ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Argument Refutation Through Definitions And Re-Definitions

If you are not well equipped with an argument against the assertion, look among the definitions, real or apparent, of the thing before you, and if one is not enough, draw upon several. For it will be easier to attack people when committed to a definition: for an attack is always more easily made on definitions. (Aristotle's Topics, Book II)

1. *Introduction*

Goal-oriented communication has long been the trademark of human interaction in a wide range of private and public settings. During the past three decades a renewed awareness has emerged in both academic and extra-academic circles about the growing role and extensive effects of rhetorically powerful discourse in all areas of human activity. This is particularly noticeable in political discourse, which is driven by the challenge and wish to argue in order to influence people's minds, to motivate people to act and even to manipulate people. That is why speakers do not only advance their own arguments in favour of their positions, but they also provide arguments denying the other side's arguments. In controversies, definitions are often used to legitimate and refute arguments. Refuting an argument presupposes understanding that argument at every level of its definitional meaning and practical implications. In political disputes the act of defining contributes to further polarisation between adversarial positions and can therefore become rhetorically persuasive or dissuasive.

This paper examines the role played by refutation in the persuasion and dissuasion processes that rely on the use of definitions. The very prospect of refuting an argument entails understanding that argument at every level of its definitional meaning and logical implications. In arguing, a speaker often appeals to definitions that reinforce the power of his/her arguments and/or to definitions that help to refute the opponent's arguments. Particularly persuasive are those definitions that are meant to stir up prejudices and stereotypes and thus to undermine the justifiability of the opponent's arguments and explicit/implicit definitions.

In order to illustrate the argumentative uses of definition in refutations, I have chosen to examine the various uses of definition-based refutations in Emmeline Pankhurst's speech on women's right to vote entitled *Militant suffragists.* This is a particularly significant speech, since apart from highlighting a very controversial issue in England and other countries at that time, it was delivered not in her home country, but in Hartford, Connecticut, which involved extra rhetorical processing and a special selection and presentation of the right arguments for the right audience.

2. *Refutation: an interactive process, a performative act and a rhetorical device*
In institutional discourses and in public speeches refutation (Lat. *refutatio*) involves the use of rhetorical and argumentative devices with the purpose of countering an opponent's argument or rejecting the counterarguments of one's opponent. The complex uses and implications of refutation have raised great interest in both linguistics and rhetoric, which may account for the fact that there are several definitions of refutation (Rieke and Sillars 1975, Moeschler 1982, Eemeren et al. 1996, Verlinden 2005). According to Rieke and Sillars, refutation designates both attacking others' arguments and defending one's own. Moeschler characterises the speech act of refutation typologically, describing the conditions that govern its use, the linguistic markers of refutation, and the role of refutation in conversation. In van Eemeren et al. an important distinction is made between strong and weak refutations. In a strong refutation "one is to attack the standpoint by showing that the proposition is unacceptable whereas the opposite, or contradictory, proposition is acceptable", whereas "in 'weak refutation' it is sufficient to cast doubt upon the attacked standpoint, without a defense of the opposite standpoint". (1996: 4).

Dictionary definitions of refutations are useful in that they often implicitly contribute to highlighting various semantic perspectives on the occurrence and functions of different kinds of refutations. A comprehensive lexical definition of the notion of refutation is provided in *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, which highlights their communicative functions:
Refutation n. [L. refutatio: cf. F. r['e]futation.]
The act or process of refuting or disproving, or the state of being refuted; proof of falsehood or error; the overthrowing of an argument, opinion, testimony, doctrine, or theory, by argument or countervailing proof. (*Online Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary*)

Linguistically, refutation is the part of a coherent piece of discourse in which the speaker reminds or anticipates opposing arguments and responds to them. A pragma-linguistic definition of refutation is provided by Online *Wordwebonline*:

Refutation
1. The speech act of answering an attack on your assertions; e.g. "his refutation of the *charges* was *short* and *persuasive*" – defense [US], defence [Brit, Cdn]
2. Any evidence that helps to establish the falsity of something – disproof, falsification
3. The act of determining that something is false – falsification, falsifying, disproof, refutal

As a rhetorical device, refutation has been formalised within the arrangement of the classical oration, following the '*confirmatio*', i.e. the section of a speech devoted to proof. Refutation also applies to a general mode of argumentation within certain topics of invention, such the contradiction, by means of which the speaker answers the counterarguments of his/her opponent. Refutation can be achieved in a variety of ways, including logical appeal, emotional appeal, ethical appeal and wit (joke, humour, sarcasm, puns). In particular situations, speakers find it appropriate to present a refutation before the confirmation. For example, if an adversary's speech is well received, it is usually helpful to refute his/her arguments before offering one's own. Refutations apply to a variety of confrontational settings in which arguments are being attacked, denied, contradicted and/or rejected as being false, absurd, impertinent, wicked or unjust.

3. *Argumentative strategies of refutation*
By means of refutations, speakers position themselves in relation to their opponents by reinforcing their own standpoints and challenging or rejecting those of their opponents, thus marking the distance that separates them. Arguing against someone else's standpoint can be used to refute all those who oppose one's position. Objections to particular arguments can be raised in at least three ways: by directly attacking the opponent's statements or claims, by putting forward counter-statements or counter-claims, and by highlighting and contrasting the arguments in the two sets of statements or claims.
Claims can be refuted when they are contradicted by experience, testimony, authority, or common knowledge. Apart from considerable background and specialised knowledge, refuting an argument requires critical thinking skills, strong purposefulness and genuine personal commitment. According to Aristotle

(1984), refutation by logical analogy was the ultimate level of human intelligence. Indeed, refuting an argument entails understanding that argument at every level of its definitional meaning, contextual grounding and logical implications. In practice, successful argument refutation requires an understanding of the boundaries of both intellect and intuition that can only be achieved in the awareness that neither intellect nor intuition can be relied upon completely alone to produce sound reasoning.

Refutations may take different forms depending on several factors, such as the specific situational constraints, the kind of discourse, the debated issue, the speakers' personality and goals, etc. More often than not, speakers resort to refutation in order not only to criticise their opponents and to attack their arguments, but also to defend their own arguments from the opponents' attacks.

Some of the main functions of refutations are the following:
– to establish the audience's understanding and acceptance of the righteousness of the speaker's position/cause
– to demonstrate why the speaker feels his/her side of the argument is the better one, even when s/he doesn't necessarily think that the other side is entirely wrong
– to involve the audience by appealing to their shared community doxa, recent experiences and basic feelings so as to bring about a change of mind
– to strike the right rhetorical chords in order to invite positive reactions and further support from the audience and the public at large

4. *Refutations by definition and re-definition*
In highly controversial debates the strength of a speaker's arguments is upheld not only by defending one's own standpoints and by attacking the adversary's standpoints, but also by supporting or rejecting particular definitions of key words as indisputable facts. In the process of argumentation, skilful speakers do not necessarily use commonly more or less acknowledged definitions, but they generate instead new context-related and ideologically based definitions. This has been extensively discussed by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), who claimed that a definition should always be regarded as an argument and should be evaluated as an argument. In the same vein, Walton considers that "a persuasive definition should be treated as a particular kind of argument" (2001: 118).
Definitions play a crucial role in every field of human reasoning and interpersonal interaction. One way to argue appropriately is to be precise about the explicit and

implicit meanings of the key terms of an argument. In this respect, the Socratic question 'What does X mean?' is a natural starting point for any argumentative discourse. A basic definition may highlight a less known aspect of a notion, idea or issue, or it may re-evaluate a well-known and debated aspect of the issue under discussion. In political discourse, definitions are not necessarily conceived as universal axioms, but they are often clarifications or explanations of contextualised terms.

Three main aspects are significant when examining the use of definitions. In the first place, the act of defining involves processes of identification, categorisation and particularisation of the entity or phenomenon to be defined. In the second place, the act of defining implies the communicative act of making something clear and tangible. In the third place, the act of defining entails determining the outline and boundaries of the entity or phenomenon to be defined. There are, accordingly, several types of argumentatively used definitions that display these features, as will be shown later in this paper.

Definitions are used to categorise things, people or ideas by either making generalisations or particularisations about them. Frequently, how one defines a term or concept can lead logically (through syllogistic reasoning) to a given conclusion, while other definitions might lead to different conclusions. Defining key notions allows a speaker to interpret the people or opinions involved in the argument in a way that makes logical sense to the listeners. To argue, as well as to refute, from definition, is a way to convince the audience that a particular ideological belief or commitment is reasonable because it can be supported by evidence. Consequently, the conclusions devolving from this definition stand a good chance of being seen as appropriate, logical and acceptable.

In the context of political discourse, definitions function as speech acts and are used to signpost the central debate issues and thus to facilitate the audience's comprehension. Discursively and rhetorically, definitions are instrumental in the process of social construction of identities and ideological polarisation, by contributing to establish, or, on the contrary, challenge, a case of partial or total consensus.

At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that the use of definitions with unexamined assumptions often results in arguments that either 'over-simplify' the issue under debate or 'over-generalise' the issue under debate. This means that either too much or too little is claimed by these arguments, which makes them

easily refuted by pointing out a simple distinction.

5. *Refutations in public speeches – Emmeline Pankhurst's suffrage speech*
On crucial issues such as the debate concerning women's right to vote, female speakers have been fully aware of the scepticism and/or opposition they faced and often tried to address it directly in their speeches. They often make creative use of their opponents' attacks by uttering refutations, which are normally stronger persuasion devices than the corresponding assertive statements. Women can be seen to deliberately start their speeches by admitting that there are those who disagree with their position, then continue by clarifying the two opposing positions for their audiences, and finally conclude by directly addressing the audience and facing their reactions. Their refutations are particularly targeted at the opponents' behaviour and communicative patterns, coherence, consistency and supporting evidence.

For the purposes of the present paper I have chosen to examine the definition-based refutations used in a speech entitled *Militant suffragists* and delivered by Emmeline Pankhurst in Hartford, Connecticut, on November 13, 1913, during a lecture tour in the U.S.A. (Copeland et al. 1999). Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) was one of the most eloquent and energetic leaders of the woman suffrage movement during the early part of the 19th century (Roberts 1995). She was head of the so-called "militants" of England and often faced arrest and prosecution as a result of furthering the right of women to vote. She worked her entire life for the cause of women's suffrage, and was certainly not afraid to back up her words with action. According to Warner (1998) "Mrs. Pankhurst was born a Victorian Englishwoman, but she shaped an idea of women for our time; she shook society into a new pattern from which there could be no going back." In her tireless public speaking, suffrage meant more than equality with men. Her plea to the court in 1912 concluded, "We are here, not because we are lawbreakers; we are here in our efforts to become lawmakers."

In 1903 Emmeline Pankhurst founded, together with other champions of women's suffrage, the Women's Social and Political Union. The motto of the Women's Social and Political Union was 'deeds not words'. It is a motto that could also serve well to sum up Pankhurst's life, both as a woman and as a suffragette. The opposition the Liberal government of the time provoked, among all classes and conditions of women, furious and passionate protests. The W.S.P.U. adopted a French Revolutionary sense of crowd management, public spectacle and symbolic

ceremony. Women's suffrage was granted at different times in different countries. For example Finland granted women the vote in 1906, Norway in 1913 and Sweden in 1921. After a prolonged struggle women were finally given the right to vote on equal terms with men in 1920 in the USA and in 1928 in Britain.

The following aspects of refutation-oriented definitions will be particularly examined in Emmeline Pankhurst's speech:
– What are the major types of definitions used as refutations and what are their distinguishing characteristics?
– How are definitions signalled linguistically and rhetorically?
– What particular rhetorical features co-occur with definitions?

6. *Definition-based refutations in Emmeline Pankhurst's speech*
The fact that Emmeline Pankhurst's speech Militant suffragists is delivered in the United States and not in England, her home-country, places her in an entirely new rhetorical situation and conditions the way in which she structures her speech and confronts the new audience. Realising that she is addressing a different audience in the United States than back home in England, Emmeline Pankhurst adjusts her Hartford speech so as to involve her listeners both rationally and emotionally, by appealing to their personal experiences, as well as to the particular values and norms to which they were expected to subscribe. She appears persuasive from the start, just by explaining why she came there and in what capacity. This straightforward move enables her to establish direct contact with the audience and to better help them understand her position and her point of view. The speech has a powerful *ex abrupto* start where she refers to her political commitment by means of two explicit negations, as illustrated in example (1):
(1)
"*I do not come here as an advocate*, because whatever position the suffrage movement may occupy in the United States of America, in England it has passed beyond the realm of advocacy and it has entered into the sphere of practical politics. It has become the subject of revolution and civil war, and so *to-night I am not here to advocate woman suffrage.* American suffragists can do that very well for themselves."

While treaties of rhetoric normally advise young orators against starting a speech with a negation, Pankhurst deliberately violates this very principle in order to directly refute her audience's presumed expectations and to avoid potential

misunderstandings. Both her first and second utterances consist of self-reference by denial which is meant to re-define her identity, which goes beyond an advocate's role. Throughout her speech, Emmeline Pankhurst can be seen to refute several of her American hearers' presumed assumptions about her role. Example (1) displays a double refutation of presupposed inferences about her presumed political role and motivations among the American audience members. By refuting twice the unexpressed assumption that she is an 'advocate' of woman suffrage, Pankhurst is actually re-defining the term to strengthen her argumentative position. At the same time, she performs a face-saving act in relation to the various categories of American listeners by reassuring them that, on the one hand, she trusts the professionalism of her fellow American suffragists and, on the other hand, she does not intend to instigate rebellion or civil unrest in America.

Pankhurst's two introductory refutations concerning her role as advocate are also meant to challenge the audience's expectations in order to capture their attention. Moreover, she anticipates her next move by raising the listeners' curiosity, which is meant to prepare them for an explanation and a new perspective on her role and position. On account of their anticipatory nature, these two refutations can be regarded as *refutations by anticipation*. Their main function in the introduction of the speech, as Cicero emphatically used to point out, is to establish the speaker's authority by rhetorical appeals to ethos. To better grasp the meaning ascribed by Pankhurst to the key word 'advocate', it is useful to examine its lexical definition, both etymological and context-related:

Advocate
Etymology: Middle English *advocat*, from Middle French, from Latin *advocatus*, from past participle of *advocare* to summon, from *ad-"to"* + *vocare* "to call", from *voc-*, *vox* voice (Online *Wordsmyth Dictionary-Thesaurus 2006*)

Advocate
1. a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy
2. a person who pleads a case on someone else's behalf
(Online *Compact Oxford Dictionary 2006*)

According to several dictionary definitions, an advocate is mainly a supporter who voices a cause or a policy, which does not imply a deeper involvement in defending the respective cause or policy. It is precisely this aspect that prompts

Pankhurst to re-define her role in the woman suffrage movement. Her two refutations create a moment of uncertainty for the audience, who, at this point, can only speculate about her real underlying intention: they may be wondering whether she refutes being described as an advocate due to certain unforeseen circumstances, or whether her refutation implies a stronger identification with her role in the suffragist movement. The rhetorical strategy that she uses here is called *procatalepsis* (from Greek "anticipation") or *prolepsis* (from Greek "preconception") and it enables the speaker to refute anticipated objections and/or to attack the credibility of preconceived judgements by providing counter-arguments. It is based on the well-known principle that an objection answered in advance is weakened. Procatalepsis, by anticipating an objection and answering it, allows an arguer to continue moving forward, while taking into account points or reasons opposing either the adversary's train of thought or final conclusions. In (1) this particular refutational argumentation rests on two closely linked syntactic relations: a causal relation, marked by the logical connective "because" and a conclusive relation, marked by the logical connective "and so".

