

ISSA Proceedings 1998 - Falsification And Fieldwork In Recent American Anthropology: Argument Before And After The Mead/Freeman Controversy



Ethnographic fieldwork - going into the bush, into the unknown - to study some 'tribe' has arguably been the central feature of cultural or social anthropology in this century.[i] "Ethnography has been, and is, the sine qua non of cultural anthropology. It accounts for our initial status and networks within our profession, legitimizes us as "real" anthropologists. . . and provides us with the means to survive the publishing dictates of the academy." (Farrer 1996: 170). It has been taken as primarily the product of the individual researcher and as relatively unproblematic. It then provides the evidential foundation for anthropological theory, which is where controversy enters. Debates are about the implications of the 'research findings', not typically the findings themselves. In the last decade and a half, there has been increased attention paid to just how ethnographies are rhetorically constructed by an anthropologist.

This is a valuable emphasis, but I am adding another - looking at how fieldwork is criticized and accepted as reliable after publication. I explore this process as a social activity by the discipline in light of its various audiences. To do this I focus on what led up to and followed Derek Freeman's attack on Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa*. My concern is not with argument by Mead or Freeman per se - that has been done (Weimer 1990, Marshall 1993).

A bit of quick history. In 1925 Margaret Mead went to American Samoa to test G. Stanley Hall's then current account of adolescence as inevitably stressful.. Her subsequent book refuting Hall and giving a compelling portrait of South Sea life, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, became a bestseller, and its view of adolescent development, particularly in sexual relations, had a great influence on American culture. Mead became the best-known anthropologist in America, a veritable

cultural icon (Lutkehaus 1996).

In 1983, five years after Mead's death, the first notice of the Australian anthropologist Derek Freeman's critique of Mead was published on the front-page of the *New York Times*; a media event ensued, complete with television appearances. Freeman, who dedicated his book to Karl Popper, the philosopher who championed the importance of falsification in science, claimed to have definitely falsified Mead, as well as offered a more adequate account of the interaction of biology and culture. A multitude of reviews and rejoinders followed; Freeman replied vigorously to many of these.

The American Anthropological Association even took a vote deploring the recommendation of the book by the magazine *Science* 83. In 1989 a documentary film, *Margaret Mead and Samoa* (Heimans 1989), apparently supported Freeman with an interview with one of Mead's informants who stated that she and other Samoan girls had "pulled Mead's leg in response to probing questions about their personal lives, and that Mead, then 24 years old, believed their tall tales" (Monaghan 1989: A6).

Why was the Mead-Freeman controversy such an event? For some anthropologists, there has been a certain befuddlement - why won't it go away? One reason is the sheer number of issues involved - ranging from particular questions such as the degree of Mead's facility with the Samoan language, to the personalities involved, to larger issues such as the nature-nurture debate and social responsibility of scientists. It is a mistake to say, as some have, that "it was really about" one thing and not another. Nonetheless I focus in this paper primarily on the relation of an epistemic matter to a standard rhetorical one, on how anthropological fieldwork claims are taken to constitute reliable evidence or knowledge for the audiences of anthropology. Following Lyne, I distinguish anthropology's intra-field audience - other anthropologists, its inter-field audience - other scholars and scientists outside the discipline, and its extra-field audience - the general or educated public (Lyne 1983). My issue involves how, as Lyne puts it, epistemic expertise is projected to these various audiences.

1. A Criterion of Science

Although many discussions of whether or not social sciences are really sciences are at best unfruitful, let me begin with one criterion for being a science set out by a philosopher writing for anthropologists (see also Kuper 1989: 455). In "*Objectivity, Truth, and Method: A Philosopher's Perspective on the Social Sciences*" Little writes, that while there is no "cookbook" version that can be

given for scientific method:

The epistemic features of science include at least these criteria: an empirical testability criterion, a logical coherence criterion and an institutional commitment to intersubjective processes of belief evaluation and criticism. . . . And all [sciences] proceed through a community of inquirers in which the individual's scientific results are subjected to community-wide standards of adequacy. And these standards are designed to move the system of beliefs in the field to greater veridicality and explanatory power. (1995: 42)

It is the last criterion that is my focus - the requirement of an effective critical assessment community of inquirers. The connection of this criterion of scientific standing to the audiences of American anthropology is highlighted by two influential anthropologists, who see the controversy as a "scientific scandal" for "the reading public" who had come to look to Mead and others to deliver the discipline's "long-established promise: its capacity on the basis of reliable knowledge of cultural alternatives to critique and suggest reform in the way we live." (Marcus & Fischer 1986: 3).

Little cites several examples of anthropological ethnography, to "show that it is possible for interpretive anthropology to be supported by appropriate empirical methods; and that is all that we need in order to show that anthropology is a scientific discipline in which there are appropriate standards of empirical reasoning as a control on scientific assertion." (1995: 43). However he does not examine how any of these were critiqued by the anthropological community. Are there in fact standards of ethnographic accuracy? And most importantly for this paper have anthropologists applied them? I will argue the record is mixed.

There has been a tendency to see the ethnographic process as unproblematic, and thus not especially needing critical assessment. In considering the Mead/Freeman controversy, Rappaport comments "Even poor ethnography usually gets the facts right." (1986: 347). Heider asserts that "ethnographers rarely disagree with each other's interpretations of a culture" (1988: 73). It should be added in defense of anthropology that in the beginning years of this century a high priority was placed on studying societies before they disappeared or radically changed. It was rare that two researchers would work on the same society, or even two adjacent ones. Thus the likelihood of conflicts such as between Mead and Freeman was low, though they certainly occurred. Given the relatively small number of anthropologists it "seemed a waste of scarce resources to let two or more researchers go to the same place." (Kloos 1997: 430).

