ISSA Proceedings 2006 – The Challenging Force Of Dissuasion

« Si, au contraire, on prend comme concept général de départ, non celui de monde, mais celui de culture, la question revêt aussitôt tout autre aspect.»
Ernest Cassirer, La philosophie des formes symboliques, I : 21

The issue: Our study takes as its starting point the general concept of culture, just as stated in the above quotation in French: "[il] prend comme concept général de départ celui de culture", trying to analyze the dissuasive force of those ideas that are dominant within the social life and exercise a negative pressure upon a creative mind. The particular aspect of dissuasion we are interested in is neither discursive, nor explicit, but active in the form of an implied argument, the power of which has normative authority.
The premise: The argumentative force of dissuasion belongs to the doxastic field (the *belief field*) and has axiological foundations**[i]**.
A remark: This paper continues our research within the field of argumentative dialectics, and the topics of several studies of ours count as premises of the present approach: (a) the mechanism of decidability in doxastic thinking follows the constitutive process of the *moral object* (Amel, 1999)**[ii]**. If our inquiry has in view only the argumentative behavior with reference to cultural notions, we are compelled to emphasize that the respective system of notions is characterized by argumentatative authority and presents the danger of promoting a prejudicial judgment; these considerations introduce two further premises: (b) we may judge *authority* as being sometimes a valid argument and sometimes a fallacious one (Amel, 2004); (c) from the point of view of the conversational logic, *the preconceived idea* has all the features characterizing the category of presupposition (it is a pre-judgment).
Actually, our contribution represents 'une prise de conscience culturelle', grasped in its dialectical unrest.

1. Between psychology and (argumentative) logic
1.1. There is a temptation to oppose dissuasion to persuasion and to define them as complementary acts. By following a strict pragmatic definition, we cannot reduce dissuasion to a perlocutionary act that guides interlocutor's thinking in a direction, which contradicts his own intentions.

Dissuasion is an exercitive act – a *demand*, [ca. institutionalized; ca. categorical]:
(1) Don't do it, because…

Generally speaking, dissuasion is based on 'reasons' the agent supplies to an inter-agent, in order to make him change his mind and not to implement the plans he priorily projected. Dissuasion is a particular demand, through which an agent tries by *persuasion*, or even by psychological pressure, to determine somebody to forbear from doing a certain act. If the force of dissuasion is less powerful and the 'reasons' which are given are not sufficiently authoritative, the *demand* can be considered a behabitive act – *a piece of advice* (following Austin's classification of speech acts), an act through which a certain agent disconcerts others' plans or ideas.
(2) You, with your foreign accent, don't try to enter this college, because you'll have no chance!

The example (2) represents a piece of advice (the well-meaning force of which cannot be appreciated) given by a teacher to a pupil who speaks Romanian with a Moldavian accent.
Even in the case in which the dissuasion is not a linguistic act explicitly expressed, the illocutionary force it implies can be linguistically translated and it is interpreted as such by the inter-agent.

1.2. The pragmatic definition of dissuasion can be easily reformulated in conformity with the logic of dialectics, if the 'felicity conditions', through which dissuasion reaches an efficient effect, are considered parameters of the argumentatative function of dissuasion. In order for it to be convincing, dissuasion should satisfy two conditions: it should be performed from an authoritative position and should supply reasons, which are disadvantageous for the person to whom the act is addressed. The argumentatative force of dissuasion cannot be considered an indirect speech act, but an implied one, as presuppositions are.
As dissuasion is fundamentally an act that manages somebody's beliefs, the argumentative logic should be coupled with elements belonging to doxastic dialectics3. Consequently, the rhetoric involvement of doxa is extremely important. The argumentative logic, on which dissuasion is based, follows both the logic of rationality and the strategic logic. Through either of these operations, the agent is looking for persuasive means and calculates the interactive advantage he could obtain over his partner.

In order for it to be able to dishearten someone from implementing one's plans, dissuasion, as an act, should satisfy an authoritative condition. This is the first thing the justificative enterprise4 of dissuasion brings into inquiry. It is impossible to persuade someone to forbear from doing a certain thing, or implementing one's plans, etc., without having a certain authority over that person. The authority can get the force of an argument in two cases: a) a power relationship, within which the advantage one part has over the other is institutionalized and recognized by both partners; and b) a certain moral superiority, and in this case the argument of authority is converted into an argument of credibility.

From the rhetorical point of view of the argumentative dialectics, we shall stress the following things, regarding the two important aspects that are mentioned:

(a) the authority is a matter of degree, and

(b) the authoritative argument, implied in dissuasion, can be either rationally supported or fallaciously imposed.

2. The crisis of the justification device

2.1 Among the rhetorical arguments that manipulate the 'reasons' through which somebody could be persuaded by dissuasion, we include the dominant ideas that a community shares at a specific time.

Within a community, there is a tendency to circulate forms of thinking, which are uncritically assumed and conventionally instituted, such as cultural axioms. In these particular cases, the state of mind has no value in itself, but it becomes pertinent as 'language' (a system of doxastic, respectively, axiological concepts), summarized in sets of several codes5 governing the speech, thinking or social behavior. We are confronted with a reality that rehabilitates the Saussurean definition of language as a social institution. Social psychology is responsible for this condition – an aspect we do not comment upon, but the fact that such beliefs being a kind of forma mentis, socially active, influence the common behavior, as authoritative arguments do. The condition of an institution-like mentality is a consequence of the formative principle, which within the belief field is excessively productive. Belief represents the cognitive 'territory' in search for forms and expression, therefore the ready-made beliefs are the best and the easiest support of the constitutive effort of axiological thinking. Axiological languages, scientific paradigms being included here, get more credibility when others share them, than when they are simply filtered by one's own mind. A value that circulates represents a reason of pertinence and to conform to it seems natural for the

common mind. This explanation tries to resume the process due to which the mechanism of prejudices is augmented within social life (Amel, 2005). A kind of cognitive laziness neutralizes the creative effects of doxastic dialectics and raises the power of intellectual behavior that has already acquired 'legitimacy' to the level of an institution.
When a ruler etc. is interested in imposing an axiological paradigm and in preserving it, the society is compelled to conform to this paradigm for a certain time:
(3) See the ironical but real example: General şi particular in gândirea generalilor şi particularilor ("General and particular in the thinking of generals and private persons") – paper presented by a student at the Marxist-Leninist seminar (see Al.Stefanescu, 2006).

Within a scientific society, it is already impossible to imagine another scientific paradigm than that which is in fashion:
(4) "Let us analyze, in structuralist terms, the poem Căţeluş cu părul creţ!" ("Little dog with curly hair!"), a seminar work (see Al.Stefanescu, 2006).

Sometimes, the lack of cognitive proofs or the insufficient pertinence of the meaning of value concepts prepares the axiological field for distortion.
(5) Physicians say:"It is dangerous to eat eyes because they contain cholesterol!" (although, others, on the contrary, recommend eating an eye every day, because eyes contain lecithin)
(6) "We should admit social anarchy because it is impossible to fight against it!" (which means: 'Real democracy' is either an empty word or a utopia).
(7) "Don't try to be a polite and modest person, because you risk being included in the category of alte Sachen!"

There are paradoxical examples, when 'deconstructive' attitudes get social legitimacy and everybody chooses this way. It is extremely typical for people with a gregarious mentality to follow uncritically a non-conformist attitude, each individual cultivating for oneself the illusion of being original. We may see how great the influence still is in the following cases:
(8) The vulgarization of Nietzsche's attempt of Umwertung aller Werte (to transvaluate values) (Antichrist, last statement; see also the commentary in Yovel, 2000: 188);
(9) The vogue of the nihilist philosophers and the power of their dissuasive attempt of destroying the fundaments of belief, or the ascendancy of the

representatives of postmodernism who advocate the neutralization of axiological oppositions;
(10) The tendency to be provocative, or to adopt a rebel behavior;
(11) Or even to speak at a brisk pace (see the radio or T.V. reports);
And so on.

In contradistinction to the common language, the institution of prejudices uncovers a kind of semantic vacuum, because the principle of intelligibility neglects the functions of doxastic dialectics. On the other hand, the fact that axiological systems are more flexible than common language is, time- and space-dependent, proves that argumentative dialectics is still active, even in moments when its importance is minimized.

2.2 Prejudices of any kind become prohibitive means for a creative mind.
The original thinking of a person trying to express ideas in one's own language and to behave consequently does not assume predominance without proving the ideas' justificative power. For him, the rules of intellectual behavior, which is socially accepted, are usually under cognitive inquiry in order to examine whether they represent authentic beliefs or cultural prejudices (Amel, 2005). In what follows, we shall discuss two aspects that prove the way original thinking assumes 'the pressure of (axiological) language' in a critical way:
(a) The active role of a subject within the system of language, and
(b) The nature of the authoritative argument implied in dissuasion.
It is important to remind that dominant ideas are veiled in a kind of ambiguity; they are either rationally supported or fallaciously imposed.

3. Critical strategy
3.1 Due to the 'presupposition status' of prejudices and their surreptitious presence in illocutionary acts, the critical inquiry is easily corrupted. The implicit validation of prejudices allows a short cutting of criticism, during which only the subjective dimension of prejudices is removed and the categorical one is preserved, a procedure through which prejudices get the normative force of axiomatic options. (Cf. Amel, 2005) Consequently, once the normative power of prejudices becomes general, they constitute a sociolect, namely, a socially accepted code, 'an institution'.
From the history of deconstructive enterprises, we quote a fragment from Derrida's Force and Signification in order to emphasize the unstable equilibrium of forces and the role the individual has within language:

“On perçoit la structure dans l’instance de la menace, au moment où l’imminence du péril concentre nos regards sur la clef de voûte [= point of tension – Our emphases] d’une institution sur la pierre où se résument sa possibilité et sa fragilité. On peut alors menacer méthodiquement la structure pour mieux la percevoir non seulement en ses nervures mais en ce lieu secret ou elle n’est ni érection, ni ruine, mais labilité. Cette opération s’appelle (en latin) soucier ou solliciter” [= convergent forces – Our emphases] (1967: 13).

Nothing is more unstable than the position of the subject under the pressure of an institution (in our case, the axiological commitment) and against which the interactive subject opposes his own force.

As far as nobody rejects dominant ideas, they maintain their supra-personal status, having normative power. However, the human mind has a critical inclination, especially when values are at stake. Therefore, the institutional status of axiological concepts triggers contrary effects. In spite of the force the institution of language imposes, by limiting free choices, the argumentative attitudes of creative individuals are challenged.
Naturally, we should not forget that ‘the pressure of the system’ is a question of degree: it is exercised either by normative force or by the force of the social choice. The concepts are loaded with specific connotations that make transparent both the authoritative argument and the axiological force they imply. In our study about “Justification transfer” (2004), we stated the following: “The (justification) process engenders the tension between two completely different parameters: the authority of the source versus the authorized source, regarding a certain point of view.” The respective distinction has important consequences upon the interactive subject: In each case, an original thinking does not assume dominant ideas without a dialectical trial: ‘the pressure of the system’ should critically prove its power. If the source gets credibility, the individual resorts to the dissuasive argument:
(12) Smoking is dangerous for man’s health!

It seems rational to conform to the dissuasive force of the above quoted example, because the authoritative argument cannot be doubted.
Sometimes, in spite of the inner resistance, the interactive subject is compelled to adopt either a conformist attitude or the strategy of silence.
(*13)* The totalitarian propaganda-discourse imposes a dominant speech that functions as an instrument of power. Language becomes a kind of

FORTIFICATION wall impossible to be demolished. The authority of the source dissuades the interactive subject to manifest any critical attitude.
(14) Nobody dared to contradict the structuralist approach in the high tide of its development, while today nobody speaks any longer in terms of structuralist paradigm.

The last example proves that the force of a scientifically chosen paradigm cannot be easily demolished, although, there are scientists who can demonstrate the paradigmatic limits through theoretical shortcomings of the concepts supporting the respective paradigm. The scientific inertia is a known fact, because few people are able to reshape their minds.

3.2. Generally speaking, dissuasion undermines the position of the interactive subject and increases the uncertainty of his own decision. He is caught in a state of axiological doubt. Though it seems paradoxical, this situation triggers the critical attitude. It is less important to inquire the 'reasons', which one gives in order to dissuade somebody else, than to ascertain what is the authority that allows the performance of such an act.

In the particular case approached by us, the interactive subject who endures the pressure of the system, puts under inquiry the normative status of the system he belongs to. In fact, he examines the Argument of Authority that supports the pressure of the dominant ideas: are these ideas imposed by force (e.g., by totalitarian language), by fashion (the common patterns of the intellectual behavior), or can they give transcendental legitimacy to the axiological choice of a particular person?
If the interactive subject is under the 'pressure' of a totalitarian institution, he adopts an ambiguous strategy:
(15) He is ready to admit the counter-argument: If you cannot beat us, join us… or keep silent!

If the subject discloses that a socially corrupted mentality imposes upon him its rules, his critical attitude is more active.
Due to the dissociative function of argumentative dialectics, the justification process has great importance in the belief formation. On this level, the principle of rationality is based on meaning, the 'truth' of which cannot be proved but assumed by consciousness as far as it is pertinent for the thinking subject. Consequently, the principle of rationality should be increased by reasons of

intelligibility.
A person becomes less passive in one's choice when confronted with the dissuasive force of the axiological language which is 'in fashion' – i.e., the values shared by the members of the society he lives in. – The critical postulate, on which doxastic dialectics is constituted, and the interactive subject follows, affirms: "Since doxastic dialectics involves reflecting judgments (see Kant, 198l: 73-74), its entire justification procedure is supported by a higher degree of logic, where the Principle of Uncertainty calls upon a Principle of Transcendence." (Amel, 1999:6)

The Principle of Transcendence is a self-defining principle of generalization.**[vi]**
In a reflective judgment, the Principle of Transcendence is a point of reference, a horizon that can give transcendental legitimacy to axiological choice.
If the first two cases – the totalitarian language and the ideas in fashion – disclose a fallacious authority, which has no rational force, there are, in exchange, dominant ideas, which define a society at a certain time and space. This case cannot be included in the category of an oppressive system. There are ideas representative for what is called Zeitgeist. An exigent mind cannot apply censorship in all these cases – Nietzsche's critical radicalism is not the best example to follow. By opening space for an unprejudiciated dialogue, even an exacting mind is caught within the hermeneutical circle, as Gadamer demonstrated: "Il n'y a pas de compréhension qui soit libre de tout préjugé." (1976:347; see also, M.Dascal: "It is impossible to think iesh mi-ein", that means: "to conceive something out of nothing.", 2004:161).

CONCLUSION

Our debate regards the inner mechanism of culture – both its dynamics and its authenticity. We tried to demonstrate that the institutionalized ideas have dissuasive power, being prohibitive for a creative mind.
Within the pressure of cultural institutions, a creative mind is never a passive consumer of ideas in fashion, but a critical participant in a collective debate, for whom the most important step is to supply reasons for oneself, to reach the inner conviction that his sense-giving acts are pertinent for the ontological cognition and the configuration of a larger than priory given Weltanshauung.

NOTES

[i] To be convincing, dissuasion should supply reasons that evaluate a situation, which are disadvantageous for somebody in particular.

[ii] The conclusions we reached in the respective study concern the general philosophy of cognition: Doxastic dialectics has three main functions (actually each argumentative dialectics does):
a. dissociative – it engenders cognitive intervals between opinion (the linguistic level, pragmatic being included), belief (the content put in consciousness) and doxa (the fundaments of axiological concepts);
b. justificative or critical – since doxastic dialectics involves reflecting judgments, its entire justificative procedure is supported by a higher degree of logic, where the Principle of Uncertainty calls upon a Principle of Transcendence, and
c. constitutive – doxastic dialectics opens conditions for an alternative truth, semantically constituted, not analytically proved.
[iii] See the premises on which this study is based, enumerated above.
[iv] See note **[ii]**.
[v] Everybody knows what a 'code' means, but we shall consider a recently given definition that satisfies our culture-based argumentation: A speech code is defined as a system of socially constructed symbols and meanings, premises and rules, pertaining to communicative conduct. (See Keith Bairy, 2002).
[vi] When the reflecting subject alleges a Principle of Transcendence for his axiological choice, he defines himself through this principle, using his transcendental experience: see Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, 1957, and Bachelard's book, 1957.