By referring to the American socio-political scene and comparing it with the situation in England, Emmeline Pankhurst shows, on the one hand, that she is aware of conceivable objections to her line of argumentation, and on the other, that she does not rule out the existence of reasonable counter-arguments. In order to convey this message, she uses the rhetorical figure called *apophasis*, by means of which a speaker asserts or emphasises something by apparently seeming to pass over, or deny it. A frequently used strategy in apophasis is the repetition, as in example (1): "I do not come here as an advocate","I am not here to advocate woman suffrage". Pankhurst utters these two almost identical statements in order precisely to call the audience's attention to sensitive facts without stirring up strong feelings in connection with the issue of women's right to vote. The rest of her speech shows in fact that advocating woman suffrage is exactly the main topic.

To further clarify her position, Emmeline Pankhurst wants to make the audience aware of her non-American background with the purpose of opening a new perspective for them based on her own experience-based arguments in favour of the woman suffrage movement in England. She continues her self-presentation by defining her self-ascribed identity as 'soldier', as well as the other-inflicted identity as 'convict', as illustrated in example (2).

(2)

I am here as a soldier who has temporarily left the field of battle in order to explain – it seems strange it should have to be explained – what civil war is like when civil war is waged by women. […] I am adjudged because of my life to be *a dangerous person*, under sentence of penal servitude in a convict prison. […] I dare say, in the minds of many of you – you will perhaps forgive me this personal touch – that I do not look either very like *a soldier* or very like *a convict*, and yet I am both.

Whereas in (1) Pankhurst refutes an implicitly presumed assumption, in (2) she refutes an explicit assumption with which she confronts her audience – i.e. that she may be neither soldier nor convict because it is difficult to identify her with the two roles. Her refutational argumentation relies primarily on implicit explanatory definitions of the terms 'soldier' and 'convict', both of which had been used to define her current social roles in England. She continues by referring to 'civil war' when "waged by women" and she implies that there is a distinction between a civil war waged by men and a civil war waged by women. This strategy is similar to the *rhetorical dissociation* discussed in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), by means of which a seemingly unitary term is split in two and the speaker's position is linked to the term that concerns the line of argumentation. In this respect, her definitions acquire more strength and become polemical acts, since she implicitly evaluates and qualifies the commonly assumed interpretations of the two notions. Also, Pankhurst describes herself metaphorically in two different and contradictory capacities: as a soldier in a civil war, i.e. a person normally worthy of respect, and as a convict, i.e. a person normally not worthy of respect. Her underlying message is that, in spite of important differences, the two notions have an important element in common: both roles are deprived of power and authority. The lexical definitions of the terms in several dictionaries support this interpretation, which reinforces Pankhurst's multifaceted role. Thus, a soldier is defined as a "dedicated worker: somebody who works with dedication for a cause" in Encarta Online, as a "person who contends or serves in any cause" in Random House Unabridged Dictionary (2006), and as an "active, loyal, or militant follower of an organization" in American Heritage Dictionary.

Two metalinguistic parentheticals contribute to supplementing the argumentative definitions in example (2) and to strengthen the speaker's ethos: "it seems strange it should have to be explained"; "you will perhaps forgive me this

personal touch". The former parenthetical is message-oriented and functions as a rational appeal (to logos), whereas the latter is addresser-oriented and functions as an emotional appeal (to pathos). Through the change in rhetorical appeal these parentheticals help to refocus the hearers' attention and to mark the speaker's rhetorical transition from a lexical definition to a persuasive definition.

Among Pankhurst's roles, the one that raises most controversial interpretations is the role of convict and this is precisely what she wants her audience to become more aware of. On the one hand, the notion of convict may have a rather neutral meaning, i.e. "somebody serving a prison sentence" according to Encarta Dictionary, but on the other hand, it can have a clearly negative meaning, i.e. "someone who is in prison because they are guilty of a crime", according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. The distinction consists in the existence or non-existence of guilt (+/- guilt). A more balanced view is taken by two other dictionaries, whose definitions include both the neutral and the negative meaning of 'convict':

Convict
1. a person who has been found guilty of a crime or misdemeanour (synonyms: criminal, offender, transgressor, etc.)
2. a person who is serving time in jail or prison (synonyms: prisoner, captive, etc.)
(Online *Wordsmyth Dictionary-Thesaurus 2006*)

Convict
1. a person found or declared guilty of an offence or crime
2. a person serving a sentence of imprisonment
(Online *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 2006*)

The last two lexical definitions succeed in giving a realistic picture of the two practical implications in the use of the word 'convict', which can only be distinguished in the right context. It is possible to infer from Pankhurst's speech that she draws the audience's attention to the tendency to interpret the meaning of the word 'convict' more often in a negative, rather than in a neutral way, instead of starting off with the neutral interpretation, i.e. "to be presumed innocent until proven guilty".

Following up the argumentative strategy of refutation by means of definitions, Pankhurst continues with her refutational argumentation, as illustrated in

example (3):

(3)
[…] it is about eight years since *the first militant action* was taken by women. *It was not militant at all*, except that *it provoked militancy* on the part of those who were opposed to it. *When women asked questions in political meetings and failed to get answers, they were not doing anything militant. To ask questions at political meetings is an acknowledged right of all people who attend public meetings.* […] At any rate in Great Britain it is a custom, a time-honored one, to ask questions of candidates for Parliament and ask questions of members of the government. *No man was ever put out of a public meeting for asking a question* until Votes for Women came onto the political horizon. *The first people who were put out of a political meeting for asking questions, were women.* […] *we were called militant* for doing that…

Two major refutations are conveyed by Pankhurst in the excerpt above. For the first refutation she resorts to two related definitions: a *definition by negation* by means of which she denies the opponents' claims – "It [the action taken by women] was not militant at all" – and a *definition by explanation*, by means of which she points out that the act of asking questions is not necessarily militant, but it is "an acknowledged right of all people". While the major function of the definition by negation is to deny the opponent's argument in order to call into question its validity, an important function of the definition by explanation is to challenge the values to which one's opponents subscribe. In the first place, she denies her opponents' characterisation of women's actions as 'militant', and in the second place, she reasserts the right of women and men to ask questions when attending public meetings, refuting the accusation of militancy in question asking. It is significant to note in the following dictionary definitions that the meaning of the word 'militant' is semantically and pragmatically related to the meaning of 'soldier', used by Pankhurst earlier in her speech and illustrated in example (2).

Militant:
(Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *militans, militant-*, present participle of *militare*, to serve as a soldier)
1. feeling or displaying eagerness to fight
2. having or showing a bold forcefulness in the pursuit of a goal
(Merriam-*Webster Online Thesaurus, 2005-2006*)

Militant:
Engaged in warfare; fighting; combating; serving as a *soldier*
(Online *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1913/2006*)

While the two meanings listed in the lexical definition provided by *Merriam-Webster Online Thesaurus* indicate general features of a militant person, the meaning indicated for 'militant' in *Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary* is a *definition by analogy*: "serving as a soldier". The key word 'soldier' in example (2) is argumentatively correlated in Pankhurst's speech with the key word 'militant' in example (3) by means of the rhetorical figure called *scesis onomaton.* This figure usually emphasises an idea by expressing it in a string of generally synonymous phrases or statements: the word 'militant' is etymologically synonymous to *soldier* since it originates in the Greek verb militare, which means "to serve as a soldier" and implicitly to display a fighting spirit. After examining the structure and content of Pankhurst's speech it is reasonable to assume that she refutes particularly the label of war-like militancy ascribed by opponents indiscriminately to any action performed by women suffragists.

The second refutation in example (3) is related to the parallel the speaker draws between the attitude towards men and towards women, respectively, in relation to the right to ask questions. Although both men and women were in principle supposed to have the same rights, women were discriminated against when they were not allowed to ask questions at public meetings, while men had never been stopped from asking questions. When exposing this obvious injustice, Pankhurst's refutation is based on a definition by analogy and emphasises a clear situation of gender discrimination: for men it was normal to ask questions (no man was ever put out of a public meeting), but for women it was not (the first to be put out of a public meeting were women). This reinforces the idea that asking questions is not only an acknowledged right of citizens, but it is also potentially a very challenging act. Indeed, by asking questions people call into question an issue, a belief, a standpoint, a line of argumentation, etc. The goal of questioning practices is to hold political actors and decision-makers responsible in front of political peers and ordinary citizens. This is why Pankhurst insists on arguing that the right to ask questions was never questioned before the Votes for Women became a political question and they started being called 'militant'.

A special type of refutation is the one enacted by means of dialogic strategies, as illustrated in example (4). By representing or quoting imaginary dialogue cues,

Pankhurst enables her audience members to identify the polyphony of recognisable ideological voices:

(4)
"Put them in prison," they said; "that will stop it." *But it didn't stop it.* They put women in prison for long terms of imprisonment, for *making a nuisance of themselves* – that was the expression when they took petitions in their hands to the door of the House of Commons;

The multi-voiced rhetoric gives her refutations a strong theatrical touch. Reproducing the directive "Put them in prison" and emphasising the derogatory comments of the legal representatives ("making a nuisance of themselves"), the speaker intends to involve her audience and to make them more sensitive to the suffragist cause that she defends. The polyphonic refutation in example (5), which continues in the same vein, is based on a definition by negation accompanied by correction:

(5)
The whole argument with the anti-suffragists, or even the critical suffragist man, is this: that you can govern human beings without their consent. They have said to us, "*Government rests upon force;* the women haven't force, so they must submit." Well, we are showing them that *government does not rest upon force at all*; it rests upon consent.

First, she denies the anti-suffragists' claim that "government rests upon force" and second, she makes a corrective statement: "it rests upon consent". In other words, her refutation consists in opposing the force of the argument to the argument of force used by anti-suffragists. A significant feature of the dialogic refutations above is the fact that the respective voices cannot be attributable to identifiable physical persons, but are generalisable and therefore more likely to have a stronger impact on the audience.

At the end of her speech, after having argued the legitimacy of the suffragist movement, Pankhurst adopts a different strategy: she starts to address specifically targeted members of her audience. This is illustrated in example (6), where she uses the rhetorical figure *apostrophe,* by means of which a speaker interrupts his/her speech and addresses directly a person or a group of persons.

(6*)*

Now I want to say to you who think women cannot succeed, we have brought the government of England to this position, that it has to face this alternative; either women are to be killed or women are to have the vote. *I ask American men in this meeting, what would you say* if in your State you were faced with that alternative, that you must either kill them or give them their citizenship […]? Well, there is only one answer to that alternative; *there is only one way out of it*, unless you are prepared to put back civilization two or three generations; *you must give those women the vote*.

When she targets a particular category of listeners, namely those "who think women cannot succeed", her intention is to enhance the appeal to pathos by displaying and eliciting intense emotionally loaded arguments. In the following utterance, where Pankhurst uses a rhetorical question, the targeted category of listeners is further narrowed down and includes only American men. Her goal is to shift the burden of proof from the suffragists to the decision-makers who, according to her, have to reach a final decision by choosing between two alternatives – one of which is obviously unacceptable, i.e. "women are to be killed".

Throughout the speech, Pankhurst resorts to several offensive and defensive moves which are conveyed, on the one hand, by means of speech acts of accusation and on the other, by speech acts of explanation and justification. Her argumentation consists to a large extent of refutations based on definitions which define and re-define her own political role and the nature of her political cause. Starting from the audience's presumed assumption about her identity as an advocate of women's suffrage, Pankhurst chooses to re-define her current identity as going beyond and strengthening that of an advocate of the suffragette cause. She exposes her personal clash of identities when she admits that her self-assumed current identity is that of a soldier, whereas the identity inflicted upon her by the British law courts is that of a convict, as illustrated earlier in example (2): "I am here as a soldier who has temporarily left the field of battle in order to explain – it seems strange it should have to be explained – what civil war is like when civil war is waged by women. […] I am adjudged because of my life to be a dangerous person, under sentence of penal servitude in a convict prison." In re-evaluating the suffragette movement, Pankhurst re-defines the women's suffrage movement as more than just a matter of advocacy, but rather a matter of higher dignity, a subject of "revolution and civil war": "[…] you must give those women

the vote. Now that is the outcome of our civil war." Her arguments show great determination and will power, as well as a deep commitment to the cause of suffragists.

7. *Concluding remarks*

This paper has examined the role played by refutation in the persuasion and dissuasion processes that rely on the use of definitions. In arguing, a speaker often appeals to definitions that reinforce the power of arguments and/or to definitions that help to refute the opponent's arguments. The process of refutation in public speaking is meant to help the audience discover the factual errors and reasoning inconsistencies in a line of argumentation. By refuting the opponents' previous or anticipated arguments, a public speaker tends to be primarily oriented towards the degree of coherence and consistency of informative and evaluative statements. The approach taken in this study lies at the interface between pragmatic and rhetorical analysis.

The aim of the present study was to illustrate the argumentative uses of definition in refutations by examining the various uses of definition-based refutations in Emmeline Pankhurst's speech on women's right to vote entitled *Militant suffragists.* This is a particularly significant speech, since apart from highlighting a very controversial issue of woman suffrage in England and other countries at that time, it was delivered not in her home country, but in the United States, which involved extra rhetorical processing and a special selection and presentation of the right arguments for the new audience. It shows that several factors are involved when successfully refuting an argument: relevant general background knowledge, critical thinking skills, intellectual abilities, personal commitment.

Three main aspects are significant when examining the use of definitions. In the first place, the act of defining involves processes of identification, categorisation and particularisation of the entity or phenomenon to be defined. In the second place, the act of defining implies the communicative act of making something clear and tangible. In the third place, the act of defining entails determining the outline and boundaries of the entity or phenomenon to be defined.

In Emmeline Pankhurst's speech, definition-based refutations function as speech acts and are used to signpost the central debate issues and thus to facilitate the audience's comprehension. Discursively and rhetorically, the definitions are instrumental in the process of social construction of identity and ideological polarisation, with a view to establishing support for the speaker's arguments and

to call into question the opponents' standpoints. Her refutations are particularly targeted at the opponents' behaviour and communicative patterns, coherence, consistency and supporting evidence.

The most salient cases of refutations that occur in Emmeline Pankhurst's speech appeal to the listeners' shared community doxa are based on three types of definitions: definition by negation (whereby the speaker proceeds to direct attack of the opponent's statements and denies the validity or truth of their claim), definition by explanation (whereby the speaker puts forward counter-statements or counter-claims and provides reasons and/or examples to support them) and definition by analogy (whereby the speaker highlights and contrasts the opponent's arguments by correlating them with similar or comparable facts or phenomena). The examples taken from Emmeline Pankhurst's speech show that these definitions co-occur and complement each other to a great extent, as they are woven into the overall structure of the speech, producing varying shades of emphasis and focus.

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Dialectical Ideal And Dialectical Training

1. *Introduction*

Since the publication of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca´s *La Nouvelle rhétorique* and Toulmin´s *The Uses of Argument,* argumentation theory in general and normative argumentation theory in particular have made great advancements. Most notably some complex models have been developed that allow for a better analysis of argumentative discourse and present a normative ideal for effective argumentation and the solution of differences of opinions. Among these, the pragma-dialectical theory with the model for a critical discussion developed by Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grotendorst stands out as the most complete and influential in recent times.

At the core of this model stands a group of fifteen rules for a critical discussion that guides the behaviour of ideal discussants on their way to solving cooperatively their difference of opinion. By reconstructing the discourse and showing derailments from these rules it is possible to analyse problems that have occurred during the discussion and to explore their causes. This pathological or ex-post function of the critical discussion is a very powerful tool for argumentative analysis of discourse and among other benefits also offers the most coherent modern theory of fallacies. These rules have been shown to have both a very high problem validity and conventional validity (comp. van Eemeren, Grotendorst 2004, pp. 131-34), so adhering to them supports an optimal solution of a difference of opinion and is also generally held to do so by ordinary language

users.

