

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Community Literacy: Negotiating Difference In Contemporary Public Spheres



Those interested in the field of argumentation theory and its application are increasingly turning their attention to the growing body of scholarship documenting how everyday people use literate practices in their day-to-day lives (Burton, 2001; Cushman, 1998; Fitzgerald, 2001), what Ann Gere (1994) refers to as “community literacy” (75). With its commitment to writing in the service of joint inquiry and collaborative problem solving, with its vision for the transformative possibilities of inventive practice, community literacy stands to help interested argumentation theorists and practitioners to update and to refine their understanding of contemporary public rhetoric. In this paper, I present a teenager’s rap. The analysis of the rap focuses on controversies surrounding it. The paper suggests that within public spheres, arguments have multiple functions, including to clarify stakeholders’ interests, to reveal their competing – sometimes conflicting – conceptions of the social problem that brings them together, and to highlight the alternative visions for rhetorical action that they recommend in response to the problem.

According to Gerard Hauser (1999), the current state of public life calls a rhetorical imagination, grounded in history, up short. Simply said: the contemporary scene for public rhetoric is significantly different from that of the past. Whether characterizing public life in ancient Athens or during the Enlightenment in Europe, two of the most striking differences are the degree of pluralism and changes in communication technology. In the past, conditions for communication were “weak in diversity,” relying on “shared tradition to resolve difference” (55). Technology, needless to say, has also changed the nature of public communication. As technology has intersected with a set of other factors, one effect has been to separate people from forums where policy decisions are made, a phenomenon that leads Hauser to note the marked differences in public

rhetoric of ancient Greece and our own (19). Furthermore, technology supports the work of spin doctors, CNN tappers, public opinion polls, and belittling talk radio – the results of which “discourage a spirit of reflective political activism in this country” (5). In *Vernacular Voices*, Hauser (1999) contrasts our everyday encounters with public opinion and the media’s portrayal of “the public” this way: Most individuals understand their speaking and writing as personal expression.... Most of our communication directed at persons or groups has some immediacy, and we know them in some way. We experience our transactions with them in concrete terms as addressed discourse: our own thoughts, our intended message, a specific audience to which we have adapted, and that audience’s perceived response. The public portrayed by the media, in contrast, is an abstract representation whose needs, thoughts, and responses are extrapolated from survey data ... creat[ing] the impression of “the public” as an anonymous assemblage given to volatile mood swings likely to dissipate into apathy and from which we personally are disengaged. (5)

Such conditions lead Hauser to conclude that as “citizens, commentators, the news media, and scholars” we become “desensitized to our own rhetorical practices and their possibilities for shaping our public lives as citizens, neighbors, and cultural agents” (6).

Hauser’s assessment raises the question of how teachers might best describe public rhetorics, as well as account for and measure rhetorical effect within the writing classroom. The issue came to the fore at this year’s Western States Composition Conference held in Tempe, Arizona. Providing the keynote address for the conference, John Trimbur responded to the questions framing the theme for the conference: *Writing, What is it? Why Study it? Why teach it?* He suggested that teachers of rhetoric would do well to take seriously David Fleming’s (1998) recommendation to revitalize rhetorical education by looking to the primary aim of classical rhetoric: preparing students for participation in public life. As a response, an instructor in the room described how he used in his classroom “Letter from Birmingham Jail” as achievement of public rhetoric. Others described how they used the same text in their classes. But Sharon Crowley soon noted: in its moment, the letter itself failed; it failed to persuade the eight clergy to whom it was addressed. Our discussion floundered. On the one hand, the letter wasn’t up to the daunting rhetorical situation. Yet the letter represents a signal achievement worthy of a place in a good many composition textbooks ranging

from *Writing about the World* to *Call to Write*?

Implicitly, it seems to me, Crowley was asking the audience to articulate how it was that the letter participated in the struggle and constrained success of the civil rights movement in the U.S. That is, responding to her comments required a conception of how rhetoric functions in contemporary public spheres. While each of us expert is at analyzing the rhetorical moves of King's letter-as-text, we were far less adept at describing publicly the complex web of practices, ideologies and institutions that permits and accounts for rhetorical agency, the always constrained catalyst behind deliberate social change. In the case of King and civil rights movement, we needed to be able to account for the dynamic interplay among King's eloquence; institution divisions between the courtroom and southern churches; and, particularly important, the advent of widely broadcast television news coverage. Such a description would be able to explain how that interplay resulted in changes in public opinion, whereby opening up spaces, including college textbooks, as places for texts such as King's "Letter" to become available for analysis and, indeed, to serve as a model of public rhetoric. And such a description would help writing theorists and teachers alike make connections among textual artifacts, scholarly theories, and community practices, on the one hand, and their own rhetorical repertoires, on the other.

Perhaps we had difficulty responding to Crowley's reality check because of the gap between the issues we were trying to address and the dominant theories available to address them. Consider "grand theorist" Jergen Habermas's model of the public sphere that has dominated theorists' efforts to conceptualize public rhetoric (Golden, Berquist and Coleman, 1990, 380). In this model, the public exists as a single, identifiable entity, recognized by a shared commitment to the common good and governed by rational-critical discourse (Habermas, 1974). According to this model, the public adjudicates claims on the basis of warranted assent. Working from this model, an argumentation theorist or practitioner would magnify the few places where this kind of centralized, unitary public sphere exists and where ordinary people still have a role in that sphere: for instance, the jury. A teacher would then develop simulations requiring students to replicate this sort of collective, impartial judgment. In such an instructional situation, the issue is not whether any one set of jurors creates an ideal speech situation as Habermas suggests, but rather that the group realizes something "public" is expected of them and they want to live up to that expectation (Fleming, personal

communication, January 27, 2002).

However, this focus on solely unitary, centralized public sphere carries with it important limitations. Foremost, the notion of a rational-critical discourse assumes difference can be bracketed for the duration of deliberation. As such, this model has ignored “the proletarian, feminine, nationalist, and popular peasant” spheres (Fraser, 1990, 60), suggesting that these discursive arenas are something other than legitimate public ones. And the rational-critical model focuses on the process and a single practice: the act of adjudicating claims on the basis of warranted assent.

This paper suggests that while the practice of adjudicating claims is central to a public when called together, say, in the name jury deliberation, it is only one among many public rhetorical practices. There exists the potential for a host of other “untidy communicative practices” through which participants “discover their interests, where they converge or differ, and how their differences might be accommodated” (Hauser, 1990, 55). Community literacy offers a set of commitments, a theoretical framework, and a suite of literate practices to assist researchers in identifying and examining other public spheres. Community literacy trades rational-critical discourse aimed at warranted assent for competing interests, acknowledged – not bracketed – social differentials, and reasonable (rather than rational) arguments. These arguments spur Burkean (1969) “identification” through which participants learn to understand their individual and collective interests, forge intercultural working relationships, and construct plans for action (19).

Framing the issue this way raises the question: how in our own time people do participate in various forms of public rhetoric? Where do we look? In terms of literate practice, what’s going on there? And how are we to understand the relationship between rhetorical participation and rhetorical effect, such as influencing public opinion and ultimately policy making? Already as a discipline we are adept at using rhetorical theory to understand the discursive richness of past events and discursive achievements. This paper suggests that community literacy can serve as a catalyst for us to infuse more rhetorical theory into our understanding of contemporary public spheres as well. For community literacy shifts our gaze from solely institutional or formal settings in order to develop rhetorically sound, empirically grounded descriptions of how more marginalized public discourse does form and function.

This paper takes sites of conflict for its unit of analysis (Flower, 1994). It explores how negotiations within these sites unearth people's competing versions of the problem that calls them together. The analysis also tracks the discursive moves the stakeholders make to resolve the conflict. Through these moves stakeholders reveal competing visions for rhetorical action. These glimpses of alternative public rhetorical practices are of potential interest for argumentation theorists and practitioners. For through them we see the value everyday people attach to local public discourse, including how they perceive rhetorical action promoting change.

1. The Case Study: A Teenager Composes and Performs a Rap Directed at School Suspension Policies

This paper analyzes a teenager's argument, performed as a rap. It first examines the negotiations surrounding the teenager's performance, then policy makers' competing interpretations of its implications for rhetorical action.

The first part features an argument that a teenager named Mark presents at a community conversation on high school suspension policies. A bit of background: Mark was a teen writer at the Community House a settlement house in the center of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that operates in partnership with the Center for the Study of Writing and Literacy at Carnegie Mellon University (Long, Peck, and Baskins, 2002). Mark wrote his rap for a community conversation, the finale of an 8-week after-school literacy project. The community conversation is a practice of community literacy, designed as an intercultural public forum for addressing social issues affecting community residents (Flower 1997). For this project Mark and several other teenagers studied suspension policies and practices in their urban high school and wrote a policy statement, representing problems and suggesting solutions from their points of view. The topic of suspension was on the table because suspension – and allegations that suspension practices were racially charged – had become a problem for many constituents: teachers; the vice principal of the high school; parents; shop keepers; community residents; and, of course, the teenagers themselves. An alarming number of students were suspended each year at the high school Mark attended. More than 50% of all students there were suspended at least once by the time they finish 10th grade.

So after studying the issue for several weeks, interviewing the various stakeholders, and writing responses to issues they explored, the teenagers, with the help of the Community House staff, hosted a community conversation to include the school board president and vice principal as respondents. The

teenagers presented a newsletter they had written, entitled *Wassup with Suspension*, documenting a range of perspectives on their school system's suspension policies. To launch the conversation, Mark performed this rap:

Example (1)

MISCOMMUNICATION

by Mark Howard

This is not your everyday gangster rap. The purpose of this rap is to tell what really happens in school between students, teachers, and vice principals, and what causes suspension.

It started with two students in the class talking out of place
The boy starts getting rude and got all up in the girl's face
The girl didn't like it so she got up and yelled back
The teacher told the girl, *Get up and sit down in the back*
She got up with no problem and then sat in the back chair

He had to be a pest so he started to look and stare
At the girl to test her and try to make her mad
He said, *Respect me girl ... and treat me like your dad!*
She stood up and said, *Don't play ... my dad got shot last year*
The teacher turned around just as the girl broke out in tears

The teacher kicked her out and said, *Go straight to the VP*
The boy started laughing as the girl said *It wasn't me*
The teacher didn't listen, even harder the girl cried
When she got to the office she found out the teacher lied

She talked and talked and tried to tell him what's going on
The VP wouldn't listen but she kept going on and on
The VP said, *You're lying 'cause that's not what I heard*
The teacher wouldn't lie so I'm going with the teacher's word
The teacher said you tried to start a fight in the classroom
She said you threatened her then you said you would leave the room
She also said you tried to pick a fight with another kid
So don't sit there and lie now; tell me what you really did

She said, *It's hopeless, every time I tell you, you say I lied*

The VP didn't listen and slowly the girl cried
The VP said, *You're going home for about three days*
She shook her head as he said, *You'll learn from your wrong ways*

The point of this story – nobody pays attention
To a student 'cause they're young. Now I may mention
If the teacher would have took one minute and acted like she cares
She would have saved a lot of time and a lot of tears
Teachers prove students right just about every day
They automatically think their way is the right way

Same for the Vice Principal they don't listen too
You're guilty, you're suspended is the only thing they do
On the other hand, the girl was also wrong in her actions
She didn't have to get up and scream for satisfaction
She could have told the teacher or even the principal
Instead she's in trouble, suspended and sitting out of school
The point of this story is lost communication
Make sure it's always there or you'll be on a vacation.

The vice principal, in his response to the teenagers' arguments, offered to make their policy document required reading for all teachers at Mark's high school, which he has done. So what was accomplished then? The teenagers in the project gave voice to the situation from their points of view, suggesting that for students, the story behind an altercation may be significantly different from what teachers and administrators may have imagined.

Mark's performance at the community conversation makes two points that can refine how we think about the rhetoric of contemporary public spheres. First, we note that publics can emerge dynamically – in response to problems, rather than existing solely as a fixed, *a priori* site. The community conversation where Mark performed his rap came into being to address a mutual problem. Within this site, it is acknowledged that the participants – the school board president, the high school vice principal, the teenagers, the parents – hold different opinions regarding the nature of the problem. What unites them for the time being as a public is their commitment to the problem and their desire to influence its resolution through dialogue. When we note publics emerging dynamically, we shift our attention from text (e.g., King's "Letter" as anthologized artifact) to

performance (albeit supported by and tracked through text). As Hauser notes, moved to a level of performance, “rhetoric opens intentional spaces: spaces where ideas, relationships, emotional bonds, and courses of action can be experienced in novel, sometimes transformative, ways” (33). Within this framework, then, a performance is judged rhetorically effective not so much because it secures agreement but rather because it is understood across perspectives and, as a result, provides a basis for cooperation among those who have a stake resolving in the problem (Hauser, 1999, 55).

Second, Mark’s performance moves us beyond rational-critical stipulations of Habermas’s model (where emotions should be bracketed while one engages in rational, critical discussion), and it moves us beyond the dichotomy between cognition and affect in our own circles. We note that people become engaged because issues touch their lives. A rhetorical understanding of communication regards life-engaging decisions as necessarily involving emotions. And here we are reminded of the classical tradition’s rendition of rhetoric as a productive art: engaging emotions in tandem with reason is necessary for sound judgment. According to Aristotle (1941/350 B.C.E.), it is essential to ponder proportion between acts and consequences for prudence to prevail.

2. Contesting the Rhetorical Efficacy of the Teen’s Rap

You may recall Young, Becker and Pike’s (1970) premise of tagmemic rhetoric: we can inquire into a problematic phenomenon by thinking of it as a particle (that is, as the thing itself), as a wave (as something that changes over time) and in a field (within a network or system). In the spirit of such inquiry, I would ask you to consider Mark’s rap as it participates over time in a larger field: a public discussion around the question of how organizations, ranging from public schools to non-profit organizations, can best support literate activity that works to build a more equitable and loving world. This question is a pressing one, one to which our discipline is accountable. It is around this question that Glynda Hull and Katherine Schultz (2002) have organized their literature review for the recently published *School’s Out! Bridging Out-of-School Literacies with Classroom Practice*. As McLaughlin et al. (2001) make clear in *Urban Sanctuaries: Neighborhood Organizations in the Lives and Futures of Inner City Youth*, the question of how best to construe literacy to support social justice is a matter of public policy. With Mark’s rap held at the center of our inquiry, this paper next traces three sites of conflict surrounding it. In the negotiation of these conflicts, stakeholders clarify their interests, they suggest competing – sometimes

conflicting – conceptions of the social problem that brings them together, and they nominate alternative visions for rhetorical action that they recommend in response to the problem.

To begin, let me take you back to the afternoon before the Community Conversation when the writers of the *Wassup with Suspension?* project hold a rehearsal. The teen writers know that more than 150 people had already RSVP-ed saying they'll attend. Adrenalin is running. The teenagers are practicing intently. A journalist from one of the city's newspapers is attending. After Mark's turn at the microphone, she calls the rehearsal to a halt. This is the first contested site.

3. Stipulating contingencies for rhetorical action: The audience must be able to hear

One of Mark's classmates, a young woman named Indie, attended the rehearsal and later recounted the negotiation this way:

Mark finished. Everybody – all of us kids – thought it [his rap] was just great. We were just clapping and clapping. But Tina – the reporter – was sitting next to me, and leaned over and said, "I didn't understand a word he was saying." I brought this up to Ms. Baskins [a literacy leader], and it soon got back to Mark. The discussion became more open and some of us brought up that, number 1, even if you're a kid, it could be hard to catch all the words, because the music is loud and the rap is fast, and there's a lot there. But especially for this adult audience who's not used to rap, it would make it that much harder for them to understand. Mark wanted to keep the music pretty loud. We talked about telling people to follow along in their copies of the newsletter. But Mark said that would distract them from the stage. We tried to think of some other options. Then this idea came up: to project the lyrics on the wall.

As Indie tells it, Mark, the journalist, a literacy leader, and several of the teen writers negotiate a solution: An overhead projection of the rap's lyrics. Here, all involved seem to agree generally on the social need: School policy-makers quite literally need to hear from teenagers. Mark's rap and the lyrics projected overhead comprise a hybrid performance aimed at getting the audience to hear Mark's argument for changes in the school's suspension policy. The overhead is a scaffolding aimed at helping the audience become more literate in the discourse of rap – well, at least Mark's use of it.

The journalist the next morning published an article, using an excerpt from Mark's rap as the lead – and later praising him for his "message-filled rap" and

the Community House as “ a revolutionary writing and communication project.” The article extends the reach of Mark’s performance beyond those attending the community conversation or reading the teenagers’ newsletter to the general readership of the newspaper.

4. Contesting the relative worth of alternative literate practices

Mark’s performance reflects an important goal of community literacy: a young person’s literate act that has clear rhetorical goals and makes a powerful public statement advocating some sort of local social change (Long, Peck and Baskins, 2002). Consistent with its educational goals, the process even supported collaborative problem solving of Mark’s strategic orchestration of text conventions (such as the overhead) to support his rhetorical purpose. As such, the directors of community-literacy initiatives highlighted Mark and his rap in two texts that they later composed: a grant proposal to fund community literacy projects at the Community House and a presentation about community literacy which they delivered at a university on the other side of the country. These accounts of Mark and his rap serve as the next sites of negotiation.