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Addressing Anticipated Countermoves As A Form Of Strategic Manoeuvring

Introduction

Addressing anticipated countermoves is a commonplace practice in argumentative discourse. A speaker in a discussion may anticipate the objections of an opponent and deal with these before the latter expresses them. Likewise, a writer may make explicit to his readers that he does not expect them to take his views uncritically and proceed to address the criticism that he anticipates from them. With the help of the pragma-dialectical concept of strategic manoeuvring, I will investigate the different ways in which this strategy functions in argumentative discourse, both as a dialectical tool for critically testing the arguer's position and as a rhetorical tool by which the arguer aims to provide the strongest possible defence for his position.

1. Addressing anticipated countermoves as a form of prolepsis

Anticipating the opponent's countermoves has been studied in the rhetorical literature in terms of prolepsis or anticipation. Prolepsis is generally defined as a figure of thought by which the speaker anticipates the opponent's objections and accusations (Pereleman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969, Gerbrandy 2001). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) discuss the different ways in which the speaker can enhance the effectiveness of his argumentation when addressing opposing arguments.

Forget (1994) argues that the rhetorical effect of prolepsis is derived from the representation of argumentative roles in an argumentative exchange and that the principle at play in prolepsis is "He who is better should win." The speaker who anticipates an objection will try to present his own thesis as more deserving of winning the exchange. This, Forget explains, proceeds in this way: by advancing one's thesis first and then interrupting it, as it were, by mentioning the interlocutor's thesis, the speaker exploits the value of taking the initiative of debate (1994, p. 72). The counter-thesis does not have the quality of initiating debate because it occurs later in the discourse (1994, p. 75).

Vincent and Heisler (1999) identify two types of prolepsis: concessive and refutative. Concessive prolepsis serves to reinforce the speaker's position by allowing him to admit the existence of a counterargument but not necessarily to adopt it; it implicitly shows that the speaker reserves an overall positive reception of the counterargument, whether it is real or imaginary, albeit the counterargument is eventually either neglected or removed (Vincent & Heisler 1999, p. 18). This confers on the presentation the quality of *fair-play debate* because the speaker maintains the truth of the conceded argument and does not emphasise that he rejects it categorically (Vincent and Heisler 1999, p. 19). Refutative prolepsis functions differently because by means of it the speaker does not maintain a positive reception of the argument. In this way, Vincent and Heisler (1999) argue, it serves to deactivate and block any possible reaction from the interlocutor.

2. Addressing anticipated countermoves as a form of message-sidedness

Within the empirical framework of persuasion research, the strategy of addressing anticipated countermoves has been studied in terms of message-sidedness. Persuasion scholars classify a message into three types with respect to sidedness: a one-sided message, in which only arguments supporting the point of view defended in the message are mentioned and a two-sided message in which arguments opposing the point of view defended are addressed. A two-sided message is divided into two types: non-refutational and refutational. A non-refutational two-sided message is one in which the communicator mentions a countermove but does not refute it, and a two-sided refutational message is one in which the arguer mentions and then refutes the countermove (Sloan 2001).

Persuasion scholars have sought to find out empirically whether there is a difference in persuasiveness between these forms of message sidedness. It is empirically established that two-sided refutational messages are the most persuasive form, followed by one-sided messages, and that two-sided nonrefutational messages are the least persuasive. This general finding has been captured by O'Keefe's (1999) meta-analysis of more than 40 experiments.

On the basis of this meta-analysis, O'Keefe (2003) concluded that the normative perspective of the pragma-dialectical theory should agree with the results of persuasion-effects research into message-sidedness. O'Keefe (2003) argues that a refutational two-sided message is more persuasive than its non-refutational counterpart because the former satisfies the dialectical obligation of defending

one's standpoint against criticism, while the latter does not. In this paper I shall explain in more detail how this view can be applied to other forms of addressing anticipated countermoves that are generated by the ideal model of critical discussion.

3. A pragma-dialectical framework

In this paper, I present an approach to the strategy of addressing anticipated countermoves that is based on the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation. Addressing anticipated countermoves is viewed in light of the ideal model of critical discussion in which two parties aim to resolve a difference of opinion about the acceptability of one or more standpoints by subjecting them to critical testing (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984, 1992, 2004). The resolution process consists of four stages each of which is characterised by the performance of certain speech acts aimed at the resolution of the difference of opinion. In the confrontation stage, a difference of opinion arises. This can be either mixed or non-mixed. It is non-mixed when one party advances a standpoint and the other challenges it with doubt and mixed when one party advances a standpoint and the other adopts an opposing standpoint towards it. In the opening stage, the parties assume their roles either as protagonist or as antagonist of the standpoint(s), decide on who should assume the burden of proof (first), identify their starting points and agree on the rules of discussion. In the argumentation stage, each party provides arguments to defend his standpoint and to attack that of the other party, and in the concluding stage, the protagonist maintains his standpoint and the antagonist retracts his doubt about it, or the protagonist retracts his standpoint and the antagonist maintains his doubt.

Reaching a mutual resolution of the dispute, however, does not preclude the fact that each party is equally interested in resolving it in his own favour. It is, therefore, assumed that each party will manoeuvre strategically with the argumentation in order to maintain a stronger position and eventually win the discussion. The aim of strategic manoeuvring is to balance one's dialectical commitment to a rational resolution of the dispute with one's rhetorical objective of winning the discussion. It takes place in every stage and consists in exploiting the opportunities provided by each stage to present oneself to be enjoying the strongest position possible vis a vis the other party (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2000, 2002).

Viewing the practice of addressing anticipated countermoves as a way by which

the arguer manoeuvres strategically requires that we determine how it contributes to the arguer's aim of presenting himself to be enjoying a stronger position in the discussion. By making explicit the countermove that he anticipates, the arguer challenges the acceptability of his own position and thereby commits himself to defending his position in a reasonable way against the anticipated countermove. In this paper I argue that any contribution to an advantageous resolution depends on whether or not the arguer discharges his self-imposed obligation of providing a conclusive defence of his standpoint and (arguments) against the countermove that he has anticipated.

4. Addressing anticipated countermoves: a manifestation of the implicit discussion inherent in argumentative discourse

Since the arguer**[i]** —the speaker or writer— is assumed to be defending a standpoint, he will be said to be performing the role of the protagonist of that standpoint. By pointing out an anticipated countermove to his standpoint or argument, the arguer challenges the acceptability of his own standpoint or argument. As Snoeck Henkemans (1992, p. 132) has explained, the countermove mentioned should be regarded as representing the voice of a different party, the antagonist. Addressing an anticipated countermove is thus an argumentative move by which the arguer manifests the argumentative positions pertaining to the propositions around which the implicit discussion revolves. It is a way by which the arguer subjects his standpoint to critical testing.

The countermoves that the arguer may wish to address in his argumentative text are derived from the moves that an antagonist in a critical discussion is allowed to make in order to attack the protagonist's standpoint or argument. In order for the antagonist to counter a standpoint, he may doubt it, advance a counter-standpoint to it or give a counterargument against it. A counter-standpoint can be either a contradictory standpoint (by which the propositional content of the protagonist's standpoint is simply denied) or a contrary standpoint (relating to a different proposition and implying the contradictory standpoint). When the antagonist advances a counter-standpoint of either type he assumes the role of protagonist towards it.

To attack an argument advanced by the protagonist, the antagonist may doubt it, deny it or refute it with an argument. A denial consists of a proposition that is contradictory to the protagonist's argument, and a counterargument consists of an attack on either the propositional content or the justificatory potential of the

protagonist's argument.

Adopting Snoeck Henkemans' (1992) distinction between acknowledging and refuting an anticipated counter-argument, I make a distinction between simply mentioning an anticipated countermove and mentioning and then invalidating an anticipated countermove. I consider counterarguments namely as just one form of 'countermove' that the arguer can mention against his standpoint or argument. The aim is to show that an arguer can do more than either acknowledging or refuting the anticipated countermove and that the different possibilities for invalidating the countermove contribute in different ways to a conclusive defence of his position which is crucial to successful strategic manoeuvring.

4.1 Mentioning anticipated countermoves

What an arguer chooses to mention in his argumentative text depends systematically on what he wishes to defend. If the arguer has expressed a standpoint, the countermove that he will anticipate and address will be one of the countermoves that the antagonist in a critical discussion can make in order to attack the protagonist's standpoint, which I identified above. The arguer may thus anticipate either an expression of doubt, which can take the form of a question, or, as Snoeck Henkemans (1992) has shown, a counter-standpoint which can be either contradictory or contrary, or a counterargument that implies that the potential opponent has reasons not to accept the standpoint.

Likewise, a countermove anticipated against an argument is derived from the possibilities that the antagonist in a critical discussion has for attacking an argument supporting the protagonist's standpoint. The arguer may thus point out doubt, denial or, as Snoeck Henkemans (1992) explained, a counterargument attacking his argument. In this paper, I will, for the sake of concision, illustrate only a few of these countermoves.

Mentioning an anticipated countermove against the standpoint

By mentioning a countermove that the arguer anticipates against his standpoint, the arguer basically acknowledges the existence of a difference of opinion between him as the protagonist of the standpoint and the potential opponent as the antagonist of that standpoint. Snoeck Henkemans (1992, p. 145) has argued that mentioning an anticipated counter-standpoint against his standpoint is a way by which the arguer represents the confrontation stage in the text. Since in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion the standpoint can be attacked by

other countermoves as well, anticipating those countermoves will also be considered as a way by which the confrontation is represented in the text.
The simplest way in which the arguer can address an anticipated countermove to his standpoint is mentioning anticipated doubt about it. Example (1) illustrates this move:
(1) Drinking too much alcohol is, let me put it frankly, dangerous for your health, even though you may not be able to realise that.

In this example, the arguer advances the positive standpoint that drinking too much alcohol may be dangerous for the hearer's health and anticipates that the hearer will have doubt about that by stating that the latter may not realise that danger. The arguer does not attribute to the hearer any standpoint regarding the question as to whether drinking too much alcohol is dangerous for his health. Saying that the hearer may not be able to realise that drinking too much alcohol is dangerous for his health implies that that the arguer anticipates the hearer to only not accept his standpoint, but not necessarily to endorse a counter-standpoint against it. The dispute is therefore represented as non-mixed.

In example 2 the arguer mentions a counter-standpoint that he anticipates against his own standpoint.
(2) I believe that hiring a PR expert will spare our organisation a lot of trouble, although some colleagues may object that it will only add more.

That *hiring a PR expert will only add more trouble* is the counter-standpoint that the arguer anticipates, his standpoint being that *hiring a PR expert will spare our organisation a lot of trouble. Some colleagues* are anticipated not only to have doubt about the arguer's standpoint but also to have a standpoint of their own. The confrontation represented here is mixed because both the arguer and *some colleagues* are presented to have standpoints about the issue of whether or not hiring a PR expert will spare trouble or add more.

Mentioning an anticipated countermove against the argument
As mentioned earlier, there are three main countermoves that an arguer may anticipate against his argument: doubt, denial or a counterargument. Mentioning an anticipated countermove against one's argument is reconstructed as a way by which the arguer makes explicit parts of the argumentation stage of the discussion because this strategy takes place when the arguer has already started advancing argumentation in support of his standpoint.

In example 3, the arguer mentions a statement of doubt about his argument.
(3) Excessive sleeping is dangerous because it remains the cause of all sorts of health problems, even though one may question that.

The arguer advances the standpoint that *excessive sleeping is dangerous* and defends this standpoint with an argument, namely that *excessive sleeping remains the cause of all sorts of health problems*. He introduces a challenge to this argument by stating that *one may question that*. The arguer presents himself as the protagonist of a standpoint who has assumed the burden of proof towards it by supporting it with an argument and who acknowledges that a potential opponent may still have doubt about the acceptability of the argument. That *one may question that* indicates that this opponent is not yet in a position to either accept or reject the argument brought forward by the arguer. This amounts to the state of doubt.

Snoeck Henkemans (1992) distinguishes between three ways in which an anticipated counterargument can target the argumentation: the counterargument can be an attack on the acceptability, sufficiency or relevance of the argument. The following is an example in which the arguer mentions an anticipated counterargument attacking the acceptability of the propositional content of his own argument.
(4) I don't think relocating the airport will present a practical solution to the current problems. Although initial estimations predict that the net budget for the project will be less than 30 million Euros, I am sure it will surpass 50 billion.

In this example, the arguer defends the negative standpoint that *relocating the airport will not present a practical solution to the current problems* by arguing that *the net budget for the project may surpass 50 billion*. The fact that *initial estimations predict that the net budget for this project will cost even less than 30 billion Euros* is the anticipated counterargument. This counterargument challenges the acceptability of the propositional content of his argument. It contains a contrary proposition to the proposition of his argument and hence implies its contradictory (i.e. *the net budget for the project will not be less than 30 million*). As Snoeck Henkemans (1992, p. 131) argues, this move causes a mixed dispute to arise at the level of the arguments; that is to say, the argument attacked becomes a sub-standpoint that is in need of defence.

4.2 Invalidating anticipated countermoves

In the preceding section, I identified some of the countermoves that an arguer can anticipate against his standpoint or argument. By 'mentioning an anticipated countermove against the standpoint or argument' I am referring to the argumentative move by which the arguer *only acknowledges* that his standpoint or argument can be challenged. But there is more that the arguer can do about the countermove that he has anticipated than just mentioning it; he can also invalidate it.

When the protagonist advances a standpoint, he, as a rule, commits himself to it and, therefore, will have to defend it with arguments if the antagonist asks him to do so (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992). By anticipating any of the countermoves identified above, the arguer challenges his own standpoint and incurs upon himself the obligation to defend it in order to get the potential opponent to accept it. When the arguer has defended his standpoint with an argument, he also commits himself to the propositional content and the justificatory and refutatory potential of this argument. By anticipating a countermove against his argument, the arguer in effect anticipates that this argument may not suffice to justify the acceptability of the standpoint and that as a consequence more should be done in order to defend that standpoint.

Invalidating an anticipated countermove against the standpoint

As discussed above, the countermoves that the arguer can anticipate against his standpoint are doubt, a counter-standpoint or a counterargument. Having anticipated a counter-standpoint, for instance, the arguer may decide to invalidate it by only stating his doubt about it, denying it, or by providing an argument supporting this standpoint.

In example (5), the arguer invalidates a counter-standpoint to his standpoint by providing an argument.

(5) It will be to our company's advantage to appoint a new PR expert. There are many colleagues who may disagree with this, but I am sure that—if implemented—such a *plan would solve many problems that we have been unable to solve on our own*.

That *it will be to the company's advantage to appoint a new PR expert* is the arguer's standpoint that the opponent (*some colleagues*) is anticipated to disagree with, that is, to have a contradictory standpoint to. The arguer treats this counter-standpoint as a challenge to the acceptability of his standpoint and thus as a challenge for him to provide an argument for his standpoint. He manifests

this through providing the argument that the plan would solve many problems that they have been unable to solve on their own.

Invalidating an anticipated countermove against the argument
A countermove against the argument may take the form of doubt, denial or a counterargument that refutes the argument. As mentioned above, these countermoves, when made explicit, represent a challenge to the argument as a defence for the standpoint. In order to maintain his argument, the arguer will have to invalidate these countermoves.
Example (6) illustrates a case in which an arguer reacts to an anticipated doubt about his argument.
(6) I think that relocating the airport will not present any practical solution to the current problems. The net budget for the project may surpass 100 billion Euros. One may ask, "But isn't that an exaggeration?" Well, similar projects in the past often took more than what the government had allocated for them.

In this example, the arguer invalidates the opponent's doubt about his argument by bringing forward another argument. To support his negative standpoint regarding the relocating of the airport, the arguer provides the argument that *the net budget for the project may surpass 100 billion Euros*. He then anticipates that there could be doubt about this argument. The arguer expresses the anticipated doubt in the form of a question: ("*But isn't that an exaggeration?"*). This anticipated doubt represents a challenge to the propositional content of the argument and therefore to its suitability as a defence for the arguer's standpoint. To maintain this argument, the arguer provides a new argument, namely that *similar projects in the past often took more than what the government had allocated for them*.

Snoeck Henkemans (1992) has argued that when the arguer anticipates a counterargument to one of his arguments the structure of his argumentation will be determined by the nature of this counterargument. If the counterargument anticipated attacks the propositional content of the argument, the argument he will provide to refute this counterargument will give subordinative support for the argument. If the anticipated counterargument attacks the sufficiency of the argument, the defence will be coordinative, and if it attacks the relevance of the counterargument, the refuting argument will support the unexpressed premise supporting the standpoint (Cf. Snoeck Henkemans 1992, ch. 6). Some countermoves that the arguer may anticipate can attack the argument in the

same way counterarguments do. As in example (6), an expression of doubt can challenge the propositional content. This means that structure of the argumentation in this example is subordinative. The same can be said in the case of a denial of the propositional content of the argument.