Yet this pathological analysis of what went wrong in an argumentative exchange is only one side of pragma-dialectics, and is necessarily mirrored by what could be called the 'medical function' of trying to prevent a discussion from failing by offering optimal guidance to partners in the discussion. Of course it might be difficult (if not impossible) to lead an ideal critical discussion under the typical constraints of limited time, incomplete information and different social backgrounds, but while this might be true, it should nevertheless be possible at least to approach this ideal with reasonable discussants and under favourable circumstances. Discussants should be able to adhere voluntarily to the set of fifteen rules (van Eemeren, Grotendorst 2004, pp. 135-157) or the more concise "ten commandments" (van Eemeren, Grotendorst 2004, pp. 190-196) of a critical discussion if they try to solve their difference of opinion in a reasonable way. However, any attempt to do so will quickly reveal that even under very favourable higher order conditions and with the best intentions to discuss a matter reasonably, most ordinary language users find it very difficult in practice to act in accordance with the ten commandments for a critical discussion while engaged in an argumentative exchange.

The question that directly follows from this problem and that will guide this paper is how can the necessary faculties for reasonable arguers be trained to enable them to approach a critical discussion in their everyday conversations? This main question can be divided into two steps: a) which abilities need to be developed to approach a critical discussion; and b) how can these abilities be trained? This paper will explore these two steps and in addition suggest a training method for some of the faculties that are needed for a critical discussion. This method is the competitive dialectical training format "Modern Disputation" which has been recently developed at the University of Tübingen and has since been successfully used for training in small groups as well as academic tournaments. In this context the basic elements of modern disputation will be described, and an attempt will be made to show how the trained faculties correspond to the necessary faculties for a critical discussant.

2. *Which abilities need to be developed to enable a discussant to engage successfully in a critical discussion?*

The complexity of this speech situation is such that an attempt to create an exhaustive list of abilities would go well beyond the scope of a single paper, and could easily fill several textbooks. For the purposes of this paper, it is enough to

concentrate on some of the core abilities that are needed for a critical discussion and that are not usually sufficiently developed in ordinary language users. In this context it will also be assumed that the higher order conditions in the discussions under question do not play a dominant role in preventing a reasonable argumentative exchange. Five central abilities that a reasonable arguer needs can easily be distinguished:

1. the ability clearly to define and present one´s own point of view, claim, or position (including understanding a position that is presented in such a way by the opponent);**[i]**

2. the ability to use valid and relevant argumentation schemes in support of one´s own position (including analysing the validity and relevance of the opponent´s argumentation);**[ii]**

3. the abilty to evade contradictions between any arguments that are presented in support of one´s position or the implication of an argument, and the position itself (including detecting and being able to describe such contradictions in the opponent´s argumentation);**[iii]**

4. the ability to see the dependence of claims on certain premises that necessarily follow if the claim is to be upheld (in both one´s own and one´s opponent´s argumentation);**[iv]** and

5. the tolerance and patience to grant the opponent the widest possible freedom of speech and right to speak.**[v]**

Taken together these abilities do not guarantee that the respective person will be optimally prepared for a discussion and even less so that the discussion will lead to the optimal result, but it is hard to imagine how any discussion in which one or more of the participants fundamentally lack any of those abilities can lead to a satisfactory outcome. It is not surprising then, that all of these abilties are prerequisites for participants in a critical discussion and that few, if any of the ten commandments can be followed by discussants who lack them to a large extent. As a result, a training form that wants to prepare for a critical discussion would be well advised to include some, and if possible all, of the above mentioned fields in its training.

3. *How can the necessary skills for a critical discussion be trained?*
Due to the variety of different goals and procedures in rhetorical and dialectical training, it is hard to find a valid, general definition of the opitimal training form. Some elements can however be distinguished that give a good guideline. Slightly

simplified, this guideline could be formulated as: a successful rhetorical or dialectical training form should be easy, realistic and competitive.

What does this mean? The first and almost preliminary quality of a rhetorical or dialectical training is its simplicity. To be effective, a training format must reduce the complexity of the original situation it is preparing for so as to enable the students to concentrate fully on the few skills to be developed during the exercise. Of course there is value in just repeating the original situation, but this repetition is always limited. A soccer player may slowly improve by just playing soccer every day for a couple of hours, but to best develop his natural abilities he would be better advised to include a variety of sprints, fitness and coordination elements into his training. However, whether training for sports or verbal ability this quality should never be viewed in isolation because it creates a constant tension with the second quality: realism.

Training is always conducted with a view to an end goal. Unfortunately, the more a training format modifies the original situation for the sake of simplicity or competitiveness, the more it is in danger of training abilities that help the student succeed in the exercise itself, but not in the overarching goal. Taking the same soccer player again, it might be helpful if he can balance a ball on his feet, arms and neck for half an hour, but if it is not clear how this skill helps him on the field he will soon be limited to impressing his family and friends at garden parties without significantly improving his soccer skills. Neat examples can be found in the antique and modern rhetorical training formats that at one point stopped being seen as training, and instead were seen as art for its own sake. The most prominent of these are the classical *suasoriae* and *controversiae* that moved from a training for the forum, to a public display of a schoolmaster and his students (Seneca 1974),**[vi]** and some modern debate formats that stopped training speakers and started creating debaters who would succeed nowhere outside an academic debate competition. (Hoppmann 2000, pp. 194f.)

The third quality of a good rhetorical or dialectical training format might not be as immediately evident as the first two. Competitiveness in the sense used in this paper means that a training format gives the means to clearly distinguish the level of success with which a training has been completed (often with the help of a set of adjudication criteria applied by a third party), and following on from that usually a ranking of the students who are training simultaneously or subsequently. This competitiveness is a very valuable feedback tool for the student, and one of the most important motivational factors in any training or game in general. Many rhetorical or dialectical training formats might be simple

and sufficiently realistic, but have the severe problem of becoming dull after a few repetitions. That does not mean that they should therefore be abandoned altogether, but that they can only usually be used either in a situation with high institutional pressure (a school, university etc. where intrinsic motivation can be substituted by the outside pressure of grades or other means of success), or by students with an outstanding intrinsic motivation and diligence. In most other contexts these formats will be abandoned by the students a considerable time before the amount of repetitions leads to a visible result. Translated to the situation of the soccer player, competitiveness means that he will enjoy playing his game more, and repeat it more often, if he is playing with a team against another team (perhaps occasionally assisting on, or scoring a goal), rather than just dribbling a ball around a field without goals. The success of the aforementioned formats (declamation and debate) shows that competitiveness is a key quality for the success of a training format, but it also shows that competitiveness can create the same tension with realism as simplicity does. (comp. Bartsch, Hoppmann, Rex, Vergeest 2005, pp. 81-83)

In the following section of this paper the dialectical training format Modern Disputation will be introduced as a means to train some of the abilities for a critical discussion. While this format is not particularly simple, it still considerably reduces the complexity of the original speech situation. Its competitiveness has been proven lately by its success at both club and tournament level. To show that it is also realistic, and could therefore be a valuable tool for the training of a critical discussion, is one of the aims of this paper.

4. *What is Modern Disputation?*

The training format Modern Disputation is based on the idea of what we know from the peripatetic dialectical training as described for example in Aristotle´s *Topics* (comp. Slomkowski 1997, pp. 14ff.) , but tries to translate this idea into modern circumstances instead of blindly copying it as closely as possible. In order to make the disputation fully usable for modern training, two major adjustments were necessary, one philosophical and one practical.

First, Modern Disputation finds a completely different social and philosophical background from its Aristotelian counterparts, and even more so from the scholastic disputations. To fully understand the importance of this difference it is necessary to remember the two distinct aims of a successful disputation. The first, easier and more prominent aim of a disputation is the testing of the consistency of a claim with all of its necessary premises. Can this claim be upheld without

leading to any contradictions in itself or between its arguments? This first aim is fairly independent of the philosophical background given a basic stability of the core logical principles. Once this aim is fullfilled and the testing against contradictions leads to a positive result, the second aim becomes dominant: Is the claim under scrunity "capable of truth" (wahrheitsfähig), i.e. is it not only consistent in itself but also with those premises in society that have a high level of endoxity and are generelly held to be true? This second aim now is highly dependent on what is considered to be true and whether there is anything that is considered to be necessarily true in a given society. And here it could easily be argued that the amount of premises that have a high endoxity in modern, western and mostly post-religious societies is way smaller than in classical Greece and even more so than in medieval cristian societies. While Aristotle could still claim *"For those who feel doubt whether or not the gods ought to be honoured and parents loved, need castigation, while those who doubt whether snow is white or not, lack perception"* (Arist. Top. 105a5ff. trans. Forster) and the same is certainly true for the time of scholastic disputations, it would be far less evident today. As a result of this difference a modern disputation needs to change its second aim from "Is the claim capable of thruth?" to "What are the least endox premises that are necessary for upholding this claim?" Thus Modern Disputation needs some rules to test and value some of the premises that are revealed in the course of the disputatation relatively rather than absolutely.

Second, a practical adjustment makes Modern Disputation more easily usable for dialectical training: The introduction of a set of adjudication criteria. The classical peripatetic and scholastic disputations depended on the presence of at least one superiour master in any disputation to evaluate its success. While this constitutes little difficulty in the institutional context of the Peripathos or a medieval school or university, it would do so in modern training especially between peers, as for example in academic societies. Additionally those adjudication criteria are needed for the full competitiveness of a training format. The effect here employed is easy to see: Most people would strive to do their best and to win against their opponents in a competitive format that gives them a clear feedback about their level of success. If then doing something better in order to win a disputation, debate or declamation also means to improve as a speaker in the original situtation, then this is the most efficient way to use personal ambition as a training tool. This translation from winning a format to improving as a speaker can only be successful however, if the adjudication criteria employed are as realistic as possible, gratifying productive behavior and punishing rhetorical or

dialectical flaws while at the same time being simple and clear enough to be used in an understandable and fair way by an average adjudicator. The second necessary adjustment of Modern Disputation against its classical counterparts is therefore the creation of adjudication criteria for disputations.

How do these adjustments then influence the aims and the setting of a Modern Disputation? Modern Disputation is a dialectical training format for two active participants (the defendant and the opponent) who compete against each other in a dialogue of approximately 25 minutes. The direct aim of this format is the testing of a selected thesis for its consistency and the endoxity of its premises. The indirect aim is the training of the participants for argumentative dialogues and other real speech situations with dominant elements of argumentation or argumentative analysis. (Bartsch, Hoppmann, Rex, Vergeest 2005, pp. 200-207) A Modern Disputation consists of three distinct consecutive phases, each with differents rights and duties of the disputants and distinct aims that are evaluated by two or more adjudicators with the help of adjudication criteria for each phase. The principle goal of the defendant in the disputation is to choose a thesis and defend its consistency without having to admit premises with a low level of endoxity, especially not those that are considerably more contested than the original thesis. The principle goal of the opponent is primarily to show contradictions between the thesis and some necessary premises and thus to destroy the thesis entirely, and secondarily, should this not be possible, to show that upholding the thesis leads to upholding premises that strongly run against the common sense. These principle goals of the two disputants result in specific aims in the three phases of the disputation – the exposition phase, the examination phase and the evaluation phase – which are divided by short breaks for preparation.

During the *exposition phase* it is the duty of the protagonist to present a certain thesis (e.g. "It can be virtuous to lie for a friend!") that he has selected out of a previously announced topic (e.g. "Friendship is the highest of all values!"). For this task he is given three minutes of uninterrupted speaking time to give a clear description of his thesis and definitions of all significant terms as well as a brief argumentation for his claim. The defendant will be evaluated during this phase on the basis of the clearness of his exposition ("Are all relevant definitions given and is the general line of argument clear?") and the choice of his thesis ("Is the thesis courageous considering the topic or is it already very endox?"). During the exposition phase the opponent remains largely passive and uses the information

given by the defendant to prepare for the examination phase.

During the *examination phase* the defendant is questioned for ten minutes by the opponent about his thesis. The opponent has the liberty to inquire about any aspects of the thesis, as long as she uses closed questions (those that require an answer of "yes" or "no") and aims them at the opinions rather than mere factual knowledge about related topics of the defendant. She may not use these questions to make independent arguments. During this time the defendant is completely limited to a simple "Yes" or "No", with the exceptions of unclear questions or questions concerning knowledge ("Is the divorce rate in Germany higher than 22%?") rather than opinion ("Is it beneficial for a person to marry?") to which he may respond "Unclear" or "Irrelevant", respectively. If in this phase the opponent believes to have found a contradiction in the answer of the defendant she may interrupt the interrogation and present it to the adjudicators. If they agree, the defendant must retract part of this contradiction or, if this is not possible, drop his thesis which leads to the end of the disputation. If the adjudicators do not agree with the opponent the examination will continue. The opponent may end the examination phase early if she sees no advancement. The two disputants are evaluated differently during the examination phase: The opponent receives points for contradictions in the thesis that she discovers as well as for her cooperative behaviour during this phase, while the defendant scores for all affirmative answers given and also for his cooperation.

The last and (usually) decisive part of the disputation is the *evaluation phase*. Here the opponent presents three of the questions from the examination phase with the respective answers that she believes to be least endox to the adjudicators. Each presentation is followed by a correspondingly brief explanation of the defendant. After these presentations the adjudicators evaluate each of these three claims seperately and grant the opponent points according to the level of endoxity, with higher scores meaning lower endoxity. The results of all three phases are added in the end and decide the level of success of the participants and the win and loss of the disputation.

5. *How does training disputation help to develop the abilities for a reasonable solution of a difference of opinion?*

As outlined above in 2) there are a number of crucial abilities that are essential for a reasonable discussant in the attempt to solve a difference of opinion. Not all of these are trained with the same intensity by both active participants in a Modern Disputation, so it will be convenient to look seperately at each position

and note how it can help to train the respective ability. It is easy to see that while nearly everything that is trained by the opponent also affects the defendant who is training to escape flaws and contradictions, the reverse is not the case. So the descriptions given below for the training of the opponent also entail the defendant whereas the training of the defendant is largely exclusive.

The main abilities that the opponent trains when trying to succeed in a Modern Disputation are outlined above as numbers 2, 3 and 4.

2. *The ability to use valid and relevant argumentation schemes in support of one´s own position*
Even though it might appear so at the first glance, the party mainly engaged in argumentation during the disputation is not the defendant of a thesis but his opponent. While being limited to questioning the defendant she is concerned with all basic elements of an argument. In choosing her questions she tries to get the defendant´s concession for her premises. These premises are then linked together with the help of valid argumentation schemes and eventually presented in support of the exact negation of one of the defendant´s claims when the opponent tries to prove a contradiction during the examination phase. This task of the opponent is of course eased if the initial argumentation of the defendant in the exposition phase or his thesis already includes or quickly leads to apparent contradictions. Seeing these and being able to present them clearly therefore is the second ability that an opponent needs to succeed in a Modern Disputation.

3. *The abilty to evade contradictions between any arguments that are presented in support of one´s position or the implication of an argument and the position itself*
The last element which is mainly trained by the opponent in a disputation is slightly more complicated and needs his full concentration (and a good memory) during the examination phase.

4. *The ability to see the dependence of claims on certain premises that necessarily follow if the claim is to be upheld*
Since the defendant tries to evade an immediate contradiction, he will hardly directly grant his opponent the premises she needs for the negation of any claim. It is therefore necessary for the opponent to extradict these concessions indirectly by first requesting more general answers which seem to have little or no connection to each other or to a possible negation, but which necessarily lead to

others that do. She therefore needs and develops a good understanding of the implications any claim has. These three core abilities then are trained by the opponent actively and by the defendant ex negativo in a disputation and any advancement in them will lead to a gratification from the adjudicators and a greater success in the competitive activity.