A second tendency is to neglect the role of the community of scientists in

critiquing the evidence in the constitution of the evidence as such. "Real science" is what goes on before publication. Just one example. Headland slips into this tendency even though it does not even reflect his own practice. At the close of a survey of controversies in ecological anthropology - in effect showing how anthropology meets Little's third criterion, he writes: "Basically, we need to do good anthropology - which means longer periods of fieldwork, more archaeology, especially in the wet tropics, and interdisciplinary team research." (1997:609). Given what he is trying to show, that "a refreshing new approach in ecological anthropology called historical ecology" has been part of effective critique of a number of "doctrines long accepted", it is surprising he does not stress that more good anthropological criticism is needed.

2. Views of the Controversy At the Time and Later

In the initial round of reviews of Freeman's book, many anthropologists basically rejected Freeman's claim to have refuted Mead (Weiner 1983, Schneider 1983). A number attacked Freeman for the manner of his critique, waiting until after Mead was dead, using questionable rhetoric, and the like. For some within anthropology the controversy was really peripheral to anthropology itself. It was simply a result of the vagaries of publishing and media misunderstandings. Others found Freeman basically correct on many of the elements of his critique, even though they may have questioned his approach (Appell 1984, Brady 1991). Freeman saw himself as vindicating anthropology, that is, by using anthropological means to refute Mead's work on Samoa, and thus redeem his discipline (as well as presenting a more accurate picture of Samoans).

For many outside of anthropology, Freeman set the agenda. There was a clear and decidable issue: "Who was correct about Samoan sexuality and adolescence?" and Freeman was seen as right. For example, Martin Gardner in an article entitled "The Great Samoan Hoax" writes: [Freeman's] "explosive book roundly trounced Mead for flagrant errors in her most famous work, *Coming of Age in Samoa*. ... new and irrefutable evidence has come to light supporting the claim that young Mead was indeed the gullible victim of a playful hoax. Her book, until recently considered a classic, is now known to be of minimal value - an amusing skeleton in anthropology's closet." (1993: 135) As I discuss below this view is *not* commonplace within the field of anthropology, but this pro-Freeman view of the matter is prevalent in two camps, in the inter-field area called "evolutionary psychology", where Freeman has been described as a "hero" of the movement (*Economist* 1998: 84, Pinker 1997) and, extra-field, in politically conservative or

right-wing American writing (Jones 1988, Davidson 1988). For many in the extra-field audience the Mead-Freeman controversy is not simply a matter of historical curiosity, but also part of clearing away misconception, propaedeutic to new intellectual advances. Wrangham and Peterson in *Demonic Males: Apes and the Origins of Human Violence* use Mead as a prime example of what their book is to offset, the “misleading separation of nurture from nature”. They assert that Mead’s “findings from this expedition [to Samoa] would capture the imagination of the Western world and galvanize a movement toward cultural relativism. Yet she was later proven extraordinarily wrong in many of her claims about Samoan life.” (1996: 106, 97).**[ii]**

For some the most salient issue has been whether Mead was duped by some of her informants. The fear that, in turn, the American public was duped has colored anthropological responses. For one, “Perhaps the most painful part of this controversy has been the erosion of the ‘public trust’ in the social sciences to which many educated Americans have traditionally looked for guidance with respect to how to raise their families.” (Scheper-Hughes 1984: 90).

An editorial the *Denver Post* asserted: This is more than just another academic teapot tempest; anthropology is a science often accused of being a haven for social theorists manipulating facts to prove their preconceived points . . . Mead . . . made major contributions to U. S. social attitudes. Her reputation is secure. The real loser may be anthropology’s reputation as a science. If its methods haven’t made quantum leaps forward since Mead’s day, the whole discipline might find a better home in creative literature (in Rappaport 1986: 316).

3. Whose Responsibility?

Are such public perceptions American anthropology’s fault? Some anthropologists have tried to distance their discipline. Rappaport argues that “Anthropology is no more capable of establishing the mythic status of narratives than is chemistry. All anthropology can do is to offer to a public accounts from which that public can select some (as it can from other sources) to establish as myth, leaving the rest to anthropologists’ arcane in-house conversations.” True enough, but as Rappaport mentions on the very next pages, “The book enjoyed substantial classroom adoptions for decades.” (1986: 322, 324, also Kuper 1989: 453). Such distancing attempts, such as Marcus’s comment, apparently intended to downplay Freeman’s critique, that “outside of introductory courses, [Mead’s] work has not generally been read in recent years.” are revealing (quoted Fields 1983: 232-233). But it is precisely in such courses that anthropology has its greatest opportunity to

educate its extra-field audience about itself. As the philosopher Philip Kitcher has suggested in his analysis of the conflicts between evolutionists and scientific creationists, the use of slogans, raw dichotomies ('proven fact' vs. 'only a theory'), and simplistic philosophies of science by biologists provide readily exploitable starting points for creationists (Kitcher 1983). The extra disciplinary audience for anthropologists, like evolutionary biologists, is in part a reflection of how scientists have educated it, including their critics. At least one would expect them to cite their efforts to rectify the misperception, even if the efforts are unsuccessful.

There is another tactic. If, as the Denver Post suggested above, anthropology was more like literature, then it would not be responsible for attempting to resolve the controversy. As one literature professor suggested: "[T]here is *a priori* no reason why we should attribute a greater degree of truth to her account of Samoan life than we might to a travel journal or a realist novel on the same subject.