5. Strategic aspects of addressing anticipated countermoves

It should by now be clear that by addressing an anticipated countermove the arguer seeks to externalise the implicit discussion in such a way that his dialectical position as the protagonist of a standpoint is placed in explicit contrast with another party's position as the antagonist or even as the protagonist of a counter-standpoint. The aim of this move is therefore to reconstruct the discussion in which the protagonist's standpoint is subjected to the critical testing necessary for a rational resolution of the dispute. From this perspective, however, it would follow that, for the sake of this critical testing, the protagonist should be prepared to sacrifice the acceptability of his standpoint by, for example, subjecting his position to countermoves that are too strong to refute. This conclusion is true if one did not take account of the fact that arguers who choose to externalise the countermoves that they have anticipated are normally as much interested in having their position accepted by the (potential) opponent as in critically testing their standpoint and arguments. Therefore, in order to understand this argumentative move, it should also be made clear how it helps in achieving the arguer's aim of getting his standpoint accepted.

One important feature of addressing anticipated countermoves is its *voluntary* character. By addressing a countermove belonging to a real or imaginary opponent**[ii]** before this opponent externalises it himself, the arguer confers what Vincent and Heisler (1999) called an atmosphere of fair-play debate on the presentation because the arguer appears to voluntarily recognise the opponent's right to have his own argumentation taken into account in the arguer's contribution.

In a critical discussion, it should be noted, the role of the protagonist is restricted to advancing a standpoint and providing arguments for it. Anticipating and addressing a countermove before it is made explicit by the antagonist is not an obligation that the protagonist has to comply with. Advancing a countermove is strictly speaking the task of the antagonist, and only when the antagonist himself has challenged the acceptability of the protagonist's standpoint or argument by means of a countermove is the protagonist required to react to it in order to

proceed towards a conclusive defence of his standpoint.

From the perspective of critical discussion (in which the protagonist is required to deal with only the countermoves that have been externalised by the antagonist), the arguer in a real argumentative situation may only anticipate those countermoves that he renders relevant to his standpoint or argument, i.e. those countermoves that, if externalised by the opponent, could present a challenge to his position.

Another important feature of addressing anticipated countermoves is its *directing* effect. Addressing an anticipated countermove can help the arguer to direct the discussion in a way that is most instrumental in attaining an advantageous resolution of the dispute. By anticipating specific countermoves, the arguer prompts certain reactions from the potential opponent. What the arguer suggests by addressing a specific countermove is that the potential opponent should rather come up with a different countermove, if he still does not accept the arguer's standpoint or argument, as the arguer in this case has already dealt with at least one possible countermove. The arguer manages in this way to "block and deactivate" certain countermoves, to use Vincent and Heisler's (1999) terms.

5.1 Addressing anticipated countermoves to the standpoint

In the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, a difference of opinion arises: the protagonist advances a standpoint and the antagonist challenges it with a countermove. Addressing an anticipated countermove to one's standpoint is one way in which this confrontation can be made explicit. However, the arguer in actual argumentative discourse seeks more than just making explicit his and, more crucially, an opponent's countermove. The arguer will also manoeuvre strategically to secure the most beneficial presentation of the confrontation (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2000). Seen from this perspective, the arguer can use the strategy of addressing anticipated countermoves by selecting from the disagreement space certain countermoves and not others. In this way, the strategy helps him to push the whole discussion towards addressing those topics that he prefers. As Kauffeld (2002) argues, by choosing certain issues rather than others for discussion, the arguer obliges the opponent to consider and respond to those issues.

From the perspective of strategic manoeuvring, the simplest countermove to be anticipated against a standpoint is an expression of doubt as through this

countermove the potential opponent is merely anticipated to not accept the standpoint (not to necessarily reject it). Since by anticipating doubt the arguer presents the dispute as non-mixed, the potential opponent is presented to have nothing to defend. The arguer presents himself as the only party with anything to defend. The most strategic way for the arguer to deal with anticipated doubt is therefore discharging his burden of proof by providing an argument to defend his standpoint. Only in this way can the arguer maintain his standpoint against the doubt.

Anticipating a contradictory standpoint presents the dispute as single non-mixed. The anticipated countermove takes the form of a denial of the arguer's own standpoint if the latter is negative and a confirmation if it is negative. Pointing out a contradictory standpoint not only puts the opposing party on equal footing with the arguer, as both are shown to disagree on the same issue, but also presents them to have the same obligations, because both are in a position that requires them to defend their respective standpoints. But the anticipated contradictory standpoint is first of all a challenge for the arguer to defend his standpoint. This means that, in order to show that he has reasons to reject the anticipated counter-standpoint maintain his standpoint, he will need not only to doubt or deny this counter-standpoint but also to refute it by means of an argument. In this way, the arguer has shown that his standpoint can be maintained even though it has been opposed. To provide a well-rounded defence of his standpoint the arguer may further need to provide an argument possessing a justificatory potential for his own standpoint.

Through anticipating a contrary standpoint, the dispute is represented as multiple mixed: two opposing standpoints relating to two different propositions are projected. Like in the previous case, the arguer has the option of doubting the anticipated counter-standpoint. In this case, however, he will not be doing anything to justify that his own standpoint can be maintained. He can react to this counter-standpoint by denying it, in which case the move amounts to a rejection of the counter-standpoint but remains short of any justificatory force. Only refuting the counter-standpoint with an argument will help the arguer to show why the anticipated contrary standpoint represents a failed attack on his standpoint. This argument will then be said to possess a refutatory potential concerning the anticipated counter-standpoint; it justifies why the anticipated counter-standpoint may not be maintained by the potential opponent. At the same

time it justifies why the arguer may maintain his standpoint.

Since a contrary standpoint implies the contradictory standpoint, the anticipation of the first implies the anticipation of the second and therefore the options available for the arguer when anticipating a contradictory standpoint are also available to him when anticipating a contrary standpoint. Having anticipated a contrary standpoint, the arguer can proceed to show that even the contradictory standpoint that is implied in it is not tenable, by refuting this contradictory standpoint with an argument. Such a refutation would imply a refutation of the contrary standpoint.

Apart from anticipating counter-standpoints, the arguer may also anticipate a counterargument to his standpoint, which is the fourth option that he has available at this stage. The arguer may choose to only doubt or deny the content of the counterargument and keep his standpoint, but in this case opposition to the counterargument remains unjustified and his standpoint remains unsupported. To strengthen his position, the arguer will need to provide a justification for his doubt or denial by bringing an argument that challenges the refutatory potential of the counterargument. The latter option will allow him to overthrow the anticipated counterargument and keep his standpoint unchallenged.

Having refuted an anticipated counter-standpoint or counterargument, the arguer may find it useful to bring forward new arguments that have a justificatory potential for his own standpoint. This makes the arguer's position appear even stronger, because it will show that he not only overcomes the anticipated counter-standpoint but also possesses reasons for maintaining his own standpoint.

5.2 Addressing anticipated countermoves to the argument

When the arguer addresses an anticipated countermove to his argument, the presentation of the argumentation resulting from the move can be reconstructed as part of the argumentation stage. In this case, addressing the anticipated countermove should be seen as a way by which the arguer seeks to provide a successful defence for his standpoint and to launch an effective attack on the other potential opponent's counter-argumentation.

According to van Eemeren & Grootendorst (2004, p. 151), a conclusive defence of a standpoint or sub-standpoint is attained if the protagonist "has successfully defended both the propositional content called into question by the antagonist

and its force of justification or refutation called into question by the antagonist." Only in this case is the protagonist in a position to make the antagonist retract his doubt and accept the standpoint. By anticipating countermoves against his argument, the arguer subjects both the justificatory potential and the propositional content of his argumentation to the (potential) antagonist's criticism.

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (2004) condition requires that if the arguer is to get his standpoint accepted by the opponent whose countermoves he has anticipated, he (the arguer) has to defend this standpoint conclusively against these countermoves. By anticipating a countermove, the arguer not only places himself in a situation in which he has to show how his argumentation justifies the acceptability of his standpoint and refutes the anticipated countermoves, but he also opens for himself the opportunity to demonstrate the strength of his argumentation vis a vis that of the potential opponent to whom the countermove could be attributed. This opportunity, if seized properly, shall be instrumental towards presenting a conclusive defence of the standpoint.

The weakest countermove that the arguer can anticipate against his argument is doubt. Presenting one's argument as simply an object of doubt suggests that the opponent is not anticipated to be entirely against the targeted argument but simply to question the it acceptability, thereby giving the arguer the opportunity to strengthen it with more argumentation. Doubt may take the form of a critical question targeting the justificatory force of the argument. The most advantageous way of addressing the doubt in this case would be providing an argument that answers the specific critical question that the arguer envisages to arise. If the anticipated doubt targets the acceptability of the propositional content of the argument, then the best way to counter it would be providing arguments supporting the propositional content of the argument about which the doubt has been anticipated.

The arguer can also make it clear that he anticipates a counterargument against the propositional content or justificatory potential of his argument and then attacks either its refutatory potential or its content or both. When the arguer has anticipated a counterargument to his argument, he has different invalidating paths to follow. He can doubt it, deny it or provide an argument to refute it. By doubting or denying the refutatory potential of the counterargument, the arguer simply shows that he is not ready to give up his argument in the face of the

counterargument. The fact that the refutatory potential of the counterargument is doubted or denied does not grant any support for the arguer's argument. It is not a refutation of the counterargument; it is simply a challenge for the potential opponent to give up his counterargument. The arguer still has to provide argumentation in support of his own argument in order to maintain his position.

Providing arguments against the refutatory potential of the anticipated counterargument serves to justify why the counterargument is not a successful attack on the argument and allows the arguer to maintain his argument as a defence for the standpoint. The whole argumentative move undertaken by the arguer would then be said to possess both a justificatory potential for his standpoint and a refutatory potential concerning the anticipated counterargument.

The arguer can also choose to attack the propositional content of the counterargument itself by means of an argument. By opposing the propositional content of the anticipated counterargument, this argument is either contradictory or contrary. When it is contradictory it is simply a denial of the counterargument; when it is contrary it relates to a different proposition and implies the opposite of the counterargument. Challenging the counterargument in either way has the effect of shifting the focus of the argumentation away from the justificatory potential of arguer's argument to the weak propositional content of the counterargument. Dealing with the counterargument in this way serves the arguer to maintain his initial argument as a defence for his standpoint.

Furthermore, the arguer can opt for refuting the anticipated counterargument as insufficient or irrelevant (Snoeck Henkemans 1992, p. 139). By doing this, the arguer clearly presents the initial dispute as mixed because now the potential opponent is anticipated to have a counter-standpoint regarding the issue and that this standpoint is not appropriately defended.

The arguer may always decide to proceed further towards a conclusive defence of his standpoint by providing new arguments supporting his standpoint. However, this may only be helpful towards such defence if the arguer has already refuted the anticipated counterargument. Providing support for his argument without first refuting the anticipated counterargument amounts to evading the burden of proof towards one's standpoint. The arguer is therefore obliged to react to the challenge imposed by the countermove in order to proceed for any conclusive

defence of his standpoint. The rule for a conclusive defence of the standpoint, mentioned above, stipulates that one may only call one's defence conclusive if both the refutatory potential of the counter-argumentation and the justificatory potential of one's arguments have been fulfilled. Leaving the anticipated counterargument unrefuted may not lead towards such a defence, whether or not the arguer provides more argumentation for his position.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued that by considering the practice of addressing anticipated countermoves as a form of strategic manoeuvring it is possible to explain how the arguer can use it to provide the most advantageous defence for his position. I have shown that the options provided by the model of critical discussion determine the different ways in which the arguer can address the countermove the he anticipates. Any advantage that this strategic manoeuvre may have for the arguer's position depends on how the arguer chooses to handle the anticipated countermove. Since an anticipated countermove presents a challenge to the arguer's position in the (implicit) discussion, his position is strengthened insofar as he proceeds to invalidate it in order to secure a conclusive defence for his position.

NOTES

[ii] I use the term 'arguer' to refer to the speaker or writer in the text, reconstructed as the protagonist of a standpoint, and I use the term 'opponent' to refer to the person or group of persons to whom the anticipated countermove is (explicitly or implicitly) attributed, reconstructed as the antagonist of that standpoint and in a mixed dispute as also the protagonist of a counter-standpoint. I use the terms 'protagonist' and 'antagonist' only in the context of critical discussion.

[2] It is namely not so important whether this opponent exists or not. To avoid any confusion, I use 'potential' to refer to both 'real' and 'imaginary' opponent.

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Understanding The Strategy Of Attacking Premises

1. *Introduction*

A common method of criticising an argument is to attack one or more of its premises. However, if we know that a valid argument has one or more false premises, this does not allow us to say anything at all about the truth or falsity of the conclusion. Is the procedure of criticising the premises of an argument, therefore, pointless? I show that an attempt to provide a rationale for this strategy, based on a traditional understanding of rationality, fails to adequately explain its value, but I then argue that there is a place for this tactic in argumentative discourse. However, in order to appreciate its value we need to consider how arguments are used to get people to believe things in the context of a dialogue and not just the formal properties of those arguments. (It should be noted that, in this paper, I assume that the strategy of attacking one or more of the premises of an argument is only used to criticise valid arguments.)

2. *The strategy in practice*

Many authors either advocate or use the strategy of attacking an argument by criticising one or more of its premises. I will mention several of these in order to illustrate how widespread the acceptance of this tactic is. Gilbert (1996) gives a lot of useful advice about how to improve your argumentative skills. Rather than talking about the conclusion and the premises of an argument, he talks about the claim that someone puts forward and the *reasons* that that person has for asserting that claim. In a situation where the person you are arguing with puts forward a claim that you disagree with, Gilbert (1996, p. 32) gives the following advice, '*Always attack the reasons for a claim, not the claim itself*'.

Fogelin and Sinnott-Armstrong (1997, p. 366) are not as categorical as Gilbert. They acknowledge that there are several ways in which an argument can be criticised. However, they write:

The second main way to attack an argument is to challenge one of its premises. We can argue that there is no good reason to accept a particular premise as true, asking, for example, 'How do you know that?' If there is no way to justify a premise, then the argument usually fails to justify its conclusion. More strongly, we can argue that the premise is actually false. In this second case, we refute an argument by refuting one of its premises.

Like Fogelin and Sinnott-Armstrong, Schopenhauer, in an essay only published after his death, states that there are several ways in which an opponent's thesis can be refuted. One of these he calls the *direct* method. He writes that the 'direct course attacks the reasons for the thesis' and that, if successful, this 'direct refutation shows that the thesis is not true' (Schopenhauer 2005, p. 174).

Some writers do not explicitly state this way of attacking an argument, but just use it. Reinard is one of these. He considers someone who 'is opposed to the current welfare system because he or she believes benefits go to many who are capable of working' (Reinard 1991, p. 308). The argument used here has an unexpressed premise and the conclusion is not fully expressed. We can take the conclusion to be the statement that the current welfare system is unfair and the unexpressed premise to be the proposition that, in a fair welfare system, benefits do not go to those who are capable of working. (Whether or not this is the best way to reconstruct this argument is not the issue here.) Reinard says that one way of criticising this argument is to 'cite evidence that fewer than five percent of welfare recipients could work if jobs were available in their vicinities'. He is attacking the claim that the current welfare system is unfair by showing that one of the reasons given for this claim is false.

Shaw also uses the strategy of criticising an argument by attacking one of its premises without explicitly stating it. One of the arguments he analyses is, 'Most of those who say they believe in capital punishment do not really believe in it. For if they were called upon to carry out an execution themselves they would not be able to bring themselves to do it ' (Shaw 1997, p. 61). He first notes that there is an unexpressed premise in this argument and he says that this is the statement, [Anyone] who sincerely believed capital punishment was right would be prepared to carry out the punishment himself'. Whether or not this is the most likely unexpressed premise is not the issue here. What is relevant is that Shaw criticises the argument he has reconstructed by showing that the unexpressed premise is suspect. He does this as follows, 'A person might surely fail to carry out an execution because he regarded executions as unpleasant rather than wrong. It is

only too possible to shirk unpleasant tasks one thinks ought to be done, leaving it to others to perform them'.

3. *An attempted rationale for the strategy*

Gilbert is one of the few writers who attempts to give a rationale for the strategy of attacking an argument by criticising one or more of its premises. He is a rationalist and he puts forward the following principle of rationality, '*Always assume that people have reasons for their beliefs*' (Gilbert 1996, p. 35). For him, in the context of argumentation, 'being rational means providing reasons for beliefs' (Gilbert 1996, p. 34).