In addition to these three shared elements of training of both disputants, two more are trained by the defendant alone. These are the numbers 1 and 5 outlined above.

1. *The ability clearly to define and present one´s own point of view, claim or position*
This ability, one most evidently lacking in the majority of everyday discussions and debates, is trained in the exposition phase of the disputation. If the defendant fails to give a clear outline of his thesis and the definitions he uses, not only will he be judged less positive by the adjudicators, but he will also widely open the doors to all kinds of contradictions in the examination phase. Of course this skill is not trained uniquely or even primarily by disputation. Other training formats such as academic debating or declamations require a comparable amount of clear definitions. The emphasis that is put on it in Modern Disputation is however one of the highest compared to the other formats and the visible consequences of failing in this task lead the student to concentrating on it very quickly.

The last trained aspect that was introduced above is in its kind however quite unique to disputation.

5. *The tolerance and patience to grant the opponent the widest possible freedom of speech and right to speak*
Being strictly limited to answering only "yes" or "no" most of the time during the examination time teaches tolerance and patience to the person speaking that should be trivial for anybody engaged in argumentation but in reality are not. And it does so in a twofold way for the defendant in that phase. Not only is he barred by the rules of the disputation to interrupt his opponent (a rule that will be enforced by the adjudicators if acted against) but it is also in his own vital interest to listen very carefully to any question in all its details to avoid contradicting answers. If only for this ability to let the other person speak, finish his point and be heard carefully, training dialectical situations with the help of disputations would already be useful. Taking all five elements together it should be even

clearer that this exercise can have tenable positive effects for the development of the abilities necessary for a critical discussion and reasonable solution of a difference of opinion.

The positions put forward and arguments expressed in this paper try to suggest that the competitive dialectical training format "Modern Disputation" can make a little contribution towards the long process of training someone to speak and discuss reasonably and thus to cooperate better with his or her communication partners. This of course neither means nor implies that this way of training is the only possible way or is alone sufficient, nor is it supposed to suggest on the other hand that the only function of disputation is dialectical training. A disputation is also a very useful tool for the actual testing of a "real" thesis. Or, as Aritotle writes about the purposes of the dialectical art and disputation: *"They are three in number, mental training, conversations and the philosophic sciences."* (Arist. Top. 101a27f., trans. Forster)

NOTES

[i] For the necessity of this ability for the fullfillment of the rules and commandments of the critical discussion comp. esp. rules 1 and 15; and commandments 2, 3, 5 and 10 (van Eemeren, Grootendorst 2004).

[ii] For the necessity of this ability for the fullfillment of the rules and commandments of the critical discussion comp. esp. rules 6, 7, 8 and 9; and commandments 2, 4, 7 and 8 (van Eemeren, Grootendorst 2004).

[iii] For the necessity of this ability for the fullfillment of the rules and commandments of the critical discussion comp. esp. rules 6, 7, 8 and 9; and commandments 4, 7 and 8 (van Eemeren, Grootendorst 2004).

[iv] For the necessity of this ability for the fullfillment of the rules and commandments of the critical discussion comp. esp. rules 6, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 14; and commandments 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 (van Eemeren, Grootendorst 2004).

[v] For the necessity of this ability for the fullfillment of the rules and commandments of the critical discussion comp. esp. rules 1, 10, 11 and 15; and commandment 1 (van Eemeren, Grootendorst 2004).

[vi] One of the nicest examples of this effect is given by Seneca in Contr. 7, Prae 6-8 where he tells the story of the famous declamator Albucius who completely failed in front of a real jury and as a result refrained from ever speaking in court again.

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Communication Principles For Controversies – An Historical Perspective

1. *Introduction*

For centuries people have complained about their opponents in controversies who tend to make chaos of rational argumentation by evading arguments, by writing incomprehensibly, by intentionally misunderstanding their opponent, by insulting him, and by committing all kinds of fallacies. (A similar list of infringements of principles was drawn up by Leibniz, cf. Leibniz, "Art of controversies", Ch. 27.) These complaints presuppose ideal forms of controversy and the validity of relevant principles which should guide the

actions of the participants. They form an important part of what one could call the implicit theory of controversy that people apply in their practice. Most of the time speakers and writers follow these principles as a matter of routine without having to formulate them explicitly. Sometimes, however, occasion arises to make such principles explicit. This is the case when one *teaches* or when one *complains* and *criticizes*. Teachers of argumentation skills have always formulated rules or principles for good argumentation, from Aristotle's "Sophistical Refutations" and the traditional rules of disputation (cf. Jakob Thomasius, 1670) to the ten pragma-dialectical rules for critical discussion (cf. van Eemeren/Grootendorst/Snoeck Henkemans 2002, 182f.). Students of disputation should be lead from that senseless type of dispute in which everything is confused without order and formal presentation to a more useful kind of reasoning which aims at discovering the truth ("ab insano illo conflictu, qvo sine ordine, sine formali discursu miscentur vulgo ac turbantur omnia ... ad magis proficuam veritatis eruendae rationem", Thomasius 1670, 140). The importance of the participants' critical remarks on ongoing discussions for a theory of dialectics was emphasized by Hamblin in his book on fallacies: "… the development of a theory of charges, objections or points of order is a first essential" (Hamblin 1970, 303). It is therefore not surprising that for an historical analysis of communication principles the complaints and accusations concerning dialectical malpractice uttered in the course of historical controversies should form a prime source of data (cf. Fritz 2005).

Before embarking on a survey of such principles I should like to clarify what I mean by communication principles. The simplest way to do this is to say *communication principles* are basically what Grice called *maxims of conversation* (cf. Grice 1989, 26ff.). In saying this, I am not subscribing to the Gricean theory in general, including the cooperative principle etc. As far as the assumption of basic principles is concerned, my sympathies lie with theories like Hintikka's (Hintikka 1986) and Kasher's (Kasher 1976) who emphasize the foundational role of some kind of rationality principle – which of course was also mentioned by Grice (Grice 1989, 29f.). However, I feel that at the present stage of research it may be useful to concentrate on the *empirical* study of communication principles in order to get a more vivid picture of how rationality is put into practice. And maybe this empirical approach will also show that there are principles which are *not* in any simple way related to standard assumptions of rationality, e.g. principles which people inherited from earlier periods without adapting them to new

communicative demands.

Taken at a certain level, such principles seem to be fairly simple and universal, like for example the principle of relevance, but as soon as we go into empirical detail we realize that the principles people mention (and follow) are often much more fine-grained and that they form highly complex families which are differentiated according to social groups (e.g. scholars vs. courtiers) and types of text (pamphlets vs. reviews) etc., and which, for good reasons – this is a basic assumption of this paper – are historically variable. If such principles are indeed derived from a general principle of rationality, then what counts as an *application* of this general principle is a rather complicated matter and can be assumed to be subject to historical changes. On the one hand, there are long-lasting traditions of certain principles, e.g. the Aristotelian tradition of criticizing certain types of fallacies, on the other hand there are obvious changes over time which are linked to social developments, e.g. the development of social groups, the development of a culture of conversation, or the developments of media. A few examples may be in order: In 17th century polite conversation, contradicting an equal was a highly problematic move, which had to be accompanied with face-saving utterances (cf. Shapin 1994, 114ff.). When 17th century scholars became advisers at court, they had to give up their academic bickering. And when the new scientific journals were created by the end of the 17th century, academic discussions had to conform to new principles of text production, which differed from traditional pamphlet writing.

The following observations are based on case studies within the framework of Historical Pragmatics, mainly from the 16th to the 18th century.**[i]** In this framework, the history of communication principles is part of the study of the conditions of continuity and change in forms of communication. Controversies are a particularly rewarding object of study for Historical Pragmatics, as they show fairly clear basic structures, as there is a large amount of interesting data available, and as many of the writers of polemical texts tended to reflect on their own polemical practice and that of their opponents.

2. *Types of communication principles*

In order to illustrate the range of principles we are dealing with, I shall now present a selection of principles which are regularly mentioned in early modern controversies. This is an open list and a rather mixed collection, partially ordered, which could be analysed into different groups, e.g. logical principles, dialectical principles, rhetorical principles, hermeneutical principles, principles of text

production, linguistic principles, and politeness principles.**[ii]** Of course, these labels only give a vague indication of the type and background of the respective principles, quite apart from the fact that, for example, rhetorical principles shade into dialectical ones (cf. van Eemeren/Houtlosser 2002) and both types of principles determine principles of text production. I shall give the whole list first, then comment on a few of them, and finally deal with two types of principle in more detail. Of course, each one of them would deserve a detailed study, which indeed some of them have received, e.g. principles banning *ad hominem* moves or certain types of arguments from authority (cf. van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1993), Walton (1997) and others).

1. Statements should be truthful.

2. Claims should be given adequate backing. (One should not make *nudae assertiones*, „naked assertions").

3. The critic carries the burden of proof (*principle of onus probandi*).

4. Claims should be refuted completely point by point (*principles of completeness and thoroughness*).

5. One should state the main question (the *status controversiae*) clearly and correctly.

6. One should relate one's arguments to the main question.

7. One should avoid irrelevant topics.

8. One should avoid unnecessary repetition of arguments.

9. One should be brief (*the principle of brevity, amabilis brevitas*).

10. One should write clearly and comprehensibly (*the principle of perspicuity*).

11. One should not use meaningless jargon (e.g. scholastic terminology).

12. One should avoid formal fallacies (e.g. *a particulari ad universale*).

13. If considered necessary, one should set out the arguments "in form" (i.e. in the explicit form of a syllogism).

14. One should not rely (exclusively) on arguments from authority.

15. One should avoid personal attacks (*ad hominem*).

16. One may (or: one should not) retort in kind (*retorsio*).

17. One should give a reasonable interpretation to the utterances of the opponent (*principle of charity*).

18. One should take the perspective of the other party (la place d'autruy, cf. Leibniz, "Art of Controversies", Ch.

19. One should not make fun of the opponent and take his arguments seriously (*principle of seriousness*).

20. One should not use rhetorical devices like irony or sarcasm.

21. One should be polite towards the opponent (*politeness principles*).

22. One should approach the opponent in a spirit of Christian meekness. (cf. Matthew 5, 5)

23. One should be tolerant towards one's opponents.

A first group of principles, which includes, amongst others, the backing of assertions, the burden of proof, the point-by-point principle, the principles concerning fallacies, and various relevance principles, belongs to the hard core of principles taught within the tradition of academic disputation, which were part of the curriculum in all European universities during the Early Modern age. As can be seen from the form of traditional pamphlets and from frequent remarks of their authors, these principles were transferred also into controversies outside university life. So they form the backbone of the common-sense theory of controversy. A good example is the principle requiring the correct statement of the question under debate (*formare statum controversiae*), which is the duty of both participants in a disputation at the beginning of each round. This principle explains why participants often complain that the opponent has not properly or correctly stated the main question. The burden-of-proof principle can be traced back to both the disputation rules and to basic rules of legal procedure. As it lowered the requirements of proof for the proponent (the *respondens*), it could be exploited strategically to uphold a thesis not by proving it, but by only refuting the objections of the opponent (cf. Leibniz, "Art of Controversies", Ch. 41). One could also decline to prove a thesis considered to be generally accepted by claiming that in defending this thesis one had the role of respondent. This move was made as late as 1778 by Melchior Goeze in his famous controversy with Lessing (Goeze 1893, 170). The example shows that this principle tends to favour traditional standpoints as opposed to new standpoints. In view of the strategical importance of the burden of proof, it is not surprising that trying to shift the burden of proof was a frequent type of move in traditional controversies. The point-by-point principle determines the characteristic form of pamphlets in the 16th to 18th centuries. I shall have more to say about this principle in paragraph 4.

Among the principles directed against the committing of fallacies, the one forbidding arguments from authority is of particular historical interest. Throughout the 17th century disputes between the "ancients" and the "moderns",

denouncing the reliance on classical authorities like Aristotle for physics, Pliny for natural history, and Galenus for medicine was a frequent move on the side of the "modernists". However, interestingly enough, the modernists themselves also frequently referred to expert opinion, but naturally they preferred modern authorities, whom they explicitly introduced using epitheta like "the famous X" and similar laudatory expressions. In his polemic against traditional medicine, Janus Abrahamus à Gehema introduced the "unwavering reformer Bontekoe" ("der unverzagte Reformator Bontekoe", Gehema 1688, Vorrede, p. 4) and referred to "the excellent Englishmen Boyle, Entius and Charlton" ("die vortrefflichen Engelländer"), of which the last (Charlton) had provided "wonderful proofs" ("herrliche Beweißthümer", Gehema 1688, 9).

A number of principles could be subsumed under the heading of *efficieny* principles, e.g. the principle of brevity, the principle of non-repetition, various principles of relevance, and principles of comprehensibility and perspicuity. Many of these were traditional rhetorical principles, of which some, however, had a particular historical flavour, e.g. the principle of comprehensibility presupposed in anti-traditionalist accusations against Aristotelian school philosophers by authors like Hobbes, Locke and many others. In his controversy with Bishop Bramhall, Hobbes frequently accused his opponent of incomprehensible jargon: „This term of *insufficient* cause, which also the Schools call *deficient*, that they may rhyme to *efficient*, is not intelligible, but a word devised like *hocus pocus*, to juggle a difficulty out of sight." […] „I can make no answer; because I understand no more what he means by sufficiency in a divided sense, and sufficiency in a compounded sense, than if he had said sufficiency in a divided nonsense, and sufficiency in a compounded nonsense" (Hobbes 1656/1841, 384). This is one of Hobbes's favourite ploys, and Bramhall was thoroughly annoyed with him for using it. In a similar vein, Locke wrote in his "Essay": "(The schoolmen) procure to themselves the admiration of others, by unintelligible Terms (Locke 1689/1975, 494).**[iii]**

Another group of principles concerns the relationship between the two antagonists. These are partly politeness principles forbidding face-threatening acts, partly principles advocating a serious and charitable attitude towards the opponent and his standpoint. Of these, the principle of taking the perspective of the other, which was discussed by Leibniz, is particularly interesting. I shall make a few remarks on this principle in the following paragraph. A noteworthy anti-rhetorical principle is the one banning irony and sarcasm. This principle marks a

boundary between dialectics and rhetoric, where scientific discourse was not supposed to trespass. Retorsion (*retorsio*), e.g. answering an insult with an insult, was legally permitted (*ius talionis*), but it stood in conflict with Christian ethics. A Christian should not reply in kind and answer an insult with an insult. He should, on the contrary, "turn to (his opponent) the other cheek also" (Matthew 5, 39). In this respect, theologians did often not behave like Christians. But they had a good excuse: In dealing with heretics one was allowed to use sharp weapons.

3. *Properties of communication principles and their contexts of application*
To understand the role of communicative principles in the history of forms of communication, one has to take into account some of their properties and contexts of application:

(i) A first fact is that *principles are* just as often *violated as* they are followed and mentioned. The same person will claim that one should not insult one's opponent and start insulting him in the worst fashion a few pages later. This has to do with the pragmatic structure of controversies, including different aims of the opponents, different styles of argumentation, the presence of an audience etc.

(ii) A second point is that we often find a *conflict of principles.* It is, for example, often impossible to give a complete survey of a problem and to be brief at the same time. In such cases, the principles of completeness and of brevity are in conflict. So speakers have to balance the advantages and disadvantages of following one principle or the other, and they have to find some kind of compromise. In some cases both a principle and its counter-principle are invoked, as in the case of retorsion.