And the same is true of Derek Freeman's . ." (Porter 1984: 31). But then anthropology's standing as science and source of cultural critique would have to be reassessed, something many in the field would resist.

4. Critique in Anthropology Prior to 1983

In responding to Freeman's critique some anthropologists rather dismissively said that the problems with *Coming of Age in Samoa* were well-known. In a review, Ivan Brady says by 1983 though Mead's Samoan research was still respected for "its pioneering impact . . . It was also recognized as inadequate on several counts . . . And had been relegated largely to discussions of disciplinary history" (1991: 497). And there certainly were several critiques. Indeed Freeman published a list of errata in Mead's *Social Organization of Manu'a* after they were not included in its republication (1972). Examples of published critiques are an article by Worsley in *Science and Society*, a socialist oriented British publication (1957) and an analysis of education in an African tribe, *Chaga Childhood*, by a South African anthropologist (Raum 1940).**[iii]** These do not seem to be obvious places to look for responses to Mead's work on Samoa. Someone from outside the discipline would easily miss these.

And other anthropologists praised Mead's work. McDowell wrote that "Most significant is [Mead's] concern for the precision and accuracy of the data she gathered In presenting her material accurately and precisely, Mead is a careful and exceptionally honest ethnographer." (1980: 127). At least until very recently it has been quite rare for anthropologists to do restudy of a group

previously studied by another anthropologist. But Ta'u, where Mead worked, has been restudied, in 1954, by Lowell Holmes, perhaps the first time a "methodological restudy was ever conducted with the specific purpose of evaluating the validity and reliability of an earlier observer's work." (Holmes 1987: 14) Holmes writes that his advisor Melville Herskovits suggested he restudy Mead's work, in part because "for some time scholars (including himself) had been skeptical about Mead's findings in American Samoa"(1987: 18). This gives some credence to the claim that Mead's work was thought to be suspect. However Holmes sums up his results as indicating that, though in some cases Mead "over-generalized and was given to exaggeration", overall Mead "was essentially correct in her characterization and conclusions about coming of age in Samoa. And I still am impressed with the quality of her investigation." (1987: 172-73). Unfortunately for anyone looking for a clear-cut resolution of the controversy, Freeman claims that Holmes's assessment is suspect, and that Holmes changed his evaluation of Mead's work over time, and under pressure. Nardi cites Holmes and an article by Naroll, which in turn cites Holmes, as examples of preexisting critiques (1984: 323) . However, the criticisms of Holmes are hardly comparable to Freeman's. Further Naroll also included an article by Mead in the collection in which the criticisms Nardi cites are included (Naroll 1970, Mead 1970). Of course, whatever one's view of Mead on Samoa, she was an indisputable pioneer in other areas, for example, in visual anthropology.

An examination of surveys published before Freeman's book in 1983 does not show any signs of this supposed widespread knowledge of Mead's weaknesses. For example, Agar lists a number of disputes over fieldwork, but does not mention Mead's work as one of these (1980). Edgerton and Langness discuss a number of cases where ethnography has been questioned - Ruth Benedict's Pueblo work, the Redfield-Lewis divergence - in a chapter where they also mention Mead, but make no indication of any reservations about her work (1974). Indeed the strength of the defenses of Mead after Freeman suggests that he was far from simply rehearsing or amplifying commonly held suspicions, albeit in an objectionably antagonistic fashion.

Either the supposedly well-known problems with Mead's work were not in fact known or recognized to be serious problems by very many, or not made public, even within the wider field. In any case the discipline never confronted them. Indeed there are mentions of a general custom of not being a public critic of a colleague's work. Jackson quotes an anthropologist informant as "commenting on one of the discipline's unwritten rules 'We've built up a sort of gentlemanly code

dealing with one another's ethnography. You criticize it, but there are limits, social conventions . . . You never overstep them or you become the heavy.'"(1990: 22).**[iv]** So when Freeman did bring them up, one speculates that there were some guilty consciences. Whether from simple oversight or Mead's iconic status, her Samoan work went without adequate critical assessment. In terms of the criterion of a critical assessment community prior to 1983 in this respect there is little evidence of it existing.

5. Critique in Anthropology After 1983

What has happened since 1983? One major change is the importance anthropologists now place on listening to those they study, to their subjects, as Freeman emphasized. Taking into account their views has become more common, indeed expected. As responses of Samoans to the controversy indicate there is at least much to learn from that audience.**[v]**

Another common response to the whole debate is to 'perspectivize' it, that is, to attribute the dispute to the effects of different perspectives or approaches of those involved, and not due to any inaccuracy per se. Thus falsification is impossible. For example, a review of a new book on the controversy begins: "I was amazed to find that yet another contribution to the so-called 'Mead-Freeman controversy' had been published, . . . It is even more unfortunate that authors cannot resist making judgements on this issue and trying to resolve the issues involved, insisting that there is and was a definitive , 'real' Samoa to be discovered. . ." (Morton 1996: 166). Scheper-Hughes, whose own ethnography in Ireland seemed to conflict with previous work of Arensberg, argues that

.. when we are talking about Samoan culture or Irish culture we are talking about an interpretation that is the result of a complex series of interactions between the anthropologist and his or her informants. . . . Ethnography is a very special kind of intellectual autobiography, a deeply personal record through which a whole view of the human condition, an entire personality, is elaborated. .. And the knowledge that it yields must always be interpreted by us, by the particular kind of complex social, cultural and psychological self that we bring into the field.Hence there can be no "falsification" of a 1925 ethnography by a 1940 or a 1965 "restudy" because the particular ethnographic moment in the stream of time that Mead captured is long since gone. (1984: 90)