The first draft of the grant proposal highlights Mark as the kind of teenager the Community House wanted (and needed major funding) to support. After a paragraph-long portrait of a center for community literacy is a description of Mark:

Mark is a teenage writer at the Community Literacy Center, or, as he would say, “a rap artist waiting to be discovered.” ... He is a bright and resourceful teenager who, like all too many African American males, is frequently suspended from school. In his raps and in his life, Mark flirts with the possibility of joining a gang and becoming a member of a group that at least supports his art form. Mark is a fifteen-year-old at a crossroads. He has important choices to make. He wants to be heard and taken seriously and to have a place to come to work on his dreams. The Community Literacy Center is an alternative form for Mark’s art and argument and a place to begin a broader conversation about issues he cares most about.

The directors sent their draft to a wealthy elderly philanthropist I’ll call Mr. Jenkins, who supports a dozen or so literary projects in the eastern and mid-Atlantic U.S. As is quite typical, Jenkins has a representative who works with organizations requesting funds, but he makes the final funding decisions himself. The draft no sooner reached the representative’s office than the executive

director of the Community House received a phone call from her, explaining that the introductory portrait of the young rap artist would not do. Indirectly representing Mr. Jenkins's sense of urban social problems, needs, and solutions, she explained that Mr. Jenkins does not consider rap a literate achievement, and certainly not the kind of literacy he wants his trust to support. The representative suggested, "You'd be better off highlighting a young poet or fiction writer."

The directors revised their proposal, highlight, instead, two teenagers – Chiante and Terrell – learning to "code switch" (Gilyard, 1991) at the Community House, strategically moving between the discourse of the streets and the discourse of political action. Also, the textual portrait of Mark is replaced with a simple photograph and moved to the second page.

What is in tension here is the relative worth of alternative literate practices: performing rap, cultivating a poetic sensibility, and code switching. For Jenkins, supporting Mark's interest in rap doesn't address Jenkin's conception of the social problem he wants his trust to support. Yet the writers of the grant choose a different rhetorical strategy than attempting to convince Jenkins of the appropriateness of rap in this setting (something the could have done, say, by highlighting rap as a type of poetry). Instead, they back up. They seek cooperation on the problem that brought them together in the first place: after-school opportunities for youth in compromised neighborhoods. In the end, the Community House received funding: several hundred thousand dollars, some to cover operating costs but most earmarked for proliferation, to "convey the model of community literacy to the broader educational and civic community." That is, to publicize their model.

5. Clarifying the relationship between an individual's literate performance and institutional agendas

Several months later, the director of the Community House and two colleagues traveled across the country to talk about community literacy at a large state university. During one of the campus presentations, the director showed video-clips from the community conversation and explicitly highlighted Mark's rap within a narrative of the larger project. Among those who responded during the questions-and-answer period was an academic who referred to himself as a cultural theorist.

He asked:

Why should Mark have to alter his discourse and explain himself to the powers

that be? Why shouldn't the powers that be turn around and adapt their discourse to Mark? I'm real suspicious here of some sort of colonialism: that the dominant discourse is coming into the community and trying to take in these kids. Saying to them, you have to adapt your discourse so it's more like ours.

Note that the cultural theorist's concerns stipulate some parameters for discussion. They suggest that if the director is going to promote this vision for community-based literacy instruction, he needs to be accountable to specific charges.

The director responded:

Cultural theorists like yourself are going to be suspicious – and you should be – if what's going on is uni-directional. But you've got to consider that school board members don't usually come and interact and listen to kids like they did that night. That was a change, that was an adaptation on the part of the school board. I feel that the fact Oliver High School was making this required reading for their teachers and using it in their teacher training workshops – that's an adaptation. If you look at the discourse of school policy, it's quite different from what you find in this booklet.

The theorist replied, arguing that the community and the university are distinct arenas:

Universities go beyond their jurisdiction when they attempt to get involved in community issues. He maintained that the overhead projected during Mark's rap was part of a larger pattern of violence against the writers. Because of the inherent power differentials, to support teenagers in addressing issues of public policy is to colonize them through the discourse of policy.

With the support of the grant from the Jenkins Trust, the director and his colleagues later developed their first formal article about community literacy and published it in *College Composition and Communication*. Their article entitled "Community Literacy" reflects both sets of these earlier negotiations. For instance, to introduce the Center, the article begins with the identical text that the directors had deleted from the final grant proposal to the Jenkins Trust. In the article, again the portrait of Mark takes front and center stage, with the identical text from the original proposal now serving as an introduction to the entire article.

Furthermore, while drafting the article, the authors of "Community Literacy" recounted the cultural theorist's concerns as representative of a larger theoretical

position in the field. The theorist helped them to preview a set of disciplinary concerns regarding the problematic power differentials at play when universities and communities attempt to forge partnerships. The article would need to address these concerns at some length to improve the chances of its readers taking seriously the proposed framework and model for literate social action. One afternoon the director recounted the argument and grappled with its construal of larger social needs. He mused to others of us in the room:

What are the implications of what he [the cultural theorist] was arguing? He was talking about groups like who are separatists. That's one way to deal with difference. To separate into camps and then just go at war with each other. It seems like he was saying we should just leave them alone. And I just really disagree with that. That discourse isn't communicating with us, and our discourse isn't communicating with them. There's got to be some room in there to invent some bridges. It's only in the safety of academia that we can even make such arguments.

The article itself responds to the theorist's concerns within a larger argument for interculturalism. What I want to highlight here is that the theorist's concerns serve as a source of invention to Peck and his colleagues, challenging them to better frame their arguments for community literacy. Consider this passage from the article:

In an urban context, an intercultural agenda must stand against things as well as for new possibilities. Interculturalism demands a suspicion of colonizing rhetorics that work to impose a dominant discourse upon a working group. At the same time, interculturalism demands a corresponding willingness to create hybrid texts that draw upon the shared expertise of the group.... In the process, boundaries become not only discourse barriers that separate but also places of relationship and encounter with persons from other communities (Peck, Flower and Higgins, 1995, 212).

In this way, the theorist's concerns urged the director to reframe and elaborate key ideas. The negotiation with the cultural theorist suggested that the director had sketched the details of the community-literacy project too quickly. Voicing his concerns, the theorist spurred the director to recontextualize his introduction to address a broader set of issues, issues that would need to be addressed to increase the probability of receiving a hearing among a diverse readers.

Viewing Mark's rap in the context of this larger field, several rhetoric principles

emerge:

One, a rhetorical model of public spheres not only expects participants to have interests but regards them as essential for the exercise of prudent judgments on public problems. As such, such a model supplants disinterestedness with accommodation on conflicting interests as a mark of a well-functioning public sphere (Hauser, 1999). And it “replaces the norm of critical rationality with the rhetorical norm of reasonableness” (61). In the course of discussing an issue, the success of an argument can be measured in terms of its success in forging identifications. As Hauser (1999) asserts, “Its [an argument’s] success or failure and its consequences for the public opinion that eventually emerge are a function of its range in addressing relevant needs and commitments” (61).

Two, the case study emphasizes that strategically crafted discourse is not an indication of ideological distortion as it is in Habermas’s model (Hauser, 1999, 47) but rather an empirical reality characterizing rhetorical discourse itself

In sum, this paper commends tracing sites of conflict within public discourse. I suggest that in doing so, one is identifying the local nodes or intersections that are at the heart of Hauser’s (1999) metaphor of public discourse as a network or lattice. Such work can help us to infuse our discipline’s characterization of local public spheres with a more dimensional, albeit heavily constrained, conception of what it means to exercise rhetorical effect within and across contemporary settings. As we elaborate such a model, we will be better able to imagine ways to infuse our undergraduate curriculum with a range of practices that, as Fleming (1998) recommends, prepares students to participate in public life. Surely, we’ll continue to prepare them to adjudicate claims on the basis of warranted assent. However, such research will also help us discover cultural, political, and social possibilities for practices that shape new understandings of common interests.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - “We Destroy Arguments...” (2 Corinthians 10:5): The Apostle Paul’s Use Of Epicheirematic Argumentation



1. Introduction

There was a moral crisis among the earliest Christians in Corinth. Intimately connected with this moral crisis was a criticism of Paul’s *modus operandi* (Litfin, 1994, 151-55; Long, 1999, 181-218; cf. Malherbe, 1983, 166-72) or more specifically Paul’s psychagogy (see Malherbe, 1987, 81-88; Stowers, 1990; Glad, 1995). Second Corinthians gives vivid testimony to this dual crisis, whatever we might conclude about the unity or sequencing of the Corinthian letters (see Long, 1999; Amador, 2000). In 2 Corinthians 10 Paul explains that he “destroys arguments (*logismous*).” Then he discloses a few sentences later (vv 9-10) a general evaluation of his letters as “weighty and strong” (*bareiai kai ischurai*). These comments are made in the context of Paul’s attempt to explain his rationale for his moral instruction and expectations of the Corinthians, as he explains in vv 3-6 (trans. Stowers, 1990, 267):

I do live in the flesh, but I do not make war as the flesh does; the weapons of my warfare are not weapons of the flesh, but divinely strong to demolish fortresses – I demolish reasonings [*logismoi*] and any rampart thrown up to resist the knowledge of God, I take captive every mind [or thought (*noēmata*)] to make it obey Christ, I am prepared to court-martial anyone who remains insubordinate, once your submission is complete.

Abraham Malherbe (1983) and others have investigated this passage identifying social connections with Hellenistic schools of philosophy. This passage, however, also speaks to the strategies of Paul’s previous epistolary correspondences, as

Stowers (1990) has well noted. While Stowers has shown that Paul's use of sarcasm, irony, and diatribe in the previous letter, 1 Corinthians, was in conformity to psychagogic strategies not dissimilar to Epicurean psychagogy, another feature of Paul's manner of argumentation may be observed; namely, the use of epicheiremes. I surmise that this aspect of Paul's argumentation led to the conclusion that his letters were weighty and strong. Indeed, if Paul was interested in promoting "faith" or "persuasion" in the early fledgling Christian communities (see Kinneavy, 1987), we should not be surprised by this discovery of epicheirematic argumentation in Paul.

Formal argumentation was taught in the rhetorical schools scattered across the Mediterranean basin, particularly in Paul's hometown of Tarsus (see Du Toit, 2000), but also in Palestine itself (Kinneavy, 1987). Within these Mediterranean rhetorical cultures (Robbins, 1994, 82-88), Paul would have had ready access to examples of popular moralists, exercises in the progymnasmata, and/or theoretical rhetorical textbooks for suitable or appropriate styles and modes of argumentation. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (2.2), Cicero's *De Inventione* (I.61), and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (V.xiv.32; cf. V.x.1, 8) give extensive testimony to the vitality and interest in argumentation specifically among the Greeks.

Cicero in *De Inventione* discusses one argument form at length, the *ratio cinatio* or what Quintilian and others referred to as *epicheirema* (see Kroll, 1936). It is my contention that Paul's manner of argumentation in 1 Corinthians and elsewhere is epicheirematic in form. The rigorous employment of epicheiremes, in which paraenetic conclusions in the form of exhortations are causally derived from premises and proofs, was Paul's strategy to deal with the emerging moral crisis in the Corinthian community. And given Paul's own comments in 2 Corinthians 10 and the evaluation of his letters (possibly inclusive of 1 Thessalonians), we should not be surprised to find that many of Paul's others letters exhibit a rigorous and fairly consistent epicheirematic argumentation. So, after a survey of the epicheireme in ancient rhetorical theory of Cicero, I will investigate its use in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, 1 Corinthians 4-5, and Acts 20:18-35.

2. The Epicheireme as a Deductive Argument Form

There are to be found various descriptions of deductive argumentation in the extant rhetorical works around the time of Paul (Eriksson, 1998, 53-62; Alexandre, 1999, 76). Purportedly, the Greek Stoics, who wanted more precision in their argumentation, preferred the epicheireme form and eventually it is

embraced by the early Cicero as described in *De Inventione* (Church and Cathcart, 1965, 141, 147; cf. Thompson, 1975, 40-41). Here Cicero explains that the epicheireme consists of a basic syllogistic structure consisting of five parts:

1. Major Premise (*propositio*)
2. Proof of Major Premise (*propositionis approbatio*)
3. Minor Premise (*assumptio*)
4. Proof of Minor Premise (*assumptionis approbatio*)
5. Conclusion (*conclusio*)

Cicero admits that each of these five parts need not be present, and gives examples of shorter formulations in which one or both proofs are omitted (*Inv.* I.57-77; cf. Quint. *Inst.* V.xiv.5-10) or even the conclusion omitted, although this is not encouraged (*Inv.* I.72, 74-75).

Cicero's discussions may be evaluated in light of the examples he provides (see *Inv.* I.58-72). Only two are presented below. Since he does not identify individual components (although Quintilian does for Cicero's first fivefold example – *Inst.* V.xiv.7-9), I have designated them before the text as Premise A and Premise B, etc. Also in brackets are other relevant pieces of information, such as the conjunctions used to help demarcate the logic of the various components.

1. First Fivefold Example (*Inv.* I.58-59)[i]

PREMISE A: Things that are done by design are managed better than those which are governed without design.

Proof A: The house that is managed in accordance with a reasoned plan, is in every respect better equipped and furnished than one which is governed in a haphazard way with a total lack of design. The army that is commanded by a wise and shrewd general is guided in all ways more advantageously than one which is governed by someone's folly and rashness. The same line of reasoning is applicable to navigation, for the ship which has the services of the most expert pilot makes the most successful voyage.

PREMISE B: Of all things nothing is better governed than the universe.

Proof B: For [Nam] the risings and the settings of the constellations keep a fixed order, and the changes of the seasons not only proceed in the same way by a fixed law but are also adapted to the advantage of all nature, and the alternation of night and day has never through any variations done any harm.

CONCLUSION: Therefore [igitur] the universe [B] is administered by design [A].

[OR] Therefore if those things are administered better which are governed by design than those which are administered without design [A], and nothing is governed better than the universe [B], then [*igitur*] the universe [B] is governed by design [A].

This example fits the form nicely. Proof A consists of a threefold example substantiating Premise A, which is more general in scope than Premise B. Proof B is initiated by *nam* which provides a threefold substantiation by considering particular components of the universe. Two alternative conclusions are provided. In each, *igitur* is used, indicating the causal connection. Also, both conclusions contain summarizing features such that one may detect the main idea in Premises A and B.

Cicero's second fivefold example is introduced with no other explanations. The distinct components are not as easily detected. My analysis would suggest that the example is indeed one epicheireme; however, it envelops two subordinate epicheiremes found within *Premise A* and *Proof B*. This complexity indicates the possibility of linking distinct epicheiremes together (e.g., the conclusion supplies the next premise) and the possibility of finding an epicheireme within an epicheireme.

2. Second Fivefold Example (*Inv.* I.68-69)

PREMISE A with elaboration as an epicheireme

[Premise A:] "It is right, gentlemen of the jury, to relate all laws to the advantage of the state and to interpret them with an eye to the public good and not according to their literal expression.

[Proof A:] For [*enim*] such was the uprightness and wisdom of our ancestors that in framing laws they had not object in view except the safety and welfare of the state.

[Premise B:] [*enim*] They did not themselves intend to write a law which would prove harmful, and they knew that if they did pass such a law, it would be repealed when the defect was recognized.

[Proof B:] For [*enim*] no one wishes laws to be upheld merely for their own sake, but for the sake of the state, because everyone believes that the state is best governed when administered according to law.

[Conclusion:] All written laws ought, then [*igitur*], [B] to be interpreted in relation to the object for which laws ought to be observed: [next *Premise A*=?] that is, since we are servants of the community, let us interpret the laws with an eye to

the advantage and profit of the community.

Proof A: For [Nam] as it is right to think that the art of medicine produces nothing except what looks to the health of the body, since it is for this purpose that medicine was founded, so we should believe that nothing comes from the laws except what conduces to the welfare of the state, since the laws were made for this purpose.

PREMISE B: Therefore [ergo], in this trial also, cease to search the letter of the law and rather, as is just, examine the law in relation to the public welfare.

Proof B with elaboration as an epicheireme:

[Premise A]: What was more useful to Thebes than the defeat of Sparta? What should Epaminondas, the Theban commander, have had in mind more than the victory of Thebes? What should he have regarded as dearer or more precious than such a glorious exploit of the Thebans, than a trophy so honourable, so magnificent?

[Proof A] It is obvious that he was bound to forget the letter of the law and to consider the intent of the law-maker.

[Premise B] But certainly this point has been examined and established beyond a doubt, that no law has been passed except for the good of the state.

[Conclusion] He thought it, therefore [igitur], stark madness not to interpret a law with an eye to the safety of the state when that law had been passed for the safety of the state.

CONCLUSION: In view of this, if all laws ought to be related to the advantage of the state [A], and Epaminondas contributed to the safety of the state [pB], surely he cannot by the same act have promoted the common interest and have failed to obey the laws.

Once again we can see the conclusion as summarizing elements from A and B. As is indicated, both Premise A and Proof B are elaborated epicheirematically such that each contains its own conclusion with *igitur*.

From these examples and other comments in Cicero and Quintilian, several points may be presented here concerning the epicheireme argument form.

1. In keeping with the designation, the major premise is more general or broader in scope; the minor premise is more particular or an example of the major premise.
2. The proofs of the premises may *or* may not be demarcated by a causal conjunction indicating substantiation (*nam* or *enim*).

3. Furthermore, the proof may involve numerous examples and great elaboration. As Cicero explains this is accomplished “by a variety of reasons and the greatest possible fullness of expression” (I.58; cf. I.75).