(iii) The third point is that *certain principles hold for some types of communication or text types and not for others*. Seriousness, for example, is strictly demanded in some parts of a controversy and less so in others. As Nicholas Jardine remarked in his book on the controversy of the astronomer Kepler with Ursus: „Whereas in a *refutatio* aggressive irony, ad hominem appeals, and even jocular facetiousness are quite proper, the tone of a *confirmatio* (i.e. a statement of one's own position, e.g. Kepler's *Apologia pro Tychone*, G.F.) is supposed to be modest, confident and fully serious"(Jardine 1984, 78). Another example, also from the astronomer Kepler, shows that some principles were only considered valid for certain domains of discourse. When, in the year 1609, Kepler conducted a controversy about astrology with an old acquaintance (Helisaeus Röslin), the latter insisted that Kepler should be more polite and friendly. Kepler, however, replied that in *scientific* discourse – as opposed to *political* discourse –

politeness and friendliness had to come second to clarity (cf. Kepler 1610, 111, 21ff.). A similar claim was made some 150 years later by the German author Lessing in his controversy with Klotz (cf. Dieckmann 2005, 222). This distinction is closely related to the contrast of quarrelsome scholar vs. civil gentleman, which was a stereotype in the discourse about politeness in the second half of the 17th century.

(iv) The friendliness example also shows that the application of principles is to a certain extent *negotiable*.

(v) To understand the status of certain principles one has to know their *context of justification*. Some politeness principles can be justified on the basis of Christian ethics (e.g. the principle of meekness), others on the rules of courtly conduct. Very often, of course, there is a convergence of Christian and courtly principles. In some cases principles seem to be rooted (and justifiable) either in the context of argumentative *strategy* or in the context of an *ethics* of controversy – or both. A case in point is the principle that one should take the perspective of the other, *la place d'autruy*, as Marcelo Dascal showed for Leibniz (Dascal 1995). Leibniz considered following this principle both strategically useful and morally advisable. These contexts of justification can also change over time, as in the case of politeness principles.

(vi) To understand the status of communication principles one also has to know the *consequences of their application*. I shall exemplify this point in paragraph 4 by showing some of the consequences of the point-by-point principle.

(vii) My final point is a consequence of the others: Communicative principles and their ranges and modes of application are *historically variable.* A simple example is the principle of brevity which is often mentioned but rarely applied in 17th century pamphlets, which tend to be notoriously long. This principle gained a much higher degree of practical relevance when controversies started to be conducted in journals which provided less space to the opponents, who were therefore forced to be brief. This generated new genres of text like short critical notices and reviews. Principles of politeness also form a highly interesting case in point, to which I shall return in paragraph 5.

4. *The principle of point-to-point refutation*

To demonstrate the consequences of the application of a certain principle I shall now turn to the principle of point to point refutation, a principle which plays a major role in many controversies from the 16th to the 18th century. This principle determines to a large extent the textual structure of traditional pamphlets and it

also contributes to the dialogical coherence between successive contributions in a controversy. As mentioned before, it derives from the rules of disputation, which were taught in all the universities in Europe during the early modern age. And from there it was taken over into the practice of controversies outside the university. In its strict version the principle requires that a participant in a controversy should answer

(i) all the points raised by his opponent
(ii) and only those points
(iii) and answer them in the given order.

This principle has a number of interesting properties and consequences. Point-by-point refutation is both a logical strategy and a strategy of topic management. From the point of view of logic it is a safety strategy. If one wants to make sure that all the opponent's theses have been refuted, one has to refute each one individually. (Of course, there are also master arguments, with which one can refute whole sets of theses.) From the point of view of topic management, the principle is meant to avoid topical chaos, as 17th century authors writing on the rules of disputation explicitly stated. Point-for-point follows quite naturally from the principles of relevance and completeness, and it therefore corresponds to a natural strategy of everyday conversation. If a speaker wants to be cooperative, he will deal with all the aspects of a topic which his partner introduced. One of the possible sequencing strategies in this situation is to actually follow the order in which the other person introduced certain aspects of the topic in hand.

Now, in controversies based on this model, the strategy governed by this principle had both advantages and disadvantages for the players. An advantage of this model consisted in the fact that the principle clearly indicated what was expected of the refuting party and thus provided a standard of quality. Lack of completeness and lack of orderliness could both be used as criteria for criticizing the quality of the opponent's contribution. The principle could even be used as a kind of decision procedure: If the opponent failed to refute the claims of the proponent point by point, he could be declared the loser.

But there are also grave *dis*advantages. Once an author had introduced a number of points in a certain order, this determined the structure of the controversy for his opponent and, later on, for himself, which could have far- reaching consequences. Commitment to the principle of completeness forced an author to deal with points which he really considered irrelevant. For example, in the last

few pages of a pamphlet directed against two Jesuits in 1586, the Protestant theologian Osiander stated that a number of points raised by his opponents were totally irrelevant but that he would answer them nevertheless, so that his opponents could not say he had not read them or had not been able to refute them (Osiander, "Verantwortung", 1586, 95). Therefore, commitment to this principle had an inflationary effect and often lead to the production of very long and boring pamphlets. Furthermore, contemporaries remarked on the fact that having to treat all this rubbish made a writer frustrated and aggressive.

Secondly, in those cases where the original order of points was not convenient for the opponent he would have to give extra arguments why he wanted to change the given order, and he would still be suspected of dodging the issue.

Thirdly, if an opponent wanted to introduce extra information or new claims, he had to arrange them within the existing framework of topics, which was often rather awkward and lead to badly-structured texts. So the principle favoured a conservative treatment of topics. One can often notice the authors struggling with this principle by explicitly announcing digressions and by introducing additional statements of their own position on top of the point-by-point refutation. Examples of these textual strategies could be supplied from various authors, e.g. from Kepler or Hobbes.

Finally, it was very difficult for the readers to get the drift of the argument if they did not actually have the original text available at which the refutation was aimed. So the authors had to present the opponent's position before they could start their refutation, which was, of course, also a requirement of disputation rules. This was often not attractive for the writer of a refutation, and it made classical pamphlets rather difficult reading.

So, generally speaking, the disadvantages of the point-by-point procedure, rigidly applied, seem to outweigh the advantages. This example shows how a basically sound principle may be self-defeating in the long run if it is applied too restrictively. One way out for a writer was to use a different genre of text altogether, where he could free himself of the requirements of the point-to-point procedure, e.g. in an open letter where he could address exactly those points which he considered relevant for his cause (e.g. A.H. Francke, "Beantwortung", 1706, cf. Fritz/Glüer 2001). This is also – at least partly – true of the shorter forms of critical text which became characteristic of the new journals by the end of the 17th century.

Still, pamphlets of the traditional type continued to be written by the end of the

18th century, although they must have looked somewhat old-fashioned to the contemporaries (cf. the lengthy works of the theologian Semler, e.g. Semler 1772), and the principle was also mentioned as a standard of quality for academic polemics during this period. Up to the present day we can find examples of the point-by-point procedure in academic writings, and we can even find traces of this traditional principle in controversies on the internet, when an author complains that his opponent did not take up all the important arguments in his favour.

5. *Politeness principles*

The second kind of principle I want to discuss in some more detail is principles of politeness. Now the history of politeness in the Early Modern age is a large topic in its own right, and I cannot go into it here in any detail. For a general outline of relevant developments in this period cf. Beetz (1990), Beetz (1999), and Gierl (1997). Useful information on the relationship between civility and science can be found in Shapin (1994).

In this paragraph I shall restrict myself to presenting a few observations on politeness in 16th and 17th century controversies. In this period, at least in Germany, Christian ideals formed an important source of principles forbidding face-threatening acts. In 1586, the Jesuit Rosenbusch accused his opponent Osiander of making fun of his opponents: "This secular and mocking manner of speech does ill behove a theologian, whoever he may be". („Die Weltlich / spöttlich Art zu reden / stehet einem *Theologo,* er sey wer er wöll / nit woll an", Rosenbusch 1586, 6). Earlier on in my paper I mentioned the debate between Kepler and his friend Röslin, where Röslin explicitly stated that one should "defend one's position and refute one's opponent and criticize him not with insults and accusations / (as is nowadays the habit with wrong-headed scholars) but the way it behoves Christians to do, with friendliness and instruction / and I shall be and remain his friend / even though we disagree on various points." („Da würd ich mich verantworten / vnd jhnen refutirn vnd straffen / nicht mit Lästern vnd schelten / (wie bey verkehrt Gelehrten jetzt der brauch ist) sondern wie sich Christten zu thun vntereinander gebürt mit freundligkeit vnd vnterweisung / vnd wil sein Freund sein vnnd bleiben / wenn wir schon in etlich Puncten einander zu wieder sein"; Röslin, „Diskurs" 1609, C ij b/C iij)

80 years later, we find a similar statement in the medical controversy between Gehema and Geuder (1688/89): „(A participant in a controversy) should treat his fellow-man in a friendly manner / and present his errors to him with proper modesty and meekness. […] It befits all reasonable people, especially Christians,

to practice meekness in all their *conversation* as well as their lives in general."
And this should apply especially to educated people, as he adds later on. („daß er
seinen Neben=Menschen glimpfflich *tractirt* / und mit gebührender
Bescheidenheit und Sanfftmuth ihme seinen Irrthum vor Augen stelle. […] so
stehet es ja allen und jeden vernünfftigen Menschen / sonderlich denen Christen
wol an / daß sie in aller *Conversation*, in allem Leben und Wandel sich einer
sanfftmütigen Art bedienen"; Geuder 1689, A4). The repeated use of the word
meekness („Sanftmut" in the German text) is of course an allusion to one of the
seven Beatitudes which Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount: „Blessed are
the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5,5).

What we have here is a family of principles which is definitely accepted in theory.
In practice, however, religious principles did not prevent priests and other
Christians in the 16th century from hurling most atrocious insults at their
opponents. They called one another *calumniators, bloodthirsty criminals,
poisonous spiders* and similar things. Although this kind of behaviour was
frequently criticized, as my examples show, it still seemed to be accepted as a fact
of life. Generally speaking, in the 16th and early 17th century people seem to
have tolerated much more verbal aggression in controversies than we are used to
in present-day controversies among academics.

By the middle of the 17th century, questions of polite conduct became an
important issue in all European societies (cf. Beetz 1990), so it is not surprising
that this question should also arise in the context of scholarly disputes. This new
trend of politeness seems to have had two sources. On the one hand, there was
the Christian tradition, which we already mentioned and which was partly
strengthened, at least in Germany, by new religious movements like the Pietist
movement. On the other hand there was a trend towards the cultivation of
politeness which was founded on courtly traditions.
One representative of the Pietist movement who showed this hightened
awareness of the defects of traditional polemical writing quite strongly, was
August Hermann Francke. A striking aspect of his controversy theory is his view
that pamphlets should primarily serve to edify, from which it follows that the
worldly aggressiveness of traditional pamphlet writing had no place in religious
argumentation. This view is expressed quite explicitly in one of his own
pamphlets, which formed the end point of long controversy with an orthodox
antagonist, Johann Friedrich Mayer: "Should anyone believe that I find pleasure

in such [i.e. polemical] writings, he errs greatly; for my soul is disgusted by them: since I know and recognise in truth that railing, satirising and suchlike things which entice the worldly sense, whether they happen by mouth or in written form, in no way encourage true edification, which should be the only purpose even in pamphlets, by contrast they impede much good even in an otherwise just thing, equally, among other things, an attitude of derision is aroused and much unchristian gossip and godless ways are notably increased by it." ("Meynet iemand / daß ich an dergleichen [i.e. polemischen] Schrifften einen Gefallen habe / der irret sich weit; Denn meine Seele hat vielmehr einen grossen Eckel daran: sintemal ich weiß / und erkenne in der Wahrheit / daß durch railliren / satyrisieren / und dergleichen den irdischen Sinn kützelnde Dinge / sie geschehen mündlich oder schrifftlich / die wahre Erbauung / die doch auch in Streit-Schrifften der einige Zweck seyn solte / keineswegs befördert / hingegen viel gutes / auch bey einer sonst gerechten Sache / gehindert / der Spott-Geist bey anderm ebenmässig erreget / und mancherley unchristliches Geschwätz und gottloses Wesen dadurch mercklich vermehret wird"; Francke, „Verantwortung" 1707, 378). It is not surprising that in Francke's writings the principle of meekness („Sanfftmut") is also frequently alluded to.

By 1670, the question of scholarly conduct in controversies became a serious topic in its own right – in some cases a controversial topic – which was intimately connected to questions concerning the status and function of scholarly work in general (cf. Gierl 1997, 543ff.). According to Christian Thomasius and other contemporaries, educated persons should be fit to act in public office and at court. And in these surroundings cavilling and pedantical scholars were not acceptable. This kind of attitude was also present in contemporary books of manners (e.g. Hunold 1716, 50ff.). Shapin (1994, 114ff.) refers to similar views presented in English books of manners. Another factor discouraging traditional forms of controversy may have been the trend towards eclecticism as an epistemological attitude. Against this background, traditional procedures of disputation were now increasingly denounced as mere word battles ("logomachia") and sectarian bickering, and many authors developed a negative attitude towards this type of scholarly exchange and the aggressiveness which they considered inherent in this type of controversy. In the course of the 18th century, awareness of the inherent problems of the traditional point-by-point principle and the new discussion of politeness principles seem to have conspired to weaken the position of the disputation pattern as a scholarly form of

communication and the pamphlet as its prototypical textual form. So we have here an example of a remarkable change in forms of communication which is closely linked to changes in communication principles.

6. *Conclusion*

To sum up the result of this study: There are both long-lasting traditions and remarkable changes in the history of communication principles. In order to analyze these forms of evolution we have to consider the principles in their contexts of justification and application, including the consequences of the commitment to these principles. This kind of analysis requires detailed study of a large corpus of historical texts. So there is still a lot of work to do for the Historical Pragmatics of controversies.

NOTES
[i] cf. Fritz (1995), Gloning (1999), Fritz (2003).
[ii] Lists of communication principles for 18th and 19th century controversies in Germany can be found in Goldenbaum (2004, 111f.) and Dieckmann (2005, 118ff.).
[iii] Similar examples from Galileo and other philosophers and scientists are mentioned in Biagioli (1993, 211f.).

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Irony As Ethical Argumentation In Kierkegaard

1. *Scope of the investigation*

Irony is a type of stylistic argument that, because of the great variety of its forms, is particularly resistant to analysis. In this essay, therefore, I propose to focus the discussion on the use of irony in:

1. ethical argumentation,

2. within rhetorical contexts,

3. especially as practiced and interpreted by philosophers, and

4. specifically by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. My reasons for limiting the topic of stylistic irony are the following four.

1.1 *Ethical argumentation*

Irony is frequently found within ethical argumentation, perhaps more distinctively than in any other context. The association of irony with ethics stems from the evaluative character of irony, since irony often encourages the listener to make a judgment that an implied idea or state of affairs is better, somehow or another, than the one the ironist explicitly puts into words. Not all irony is ethical argumentation, of course, not even all evaluative irony; for example, irony also occurs in aesthetic argumentation. Some of what is called irony is not argumentation at all, such as "tragic" or "dramatic" irony, where the irony lies in what happens and not in what is said. Moreover, much of what goes under the name of irony seems too trivial to be called ethical argumentation, or indeed argumentation in any usual sense. It seems, rather, to be mere playfulness, a way of having a bit of fun with the vagaries of words and typical human dilemmas. Still, if someone identifies some pages as a paradigm case of sustained irony, the passage is apt to turn out to be a piece of ethical argumentation – perhaps as used in personal invective or social critique – in such works as Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal or A Tale of a Tub.*

1.2 *Importance of the rhetorical context*

Each case of irony needs to be appreciated in its specific rhetorical context – in terms of the situation, at that time, of the particular ironists and listeners, their emotional states, their personal histories, and even the very intonation of the words they speak. The words by themselves and their sentential structure do not identify a passage as ironical, since just the same words, with a slightly different inflection or under other circumstances, may be utterly devoid of irony.