This pattern of attributing differences to perspectives is not limited to this controversy. There is a growing movement in anthropology toward seeing

ethnography as a much more complicated and multifarious endeavor than previously held. A greater sense of the personal nature of ethnography, and of the rhetorical construction of ethnography developed in the years after 1983. As Brady points out, these developments “which we lump under the heading of ‘post-modernism’, [influenced] . . . a common perception (but very little said in print) that even if Mead was wrong, Freeman didn’t have . . . the answer to what was right . . . The ‘meta-issues,’ in other words, seem to have carried the day against Freeman, against closure on multiple interpretations of Samoan ethnography.” (1988: 44). However, while anthropology’s internal, or intra-field, audience was not especially interested, its inter- and extra-field audiences were drawing their own conclusions, as discussed above. Though really a matter for another day, I do not believe that post-modernism in any stricter sense than Brady’s is really involved. The issues pre-date its rise; it serves more to provide a strawman to criticize (Pool 1991).

This ‘perspectivist’ response would seem to make a thorough going criticism otiose. Other anthropologists, of course, do not see it this way. It is striking that other ethnographic work by Mead has come under significant criticism. Gewertz and Errington have re-evaluated Mead’s analysis of one tribe the Chambri (or Tchambuli) in *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* arguing that Mead’s interpretation was led astray by reliance on a Western conception of self (Gewertz 1984, Errington & Gewert 1987). Others have made substantial criticism of Mead and Bateson’s work on Bali (Jensen & Suryani 1992). If Mead and her work were ever sacrosanct that does not appear to be the case recently (Foerstel & Gilliam 1992, Roscoe 1995).

With respect to Samoa, and in particular the controversy itself, there has recently been a number of critical work. There are two book length assessments. Cote, a sociologist, in *Adolescent Storm and Stress: An Evaluation of the Mead-Freeman Controversy*, comes to the conclusion “that Mead’s coming-of-age thesis is quite plausible . . . There are some problems with some of what she wrote in *Coming of Age*. But there is little reason to believe that she was wrong in most of what she reported - contrary to what Freeman claimed and despite the mythology surrounding her book.” (1994: xiv). Orans in *Not Even Wrong: Margaret Mead, Derek Freeman, and the Samoans* (1996) concludes that Mead’s fieldwork and the claims she makes on its basis are seriously inadequate, that on a number of points Freeman is correct, but that Freeman is wrong to think that he could refute Mead in that her claims are really insufficiently formulated to be either verified or falsified. Hence the book’s title *Not Even Wrong*. Given the prominence given to

the 1989 filmed interview with an informant which led to the perception that Mead was duped, after examining Mead's fieldnotes and letters, Orans holds that there is no indication that the 'tall tales' had any particular impact on Mead's thinking.

Even more striking are attempts to not just adjudicate the controversy, but to learn from it. Taking up suggestions first raised by Shore, Mageo develops an account of that integrates what she calls "the incongruent impressions that surround Samoan character." She argues that Mead and Holmes "documented the communal personality, which is the ideal product of Samoan socialization. Freeman observes the psychological costs of this ideal." (1991: 405). She does not simply say that there are different approaches, the Rashomon 'perspectivist' tactic, but tries to account for this divergence, and thus advance beyond the controversy. There are other articles of a critical nature (Shankman 1996, Grant 1995). Perhaps book reviews of the three books on the controversy (Caton, Cote and Orans) will be revelatory. Textbooks now at least have perfunctory mention that Mead's work is contested.

What is striking is the contrast between the simplistic "Freeman falsified Mead" views prevalent inter- and extra-field and the recent critical work on the controversy within it. If prior to 1983, the American public listened to an incompletely scrutinized account from anthropology, allowing Mead's erroneous findings to go unchallenged, today they do not seem to be listening to anthropology at all. And if they are not listening, then the discipline cannot fulfill what Marcus and Fischer call its "long established promise: its capacity on the basis of reliable knowledge of cultural alternatives to critique and suggest reform in the way we live." (1986: 3).

6. Conclusion

Is anthropology "the gang who couldn't shoot straight"? That is certainly not my contention. As Kloos points out in an examination of disagreements in anthropology, there also are many examples of sites studied by anthropologists from a number of countries, including the one studied, where no radical disagreements have emerged. And he rightly stresses that these outnumber the thirty some cases on the list of serious discrepancies that he has compiled (Kloos 1996). Nor do discrepant results necessarily indicate the absence of a critical assessment community. Tracing the history of research on the !Kung people, Kuper argues for the existence in that area of anthropology of a disputatious, but

at the same time cooperatively interacting, group of researchers from different countries and theoretical backgrounds, working, as he says, "in many ways like conventional scientists." - or at least like the standard conception of scientists (1993: 68). The practice of the journal *Current Anthropology* of publishing articles followed by comments from other scholars, often quite critical, is also signal. The American Anthropological Association has a precedent here. It published a collection of articles on another, somewhat similar dispute within the discipline: *The Tasaday Controversy: Assessing the Evidence*. (Headland 1992).