4. The conclusion is regularly indicated by an inferential conjunction (*igitur*) and brings features of both the major and minor premises together to form the conclusion.

After providing examples of shorter and shorter possible forms in which one component of the *epicheireme* is missing, Cicero concludes by offering general recommendations. Quintilian also adds helpful information. These may be summarized as follow:

5. There should be variety in the conclusion (*Inv.* I.73-74). He suggests the following options:

a. combining major and minor premise into one sentence: *example*: “If, then, all laws should be related to the advantage of the state [A], and he contributed to the safety of the state [B], he certainly cannot by one and the same act have had regard for the common safety and have disobeyed the laws.”

b. making a contrary statement: *example*: “It is therefore the height of folly to place confidence in the promises of those whose treachery you have so often been deceived.” [rather than: “it is wise not to trust those by whom we have so often been deceived before”]

c. merely stating the deduction: *example*: “Let us therefore destroy the city.”

d. stating what is the necessary consequence of the deduction: *example argument*: “If she has born a child, she has lain with a man; but she has born a child.” *deductive conclusion*: “Therefore she has lain with a man.” *necessary consequence*: “Therefore she is unchaste.”

e. Quintilian would add that occasionally the conclusion will be identical with the major premise (*Inst.* 5.14.10—“The soul is immortal, since [*nam*] whatever derives its motion from itself is immortal. But the soul derives its motion from itself. Therefore, the soul is immortal.”). He considers this conclusions as still yet unproven.

6. Furthermore, there should be variety in the order of the argument to avoid boredom (*Quint. Inst.* 5.14.30). If not, then the discourse becomes more like “dialogues or dialectical controversies....with learned men seeking truth among men of learning” (*Quint. Inst.* 5.14.27-28).

7. In this regard, we should note that rhetorical questions may be used as

premises (Quint. *Inst.* 5.14.19), proofs (Cic. *Inv.* I.69, 70; Quint. *Inst.* 5.14.19), and conclusions (Cic. *Inv.* I.70).

8. Specifically, Cicero urges variety and argues that it is not the basic fivefold argument that is sought after, but the greatest orators develop and expand the thought (*Inv.* I.75). He suggests the following (*Inv.* I.76):

- a. use different kinds of arguments in the discourse: inductive and deductive.
- b. when using deductive arguments, 1) do not always begin with the major premise; sometimes start with the minor premise; 2) nor employ all five parts; sometimes use only one of the two proofs, sometimes both; 3) nor embellish them in the same fashion; and 4) use different types of conclusions.

9. Finally, Quintilian argues that such careful argumentation drawing out of obvious inferences as conclusions, etc. is a characteristic of his contemporaneous Greek practitioners (*Inst.* 5.14.32). However, the use of epicheiremes and enthymemes should be limited (5.14.27), diversified (5.14.31-32), and hidden lest it become monotonous (5.14.30) and betrays a manufactured artifice (5.14.32-35).

3. The Epicheireme as a Formal Deductive Argument Pattern in Paul

Now let us consider some examples of this type of argument in 1 Thess 4:13-5:11, 1 Corinthians 4-5, and Acts 20:18-35.

1. The Certainty of the Dead in Christ being Raised (1 Thess 4:13-18)

PREMISE A: 4:13 But [*de*] we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

Proof A: 14 For [*gar*] if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

PREMISE B: 15 For [*gar*] this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

Proof B: 16 For [*gar*] the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

CONCLUSION: 18 Therefore [*hōste*] comfort one another [A] with these words [B].

This argument may be simplified as follows:

PREMISE A: Be informed so as not to grieve about those who have died. [General]

Proof A: For, as with Jesus, so also God will raise the dead in Jesus.

PREMISE B: Indeed, the dead will precede those still alive when the Lord comes. [Specific]

Proof B: For, this is the sequence: 1) Lord will descend, 2) The dead will rise first, 3) Then we will meet them all and be with the Lord forever.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, don't grieve, but comfort one another.

Notice Paul's careful use of conjunctions to present the deduction. Gars are used to introduce the Proofs and the conclusion is demarcated by the use of hōste with the imperative mood. Premise A is more general; Premise B is specific. The conclusion is a combination of two variations that Cicero discusses, namely that of contrary statement and necessary consequence. In other words, rather than saying "Therefore, do not grieve..." he exhorts "comforting" instead; and rather than saying "be comforted" he urges the necessary consequence "comfort one another" which is communal in nature. At the same time, one may also detect Paul bringing both major and minor premises together in the conclusion ("these words" refers to the theological elaboration of the sequence of events in Element B). This combination also accords with Cicero's description of how to conclude a deductive argument.

2. The Certainty of Salvation (1 Thess 5:1-11)

PREMISE A: 5:1 Now [*de*] as to the times and seasons, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. [GENERAL]

Proof A: 2 For [*gar*] you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. *Elaboration on Proof A:* 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

PREMISE B: 4 But [*de*] you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; [SPECIFIC]

Proof B: 5 for [*gar*] you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;

CONCLUSION and Next PREMISE A: 6 so then (*ara oun*) let us not sleep as others do [A], but let us be alert and sober [B].

Proof A: 7 For [*gar*] those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get

drunk get drunk at night.

PREMISE B: 8 But [*de*] since we are of *the* day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. [more SPECIFIC]

Proof B: 9 For [*hoti*] God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him.

CONCLUSION: 11 Therefore [*dio*] encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

In 5:1-11 we see two integrated epicheiremes. We should note the progression of premises followed by proofs which are introduced by *gars* or a *hoti*. The conclusions of each epicheireme is indicated by the inferential conjunctions *ara* and *dio*.

The first conclusion in 5:6 contains three hortatory subjunctives (present tense). These hortatory subjunctives effectively call the Thessalonians to a continual communal response to Paul's injunctions, as in 4:18 and 5:11. The conclusion is a simple deduction where the two premises would lead. In other words, given that they know the day will come unexpectedly (premise A), and given that they belong to the Light and Day (premise B), they should not sleep (relating back to A) but rather be alert and sober (relating to B), thus effectively bringing both premises/proofs together. This conclusion accords with the examples Cicero described.

This conclusion in 5:6 then becomes premise A for the next epicheireme which comes to a conclusion in 5:11: "Therefore, encourage and build up one another." This conclusion in 5:11, however, is a necessary consequence according to one of the Cicero's variations. In other words, according to Cicero's description, Paul has introduced a conclusion in 5:11 which is in fact further derived from a more direct deduction. Such a deduction would be "Since we ought not to sleep, but be alert and sober, and since we have this hope of salvation, we, therefore, ought to continue to be sober in order to obtain our salvation." The conclusion Paul offers, however, is really the next step beyond this more direct conclusion: "Therefore, encourage and build up one another." This actual conclusion reinforces Paul's communal emphasis in the exhortations ("encourage and build up") by placing them within a corporate context ("one another"). This conclusion fittingly shows variety and, while urging them to encourage one another, Paul exemplifies this

himself by adding, “just as you are doing.”

Now I would like us to consider 1 Corinthians 4. Paul in chaps.1-3 has just discussed the nature of the gospel message in relation to his evangelistic preaching. Now, in chapter 4 Paul turns to address the Corinthians directly about their criticism of him. Chapter 4 is thus pivotal for re-establishing Paul’s authority before he is able to address the problems of immorality and lawsuits between believers in chaps. 5 and 6.

3. Stop Judging Paul (1 Cor 4:1-5)

PREMISE A: 4:1 Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. [GENERAL]

Proof B: [none needed; already established in 1 Cor 3:1-10]

PREMISE B: 3 But [*de*] to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. [SPECIFIC]

Proof B: 4 For [*gar*] I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.

CONCLUSION: 5 Therefore [*hōste*] do not go on passing *judgment* before the time [B], but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things *hidden* in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men’s* hearts [A]; and then each person’s praise will come to him from God [necessary consequence].

This argument may be simplified as follows:

PREMISE A: We are servants of Christ and are expected to be found trustworthy (when judged by Him)

Proof A: [see 3:5; servants will be so judged (3:10-17)]

PREMISE B: Your judgment of me doesn’t bother me.

Proof B: For I know nothing against myself; besides the Lord’s judgment is what matters.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, stop judging; the Lord will judge and each person will receive praise from God.

Notice the movement from general to specific between the premise A and premise B. Also, the conclusion is formed by a combination of both A and B elements: the notion of “judgment” corresponds to the element B and the evaluation of things hidden by the Lord corresponds to element A. Additionally, the last clause of the conclusion contains a necessary consequence to the conclusion (“each person will

receive praise from God").

4. *Be Like Paul (1 Cor 4:6-16)*

PREMISE A: 4:6 Now [*de*] these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

Proof A: 7 For [*gar*] who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive?

And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Further Embellishment of Proof A:

8 You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. 9 For [*gar*], I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10 We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. 11 To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 12 and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 13 when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

PREMISE B: 14 I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as *my beloved children*.

Proof B: 15 For [*gar*] if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, *yet you would* not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus *I became your father* through the gospel.

CONCLUSION: 16 Therefore [*oun*] I exhort you, be imitators of me.

In this epicheireme one may note that the proofs are initiated with gars and the conclusion introduced with the oun. This conclusion is in the form of an exhortation. Paul shows his skill at embellishment through elaborate contrasts in proof A. Cicero understood the deductive argument as assisting one's embellishment (De Inv. I.75). Once again, this argument may be simplified as follows:

PREMISE A: I want to instruct you not to become arrogant one against the other

by comparing Apollos and myself.

Proof A: For you certainly value yourselves way too highly (and you ought not) while we apostles are so meager and humble.

PREMISE B: I am not shaming you, but admonishing you as my beloved children.

Proof B: For I became your father in the gospel (despite the claims of others).

CONCLUSION: Therefore, imitate me.

(5) Paul will eventually come (1 Cor 4:17-21)

This epicheireme is logically connected to the previous argument by the transitional phrase *dia touto*. As a result of Paul's desire for the Corinthians to imitate himself, Paul discloses his plan to send Timothy to them.

PREMISE A: 17 For this reason [*dia touto*] I have sent to you Timothy, who is my *beloved* and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

Proof A: [None needed]

PREMISE B: 4:18 Now [*de*] as though I were not coming to you, some have become arrogant. 19 But [*de*] I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power.

Proof B: 20 For [*gar*] the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

CONCLUSION with Rhetorical Questions: 21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod [B], or with love and a spirit of gentleness [A]?

The conclusion in this final epicheireme shows great versatility, although it is derived from the argument elements. We might have imagined a conclusion such as "Since therefore I am sending Timothy to remind you of my ways, and since I will come and confront the arrogant if need be, therefore listen carefully to Timothy in preparation for my arrival." Instead, Paul presents contrasting consequences determined by how the Corinthians should choose to receive Timothy as Paul's representative. If they reject Timothy's instruction, then Paul will bring a rod. If they accept Timothy, they should expect love and gentleness. In effect, the conclusion as stated functions to substantiate the unstated conclusion as I have reconstructed it by explaining why they should accept Timothy, because a rod awaits them if not.

This conclusion is rather severe. However, at the end of the letter Paul warns the Corinthians to treat Timothy appropriately (16:10 "Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am"). But, we also must understand that chapter 4 was constructed with

three epicheiremes in an attempt to reestablish Paul's authority within the Corinthian community. The two previous conclusions in 4:5, 16 involve critical exhortations (stop judging me; and imitate me as your Father). The whole of chapter 4, then, thereby prepares for the rebuke and judgment Paul must offer in 1 Corinthians 5, a chapter which is itself comprised of three epicheiremes.

6. Three Epicheiremes in 1 Corinthians 5

PREMISE A: 5:1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.

PREMISE B: 2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

Proof B: 3 For [*gar*] I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.

CONCLUSION: 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled [A], and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus [B], 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus [A].

PREMISE A: 6 Your boasting is not good.

Proof A: Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*?

PREMISE B: 7 Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened.

Proof B: For [*gar*] Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.

CONCLUSION: 8 Therefore [*hōste*] let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness [A], but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [B].

PREMISE A: 9 I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10 I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters,

Proof A: for [*epei*] then you would have to go out of the world.

PREMISE B: 11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler – not even to eat with such a one.

Proof B: 12 For [*gar*] what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the *church*?

CONCLUSION: 13 But those who are outside, God judges [A]. REMOVE THE

WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES [B].

A pattern of paraenesis exists in which the exhortative conclusions bring together the argumentative elements. Paul hoped to establish a proper communal response to immorality. He did so first by his own example of issuing judgment upon the immoral man (5:4-5). Then, through a reconfiguration of the Passover celebration in view of Christ as the Pascal sacrifice, Paul exhorts the community to remove malice and wickedness and to replace them with truth and sincerity (5:8). Finally, Paul appeals to his teaching concerning the matters pertaining to discipline of body members, and creatively brings the argument to a conclusion through the citation of Jewish scripture (*Deut* 21:21): "Remove the wicked from your midst." Notable too is Paul's use of rhetorical questions as "proofs" found also in the examples of Cicero (*Inv.* I.69, 70) and Quintilian (*Inst.* 5.14.19).

7. Three Epicheiremes in Paul's Farewell Address to the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:18-35)

Of the three speeches in Acts attributed to Paul, two involve Gentile/Greek audiences. Each contains epicheiremes. The last speech is displayed below. The author of Acts has probably depicted Paul employing epicheirematic argumentation through the literary procedure of *prosopopoieia* (i.e., the construction of a speech in character). This portrayal of Paul is consistent with his letter writing, as I have described above. In each epicheireme below, notice how the conclusions combine elements from respective premises. The last two conclusions are exhortative in nature.

PREMISE A: "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

Proof A by particular elaboration: 19 *serving* the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; 20 how I did not shrink from *declaring* to you anything that was profitable, and *teaching* you publicly and from house to house, 21 solemnly *testifying* to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

PREMISE B: 22 "And now, behold, [kai nun idou] bound in spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

Proof of B: 24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus,

to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

CONCLUSION: 25 "And now, behold, [kai nun idou] I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom [A], will no longer see my face [B].

PREMISE A: 26 "Therefore [*dioti*], I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

Proof A: 27 "For [*gar*] I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

PREMISE B: 28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Proof B: 29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

CONCLUSION: 31 "Therefore [*dio*] be on the alert [B], remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears [A].

PREMISE A: 32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace,

Proof A: which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

PREMISE B: 33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.

Proof B: 34 "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my *own needs* and to the men who were with me.

CONCLUSION: 35 "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak [B] and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" [A]

4. Conclusion

I have sought to describe the epicheireme argument form as depicted by Cicero and to analyze sections within Paul's letters which appear to conform to this form. My analysis demonstrates that Paul resourcefully employed this deductive argument form to achieve his God-directed ends within the recommendations and variety encouraged by Cicero. This is significant for Pauline studies, since it is currently debated whether Paul knew and utilized ancient rhetorical theory in his letters. Furthermore, epicheirematic analysis has shown that often Paul's conclusions are of the variety of necessary consequence in which he exhorts his readers to certain courses of action. More comparative work is needed studying

the epicheireme form in other ancient writers. Thus far, I have located epicheirematic argumentation in such writers as ps-Isocrates, Plutarch, Seneca, Dio Chrysostom, and Heirotocles (Long, 2002). This research suggests that Paul was using methods of persuasion consistent with the moral philosophers of his day. It seems likely that Paul “destroyed arguments” through the construction of his own, resulting in the evaluation of his letters as “weighty and strong.”

NOTES

[i] The translations of classical authors are from the LCL. All biblical quotations are from the New American Standard Bible.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - The Interaction Between Critical Discussion Principles And The Development Of A Pluralistic Society



In this paper we intend to draw some consequences for the development of a pluralistic society from the principles that should regulate a critical discussion as described in the pragma-dialectical approach (PDA) (Eemeren, F.H. van & Grootendorst, R. 1992). We intend to unveil some presuppositions underlying Chilean public debate and to

show some contributions that can be made to the development of a more alert civic consciousness in Chile. The most recurrent public controversies in Chile since the restoration of democracy in 1989, after seventeen years of military

dictatorship, are controversies over moral values which reflect a social tension between those who want to develop into a modern pluralistic society and those who want to arrest all changes and to maintain traditional values.

As the analysis show, in most cases these controversies and the discussions involved are not really “resolved” but “settled” in the sense in which the PDA contrasts to “settle” a discussion and to “resolve” a difference of opinion (Eemeren, F.H., van & Grootendorst, R. 1992, 32). This is usually achieved by the intervention of what we should term “factual powers”, meaning groups or organizations that have the power to impose decisions upon society without having to enter into debate.

From the numerous public controversies that have taken place since 1989 in Chile, we have selected a few that seem to us to reflect best the issues related to moral values and to reveal the core of the disagreement: the death penalty, the divorce law, the so called “pill for the day after”, and the controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry.

The controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry seems to us to be the most representative of the issues that are at stake in Chilean public debate, while at the same time enables us to hint at some general conclusions regarding what a critical discussion about values and moral principles entails.

In what follows, we shall present some of the controversies that have been the object of interest in public debate in Chile such as they appeared in the press, that is to say, as they were available to every citizen and not as they may have been treated in specialized literature. Next, we shall introduce some necessary distinctions in order to clear the way towards a possible solution of the conflicts presented, and we shall reflect on the ideal of reasonableness underlying the PDA critical discussion principles and on Ernst Tugendhat’s ethical ideal of a moral community of universal mutual respect and their application to the building of a pluralistic society in Chile.