The conception of rationality that Gilbert is here assuming is very old. It has been called *uncritical* or *comprehensive rationalism* (Popper 1966, p. 230) and also *panrationalism* (Bartley 1984, p. 85). Bartley (1984, p. 93) says that comprehensive rationalism consists of two requirements:

These are (1) that any position which can be justified or established by rational argument is to be accepted; and (2) that *only* positions which can be justified or established by rational argument are to be accepted.

Thus, in comprehensive rationalism the only way in which a belief can be justified is by showing that it follows logically from other justified statements. There is no way of justifying a belief other than by showing it to be the conclusion of a valid argument whose premises have themselves been established.

Comprehensive rationalism can easily be shown to be untenable. Consider some position, claim or standpoint. For the comprehensive rationalist to accept this claim it has to be justified or established by rational argument. That is to say, it has to follow logically from other justified positions. The only way in which these positions can themselves be established is by means of rational argument. That means that they have to follow logically from other established positions which themselves have been justified by means of rational argument and so on. Such a view of rationality entails that no position whatsoever can ever be justified, because the attempt to justify any belief would lead to an infinite regress.

Gilbert (1996, p. 34) is well aware that his principle of rationality cannot be universally valid and his discussion brings out the untenability of comprehensive rationalism in another way:

Someone who believes something without reason is being irrational. In terms of argument, being rational means providing reasons for beliefs. In the end all of us may be irrational, since sooner or later we reach a point of ultimate beliefs (for

which it is impossible to provide reasons).

In order to prevent an infinite regress of reasons, Gilbert accepts that people must have some beliefs which they have acquired directly in some way and not as a result of argumentation. Because of his principle of rationality, this acquisition must have been irrational. In fact, the situation is even worse than this because Gilbert's acceptance of the existence of ultimate beliefs shows that his comprehensive rationalism is inconsistent. He begins by assuming that a rational person has reasons for all his beliefs and ends by acknowledging that that person must have beliefs for which reasons cannot be given. As Gilbert's comprehensive rationalism is inconsistent it cannot be used to provide a rationale of the strategy of criticising an argument by attacking one or more of its premises.

A common response to the realisation that comprehensive rationalism is untenable is to adopt a different account of rationality which has been called *limited rationalism* (Bartley 1990, p. 232). A limited rationalist accepts that some beliefs cannot be justified by means of rational argument, but he then insists that every other rational belief must be ultimately justified in terms of some collection of justification-terminating beliefs. That is to say, the limited rationalist accepts that all the leaf nodes of the tree of justificatory reasons for every one of his beliefs consist of statements belonging to a privileged class of justification-terminating beliefs which are established in some non-argumentative manner. Limited rationalists disagree about the nature of the justification-terminating beliefs and also about the ways in which those beliefs are established extra-logically. I will mention three varieties of limited rationalism for illustrative purposes, but there are many more.

A very popular version of limited rationalism is *empiricism* in which the collection of justification-terminating beliefs consists of observation statements which are established on the basis of sense experience.

Williams (1999, p. 180) presents a 'picture of human knowledge as an evolving social phenomenon'. The collection of justification-terminating beliefs in his account consists of those beliefs that are generally accepted by some community. He writes, 'at any given time we must have some stock of beliefs which are not thought to be open to challenge' (Williams 1999, p. 83).

Wittgenstein can be interpreted as saying that our justification-terminating beliefs are established by our form of life. In *On Certainty* he is much troubled by the practice of asking for and giving reasons. He writes that some people behave '[as]

if giving grounds did not come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting' (Wittgenstein 1969, p. 17e). Thus, the class of justification-terminating beliefs are grounded, not by other beliefs, but by a particular form of life.

The main problem with all varieties of limited rationalism is that no rational account can be given for the choice of justification-terminating beliefs. That choice has to be irrational. This is because, for the limited rationalist, being rational means providing reasons for all beliefs except justification-terminating beliefs. Reasons, therefore, cannot be given for those beliefs. Limited rationalism can, therefore, be seen to be relativistic and fideistic: the collection of justification-terminating beliefs is chosen by an irrational act of will and, being irrational, any such choice is as good as any other.

To overcome the difficulties of comprehensive and limited rationalism Bartley has proposed a new version of rationalism which he calls *pancritical rationalism*. Rather than thinking that 'being rational means providing reasons for beliefs' (Gilbert 1996, p. 34) or that being rational means providing reasons for all beliefs except a privileged class of justification-terminating beliefs, Bartley holds that being rational means that you are willing to allow any of your beliefs to be criticised. He stresses that there are many different ways in which a claim can be criticised (Bartley 1984, pp. 126-136). However, there is at least one method of criticism that he outlaws and that is the strategy of criticising an argument by attacking one or more of its premises. Bartley outlaws this strategy indirectly.

Before we can attack the reasons that someone has for a claim we have to ascertain what those reasons are and that is achieved by asking a question like 'How do you know?' Bartley (1984, p. 113) sees no place for this question. He writes, 'The traditional demand for justification – the 'How do you know?' question – would not legitimately arise [in pancritical rationalism]'. He explains why as follows:

Any view may be challenged by questions such as 'How do you know?', 'Give me a reason', or 'Prove it'. When such challenges are accepted by citing further reasons that justify those views under challenge, these views may be questioned in turn. And so on forever. Yet if the burden of justification is perpetually shifted to a higher-order reason or authority, the contention originally questioned is never effectively defended. One may as well never have begun the defence: an infinite regress is created (Bartley 1990, p. 231).

I have a great deal of sympathy for pancritical rationalism, but I think that Bartley is wrong to forbid the use of the question 'How do you know?' and thereby outlaw the strategy of attacking premises as a legitimate method of criticism. His argument is flawed because asking the question 'How do you know?' does not necessarily lead to the creation of an infinite regress. Above I discussed the claim made by Gilbert (1996, p. 35) that people always have reasons for their beliefs. This does lead to an infinite regress, because those reasons are themselves beliefs. Bartley's claim is significantly different because he is talking about one person asking another for reasons. No one can ask another an infinite sequence of questions. Furthermore, having asked the question 'How do you know?' once, the questioner does not have to ask it again. He could change to a different kind of challenge. He could say, for example, something along the following lines, 'But that contradicts what you said earlier' or 'Your claim has these unacceptable consequences'. In fact, he does not have to challenge everything his opponent says. The opponent may actually say something that the questioner agrees with.

Not only is Bartley's stated reason for outlawing the strategy of asking for and criticising reasons flawed, he also implicitly endorses the use of this strategy! For example, in discussing the critical method that he employs in his book *The Retreat to Commitment* he says, 'I do not pretend to give an exhaustive critique of the thinkers or the systems of thought which I discuss and criticize' (Bartley 1984, p. xxvi). He continues, 'I have tried to aim my criticisms at only the most basic assumptions of these systems of thought, their feet as it were, without which they cannot stand.' Thus, concerning each system of thought that he discusses, Bartley's strategy is to attack the premises (which he calls 'feet' or 'basic assumptions') from which the statements that make up that system follow. The result of this is to show that all those statements are false. Those statements are all conclusions of different arguments having the same premises. Thus, Bartley uses the strategy of attacking premises to criticise a set of conclusions and not just a single conclusion, but he uses it nonetheless.

As already mentioned, I have a lot of sympathy for Bartley's pancritical rationalism, but I also think that the strategy of attacking the premises of an argument is an important argumentative tactic. Thus, the task to which I now turn is that of legitimising that strategy in a way that can be accommodated within pancritical rationalism.

4. *Legitimising the strategy*

In order to appreciate the strategy of asking for and criticising reasons we have to

stop thinking of arguments as abstract objects to be studied without regard to their use. The legitimacy of the practice of asking for and challenging reasons can only be explained by looking at arguments that are being used to try and persuade someone of the truth of some claim. Consider, for example, the following argument, which I have already mentioned and which is based on (Shaw 1997, p. 61), 'If a supporter of capital punishment was called upon to carry out an execution, he would be unable to do so. Anyone who sincerely supported capital punishment would be prepared to carry out the punishment himself. Therefore, supporters of capital punishment are insincere.' When such an argument is presented without any consideration being given to its use, then showing that one or more of its premises is false tells us nothing at all about the truth-value of the conclusion. There is a role for the study of arguments as abstract objects without consideration being given to their use. However, it is a mistake to think that studying arguments in this way exhausts everything interesting that can be said about them. No doubt, arguments can be put to many different uses. It is when they are used to influence people's beliefs in the context of a dialogue that the strategy of attacking reasons makes sense.

Many rules would appear to govern argumentative discourse, but two in particular are especially relevant to understanding the strategy of criticising an argument by attacking one or more of its premises. The first applies to much more than just argumentative discourse and was called, by the eighteenth-century philosopher Thomas Reid, the principle of credulity. This 'is a disposition to confide in the veracity of others, and to believe what they tell us' (Reid 1997, p. 194).

He adds that this principle 'is unlimited in children, until they meet with instances of deceit and falsehood: and it retains a very considerable degree of strength through life.' Because of this principle, we do not need a reason in order to believe what we are told, but we do need a reason to reject what we hear.

The second rule that governs argumentative discourse and is relevant to understanding the strategy of attacking premises is a restricted version of, what Harman (1986, p. 12) has called, the *logical closure principle*. Harman's principle states that a person's beliefs should be closed under logical implication: if a proposition follows logically from your beliefs, then you should believe that as well. The logical closure principle is controversial. Since every statement has an infinite number of logical consequences (to be precise, it has countably many logical consequences), the logical closure principle would mean that anyone with

at least one belief would have infinitely many beliefs. For my purposes I only need a restricted version of this principle which states that if you *believe* that a proposition follows logically from your beliefs, then you should believe that as well. In the original principle you do not need to know or believe that the proposition in question follows from your beliefs, whereas in the restricted version you have to believe that the inference from your beliefs to the proposition in question is valid.

I will show the usefulness of the strategy of attacking reasons by considering a concrete example of its employment. In this I make use of the argument from Shaw (1997, p. 61) that has already been mentioned. Consider a conversation between two people. One of them, the protagonist, asserts, 'Supporters of capital punishment are insincere.' (Following van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, p. 35), I call the person who makes the assertion the *protagonist* and the hearer the *antagonist*.) We may assume that the antagonist does not believe this assertion at the beginning of the dialogue. Because of Reid's principle of credulity, people generally believe what they are told, so, if the antagonist does not challenge this assertion in some way, he should accept it. If he does not criticise the protagonist's claim, then the protagonist would be right in thinking that he had convinced the antagonist that supporters of capital punishment are insincere. There are many ways in which the antagonist could reply to the protagonist's assertion which would indicate that he did not accept it. One of these is to ask 'How do you know that?' or 'Why do you believe that?' Such a question has several purposes in argumentative discourse. One of them is to indicate to the protagonist that the antagonist has not believed the assertion and it can, thus, be interpreted as a challenge, 'Convince me of the truth of your statement.' It also, as Norman (1997, p. 487) puts it, 'temporarily suspends the claimant's right to use the claim questioned. The implicit understanding is that, if entitlement to the claim is to be redeemed, adequate grounds must be provided.' The protagonist's ultimate aim might be to convince the antagonist that capital punishment should be abolished and his argument for this position may depend on the claim that supporters of capital punishment are insincere. Thus, he needs to convince the antagonist of this claim. The question 'How do you know?' prevents him from using this claim as a premise until he has convinced the antagonist to believe it.

In reply to the antagonist's question 'How do you know?' the protagonist might reply, 'Anyone who sincerely supported capital punishment would be prepared to

carry out the punishment himself. Furthermore, if a supporter of capital punishment was called upon to carry out an execution, he would be unable to do so.' If the antagonist were to accept these reasons, then, because of the restricted logical closure principle, he would be committed to accepting the claim. If he does not challenge the reasons given, by Reid's principle of credulity, he would be assumed to have believed them. And believing the reasons, he would be forced to believe the claim. (He can challenge the reasons given for a claim in many different ways. He could ask again 'How do you know?' However, he could adopt some other strategy, like showing that the reasons had consequences that the protagonist found unacceptable.)

Reid's principle of credulity helps to explain why the strategy of attacking premises has a place in argumentative discourse. In an argument one person tries to convince another of a claim, that is to say, he tries to get the other person to believe that claim. One way of getting someone to believe something that they are reluctant to believe is to get them to accept reasons from which that claim follows. If the antagonist does not attack those reasons, the protagonist can assume he has accepted them and thus, by the restricted logical closure principle, that he has been forced to accept the controversial claim. That is why the antagonist must challenge one or more of the reasons given for a claim that he does not want to accept.

The strategy of attacking premises comes into its own when arguments are used to influence beliefs in the context of a dialogue. In argumentative discourse, if the antagonist does not challenge an assertion made by the protagonist, it can be legitimately assumed that he accepted that assertion. Challenging an assertion is a way of signalling to the protagonist that the antagonist does not believe it. And not believing one of the reasons given for a claim shows that he does not believe the claim. In argumentative discourse, if I do not believe one or more of the reasons given for a claim that I have challenged, then it can be correctly assumed that I do not believe the claim. Contrast this with the formal properties of the same argument: if one or more of its premises are shown to be false, then the conclusion can be either true or false. The falsity of one or more of the premises of a valid argument is not transmitted to its conclusion, but, in argumentative discourse, my not believing one of the reasons given for a claim I have challenged is transmitted to that claim. Thus, the strategy of attacking premises makes sense in argumentative discourse.

My legitimisation of the strategy of attacking premises in the context of an argumentative dialogue depends on the acceptance of only two rules, namely

Reid's principle of credulity and the restricted logical closure principle. These two rules are not inconsistent with the tenets of pancritical rationalism. Thus, they allow us to legitimise the strategy of criticising premises while at the same time embracing pancritical rationalism. However, those two rules are not specific to pancritical rationalism. Therefore, my legitimisation of the strategy of attacking premises can be accepted by anyone who accepts those two rules no matter how they conceive of rationality.

5. *Conclusion*

I have argued that there is a place for the practice of asking for and criticising reasons in argumentative discourse. Most people accept this, but a common account of why this strategy is used is faulty. This says that you show that the conclusion of an argument is false by showing that one of the premises of that argument is false (Schopenhauer 2005, p. 174). This is straightforwardly wrong as a valid argument can have a true conclusion even if all of its premises are false. To understand the strategy of attacking reasons we have to look at how it is used in argumentative discourse involving a protagonist and an antagonist. I have indicated several of the consequences of using this strategy both on the protagonist and the antagonist. By asking for the reasons given for a claim made by the protagonist, the antagonist signals that he does not believe that claim. Furthermore, it prevents the protagonist from using that claim as a reason for a further claim until he can provide acceptable reasons for it. By criticising the reasons that the protagonist gives for his claim the antagonist again signals that he does not believe them and, if the protagonist cannot rebut those criticisms, he cannot make further use of his original claim in his argument with the antagonist. If he cannot, he may excuse himself from the conversation or try a different approach to getting his message across. The truth or falsity of the reasons given for a claim and how these may affect the truth-value of the claim is not the issue when the strategy of attacking reasons is used in argumentative discourse. What matters in an argument that takes place in the context of a dialogue is whether or not the antagonist accepts what the protagonist claims and whether the protagonist can make further use of a claim he has made. It should be noted that I am not suggesting that truth and falsity are irrelevant to argumentative discourse. They are crucially important as all of us want to have true beliefs rather than false ones. What I am saying is that you cannot understand the strategy of attacking premises just in terms of the truth-values of the component statements of the argument being criticised as falsity is not generally transmitted

from the premises to the conclusion of a valid argument. To understand this strategy you need to take into account what the antagonist, as the user of the strategy, believes. This is because his not believing one of the premises of an argument, used by the protagonist, *is* transmitted to the conclusion of that argument in the sense that he is not compelled to believe that conclusion.

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – The Strategic Use Of Antithesis In The Argumentation Stage Of A Critical Discussion

1. Introduction

In this paper I am concerned with investigating the role that antithesis plays when arguers try to reconcile their dialectical aims with their rhetorical aims in the argumentation stage of a discussion. My intention is to show that different kinds of the usage of antithesis may help an arguer to present his arguments in such a way that they seem as strong as possible to the audience or they are difficult to attack.

