relationships." In utilitarianism, a constitutive axiom is that happiness should be spread over the people equally. What happiness is and whether it should constitute the ultimate goal in life is not open to critical discussion, but is a matter of personal choice, taste, belief and the like: one cannot 'convince' someone else that he or she should not be happy while eating meat, seeing other people suffer, listening to speed metal, and so on. Kant rejected utilitarianism, basically because he considered happiness a too subjective and unreliable standard upon which no

moral law or normative ethics could be based. Moreover, in his view, it wrongly conceives of morality in terms of means and ends. In his deontological theory, moral standards exist independently of utilitarian ends. An act is right insofar as it satisfies the demands of some principle of obligation. As highest principle or moral law Kant posited the well-known categorical imperative that every moral agent recognizes in accepting an action as morally obligatory. This imperative states that 'I ought never act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim become a universal law.' In fact, the categorical imperative formulates the equality postulate of universal human worth. According to Kant, the duty of equality has priority over other duties, because it is a purely rational principle based on *a priori* principles only (Kant 1793/1970, p. 63).**[vii]** Both conceptions of equality have an intuitive appeal: on the one hand, the utilitarian idea that each person has to count as one in the calculation and dissemination of happiness; on the other hand, the Kantian notion that general moral rules should be applied to everyone equally. In both conceptions, the principle of equality does not exclude the possibility that relevant differences are taken into account, for example, between children and adults or between mentally ill people and 'sane' people.**[viii]** The crucial question is, however, which differences are relevant under which circumstances. The answer to this question cannot be derived from the equality principle itself, whether in a utilitarian or in a Kantian conception, but is a matter of personal conviction. A religious person might find it acceptable that women are excluded from political functions; a feminist may oppose against this exclusion and may defend a preferential treatment of women over men in politics instead. No argument, however rational or reasonable from a certain point of view, will succeed in bridging the gap between these incompatible world-views.

That is not to say, of course, that arguments do not matter. But when it comes to matters that matter, they can never be *decisive*. As Kelsen has argued, "[t]he problem of values is in the first place the problem of conflicts of values, and this problem cannot be solved by means of rational cognition. (...) Norms prescribing human behavior can emanate only from human will, not from human reason" (Kelsen 1971, p. 4 and 20 respectively). The pragma-dialectical ideal of reasonableness disguises the potential violent nature of argumentation: when it comes to political and legal decision-making, it is mostly not the 'force of argument' that triumphs but the force behind the argument - the 'human will' that is powerful enough to exert itself at the expense of other wills. In real life, debates are often ended, not because reason has finally won or consensus

between the parties involved has been reached, but because a certain authority – a judge, a minister, a police officer, to name a few – decides it is time to stop. **[ix]** In this respect, the pragma-dialectical approach is less neutral and formal than it appears to be: by depoliticizing argumentation, it hides from view that in actual political, legal, and other norm-setting practices decisions are taken for which no sufficient grounds are given or ever can be given.

## NOTES

**[i]** Following Rawls, Kymlicka (2002, p. 10) argues that “utilitarianism operates as a kind of tacit background against which other theories have to assert and defend themselves.”

**[ii]** In a forthcoming article, we will apply the pragma-dialectical approach to two other types of normative reasoning: deontological theory (Kant) and virtue ethics (Aristotle).

**[iii]** Exceptions are rule-utilitarianists like R.B. Brandt and R.M. Hare.

**[iv]** See further section 4.

**[v]** These objections are discussed in Royakkers, Van de Poel & Pieters (2004, pp. 65-67).

**[vi]** Like every argumentation theory, the pragma-dialectical approach considers itself to be a formal and neutral approach that aims at remaining silent in substantive matters of justice and truth: “Instead of concerning themselves with the question of who is right or wrong, or what exactly is true or untrue, argumentation theorists concern themselves with the way in which acceptability claims, such as claims to being right or truth claims, are (or should be) supported or attacked” (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004, p. 12).

**[vii]** In a forthcoming article, we will discuss this position in more detail.

**[viii]** The following reflections are inspired on Kelsen (1971, p. 14).

**[ix]** Cf. Van Klink (2005, pp. 118-120).

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# ISSA Proceedings 2006 - On Justified Belief In The Link Of An Argument



## 1. *Introduction*

A natural requirement for justifiably believing the conclusion of an argument is that the arguer or an inferer must justifiably believe the premises. This paper studies the question whether we should also require that an arguer or an inferer must justifiably believe the link of an argument in order to justifiably believe the conclusion. I will first draw some theoretical divisions and then present an intriguing argument by Andrew D. Cling (2003) that appears to show that this requirement is necessary for justifiably believing the conclusion. I will then present four different arguments that challenge Cling's argument. Finally, I discuss the implications of rejecting the requirement.