1. The death penalty

Although, since its abolition by Parliament in 2001, the death penalty no longer represents a central concern for public opinion in Chile, we consider that an analysis of the controversy about it provides a good starting point to reflect on the moral principles that are presupposed on each side.

The following is a summary of the main arguments, as they appeared on several letters to the editor or columns of opinion in the leading Chilean newspaper, *El*

Mercurio.

The first project of a law for the abolition of the death penalty was presented in 1990, during the first democratic government to rule after the military. From that moment on the different views expressed have centered on two main principles. According to a newspaper article (Pamela Aravena, *El Mercurio*, April 8, 2001), the two standpoints can be summarized as follows: The first, in favor of abolishing the death penalty, is based on an appeal to the obligation of respecting the criminal's right to life and rehabilitation. The opposite standpoint, in favor of maintaining the death penalty, is based on the right of society to defend itself from the most perverted criminals. This position was also backed by at that moment recent decisions by the law courts to condemn to death offenders that had been found guilty of the rape and murder of children.

In a subsequent moment, the discussion focused on the effectiveness of the death penalty. Those in favor of abolishing it argued that the death penalty lacked the dissuasive power that its supporters attributed to it. Due to the unfavorable climate around it, the law project of abolishing the death penalty did not prosper and the controversy remained unresolved. It was reactivated, however, shortly before its abolition in April 2001. The new context was provided by the decision of subscribing the American Convention for Human Rights ("Pacto de San José"), which entailed the abolition of the death penalty. Part of the debate centered on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the death penalty from a Catholic perspective. For Catholics who oppose the death penalty, the foundations of their standpoint are in the Bible, insofar as it establishes that life is sacred and that to impose the death penalty is, therefore, to seize and hold a right that belongs only to God (Sergio Peña y Lillo, *El Mercurio*, July 18, 2001). For other Catholics, however, the Bible allows the death penalty. In fact, Jesus himself would have recognized this in accepting Pontius Pilate's right to judge and to condemn him. (Hugo Tagle, *El Mercurio*, August, 14, 2000). The trouble with this presentation is double, since it not only presupposes the authority of the Bible, but also requires reaching an agreement about its interpretation.

Finally, the Catholic Church supported the abolition of the death penalty, although it did so from a pastoral point of view and not from a dogmatic one (Alejandro Guzman, *El Mercurio*, July 22, 2000).

Another part of the debate centered on whether, despite its abolition, the death penalty could be restored. According to the Agreement of San José ("Pacto de San

José”), once the death penalty is abolished it cannot be reinstalled. The problem with this is that, as some have argued, the death penalty has not been really abolished in Chile. It was only abolished for civil trials, but not for military trials under a state of war (Hernán Montealegre, *El Mercurio*, August 19, 2001). This is a fact that reveals the absence of a serious discussion and the presence, instead, of a decision considering “the country’s best interest”, which means projecting a better image in the international forum. On the other hand, since a state of war in Chile is something that seems absolutely unthinkable these days, it is understandable that this part of the controversy has ceased to attract public interest, despite the fact that during the military regime over 2000 people were executed in Chile aside of any legal procedure (Jaime Castillo, *El Mercurio*, April 19, 2001). The fact that this issue has not been taken up reveals the shallowness of the debate. One should expect a much deeper discussion about the foundations that should lead to maintaining or abolishing the death penalty.

2. The divorce law

The controversy over a divorce law has a long history. Since 1940 many law projects have been presented and rejected in Parliament. It may seem strange that Chile lacks a divorce law, but this doesn’t cause much trouble in practice, since it is not so difficult to get an annulment of the marriage contract by a legal trick consisting in both members of the marriage couple agreeing to declare that the address stated in the marriage act is not the correct one. In practice, what we have is a very permissive annulment law.

The controversy has been reopened by the fact that the presentation of a project of law concerning divorce has been in the political program of the three governments of the “Concertación” (the coalition of parties that have governed the country since the restoration of democracy). The need to have a divorce law has been argued precisely on the grounds that it is necessary to put an end to the annulment fraud, and also that in the present situation the children of annulled marriages are left in a state of disprotection. The Catholic Church, however, has persistently opposed the divorce law project.

The controversy centered around two issues. One of the central issues taken up in the discussion is the impact of a divorce in the children. The other central topic is whether the Catholic Church’s opposition to legislating about the divorce is an intolerable imposition on the non Catholic members of society. Concerning the influence of divorce on the children, those against the divorce law argued that

divorce destroys the family and harms the children, especially so from a psychological perspective. (Father Jaime Fernández, pastoral Vicar for the Family, *El Mercurio*, Sept. 11, 2001). This view has been opposed arguing that the empirical evidence on which it is based is rather questionable for various reasons: *First*, to determine the effect of divorce on the children is difficult, since it does not affect them in the same way. Some children suffer very much; others adapt themselves to the new situation and recover themselves with little difficulty. (Psychologists Carmen Luz Méndez and Fernando Coddou, *El Mercurio*, May 18, 2001).

Secondly, the effect of divorce on children has to be compared with what happens to the children of annulled marriages and not only with the children of stable marriages (Ignacio Salas, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 18, 2001).

Thirdly, a correct evaluation of the effect of divorce on children requires to measure also the psychological impact that living in a home where the members of the married couple don't get along well may have on the children (Jorge Gómez, *El Mercurio*, July 12, 2001).

Fourthly, the conclusion that divorce harms the children is based on studies that have been carried on in societies with a cultural context very different from the Chilean. For instance, effects of the divorce law in the US are presented without comparing the text of the law or the cultural differences in both situations. Or correlations are presented which appear to be extremely far fetched, as for instance a correlation between the divorce rate and the suicide rate, or the divorce rate and the economic development in Denmark (Jorge Vásquez, *El Mercurio*, Nov.11, 2001).

The second part of the controversy centered on the legitimacy of a divorce law. The position against a divorce law argued that the thesis would be a law against the indissoluble character that marriage should have as a commitment for life. Among the arguments presented by those in favor of this view are the following:

1. The indissolubility of marriage rests on basic moral principles that all people must respect, so that no respecting it would lead to a moral weakening of society in general, which "would be equivalent to accepting the violation of a norm such as the one that prohibits murder" (José Joaquín Ugarte, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 21, 2001).

2. Even a restrictive divorce law (that is, one that admits only a very specific reasons for it) would not be acceptable, even as a lesser damage, because any form of divorce would open the door to marriage forms that debase it to the mere

satisfaction of subjective desires and necessities, such as a marriage between homosexuals would be (Cristóbal Orrego, *El Mercurio*, Sept. 16, 2001).

3. Divorce is not acceptable because marriage, by its own nature, implies a commitment for the whole life (José Joaquín Ugarte, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 21, 2001).

The weakness of these arguments is manifest. They don't even attempt to justify the assumptions on which they are founded, with the result that they incur in circular reasoning. If marriage is defined as a commitment for life, it is indissoluble by definition, and divorce (the dissolution of marriage), of course, is not acceptable. The questions that the arguers do not address are the following: What are the basic moral principles obligatory to all on which the indissolubility of marriage rests? Why would a divorce law weaken society morally and lead to debased forms of marriage?

This position has been much criticized also for its lack of realism, since in the face of the obvious number of marriage ruptures they still maintain that "there are very few ruptures that cannot be remedied inside the marriage itself" (José Joaquín Ugarte, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 21, 2001).

The position in favor of the divorce law argues that the law is required precisely because of the numerous marriage ruptures and that these should be regulated in order to protect the rights of the spouses and the children.

Those in favor of a divorce law argue that it is senseless to think, as the people who are against it do, that the existence of a divorce law would cause or stimulate marriages ruptures (Carlos Peña, *El Mercurio*, July 3, 2001). In fact, empirical observations would show that ruptures are inevitable, and this is the reason for wanting to regulate them by law. Moreover, failing to do it could mean a submission to a particular group, with a particular conception of marriage. Favoring this conception and arbitrarily imposing the idea of an indissoluble marriage to the whole of society, instead of making room for a more flexible idea that admits the possibility of a rupture, would be attempting against the conception of a pluralistic society (Jorge Gómez, *El Mercurio*, July 12, 2001).

Underlying this debate is the issue of personal autonomy. Those in favor of a divorce law consider that the people who are facing a rupture are the best qualified to judge for themselves what they ought to do. Society's failure to respect their right to decide in this matter would mean that society exercises a sort of moral tutelage on them, which would contradict the principles of pluralism and respect for autonomy.

3. The “pill for the day after”

The controversy began in 2001 when the government, through the Public Health Institute (Instituto de Salud Pública, IPS) authorized the use of the drug *Levonorgestrel*, better known as “the pill for the day after”, an emergency contraceptive to be taken after having sexual intercourse. ISP officials justified the use of the pill in extreme cases such as rape or incest.

The Catholic Church expressed its disapproval of the measure and some conservative groups presented a case before the tribunals arguing that the pill was abortive, not just contraceptive. This made it possible to start an indirect public controversy over abortion, which had not been possible before, since abortion is explicitly prohibited as homicide in the 1980 Constitution.

Before the Court’s decision that pronounced *Levonorgestrel* illegal (August 30, 2001) on the grounds that it was against the right to life, some members of the scientific community had pointed out that the judges were not taking into consideration all the scientific evidence available (Fernando Zegers, *El Mercurio*, March 18, 2001).

The debate turned out to be somewhat confuses, since many different issues were being discussed at the same time.

One of the important issues has become to determine whether the pill is abortive. Scientific studies on the effects of the pill had led some people to maintain that it is not abortive, because it only prevents the nestling of the fertilized ovum, and, according to the *World Health Organization*, human life starts with this nestling, since only then the fertilized ovum becomes viable as a human being. Moreover, human reproduction experts have claimed that the pill does not interfere with the fertilized ovum’s development once it is already nestled (Dr. Ramiro Molina, *El Mercurio*, March 20, 2001).

Against this view, it has been objected that scientific studies do not show conclusively that the pill does not interfere with the fertilized ovum already nestled and that, therefore, it cannot be considered proven that the life of a future human being is not endangered by the use of the pill. As long as there is doubt, the use of the pill should be prohibited (Juan Ignacio Donoso, *El Mercurio*, Oct. 10, 2001).

To make things worse, human reproduction experts do not agree on whether the fertilized ovum, before its nestling, should be considered a future human being. For some of them, a fertilized ovum is an individual of the human species (Carlos Valenzuela, *El Mercurio*, April 23, 2001), but for others it is not possible to

determine this on a purely empirical basis, so that the scientist has to reach a conclusion based on his own personal ethical convictions (Enrique Castellón, *El Mercurio*, April 8, 2001).

Since the dispute between the scientists remained unresolved, the discussion moved to a legal and ethical sphere, trying to define whether the fertilized ovum is a human being or not and what its rights would be before the law.

Some lawyers have argued that the state is under the obligation to protect the life of the *nasciturus* (the one who is going to be born), therefore, the Supreme Court's decision that declared illegal the pill is correct and well founded (Angela Vivanco, *El Mercurio*, Sept. 2, 2001). In addition to this, it has been argued that the fertilized ovum is *ontologically* a human being and has, therefore, the same rights as any other human being (Jose Joaquin Ugarte, *El Mercurio*, May 28, 2001).

Against this, it has been argued that this statement presupposes the acceptance of an ethical doctrine that it is not necessary to accept: "Chile it is a democratic republic and not an Aristotelian one" (Antonio Bascuñan, *El Mercurio*, June 2, 2001).

Besides, since an embryo's death could only be established when the fertilized ovum has been nestled, and a right can only be protected when there is a subject to whom that right belongs, it would not be possible to protect the right to life before nestling. Moreover, although there is an obligation of protecting the *nasciturus's* rights, these have to be balanced against the women's rights to autonomy (Antonio Bascuñan, *El Mercurio*, June 2, 2001). Therefore, preventing a woman from using the pill in cases of rape or incest would be against the principles of a pluralistic society.

As in the cases analyzed earlier, the controversy was ended externally by a Supreme Court's decision. As it was to be expected, the government appealed the former Supreme Court's decision that had pronounced *Levonorgestrel* illegal. The main argument used was the pill contained, in a larger dose, the same components that were already in use in other milder contraceptives. In fact, in emergency cases, when they have forgotten to take the regular pill or when the condom fails, many women take the so called "cocktail" of contraceptives, consisting of several doses of the regular pill. In the face of this new evidence the Supreme Court approved the use of a new pill, *Postinol II*, that contains the same substance and produces the same effects as *Levonorgestrel*. The irony of this is that the final decision that settled the discussion was taken without paying any

attention to the important scientific and ethical issues raised in the controversy.

4. The Catholic Church and the Freemasonry

In order to understand the context of the controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry in Chile it is necessary to understand the importance that the Catholic Church is given in the Chilean society. This is due to two reasons. First, the Catholic Church is perceived as a moral authority because of its strong and courageous defense of human rights during the military government. Second, the vast majority of the population identify themselves as Catholic, even when they have ceased to practice the Church's rituals and commandments. This is apparent in the fact that, for most Chileans, all important moments of their life are marked by Catholic rituals, such as baptism, first Holy Communion, marriage and funeral, even when the participants, their parents or their relatives no longer believe in or practice the Church's commandments in everyday life.

Other important thing to notice about this controversy is that this is the first time since the 1973 Coup that the Catholic Church has been so openly and publicly attacked in Chile.

For our purposes in this paper, the importance of the controversy is that it shows the tension between an authoritarian conception of morality and an autonomous one.

The controversy was originated by the words of Cardinal Jorge Medina, who declared that Chilean Catholics should vote for the political candidates who are against abortion, the "pill for the day after", the divorce law and euthanasia. Cardinal Medina's words were considered to represent an unduly intervention of the Church in politics and produced strong reactions, especially because Cardinal Medina holds a high office in the Vatican.

The Chilean Church declared that Cardinal Medina's sayings did not represent the Church's official position, but were only his personal opinions, to which he was entitled as any other Chilean citizen. Also, he was in Chile on vacation and not in an official visit.

The strongest reaction against Cardinal Medina's words came through a public statement by the "Gran Maestro", the Head of the Freemasonry, protesting for what he considered an unduly intervention over the citizen's consciousness: "There has always been in Chile a religious [i.e. Catholic] pressure on the civil society, but never before has there been so open an interventionism" (Jorge

Carvajal, Head of the Freemasonry, *El Mercurio*, Oct. 23, 2001). According to the Freemasonry's view, the Catholic Church, just as any other member of society, can express their opinions concerning any issue related to moral values, but they should not interfere with the civil society.

A telephonic poll conducted shortly after the Freemasonry's statement was published, showed that 77% of the people consulted strongly agreed with it. The outcome was surprising even for the Freemasonry.

The Freemasonry's main thesis, is that the Catholic Church's intervention represents a threat against the moral autonomy to which every citizen is entitled and that this issue should be made the object of an open public debate (Jorge Carvajal, Head of the Freemasonry, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 18, 2001). This raises the question about the limits of personal moral autonomy and the extent to which the state and social institutions such as the Church are entitled to exercise an influence on it.

As the strong unexpected approval from the people to the Freemasonry's statement seems to show, this is precisely the issue that has been bothering Chilean society and has been implicit in the controversies over moral values analyzed in the previous sections. It also shows that the reaction against Cardinal Medina's words was really a reaction against several more or less direct interventions of the Catholic Church and of conservative Catholic laymen, seeking to influence policies and decisions involving moral value issues, as the controversies discussed earlier permit to appreciate.

We think that the controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry shows a tension between the Catholic Church and civil society which is too complex and which, obviously, has not developed into a critical discussion. Only some discrepancies concerning a few specific topics have been expressed.

The main issue that has been debated is whether the Church has the right to demand from Catholics that they vote for candidates that defend the Church's position concerning moral values. According to the most conservative sectors of it, the Church has the right to demand from its flock that they be coherent with the Church's moral principles.

The Freemasonry's objection to this is that, although the Church has the right to express its opinion, it does not have the right to exercise its power to the point that it results in an interference of the civil consciousness. In a pluralistic society, every citizen should feel free to decide according to his or her consciousness and

to vote for candidates that better represent the common good. To put pressure on them so that they vote for candidates who represent a particular group's interests would be against the foundations of a pluralistic society.

The Catholic Church conceded this point. However, since the issue of the limits of personal autonomy has never been debated, it is not clear whether new discrepancies concerning other moral topics are going to come up.

On the other hand, the Freemasonry has not established the foundations on which personal autonomy rests, it has simply defended the right to have a personal ethical option, but it has not clarify whether this implies the recognition of moral norms that everybody must respect. If this remains unclear, the danger of moral relativism is latent, and this is what the Catholic Church criticizes. In fact, in the absence of certain basic moral norms that all people must respect, it is difficult for a pluralistic society to subsist.

5. Some necessary distinctions and reflections towards a resolution of the controversies.

As we have seen, the Chilean controversies over moral value issues are far from being resolved, in a pragma dialectical sense. This is due mainly to the fact that they reflect the tension between two different conceptions of morality.

In order to show how the controversies between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry, as well as the other controversies over moral value issues, could be approached in the direction of a resolution we think that it is necessary to introduce the following distinctions concerning ethics. In this we follow closely Ernst Tugendhat's ethical theory (Tugendhat, E. 1988).