Antithesis can be defined, starting from Aristotle's comments and examples, as "a verbal structure that places contrasted or opposed terms in parallel or balanced cola or phrases" (Fahnestock 1999, p. 46). Although it received some attention in classical rhetoric, other figures such as metaphor have been more largely described and the functions that they play have been more closely examined. However, when looking into the description of this figure, one can easily notice that antithesis is not merely an ornament added to plain speech, but it can have different functions, such as giving emphasis to specific aspects. This effect occurs due to its placement most often in parallel balanced structures that attracts the attention of the readers more easily than if placed in sentences with different patterns. Therefore, I consider that the various kinds of effects of antithesis are worth investigating in argumentative discourse.

Before providing a detailed account of the possible effects of various forms of antithesis, I take a brief look at the history of this figure. An account of how this figure of speech is described by different authors can point to possible effects the figure of antithesis can have.

To start with, Aristotle pays special attention to antithesis in Book III of his *Rhetoric* where he shows that, along with metaphor and energeia, it stands as one

of the devices employed to form a polished prose style. The reason for him to affirm this is determined by the fact that he believes that antithesis satisfies the syntactic criteria of being placed in a symmetrical parallel phrasing capable of drawing the attention of the audience through this strategic positioning. As an example he gives the following: “It happens often in these circumstances that the wise fail and the foolish succeed” (Kennedy: 1991, p. 239). As Fahnestock (1999, p. 47) rightly notices, “antithesis as a figure of speech at the sentence level builds on these powerful natural pairs, the use of one in the first half of the figure creating the expectation of its verbal partner in the second half”. Should this expectation be defeated, the consequence would be a loss of its force, otherwise supported by the syntactic pattern.

According to Aristotle, the contrasted wording in antithesis can use four modes of opposition: contraries such as *good* and *bad*, contradictions, such as *certain* and *uncertain*, correlatives, such as *cause* and *effect* and privation/possession pairs, such as *blindness* and *sight*. As concerns the last category mentioned, Fahnestock (1999, p. 49) argues, and I agree, that “it collapses readily into the other categories”. According to her, a pair such as *blindness* and *sight* can be treated either as a contradiction in the sense of *to see* and *not to see* or as a pair of contraries in the sense of *blind* and *sighted*. Whether the terms opposed in an antithesis are contraries, contradictories or correlatives, Aristotle believes that the figure requires in all cases a parallel phrasing. The main function of this kind of construction is that it is capable of attracting the attention of the audience by bringing into the foreground the opposed terms. A reinforcement of this emphasis is achieved when all words, except for the contrasted terms, are repeated or when similar grammatical forms are employed. In both cases, the opposed terms occur in similar positions, which highlights their difference. To such cases, Fahnestock (1999) adds the possibility to place one of the pairs at the end of the balanced cola. In an example such as “You have everything to win/and nothing to lose”, Fahnestock (1999, p. 50) is right to claim that the end focus gives more prominence to the contrasted terms.

Fahnestock (1999, p. 50) proposes one explanation why the parallel phrasing would be the ideal form for an antithesis. This explanation is connected with the ability one has to perceive a contrast, which is enhanced when a uniform background is provided. One perceives more easily red and green dots against a white background. Similarly, according to Fahnestock, “different grammatical

structures in the two halves of an antithesis would diminish the intended contrast between the paired opposites". Given that the device was first identified in Greek oral practice, audible parallelism was important at that time to create an emphasised sound pattern.

The author of *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* places also antithesis among important figures, but as a new aspect, he marks a distinction between antithetical thought and antithetical phrasing, a combination of which would create a perfect figure. In addition, it is possible that one functions without the other. Given that in the examples the author provides antithesis has not survived translation, I limit myself to adding that the parallel construction is no longer the only one possible for the figure, the presence of contrasted wording being considered sufficient. An instance such as "Let the rich and prosperous give to the poor and needy" counts in this case as an antithesis.

Later, the author of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* simply treats antithesis among many other figures without particular emphasis on this device. Its defining features appear when treating different forms of antithesis, such as *contentio*, when the style is built upon contraries (Cicero IV, XV, 21) in order to impress and give distinction to the discourse, as in the following example provided: "To enemies you show yourself conciliatory, to friends inexorable". Another form discussed by the author of this treatise is *contrarium*, "the figure which, of two opposite statements, uses one so as neatly and directly to prove the other" (Cicero IV, XVIII, 25) as in the following instance: "Now how should you expect one who has ever been hostile to his own interests to be friendly to another's?".

In his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian (IX, III, 81-83) offers a thorough account of antithesis, to which he refers as *contrapositum* and lists all possible forms of verbal antitheses: single words with single words, cola with cola and sentences with sentences. Moreover, Quintilian (IX, III, 81-83) adds, "nor is the contrasted case always placed immediately after that to which it is opposed, but (…) we (…) may have correspondence between subsequent particulars and others previously mentioned". A parallel construction is no longer imposed, although the examples provided have this feature.

In recent publications, Fahnestock (1999, 2003, 2004, 2005) pointed out the heuristic and persuasive use of antithesis by showing how scientists can argue when making use of antithesis. In the first case the author mentions, arguers draw on already accepted pairs of opposed terms, the frame of the figure being

used to invent or construct arguments. Since the terms are already accepted, the form becomes what Fahnestock (1999, p. 59) calls “an inventional prompt”, the first colon determining the choice of terms and the form of the second. The effect it has on the audience depends on its prior recognition and it can be so strong that even the use of a partial antithesis secures a good effect. As an example Fahnestock takes the case of a sentence such as “I am tired of words” that inevitably calls for “deeds”.

In the second case that Fahnestock indicates, arguers construct an argument to set terms apart, to create new contraries out of terms that have not been previously opposed for the audience. Terms are forced into opposition and placed into strategic positions, as in the following example from the work of a physiologist: “(…) the roots of the nerves that arise from the spinal cord have different functions, that the posterior appear more especially intended for *sensations*, whereas the anterior seem to be more particularly linked with *movement*. (my italics). “Sensation” and “movement” do not represent an established opposition, but they become opposed by their placement in this figure, linked with the established antonyms “posterior” and “anterior”.

In the third case the author indicates, the nature of an existing opposition is reconfigured. An antithesis of a different kind is created in such a case, as when intermediates are formed from previously opposed terms. A case in point can be “indifference” as an intermediate between “love” and “hate”. As Fahnestock (1999, p. 72) explains in this case, arguers “have the more modest goal of reconfiguring the kind of opposition represented by a pair of terms”. The midpoint of the terms obtained is not an average of properties, but “a sharp boundary producing a dichotomy” (Fahnestock 1999, p. 73). The reader is encouraged to accept the opposition by arguments offered in favour of each of the contrasted terms.

This short description of the figure of antithesis indicates that this device is not merely aesthetic, but it can have certain functions. The placement of opposed terms in parallel balanced grammatical constructions may convey certain effects, such as giving presence to certain aspects, placing others into the background or encouraging the audience to accept certain oppositions.

My aim is to make clear different kinds of effects that may be achieved when arguers employ antithesis. In order to achieve my goal, I examine the role of this

figure in the context of what van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2000, 2002) have called *strategic manoeuvring*, that is the arguers' attempts to reconcile their rhetorical and dialectical aims, making a strong case, but avoiding to put forward moves that are not reasonable. My focus in this paper is on the argumentation stage in order to investigate to what extent antithesis helps arguers to put forward strong arguments, more difficult to attack.
I present first an overview of possible effects that different forms of antithesis can have as shown by classical and modern authors concerned with the study of this figure. These effects are an addition to the effects presented already above. Starting from these general effects, I try to indicate in the final section of the paper how arguers can manoeuvre strategically in the argumentation stage.

2. Effects of antithesis
According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969, p. 172), figures can have effects such as imposing or suggesting a choice, bringing about communion with the audience or increasing the impression of presence. Antithesis can have the last two of these effects. Just like any other figure, antithesis is employed to have some striking effects on the audience, a fact underlined also later by Fahnestock (1999) and Tindale (2004). Fahnestock focuses in her treatment on how a pattern consisting of opposing terms is experienced encouraging the audience to follow it, "fulfil its predictions and even feel its force" (1999: 69). An even greater effect is achieved as in the case exemplified above where an argument is constructed to set terms apart that were not viewed as such before. The impression of presence is created when the antithetical pattern occurs in symmetry through parallelism, an efficient choice to reinforce the arguments. Apart from these two general effects, antithesis can have other possible effects determined by the various forms under which it can occur.

Quintilian (IX, III, 35) indicates that an antithesis of the regressio type intensifies the contrasting effect through repetition whose role is to strengthen the opposition and draw attention to the elements contrasted. One of the examples he gives is the following: "The reputation of the leaders was approximately equal, but that of their followers was not so equal".
In the case of an antithesis of the *comparatio* type, two elements are paralleled in order to focus on one of them, accentuating the distinction that exists already. One of the elements is singled out to give it a presence in the discourse. In *Rhetorica ad Herenium* (IV, XL, 59) the following example is provided to illustrate

the effect of this type of antithesis: “Unlike what happens in the palaestra, where he who receives the torch is swifter in the relay race than he who hands it on, the new general who receives command of an army is not superior to the general who retires from its command. For in the one case it is an exhausted runner who hands the torch to a fresh athlete, whereas in this it is an experienced commander who hands over the army to an inexperienced”.

A contrast can be established between the ordinary meaning and the emphatic meaning through an antithesis of the distinctio type, as in: “That is not economy on your part, but greed, because economy is careful conservation of one’s goods and greed is wrongful covetousness of one’s goods” (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* IV, XXVI, 36). The strength in this case comes from accentuation, brevity and clarity by pointing out certain aspects that explain the difference between two qualities or entities. A distinction is then made between two notions, one positive and the other negative, explaining why a positive term should be replaced by a negative term. In this example, the term *economy* is weakened by the employment of a negation and receives a mitigated reading, that of *greed*. The negation repairs the description by providing a milder reading of it. A contrast of this kind calls for the acceptance by the reader of the second term given that the first term is negated and reasons to adopt the second term are offered through the explanation of both terms.

Terms may also be placed in opposition against the expectations of the audience. Sloane (2001) describes New York in the following terms: “It has the poorest millionaires, the littlest great men, the haughtiest beggars, the plainest beauties, the lowest skyscrapers, the dullest pleasures of any town I ever saw”. In the case of the antithesis of the *oxymoron* type as in this example, a new strange unity of things is created that emphasizes the fact that something is unexpected and unusual.

3. The strategic use of antithesis in the argumentation stage

According to van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002), parties engaged in argumentative discourse make use of what has been termed *strategic manoeuvring* in order to reconcile their dialectical aims with their rhetorical aims. To explain, the parties remain committed to complying with the critical norms, but they try to achieve at the same time a persuasive result in order to win the discussion. Pursuing a different goal besides that of resolving a difference of opinion does not prevent people from achieving the latter aim.

In the argumentation stage, which is the focus of the present paper, protagonists put forward arguments for their standpoints that are intended to overcome the doubts of the antagonists or to refute the critical reactions of the antagonists (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, p. 61). The antagonists judge whether the argumentation that is advanced is acceptable. If it is not fully convincing, they provide further reactions, followed by further argumentation from the protagonist, so that the structure of the argumentation that is advanced can vary from very simple to very complex.

The dialectical objective at this stage is to test the tenability of the standpoints that shaped the difference of opinion in the confrontation stage. Rhetorically, the parties aim at making the strongest possible case and launching the most effective attack. They choose a strategic line of defence that best suits the speaker. All moves made are adapted to the preferences of the audience, in other words they respond to audience demands. This kind of adaptation involves creating a sense of communion with the audience, involving moves such as reference to principles that the audience agrees with. To achieve these aims, presentational devices are strategically employed in order to convey the various moves in the discourse in an effective way. Unclear formulations that might weaken one's case are avoided, arguments are put forward in a fashion that appeals to the audience and arguments are so formulated as to bring about less criticism.

In practice, all these aspects work together in order to influence the result of the argumentation stage. According to van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002, p. 141), "argumentative strategies (…) are methodical designs of moves for influencing the result of a particular discussion stage, or the discussion as a whole, to one's own advantage, which manifest themselves in a systematic, coordinated and simultaneous exploitation of the opportunities afforded at that stage".
I analyze in what follows some examples in order to show how different forms of antithesis presented above can help the arguer to give forcefulness to his arguments and to make them appealing to the audience so that they are hard to attack. Consequently, the possibility of manoeuvring strategically by employing different forms of antithesis will be analyzed in the context of the argumentation stage.

The following example stands as an instance of the strategic employment of antithesis where the arguer attempts to make the audience accept that the

products his company produces are of a high quality. In order to support the standpoint that he believes his products to be very good, the arguer reinforces a connection between two contrasted aspects, high quality and low costs:
(1) At Haiwei we actually work hand in hand with our customers to develop *high* quality technology solutions, swiftly and at *low* costs to satisfy real customer needs.

Possible criticism that a high quality product might involve high costs is anticipated and responded to by the arguer who highlights, through the use of an antithesis that indicates that the good quality is accompanied by a low price, only the advantages of the product. Although linguistically a pair of opposites varying along the scalar dimension of vertical extension in a metaphorical sense, the oppositeness of meaning suggests in this example the necessity of unity between the two features of the pair *high-low* and it is this bringing together that gives a strong argument for the audience to be persuaded.

In the next example, too, there is a case of lexical contrast between single words, but the oppositeness of meaning in this case helps to fulfil a different rhetorical goal:
(2) He seems to be an honorable person, hardworking and probably intelligent enough. (…) But he is suffering from complete isolation. It is the isolation of an Arab in Amman, educated at the local university but cut off from significant contact with the outside world (…). He cannot go to the United States. He cannot go to Iraq. He has been denied access to the defendants in prison. He has been denied access to the documentary evidence that is slowly being entered into a database in Baghdad. He has seen no deposits and he does not know if they have been taken. He has not been informed of the charges. (…). There have been no phone calls from the officials at the tribunal. (…). Abandoned, therefore, he wanders through the wilds of the Internet, reassured by the appearance of a global *connection*, but essentially alone and exposed to the Internet's depredations. (*The Atlantic*, June 2005, p. 72).

The arguer tries to support the standpoint that the leader of the committee of the legal defenders of Sadam Hussein is someone who has the qualities necessary to do a proper job for the defence of his client. Despite this, he has an ironic fate described in this example through the employment of antitheses. The forcefulness of the argument is enhanced through grammatical symmetry in the form of parallelism, the use of synonymous words – *isolated and abandoned* – that

contrast with a seeming *connection* to the world through Internet – connection – and the use of negatives whose function is to deny that a certain state of affairs exists, namely communication with others. The negation acts as an intensifier, highlighting the information within its scope. The multiple emphatic use of negation helps to amplify that the person described is in complete forced isolation despite his apparent relation with the world and it pronounces so much this state that criticisms can no longer be raised. The negatives take away any appearance of link with others and place the focus on the first feature in the pair of opposites.

A few lines further in the same text, an antithesis of the *regressio* type functions as a strong argument for the same standpoint as in the previous example, this time through repetition:
(3) He is not exactly a *clown*, but he brings a carnival atmosphere to this whole affair.

The contrast results from partial repetition of words with similar connotation – *clown and carnival* – that epitomizes a causal argument. One argues from a causal agent – a clown – to an effect – *a carnival atmosphere* – preserving the core of meaning and changing the form.The negation of what is said about the agent – *he is not a clown* – and the affirmation of the effect – *he brings a carnival atmosphere* – calls for acceptance from the audience. The denial implied in the negation curtails the interpretation of the negated constituent, but does not discard it completely. By keeping part of the meaning in the second part, the contrast is maintained and the strength of the argument comes precisely from keeping the opposition and emphasizing the effect.

An example of the use of antithesis that forces terms apart can be found in the following passage from an interview in which the interviewee talks about his plans on how to deal with the problem of corruption. The arguer puts forward arguments in support of the standpoint that he is doing his job in order to keep corruption under control:
(4) I am not very interested (…) in the *small fish*. The small fish has to be captured by any prosecutor, by any policeman, by any person who has a job to act against corruption. But my objective as president is to remove the *big sharks* from the political waters. (*Euronews*, 2005)

There are several pairs of oppositions that emerge from this paragraph. Although the emphasis is expressed metaphorically between those that are involved in

corruption to a certain degree – *the small fish and the big sharks* – another opposition comes out, that between the person speaking, the president of a country and the others, referred to as "any policeman, any prosecutor". This strongly context-dependent instance of adversativity is made possible not only on the basis of pragmatic knowledge, but also due to the occurrence of the systemic pair of opposites *small-big* that can be handled along strictly semantic lines and that transmits its meaning to the other terms. The creation of the opposition in this way is strategic since it underlines that the arguer is attempting to prevent any criticism that he is not doing enough. The attention is shifted from the ordinary case to the big problems and especially to the big role the interviewee can play in solving them. The first element is depicted as a less important aspect of the matter and the second is accentuated, pronouncing at the same time the role of the arguer. The rhetorical effect obtained consists in the speaker defending himself against possible accusations of non-involvement with the problem of corruption.