## 2. *Preliminaries*

An argument is an ordered pair of a set of propositions, the premises, and a proposition, the conclusion. We acquire indirect beliefs, i.e. beliefs based on other beliefs through the use of arguments and inferences, and the propositions of the abstract argument structure express the content of those beliefs. The uses of arguments may have varying purposes but here I will only discuss the core case of using the propositional structure of an argument with the intention of becoming justified in believing the conclusion. Obviously, not every use of an argument results in justified beliefs. We should also note the difference between being justified in believing that C and justifiably believing that C. The former is evaluative in the sense that it merely means that a person S has justification for believing that C, has a good reason to believe C, but it does not imply that S actually believes that C. If S justifiably believes that C, S has good reason to believe C and actually has the belief that C. It is thus evaluative and factual. Further, S can have justification for C, and believe that C, without justifiably

believing that C. This would be the case if S were to base her or his belief not on the justified belief that P, but on some other belief R that is not justified. In this case, P would not be the reason for which S believes that C. **[i]** In what follows, I will discuss cases where the arguer or reasoner bases his or her belief that C on the premises. But even if S is justified in believing the premise P and bases her or his belief that C on P, S is not necessarily be justified in believing that C, if S's belief that C was generated from P in an intellectually dubious manner, for example, by a fallacious argument).

### 3. *The argument for justified belief in the link of an argument*

It seems reasonable to accept the following principle:

(JP) Necessarily an argument *P therefore C* is justification-affording for S only if S justifiably believes P. (Cling 2003, p. 286) **[ii]**

If the arguer is not justified in her or his belief in the premises, the argument cannot make the belief in the conclusion justified. But Cling argues that we also need the following requirement:

(JCC) Necessarily, an argument *P therefore C* is justification-affording for S only if S justifiably believes *if P, then C*. (Cling 2003, p. 287)

Cling argues that if one does not include the (JCC), we end up drawing arbitrary distinctions between different arguers. Namely, there can be an argument

(1) P therefore C.

that can be justification-affording for persons who do not justifiably believe *if P then C*. Given the principle (JP), the corresponding argument

(2) (P and if P then C) therefore C.

- the argument that results from taking (1)'s corresponding conditional as a premise - will not be justification-affording for the same persons, if only because they do not justifiably believe a crucial premise of (2). Among those for whom (1) is but (2) is not justification-affording will be some persons whose predicaments are such that the only non-epistemic differences between (1) and (2) are those that result from the fact that the corresponding conditional of (1) is a premise of (2). Since such differences are epistemically irrelevant, the epistemic distinction that is drawn between (1) and (2) is arbitrary. (Cling 2003, pp. 299-300)

We need to look at this argument a bit more closely. The idea is that there are persons who can use the argument (1) to reach a justified belief C even though they are not justified in believing the corresponding conditional of the argument (1) but for some persons (2) is not justification-affording, given the principle (JP), that is, because they do not justifiably believe its premises. The only difference is that (2) has (1)'s corresponding conditional as premise and that (1) and (2) have different corresponding conditionals. In particular, some S for whom this applies, can be such that neither S's internal states nor any external features of S's world provide a basis for distinguishing between (1) and (2) beyond the role of *if P then C* in the two arguments. So, S's predicament can be such that S's beliefs and the logical and epistemic relations among S's beliefs and other internal states provide no basis for distinguishing (1) from (2). Furthermore, S can be such that the conditional reliability of the processes of inference that S would bring to bear on (2) is at least as high as the process S would bring to bear on (1). According to Cling, the point is general: specify internal or external conditions as you will, the same problem can always be reproduced. Since both (1) and (2) depend upon S's commitment to *if P, then C*, it is arbitrary to claim that (1) is justification-affording but (2) is not.

There is also a further argument. There could be a situation where S does not justifiably believe corresponding conditional of (1) *if P, then C*, but does justifiably believe *if (P and if P, then C), then C*, the corresponding conditional of (2). Theories of justification that do not include (JCC) imply that although S could come to be justified in believing C by reasoning to C through P by means of a conditional statement that S does not justifiably believe - *if P, then C* - S could not come to be justified in believing C by making more of S's commitments explicit as premises and reasoning to C through P and *if P, then C*, by means of justified true proposition that S does justifiably believe - *if (P and if P, then C), then C*. Such theories imply that even though (2) makes more of S's commitments explicit as premises and even though S justifiably believes (2)'s corresponding conditional, S cannot acquire justified belief in C by means of (2) but can acquire justified belief in C by means of (1). This is clearly arbitrary. (Cling 2003, pp. 300-301) **[iii]**

#### 4. *Arguments against justified belief in the link of an argument*

There have been some influential epistemologists who have held that the requirement (JCC) is too strict. For example, according to William P. Alston (1989, pp. 164-165) (JCC) is not a reasonable requirement, mainly for two reasons. First, requiring (JCC) would make the indirect beliefs, that is, beliefs based on other

beliefs, of animals and preverbal children unjustified. Arguably, both preverbal children and animals infer, but they do not possess the concepts of deduction, induction or argument scheme. Hence, they cannot justifiably believe anything what the principle (JCC) requires. In addition, consider someone reading the local newspaper and unthinkingly (but truly) assuming that the newspaper is a reliable source of local news. Does this prevent her or him from coming to know about what has happened in the community?