A first necessary distinction we want to introduce is that between beliefs that ought to be respected and beliefs that ought to be debated. By beliefs that ought to be respected we understand all beliefs that every one of us is entitled to hold in the intimacy of his or her consciousness and should not be forced to defend if he or she does not want to. In opposition to these, there are beliefs that concern the way we understand our relationships with other people and the obligations we assume they have towards us. We think that beliefs concerning moral norms belong to this group and are, therefore, beliefs that ought to be debated. Since moral norms consist of reciprocal demands to limit each other's autonomy, they and their foundations must be open to debate, unless we were in favor of a non egalitarian system in which one party imposes his or her will arbitrarily upon the other.

In the Chilean controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry, both parties appealed to the principle of toleration and accused each other of being intolerant. The distinction just made shows that it is not being intolerant to request from the Catholic Church that the moral norms based on religious beliefs be open to debate before they are imposed to the whole of society. It is not a question of preventing the members of the Catholic Church from holding their religious beliefs, but of preventing them from imposing those beliefs and their consequences upon other (non believer) members of society

A second necessary distinction is that between *moral* norms that are obligatory for everyone and *prudential* norms that are reasonable guidelines for conducting a better life.

In our opinion, the Catholic Church, and many of the conservative groups that support it, favor a conception of morality that is closest to ancient rather than to modern ethics. According to Tugendhat (1988, 52), one of the main differences between ancient and modern ethics is that the latter is concerned with the foundation of moral norms, whereas the former is concerned with happiness, as equivalent to leading a good life. Tugendhat further explains that while the question concerning the word “good” referred in ancient ethics to what is good (agathon) for the individual, i.e., to his or her happiness (eudaimonia), in modern ethics it is referred to intersubjective norms answering the question of what to do with respect to others (Tugendhat 1988, 52). Although the Greeks also had a concern for morality in this sense, but called it “beautiful” (kalon) rather than “good” (agathon), they finally equated morality and happiness, establishing that what is good in the first sense (kalon) is what is truly good in the second sense (agathon) (Tugendhat 1988, 53). According to this view, no one can truly be happy who is not at the same time a moral person. This conception seems to be quite similar to those held by traditional or religious systems of morality, such as the Catholic Church’s.

This makes it possible to understand why the Catholic Church and its followers are so anxious to have an influence on the decisions that affect the whole of society. They are convinced that by following the Church’s moral principles the people are going to reach their true happiness.

However, as it should be clear from the next distinction we make, it is no longer possible to found moral obligations appealing to beliefs that not everyone shares in. As Tugendhat points out the question of the foundation of moral norms

introduced in modern ethics can no longer be avoided. This leads to our third distinction.

A third necessary distinction is the one, already mentioned, between an authoritarian and autonomous conception of morality. According to Tugendhat, an authoritarian conception of morality is one that is founded in an appeal to “superior truths”, that is, an appeal to non empirical propositions that are presupposed to be true and are used to found ethical propositions, although they themselves can only be founded on religious or traditional beliefs (Tugendhat 1988, 141). An autonomous conception of morality, on the other hand, is one that rests on the individual’s personal decision of putting him or herself under the obligation of respecting moral norms in order to belong to a moral community determined by universal mutual respect.

According to Tugendhat (1988, 142), the only possible foundation for morality in modern times is the autonomous one, because they appeal to “superior truths” would inevitably lead to relativism, since the idea of a rational confrontation between the competing founding predicates would be illusory. Therefore, although the foundation on a personal decision is weak, in that it lacks the necessity of a foundation on superior truths, it is the only one left in modernity. The alternative would be to renounce the goal of founding moral norms. But to choose this alternative would be equivalent in practice to favor ethical relativism and, as a consequence, to accept that the stronger impose their norms upon the weaker members of society.

The obvious consequence of this is that neither the Catholic Church nor any other “factual power” has the right to impose upon the whole of society moral obligations that are not founded autonomously, i.e., that are not of the kind that anyone would voluntarily subject himself to in order to belong to a moral community. This means that moral norms should be able to be argued for in a rational environment, and all members of society, especially children, should be helped in making a decision in favor of morality. This represents a challenge for the whole of society, but especially for educators who want to prepare citizens to be able to participate effectively in public debate and to influence decisions that affect all people.

The role of dialogue in developing critical thinking and reasonableness has been sufficiently established by the Philosophy for Children (Cf. Lipman 1991). Also our own work on education for democracy in Chile has been based on the influence that philosophical dialogue can have in developing rational and democratic

attitudes in children (Vicuña & López 1994).

Underlying these educational approaches there is an ideal of reasonableness that is expressed in favoring critical discussion as the way of searching to understand and to clarify concepts, and to reach agreements in personal interactions.

This ideal of reasonableness is best summarized, in our view, in the PDA rules for a critical discussion. The PDA proposes to treat argumentation “as a rational means to convince a critical opponent and not as a mere persuasion” and establishes that the dispute “should not be just terminated, no matter how, but resolved by methodically overcoming the doubts of a rational judge in a well regulated critical discussion”. (Eemeren, F. H. Van & Grootendorst, R. 1992, 10-11)

An analysis of the rules for critical discussion as they are formulated in the PDA (Eemeren, F. H. Van & Grootendorst, R. 1992, 208-09) permits us to look at the principles on which it is founded. They are respect, honesty, consistency and rationality.

In the following charts we present a summary of the principles underlying each rule as we see them according. The contents of the rules are indicated in parenthesis.

Rule:

1. (freedom of expression): Respect and Tolerance
2. (responsibility and consistency): Honesty
3. (relevance): Rationality
4. (relevance): Rationality
5. (truthfulness, avoidance of manipulation): Honesty
6. (truthfulness, avoidance of manipulation): Honesty
7. (using appropriate argumentation): Rationality
8. (using logically valid arguments): Rationality
9. (responsibility and consistency): Honesty
10. (avoidance of manipulation, truthfulness): Honesty and Rationality

We think that the commitment to rationality, the ideal of consistency, honesty, avoidance of manipulation, and the recognition of the other person's right to disagree or to think differently, that are the basis of the PDA rules for a critical discussion, represent ways of respecting other human being as such. Therefore, learning to respect these rules in arguing not only leads to the establishment of better conditions for achieving a resolution of the dispute, but also to the building

of a community of mutual respect.

A society where citizens are willing to work out reasonable agreements about difficult issues that divide them is a society that has developed in itself the seeds for growing into a pluralistic and moral society. Our Chilean society is far from approaching these ideas, but we are certain that teaching argumentation following the PDA guidelines is a major contribution towards approaching these goals.

It is important to note, however, that a critical discussion can only exist when the two parties are willing to enter the discussion and to respect the rules in order to resolve it. It is in this sense that we consider that there is a limitation in the rules for a critical discussion, since no one can be forced to enter the discussion or even to be rational. In the controversies analyzed in this paper it is manifest that the parties are often irrational. Therefore, it is necessary to stimulate the development of a moral consciousness so that the people are more willing to participate in the building of a pluralistic society.

4. A last comment on the role of the Catholic Church in Chile

As a corollary, we would like to add that through the analysis of the controversies presented it is possible to clarify the role that religion, and especially the Catholic Church, can have in Chile. We think that religions aims at providing a more optimistic conception of life, answering to fundamental questions that have to do with the purposes of human existence. For instance, to believe that we were created by a loving God to be His or Her children and to build His Realm of Love here on Earth can be very comforting in a world that has become increasingly meaningless. Being able to distinguish this as a belief one may choose to have, but not an undeniable truth evident to everyone is an important step towards the understanding between believers and non believers.

Furthermore, being able to distinguish between what is a moral obligation (equal universal respect) for all members of a moral community and what is a generous response to a loving God, shows that the appeal to love is (a) more demanding than the appeal to respect, and (b) an invitation to imitate Christ, but not an obligation. Thus, if a person chooses to accept the invitation to sanctity, he or she is happy in the sacrifices involved, but if a person chooses not to accept it, he or she should not feel guilty about it. (Cf. Tugendhat E., López C. & Vicuña, A.M. 1998, 76-77).

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Giving And Asking For Reasons: The Impact Of Inferentialism On Argumentation Theory



Introduction

In *Making It Explicit* (1994) and *Articulating Reasons* (2001), Robert Brandom has introduced a semantic conception called Inferentialism. Inferentialist semantics determines the meanings of terms and actions by describing their inferential use in the language-game of giving and asking for reasons. Brandom's domain is primarily the philosophy of language and not argumentation theory. I will just give a rough sketch of the inferentialist idea and draw some consequences for our field: argumentation theory.

1. The idea of Inferentialism

Following Wittgenstein, Brandom characterizes his inferentialist approach as “an attempt to explain the *meanings* of linguistic expressions in terms of their *use*.” (Brandom 1997, 153) However, this slogan is not specific. More specific for Inferentialism is the idea that it is a *particular kind of use* that is crucial for the meanings of linguistic expressions: it is the *inferential use* of these expressions in the language game of giving and asking for reasons, i.e. the use of these expressions in contexts of argumentative reasoning.

It may be confusing that Brandoms speaks of “inferential use” and “inference”, since these terms are sometimes identified with “deduction” or “formal entailment”. Brandom, however, does not follow deductivism, but *pragmatism*. *Formal* inference is only one case of inferring. Brandom also speaks of *conceptual*, *material* and *practical inferences*. His concept of “inference” includes all kinds of regular connections and relations between linguistic expressions – and between linguistic expressions and practical consequences, i.e. actions. This concept of inference is open for many types of argument and could even be applied to regular connections between “meaningful” non-linguistic activities, as long as these connections and relations can be judged in a normative dimension of correctness. Actions, linguistic and non-linguistic, are significant insofar as they follow from and are followed by other actions in a way that it can be understood as *correct or incorrect rule-following*.

Instead of being too tight, Brandoms conception of inference may now appear as too broad for the purpose of explaining meaning and argument. This would be the case if Brandom had not restricted his focus to the inferential use in a *particular language game*, the game of giving and asking for reasons. In every kind of practice, language game or communication there are regularly connected, significant moves. Inference is everywhere. But, according to Brandom, it is only the language game of giving and asking for reasons that discloses what the meanings of these moves are. The reason is that in this language game we do not only *perform*, *understand* and *practice inferential moves*, but also *explicitly judge and mutually control the correctness of these moves*. Whatever practice we perform, whatever game we play: as soon as the correctness of some move is called into question this game may shift to the game of giving and asking for reasons.

The game of giving and asking for reasons is the game of argumentation or argumentative discourse. Moves in a language game can be judged as correct or

incorrect und such *normative judgements belong to the game of giving and asking for reasons*. If I judge a move in a game as correct, the interlocutor is entitled to draw consequences from that claim. He may also ask for reasons why I claim this move to be correct. In this case I am committed to give reasons or withdraw the claim. Now, Brandom offers a conceptual frame in which this normativity of inferring and mutual judgement can be explicated. Inferentialist semantics is embedded in a kind of *normative pragmatics* that delivers a vocabulary to describe the normative dimension of social practices and language games. The essential concepts of normative pragmatics are *commitment* and *entitlement*. Every move in a language game establishes particular constellations of commitments and entitlements among the participants. And the participants *keep score of these normative statuses* which they ascribe to each other.

In some respect, Inferentialism resembles well known theories, like Speech Act Theory or Dialogical Logic. For instance, Dialogical Logic determines the meanings of logical connectives by means of dialogue-rules. The proponent starts, for instance, with claiming “p and q”. Now, the opponent is entitled to attack p or q according to his choice. The proponent, then, has to defend the attacked assertion, say p, by giving reasons for p. If he fails, the proponent has lost the dialogue-game, if he succeeds the opponent may attack the other assertion q. If the proponent is able to defend q by reasons, he has won the game. These rules may explain what the meaning of the word “and” is in the claim “p and q”. Suitable dialogue-rules can also be explicated for the other connectives like “or”, “not” and “if, then”. The meanings of these words can be explained in terms of the rules of their use in a regulated dialogue-game.

Another example is given by Speech Act Theory. The rules that John Searle has explicated for the speech act of promising are well known. These rules include permissions and obligations for speaker and listener. And these rules are not only supposed to be rules for a happy performance of that speech act. At the same time these rules figure as semantical rules for the correct use of the word “promise”. What this word means is explicated in terms of the rules for performing the corresponding speech act. And the same counts for all the other classes of performative verbs.

In a sense, Brandoms approach can be seen as a generalisation of this explanatory strategy. What Dialogical Logic has done with respect to the logical connectives, and speech act theory has done with respect to performative verbs, could perhaps be done for all kinds of meaningful expressions. But Brandom does

not continue this research programme by adding further lists of expressions and giving lists of rules for their correct use. He seems to recognise Wittgenstein's view that there is an indefinite multiplicity of language uses that cannot be fixed in a linguistic theory. No list of definite and limited sets of rules can catch the variety of practices and language games.

While Speech Act Theory and Dialogical Logic try to fix the rules of pieces of linguistic practice, Brandom operates on a different level: He tries to clarify what it means to make implicit rules explicit and how this language game of making it explicit can be described by means of his normative terminology. At the same time he asks what meaning and linguistic content is and how meaning is dependent from social practices of reasoning, i.e. from the game of giving and asking for reasons. He does not commit himself to any set of rules that definitely determines the meaning of whatever kind of expression. He is not even obliged to claim that there are such sets. His idea is that talking about meaning and content of linguistic expressions means making explicit the rules that are implicit in inferential language use. The normative vocabulary of commitment and entitlement is designed to articulate these rules as social practices. But these rules do not exist independent from agreements in judgement among the participants of the game of giving and asking for reasons.

The picture, given by Brandom, is roughly this: There is a variety of, say 'flat' practices and language games in which we participate by following the implicit rules. As soon as the implicit rules are called into question and are made explicit, we enter another game, a multi-dimensional language game of giving and asking for reasons. In other words: we participate in argumentative practice. The turn from mere participation in a practice to arguing about that practice includes a shift of level. But if we try to explicate the rules of this game of giving and asking for reasons - and this is what we do in argumentation theory - we do *not* leave argumentative practice and enter another higher-level game; we are still participating in the game we are reflecting on. We do not shift the level, but move in a certain direction on the same level. According to this picture, I would say, argumentation theory is an intrinsic part of argumentative practice. It continues argumentative practice in a particular way, but it does not follow rules different from the rules it reflects on.

2. The Impact on Argumentation Theory

1. We may distinguish *two kinds of practices or games*. There is one kind of

games in which judging rules and moves, and reasoning about their correctness, is itself not a move within that game. Trying to score goals belongs to playing soccer, but discussing these moves does not belong to this game. It is another game to talk and reason about the moves of a game. In these cases we say that playing the game is object-level, while discussing the game is meta-level. Here, we have a fairly clear *separation of the levels of theory and practice*.

But there are games, in which both, performing moves and discussing these moves, belong to the same game. With respect to such games it does not make sense to separate an “object-game” from a meta-level game. Shifting to meta-level operations here does not mean to leave the game and play another one, but to continue the game in a certain way. The language game of giving and asking for reasons is of this second kind. Giving and asking for reasons is performing argumentative acts. It is at the same time judging, justifying, attacking or defending these acts explicitly. As participants of this game we are *players and scorekeepers at the same time* – we play a double role.

We have to give up the assumption that there is a strict demarcation line between the level of argumentative practice and the level of argumentation theory. Of course, doing argumentation theory still means to talk and reason about argumentative practice. But to some extent, this always happens already in the game of giving and asking for reasons: If we, for instance, give reasons for rejecting a particular argument, we talk and reason *about* the validity of this argument. It would be absurd to regard this as a move that would belong to another game, a meta-game.

Doing argumentation theory is a *theoretical practice* insofar as it generally tends to enter the “*about*”-perspective; it focusses on modelling argumentative discourse, distinguishing types of argument and fallacies, reflecting and developing criteria of argumentative relevance, soundness, adequacy, validity, and so on. But these theoretical activities do not constitute a separate meta-game; they still belong to the game of giving and asking for reasons. As theorists of argumentation we are interested in making explicit the rules of the game, including the rules of scorekeeping in the game. But we are not entitled to occupy the privileged position of a scorekeeper who judges the moves of the players without himself being one of the players. We remain participants in that game and each of our moves is subjected to the judgements of the other players. *All players are also scorekeepers*.

Emphasising this point, I would suggest to refrain from establishing a theory of

argumentation with sets of fixed rules and from claiming that these rules are constitutive for argumentative practice. From the outset, our 'theories' are rather suggestions for an understanding of what we do in the dialogical game of giving and asking for reasons. Our proposals are open to critical examination by all participants of the game. We cannot occupy the role of a general judge, a scorekeeper and meta-scorekeeper, a scrutinizer whose authority is immune and neutral, since he is not a player. Argumentation theory and analysis is part of the game of giving and asking for reasons. Its role in the game is to make the implicit structures of this game more explicit. Instead of separated levels, we have a continuum from argumentative practices to theories of these practices. And in this continuum there is no privileged position.