Another effective way of offering strong arguments that have an impact on the audience is the employment of an antithesis of the *oxymoron* type. In the following newspaper excerpt, the journalist gives his reasons to support the position that the choice of the cardinals for the new Pope is a good one:
(5) (…) Brilliant theologian. Good listener. Very conservative. (…) The Church is emphatically not a corporation, and it has nothing resembling a next-quarter mentality. It is *ancient*, and its leaders think in time slots that no *modern* company could consider. After all, the Church's mission relates to *eternity*, not *annual* result. (…) The Vatican can also make the argument that churches that stand for something are the ones that are growing. Fundamentalist Islam is strongly on the rise globally. In the US, the most conservative churches are growing – including Mormons and evangelicals. In contrast, the churches that have made too many accommodations to secular culture are crumbling. And the Catholic Church has strongly conservative constituencies around the world are expanding.

The employment of an antithesis of the *oxymoron* type suggests an incompatibility between the new Pope's ideas and the nature of the church nowadays, but the suggestion goes into the direction of uniting the two possibly incompatible features, which creates in this context strong support in favour of the standpoint that the newly elected person is a suitable person to act as Pope. Attention of the

audience is attracted via the incompatibility, but this implies in reality a non-contradiction in the direction that the new Pope is a suitable person for the job. Even if a simple antithesis would have highlighted the contrast, an antithesis of the oxymoron type is a more forceful manner to achieve one's objective. A seemingly irreconcilable case is resolved when the two surprising elements are brought together into a unity. Rhetorically, the attention is shifted away from the obvious contrast to the possible unification of opposites.

In the example below, the negation mitigates the interpretation of the negated component, repairing the description into a less negative term. The arguer employs an antithesis of the *distinctio* type to defend the standpoint that in an Europe that includes more states money is an important matter for the enlargement:
(6) The Commission President said some time ago you can't have more Europe with less money. We are in fact facing the challenge of producing more Europe in the enlarged union, and money, I would say, unfortunately matters. We are talking, that's important to remember, about money which is being used through structural funds to invest. It's not *charity*, it's not *handouts*, it is just *investments*. (Euronews, 2005).

In order to show that he does not subscribe to the position that the money provided to the new countries of the enlarged Europe is a form of charity, but to support the idea that the money given should be seen as an investment, the arguer denies a term through a distinction involving a redefinition of the same term. The negative connotation of the first term is denied in order to enhance its meaning through a reformulation in positive terms, which explains the possibility it creates of raising less criticism. The redefined term – *investment* – is placed in opposition to the negated terms – *charity* and *handouts* – and it acquires emphasis precisely by this placement.

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have tried to show that antithesis as a figure of speech may play a role in the way in which arguers' manoeuvre strategically in the argumentation stage of a discussion. As I tried to show, when arguers make use of antithesis, they can give presence to their arguments, make them seem stronger in the eyes of the audience and less open for criticism.

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – Hurricane Katrina: An Argumentative Analysis Of Race And Gender Issues In The Media Coverage Of A Natural And National Disaster

On August 29, 2005 Hurricane Katrina, one of the strongest hurricanes to make U.S. landfall in the last hundred years, struck the central Gulf of Mexico U.S. coast. With gusts of up to 125 miles per hour, the storm wrought havoc and devastation on the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama (National Climatic Data Center December 29, 2005). The city of New Orleans suffered the worst effects of the storm. The combination of a rainfall at the rate of an inch per hour, powerful sea swells and breeched levees resulted in the flooding of 80% of the city. Thousands of residents who had not or could not heed the order to evacuate were trapped and survived in squalor without adequate food, water, shelter or sanitation as they awaited rescue. Over 1,500 people died in the three states struck by the hurricane. The national and international media were there broadcasting the tragedy to audiences across the world. Everywhere people could see the world's sole superpower dealing ineptly with the crisis.

There are many issues concerning this tragedy worthy of investigation: the failure to assure the integrity of the levee system, the inadequacy of evacuations, the delayed and incompetent rescues. This paper examines the argumentative frames presented through the media coverage of the hurricane and its after effects. We utilize a narrative approach and seek to illuminate issues of race and gender raised by this coverage. We argue that the media's coverage can be profitably considered in phases, each employing its own narrative focus and argumentative lens. These phases are admittedly overlapping and imprecise; nevertheless the phases share certain characteristics that we believe are of significance to scholars of argument. Through an explication and analysis of each phase of the media's coverage of Hurricane Katrina we argue that the media distorted the narrative and distracted its audience from the lessons that should have been learned.

1. Phase one: Hurricane Katrina as a "natural" disaster

Media coverage of Katrina began well before it devastated New Orleans. The National Hurricane Center of the National Weather Service issued its first advisory on tropical depression Katrina on August 23. By August 25, 2005 the Tropical Storm Katrina had become Hurricane Katrina; a category 1 storm on the Saffir-Simpson scale. Shortly thereafter it crossed the southeast coast of Florida. As the hurricane lingered over the warm Gulf of Mexico waters it developed into a Category 5 hurricane. By the time it struck the shore it had diminished to a category 3 hurricane (National Climatic Data Center 2005). Each of these steps was covered by the national media.

The narrative focus of the media in this initial phase of the story was on the fury of nature. Winds and rains and the devastation that nature can cause were the storylines. Many citizens boarded up windows and drove away from the coastline. Ray Nagin, the mayor of New Orleans, declared a state of emergency and ordered a mandatory evacuation on Sunday, August 28 (CNN.com 2005). Less than twenty-four hours later, Katrina swept ashore.

The media's coverage at this point was typical of that of any such storm. Prior to landfall, most national media charted the predicted path of the hurricane and it was common to see on-site reports on the preparations undertaken by those threatened. As the storm came ashore, reporters often braved the elements to report on the devastation wrought by wind and rains. Throughout the storm, individuals trapped in homes and cars were shown being rescued by emergency personnel.

The argumentative frame employed by the media was that this was a natural occurrence. Hurricanes are a part of nature. Humans must learn to accommodate such events if they choose to live in those parts of the world where storms of this magnitude occur. The advantage humans have when it comes to hurricanes, as compared with tsunamis, earthquakes, landslides and volcanoes is that hurricanes develop slowly giving us adequate time to prepare. The heroes in such a frame are those who take precautions and those risking their own lives to assist the needy. The villain, if it could be called that, was nature itself. Dramatists, such as Kenneth Burke (1966, p. 53), differentiate between motion, movements that do not result from human choice, and actions, those that do. Consequently, casting wind and rain as villains in a narrative may strike some as a stretch. Nevertheless, we believe that the history of personification of nature, captured in the title, "Mother Nature" permits such a designation. Those individuals who

were overwhelmed by the onslaught of the weather were depicted appropriately as the victims of humankind's battle with the elements.

National Geographic News Photography – August 25, 2005

We believe that this argumentative frame largely, though not completely, absolves humans from responsibility. Acts of nature are generally understood to be beyond our control. Western notions of guilt assume chosen actions are causally relevant to a guilt creating outcome. Guilt, in the Burkeian notion (1969), cannot be assigned if the villainy is caused by an inanimate agency. There are those victims, however, who perhaps warrant attributions of guilt because their actions invite victimhood. The "fool" might be such a character. Through their inane actions, fools deserve what befalls them. The guilt for their status as victims is thus earned by the fools themselves. On the other hand, if a fool does not "know" better, how can he/she be held accountable. For this reason Frye argues that the fool is "no more deserving of what happens to him than anyone else would be" (1957, p. 41).

In this case, the argumentative frame assigns contributory guilt to those who refuse to take necessary precautions. Those who choose to live on lands repeatedly struck by hurricanes and those who chose to ride-out the Katrina with "hurricane parties" are assigned some level of guilt by this frame.

Alternatively, the media might have focused more directly and more frequently on the effect that global warming has on hurricanes and that scientists have

predicted more frequent and more severe storms as a result of warming. Or the media might have considered the folly of building so close to the shoreline, draining the wetlands that had provided a buffer for New Orleans or the need for better predictive capabilities for meteorologists. Such constructions would have changed the assignment of the roles of hero, villain and victim. They might also have prompted more explicit debate over environmental policy that the "natural" disaster frame obviates.

2. Phase two: the "unnatural" consequences of Hurricane Katrina

Media coverage on the days immediately after Katrina struck focused largely on the devastation wrought by the storm. Buildings had been blown down, cars and buses tossed around like matchsticks, and many were stranded by flooding. Smiley N. Pool won a Pulitzer Prize for his aerial photographs showing the magnitude of the flooding in New Orleans (Lang August 31, 2005). Block after block of homes with water up to the roofline, bridges destroyed, and highways covered with water. These pictures reveal a city practically destroyed by winds and inundated by water.

Photographers also sought to show the human toll. Typical of the coverage is a photograph taken on August 29th by Douglas R. Clifford of the St. Petersburg Times.

Photo by Douglas R. Clifford. St. Petersburg Times – August 30, 2005

This photo, distributed by the Associated Press, appeared on the 30th on the front page of more than two dozen newspapers. It shows dozens of residents of New Orleans wading down a street in Orleans Parish through chest-deep waters (Lang

August 30, 2005). Other pictures tragically showed bodies floating in the brackish waters filling the streets dramatically showing that not all residents had been rescued in time.

Then came revelations that there were still thousands in the city. While 80% successfully evacuated prior to the storm hitting, approximately 30,000 of individuals made their way to the Superdome, a location designated as a "refuge of last resort" and another 25,000 huddle together at the city's Ernest N. Morial Convention Center (Dyson 2006, p. 59, 95). Others were left stranded on freeway overpasses or in the attics of their homes. None of these people had sufficient food, water, shelter or sanitation. The Superdome had no stockpile of food and no cots. The disaster relief agencies, especially the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was not succeeding in addressing the needs of the people.

The initial narrative focus of the media during this phase was of coping with the disaster and of how emergency personnel were attempting to rescue or supply residents, but that was to quickly change. As with all tragedies, the press sought to put a human face on the tragedy and one thing almost anyone noticed immediately was that the face of the individual suffering in New Orleans after Katrina swept through was unquestionably an impoverished black person.

Photograph: James Nielsen: Getty/AFP – August 29, 2005

In picture after picture it was poor black people being rescued from rooftops, poor black people stranded on freeway overpasses, poor black people at the Superdome and Convention Center. Jack Shafer of Slate.com scolded

broadcasters for their initial failure to point out that race and poverty may have contributed to the failure to evacuate New Orleans, “I can’t say that I saw everything that the TV newscasters pumped out about Katrina, but I viewed enough repeated segments to say with 90 percent confidence that broadcasters covering the New Orleans end of the disaster demurred from mentioning two topics that must have occurred to every sentient viewer: race and class” (Shafer 2005). Yet it really was impossible to ignore.

Photo by National Geographic
News – September 1, 2005

The race of the residents left behind was so overwhelming black that it led one CNN news anchor to ineptly blurt out “As Jack Cafferty just pointed out, so tragically, so many of these people, almost all of them that we see, are so poor and they are so black, and this is going to raise lots of questions for people who are watching this story unfold” (Blitzer 2005).
Questions were indeed raised.

Black activist Al Sharpton expressed what many were thinking: the reason for the delay in helping the stranded residents of New Orleans was racism. “I feel that, if it was in another area, with another economic strata and racial makeup, that President Bush would have run out of Crawford a lot quicker and FEMA would have found its way in a lot sooner” (Taranto 2005).
These sentiments were echoed by civil rights activist Jesse Jackson who told CNN’s correspondent Anderson Cooper “We have an amazing tolerance for black

pain," contending that race was "at least a factor" in the delay in the recovery efforts.

Today I saw 5,000 African Americans on the I-10 causeway desperate, perishing, dehydrated, babies dying. It looked like Africans in the hull of a slave ship. It was so ugly and so obvious. Have we missed this catastrophe because of indifference and ineptitude or is it a combination of the both? And, certainly I think the issue of race as a factor will not go away from this equation (Cooper 2005).

Perhaps the most famous public statement about Katrina and race was made by rapper Kanye West who stated during a live broadcast to raise funds for the hurricane victims, that "George Bush doesn't care about black people" (CBSNew.com).

This critique was so frequent and inflammatory that both President Bush and the Bush administration's most visible and highest ranking black, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice held press conferences denying race had anything to do with the suffering caused by the hurricane (CNN.com September 17, 2005).

We believe that the shift in narrative focus from coping with a natural disaster to confronting the unnatural disaster of racism had three significant consequences. First, focusing on race became an enabling fiction, permitting and evoking a myriad of assumptions about the hurricane survivors. The first consequence of this fiction was to dreg up stereotypes of poor urban blacks turning to violence.

Allegations of looting, snipers shooting at relief workers, rapes and thuggery were reported on the news without corroboration. Zizek (2005) contended that:

Non verified rumors were simply reported as facts by the media. For example, on September 3, the Superintendent of the New Orleans Police Department told the New York Times about conditions at the Convention Center: 'The tourists are waling around there, and as soon as these individuals see them, they're being preyed upon. They are beating, they are raping them in the streets.' In an

interview just weeks later, he conceded that some of his most shocking statements turned out to be untrue: 'We have no official reports to document any murder. Not one official report of rape or sexual assault.
Similarly, according to Pierre and Gerhart (2005) CNN reported that a helicopter had been fired in the city, but this was later denied by the Louisiana National Guard (p. A8).
One of the most frightening rumors relayed by Pierre and Gerhart was of bodies discovered at the superdome.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune reported that National Guard troops found 30 to 40 bodies decomposing inside a freezer in the convention center, including a girl whose throat was slashed. The newspaper quotes a member of the Arkansas National Guard, which was deployed in the building. Other news organizations then passed the information on. That, too, was untrue (p. A8).
Yahoo! News created a global firestorm when it displayed two photographs taken in New Orleans showing individuals wading through water carrying foodstuffs. One, image A, showed a black, the other, image B, two whites. Image A carried a caption labeling the individual a looter. The other caption said the whites had found their foodstuffs (Harris & Carbado 2006). That two similar photographs could lead to two such disparate and loaded conclusions is certainly troubling. The photographers involved later reported that they had observed different events. One recalled seeing people go into a shop and come out with goods as a result he wrote that the individual he photographed was looting. The second photographer reported that he observed several people finding foodstuffs floating out of a flooded market (Kinney 2005).

From Flickr.com – (Originally posted on Yahoo! News, but later removed.)

We agree with Harris and Carbado when they argue that the captions really aren't the issue.

The loot-or-find problem of image A and image B cannot fully be addressed with reference to the individual intent of those who either took the picture or produced the accompanying interpretive text. Indeed, it is entirely plausible that had the photos appeared without any captions, they would have been read the same way. This is because while neither 'loot' not 'find' is written on either image, in the context of public disorder, the race of the subjects inscribes those meanings" (p. 90).

The pictures framed the narrative as seen and understood by many viewers: blacks loot, whites find. Such perceptions are fed by portrayals in the entertainment industry that reinforce stereotypes of people of color as pimps, prostitutes and criminals (Wilson, Gutierrez & Chao 2003, p. 108). The result, argues Russell-Brown (2006) is that most Americans, whether white or black, fear black men (p. 113). Russell-Brown also contends that when confronted by the term "crime" Americans envision street crimes: muggings, thefts, robberies, rapes, even kidnappings. She links these two assumptions and concludes that "What we have it a collective, acute, national fear of black men engaging in acts of violence" (p. 113).

One can argue that the media was merely reporting the facts as it knew them, but the quest for twenty-four hour coverage resulted in the endless repetition of limited news footage and the reporting of rumor as if it was fact. Dyson (2006) in his thorough analysis of Katrina contends that "The media's role in blacks as outlaws and savages achieved a rare blatancy when it endlessly looped on television the same few frames of stranded blacks 'looting' food or other items, largely for survival (p. 166).

When the media switched its narrative frame about Katrina to a consideration of racism, it invoked these long harbored collectives and enabled the fiction of violent looters, rapists and murderers stalking the flooded denizens of New Orleans. This fiction not only fed this national fear, it slowed the rescue of those most in need because relief workers were diverted from rescue efforts to restoring order (Pierre & Gilbert 2005).