The second reason is Alston's famous level confusion argument in regards to mediate knowledge. He argues that the requirement of justified belief is tempting because we are not careful to differentiate between being mediately justified in believing that C and being justified in believing that *one is mediately justified in believing that C*. If this distinction is not upheld, Alston argues, one will naturally suppose that what is required for the latter is also required for the former.

Yet, Cling's argument seems compelling. Perhaps it is then that we should hold that the unreflective justification of animals and preverbal children is not the same kind of justification that we are after when discussing 'full-fledged' epistemic justification of mature adults. Bearing in mind the proneness of humans to argue fallaciously, we might want to raise the bar for justifiably believing an indirect belief. **[iv]** However, this might lead into difficult questions on where to draw the line between reflective and unreflective justification (Cf. also second argument below). Alston's second reason is not so much an argument as it is an explanation of why we end up requiring (JCC). An independent argument for (JCC), which Cling appears to have, should defuse it. But there are also independent arguments for challenging Cling's position. This is where I will turn now.

First, there is the case of the Tortoise (Carroll 1895) and the looming regress. If the arguer must justifiably believe that 'if P, then C' in order to justifiably believe C, must the arguer not also justifiably believe 'if (if P, then C) and P) then C' and so on ad infinitum. Cling (2003, pp. 293-294) responds to this by arguing that the Tortoise's point is doxastic, not epistemic. The puzzle only shows that one cannot force the acceptance of any argument on a person who refuses to accept the conditional. This blocks inferential justification and is naturally quite compatible with (JCC). However, one can accept that Tortoise's point is at *least* doxastic, but this does not imply that it might not still be epistemically problematic as well. I will come back to this in the fourth argument below.

Second, as Robert Audi (1993, pp. 238-241) has argued, there needs not to be a



belief 'If P, then C' at all, when someone advances an argument 'P, therefore C'. We may accept that in every case, where S believes C based on a reason P, there is an argument, an abstract propositional structure, and accept that every such belief is structurally inferential. The abstract structure indicates how the belief is grounded, but such a structure does not necessarily imply that the resulting belief is episodically inferential. For example, I may infer that 'There is wind out there' from 'The trees are swaying' without conceptualizing the connection. Audi (ibid.) notes that an indirect belief need not arise from an internal recitation of that structure in any way that deserves the name of 'inferring C from P'. There could thus be *de re*-beliefs that do not require that one believe 'If P, then C' but only that one takes P to support C.

Third, it can be argued that as the acquisition of indirect beliefs is a case of belief-basing, we should pay attention to the fact that the starting belief and the end belief are belief states, but the move from the premises to the conclusion is an action. The argument Cling advances assumes that these can be treated equally. But thinking that the abstract propositional structure that represents the beliefs used in arguing fully describes *the act* of arguing or inferring is dubious. Cling argues that there should be persons whose predicaments are such that the only non-epistemic differences between (1) and (2) are those that result from the fact that (2) has (1)'s corresponding conditional as a premise and that (1) and (2) have different corresponding conditionals. But if I can merely *take* P to support C, and having seen that P, move right away to C, then the difference between (1) and (2) is not epistemically irrelevant: in the latter I have a state of belief which I lack in the former. **[v]**

Fourth, there seems to be several types of arguments that we take as being able to justify beliefs in their conclusion, yet the theorists have not agreed why exactly they do so, for example inductive arguments and arguments from analogy. If we take the requirement of justified belief in the link of an argument seriously, we might want to ask if anyone is really justified in using these arguments. Similar points seem to apply to several arguments about the coherence of a theory in respect to its competitors or to arguments about simplicity. This relates to Tortoise's point. For example, I may justifiably believe that theory T1 is more coherent (simpler) than T2 and infer from this that theory T1 is more preferable than T2. But assume that this inference is done in the context of a relatively undeveloped field of study. A critic might then quite reasonably launch two different attacks. First, the critic could challenge my belief in the premise that T1 is more coherent than T2 and the implication that this coherence (simplicity)

should lead to difference in preference. Second, the critic might admit the premise and the implication, but still, quite reasonably, ask why I accept this argument (in toto) *in this case*, i.e. why should the lesser coherence of T2 be a sign of its falsity in this relatively undeveloped field. Perhaps it is only due to our lack of further knowledge about the field that makes T1 seem more attractive. I do not think that Tortoise's point about the corresponding conditionals can be swept under the rug so easily. We need further argumentation to show that the point is *only* doxastic.