2. Let me now draw a further consequence concerning the relation between questions of meaning and questions of argument. Judgements on the validity of arguments include – at least implicitly – judgements on the meaning of the expressions used in the arguments. However, argumentation theory often uncritically presupposes a certain conception of this relation that can be characterized in the following way:

Questions of meaning and questions of truth, validity or inference are located on two different levels that have to be treated separately. Meanings have to be clearly determined, before the validity of arguments can be judged. If this condition is not satisfied, the argumentative discourse as well as the analysis of argumentation will fail. This view entails a practical recommendation for arguers and analysts: Determine the meanings first, and examine the validity of argumentative inference in a second step. The clarification of what an argument means has to be finished, if the examination of the argument's validity is to make sense. Therefore, the discourse or the analysis has to be interrupted as soon as ambiguities or meaning shifts appear. An intermitting phase of defining or performing "usage declaratives" has to take place, before argumentation can go on. The operations of shaping meanings themselves do not belong to the process of argumentation, but to means of re-establishing constitutive pre-conditions of this process. I call this view the dogma of fixed-meanings.

As far as I can see, Inferentialism entails that this dogma is misleading. If we accept the inferentialist approach to meaning, this separation of meaning and inference does not make sense, since examining an argument's validity is more or less the same as clarifying its meaning. Inferentialism suggests that meanings are determined and reshaped by inferential use. Judging the acceptability of

inferences in the game of giving and asking for reasons includes that the participants implicitly commit themselves to particular usages (i.e. meanings) of the involved expressions. Making these meanings explicit is another inferential move, which entails commitments and entitlements to further inferential moves. In this view, questions of meaning go hand in hand with questions of inferential validity. Neither in practice, nor in theory there is a primacy of the one over the other.

Of course, there is still a difference: We may try to make explicit what some expressions mean, i.e. how they are used correctly, or we may focuss on making inferential rules explicit. But this difference is a matter of degree. Both kinds of moving on are cases of making implicit rules explicit. And both have inferential consequences for each other. Shaping meanings of expressions implicitly determines what can be inferred from theses expressions and accepting or rejecting inferences or inference rules contributes to shaping the meanings of the involved expressions. Instead of a methodical order, we have a process that may turn in this or that direction in accordance to the purposes of the players of the game. I would even add that the entire game of giving and asking for reasons, the argumentative discourse would not make sense if we had pre-fixed meanings and inference rules. If that were the case we could simply replace dialogical arguing by monological calculating.

3. Let me now draw a more concrete consequence. It concerns the problem of dealing with enthymems and premiss addition. In the context of understanding, reconstruction and evaluation actual arguments often are said to be incomplete or insufficient. In order to understand the argument, one needs to grasp what is not explicitly said, but implicitly presupposed. In happy cases, background-knowledge, contextual factors, linguistic competence and a charitable attitude are sufficient to understand what is meant. However, there are also unhappy cases in which the addressee misunderstands the argument or where the arguments really are poor or fallacious – such that even implicit additions could not improve them. In argumentation theory we find the following method of dealing with this problem. There are theoretical models that deliver criteria and patterns for valid and fallacious arguments. Applying these criteria and patterns, we often find the actual arguments not satisfying the conditions of valid inference. Now, we may compare our patterns with what is said and see which pattern fits best to the given argument. Applying the Principle of Charity, we try to identify the actual argument as fitting to some valid argument pattern. This pattern, then, shows us what is missing in the actually expressed argument. We may add the missing

pieces and links and reconstruct the argument as actualizing a valid argument pattern. By using this 'charitable' method we are entitled to regard the author of the argument as committed to the added premisses.

Such a method has, for instance, been proposed by Susanne Gerritsen. If the "original enthymematic argument is in its present form formally invalid and therefore seems to violate the rule that language users should not perform pointless speech acts", the Principle of Communication (which is the pragma-dialectical version of the Principle of Charity) requires that "a statement must be added that renders the argument deductively valid" (Gerritsen 1994, 42). According to Gerritsen, this addition "is aimed at determining the speaker's commitments" (Gerritsen 1994, 41). So, "The supplied unexpressed premiss is regarded as part of the original argument, and the evaluation of the unexpressed premiss is pertinent to the evaluation of the argument" (Gerritsen 1994, 43). According to some proponents of this method of premiss addition, this very method which is explicitly employed in argumentation theory is also what, in happy cases, arguers implicitly perform. The listener is entitled not only to ascribe the added claim to the speaker. He is right in regarding the speaker as committed to that claim.

Viewed from the perspective of Inferentialism, we may see what's going wrong, here. The first point is that the procedure presupposes already fixed criteria or patterns of valid inference being in power, independent from the explicit recognition of these criteria by the participants of the game of reasoning. But inferential rules do not exist in a kind of platonistic realm of eternal ideas to which the theorist has privileged access. Inferential rules or patterns of argument are proposals to articulate what is already implicitly accepted in the practice of inferring. The fixation of such rules is a kind of technical device that has to be justified and acknowledged by the participants as a helpful convention for their reasoning purposes. The use and justification of criteria of validity belongs to the game of giving and asking for reasons, a game that stands for itself without external theoretical regulation.

A second assumption underlying the 'method' of premiss addition and ascription is that the allegedly given criteria of inferential validity are at the disposal of the listener or analyst and can be used to ascribe commitments to the speaker. Whether the speaker acknowledges these criteria or commitment seems to play no role. In terms of Brandom's normative pragmatics, it is presupposed that the

addressee or analyst of an argument which seems to him incomplete is not only entitled to add what he is missing, but that the author of the argument is, then, committed to the added claim, since according to the fixed set of inference rules the added claim must have been meant implicitly. But this arbitrary and, I would say paternalistic, ascription of commitment reveals that the argumentation theorist who adopts this method of premiss addition does not see himself as an equally entitled participant in the game of giving and asking for reasons, but as a scorekeeper who himself is not being judged by the other players. In the game of giving and asking for reasons the arguer would also be entitled to ask for reasons for the proposed addition and he may reject the given reasons. By adding a premiss the interlocutor rather commits himself to a particular reading of the argument. He may be entitled to do that, but he is not entitled to commit the author of the argument to that reading. The author is entitled to refuse to accept the addition and thereby shift the burden of commitment to the interlocutor. Seen in this way, premiss addition is not simply a charitable operation, but the continuation of the game in a way which could best be regarded as a proposal for understanding the argument, but not as a fixation of a commitment of the argument's author.

Conclusion

I conclude that Inferentialism is a challenge for argumentation theory. It suggests that we should give up the enterprise of looking for the best theory of argumentation which may regulate and, thereby, improve argumentative practice. The game of giving and asking for reasons stands for itself. If we wish to contribute to the improvement of this practice, the only thing we can do is participating in this practice in such a way that the implicit is made more explicit.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Interpreting Arguments



Abstract

The aim of this paper is to develop and justify a specific methodology of interpreting arguments for judging their argumentative validity and adequacy, i.e. the aim is to provide a useful tool which may be used for a specific purpose. This does not exclude that there are or may be other useful methodologies for interpreting arguments which could serve for different purposes. The methodology exposed in the paper will not only be theoretically justified but also specified up to detailed rules which can be used in classroom for analyzing found scientific arguments.

1. What Is an Interpretation of a Text in General?

Arguments in the sense of argumentative acts (as opposed to the content of an argument) are speech acts or – if one takes speech acts to be smaller units confining them to the level of sentences – consist of speech acts. In the analytical tradition there exist two major approaches to the interpretation of speech acts. The first may be called the “*rationality presupposition approach*”, is fostered e.g. by Davidson and Dennett (Davidson, 1963; 1974; 1980; Dennett, 1987), and claims that speech acts can be understood only if we presuppose that they are rational themselves or the expression of the agent’s rationality. The second approach may be called the “*intention reconstruction approach*”, is fostered e.g. by Grice and Meggle (e.g. Grice, 1957; 1968; 1969; 1989; Meggle, 1981) and states that understanding texts and speech acts consists in recognizing certain parts of the agent’s communicative intentions.

Here I cannot dwell on a substantial discussion of the merits of these approaches.

But some short arguments against the rationality approach and in favour of the *intention reconstruction approach* shall help to motivate the general guidelines (exposed below) for interpreting arguments.

A first big shortfall of the rationality presupposition approach is that there are many theories about what being rational amounts to. Some authors think of epistemic rationality only, others think of practical rationality in particular decision theory; but in both of these areas a wide variety of concurring or only supplementing standards are discussed: from logical coherence (defined in various ways) over respecting the probability calculus etc. up to the many definitions of 'knowledge' or from simple decision theoretic optimizing fulfilling the axioms of von Neumann and Morgenstern or various other axiom systems over nonlinear utility theory to philosophically more substantial criteria of prudential rationality. Firstly, until the followers of the rationality presupposition approach have not determined which of these many standards is essential for understanding speech acts their approach remains too vague. Secondly, even if one of these many rivaling conceptions will have been established to express in the best way what it means to be "rational" it is highly improbable that we already now are able to understand each other without knowing about the result of this discussion.

A second and even bigger shortfall of the rationality presupposition approach is that rationality is an ideal (and rationality theory in a wide sense is a normative theory) which often is not realized in practice; if it were always fulfilled the theory would be pointless as rationality theory[i]. This implies that if the rationality presupposition approach asks us to regard speech acts to be the result of rationality, firstly, the outcome of the interpretation cannot always be an understanding of this particular utterance and, secondly, it must be systematically leading astray: We are encouraged to see something which does not exist. One may take the occasion to construct something rational from the given utterance; but this is already creative and no understanding of something given and the aim of such an operation is unclear.

The intention reconstruction approach on the other hand takes a linguistic utterance's meaning to be a particular part of the agent's intention, namely some sort of communicative intention, and takes the intention to be formed according psychological decision laws. The specific communicative intention is identical with some representation of a state of affair, i.e. the proposition, plus the

intention what to do about this representation: expressing one's belief, desiring to get realized the representation, asking if it is already realized etc. Because of the conventional representational function of sentences this intention can be straightforwardly expressed by the propositional part and the mood of the sentence. This implies that the intention reconstruction approach takes the agent's utterances as intelligent or stupid as they are. In simple cases the communicative intention is identical to the conventional meaning of the uttered sentence, in more complex cases these two things go apart, i.e. the intended meaning is different from the conventional meaning, and the communicative intention has to be inferred from the utterance, our knowledge about the agent and general knowledge about the formation of intentions. In the most complex cases an explaining interpretation has to be executed which tries to construct the best explanation of the utterance where this explanation includes the communicative intention as one of the causes of the utterance (cf. Lumer, 1992). For the interpretation of arguments this means: The explicit argument possibly is not identical with what the arguer wanted to express so that it may make sense to look for the latter (in very simple cases of this type of error the arguer only has confused the meaning of some word); the intended argument must neither be valid nor adequate because the arguer may have made epistemic or deliberative errors. And all this is what we usually experience when we try to understand and criticize given arguments. Therefore, the intention reconstruction approach seems to be much more realistic.

2. What Are Arguments?

Before turning to the interpretation of arguments let me briefly explain what I mean by "argument" in the sense of an argumentative utterance's meaning (precise definition: Lumer, 1990, sect. 2.4; 1991, sect. 6; 2000, sect. 4). A *valid argument*, as I use this expression, is a triple consisting of:

1. a set of judgements called the "*reasons*",
2. an indicator of argument like "therefore" or "hence", and
3. a further judgement, called the "*thesis*". The indicator indicates which judgements are the reasons and which judgement is the thesis argued for. The argument is based on an efficient epistemological principle, which is a general primary or secondary criterion for the truth or verisimilitude of (perhaps specific types of) propositions and which in epistemology has been proved to really guarantee the truth or verisimilitude of propositions. Such an efficient epistemological principle e.g. is the deductive principle: 'A proposition is true if it

is logically implied by true propositions', or the genesis of knowledge principle: 'A proposition is true if it has been verified correctly'; or the interpretative epistemological principle: 'A proposition is true if it is part of the only possible explanation of a known fact' etc. The argument's reasons then truly affirm that the conditions of the principle are fulfilled in a specific way for the thesis in question. The validity mentioned in this definition is an argumentative validity, which goes beyond logical validity in several aspects: So nondeductive arguments may be *argumentatively valid* too, and for deductive arguments being argumentatively valid their reasons have to be true, etc.

A valid argument is *adequate for rationally convincing* an addressee of the thesis

1. if the addressee himself is rational,
2. if he knows the epistemological principle at least implicitly,
3. if he knows about the truth of the reasons,
4. if the argument is structured in a way that he can follow it etc.

An argumentatively valid and in the specific situation adequate argument is apt to convince in a rational manner in that it may guide the addressee's process of recognizing the truth of the thesis.

Following the guidelines provided by this definition, one important part of a normative theory of argumentation then is to develop more specific criteria for the argumentative validity and adequacy. These criteria differ according to the epistemological principle on which the specific type of argument is based. In the Practical Theory of Argumentation some precisely defined criteria of this type have already been developed (Lumer, 1990, sects. 4.2; 4.4-4.6; 6.1.4; Lumer 1997, sect. 2.4).

3. The Aims of Interpreting Arguments

The theory of interpretation sketched in the first section is rather general and can be applied to any kind of linguistic utterances. Argumentative utterances are a very specific type of linguistic utterances though. In standard cases they are intended not only to say something meaningful but to provide an argument in the just defined sense which shall convince the addressee. And this argumentative intention is very important for the explaining interpretation of the text. In the interpretation one may e.g. argue like this: 'The arguer wanted to prove the thesis p ; the second reason r_2 as it stands does not prove anything in this respect, whereas the very similar reason r_2' would perfectly provide the necessary proof; possibly the author has confused the meanings of " r_2 " and " r_2' ".

On one side the argumentative intention of the arguer makes it often easier to *understand* the text but on the other side it opens a completely new task for the interpretation of arguments, namely to take the argumentative claim seriously and to assess the argumentative validity and adequacy of the argument, i.e. if it proves the thesis. Such an assessment is not only an academic exercise because the interpreter himself may behave like an addressee, though a particular one, when assessing the argument: He scrutinizes (with the help of very precise and theoretically justified criteria) if the reasons prove the thesis, and if he finds out that the answer is 'yes' he probably will believe in the thesis (If he then publishes this positive result this may amount to arguing for the thesis). Assessing the argument can even be regarded as the *true* task of the interpretation of arguments - already presupposing that the text has been understood semantically. I do not want to assert that this is the only specific task of an interpretation of arguments but it certainly is a very important specific task. In the following I will speak only of interpretation of arguments with this aim, i.e. which shall make it possible to assess the argumentative validity and adequacy of the argument and which, finally, carry out this assessment.

The specific criteria for the argumentative validity and adequacy mentioned in the second section describe rather ideal forms of arguments only. This is because they have been designed in such a way that with warranty they fulfill the function of arguments, namely to be able to guide a process of acquiring knowledge. This leads to a certain gap between these ideals and the arguments as they can be found in written texts or oral speech though intuitively the latter arguments may be completely okay. They are not ideal in the defined sense because we do not think in this ideal way - from an incomplete set of reasons we jump to a conclusion and many persons have a good "feeling" for if with this jump unfulfilled presuppositions have been skipped - because of stylistic reasons, i.e. we do not want to write in such a sterile manner, etc. So there are some good reasons why arguments found in normal texts are not ideal, but on the other hand often it is very difficult to recognize if such arguments are valid. The most obvious way to fill this gap between normal and ideal arguments without renouncing the connection to the warranted way of leading to knowledge is to bring given arguments nearer to the ideal, i.e. to reinterpret or reconstruct them in such a way that the reconstructed arguments - in the best case - have the ideal form required by the criteria for argumentatively valid and adequate arguments so that, finally, these reconstructions can be assessed according to these criteria.

This then would be a further specific task of argument interpretations. Executing this task, i.e. constructing an ideal version of the argument, apart from being an academic exercise, again can be functional for the interpreter's own acquiring justified belief about the thesis (and it can be functional for his arguing for it in a more precise way by publishing the interpretation)[ii].

To summarize, the tasks of an interpretation of arguments are, firstly, to *understand* the semantic meaning of the argument, secondly, to *reconstruct* it, i.e. to bring it as near as possible to the ideal form of the criteria of argumentative validity and adequacy, and, finally, to *assess* their validity and adequacy according to these criteria. The further exposition of this paper will centre on the second step.

4. General Principles for the Interpretation of Arguments

What just has been said can be formulated a bit more precisely as a first principle:

Principle way of how the interpretation works: The initial or original (i.e. given) argument has to be transformed into a version which is as ideal as possible (called the "*reconstruction of the argument*") according to the following principles. The "ideal form of an argument" is determined by the criteria of argumentative validity and adequacy for ideal arguments. The reconstruction then has to be scrutinized if it fulfills these standards. If and only if the reconstruction fulfills the criteria the initial argument is argumentatively valid and adequate.

During the interpretation one has to do with the original argument as well as with the reconstruction and its parts. This may lead to confusion on the side of the interpreter as well as on the side of the addressees of the interpretation. Therefore, a second principle is straightforward:

Clarity: In the interpretation it must always be clear which part of the reconstruction stems from the author of the argument and which parts and why stem from the author of the interpretation.

Charity is often held to be a general principle of the interpretation of texts, this may even be a question of politeness. Be that as it may, in argumentative contexts a general reason for charity is that – even as an opponent – one cannot get rid of the truth or of a strong hypothesis only by a malevolent interpretation: A small modification of that what the malevolent interpreter takes to be the argument may be a perfectly good argument proving the thesis, and – taking people not as

being stupid – this argument probably was what the arguer intended to put forward. But with respect to the specific type of argument interpretation under consideration there is further strong reason for charity. One main part of the interpretation is to bring the original argument in a form that is as ideal as possible. In a certain respect this ideal is extraneous to ordinary arguing, and it is not a mistake of the resulting arguments that they are not ideal in this particular way. Therefore, the interpreter who wants to have them in the ideal form has to be indulgent with them and he has to make the efforts for obtaining what he wants to get. So we can set up this principle:

Charity, benevolence: Make the reconstruction of the initial argument as strong as possible, i.e. so that an argumentatively valid and adequate argument for a thesis substantial in the respective context is created but without violating the other principles of interpretation!