Toward the end of the twentieth century several rhetoricians wrote interpretations of the concept of irony that continue to be significant for the study of irony and its place in argumentation. Three writers laid the foundation: Norman Knox, with his book *The Word Irony and its Context, 1500-1755* (1961), D. C. Muecke, with *The Compass of Irony* (1969), and, above all, Wayne Booth, with his influential study, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1974). David Kaufer then applied their insights specifically to the study of irony's place in argumentation, with a series of three articles, in 1977, 1981, and (with Christine M. Neuwirth) 1982.

Their work, in turn, was followed by that of a pair of informal logicians, Christopher W. Tindale and James Gough, in 1987.

1.3 *Interpretation and practice of irony by the Romantic philosophers*

Although looking to philosophers to interpret literary irony may seem strange, the explanation is simple. Near the beginning of the nineteenth century a group of philosophers, led by Friedrich Schlegel and his brother August, but including many of the leading philosophers and poets of the day, greatly expanded the concept of irony and made irony central both to philosophy and to literature, both for their own time and up to the present. To call them philosophers, however, does not mean that they were not also literary figures, since for them literature and philosophy – like poetry and prose, the novel and philosophical dialogue, and irony and the non-ironical – are all false dichotomies.

1.4 *Kierkegaard's contributions*

Kierkegaard plays a twofold role in the history of the concept of irony, for one of which he is famous, but for the other, virtually unknown. On the one hand, Kierkegaard's dissertation, *The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates* (1984), is a central text for the interpretation of irony, both as an exploration of Romantic irony's potential uses for argument and also as a critique of the self-defeating character of some of the Romantic ironists' more extreme claims. Thus Muecke describes Kierkegaard's work as the "most thorough-going presentation of the self-defeat of the ironical man" (1969, p. 242). Similarly, Booth is at pains to insist that he can only lay out how irony functions in rhetorical argumentation with continual reference to Kierkegaard (1974, p. xii). More recently, even some postmodernists have appropriated, or on occasion misappropriated, the dissertation's ideas on Romantic irony, and one, Paul de Man, has described Kierkegaard's dissertation as "the best book on irony that's available" (cited by Norris 1989, p. 199).

On the other hand, Kierkegaard's other writings, after the dissertation, have attracted relatively little attention from students of argumentation. Yet these writings, too, contain many insightful reflections about argumentation, often strikingly different from any he had envisioned earlier. Here he works out of a different portrayal of Socrates, together with a new and broader understanding of irony, than before.

2. *Defining Ironic Ethical Argumentation in Terms of Contradiction and Self-canceling*

Since the concept of irony includes many and diverse ideas, putting it into practice in ethical argumentation involves identifying irony's main features. In fact, it would probably be impossible to draw up a list of irony's central characteristics that would satisfy all, or even most, critics.

What I am looking for, in any case, is not a specifically Kierkegaardian account, but instead the sort of consensus he shares with such figures as Muecke, Booth, Burke, and Kaufer. The common ground I have in mind is represented in the irony Muecke calls "rhetorical irony," and which Booth calls "stable irony – part of which Kierkegaard, within his dissertation, associates with practices in oratory (Muecke 1969, p. 51; Booth 1974, pp. 5-7; Kierkegaard 1989, p. 247).

Here I will confine myself to four such features, a list modeled, roughly, on the set Kierkegaard's dissertation uses. They are: contradiction, self-canceling, creativity, and exclusivity or inclusivity. The next section discusses the first two, which characterize all irony, and the following section will take up the other two, which are interpreted in controversial ways in Romantic irony.

2.1 *Contradiction*

The first and most obvious sign of any sort of irony is the presence of contradiction, incongruity, or incompatibility. This feature can be defined in various ways. In keeping with the deliberately Hegelian cast of the dissertation, for example, Kierkegaard spells out the kind of incongruity in highly abstract terms: because "the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence," he says, the "words" are in conflict with the "meaning" (1989, p. 247).

The point, however, can be put much more plainly than that. Muecke, for example, describes the incongruity involved as a "two storey phenomenon" (1969, p. 19). At the lower level stands the situation as it appears, whereas at the upper level stands the situation as it actually is. The person making the irony does not, of course, have to say explicitly what the upper level is. Instead the ironist merely hints at it and lets the reader or listener find it for oneself. Booth makes a similar point to Muecke when he describes the direction in which the ironist wants to draw the listener as "upward," that is to say, toward a "superior" viewpoint (1974, p. 38), which is "wiser, wittier, more compassionate, subtler, truer, more moral," and the like (p. 36). That is to say, the ironist invites the listener or reader to reach a higher level than before.

From his 1981 essay on "ironical evaluations," it is only a short step for Kaufer to apply that notion in a way especially appropriate for ethical argumentation, and that is what he, working with Neuwirth, does in an essay entitled "Foregrounding

Norms and Ironic Communication." By the term "foregrounding" they understand that the ironist highlights the norms a person has, not by emphasizing their *presence* but rather by calling attention to their *absence*; "the ironist foregrounds norms, intending to apply them, by pretending to violate them" (p. 30). They use the term "norms" very broadly, to include any "personal standards, social norms, social regularities, social standards, practices, rules, role standards, group standards, and so on" (p. 31). As applied to the concept of irony, this means that the apparent violation of the person's norms shocks the reader or listener, and the contradiction, or incongruity, draws much more attention than before to the moral gap between a person's norms and daily life.

2.2 *Self-canceling*

A second general feature of all irony is that some aspect of an ironical statement has to indicate that it is not to be taken at face value. Following Kierkegaard's terminology (1989, p. 248), I shall call this feature of irony "self-canceling." What this term means is simply that the literal statement by the ironist "cancels" itself, requiring the reader or listener to substitute some other statement, in most cases the opposite, or even the contradiction, of what the ironist says. If there is no such indication that the ironist's statement does not mean what it says, then the statement may be indistinguishable from a lie or even from mere babble.

But just how is this self-canceling supposed to work? The self-canceling cannot simply be a matter of logical relationships among the terms used. In a 1987 essay, "The Use of Irony in Argumentation," a pair of informal logicians, Tindale and Gough, help to demonstrate this point by comparing the logical patterns in an ironical argument with that of its most plausible logical analogue, a *reductio ad absurdum argument*. The similarity, they point out, is that in both cases the argument "involves an absurd suggestion or claim." But that's it. In every other respect the two kinds of argument are different. For Tindale and Gough, a *reductio* is judged good or bad on the basis of "the nature of the relationship of contradiction," and it "involves a straight, literal reading"; whereas irony "relies not on a straight literal meaning but on its tonal implications" (p. 11).

The contradiction functions in very different ways in the two cases. With everyday cases of irony, for example, the falsity of the ironist's statement is often blatant. "Great shot!" the opposing fans jeer, as the ball goes far wide of the goal. If there needed to be a line of reasoning for someone to decide whether the shot was good, the force of the irony might be lost completely. With a *reductio ad*

absurdum, on the other hand, the line of reasoning is how one gets to the contradiction; that is, reasoning conducts the "reduction" by which the "absurdity" is uncovered.

For ironical argument rhetorical considerations, or what Tindale and Gough call "tonal implications" (p. 11), are much more important than the logical relationships of the terms used. In fact, for the word "tonal" to do the work that they make it do here, the word has to include not just the tone of voice, but much, much more, including every other rhetorical feature of what is spoken or written, such as the character of the speaker and the emotional backdrop against which the speaker delivers the message. As Quintilian notes, irony "is made evident to the understanding either by the delivery, the character of the speaker, or the nature of the subject" (*Institutio oratoria*, 8. 6. 54). The *reductio* is different in this respect. To identify a reductio all one needs to understand is the words used and how they apply to the world, but to do the same with a piece of ironical argumentation requires attention to a statement's full rhetorical situation.

In some respects even the expression "self-canceling" may be misleading, since irony does not actually cancel itself. Nor does the ironist cancel it, except by offering a few, often ambiguous clues. The canceling has to be done by the reader or listener. This is an aspect of irony on which Booth is especially helpful. Booth calls the work of the reader or listener the "reconstruction" of the ironical message (1974, pp. 37-43).

3. *Creativity and Exclusivity/Inclusivity in Romantic Irony*

By themselves the features of contradiction and self-canceling do not give an adequate account of what irony is and does, nor does Booth, nor any of the others mentioned here, suppose that they do. A statement might, for example, be "contradictory," and "self-canceling," in the sense that it plainly conflicts with what people would normally say is the case, but that would not by itself make it ironic. The person making the statement might simply be wrong headed and the statement transparently false. The reason why I have started with these two features is that they are features that students of irony are likely to accept as characterizing irony as a whole.

With the coming of Romantic irony in the early nineteenth century, however, the concept of irony greatly expanded, and with that expansion grew also the possibilities for argumentation. Romantic irony can be identified in many ways. Muecke relates it to "General Irony" (1969, p. 159), and Booth classes as a kind of "infinitely unstable irony" (1974, pp. 267-68). Romantic irony carries the practice

of irony further than before, and in some of its proponents proposes to extend irony to all statements whatsoever. This is the movement of which Kierkegaard's dissertation was a part and to which it provided a critique that remains of interest today.

The following section will focus on two features of irony that are contested between scholars who favor, or do not favor, Romantic irony. I will use the terms "creativity" and "exclusivity/inclusivity," because they seem to provide a relatively neutral ground from which to explore some disputed issues.

3.1 *Creativity*

Creativity is the contribution of the ironist, the speaker or the writer. If irony were merely a matter of contradictions that canceled themselves, it would require no creativity, but that is not the case. Irony takes creativity, and at its best it calls for artistry of the highest order. As Booth notes, irony has to be intentional (1974, pp. 52-53). Of course, there is also a kind of irony – dramatic or tragic irony – that arises out of events rather than from human artistry, but such irony is not argumentation and thus not a matter of concern for this essay.

The Romantic ironists, such as Friedrich Schlegel, who pushed the limits of irony furthest, also had a high ideal for the ironic artist. Life itself, they tended to think, could become a work of art. Above all, the Romantic poets and philosophers prized freedom – freedom, not only from old ways of using words but also from conventional, middle class morality. And the way to achieve this freedom, they maintained, was through irony, an irony not just in one's poetry but in one's life. In his novel *Lucinde* (1971) Schlegel celebrated just this kind of artistic freedom, and the work became a signature song for the whole movement of which he was a part.

In the critique of Romantic irony within Kierkegaard's dissertation, therefore, irony's creativity is characterized by what Kierkegaard calls "negative freedom," that is, freedom *from* conventional meanings. The ironist, Kierkegaard says, is "free" by not meaning, literally, what he says, and thus he is not bound by his own words. Kierkegaard puts it this way: since "what I said is not my meaning or the opposite of my meaning, then I am free in relation to others and to myself" (1989, pp. 247-48).

But is this true? Can a person really achieve such absolute freedom? If it is, it would seem to be so just for a moment. When someone speaks ironically, the words are not literally binding; but just as soon as the other person sees through

the irony the two will be mutually "bound" to the meaning they now share in common. Thus the ironist may be at first only committed by the literal words, and in that sense is "negatively free." On the other hand, during that moment while the ironist is negatively free there is of course no real communication taking place either.

Evidently Kierkegaard highlights negative freedom here because his dissertation has "Romantic irony" specifically in mind. The Romantic poets and philosophers of the early nineteenth century prize such freedom highly, partly because, since words make sense only within the context of social norms and conventions, verbal freedom implies freedom from conventional bourgeois society too. Moreover, the kind of "negative freedom" that this kind of irony promises has the advantage over other kinds of irony that it does not have to be limited to the moment. Under some circumstances it might last on and on. Romantic irony, as Kierkegaard understands it, claims never to have to resolve itself into a mutual understanding between the ironist and the other person, because, as soon as someone sees through the initial irony, the ironist is right there ready to raise further irony, over and over again, indefinitely. In this way the Romantic ironist could in principle remain negatively free forever.

In the end, however, Kierkegaard's dissertation rejects the ideal of infinite Romantic irony as well as the complete negative freedom that is supposed to go with it (1989, p. 275). Infinite irony is self-defeating, because it destroys the very basis from which it ironizes. It is, he says, "like that old witch," who "continually makes the very tantalizing attempt to eat up everything first of all and thereupon to eat up itself" (1989, p. 56). For this reason Romantic irony, in its extreme form, is bad argumentation, and *a fortiori*, bad ethical argumentation as well. The ravenous irony that gobbles up all the premises, and then gobbles up itself, will have the same problem with ethics, since, as such irony expands to infinity, it will destroy any individual and social norms on which ethical reasoning could be based.

Of course, this does not mean that irony cannot go a long way. Kierkegaard himself is sympathetic to Romanticism in many respects, not only for the ironic techniques themselves, but also for irony's positive effects as it sends "a shiver down the backs of the philistines" (1989, p. 304). The problem with Romantic irony emerges when a person imagines that the irony could possibly be made infinite, that is, unlimited. Somehow, Kierkegaard thinks, irony must be "controlled" (1989, p. 324); it must retain at least a few premises that do not

themselves get ironized away. Indeed, no one has ever really managed to practice infinite Romantic irony; but even when it is merely proclaimed as an impossible ideal it can be logically confusing and ethically demoralizing.

3.2 *Exclusivity and Inclusivity*

A fourth main feature of irony is that irony implies an ironist, who sees through the irony, as well as readers or listeners, who may not. How this feature is interpreted, however, differs among the classical practitioners of irony and the Romantic ironists.

Kierkegaard's dissertation represents Romantic irony in terms of what I call an "exclusivist" approach. Implicit in irony, he writes, is a "certain superiority" which "looks down pityingly on ordinary, prosaic talk" (1989, p. 248). That attitude of superiority also carries over to the cases in which the ironist condescends to share his irony with a selected group of others. The latter, he says, is the merely "secondary form of the ironic vanity that desires witnesses in order to assure and reassure itself of itself" (p. 249).

Again, as above with his treatment of what he calls "negative freedom," Kierkegaard is here describing this characteristic feature of irony especially as it appears in Romantic irony. The problem he sees for the Romantic ironist is that the attempt by the ironist to communicate irony, even to an elite community, is bound to fail, since there can be no true communication between the ironist and anyone else as long as the meanings of the words uttered are forever being subverted by deeper and deeper irony. The result is that, as Kierkegaard remarks, "there is just as little true social unity in a coterie of ironists as there is real honesty in a band of thieves" (1989, p. 249).

The main representative of this sort of exclusivist irony in Kierkegaard's dissertation is Socrates – not, however, primarily the familiar Socrates of Plato's dialogues, but instead the Socrates of Aristophanes' comic play, *The Clouds*, which shows Socrates hanging in a blanket suspended over everyone else in the city. This Socrates, the real, historical Socrates (Kierkegaard ironically insists), "stood ironically above every relationship… suspended high above all this in ironic contentment" (1989, p. 182).

Although Kierkegaard's characterizing of Romantic irony in this way is plainly polemical, the feature of exclusivism does highlight a common feature in irony. The ironist is implicitly addressing two possible communities: the first, of the elite – that is, of those who can see through the irony – and the second, of the slow-

witted, who can not. Thus Muecke describes the listeners and readers as typically "victims" (1969, pp. 19, 34-39), and Booth also admits the possibility of victimization (1974, p. 29). Moreover, the characterization of irony as elitist does fit much of Romantic irony itself and, as Kenneth Burke notes, the movement of Romantic irony "did, as a matter of fact, arise as an aesthetic opposition to cultural philistinism" (1969, p. 514).