Another similar consequence of seeing the Katrina story through the racism lens is that many of the pictures showed the poor blacks of New Orleans as helpless

victims desperately in need of saving by white society. Those who flew the helicopters were white, those dangling below were black. Those who piloted the boats that went house to house searching for stranded survivors were white, those who crawled out onto roofs and waved signs pleading to be saved, were black.

These visual images frame the event in terms that have significance well beyond this event. Social conservatives have long argued that the poor in America languish in this condition due to their own failures and that government largess merely perpetuates this dependent status. The American right-wing argues for a strict parental response to the poor and they will move themselves out of poverty (Lakoff 2004). Framing the aftermath of the hurricane in terms of race reifies such stereotypes. We also believe that it rekindles racial prejudices.

The antebellum South was an era of persistent slavery. Apologists of that era argued against abolition partially in terms of the adverse effect freedom would have on the morally and mentally inferior slaves (Cooper 1834). These arguments carried such sway that, when they were not portraying blacks as thugs and whores, Hollywood movies of the twentieth century continued to depict blacks as intellectual inferior and subservient to whites (see, for example, Wilson, Gutierrez and Chao 2003). Visual images that depict contemporary blacks in situations of helplessness which necessitate being saved by wiser, more well-prepared whites recall this characterization.

The focus on race also changes the locus of Burkeian guilt. If what transpired in New Orleans was the result of racism, then blacks were the victims, racists were the villains, and the heroes were those who oppose racism. The unfortunate consequence of such labeling is that very few individuals, black or white, consider themselves racists. Blaming racism however absolves everyone but the racist of guilt. Proclaiming that racism is bad even makes people feel good about themselves, i.e., heroic, for not being one of the racists who caused the problem in the first place. As a solution however, identifying racism is ineffectual or as Adolph Reed, Jr. (2006) argues, “wrongheaded and at best an utter waste of time” (p. 64). Reed takes this position because he considers the language of racism too imprecise to lead to meaningful discussions. Racism can mean a multitude of conscious or unconscious actions. It is this very inexactness that makes the label futile. “The category [of racism] is too porous, it doesn’t really explain anything. Indeed, it is an alternative to explanation” (p. 65). The ambiguousness of the term

permits most people to righteously demand that others should not be racist, while ignoring their own culpability of the situation. Who were the racists that caused so many poor blacks to be left behind in New Orleans? Was it Bush? The white Governor? The black Mayor? Would a different president, governor or mayor really have resolved the intractable poverty that really lay at the root of the problem?

The poor were left behind in New Orleans because they had no way to leave the city. There are 297 metropolitan areas in the U.S. New Orleans ranked fourth from the bottom when it came to percentage of the population with cars (Dyson 2006, p. 5). The three cities with fewer cars per person are all cities in the New York area, an area with extensive mass transit. The poor who lived in New Orleans didn't evacuate because they lacked the means to do so. They also lacked the financial wherewithal.

Mississippi and Louisiana are the two poorest states in America and more than 90,000 people in the hurricane's path made less that $10,000 per year (Dyson 2006, p. 5). The current federal minimum wage is $5.15 per hour. It was last raised in 1997. Some states have elected to set minimum wages above the federal level. Neither Louisiana nor Mississippi nor Alabama chose to do so. An individual who works forty hours a week every week of the year would earn only $10,712. For a family of four the poverty line, an income measure differentiating those living in poverty from those who are very poor, is any family earning less than $20,000 (U.S. Health and Human Services 2006). It would be wrong to think of the poor that were stranded in New Orleans as people who did not work. They worked. They simply did not earn enough to escape poverty.

In addition to being poor, many of the people who suffered and perished in New Orleans were elderly. In fact, nearly forty percent of the 1500 people who died were over the age of 71 (Cornish 2006). It should surprise no one that the elderly are the least able to evacuate with less than a day's notice. Many were infirmed and had limited mobility. Others refused to abandon their homes or leave their pets (Smith and Ritter 2005). Government officials provided some buses and trains to evacuate citizens willing to flee the city, but not nearly enough.

The manifestation of reframing the effect of the hurricane on New Orleans as an issue of racism is that the core issues of entrenched poverty and elderly neglect are largely ignored. Yet these are the issues that require focused attention.

3. Phase three: the return to "normalcy"

Even though the media coverage of Hurricane Katrina became centered on race, in the aftermath reporters did deal with other issues. One article attempted to address a topic that "transcends the boundaries of race, class, and age." The article, titled "Beauty in the Eye of Katrina" asked the question: *How were women dealing with the aftermath of Katrina?* The answer, apparently, was beauty salons. The article, featured prominently in the Los Angeles Times, outlined the surprising popularity of beauty salons just two weeks after Katrina (Huffstutter 2005). It was an explicitly gendered piece, one that develops a problematic image of its female subjects. The article can be viewed in two sections, each troubling in varying ways and degrees. The first section defines its subjects solely in terms of traditional femininity; the second encourages them to limit themselves to those stereotypes.

The concept of femininity has existed for hundreds of years. Femininity describes a collection of traits that have historically been associated with women—sensitive, passive, nurturing, emotional, domestic, and beautiful. Since a woman can just as easily display counter-traits (logical, active, and so on), modern conception holds that these traits are not inherent to one's gender. Thus, femininity is a social construct. Nevertheless, it remains useful in describing society's expectations of how women ought to be. The women of the article, through their preoccupation with their appearance, are traditionally feminine. They feel a strong need to maintain a flawless appearance and, therefore, are visiting newly opened beauty salons. Deanna Dartez, one of the article's salon patrons, stated that beauty treatments were simply "part of the process of learning to be a woman" (as cited in Huffstutter 2005). Thus, these women see their actions as feminine, an attempt to maintain their womanhood.

It is no surprise, then, that these traditionally feminine women are attending beauty parlors, for femininity has always necessitated strict disciplinary practices. The preservation of beauty, as one of most readily perceptible of feminine traits, requires a host of rigorous and constant rituals to maintain. This is by no means a new phenomenon. Mary Wollstonecraft, an author and early feminist, wrote in 1792, "Genteel women are, literally speaking, slaves to their bodies, and glory in their subjection" (Wollstonecraft 1995. p. 115). The idea that women must 'slave' over their appearance may translate to jokes about how long it takes for women to get ready nowadays. Yet the efforts to maintain a feminine appearance require

strict discipline. For the face, a variety of products are necessary: moisturizer, toner, foundation, blush, mascara, eye shadow, blush, bronzer, lip liner, lipstick, lip-gloss, and so on. There are strict standards for each part of the body. Sandra Lee Bartky (1998) described just some of the practices necessary to keep one's skin hairless:

Hair must be removed not only from the face but from large surfaces of the body as well, from legs to thighs, an operation accomplished by shaving, buffing with fine sandpaper, or applying foul-smelling depilatories.... Eyebrows are plucked out by the roots with a tweezers. Hot wax is sometimes poured onto the mustache and cheeks and then ripped away when it cools" (p. 31)

Bartky's list barely scratches the surface of the primping required for a woman to look good. Violating societal norms, and thus ignoring these disciplinary practices, is not a viable option; to deviate from the mainstream is to be isolated. The women in the article, then, are simply fulfilling the expectations of a society that Charles Reagan Wilson, director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, stated stressed the importance of "performing roles" (as cited in Huffstutter 2005). Thus, these women go to salons for waxes, dye-jobs, and shampoos in order to comply with the standards of the role of feminine women.

Clearly and most significantly, these women are preoccupied with how they look despite a life-altering tragedy. It is the context of the women's need for looking good that makes it noteworthy. Even though her husband, and common sense, argued that no one would care how she looked, Deanna Dartez says she still felt that she needed to put on make-up before going to Home Depot (Huffstutter 2005). So, why do these women insist on fulfilling standards of beauty when they are all but irrelevant? The answer relates to the way that society perpetuates standards of beauty in modern society. Michel Foucault (1980) conceptualized power as fluid, rather than emanating from a single, authoritarian entity. He called the pervasive power that enforces society's expectations, such as the standards of femininity, the gaze. He contends, "There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself"(p. 155). Each person, then, is incessantly subjected to the gaze of others, and this gaze becomes the method of enforcing society's rules. Through her life, a woman ascertains society's norms and is brought in line with the group

through constant monitoring. Dartez experienced such socialization; she began accompanying her mother on her weekly visits to the salon when she was seven years old (Huffstutter 2005). Through that educational experience, she learned how to fulfill societal expectations.

Foucault continues that, once the gaze is habituated, it becomes internalized so that actual surveillance is no longer necessary. Individuals begin to monitor themselves, self-regulating their behavior to comply with expectations. The article's women have adopted the standards of traditional femininity as part of society's expectations. Even when society is in crisis, and lapses on the gaze, the women continue their disciplinary practices in accordance with the usual expectations. When asked why she came to the beauty salon, one woman interviewed, Amy Haulsee, stated that it gave her a sense of normalcy (Huffstutter 2005). Since the gaze has hitherto been constant, she notices its abatement. Its absence brings confusion. Moreover, she has so internalized the message that she continues to comply even when the expectations are lifted. By continuing to practice their beauty regime, these women can ignore the fact that their appearance is suddenly irrelevant.

The main problem of this section of the article is its selection of topic. The article positions these women as traditionally feminine. It ignores their personalities outside of their desire for beauty. Additionally, by choosing a group of women that can fit female stereotypes, it suggests that their femininity is representative of the female population in general. It creates a homogenous image of women, which diminishes diversity and discourses. Moreover, Susan Bordo (1993) argues that homogenized images normalize: "they function as models against which the self continually measures, judges, 'disciplines,' and 'corrects' itself" (p. 25). When women see these images of femininity as normal, they will not question the disciplinary practices needed to achieve the strict standards of beauty. The preoccupation with appearances continues. The article effectually contributes to the social reality that caused these women to be so preoccupied with their appearances in the first place. It perpetuates an unfortunate and constraining cycle.

As the article continues, however, its narrative changes from merely disappointing to truly disturbing—when it reports on the women at City Hall. The paragon of this section is Bonnie Irby, a demure 38-year-old who, while waiting at City Hall, succeeds in achieving beauty despite the circumstances. She has a

“peaces-and-cream complexion;” her eyebrows beautifully drawn in with pencil. The other women, sweaty in their baggy, wrinkled T-shirts, view Irby with “undisguised envy.” For her part, Irby recognized that the other women failed to achieve a pristine appearance and, “her heart went out to them.” She lamented that “we just don’t have the tools to maintain our dignity” (as cited in Huffstutter 2005).

These passages trivialize the women at City Hall, save for Irby. It suggests that, despite the tragedy, the authors of the article are still judging women by their appearances. To praise Irby as admirable, that is to cast her as hero at the expense of the others, means that she is superior. And to say that the other women cannot, in the situation, maintain their dignity implies that beauty and self-worth are somehow linked. The other women are guilty and lacking because they did not focus on their appearance.

The problem with this perspective is immediately obvious. Besides the fact that it is an invalid conclusion—dignity and aesthetics are not synonymous—such a position has rhetorical consequences. It further entrenches traditional femininity (and the ceaseless rituals that accompany it) into societal conceptions of women. The article concludes not only that women are concerned about how they look, but that they should be that way. Such media reports stand as argument for continuous self-regulation. Moreover, suggesting, albeit unintentionally, that a woman’s worth is determined by her appearance rather than the more common standards applied to men (intelligence, morality, etc) demeans women. It trivializes these women by suggesting that they have no more to contribute than their looks.

A story focusing on women, and their reaction to the hurricane was not inherently a bad idea; its handling, however, made it damaging rather than worthwhile. The choice of topic could have been more appropriate. The authors of the article did not need to choose a topic relating women to beauty or consumption. Thinking outside of feminine stereotypes would have led to a better topic, and produced a better article. In fact, the women described amongst Bonnie Irby provide the perfect example of an intellectual group of women struggling to rebuild after Katrina. They were attempting to gain permits to build business and homes in the aftermath. Such an article would have shown its subjects (the women) as productive, determined, and strong, even if their appearances were messy.

Even with the chosen topic, there were alternatives to portraying women as stereotypically feminine; the reporters could have represented a more complex, less problematic picture. At the very least, the article should not have praised Bonnie Irby for her success at maintaining her appearance. First, the segment is the most troubling because it leads the authors to equate dignity with beauty. Second, Irby does not deserve praise. As the article explains, she is the only woman at City Hall not actively pursuing a business license. Instead, she waits for her boyfriend to acquire a permit. While her waiting meets the traditional ideal of female as passive, it demonstrates a dependency on others that should not be glorified. The other women at City Hall are bustling—racing around nosily as they attend to their business, unconcerned about their appearance. They are focused, determined, and assuming control—traits that are perhaps more important than Irby's "dewy face" and "straight, clean hair" (Huffstutter 2005). The section of the article about Irby, furthermore, was unnecessary. It made the article more shamefully problematic and did not even relate to the article's initial topic of beauty salons.

Finally, the article could have asked deeper questions about its topic, rather than simply opting for superficial treatment. It is in part the shallowness of the article's perspective that makes it so troubling. Central questions (Why do these women feel such a compelling need to go to the beauty salon? What does it say about our society that women are so concerned with their appearance that they will worry about it amidst chaos and death?) are ignored. The article's position that the women acted for a sense of normalcy is insufficient; men did not react in similar way. They did not engage in gendered pastimes as a method of coping. A meaningful article would have analyzed the deeper issues surrounding this issue. Deeper analysis would have allowed the topic to be insightful, rather than insipid.

4. Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that the narrative frames employed by the media in its coverage of Hurricane Katrina shaped and directed how the events were understood by American audiences. Initially, the hurricane was a "natural" event, its tragic effects then became a manifestation of racism, and ultimately, at least selectively, it became a condemnation of women who didn't conform to gendered expectations. Each frame situates the guilt and depicts the heroes, villains and victims differently. We have identified the adverse effects of these depictions and argued that alternative constructions could have yielded more positive and lasting

results.

Societies, like individuals, must learn from their mistakes. Just as people grow by dealing with life's challenges, societies can benefit from scrutinizing the causes and consequences. The ferocity of Hurricane Katrina provided a moment when Americans might have addressed the causes of poverty and addressed the plight of the elderly. It also provided an opportunity to view each American, man and woman, as individuals facing the fury of the weather as individuals, not as gendered segments of society. We argue that unfortunately this did not occur. As a result, the issues of classism, ageism and sexism remain unaddressed.

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ISSA Proceedings 2006 – A Perfect Circle: Visual Argument Field And The Definition Of The Middle Class

One of the great mysteries of argumentation theory is the construct of field. While multiple attempts have been made to understand, categorize and essentialize the nature of field, it remains an elusive concept; one that appears central but has yet to be fully actualized. Despite early theorizing from some of the most important theorists in argumentation, little attention has been paid to field in the last 20 years.

Contemporary theorizing about visual argument is reminiscent of the treatment argument field received during the 1980s. Theorists know it is important; but they have had difficulty pinning down precisely the operations that visuals play in argument. Thankfully, theorists seem to have moved beyond the fundamental debate over whether visuals could perform any argumentative function. However, contemporary work in visual argument seems rooted in examining specific visuals in order to understand how they communicate. Additionally, theorizing on the physiological reactions of audiences to visual stimuli has been a central focus. While we find all this research useful to building a foundation for the study of visual argument, we are interested in understanding the larger role that visuals play in discourse.

In recent years, visual rhetorical theory and criticism has generated a vibrant and compelling body of literature. Taylor's (2003) essay finds "expanding engagement by communication critics with particular visual genres" (p. 3). No archetype theory or method for the analysis of visual argument has yet emerged from these writings, but it is clear that the visual turn in rhetoric has emerged as one of the dominant themes of contemporary theorizing.

Visual argument analysis has two dominant foci: one interested with the substance of the argument, the other with the interaction that the audience has with a visual argument. Shelly (1996) and Blair (1996) are both concerned with understanding the substance of visual argument. Blair and Goarke (1996) and Finnegan (2001) investigate the intersection of the visual form with audience assent. Blair and Goarke argue that in order to understand how a visual argument works on an audience, a critic must examine three types of context, "immediate visual context, immediate verbal context, and visual culture" (1996, 6). The first two contexts are read in relation to the visual; the third requires a critic to understand how the public reads the visual in relation to its interaction with other visuals. Blair and Goarke (1996) claim "The meaning of a visual claim or argument obviously depends on a complex set of relationships between a particular image/text and a given set of interpreters" (5). Mitchell (1994) and Finnegan (2002) both make very similar arguments; visuals cannot be separated from the surrounding symbol systems.