Charity however has its limits. According to the intention reconstruction approach, the aim of the usual interpretation of texts is to reconstruct the communicative meaning *intended by the author*. And this with some modifications holds for the interpretation of arguments, too. Otherwise the reconstructed argument could no longer count as a reconstruction of the *arguer's* argument.

Authenticity: The reconstruction has still to be a reconstruction of the argument of the *original author*. Therefore, impute only such implicit arguments, types of inferences, argument schemes and steps to the author which he accepts!

Similar reasons hold for the following principle: The interpretation must not only be a reconstruction of what the arguer *may* think, it must be a reconstruction of what he has said. Limits of the idealization this time are given by the degree of efforts that may be expected from the addressee: Some idea to an argument is not yet an argument because the completion may be difficult or go in various directions so that the arguer himself should have completed the argument. The appertaining principle is this:

Immanence: No overinterpretation! The reconstruction has still to be a reconstruction of the original *argument*; i.e. alterations of this argument in the direction of an ideal argument have to respect limits which result from the amount of efforts that can be expected of the addressee of the argument. So missing parts of the argument have to be inferable from the given material; i.e. no substantial reasons may be added.

Sometimes interpretations have to cope with the problem of a plurality of possible

reconstructions remaining after the already mentioned principles have been applied. In this case one should choose from them according to argumentative strength and simplicity.

Plurality, argumentative strength and simplicity: One interpretation can lead to different reconstructions. From these eventually invalid or inadequate or weak reconstructions have to be cancelled (but only so far that there remains at least one reconstruction). From the remaining arguments the most simple one is the *central* reconstruction of the argument.

5. Procedural Operationalization: The Steps of an Interpretation of Arguments

The principles developed so far are only general guidelines which should be observed in the interpretation. They say only little about how to proceed. In the appendix of this paper I have listed 14 steps of a possible operationalization of the ideas described so far. This operationalization is intended for a very detailed interpretation of rather complex and difficult arguments recorded in writing as we may find them e.g. in politics, science, philosophy etc., i.e. the operationalization is intended to represent the strongest instrument we may dispose of in this respect (Hints to a simpler form of interpretation are given at the end). The list has been used successfully in classroom interpretation of arguments.

The steps of this procedure (apart from the preparatory step 2) can be assigned to the three tasks of the interpretation of arguments (cf. sect. 3). Many steps (namely steps 1, 3, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 5d, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12) aim at *understanding* the argumentative structure as it was intended by the arguer. A key position in this respect is given to the indicator of argument which helps to identify the thesis and the reasons. A second set of steps (namely steps 4c, 5c, 9, 11, 12, 13) aims at *transforming* the given argument into the ideal reconstruction: The phrasing has to be unified, parts have to be canceled, new parts have to be added etc. Finally, the assessment of the argumentative validity and adequacy (step 14) has to take place. Though the steps can be assigned to the three tasks these tasks cannot be fulfilled one after the other because the “logically” prior tasks often are already executed with a view to the next task: Understanding the original argument’s structure is subject to the principle of charity, which implies that within limits one tries to find an argument which later on turns out to be valid; and the transformation into an ideal argument, of course, can be done only if tentative reconstructions are already assessed according to the criteria of validity and

adequacy. This however does not lead to any vicious form of circularity; it is only a way of reducing the number of possible reconstructions at an earlier stage by excluding such versions which later on, because of their argumentative weakness, have to be cancelled anyway.

The list of steps and the procedure of a detailed interpretation are rather long. Unfortunately, interpreting arguments, in particular unclear ones, often is more laborious than inventing them.

Appendix: Steps of a Comprehensive Interpretation of Arguments

The following list of steps of interpretation is intended for guiding a comprehensive interpretation of a longer argument recorded in writing. This procedure of interpretation is rather exact, but expensive and long-winded. Therefore, if it is opportune one will use more simple procedures of interpretation.

1. *Confining the argument*: From where to where does the argument reach in a longer text? The length of an argument may vary from one line to a whole book. In the latter case subarguments have to be individuated.

2. *Numbering the sentences of the argument*: It is recommendable to use shortcuts for the parts of the argument. And the easiest way to do that is to simply assign numbers to the sentences sentence per sentence. If a sentence consists of several main phrases each of them could get a different number though. This numbering shall not be changed during the further course of the interpretation - otherwise one runs the risk of making a mess. If later on it will be necessary to assign numbers to *parts* of sentences the best way to do that is to add a further index to the original number of that sentence (e.g. third part of sentence 10 = 10.3). Sentences added by the interpreter get a different type of numbering (if one wants to insert these sentences at a certain place of the argumentative text, one can e.g. affix letters to the preceding sentence-number (additional argument behind sentence 10 so would be sentence 10a). If the place is irrelevant one can simply use letters or roman numbers or numbers higher than 100.

3.

a. *Identify and*

b. *mark the indicator(s) of argument*, e.g. with "IA"!

4.

a. *Identify,*

b. *mark* and

c. *phrase formally correct the theses*: With the help of the indicator(s) of argument the thesis (theses) has (have) to be identified, marked (e.g. with “T1” etc.). In addition these theses have to be phrased formally correct, i.e. as complete sentences, their pronouns substituted by names, implicatures and examples transformed into explicit text, different expression for singular terms and predicates referring to the same entities made uniform over the text etc.

5.

a. *Identify*,

b. *mark*,

c. *phrase formally correct the manifest reasons* and d) *assign them to the appertaining thesis*: With the help of the indicator(s) of argument manifest reasons have to be identified and marked, e.g. as “R1” etc. These reasons then are phrased formally correct according to the same principles as already applied to the thesis (theses). Doing this one should take care that the whole way of expressing is unified altogether (for obviously synonymous expressions e.g. use only the most fitting one, but be careful if there is real synonymy). If the argument contains several theses, finally it has to be cleared with the help of the indicators of argument which reason shall sustain which argument.

Each of the following steps possibly is only provisional, i.e. eventually they have to be revised later on. And the order of succession indicated here is not obligatory: Sometimes it is more convenient to do a certain step first thereby simplifying the following steps, or to execute one step only partially and to finish it some steps later on. Steps 4 and 5, too, eventually can be revised later on when the structure of the whole argument is seen through.

6. *In case of several theses clarify the relation and hierarchy between them*: Are the theses on the same level or is the argument under consideration complex with intermediate theses which function as reasons for a higher thesis? The highest thesis is marked particularly, e.g. by a “*”.

7. *In case of several theses establish the structure of the argument*: From the results of steps 4a, 5d and 6 one tries to establish the complete structure of the argument. For getting a better overview this can be done in form of an argument tree. All the subarguments then first can be dealt with separately.

8. *Establish the argumentative function of all sentences*: Now one tries to establish the argumentative function of all sentences of the argument, in particular those which until now have not been inserted in the argument tree:

Which of them are really further reasons, and which of them are only announcements of theses, explanations of the argument's structure, other explanations, repetitions etc.? In order to be sure of not having forgotten any sentence one may set up a list of all the sentences of the argument.

9. *Cancel superfluous sentences and parts of sentences*: Not all parts of the argument must be argumentatively relevant; e.g. repetitions, circumscribing explanations, merely illustrating examples, explanations of the argumentative structure are not. All these parts have to be canceled. Only theses, reasons and indicators of arguments shall remain. For a very extended argument a list of all these cancellations and of the remaining sentences shall be set up.

10. *Identify the type of argument*: Which type of argument is intended by the author, i.e. which epistemological principle does he rely on? For answering this question the following evidences are helpful:

Deductive arguments: The predicates of the reasons show up again in the thesis; the indicator of argument often indicates the deductivity (e.g. "from this follows / can be inferred").

Practical arguments: The thesis is a value judgement (in justifications of actions though the thesis mostly is not made explicit, only the action is given; in such cases the thesis has to be completed to: 'this action is optimum'); a great part of the reasons are value judgements; another big part of the reasons are assertions about the consequences of the object of valuation.

Genesis of knowledge arguments: The content of the reasons is a description of the origin of the knowledge about the thesis. *Interpreting arguments*: In the reasons among others an explanation of a certain fact is offered; the thesis' subject is an event or a state. – Establishing the intended type of argument is an important step for the further interpretation because with this step the respective ideal is fixed in the direction of which the argument has to be interpreted and against which finally the reconstruction has to be measured or evaluated.

11. *Rephrase sentences in their contents*: If not yet already done in steps 4c and 5d sentences shall be rephrased in such a way as to establish a uniform and completely explicit diction: Singular terms have to be made uniform in a convenient way (e.g. personal and demonstrative pronouns should be substituted by names); different expressions which shall represent the same predicate have to be standardized; things said implicitly have to be expressed explicitly (if a reason e.g. is presented in the form of an example or a metaphor a general sentence expressing their content in an abstract way has to be formulated); implicatures have to be expressed explicitly; usual periphrases have to be brought into a

convenient form (e.g. “p is false” should be transformed into: “not p”). In addition, sentences which are too weak, too strong or too unprecise for the argumentative strategy presumed by the author have to be corrected appropriately. Eventually the exact meaning and the logical syntax of the sentences must be clarified via a formalization. However the meaning has to be clarified so exactly only as this is necessary for their argumentative function. These reformulations have to be effected according to the principles of benevolence, authenticity and immanence and in view of the requirements of the respective type of argument. Particular attention has to be paid to reformulations of the thesis: If the thesis has become very strong this could make the argument invalid or inadequate. In such cases weakenings of the thesis have to be sought which still would lead to the arguer’s aims.

12. *Eventually correct steps 4-6.*

13. *Adding missing reasons:* For inserting additional reasons the following principles hold:

1. Additional arguments have to be indispensable for the argumentative validity and adequacy of the ideal argument. (If the reconstruction yielded so far is already ideal additional reasons are superfluous; if additional reasons are indispensable they of course have to contribute to the validity and adequacy of the reconstructed argument.)

2. *Authenticity* has to be respected.

3. *Immanence:* Missing reasons have to be “inferable” from the explicit argument. In deductive arguments e.g. the predicates of the additional arguments have already to be found in the explicit reasons or in the thesis. In practical arguments of a pair of consequences and valuations at least the consequence has to be mentioned for being able to add its valuation.

4. *Simplicity:* In case of alternative additions decide according the principle of simplicity. – Adding missing reasons in complex arguments is the most difficult step. Because of the high number of requirements even for short arguments often many trials have to be done before this step can be finished.

14. *Checking the validity and adequacy of the resulting reconstruction:* Though the preceding steps have been designed in a way that, if this possible under the described limitations, a valid and adequate reconstruction is brought into being – so that a final checking of the argument may seem to be superfluous. Nonetheless it is advisable, finally, to check systematically if all the conditions for a valid and adequate argument are fulfilled.

A simplified interpretation procedure:

In a still rather thorough but, as compared to the comprehensive interpretation, considerably simplified interpretation one can proceed as follows: After a thorough reading one writes down the argument immediately in a rather precise formulation like the interpreter himself would have formulated the argument in the most ideal form. I.e., with respect to the written record, one jumps immediately to step 11 of a detailed interpretation; the steps 1, 3a, 4a, 5a, 5d, 8, 10 and eventually 6, 7, 9 nonetheless have to be done intellectually even in this simplified procedure. With respect to adding missing reasons (step 13) one may confine oneself to provide the most important reasons. Even during checking the validity and adequacy (step 14) one will confine oneself to check the most important conditions.

NOTES

[i] In empirical decision theory many systematic violations of the rules of subjective expected utility theory have been discovered (overview: Camerer, 1995), whereby according to many people, these rules represent what it means to be practically rational.

[ii] Interpreting argumentative discourses which aim at resolving conflicts of opinion (cf. Eemeren et al., 1993) may be different in this respect: At least the academic interpreter ususally is not a party in the conflict, and the conflict may have already been resolved. Then some sort of ideal reconstruction of such a discourse will remain merely an academic exercise.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Arguing In Organizations: The Struggle Concerning Rules And Meaning



In modern types of organizations individuals do not simply fulfil roles. They are neither independent and autonomous individuals. In the daily functioning of organizations many types of discussions can be found, some of which are of an explorative nature, others are rather negotiations and in still other cases proper argumentation takes place. The

aim of this paper is to develop a model of the place of argumentation within the different types of verbal interactions taking place in organizations. In this model, which takes into account the variables of identity of the participants, of the hierarchical power relations between the participants, the urgency of a decision to be taken and the general mission of the organization, I will show that in all cases some aspects of argumentation are present, combined and interlinked with forms of negotiations, fights and other interaction games. However, the rules of argumentation used will be adapted to the power differential of the participants, the urgency of finding a solution and the general mission of the organization. To begin with I will present a case study in some detail and based on this case study and other references I will outline the general model of arguing in organizations.

1. A case study from a multicultural school

A research project in which I participate aims to collect data over two years of verbal and non-verbal interactions in the classrooms and in grading meetings of two multicultural schools with an important percentage of Moroccan students. In one of the schools two thirds of students are migrant children, with a large percentage of Moroccan origin, in the other it is one third. With the help of several video recordings a number of mathematics lessons are recorded and also some other lessons in the same school. Parts of these recordings are discussed immediately after the lesson with the teacher and with some students, with questions such as: 'what did happen here?' This is the so-called 'stimulated recall' interview method. It was also possible to record some of the discussions in meetings of the teachers in the schools, and in particular some grading meetings where all the teachers of a class discuss the results of each student, and decide what kind of measures should be taken.

The recordings were made in the so-called 'orientation'-year, which is situated between primary and secondary education, in principle at age twelve. This year is very important, because at the end of this year students will go separate ways, according to the school career which they are judged to be able to pursue.

The central question of this large research project was rather modest. With the help of a variety of methods of (micro)analysis a large inventory of the characteristics of the various interactions should be established with the aim to identify specific types of interactions or specific characteristics of interactions which are connected with school success or which are connected with school failure.

In the Netherlands state schools are obliged to publish every year a self-presentation with a standard format, called 'schoolgids'. This information is sent to all parents with children in the school and also to all others who might be interested in the school for their children. Here follows a translation of one specific point from the self-presentation of one of the schools where the research data have been collected.

Identity and general atmosphere

We are a state school. Every pupil is welcome, regardless his/her philosophy of life or religion. We demand of all pupils en staff members that they communicate with each other and learn to know each other better with respect for each other's philosophy of life, religion, origin, sexual preference and gender. All this happens in a pleasant, open and safe atmosphere; we suppose that the encounters between many different perspectives and cultures will be an enrichment for each individual and an appropriate preparation for society. Also in society our pupils encounter a diversity of people. Knowledge of this diversity stimulates our pupils to be more prepared and mentally richer. Not only our pupils, but also the staff members have various cultural backgrounds. Therefore we are in many respects a multi-ethnic school, a kind of small society. But it is one which a pupil can get to know with confidence.

It is precisely because we as school do not choose for a certain philosophy of life, we think we can reach this goal. We would like to provide our pupils with more than simply a diploma.

To work and learn together presupposes a certain number of agreements in order to guarantee a pleasant atmosphere. Respect for each other is the most important one. This respect for each other's culture, conviction en property must be evident in the behaviour of everyone. Respect is also the key notion in the interactions between adults and pupils.

This school presents itself explicitly as a multicultural, or multi-ethnic school, and indeed when visiting the school this multicultural character is quite evident. In

this self-presentation, this school starts with affirming some basic civil rights, but goes on immediately by affirming that these norms and values are realised in the daily practice of the school. Therefore, this school presents itself as a good and safe learning context for students with the perspective to be well prepared for the multicultural society at large.

In this presentation, the notion of respect is quite central. It is interesting to note that the term 'respect' is used familiarly by many members of the migrants groups which reside in the Netherlands. They greet each other for example with the formula 'hay, respect man', an 'anglicism' which points to a certain form of acceptance and solidarity. Here, I would like to point out the astonishing association between culture, conviction and property in the last paragraph of the cited passage.

The other school, where data have been collected, does not present itself explicitly as a multicultural school, but in the self-presentation one can find many photographs, and at least a third of the pictures depict clearly children from one or the other immigrant group. In short, the other schools does not underline its multi-ethnic identity, but does not hide either. These two schools were really motivated to receive our group of researchers, and the direction and the staff of the schools was eager to learn something new from the research. And in fact, several meetings have been held, in which the researchers presented a selection of video-recordings made, and the staff discussed this material. Moreover, one school has expressed the wish that one researcher will be affected part-time to this school after the official termination of the research period, in order to review the teaching material and the didactic methods.

Finally, it should be said, that all the researchers having visited the two schools got the impression that there seems indeed to be a very good climate at these schools, as far as contacts, openness, contacts between students and teachers and the personal engagement of the teaching staff and the direction are concerned.

Case study: Hennia

In this paper one particular case will be analysed. Hennia, a Moroccan girl who came recently to this school with the following motivation: (extract from an interview with Hennia): "I came to this school, because in my last school it was fighting every day, here I would like to get a diploma." In other words, she presents herself as a motivated student, who would like to look for more than a very limited vocational training.