Kaufer's 1977 essay goes into detail to describe the rhetorical function of irony, not just in terms of ironist and audience, but in terms of a "bifurcation of audiences," that is, between "victims," who associate with the literal meaning of the ironist's words, and "confederates," who associate with the implicit, ironic meaning, on the other. "One audience identifies with the ironist's literal meaning, the other with the ironic meaning" (p. 96). Some approaches the ironist may take are to use irony to promote group cohesion, either for him to share some irony with confederates or else to let all the audience identify with the same victim (pp. 100-101). Alternatively, the ironist might use irony to prevent part of the audience from knowing what was going on, or perhaps even use it to keep both parts of the audience unaware of the real issue (pp. 102-103).

But is the exclusivist interpretation of irony the only one? As Kaufer points out, the elitist strategy in Kierkegaard's dissertation, which is "to loosen the speaker from responsibility over his immediate situation" (p. 99), is not the only approach the ironist may take, nor is it necessarily the best one for most purposes. The "fun of feeling superior" is "highly important," Booth agrees, but "the building of amiable communities is often far more important than the exclusion of naive victims" (1974, p. 28).

Both the exclusivist and the inclusivist approaches of irony have roles to play. Indeed in *A Grammar of Motives* Kenneth Burke argues that, despite the historical importance of elitist Romantic irony, the irony that he calls "true irony" is the humble irony that does not claim any kind of superiority of the ironist over the listener or reader. "True irony," he says, "humble irony, is based on a sense of fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one *needs* him, is *indebted* to him, is not merely outside him as an observer but contains him *within*, being consubstantial with him" (1969, p. 514; italics in original). This is the kind of irony he finds in much great literature, including T. S. Eliot, Gustav Flaubert, Thomas Mann, Shakespeare's Falstaff, and Plato's Socrates. And this is the humble sort of irony, I will argue, that one finds in Kierkegaard's writings after his dissertation.

4. *Kierkegaard's Later Writings*

What scholar would want to be judged solely upon a dissertation? Often that is Kierkegaard's fate when the topic of irony is discussed. Even though he refused to republish his dissertation, did not list it among the writings in his authorship, and wrote more than three dozen other works, many of them ironic in one way or another, his dissertation on irony is often the only source used for his views on that topic. And it is a great book. In my opinion, the high praise he receives for it is well deserved. But the neglect of his other writings that use irony or discuss the concept is still astonishing.

Part of the reason for this neglect may be the major differences of his later views about irony, not only from how he views irony in the dissertation, but also from any of the other accounts of irony I have been discussing. Even the Socrates appealed to by the late works is not the same as before, since they draw their Socrates figure from the works of Plato, rather than from Aristophanes' comedy, in order to portray ethical argumentation.

Since the material to be discussed is extensive, and each Kierkegaard writing is different from the others, often even by different pseudonymous authors, I shall merely sketch the situation in three pseudonymous works from the period immediately following the publication of Kierkegaard's dissertation:
(1) irony in a somewhat traditional sense of the term, in the pseudonymous "Seducer's Diary" from the first volume of *Either/Or*;
(2) Socratic irony, enlivened by irony in a more usual sense, in the pseudonymous book *Philosophical Fragments*;
(3) Socratic irony in another sense in the long "postscript" to *Fragments*.

4.1 *Irony in the "Seducer's Diary"*

Much of the first volume of *Either/Or* (1987, 1:301-445) – Kierkegaard's first writing after his dissertation – is made up of a diary of a cold-blooded seduction, written in a recognizably Romantic ironist style. The seducer, Johannes, carries through his plans for his victim Cordelia with all the detachment a scientist might have in dissecting a new species of butterfly, producing an effect far more shocking than anything in Schlegel's novel *Lucinde*. Although the editor describes seducer as an "aesthete," the irony is mainly a matter for ethics, not aesthetics, since what Johannes proposes is to make his life into a work of art.

The diary fits well into the model of "humble" irony outlined by Kenneth Burke. (a) For virtually all readers the "contradiction" results in a sharp "foregrounding" of personal and societal norms. (b) The "self-canceling" of the diary is carried on

through an elaborate set of devices. The manuscript is allegedly found by accident in an old desk, and the unknown author (called simply "Mr. A") denies he wrote the diary, even though the editor, "Victor Eremita," who found the manuscript in an old desk, thinks he did; and, to complete the masquerade, Kierkegaard even published an article asking who the author of the book was. Moreover, the style and the viewpoint are completely contrary to what the reader would know as Kierkegaard's own. (c) Unlike Romantic irony, but like humble irony, the reader discovers the truth on one's own. What is involved in "positive" rather than "negative" freedom, a freedom *for*, rather than a freedom *from.* (d) The irony is inclusionary, helping readers discover their common norms, especially since virtually all readers will share the same effect.

4.2 *Irony and Humor in Philosophical Fragments*
The initial chapter of *Philosophical Fragments*, called "A Project of Thought," is the first book that can be, with some confidence, called "humorous," since the pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus, is specifically identified in that way in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (1992, 1: 501, 617). The category of humor, however, "is not essentially different from irony" (1992, 1: 271), only that, unlike irony, it is a specifically ethical-religious concept. Irony works with incongruities in the realm of the norms Kaufer and Neuwirth speak of, of "personal standards, social norms, social regularities," and the like (1982, p. 31). Humor, on the other hand, "expresses man's existential experience in actualizing the eternal norms of the ethical" (Malantschuk, notes to *Kierkegaard's Journals*, 1970, 2: 585. In any case, the designation of the author as a humorist does not prevent the book from being described elsewhere as written with "the indefatigable energy of irony" (1992, 1: 275). In this first chapter of *Philosophical Fragments* Climacus sets out to try to derive the main teachings of Christianity from the teachings of Socrates, and, ironically, it looks at first sight as if he has almost made it.

Far from following the dissertation's definition of irony, however, *Fragments* turns it completely around. The key change is in the figure of Socrates, which here is derived from Plato's rather than Aristophanes' portrayal. I will follow the same list of features of irony as before, but this time in reverse order: (d) The Socrates in *Fragments* is an "inclusionist." Unlike the supremely aloof Socrates in Aristophanes, this Socrates spends his time out in the market place. He has no teaching to sell and can only humbly encourage people to recollect what they already know. There is no decisive difference among those whom this Socrates

teaches – for example, between his "confederates," who grasp his teaching, and his "victims," who cannot. Everyone is in the same boat: the boy Lysis with the old man Cephalus, and the untutored slave in the *Meno* with the renowned sophists. All the people have the same given ethical norms available to them. (c) That, in turn, leaves Socrates' students "positively free" to find the truth within themselves. (b) *Fragments* provides an abundance of clues to show that the chapter is "self-canceling"; for example, the tone of the approach Climacus takes mocks the approach taken by speculative thinkers, because it takes it further than they would ever have dared to do. (a) The "contradiction" involved in the chapter is essentially an ethical, Socratic one, between the pretentiousness of the speculative method with which the chapter deduces so many doctrines and in such a rapid-fire fashion, on the one hand, and the modesty of simple faith, on the other. The implied parallel is to Socrates' critique of the grandiose approach of the Athenian sophists, for example in the opening scene of Plato's *Protagoras*.

4.3 *Humor in Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*
Even though it is projected as a postscript to *Fragments*, and is assigned the same pseudonymous author, the concept of irony in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* differs markedly from the earlier work: (d) the Socrates in *Postscript* differs from the one in *Fragments* by exemplifying his teaching in his life (1:206-07); (c) the positive freedom of the listener, or "subject," already implicit in Fragments, is here made explicit by the explication of the "subjective" ethical task that subject faces. (b) Climacus carries the "self-canceling" even further than before and in the end even "revokes" everything he has said in the whole book (1:619). (a) The "contradiction" involved is not only an ethical but also (in "religiousness B") a "dialectical" contradiction in the terminology itself.

Is this rhetoric? Strangely, the argument in *Postscript*, as well as in the other pseudonymous works of the period, seems at least as much concerned to dissuade as to persuade. These works provide, as Tim Hagermann puts it, an "antipersuasive Rhetorik" (2001, p. 12), which turns Aristotles' rhetoric on its head, recommending Christianity not because it is *probable* but precisely because it is *improbable* (Kierkegaard, 1993, pp.110-111). Still, this is not to say that *Postscript* cannot be rhetoric in any sense at all. Peter L. Hagen argues, in fact, that Kenneth Burke's "pure persuasion" is a sort of "non-rhetorical rhetoric," a "persuasion that seeks not to persuade" (1995, p. 47), and he presents the irony in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* as an example of just such pure persuasion

(p. 49). Whether Hagen's interpretation does justice to Burke, however, has been questioned (K. M. Olson & C. D. Olson, 2004, pp. 27-28), and in any case it would be a daunting task to try to trace the complexly intersecting lines of these two elusive concepts.

Where Burke and Kierkegaard are clearly allied is on the principle of inclusivity. Despite their considerable differences, the "Seducer's Diary," *Fragments*, and Postscript take a common inclusive attitude toward their readers. The figure of Socrates stands throughout Kierkegaard's post-dissertation writings, and especially in the Climacus works, as a guarantee that many of the truths that matter most are in principle accessible to all.

What is most striking to me about the three pseudonymous works from Kierkegaard's early period is his literary mastery of the art of irony. All three of the books are gems, but each in a completely different way. Philosophers are more often than not bad writers, some of them even worse than others, so that no one should expect them to be awarded any literary prizes. Still, I think that, if Kenneth Burke had rechecked his book shelves and looked again at the selections of philosophical argument written by Kierkegaard's pseudonyms "Johannes the Seducer" and "Johannes Climacus," he might well have agreed that these three pieces of extended irony belong on his honor roll for humble irony, along with Shakespeare, Socrates, and all the rest.

5. *Conclusion*

The concept of irony in Kierkegaard's 1841 dissertation fits solidly within present day argumentation theory, partly because it emerged in a period that was just assimilating Romantic irony, and partly because of the influence it has had on the history of the development of that concept. Even a brief examination of three representative examples of his treatment of the concept after that dissertation shows a far richer and more complex development of the concept than one could have anticipated from the dissertation itself. Further treatment of the concept of irony in these later works would, however, require more space than can be allotted here, since the concept of irony is by this point in Kierkegaard's development deeply embedded, in various ways, in the particular problematic of each of the works.

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Metadialogues And Meta-Arguments: Krabbe On Formal-Fallacy Criticism

"A metadialogue is a dialogue about a dialogue or about some dialogues. A dialogue that is not a metadialogue will be called a ground level dialogue" (Krabbe 2003, p. 641). With these definitions, Krabbe explicitly introduced the topic of metadialogues into argumentation theory. Similarly, I define a meta-argument as an argument about one or more arguments, and a ground-level argument as one which is not a meta-argument.

Here it is useful to stress the overlap between dialogues and arguments. Krabbe himself has stated that his main interest lies with persuasion dialogues, or critical discussions, and these entities involve arguments in an essential way. Moreover, Barth and Krabbe (1982) have famously proved the equivalence between the axiomatic and dialogical methods; and this proof may be taken to suggest (cf. Finocchiaro 2005, pp. 231-45) not only that the monolectical way of talking about arguments can be translated into a dialogical way of talking, but also that the reverse is the case. Here this reverse case will be exploited by discussing arguments and meta-arguments in a relatively monolectical manner, in the belief that this discussion could be translated into one about dialogues and metadialogues. Accordingly, in a few moments I will attempt to reconstruct some of Krabbe's insights about metadialogues in terms of meta-arguments.

Finally, although the explicitly meta-argumentative, or metadialogical, approach is a valuable step forward, both meta-arguments and metadialogues have been implicitly discussed for a long time in argumentation theory. This has happened primarily in the context of the evaluation or criticism of arguments, which everyone will admit to be a crucial part of argumentation theory. In fact,

argument evaluation can be done seriously only if one gives reasons supporting the evaluative claim; such a reasoned evaluation is obviously an argument, and since the subject matter is the original argument, the evaluation is clearly a meta-argument. Thus, it should come as no surprise if much of my analysis will consist of attempts to reconstruct in explicit terms of meta-argument relevant insights that deal with argument assessment.

An important type of meta-argument occurs when a ground-level argument is criticized for having committed a fallacy. As Krabbe (2002, p. 162) has stated, "in fallacy criticism it is upon the critic to show why an alleged move in critical discussion is so completely wrong that it cannot even prima facie be accepted as a serious contribution to the discussion. Thus fallacy criticism leads to a critical discussion on a second level, a discussion about the permissibility of a move in the ground level discussion."

Krabbe's thesis about fallacy criticism is in part presented by him as a solution to the problem of the asymmetry between favorable and unfavorable evaluations of arguments. In several challenging papers, Massey (1975a, 1975b, 1981) had asked and answered negatively the question, "Are there any good arguments that bad arguments are bad?" By contrast, Krabbe (1995) asks and answers affirmatively the question, "Can we ever pin one down to a formal fallacy?" Despite the terminological variance, and the opposition of their respective conclusions, the meta-argumentative dimension of the discussion is obvious. What is being discussed is the nature and cogency of meta-arguments to the effect that some ground-level argument is bad, fallacious, or invalid. Let us reconstruct Krabbe's own argument (a third-level meta-argument!) that it is possible to construct cogent (second-level) meta-arguments to the effect that some ground-level argument is a formal fallacy.

First, what is a formal fallacy? For Krabbe (1995, p. 336), "*a formal fallacy, in dialogue, is committed as soon a party presents a formally invalid (i.e., not formally valid) argument that violates the code of conduct of the dialogue.*" Here it is important to note that, besides formal invalidity, there is a second element in this definition – code violation; that is, a violation of some rule either agreed upon by the two interlocutors, or arguably relevant in the context of that discussion. Although it is unrealistic to expect prior or explicit agreement about the rules of a particular discussion, learning the contextual relevance of various types of arguments and criticism is a normal part of the education designed to achieve mastery of a given field. For example, historians often argue for chronological

theses by means of arguments which, however strong, are formally invalid; and the same happens in the more experimental branches of empirical science when one gives evidence to support some empirical generalization. But everybody knows, or ought to know, that in these contexts such formally invalid argument do not violate the rules of the game. My point here is simply to underscore the fact that, following Krabbe, there are two things and not just one that must done to prove a formally fallacy; and since these two things embody different claims, two distinct meta-arguments must be advanced in effective formal-fallacy criticism.

Next, what is formal invalidity? Or equivalently, what is formal validity? And more fundamentally and generally, what are validity and invalidity? Again, I follow mostly the spirit and occasionally the letter of Krabbe's discussion. An argument is valid iff there is no "situation, actual or fictitious (a possible world, if one wishes) such that in that situation all the premises are true and the conclusion is false" (Krabbe 1995, pp. 335-36); i.e., iff it is impossible for the premises to be true while the conclusion is false; i.e., iff "there is no counterexample to it" (Krabbe 1995, p. 336). Such a *counterexample* to an argument should not be confused with a counterexample to an argument-form, which is an argument instantiating the form and having true premises and false conclusion; thus to be clearer, we may speak of *counterexample-situations* (to arguments) and of *counterexample-arguments* (to forms). Finally, an argument is *invalid* iff it is not valid.

Formal validity is a special case of validity. An argument is *formally valid* iff "it can be correctly paraphrased... such that its schema (or form) is valid" (Krabbe 1995, p. 336); i.e., iff it instantiates a valid argument form; i.e., iff it instantiates a form that has no counterexample arguments. And an argument is *formally invalid* iff it is not formally valid; i.e., iff it does not instantiate any valid argument form. Note that this is not equivalent to instantiating an invalid form. Thus, validity is more general than formal validity: all formally valid arguments are valid, but not all valid arguments are formally valid; and all invalid arguments are formally invalid, but not all formally invalid arguments are invalid.