One further point that should be noted is the nature of belief basing relation. Cases of justifiably believing C based on P are instances of belief basing. There are at least four different theories of this basing: the causal, the counterfactual, the doxastic, and the causal-doxastic. Arguably, none of these four are incompatible with us not accepting (JCC). For the case of causal, counterfactual, and causal-doxastic this seems clear. According to causal accounts (such as Moser 1989), the belief in the conclusion C is based on the belief in the premise P, if it is causally sustained by this belief in a non-deviant manner. According to counterfactual theories (e.g. Swain 1981), the belief that C is either caused by the belief in the premise P or would have been caused by the belief that P in appropriate circumstances. The causal-doxastic account (see Korzc 2000) is disjunctive: either the belief in the conclusion is caused by the belief in the premise or there is the appropriate meta-belief to the effect that P is a good reason to believe that C. **[vi]** This leaves doxastic theories, which usually include the requirement that S must have the appropriate meta-belief to the effect that P is reason to believe that C. But one notable representative of doxastic theory is Robert Audi (1993, p. 241) who does not require that S conceptualizes the relation between P and C, nor believe *that* P implies C. Admittedly, the basing relation is a controversial issue and all of these theories have to deal with difficult counterexamples. But we should bear in mind that these theories are compatible with the rejection of (JCC), although strong access internalism would seem to necessitate its acceptance.

## 5. Conclusion

If a person can come to believe C based on the belief that P without believing that if P then C, then the difference between

(1) P therefore C.

and

(2) (P and if P then C) therefore C.

is not arbitrary in respect to normal belief basing, and therefore not epistemically arbitrary either. However, some final remarks need to be made on what the rejection of (JCC) does not imply. First, it does not imply that by the use of the argument 'P, therefore C' the arguer does not become committed to the link of the argument. Second, this does not imply that the link of an argument should not be objectively good. The issue is only to what extent the arguer needs to be aware of this goodness when the argument is used. Third, this does not imply that one cannot normally track down one's reasons and consider them critically, although subconscious reasoning might be an exception.

## NOTES

**[i]** These terms have become standard philosophical jargon. For discussion, see e.g. Alston 1989, ch. 4 and Audi 1993, ch. 8.

**[ii]** Cling (2003, pp. 281-282) divides justification-affording further into justification-creating and justification-affording. The former are cases where the argument creates justification for belief in their conclusion and the latter are cases where there is already some justification for the conclusion. Cling limits his discussion to arguments that are supposed to be justification-creating.

**[iii]** It should be pointed out that Cling's argument is directed against certain philosophers (nick-named friends of self-support) who argue that we can refute the sceptical challenge against deductive and inductive reasoning by holding that both of these methods can be used to justify themselves, given that we do not require that the arguers must be justified in believing in these methods when using them to support themselves. I am no friend of self-support, even though I have my doubts about the principle (JCC): I would argue that we can reject self-supporting arguments by other means but this cannot be attempted here.

**[iv]** On empirical research on reasoning and discussion on fallacies, see Perkins 2002.

**[v]** To make a simile, the premises can be likened to bullets and the inference to a gun. A deductive argument is like a gun that hits the target every time one has good bullets (i.e. true premises). Cling's position would appear to imply that one could hit the target with just two bullets and no gun. (I beg the reader to pardon this militant simile. Having a taste for knock-down arguments is compatible with believing that argumentation is not inherently adversarial or even competitive.)

[vi] However, Korcz (2000, p. 548) also includes in the doxastic disjunct a causal explanation.

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# XISSA Proceedings 2006 - Russian Political Talk Show: Glamour Of Argumentative Discussion - A Case Study



## Summary

In this paper [i], I present an argumentation analysis of a popular Russian political talk show “K barieru” (hereafter referred to as “KB!”), a duel of words that could be translated something like “To the Wall”. I argue that the

type of the discussion plays an important role in the analysis of argumentation. The task of describing the type of discussion goes beyond describing the actual interaction. In order to reveal fallacies and tricks one should take into account the pragmatic framework of the discussion: the preliminary rules, the responsibility rules, the rules of the Gricean principle and the type of the discussion. The latter involves the initial situation, the goal of the discussion and the participants' goals. I argue that we can employ the Gricean principle to identify the type of discussion.

*Key words:* argumentation, discussion, fallacies, pragma-dialectics, pragmatic rules, Gricean principle of cooperation.