My conclusion is that, if one examines the discipline of American anthropology with respect to Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* prior to 1983 in light of the criterion of functioning as a critical assessment community the judgment has to be anthropology's achievement is at best mixed. A book that many in retrospect claim was inadequate was allowed to be seen as adequate, or even better. Since 1983 the evidence is considerably stronger, but not univocal. Here the *practice* seems better than the theory. That is, there is a considerable amount of criticism. What is problematic the strand of what I call 'perspectivism'. Here I have suggested the problem is not so much the practice of critical assessment, but confusion over the nature of, or even need for what Little terms "community-wide standards of assessment". This history in turn is, I have suggested, is partially reflected in the relation of American social anthropology to its various audiences. Meeting Little's criterion is of course at most a necessary condition. I have not tried to *explain* what occurred. Perhaps it is a matter of disciplinary structure and practice, of how a scientific discipline functions. Or perhaps it is the nature of social reality - the stuff ethnographies are about - as just too complicated or transitory to be studied in the ways anthropologists study it. One could argue that the culture and personality school, of Benedict and Mead, was particular prone to problems (see Stocking 1989). Establishing claims about temperament of a culture or dominant personality traits in a group may simply not be an endeavor for which anthropological methods are appropriate. The particular factors of Mead's iconic status, and Freeman's approach, must be considered. I am inclined to favor the first explanation, or perhaps some combination of factors.

Nonetheless there is only so much a discipline can do to educate its audiences. I was taken aback to read in a recent book by a psychologist - from Harvard University Press, the publisher of Freeman's book no less - that *Coming of Age in Samoa* is "considered by some to be one of the great anthropological studies of all time." (Plotkin 1998: 241). After all the controversy, I cannot believe that even Mead's strongest supporters would evaluate it that highly.

NOTES

i. I use 'anthropology' as short for American cultural or social anthropology. I draw on Strikwerda 1991. I want to thank Penny Weiss and Clarke Rountree for their comments, the Indiana University Kokomo Division of Arts and Sciences and Interlibrary loan staff and the Indiana University Institute for Advanced Study for their support.

ii. I have not done a comprehensive search, but the prevalence of these interpretations of the upshot of the controversy is striking. I did find more favorable treatments of Mead in books and tapes for children (for example Ziesk 1990).

iii. Note that these are not American authors. Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 45, n. 38) cite Radin's 1933 critique of Mead. Their omission of any mention of Freeman strikes me as rather disingenuous.

iv. Worsley writes that after publication of his 1957 article Mead wrote him attacking the piece. "Taken aback by the virulence of this language, I soon discovered that it evidently was not unusual, for I received several communications from anthropologists in the United States who told me that they had been treated to similar withering counterattacks when they had dared, especially in public situations, to say anything critical of her work". (1992: xi).

v. In her preface to the 1973 edition of *Coming of Age in Samoa*, Mead acknowledged Samoan concerns but stated that "It must remain, as all anthropological works must remain, exactly as it was written, true to what I saw in Samoa and what I was able to convey of what I saw; true to the state of our knowledge...." (1973: xii). Why she did not discuss these concerns in some depth elsewhere is not clear.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - Rhetoric As Ideological Pronouncement: An Analysis Of The Cardinal Principles Of The National Entity Of Japan



The concept of *kokutai* or 'national structure' derived from the fundamental insularity and isolation of the Japanese. The concept served as a powerful linguistic weapon both for attack and defense in the political arena of the period 1931-1945.... [A]fter the Meiji Restoration, 'national structure' was used to signify the uniqueness of the existing government of Japan. The word became a glorification of that order, a claim that the present had existed since time immemorial. Since the oldest book extant was the *Kojiki*, which recounted the descent from heaven of the ancestor of the Royal Family, the national structure was generally understood to centre on an unbroken line of emperors of heavenly origin. - *Tsurumi Shunsuke*

Over the past centuries, scholars of rhetorical communication have been

grappling with a fundamental nature of argumentation that continues to shape and reshape social, political and religious structures of human society. Literature suggests that whereas most scholars acknowledge its critical or sometimes subversive effects, some have paid a considerable attention to enemies of argumentation such as ideology, myth, and propaganda. For instance, Marxists are concerned with ideology as the ruling ideas of the epoch in an attempt to investigate what might be termed the internal life of the ideological realm and to provide detailed and sophisticated accounts of how a society's "ruling ideas" are produced. Religious scholars have argued that myth, as sacred tales concerned with the origins of natural or supernatural, or cultural phenomena, serve various roles available within the articulated social cosmos for community members to achieve a position of influence within the social hierarchies or to find ways of operating meaningfully as contributing members. Finally, the scholars of media studies have explored the tension between the principles of democracy and the process of propaganda since the notion of a rational person, capable of thinking and living according to scientific patterns, of choosing freely between good and evil seems opposed to secret influences or appeals to the irrational.

Given that, it is surprising to know that there has been very little discussion about "ideological pronouncement," which means a sort of rhetoric which undermines and limits the possibility of critical discussion among target audiences. In what follows, I will explore "ideological pronouncement" as an enemy of argumentation. First, I will contend that the nature of argumentation is primarily characterized as an engagement in critical/rational discourse. Second, I will define the nature of ideological pronouncement as an engagement in fascist/anti-realist discourse. Specifically, the essential constituents for such an enactment can be identified as anti-realism, a lack of critical space, and especially, one-sided communication.

Finally, I will investigate Japan's wartime textbook, the *Kokutai no hongii*, or *Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan* (hereafter it will be referred to as *Cardinal Principles*) as a rhetoric of ideological pronouncement. In 1937, the *Cardinal Principles* was published by the Japanese government and became the most widely employed moral education textbook, an official attempt at indoctrination of its nationalist principles: "first printing of approximately 300,000 copies was distributed to the teaching staffs of both public and private schools from the university level to the lower cycle of elementary schools" (*Cardinal Principles* 10). As of 1943, the book is said to have sold approximately 1,900,000 copies. Given such enormous popularity, it seems appropriate to use

the *Cardinal Principles* as a prime example of fascist discourse.