Based on these definitions, Krabbe discusses several methods of proving formal invalidity, i.e., several types of meta-argument concluding that some ground-level argument is formally invalid.

One method is what Krabbe, following Massey calls "the trivial logic-indifferent method" (Krabbe 1995, p. 341; Massey 1975a, p. 64; Massey 1981, p. 494). This

amounts to proving that the argument's premises are true and the conclusion is false. I agree with Krabbe and Massey that here we have triviality and little if any logic. However, I would stress two things: we do have, inevitably, argumentation, indeed a meta-argument; and the proof is indirect in the sense that the meta-argument shows formal invalidity without appealing to anything "formal," but rather by showing (simple) invalidity, and using the principle that all formally valid arguments are valid.

The same indirect proof is used in another method, which Krabbe discusses at greater length. He calls it "the method of *counterexample*. This is the royal road of showing invalidity" (Krabbe 1995, p. 340). Krabbe clarifies that "counterexample" is commonly used with several different meanings, but that here he is using it in the sense defined above, namely a situation in which the premises are true and the conclusion is false. The correctness of this method is grounded on the definition of validity (to intermediately conclude invalidity), and on the relationship between validity and formal validity (to finally conclude formal invalidity).

For example, suppose someone, perhaps in a context of learning geography, thought that: (1) Reno is the capital of Nevada, because (1.1) Las Vegas is not, and (1.2) if Reno is the capital of Nevada then Las Vegas is not. Without doing any empirical research or knowing whether Las Vegas or Reno is the capital, we can simply imagine a situation in which neither Reno nor Las Vegas is the capital. It would then follow that Las Vegas is not, and so the first premise is true; the second premise would still be true, by the rules of states' administration; but it would also follow that Reno is not, and so the conclusion is false. Here is then a *situation* in which the premises are true and the conclusion false. Therefore, by the definition of validity, the argument is not valid. Therefore, formal validity being a special case of validity, the argument is formally invalid.

From the general description of the method of counterexample-situation, and from this example, the meta-argumentative nature of the process is obvious.

Krabbe (1995, pp. 341, 343-44) admits that because of the indirectness of such proofs of formal invalidity, it might be preferable to reserve the label "formal fallacy" to cases where one proves formal invalidity more directly by exploiting logical forms. This he calls the method of formal paraphrase (Krabbe 1995, p. 340). This method appeals explicitly and directly to the definition of formal validity. The ground-level argument is paraphrased in some more or less formal logical system, and "the reason that the argument is [formally] invalid is

expressed as follows: 'this paraphrase captures the gist of your argument (meaning: the ground of its presumed validity), and this paraphrase constitutes an invalid logical form" (Krabbe 1995, 340). It is crucial to understand that there are three things which the meta-argument must try to prove:

1. that the ground-level argument instantiates a particular argument form;

2. that this argument form is invalid; and

3. that that this argument form captures "the gist of the argument," or "the ground of its presumed validity," or all logically important features of the argument. The third clause is especially important; if it is ignored, one would conclude that a ground-level argument is formally invalid simply because it instantiates an invalid argument form, even though it also instantiates another form that is valid, thus committing "the fallacy behind fallacies" exposed by Massey (1981).

For example, consider again the argument about the capital of Nevada. One could claim that it is of the form:(2) R because (2.1) not-L and (2.2) if R then non-L. Indeed this is the well known form "affirming the consequent." This form is commonly known to be invalid. If need be, this invalidity could be exhibited by assigning the truth value falsity to both R and L. It could also be exhibited by constructing this counterexample-argument:(3) New York is the capital of the USA, because (3.1) Boston is not the capital of the USA, and (3.2) if New York is the capital, then Boston is not. Thirdly, one would have to argue that affirming the consequent is all that is happening in the original argument; that is, that the form affirming the consequent does indeed capture the gist of the argument. To better grasp that this third point is correct in this case, let us contrast it to another case in which the claim would not hold.

Consider this argument, devised for this purpose by Massey (1981, p. 492): (4.1) if something has been created by God then everything has been created by God; (4.2) everything has been created by God; therefore, (4) something has been created by God. This argument instantiates affirming the consequent: if S then E; E; so, S. However, this form ignores another crucial feature of the argument, namely the relationship between the second premise and the conclusion; the conclusion is a special case of the second premise; indeed the conclusion follows from the second premise alone, by the rule of universal specification. Hence affirming the consequent per se is an improper paraphrase of the argument, and the third clause of the method of formal paraphrase rules out this paraphrase.

There is a fourth method briefly mentioned by Krabbe (1995, p. 340), the method of logical analogy. He does not elaborate. But he does refer to a paper by Woods and Hudak (1989), entitled "By Parity of reasoning." This terminology and this reference led me to examine two other types of meta-argument, which I would want initially to keep distinct, even though a later deeper analysis might reveal that they share significant commonalities.

One type is what has been labeled "refutation by logical analogy." Oliver (1967) used this label, although he wrongly criticized it as incorrect. Later, Govier (1985) published an insightful discussion in the journal *Informal Logic*, defending its essential correctness and claiming its applicability to inductive as well as deductive arguments. And at about the same time, it became incorporated into some textbooks, specifically in Copi's (1986a, 1986b) seventh edition of his *Introduction to Logic* and the first edition of his *Informal Logic*. While agreeing that it is correct and applicable to inductive arguments, Copi also claimed that it is itself an inductive argument by analogy. I would define a refutation by logical analogy as a meta-argument of the following type: argument A is flawed in the sense F because A is logically analogous to argument B, and B is flawed is the sense F.

Finally, my reconstruction of Woods and Hudak's (1989) discussion is as follows. They have defined an important class of arguments, called arguments by parity of reasoning. These are meta-arguments that argue that some original argument should receive the same logical assessment as some comparison argument because these two ground-level arguments share the same logical form. Judith Thomson's argument about abortion and the violinist is a significant example of such a meta-argument by parity of reasoning. Such meta-arguments by parity of reasoning are deductively valid. Finally, by way of criticism, I would point out that arguments by analogy (as ordinarily understood) are *not* arguments by parity of reasoning, as Woods and Hudak claim.

Such meta-argumentative reflections have implications regarding metadialogues. At the beginning, I asserted such a connection based primarily on the conceptual overlap between dialogue and argument (via the notion of persuasion dialogue or critical discussion) and on the demonstrated formal equivalence between the axiomatic and dialogical methods. To these general reasons, we can now add (as a case study) the translation carried out above of Krabbe's dialogical account of formal-fallacy criticism into a monolectical framework. Analogously, a metadialogical theorist could now undertake to translate into a dialectical

framework the meta-argumentation of logical analogy and of parity of reasoning sketched above.

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – A Pragmatic Analysis Of Critique And Evaluation

Abstract: It is generally accepted that a critique (or criticism) gives a more articulated account of the strengths and weaknesses of an argument than an evaluation. It will be argued in this paper that the difference between a critique and an evaluation is not one of depth, but of scope of analysis. An evaluation is concerned with the value of an argument relatively to a set of domain-dependent criteria, whereas a critique is mainly concerned with the claim of that argument with regard to the reality it is about.

1. *Introduction*

Critique (or criticism) and evaluation are close concepts that have been compared in argument studies (Johnson, 2000) as two means of argument appraisal. Johnson (2000) claims that a critique gives a more articulated account of the strengths and weaknesses of an argument (or a product, to be general) than an evaluation.

The aim of this paper is to show that the difference between a critique and an evaluation is not one of depth, but of scope of analysis. We argue that an evaluation basically consists of the appreciation of a product relatively to its domain, whereas a critique is mainly concerned with the opinion or position underlying the product.

First, we look at the context of use of the two terms (Section 2), then, we make a distinction between the two concepts in terms of objective and approach (Section 3). We distinguish them as two different types of discourse (Section 4), and finally, we discuss the dialectical nature of critique (Sections 5).

2. *Meaning distinction*

In English, the concepts of 'critique' and 'criticism' are often confounded, despite the negative connotation of the latter. We will use the term critique here to refer to an intellectually serious criticism that 'evaluates on the basis of an interpretation' – this is criticism which judges, but which, at the same time, explains and justifies its judgement (Nowlan, 2001). Moreover, our choice of the

term critique is motivated by the fact that a critique, contrary to criticism, can not apply to individuals.

In argument studies, the concept of critique (called criticism) has been opposed to that of evaluation, both being related to argument appraisal. Yet, contrary to critique, the use of the term evaluation is not limited to the realm of argumentation. One can evaluate a person, an object or a situation, etc. in order to decide whether it has certain properties or whether it satisfies certain criteria. For example, one can evaluate the robustness of a system, the performance of an athlete, etc. Any phenomenon or product can be evaluated if there are criteria that allow it to be 'measured'. Freeman (2000) shows that evaluative statements may have a number of uses, including expressing approval or disapproval of something as a means to some end, asserting that some person or thing satisfies or fails to satisfy certain normative criteria, or judging the merits of some policy.

The object of a critique, on the other hand, can only be the product of a reasoning. Critiquing a product necessarily implies that the structure behind it is traced back to a purposeful opinion or belief. Moreover, a critique can only be addressed to an opinion that seeks the commitment of an audience. One would not critique something that is not a 'purposive act of communication' (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992). As a matter of fact, contrary to an evaluation, a critique can only be directed at an argument.

3. *Critique and evaluation: two different approaches to argument analysis*
Restating the criticism and evaluation distinction made in Johnson's Manifest Rationality (2000), Govier (2000) writes:

'We evaluate, say, a movie, if we pronounce it good or bad – and when we do so, we presumably have some standards in mind. But to evaluate a movie is not yet to criticize it. To criticize it, we have to articulate our standards, show evidence as to why the movie did or did not meet them, and put our comments into some kind of coherent perspective. To evaluate something is to pronounce it good, bad, or indifferent – or somewhere along the spectrum. To criticize it is to develop an account of its strengths and weaknesses, an account that shows some discrimination between more and less significant strengths or weaknesses and can give assistance as to how the product might be improved.'

According to this view, a critique is the articulated and analytical version of an evaluation. Our claim is that the difference between an evaluation and a critique is not essentially one of depth of analysis, as stated above, although analysis is the

major requirement for critiquing. In fact, it is the burden of the critique to develop a full account of the argument because it is aimed at something more 'sensitive' than the quality of the product as such, and that is the opinion or more generally the position of the arguer.

To explain this, we have to first emphasize the role of argument as the mould of an opinion. From the perspective of a theory of communication, the object of argumentation is the transformation of an opinion into an argument with respect to a particular audience (Breton, 2001). We think that any opinion as expressed by any single argument can be considered as an instance of a more general position. By *position*, we refer to the proponent's global stance with regard to the subject of his argumentation. It is the set of ideas regarding a subject that situates a person relatively to others. Also, generally, to determine someone's position, one needs to consider his history of argumentation.

Our view is that to critique a product, one has to do much more than develop an account of its strengths and weaknesses. A critique must be able to determine what exactly is the message of the product and what is it that the proponent is trying to make the audience accept, believe or share with him? Beyond the product, a critique must be able to identify the opinion, or better, the position of the arguer with regard to the subject of his argumentation.

It is precisely this inferential leap to the opinion or position of the proponent of the argument that distinguishes a critique from an evaluation. Critiquing is the only means by which one can question the opinions, beliefs, representations, and values that are conveyed by an argument. It is also the mechanism by which one can reveal, for a given audience, the goals that a particular argument tries to achieve.

An evaluation, on the other hand, needs to go no further than assess the strengths and weaknesses of a product. This is done relatively to the norms and standards that prevail within the domain to which the product belongs. A critique can also contain evaluation, but it also needs to deconstruct the argumentative structure of the product.

4. *Argumentative versus evaluative discourse*

From a critiquing perspective, argument appraisal means identifying the position of the proponent with regard to his subject matter, and justifying this understanding by using the proponent's current or past arguments as supporting evidence. It is because of this need for jusification, that a critique appears more

analytical comparatively to an evaluation.

Just like a critical discussion whose stages must be correctly executed so that it can develop in a satisfactory fashion (Rees, 2001), a critique, as a normative type of discourse, must meet certain requirements. The most important constraint for a critic is to identify the proponent's position. It is based on this premise, that he develops his own argumentation. Driven by his agreement or disagreement with that position, the critic attempts to convince the audience or the other party of his interpretation. The elements that can support this interpretation must be found in the proponent's arguments, hence the critique's thorough and preliminary analysis of them. Thus, the 'articulated account' is in fact an account of all those elements that warrant the assumptions of the critic regarding the proponent's position.

Our point is that the analytical flavour of critique is in fact a burden of the critiquing attitude and the fact that a critique is itself an argument. While an evaluation constitutes a distinct type of discourse – evaluative discourse – a critique is a certain type of argumentative discourse. A critique is the product of a sequence of reasoning where one moves from assumptions about the other party's position and goals to certain conclusions by means of warrants.

5. *The dialectical character of critiquing*

Johnson (2000) also claims that a critique, in contrast to an evaluation, performs its assessment with the purpose of enhancing the product. He writes:

'Criticism goes beyond evaluation in that it must take into account the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the product and is intended for the one who produced the argument as a vehicle whereby the argument may be improved. Thus, it may be said that criticism is part of a dialectical process, whereas evaluation is not.' (p. 219)

Neither a critique nor an evaluation has for objective to enhance a product. Ultimately, the purpose of an evaluation is to decide upon the quality of a product and take some action. The purpose of a critique is to counter or to enforce the goals of an argument. Only upon approval of those goals, the critique will contribute to their achievement. When in disagreement with the proponent's viewpoint, then the critique will precisely intend to avoid the accomplishment of those goals.

However, given that a critique considers the relationship between the position and the argument, it can positively contribute to the product in many ways, for

example, by proposing a better way of articulating a position, by improving the understanding of the problem, by providing domain knowledge, by presenting different viewpoints, etc. Yet, for this to happen, the two parties (the protagonist and the antagonist) must engage in a dialogue. It is the mutual exchange of viewpoints that results in the improvement of the product and not critiquing by itself. Also, if critical discussions and critical thinking are said to promote such positive outcomes, it is because they are based on a dialogue paradigm, whether that dialogue takes place between two distinct individuals or is a 'mini-debate carried on with oneself' (Rieke and Sillars, 1997).

When provided a posteriori, a critique simply enables the interpretation of a product by determining the standpoint of its proponent and thereby revealing its argumentative structure. Nevertheless, critiquing requires dialectical reasoning since it operates on an input provided by another reasoner (Walton, 1990), and like any argument, it aims at securing acceptance of a claim (Hitchcock, 2002) and cannot do so irrespective of the values, opinions and beliefs of the individuals to whom it is addressed.

The role of a critique is to control the effects that an argument/product aims to produce on its audience. Contrary to an evaluation which verifies if and how the goals of an argument are achieved (by assessing it against a set of criteria), a critique is concerned with whether, given the position of the proponent, those goals deserve to be achieved. By critiquing, individuals validate their understanding of a position and, depending on the case, attempt to facilitate or resist its effects.

6. *Conclusion*

To conclude these remarks, we can say that basically, a critique and an evaluation differ relatively to two related points. One is their purpose and therefore their scope of analysis: an evaluation assesses a product by establishing its value with regard to a set of criteria with the purpose of acting upon it. A critique identifies and judges the position the product supports with the purpose of containing or amplifying its effects. The other aspect is related to their discursive attitude: an evaluative discourse appraises its object within a well-established domain-dependent frame of reference, which requires no justification. A critique, as an instance of argumentative discourse, moves from a set of assumptions (regarding the position of the proponent) to a conclusion, a move that it needs to warrant by justificatory elements.

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