One of the most usual rational ways to surmount disagreements is to discuss them. Discussion opens opportunity for expressing opinions as well as for arguing in favor or against them. Arriving at a reasonable solution that would be satisfactory to all parties is commonly considered to be the most successful result of a discussion. Sometimes it is enough that not all but at least most parties share the decision. Obviously, not all discussions are successful as far as reaching an agreed opinion is concerned.

Some arguers do not seek such a resolution and therefore such discussions are not argumentative. A discussion is argumentative if for every discussant to persuade the other party is the ultimate goal. According to the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation, this condition functions as pragmatic constitutive system of rules; this consists of two kinds of rules: preliminary and responsibility rules.

The preliminary rule says that a disputant should (P1) have a viewpoint and let her audience know that she has it and (P2) consider the latter to disagree with the expressed viewpoint. At the same time, the disputant expects (P3) that the audience that she addresses is ready to accept the arguments in favor of the viewpoint both in principle as an action aiming at persuasion and essentially as possibly true propositions.

J.R. Searle was the first to introduce the responsibility rule, which he originally referred to as the sincerity condition (Searle J.R. et al. 1980, p. 27 and ff). It provides the basis of persuasive power for the whole act of argumentation and says that the speaker (R1) has to be sincere in adhering to her viewpoint and to the arguments meant to support it and (R2) should believe that the arguments contribute to the success of the whole process of argumentation (Eemeren, Frans,

van, Grootendorst R., 1994, p. 52-56).

In cases when at least one party does not meet the whole or part of the condition, the discussion bears somewhat different character. It may happen that no party meets the abovementioned rules but still there is a discussion. For instance, it happens in an information-seeking discussion in which parties just exchange their views and neither intends to argue them. Apparently, such a brainstorming discussion is non-argumentative.

D. Walton and E.C.N. Krabbe provide an extensive classification of discussions using the initial situation, main goals and discussants' aims as the criteria of identifying discussion types (D.N. Walton, E.C.W. Krabbe, 1966, p. 66). According to them, there are seven types of discussions: persuasion, negotiation, inquiry, deliberation, information-seeking, eristic and mixed discussions.

The first six types of discussion are monotonous in their character, which means that during the discussion both its type and the discussants' goals remain unchanged. Some real life discussions are obviously non-monotonous in the sense that any one or all the parameters can vary during the dialogue. This non-monotonous type of discussion is referred to as a mixed discussion. Most real life discussions are of that type.

Moreover, it may well happen that the discussants' aims are not the same but asymmetric, i.e., the participants pursue different goals at different stages of the discussion depending on the type of the discussion and on their opponent's position, which may shift as well.

Sometimes all the parties fulfill the preliminary rule and the rule of responsibility, but the direction of this fulfillment depends on the addressee. For instance, in the framework of election campaign debates among politicians, none of them normally is going to persuade her opponent or be persuaded by them. Instead, all of them do their best in arguing against each other in order to influence the audience watching the debates and all the discussants aim at is getting votes. It means that the rules should apply only to the addressee whom a disputant seeks to persuade.

It may well happen that the vectors of the fulfillment of the rules in a discussion are directed asymmetrically so that in a three-party discussion two disputants, while arguing against each other, try to win the approval of the third party, which may not be actively involved in the dispute at all. In such a triangle-like argumentative discussion, the passive participant is called a rational judge; she is never expected to provide any arguments in favor of her position or against

someone else's view.

In court, for instance, the jury plays the role of a rational judge, for it is the jury against which the prosecutor and the barrister are expected to prove their case and it is the jury's approval or disapproval that signals the disputants' success. However, nobody asks the jury to explain the motives for their decision while the judge is obliged to justify her decision. In other words, persuasion is directed from the prosecutor and the barrister (barristers) to the judge, the jury and the audience and not from prosecutor to the barrister (barristers) or from one barrister to another. Therefore, argumentative activities in a court setting are asymmetric. The fulfillment of the pragmatic rules is structured accordingly. Argumentation in court involves an institutional framework that eliminates the need to determine whether the parties are observing the rules or not.

As we have seen, in theory the two types of pragmatic rules are meant to work as a necessary condition for detecting the type of discussion. The only problem is that it is often quite hard to determine a party's motives. When analyzing verbal communication, one has just words that involve arguments and certain rhetorical devices such as making a pause or coughing. In addition to the abovementioned pragmatic rules Grice developed what he referred to as Cooperative Principle Postulates. Grice thought that in verbal communications most people omit parts of what they were going to say (G.P. Grice, 1985, p. 66). It concerns, of course, shared information, i.e., basic legal and moral principles, conventions and generally accepted facts.