1. *Argumentation as engagement in critical/rational discourse*

Let me start the discussion by posing a question: Why is ideological pronouncement problematic or undesirable? To answer the question, I will define and examine the following three concepts: *argumentation*, *argument*, *argumentativeness*. First, argumentation is generally recognized as “the process of advancing, supporting, modifying, and criticizing claims so that appropriate decision makers may grant or deny adherence” (Rieke & Sillars 5). This audience-centered definition holds the assumptions that the participants must willingly engage in public debate and discussion, and that their arguments must function to open a critical space and keep it open. From this perspective, as Chaim Perelman has rightly pointed out, the aim of argumentation is to gain the adherence of others. Hence, argumentation should be viewed as an interactive process between arguer and audience to determine the appropriateness of an advocated claim based upon data presented with reasoning given. Only the arguments that exceed a threshold for audience acceptance will survive or prevail, and others will disappear or fade away. This way, argumentation plays a chief role in the critical decision-making process.

Another important definition is concerned with the term “argument.” In his landmark article, “Rhetorical Criticism as Argument,” Wayne Brockriede maintains that “argument” means the process whereby a person reasons his/her way from one idea to the choice of another idea, and further argues that this concept of argument implies five generic characteristics:

1. an inferential leap from existing beliefs to the adoption of a new belief or the reinforcement of an old one;
2. a perceived rationale to justify that leap;
3. a choice among two or more competing claims;
4. a regulation of uncertainty in relation to the selected claim – since someone has made an inferential leap, certainty can be neither zero nor total; and
5. a willingness to risk a confrontation of that claim with one’s peers.

Thus, the second definition also assumes the arguers’ willingness to risk engaging in critical evaluation of claim selected, data presented, and reasoning provided. As Brockriede himself notes, the “last characteristic is especially important. By inviting confrontation, the critic-arguer tries to establish some degree of intersubjective reliability in his[/her] judgment and in his[/her] reasons for the

judgment" (167). Thus, the establishment of intersubjectivity is one of the primary aims of engaging in argumentative discourse.

As a consequence, the arguer is necessarily required to cultivate his/her "argumentativeness," or willingness to argue for what he/she believes, by treating disagreements as objectively as possible, reaffirming the other, stressing equality, expressing interest in the other's position, and allowing the other person to save face (Devito). Thus, the arguer is forced to engage in critical/rational discourse, running a risk of being defeated by his/her opponents. When he is quoted by Jürgen Habermas, H. Neuendorf states: Anyone participating in argument shows his[/her] rationality or lack of it by the manner in which he[/she] handles and responds to the offering of reasons for or against claims. If he[/she] is "open to argument," he[/she] will either acknowledge the force of those reasons or seek to reply to them, and either way he[/she] will deal with them in a "rational" manner. If he[/she] is "deaf to argument," by contrast, he[/she] may either ignore contrary reasons or reply to them with dogmatic assertions, and either way he[/she] fails to deal with the issues "rationally." (Habermas 18)

Therefore, Habermas concludes that "[c]orresponding to the openness of rational expressions to being explained, there is, on the side of persons who behave rationally, a willingness to expose themselves to criticism and, if necessary, to participate properly in argumentation" (18). Thus, assurance of rationality is one of the chief purposes of argumentation.

In short, argumentation must help carry out critical decision-making, establish intersubjectivity, and save rationality in the act of speech. I believe that ideological pronouncement fails to meet all three of the fundamental characteristics of argumentation. Ideological pronouncement should be considered problematic and even undesirable in that it is designed to oppress free and critical discussion and promote controlled and uncritical thinking. In the following section, I will illustrate how ideological pronouncement is constructed by using Japan's wartime rhetoric as a major paradigm case.

2. Ideological pronouncement as engagement in fascist/anti-realist discourse

Rhetorical reality is produced and maintained through symbolic interaction between and among people and rhetoric. Clearly, communication practice typically serves to reinforce the ongoing construction of rhetorical reality (Berger & Luckmann; Farrell & Goodnight). In this sense, reality is far from something we are given by others, but something we experience within the framework of rhetorical formation. As Berger and Luckmann argue, "Knowledge about society

is thus a realization in the double sense of the word, in the sense of apprehending the objectivated social reality, and in the sense of ongoingly producing this reality” (66).

I argue that a rhetorical reality becomes ideological pronouncement when it possesses the three characteristics mentioned previously, and that such an anti-argumentative rhetoric is likely to proliferate in the period of fascist ideology, such as wartime. To begin with, the nature of ideological pronouncement can be defined as “anti-realism,” or symbolically constructed reality. For instance, the character of wartime Japanese rhetoric can be represented by the following: *respect for order, hierarchy, filial piety, and harmony*. As Kenneth Burke has argued, “a cycle or terms implicit in the idea of ‘order,’ in keeping with the fact that ‘order,’ being a polar term, implies a corresponding ideas of ‘disorder,’ while these terms in turn involve ideas of ‘obedience’ or ‘disobedience’ to the ‘authority’ implicit in ‘order’” (450).