These theories of argument substance and argument assent imply an understanding of how audiences are primed to respond to visuals. Their focus is primarily on how visuals function as either claim or evidence. Toulmin's (1958) classic treatise instructs argument critics that argument analysis must always consider the field in which the argument is taking place.

> The arguments which we put forward, and the steps which occur in them, will be correspondingly various: depending on the logical types of the facts adduced and of the conclusions drawn from them,, the steps we take—the transitions of logical type—will be different (p. 13).

Argument fields serve to direct audiences to the appropriate realm in which to analyze the strength of a particular argument. Each field has a different set of criteria for the worth of an argument based on the expectations of members of that field. Fields control the quality of evidence, the type of reasoning statements being used and even the claims that may be advanced.

1. A very brief history of argument field

Field was introduced by Toulmin as a way to explain how arguments that did not meet the strictures of formal logic could still be considered as valid. Toulmin's goal was simple: he wanted to understand how "to characterize what may be called 'the rational' process, the procedures and categories by using which claims-in-general can be argued and settled" (1959, p. 7). Toulmin chose to define field without a great deal of precision:

Two arguments will be said to belong to the same field when the data and conclusion in each of the two arguments, are respectively, or the same logical type: they will be said to come from different fields when the backing or the conclusions in each of the two arguments are not of the same logical type (1959, p. 14).

Toulmin's lack of conceptual clarity has plagued research on argument field. Most of the literature devoted to the construct has attempted to define the limits of field; theorists grappled with the appropriate use of field in the discipline. Indicative of early writings on argument field is Willard's and McKerrow's on going debate over whether logical types should be a defining characteristic of field. While the debate raged, the construct of field withered. We would note however, a particularly compelling passage penned by Willard in his 1981 article, "I am assuming here that fields are not things, but living breathing social enterprises that take their existence from the defining practices of people in them" (1981, p. 140). Willard's insistence that field not be constrained by static definitions provides a foundation for understanding the flexibility of the construct.

In 1982 a special issue of the *Journal of the American Forensic Association* featured a theoretical debate over the concept of field. Zarefsky found that the construct was messy but useful; he viewed fields as being capable of having multiple meanings that were dependent on the purpose of the critic examining argument. Rather than expressing dismay at the imprecision with which fields were used in argument research, he applauded field's potential in "explaining what happens in argumentative encounters, to classifying argument products, and to deriving evaluative standards" (1982, p.203).

Four years later, *JAFA* dedicated another special issue to field theory. McKerrow introduced the journal with the admonition that there was no real definition of field. This appears to be a criticism of the construct. Dunbar, however, argues

that fields are useful without a clear definition. She notes that we can use “field of economics, field of wheat and Wrigley field” without causing any conceptual confusion (1986, p. 196).

Prosise, Mills and Miller’s (1996) work reframes fields as discursive battlegrounds where power authority and linguistic aptitude define those arguments that are accepted as credible. This essay is a through application of Bourdieu’s social theory to argument structures, with a careful consideration of how arguers and audiences read argument within the realm of symbolic power. Of particular relevance to our argument, we would highlight these authors’ claim that:

Rather than having clear defined boundaries, fields can be conceptualized as overlapping and dynamic arenas, consisting of social agents who negotiate daily activities in relation to their own subjective perceptions of the objective social realities of particular fields (1996, par 44).

In other words, arguments are granted legitimacy not only because they meet the criteria established within a particular field, but because they originate from a source that has authority and because the originator of the argument knows how to use those criteria appropriately.

Admittedly, our tour of argument field theory has glossed over important theoretical and definitional developments. Much more has been written on the theory of field than we have the space or inclination to summarize in this article. Instead, we have found those elements of field theorizing that illustrate fields as tools to understand argument practices; especially those practices that are privileged over others. We highlight three relevant portions of this argument:

1) Fields are a method by which arguments are either excluded or included in the public sphere;

2) Fields serve to include or exclude participants and

3) Fields have standards that discipline both participants in the arguments as well as recipients of argument. Visual argument is enacted against cultural and social norms that direct audiences to a preferred reading of that argument; we use the concept of field to understand those limits.

Our study of visual argument practices has led us to view visuals as performing as cues to field. In other words, visuals prompt viewers to examine a particular argument within the frame of the visual. Our previous work argued that the photograph of the fence associated with the death of Matthew Shepard directed the discourse surrounding Shepard’s murder away from the legal field and onto

the place of his death (Balter-Reitz and Stewart, 2006). We also found that Cody, Wyoming was able to define itself as the epitome of the Western experience through its use of visuals associated with the culture's understanding of the mythic American West (Stewart and Balter-Reitz, 2004). In both of these cases, we found that the use of particular visuals eliminated discursive options that might have been possible points of stasis for the issues in question. The visuals directed audiences to understand arguments being offered about these events to a particular set of circumstances. We are particularly interested in understanding why discourse surrounding some issues takes directions that appear to be illogical. Why, in the case of Matthew Shepard, did the media and public focus their attention on the place of his murder rather than the traditional issues of crime?

How is it that visuals constrain the available means of understanding, evaluating and critiquing arguments? In order to answer this question, we decided to investigate the visuals that are used to define the construct "middle class" We wondered what compels middle income individuals to consumption when faced with the realities of immense debt, extreme mortgage or rent payments and ever increasing daily living bills. What drives the middle class to order coffee from Starbucks, kitchen appliances from Wolf and furniture from Pottery Barn?

2. Constructing the middle class

What does it mean to be a member of the middle class? While this question appears to beg a categorical answer, in practice the term middle class is decidedly rhetorical. In 1969 Time proudly proclaimed, "Above all, Middle America is a state of mind" (Ehrenreich, 1989). Most Americans describe themselves as middle class, regardless of their income level. Middle class life is a complex construct, one that includes economic, political, social, gender issues. Multiple academic disciplines have examined what it means to be a member of the middle class. Certainly, there are economic boundaries that can be established to refer to mean income levels. Economic research refers to middle income as between $25,000 and $75,000 per year (Measuring, 2006, p. 10). Even by quantitative measures, the definition of middle class is imprecise. The buying power differential between the high and low end of this range is enormous; especially when taking geographic location and family size into account. Even faced with the realities of their paycheck, most Americans still identify themselves as middle class, whether they are making minimum wage or a member of the top

5% wealthiest in the United States (Kacapyr, Fancese & Crispell, 1996). It seems that only the very rich and the very poor consider themselves outside the middle class.

Income level is not the only, or even most important, explanation of what it means to be middle class. Middle class is a lifestyle, one that is beyond the reach of most of those who fall within the economic category. Austin cites an AARP study that found "one in three adults believes a family of four with an income under $50,000 is poor—and one in five considered an annual income of $200,000 as the bare minimum for wealth" (2000, p. 31). Americans are constantly bombarded with images that contextualize the types of housing, products and lifestyles that they are expected to acquire. Barbara Ehrenreich noted "Something is terribly wrong when the once modest expectations of the middle class can be met only with what is far from a middle income" (1989, p.245).

Austin (2000) blames media representations of American life, from the film You've Got Mail to Real Simple Magazine, for the unrealistic expectations that middle class Americans have placed on their own experiences. We believe that Austin's premise is strong: the visuals associated with what it means to be middle class have framed the arguments that are possible about the middle class experience. We are dismayed that the issues of income distribution, poverty, homelessness, and living wages are absent from discussions of the middle class. Instead, we find most discourse about middle class life framed in terms of consumption.
We do not claim that the media is the sole framework of middle class experience; however, we do see media frames as vital to how individuals make sense of the world. We decided to investigate how middle class life was presented in lifestyle magazines. We choose this category of media because these magazines both explicitly instruct readers how to live and implicitly create scenes of what constitutes a good middle class life. Certainly, our work is only a beginning; there are multiple sources that visually argue what it means to be middle class. Thus, we offer our observations as a starting point; we hope to understand the powerful field that is created by commercial photography in lifestyle magazines.

3. Commercial photography
Commercial photography is photography for hire; i.e. the conscious framing of images to create a market for either a product or for the photograph itself. There are several types of photography that may be considered commercial: stock, portrait, fashion, and food are the most common categories that are included in

this genre.
Two conditions of commercial photography are important for our discussion. In the first condition, the photographer is a free lancer who sells photographs for a fee. These photographs are generally marketed by large organizations through catalogs (Frosh 2003). Photographers who work as freelancers are working within clearly definable tropes or concepts. Other photographs are commissioned for a particular event or story. These images are constructed by art directors, editors and others who ask photographers to create a specific photograph to compliment an article or event. Wedding photography serves as one exemplar of this type of commercial photography.

Whether the photograph is created before a story and used by an art director, or created for a specific event or story, photographers will be constrained by the marketability of the image. Wedding photography illustrates this point well. The practice is disciplined by the culture's vision of acceptability. Strano (2006) found that "Although a wedding album may feel personal and individual to the bride and groom, albums are remarkably similar between couples, in part due to the work routines that professional photographers employ and in part due to the conventions wedding participants learn from looking at the wedding albums of friends and celebrity photographs in the mass media" (37-38). The field constrains the acceptable prints; photographers who are unwilling to conform to the power of the field will not find work.
Even more telling about the power of field within commercial photography is the way in which stock photographs are marketed. Frosh (2003) discovered that photographers could only sell their work when they were able to classify their photographs into clearly identifiable concepts. "Concept thereby helps to maintain the production-distribution-consumption process as an *intentionally coherent and rationalizable* system of pure communication without noise. At every stage, everyone—photographers, stock agents, advertising professionals, and ordinary consumers—seem to 'speak' the same language. Or rather, 'think' it" (Frosh, 2003, p. 253).

Inherent in the concept of the photograph is its function as representing reality; photographs must be recognizable. Sean Kernan, providing advice to commercial photographers on what makes a good photograph in the trade journal *Photography Annual*, opines, "it lets us see into reality in a way that nothing else quite does, and its goodness depends on how well it does that…" (2000, p. 216).

In other words, photographs have the ability create a world that is simultaneously real and fantasy. The representational aspect of the photograph often overwhelms the audience's understanding of the photograph as a possible frame; photography masks its artistic elements. Commercial photography in particular, which is both artistic and representational, can present its substance as truth. What audiences see when they view a photograph in a magazine is given the presumption of reality.

4. Visualizing the middle class

We examined the category of lifestyle magazines to understand how the middle class was portrayed by commercial photography. We understand the tautology inherent in our choice of visuals; commercial photography is intended to sell—whether its subject is food, clothes or simply a concept. Lifestyle magazines are selling a lifestyle—they are aspirational more than actual. Very few will ever achieve the visions being offered as representational. Audiences for these publications tend to be female and upper middle class. We choose a convenience sample of lifestyle magazines: *Real Simple, O* (Oprah's magazine), and *Martha Stewart Living*. We chose these publications because they consciously provide guidance on how to achieve a specific lifestyle. Both Oprah and Martha Stewart would, and should, be considered part of the wealthy class; however, their magazines are aimed at middle class women. *Real Simple* is a magazine targeted to working women, its intent is to "make busy women's life's easier" (about Real Simple, 2006). At its inception, *Real Simple* was intended to be the anecdote to *Martha Stewart Living*. Our analysis, however, reveals that these three magazines present similar visual frames of what it means to be middle class.**[i]**

Three themes emerged from our readings of these texts:

1) Middle class involves the creation and consumption of expensive, complex foods that must be perfectly displayed,

2) there is a narrative that must be followed to achieve the middle class lifestyle that requires a particular form and

3) the homes of the middle class are artfully created, but empty of both persons and their possessions.

Food and its consumption are the most prevalent themes visualized in the magazines. Frederick Kaufman of *Harper's* coined the term "gastroporn" to describe the types of photographs of food that are featured. He describes these images as "building to an unending succession of physical ecstasies, never a pile

of dirty dishes" (2005, p. 56). The images offered in lifestyle magazines portray food that is intricate; the ingredients are delicate and arranged artfully. The July 2006 issues of both *Real Simple* and *Martha Stewart Living* featured lovingly presented desserts consisting of berries topped with layers of whipped cream. Each display was created by hand placing berries into exacting patterns and plating each item on the appropriate serving dish. The food was pictured in excruciating close up, each drop of moisture, the plumpness of the berries, and the froth of the whipped cream was vividly shown. Desserts are not the only food so painstakingly created for and by the middle class; even vegetables are presented as perfectly cooked and arranged. Middle class food is not easy, not cheap, nor is it lonely. The narrative presents a preferred position for the type of consumption typical of a fine restaurant. Even the "simple" or "30 minute" meals promised by the magazines are illustrated with visuals of elaborate presentation and display.

Food is also part of the narrative of what it means to be middle class. All three magazines we examined created the narrative of the party; the longest and most heavily illustrated story in each issue. In every story, the opening visual was a table placed against a natural backdrop. The table was intricately set; each place included full settings of cutlery, glasses and napkins. The opening shot inevitably has an absence of people; instead the focus is on the preparation that has gone into the party. Following the opening visual, each magazine presented a series of vignettes; smaller square photos that included a variety of images. In these photographs the preparations were made visible; there were pictures of people preparing food, of the food itself, of the scene or the home where the party was set, and sometimes of dogs watching the festivities. These squares were always followed by a large photograph of the party in full as well as several large photographs of the food served by the hosts.

The homes of the middle class are as elaborate as the food. The settings and accessories of the homes are framed as everyday living, although the featured homes are often vacation houses. We were struck by the feature in the July issue of O that introduced readers to Oprah's Hawaiian retreat. In particular, the audience is given a peak into Oprah's kitchen. One full page photograph takes the point of view of a visitor sitting at Oprah's breakfast bar, looking directly at a professional stove. Enormous windows frame the stove, while on the bar is a large flower arrangement placed next to a bowl of exotic fruit. On the top right of the

page is Oprah's invocation. "It's a gem, so sweet and exquisite. Such a real normal house." On the pages that follow, readers are taken on a tour of her sprawling estate decorated with expensive furniture and art.

While we would like to believe that readers would be able to distinguish between Oprah's home and their own, the magazines erase those differences. A photo essay on how to clean house in the Spring 2006 issue of *Real Simple* exacerbates the line between celebrity and middle class home. The multi-page article consists primarily of pictures of a woman in a white t-shirt and jeans dusting, polishing and refreshing a house that glistens in white. The kitchen counter is marble, the bed frames are brass, and flowers decorate every room. The room sizes are enormous; the bathtub the woman is cleaning is a Jacuzzi tub large enough for two framed by a bay window. The woman's face is blurred; while this is a convention to allow readers to place themselves in the room pictured, it also serves to underscore the lack of personality in the home. The space is anonymous; no person belongs in it.

The homes presented are not just large and expensive, they are also empty. Rooms are never occupied; no evidence of habitation is present in these photographs. Possessions, when pictured, are artfully arranged. Most rooms are completely free of clutter. Homes, it seems, are not for living, but for creating an impression.

These visuals create a frame upon which middle class life is read. To be middle class is to own a home that is perfectly arranged with extravagant furniture and art, accessorized with just the right pieces, yet completely devoid of human presence. To be middle class is to orchestrate large parties which must be created around elaborate, multi-course repasts. To be middle class is to create and consume intricate and expensive food concoctions.

*5. Visual argument fields and the limits of understanding middle class life*Visuals provide a powerful tool for understanding middle class lifestyle; they are created by arguers who are given power by both their profession and their audiences. The commercial photography that illustrates magazines is produced by artists who work within the boundaries of the discipline to produce images that are clearly recognizable as representing the substance of the middle class. Recipients of these magazines unconsciously grant authority to these photographs; they sublimate their own power to the editors of these magazines.

Our preliminary investigations into how middle class life is pictured in lifestyle

magazines reinforce our belief that the frames available for interpreting the experiences of the middle class are minimal. While we are far from claiming that these magazines are exhaustive of the possibilities of understanding middle class life, their ubiquity and uniformity raise our suspicions that audiences are offered limited fields in order to examine their understanding of their own experiences. These visuals restrict available public discourse; they eliminate discussion of important economic and social aspects of middle class life in favor of a discourse of consumption. Bill Moyers, in the introduction to the book Inequality Matters, warns that the middle class "have been the losers in a class war that disarmed them of political influence before defeating them" (Moyers, 2005, p. 8). We believe the middle class may be complicit in their own defeat in part because visuals have constricted the ability of the middle class to see their own experiences in larger contexts.

NOTES

[i] This section is difficult to report without the extensive graphics. Please contact the author if you are interested in the slide show that accompanied this presentation.

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