Sometimes people misuse language by widening or narrowing a conventional expression meaning. Grice referred to such phenomena as conversational implicatures. According to him, the conversational implicature is a fundamental mode of verbal communication. When a conversational implicature is used, the conventional meaning of an expression is transformed into a new meaning, which lies beyond the wide or narrow meaning of the expression to be found in the dictionary. To decipher a conversational implicature the analyst needs to take into account background information, body language and the communication setting. Grice's idea is that in many cases conversational implicature signals a violation of the Cooperation Principle. According to some post-Gricean studies (Walton Douglas, 1996, p.254 and ff)**[ii]**, verbal ambiguities, which are conversational implicatures of a certain type, also indicate a violation of the principle.

Grice's Cooperation Principle consists of four postulates (quantity, quality,

relation, manner) that determine the relation between the proponent and her audience, the relation between the proponent and the content of the arguments, the relation between the proponent and the topic of discussion, and finally the relation between the content and the manner of expression. The persuasive power of arguments depends not only on their meaning or on the argumentation schemes, but also on the means of expression and the proponent's attitude to the discussion as whole. It is the speakers' verbal and emotional behavior during the discussion rather than the semantics of their argumentation that indicate the speakers' real positions. A speaker may pursue goals in the discussion that differ from her original goals, e.g. persuasion. By doing that she changes the type of discussion. To achieve, for instance, self-promotion, and they may use an ad hominem attack but it should not necessarily be considered a fallacious move but as an indicator that a shift of the type of discussion has occurred. My suggestion is that in controversial cases we should first look for implicit premises and conversational implicatures instead of suspecting a fallacy or a violation of the Cooperation Principle. This does not mean that fallacies never occur, rather that the Gricean postulates are an indispensable condition for any communication to take place and a necessary condition for detecting fallacies.

Let us turn to the NTV's live weekly political talk show 'K barrieru'. In the talk show, two participants advocating opposing views on a problem of public concern debate in the TV-studio. Normally the discussion is rather unfriendly and even hostile. The participants' verbal attacks aim to persuade TV viewers who vote for one or the other arguer during the show.

My main question is why obviously illicit methods used by some participants nevertheless work quite effectively. I argue that such tricks are persuasive because most of them are conversational implicatures. In order to make an implication explicit, people usually reason enthymematically and based on the Cooperation Principle. Most of illicit techniques traditionally are classified as fallacies or as violations of the principle after which a misunderstanding occurs and the verbal communication stops. My point is that (1) illicit methods are made possible only when participants keep to the principle; (2) the persuasive power of illicit tricks rests on the fact that the principle regulates communication both between the participants and their audience and between the participants themselves, but because the goals of these kinds of communication are different, the principle works differently from case to case.



My first point is to show that the debate between the two discussants is not an argumentative one for neither of them has in mind to persuade the other.

KB! 10 Nov 2005

V. Soloviev (moderator): *The latest developments in France make us project them upon Russia. In a tolerant Europe Islamized a long time ago, one tiny spark was enough to fire up whole towns. Is the fire coming to Russia as well, or is there going to be a somewhat different Russian revolt against overpopulation of immigrants who have no wish to be assimilated like the residents of Parisian suburbs?*

Let us reconstruct the presuppositions of the presenter's question:

1. Europe is tolerant and Islamized unlike Russia;
2. Russia is intolerant or has not been Islamized yet;
3. The residents of Parisian suburbs have not been assimilated yet or they do not want to;
4. There are too many immigrants in Russia;
5. Russian immigrants, like those of Parisian suburbs, have no wish to be assimilated;
6. A Russian revolt, if there is going to be one, will be directed against immigrant domination.

The analogy between Russia and Europe rests in (3) and (5), and there are many more points, (1), (2), (4), (6), where they obviously differ. Therefore, the initial topic for the discussion is tolerance towards immigrants in Russia, as it becomes clear from the views that are put forward by the discussants.

Geidar Dzhemal (President of the Russian Muslim Association and a Russian Muslim Rights Activist): *"Zhirinovsky is the most well known nationalist in public politics of the post-Soviet Russia. His activity is a consistent dismantling of all Soviet values, a demolition of internationally oriented world perception and a public appeal for a bourgeois consciousness and for a bourgeois social structure. Both the bourgeois consciousness and bourgeois social structure, which characterize consumption society, are baneful".*

(D1) *Soviet values, such as internationalism and socialist economics, are true values.*

(D2) *Bourgeois consciousness and bourgeois social structure are opposite to*

*Soviet values.*

*(D3) Zhirinovsky is a nationalist.*

*(D4) Zhirinovsky advocates a demolition of the Soviet values.*

*(D5) His activities are baneful.*

Vladimir Zhirinovski (Leader of the Russian Liberal Democratic Party): *Europe is already burning. This is the beginning of a clash of civilizations with elements of religious, social, ethnic and cultural discord, which can lead to world civil war in Europe and in Russia. You are one of the participants of this worldwide political provocation.*