Here follows a passage from a grading and general evaluation meeting of the

teachers of the class Hennia is in. These grading meetings take place three times a year, and there will be mainly discussions of students situated in the so-called “danger zone”, which means that these students risk to be oriented towards a low and rather practical further education. This meeting took place in april 2000, three months before the end of the school year.

Teacher English: *I would like to discuss Hennia (others nod agreement)*

Concerning comprehension she is really weak; I'm afraid, really afraid that it will not work out; she has some low marks, she hasn't delivered her reading list.

Teacher Mathematics: *We have to find something for; maybe an obligation for extra repetition, to put her in this ...*

Teacher Drawing: *I'm worried more about her behaviour in the future; there has just this to happen and she bursts with anger; she might soon beat up one of the boys, this Maktoub or Assad;*

Teacher Dutch: *Yes, with Ionica; a few days ago Maktoub made a remark about sexual parts of Ionica's mother and Hennia got up in order to ...!*

Teacher Mathematics: *I think Hennia is a girl who is really smart; she has original ideas and can put them nicely into words;*

Teacher Dutch: *Yes, a little structure from the blackboard, she applied immediately ...*

Teacher Gymnastics: *She feels herself quickly discriminated; I asked her to get something from my bag, but she refused, “can't get something from the bag of the teacher because immediately I will be accused of stealing” ...*

Teacher Biology: *She makes fun of you; she tried something similar recently with me, looked and said “little joke!”*

Teacher Dutch: *She is slimy with me; from the beginning of the year: “miss, you are so beautiful, you should try another coiffure, and ... other remarks. (others laugh).*

Teacher Drawing: *She gets quickly into conflicts ...*

This passage is a literal translation of the part of the discussion concerning Hennia, starting after the discussion of another student from the ‘danger zone’, the English teacher starts by his remark this discussion concerning Hennia. And after the remark of the teacher of practical ability (drawing) another discussion starts immediately concerning another student.

Some other fragments from or on Hennia:

- Hennia is one of the six children of a single-parent Moroccan family, the father

has left the house years ago, but there is still some contact with the father; Hennia is neither the oldest nor the youngest of the six children;

- Hennia (in an interview): *"I came to this school, because in my last school it was fighting every day, here I want to get a diploma..."*

- Hennia tells that she makes her homework alone, but sometimes other members of the family help her, her big friend is Patricia and also Nabila, Khadija, Hannan and Ouarda.

- Hennia (in an interview) tells that she has an older girl friend, also a Moroccan she calls 'sister' (but she is not a biological sister), who is very important for her;

- teacher mathematics on Hennia: (in an interview on interactions in the classroom): *"they must pick up things from the class, there are some doing this better than others; Hennia does this quite well, ... whereas Nouzha for example does not seem to learn anything from the discussion in class"*

- M in commentaries on video made of the mathematics lesson just after the lesson has finished: *"... Fabienne participates quite well, better than she does her other work, others like Edith, Nirmala and Jeroen you never hear, how do they work? Hennia is such a girl, you asked her at some moment what's happening, and she "oh, I already forgot", apparently there is a category of girls with their hands up without any goal"*

A first, superficial reading of the discussion of the teachers concerning Hennia shows that at least one teacher is worried about her school career possibilities, that a standard solution is suggested in the form of an obligation of supplementary teaching and that other teachers present various points which throw some light on this student. Such a reading and understanding of this discussion seems sensible because it fits a standard procedure followed in these evaluation meetings.

However, a more detailed analysis of this discussion among the teachers concerning Hennia reveals some disturbing imbalances and tensions, particularly if one takes into account the supplementary information on Hennia, provided by herself and by her mathematics teacher. The mathematics teacher considers Hennia as "girl who is really smart; she has original ideas and can put them nicely into words", and the teacher of Dutch language agrees and specifies: "yes, a little structure from the board, she applied immediately ..." These two evaluations concerning Hennia are clearly opposed to the rather negative judgement of Hennia by the English teacher, who started the discussion with: "...concerning comprehension she is really weak, I'm afraid that it will not work out ..." The

question arises if Hennia has some particular problems with English or with the English teacher and is therefore considered as 'weak'. Because the subjects of mathematics and Dutch language have a rather high status, one should take seriously the evaluations of these two teachers. At least the mathematics teacher seems to have a rather consistent perception of Hennia; see his remarks on Hennia in an interview on interaction in the classroom; see 'other fragments'. The teachers participating in this meeting do not take up this challenge, but this is in fact not really astonishing.

In fact, the teachers never express any explicit disagreement during the sessions of this kind of grading and evaluation meetings which have been recorded. It seems that the implicit norms and rules applied during these meetings do not permit to argue and to point to apparent contradictions in contributions of a participant or to start a discussion on the presuppositions of the various participants or on the facts they base their judgements on. Without any explicit rejection of statements made some teachers do however succeed to introduce quite new and unsuspected characterisations of students, by telling a story or by presenting an experience with the student being discussed which attributes another identity to this student. Never reject explicitly an opinion of a colleague, that seems to be a rule of these meetings, but you should not hesitate to present your own opinions or experiences. That is why these meetings seem to be subtle forms of negotiations concerning the identity and the qualities of the students who are discussed (Maier, 2001), with some indirect moves of argumentation.

From this passage it is therefore not possible to arrive at a definite conclusion concerning the evaluation of Hennia; she is "really weak concerning comprehension" for one teacher, but for others she is "smart, original, able to find good formulations, she applies well general models to particular cases".

But there is more. The teacher of Biology remarks to be more worried (is this also an implicit rejection of the judgment of the English teacher?) about the behaviour of Hennia, because she can easily "burst with anger". The illustrations offered by this teacher and by another one show that Hennia defends herself and a girl friend against sexist jokes made by Moroccan and Dutch boys. We do not know if there are also other examples, or if Hennia has a reputation to 'get easily into a temper'. During the discussion in the evaluation meeting these questions are not explored at all, or in other words the meanings of the remarks made by these two teachers are accepted as such. As we do not dispose of any detailed psychological profile concerning Hennia, one can only speculate on the meaning of her

behaviour. Hennia has chosen this school because she wants to get a diploma and she wants to avoid fights. In other words, she seems motivated and she has made choices, and, therefore, she can be considered as well integrated in the school community. As these choices had to be supported by her mother, one can suppose that her family culture is at least not characterised by a clear separation from Dutch ways of living, an attitude which some migrant families adopt in their private sphere. Hennia told us that she makes her homework alone, but sometimes other members of her family help her, which seems to confirm the preceding conjecture. Moreover, she has next to Moroccan friends also a Dutch girl friend.

In the last part of the discussion on Hennia, still other points concerning Hennia are made public. According to a superficial reading these remarks just give some specific information on Hennia. But it is also possible to consider this final part of the discussion as revealing another interesting aspect of Hennia's way of functioning in the school community. According to these passages, Hennia is well known to make jokes with teachers and to tease them in various ways, without however being confrontational or aggressive.

Before saying more about it, let me underline here that during this phase, the interpretation of the behaviour of Hennia by one teacher is politely but resolutely rejected and corrected. The teacher of Gymnastics thinks that Hennia feels quickly discriminated, and he gives an example. This judgment is subtly rejected by the teachers of Drawing and Biology. These two teachers are convinced that Hennia is joking and teasing, and that the illustration offered by the teacher of drawing should be understood in the same way. Here the question should be asked if another remark offered by the mathematics teacher on Hennia should also be interpreted in this way. Indeed, this teacher (in a stimulated recall interview immediately after one lesson) said that Hennia can sometimes hold up her hand (popularly said to 'hold up one's finger') in order to get the attention of the teacher, but after some time when asked what she does want, she can say: "oh, I already forgot". This expression could also be interpreted as teasing, because sometimes students hold up their hand for a very long time before getting any attention by the teacher.

Hennia appears to enter quite regularly into explorative, joking interactions with several teachers, by teasing them or by revealing herself that it was a "little joke". Such a behaviour of Hennia could be interpreted as a manifestation of attempts to

explore in detail the possibilities and constraints of norms and values governing interactions with Dutch teachers, and more generally with others in the Dutch multicultural society. Such an interpretation would not only be in line with the interpretation of the 'temper' of Hennia, as denoting a definite and active form of exploring 'integrative' types of interactions, but also with the possibilities offered explicitly by the school, as affirmed in the school-information, which has been discussed before.

Let me specify here that Hennia was not put down at the end of the year (two/three months after the recorded grading meeting) for a low vocational training. On the contrary, she was promoted to higher further schooling, but she was also advised to continue her schooling in a class where she will not be with some of the Moroccan and Dutch boys of her former class, because of the ongoing fights.

2. Arguing in organizations

As we know from many studies of organizations (Morgan, 1986, Apostel & Walry, 1997, Desmarais, 2001, Leising, 2002), fights, conflicts and various forms of discussions are to be found in most organizations. The modern organizations do no anymore attempt to apply strictly a model of classical organizations, which were based on a clear hierarchical order, with roles defined in order to work collectively for realising goals in a rational way. That does not mean that there are no longer hierarchies within the organization nor that there are no collective goals. On the contrary, the mission of an organization (profit, qualification of students, etc.) and certain hierarchies (direction, higher management, etc.) are dominant characteristics of modern organizations. Moreover, according to the mission and the interactions with the environment of the organization, it is sometimes necessary to react without delay, if the organization wants to guarantee its ongoing existence. As a certain degree of cooperation between the members of an organization is necessary for the survival of the organization, a certain number of characteristics of the pre-conditions of argumentation will be very important for any organization. These pre-conditions can be summarized under the following three headings:

- (a) the general disposition to argue, which means to be informed, to understand the consequences of propositions of others, to be able to formulate critical comments and/or alternatives, etc;
- (b) the enter into cooperative discussion with others, even in a critical way, and
- (c) to participate in evaluations of discussions, which means above all to adopt

standpoints after a critical discussion and to review rejected opinions which could not be defended. But these dispositions of argumentation will not be independent of the power relations and the necessary compromises which have to be taken, in circumstances where urgency of decision is not excluded. In other words, arguing will be linked with forms of negotiation and fights. In order to understand these connections it is necessary to introduce the concept of constellations of power.

The constellations of power at work in organizations consist of a variety of forms of power. The forms of power can be independent of individuals (roles, wealth) or be specific human competencies, such as charisma or the ability to argue. The constellations of power form the context of interactions between individuals and groups with specific social, cultural and psychological identities (Maier, 1996). The constellation of power can be conceived of on the one hand as a system with some structural properties, but as power is always a cause of action and transformation, the constellations of power can never be completely stable, they will necessarily have to be conceived as sets of processes.

Power does not exist in isolation, a field theory of power is called for. Power can be defined as an action on an action, in other words, by the ways in which actions can be influenced by other actions, for example by restraining an action, by accelerating the action, by making the action change direction or by combining initially separate actions. There are various concrete forms of power, such as power by the exercise of physical force (in general excluded in modern organizations), power as sanction, power as status, power as charisma or argumentative power. These different forms of power can be compared with each other on the basis of the following parameters:

- a. The domain of power: no form of power will be exercised in all areas of life.
- b. The basis of power: the exercise of power is based on the use of certain means, for example only a nomination to a certain position gives status power.
- c. The source of power: the acquisition of a certain basis of power can occur in various ways, by inheritance or by a long training.
- d. The intensity of power determines the strength and immediacy of effects of the exercise of a specific form of power.
- e. The costs of power: the effective use of any form of power will affect the basis of power, as for example being tired after a struggle, or being tired – but in a different way – after an argument.
- f. The bearer of power: not all forms of power have persons as bearers, for

example, advertisements can influence consumption, or wages paid do not depend on individuals, and if persons are bearers, they will never be it with the totality of their being. For argumentation, persons are bearers, but only as interlocutors and not as physical bodies.

g. Finally, the objects of power, on which power is exercised. These objects can be human bodies with their potential to act, but never in their totality; these objects will for example be desires in the case of charisma or plans of actions and convictions in the case of argumentation.

There is no common measure for the various forms of power with their parameters, as in the case of economy, where value, expressed as monetary value, serves as general equivalent. In other words, the various forms of power are not comparable with each other in a simple way. The main reason of this complexity can be found in the nature of the different forms of power. These forms of power, taken two by two, exclude each other on the one hand, but attract and stimulate each other on the other hand. One example should be sufficient here to illustrate this form of dialectic relationship between the forms of power. Take status power and argumentative power. On the one hand, these two forms of power exclude each other, because somebody with status power does not really need to use arguments and vice versa. But if a holder of status power is not able to formulate subtle arguments, the basis of status power might be eroded progressively, and an excellent arguer might not be only depending on this functional capacity, but look for a stable position, in other words for status power.

From this field theory of power one can establish a certain number of general relations, see Maier (1996) for more details, one of which is particularly relevant for the present discussion. One general relation states that preservation of power will necessarily lead to attempts to increase power, as pure preservation uses power, and therefore diminishes power by entailing costs. However, to increase power is not at all a simple affair. Indeed, an increase of power means

1. a greater independence of the sources of power,
2. an extension of the domains of power where power is exercised,
3. an increase of the intensity of power in each domain,
4. a multiplication of the objects of power and
5. a reduction of the costs of power. But it is impossible to realize all these points at the same time. For example, an extension of the domains of power and a reduction of the costs of power cannot be realized together. Therefore, power

involves necessarily conflict and instability.

The effective and/or potential exercise of power is a general characteristic of interactions, and in particular in the case of conflicts or negotiations, which are quite frequent in organizations. Typical moves in negotiations are threats and promises, and they can only be understood by referring to power. A threat, for example, is to point to a future action which will effect the actions of another party in a negative way. The action may take a variety of forms, such as constraining the range of movements, or by a territorial arrangement which limits the access to goods which are necessary for certain activities, such as water, or by refusing the usual recognitions, such as the withdrawal of love, attention or respect. Threats use in principle the forms of power of physical force and of sanction. But in order to be effectively used, in general some form of status power will be called for executing the action. Promises use next to these forms of power also argumentative power, for example when promising to assist another party in difficult negotiations.

The execution of any such action will evidently affect the power base and cause costs. With the consequence that the means of power used will have to be replaced with one or another source of power, if the party executing the action wants to avoid that its position of power is diminished.

Threats and promises will only have an effect if they are considered as more or less realistic. In other words, the second party should be convinced that the first one (a) can execute the menacing action and (b) that this action will indeed have an effect on its own actions. In short, the probability and the effectiveness of the action will be considered in order to evaluate the seriousness of the threat. Empty threats and promises miss at least one of these two characteristics.

It is now easy to show that the potential or effective use of power will transform the social (in particular roles, the base of status power) and psychological identity of the participants. Identity can be defined as dynamic, with social, cultural and eventually psychological aspects, involving self-identification and categorizations. My thesis is that during the process of interaction, the (potential) power play will reproduce the social, cultural and psychological aspects of identity.

Let me take once more negotiation as an example, elaborated in more detail in Maier (2001). During negotiations, the parties involved (as individuals or as representatives of organizations or states) will at least specify their reciprocal appraisal as actors using (potential) power. In other words, the participants will categorize each other by elaborating discourses, and at the same time change

their own self-identification in reaction to the categorizations imposed by the other party, as we have seen in the case study presented before. Moreover, in situations where some effective use of power occurs, the necessity of replacement of the means of power from one source or another will entail a more or less detailed self-analysis. This self-analysis does not presuppose a self-awareness, but it involves at least an internal transformation (of the individual, the group or the community), because the initial arrangement of the parts has to be altered in order to secure the replacement of the means of power already used. For an individual, for example, this may involve training or looking for new areas of activity, and for groups and communities, it can be realized by raising new taxes or trying to find new partners with their own means of power. This self-analysis and transformation will have consequences for self-identification and by repercussion for the categorizations of the other parties.

4. A model of argumentation in organizations

Argumentative dispositions, such as the capacity to participate in critical discussions, as well in the preparation phase, in the argumentation and in the evaluation with all the consequences such an evaluation implies, will be extremely important for all members of modern organizations. Arguing presupposes that power relations are, at least temporarily, suspended or neutralized. However, given the mission of the specific organization, the power constellations and possibly the urgency of some decisions, the real interactions in the organization will involve also many aspects typical of negotiations and fights. Negotiations work mainly with promises and threats, and have compromises as outcome, whereas fights involve directly the existence of some participant. In modern organizations fights do not mean that somebody will be killed, but an employee may be fired or placed at a position in a department which is far away. My thesis is that the negotiations and fights, through the ongoing working of power constellations influence the norms, rules and forms of argumentative discussions taking place in organizations. Examples of how different identities and forms of power influence the norms of argumentation and the forms of negotiations have been analyzed (see Maier, 1996 and 2001).

Let us imagine a rubber band where one finds in the middle the norms, rules and types of argumentation. However, when extended, one can identify the constellations of power at work at a given moment in an organization. That would be the model I want to suggest here for argumentation in organizations.

This model attributes a central place to argumentation. However, it also shows that the constellations of power and the identities of the participants (and in particular their roles) co-determine the norms, rules and forms of argumentative discussions which take place. The case study analyzing the discussion concerning Hennia in a multicultural school in the Netherlands illustrates perfectly this model. These teachers work together for quite some time, and they will continue to do this in the near future. Therefore, in the grading meetings they do not reject the standpoints of other participants by explicit arguments. On the contrary, they seem to agree, or they relate examples or experiences (with Hennia) which offer quite another picture of Hennia. In this subtle way, they reach more or less easily agreements or compromises, without using the strict norms of critical discussions.

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