*(Z1) There are ethnically different incompatible civilizations in the world.*

*(Z2) Russians and Muslims are representatives of such incompatible civilizations.*

*(Z3) It is baneful to unleash a conflict between them.*

*(Z4) Dzhemal' activity is unleashing a conflict between the incompatible civilizations.*

*(Z5) Dzhemal' activity is baneful.*

Basic disagreement rests in (Z1) and (D1): Soviet values, and internationalism is among them, mean that there are no incompatible civilizations. Dzhemal's idea is that the reasons underlying the existence of incompatible civilizations are economic and political, namely, bourgeois social structure, which should be abolished and this is exactly what is being done by upheaval mongers in France. That is why he likes the developments in France. Contrary to that, Zhirinovsky considers that it is inevitable that incompatible civilizations do exist, and if so, provoking them to enter into conflict with each other is fatal, because social conflicts are always fatal.

Let us check whether the discussion meets the necessary conditions, namely, the preliminary rules and the rules of responsibility. Both Dzhemal and Zhirinovsky have confronting opinions expressed in (Z1) and (D1), and they express them at the very beginning of the show: (P1), (P2). Obviously, they sincerely disagree with each other's views (R1) and are going to provide arguments in support of their positions, otherwise there would be no reason to participate in the talk show. But do they really expect that the opponent will accept their arguments in principle and essentially (P3)? It is difficult to answer the question whether the participants have any or have no intention to accept the arguments of each other, but hardly one of them could ever accept Z5 or D3 and D5 as essentially persuasive arguments! It is clear that these statements are not arguments. There is also a

doubt concerning the R2-rule, which says that they should believe that their arguments would contribute to the success of the whole process of argumentation.

Let us deal with P3 first. I argue that neither participant observes the rule, for otherwise they would never have said something like Z5 or D3 and D5. By adducing these, the participants not only disapprove of each other's views, but also say that they disapprove of them essentially. If they both were keeping the P3 rule, then Z5, D3 and D5 would definitely mean committing the fallacy *ad hominem*, but does it? If it were an *ad hominem* fallacy, it would mean that the argumentative move was not a legitimate one. In this case the arguer committed the fallacy without realizing that he was committing a fallacy: he either meant something else, i.e. he meant to express his disapproval of the opponent's view rather than attack the opponent's character or just awkwardly expressed his ideas.

'KB' is a verbal duel and when the discussants attack each other they aim at striking the other party in the eyes of TV viewers. Therefore, not attacking the other party would definitely be a mistake.

Another reason why there is no fallacy *ad hominem* in Z5, D3 and D5 is that in the show such personal attacks are often just unintentional mistakes.

(D6) G. Dzhemal: *Your nationalism is reproachable!*

(D7) G. Dzhemal: *You are always seeking to join the golden billion.*

(D8) G. Dzhemal: *In Russia, only a small group of skinheads manipulated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs supports your racist ideology!*

(Z6) V. Zhirinovskiy: *... Then do say that you need more space for your living space and that you are certain to use any means to occupy it and France is the first to be occupied!*

(Z7) V. Zhirinovskiy: *Tell us of your plan to Islamize Russia!*

Both participants attack each other and it is obvious that the two mean to fight each other; neither of them has misread the other's intentions so far, both understand that his opponent is seeking a victory in the eyes of the audience. The discussion between them is of a quarrel type and there is no space for a persuasive dialogue. The quarrel-like discussion between the participants is symmetric, but there is a third in the discussion, TV viewers whose calls determine who has won the debate. Perhaps, for the participants their votes are

even more valuable than just as an indicator of the victory in the talk show. Callers are their real life electorate as well.

With respect to the audience, the discussion between the participants seems to be argumentative. Let us now suppose that the discussion is argumentative not just with respect to TV viewers but also with respect to the participants in the studio. Their personal attacks cannot be qualified as ad hominem fallacies, as I have shown earlier. Then because of the argumentative type of the discussion, these attacks should mean anything else but personal attacks, for personal attack in an argumentative discussion is either ad hominem fallacy or, in case it is a conscious step, a symptom of a violation of P3-rule. Therefore, such steps should be taken as conversational implicatures and as signals of a violation of the Gricean Postulate of Manner: instead of saying clearly that nationalism is a bad thing to support Dzhemal puts forward D5 and instead of saying that provoking a conflict is very dangerous Zhirinovskiy puts forward Z3. Indeed, this way they attack their each other personally but in fact it seems to them to be the right way of criticizing each other.

So the postulate would have been violated just if the words of discussants were taken to signify something different in the sense of a conversational implicature. I suggest that both discussants are observing the principle and that they are obeying all the pragmatic rules. Moreover, if they were not, the conversational duel between them would have never been possible. The necessary condition for a successful discussion consists of three important points:

- 1) the participants' goals should correspond to each other;
- 2) these goals taken together should meet pragmatic rules;
- 3) the participants' activities should meet the requirements of the Cooperation Principle. The idea itself is far from being a new one, but when applied to a real case it can function as a method for detecting both illicit tricks and fallacies.

Quantity	Optimal number of arguments	From the speaker towards the audience	(Z8) However, you will never capture Russia, it will never occur. We have stopped Chingiz-khan, Napoleon, and the Nazis. We will stop you as well!
Quality	Validity and reasonableness of arguments	From the speaker towards his arguments	(Z9) Who ruined the USSR? Why have the fifteen new states come into being?
Relation	Following the topic of discussion	From the speaker to the topic discussed	(Z10) Russia is an orthodox country. There is the national ideology and some people also have religious ideologies, but in Russia the state was created by Russians together with others and it should remain Russian, Slavic and Orthodox, but should never become Islamic or Buddhist.
Manner	Clarity and intelligibility of arguments	From the contents towards the manner of expression	(Z11) Are you for internationalism or for the Islamic nationalism? Do you want Russia to fall? Do you plan to Islamize Russia? Where is your Islamic socialism or internationalism? Tell us of your plan to Islamize Russia!

In the following table V. Zhirinovskiy's words are understood as conversational implicatures. As we have seen earlier, the communicative structure of the talk show is asymmetric, and his words are meant to be arguments in favor of Z1 in respect to the audience and verbal attacks in respect to his opponent. This does not necessarily mean that the same conversational implicature should be interpreted consequently in each case though it may well be the case. For the present issue it is enough to say that in the following phrases he attaches new meanings to certain expressions.

In Z8 Zhirinovskiy obviously does not mean that Dzhemal himself has in mind capturing Russia. His idea seems to be that Muslims need more living space and because of that they are going to occupy France (Cf. Z6) and it may well be the case that they would like to do the same in Russia, so he warns that they will never succeed in doing that in Russia, for nobody had done that before (Chingiz-khan, Napoleon, and the Nazis). To accuse Dzhemal or Muslims of invading Russia would be an enormous exaggeration, indeed. Zhirinovskiy's idea is that excessive immigration is dangerous because of Z1-Z2. Therefore, I suggest that Zhirinovskiy is keeping the quantity postulate because his arguments aim at supporting the idea of incompatible civilizations: some civilizations are incompatible; no positive communication between them is possible for whenever in history it has taken place it ended up in war or conflict.

In Z9 he seems to blame Dzhemal for ruining the USSR, but this is not so. He obeys the quality postulate and there is no accusation. Zhirinovskiy's goal here is to strike his opponent in the eyes of onlookers. It is well known that in 90s, most Russian people have been supporting the idea of the USSR, but today nobody of sound mind blames Muslims for ruining it. Most likely that in Z9 Zhirinovskiy once again speaks of his ideas expressed in Z1, Z3, and he means that the Soviet state has collapsed because of the excessive number of non-Russian residents that have been enjoying economic privileges:

V. Zhirinovskiy: *In the USSR, Russians' well-being was the lowest. In all the national republics people were living better than Russians, therefore in 1991 they have quickly scattered.*

In Z10, he is recalling these ideas again though when he is saying that Russia should remain Russian Orthodox and it will never become Buddhist or Islamic it might seem that he shifts away from the topic of the discussion. In Z11, Zhirinovsky attacks his opponent with a series of questions and again it might seem as if he breaks the Postulate of Manner. Obviously, it would have been the case if there were a persuasive discussion between Zhirinovsky and Dzhemal. The former accuses the latter of a series of dangerous intentions and I suggest that he says just what he means without any conversational implicatures, for he does so because these accusations in fact support his basic ideas Z1-Z5.

In the framework of argumentative discussion, Z9-Z11 would definitely be analyzed as a fallacy, or as instances of a violation of either a pragmatic rule or the Cooperation Principle. Therefore, the type of discussion plays an important role for the analysis of argumentation; the task of detecting the type of discussion goes beyond the participants' actual behavior and involves identifying its pragmatic framework. In order to have fallacies and illicit tricks successfully revealed the actual pragmatic framework of the discussion should necessarily be taken into account: the preliminary rules, the responsibility rules, the rules of the Cooperation Principle and the type of discussion. The latter is a complex notion involving the initial situation, the goal of the discussion and the participants' aims. I suggest that the Cooperation Principle is a useful tool for identifying the participants' aims.

## NOTES

- i.** The project is supported by Russian Research Foundation for Humanities, N 05-03-03301.
- ii.** Cf. Walton Douglas. *Fallacies Arising from Ambiguity*. Kluwer Academic Publishers 1996

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