Specifically, the *Cardinal Principles* was exerted in order to construct Japan as the great family nation which has no parallel in history. The imperial Household is regarded as the head family, and the Japanese people as the Emperor’s subjects and nucleus of national life. The book begins:

The unbroken line of Emperors, receiving the Oracle of the Founder of the Nation, reign eternally over the Japanese Empire. This is our eternal and immutable national entity. Thus, founded on this great principle, all the people, united as one great family nation in heart and obeying the Imperial Will, enhance indeed the beautiful virtues of loyalty and filial piety. This is the glory of our national entity. (emphasis added, 59)

Thus, filial piety is featured as “a Way of the highest importance” that “originates with one’s family as its basis” (*Cardinal Principles* 87). The term “Way” is used in the technical and ethical sense to indicate a particular significance in placing the Imperial Ancestor and the Emperor in the relationship of parent and child. Thus, the Emperor-subject relationship is emphasized as not only that of sovereign and subject, but of father and child. In this way, the content of the *Cardinal Principles* is far from historical facts: rather, it is an ideological construction. Japanese historian Nagahara Keiji comments: The imperial view of history sought to reinforce itself as an ideology to rationalize the powers that be, rather than to cope with contemporary rationalism. The Imperial view of history was inherently non-scientific, since it started the Japanese history from the divine message, descent of the Sun Goddess’s grandson to earth, and Emperor Jinmu. Further, it fundamentally blocked the academic recognition of Japanese history by ascribing

everything to “manifestation of Kokutai” and describing Japanese aggression as dissemination of the “Imperial Will.” (my translation, 27-28)

After all, it is impossible for State Shinto evolved from an indigenous religion of nature-worship to offer a solution to social problems caused by the rapid modernization of Japan. It was rather natural for militarists and imperialists to seek a means of escape into territorial aggrandizement in order to divert the attention of the public from real issues. This attempt to resolve the internal contradictions only created new contradictions, all doomed to end badly. The second essential constituent for ideological pronouncement is “a lack of critical space.” Rather than promoting a space for critical thinking and reflection, it functions to undermine and limit the possibility of critical discussion among target audiences. For instance, the *Cardinal Principles* is said to serve the role of indoctrination, or “the teaching of what is known to be false as true, or more widely the teaching of what is believed true in such a way as to preclude critical inquiry on the part of learners” (*Oxford Companion to Philosophy* 867). It was published for the purpose of easing the social tension caused by the impact of Westernization after the Meiji Restoration and Great Depression later, and of unifying the Japanese people for nationalistic ideas. Robert King Hall explains: Its avowed purpose was to combat the social unrest and intellectual conflicts which sprang from the “individualism” of the people and to substitute a devotion to the “national unity” which it identified with unswerving loyalty to the Imperial Family. (“Prefactory Note” in the *Cardinal Principles*)

Thus, the *Cardinal Principles* serves twin functions: the first is to divert the Japanese people’s attention from internal disorder and dissatisfaction with political realities; and the second, to provide justification for Japan’s wartime nationalism.

The final important characteristic of ideological pronouncement is “one-sided communication,” or a sort of imperfect communication designed to ask the audience to stop thinking and accept the imposed cultural norm or social more blindly. In this frame of reference, no criticism or even questioning is called for, but all obedience and loyalty are required by the ruling class. A prime instance of this is the wartime Japan’s “ideology of death.” Tsurumi Kazuko argues that, in the army and the navy, the indoctrination was extended so as to serve as socialization for death:

Army indoctrination was a strictly one-way communication, in which only the socializer spoke and the socializee was expected to accept silently whatever was told him. It was an imperfect communication, since the socializee was not

expected to understand precisely what these words meant but only to grasp vaguely what they were about. Their ambiguity created a halo of sanctity around the words of the Imperial dicta.... Thus imperfect communication, instead of complete discommunication or perfect communication, was function for military elites as a method of indoctrinating soldiers in the ideology of death. The use of imperfect communication as a vehicle of army socialization was related to the functional diffuseness of its ideological content. (121)

Thus, the Japan's army education provides what Tsurumi calls "imperfect communication" for indoctrinating young soldiers in the "ideology of death."

With the above defining characteristics in mind, let me now turn to an analysis of the *Cardinal Principles* in order to show how ideological pronouncement as a rhetoric serves a role of fascist/anti-realist discourse, in lieu of that of critical/rationalist discourse.

3. The cardinal principles of the national entity of Japan as an example of ideological pronouncement

The *Cardinal Principles* employs a variety of rhetorical strategy to distinguish Japanese from Western traditions. Assuming a nation to be an "imagined community" (Anderson), I will analyze its rhetorical strategies as an instrument of official nationalist education within the context of the three constituents of ideological pronouncement.

First of all, to prove the ground from which the claim that the Japanese people are a special race destined to rule the world is drawn, the *Cardinal Principles* argues that the "Emperor is a deity incarnate who rules our country in unison with the august Will of the Imperial Ancestors" (71). As the fascist regime came into power, the "sacred and inviolable" nature of the Emperor was transfigured to claim that he was the living representative of the imperial line unbroken for the age eternal. This is the existential dimension regarding Japan's special status. The *Cardinal Principles* contends:

The Emperor is not merely a so-called sovereign, monarch, ruler, or administrator, such as is seen among foreign nations, but reigns over this century as a deity incarnate in keeping with the great principle that has come down to us since the founding of the Emperor; and the wording of Article III [of the Imperial Constitution] which reads, "The Emperor is sacred and inviolable," clearly sets forth this truth. Similar provisions which one sees among foreign nations are certainly not founded on such deep truths, and are merely things that serve to ensure the position of a sovereign by means of legislation. (165)

Here Japanese mythology is used to generate a national ethos. Its citizens are told that Japan is a unique sacred nation which is ruled by a divine character. The *Cardinal Principles* goes on to argue the time dimension of Japan's special status. Namely, it is argued that Imperial Japan possesses everlasting life and so flourishes endlessly in an eternal "now." The *Cardinal Principles* states:

That our Imperial Throne is coeval with heaven and earth means indeed that the past and the future are united in the "now," that our nation possesses everlasting life, and that it flourished endlessly. Our history is an evolution of the eternal "now," and at the root of our history there always runs a stream of eternal "now."
(65)

The concept of an eternal "now," of course, assumes that the Imperial rule is unchanging and resistant to historical pressures within and without the country. Clearly, the aim of the *Cardinal Principles* is to unify and elevate the nationalistic spirit of the Japanese. The authors themselves state:

We have compiled the [*Cardinal Principles*] to trace clearly the genesis of the nation's foundation, to set forth clearly at the same time the features the national entity has manifested in history, and to provide the present generation with an elucidation of the matter, and thus to awaken the people's consciousness and their efforts. (emphasis added, 55)

Like the Hegelian phenomenology, consciousness becomes a task in the sense that Spirit is a progressive and synthetic movement through various figures or stages in which the truth of one moment resides in that of the following moment. In this way the *Cardinal Principles* constructs a convenient ideology for the ruling class (see, for instance, Ajisawa). Again Nagahara argues:

From the imperial view of history, the social and political actions of the masses, especially issues of class struggles and movements, were not only of no significance but also intolerable and something excluded. These problems could destabilize "harmony" of the great family nation whose head was the imperial family. This emotional and irrational concept of "harmony" was employed as a device to conceal the oppressing condition of the imperial state under the name of family nation. (my translation, 24)

Thus, the *Cardinal Principles* cannot but emphasize the spirit of harmony in order to inhibit liberal academism or politics.

The second defining characteristic of ideological pronouncement is one-sided communication, accepting no empirical evidence to prove the point, only to

extend comparisons with and denials of “outsiders.” At this point, the *Cardinal Principles* deploys the strategy hinged upon binary oppositions to, first, discredit the Western tradition, and, then, praise the Japanese tradition. They are based upon the assumption that the growing prosperity of the Imperial Line has “no parallel in foreign countries” (*Cardinal Principles* 67).

The book takes virtually any and every opportunity to argue the superiority of Japan over the West. The first example draws upon a purported relationship between “God” and men. Whereas the West posits a hierarchical relationship between God and people, in the East God is in eternal concord with the mutual harmony between them. Thus, the spirit of harmony is demonstrated even within the relationship of “God” and the Japanese people. Elsewhere, the same idea is also extended to the relationship between nature and human beings in which humankind and nature enjoy coalescent intimacy (*Cardinal Principles* 97). Political or moral philosophy is presented as another area of comparison (113). Whereas harmony provides moral character for the Japanese people, Westerners are not thought to be capable of drawing on collective inner strength because individualism characterizes them. Finally, Japan is represented as superior to the West in the terms of its social institutions. The Imperial Constitution is featured as a major example (161). The Constitution is distinguished from that of foreign countries by the nature of the ruler, and it is considered an august message of the Emperor.

In short, Japan is both differentiated from the West, and the superiority of Japan is held to be demonstrated over the West throughout the *Cardinal Principles*. The keys to the comparison are the oppositions between Japanese “harmony” and Western “individualism,” and between Japanese “filial piety” and Western “liberalism.”

The final constituent for the enactment of ideological pronouncement can be viewed as a lack of critical space, thus, undermining and limiting the possibility of public argument or discussion. Specifically, the *Cardinal Principles* presents a “sub-universe” within which Japan is infused uniquely with the “spirit of harmony.” Not only is harmony the “foundation of our country” but there exists no true harmony in Western individualism. The *Cardinal Principles* maintains: Harmony is a product of the great achievements of the founding of the nation, and is the power behind our historical growth; while it is also a humanitarian Way inseparable from our daily lives. The spirit of harmony is built on the concord of all things. When people determinedly count themselves as masters and assert

their egos, there is nothing but contradictions and the setting of one against the other; and harmony is not begotten. In individualism it is possible to have cooperation, compromise, sacrifice, etc., so as to regulate and mitigate this contradiction and the setting of one against the other; but after all there exists no true harmony. (93)

The spirit of harmony is characterized as the key concept to national unity and contrasted with individualism, or self-autonomy, which is asserted to be the basis of Western socio-political theories. If harmony is a cultural ideal of the Japanese race, then everything that aims at harmony should be desirable. Even “war” can be regarded as a valid activity, as long as its ends are to achieve harmony and to bring about peace: “War, in this sense, is not by any means intended for the destruction, overpowering, or subjugation of others; and it should be a thing for the bringing about the great harmony, that is, peace, doing the work of creation by following the Way” (*Cardinal Principles* 95).

In the *Cardinal Principles*, there is a careful and predetermined plan of prefabricated symbol manipulation to communicate to an audience. The symbol manipulated is, of course, the Emperor and the imperial myth. The modern concept of equal partnership among autonomous people is replaced by the emotional concept of harmony that envelopes the sovereign and subjects within a hierarchical relationship. Potentially threatening praxis is inhibited or ruled out by the bond of intimate interaction between the Emperor and his “Good and Loyal” subjects. Real politics is, for instance, not valued since it might hurt the spirit of harmony.

Harmony is asserted to have practical benefits for other cultures, too. The *Cardinal Principles* maintains that saving the deadlock of Western individualism is Japan’s “cosmopolitan mission” (55). The *Cardinal Principles* even indicts Westernization for the cause of the social evils in Japan’s modernity:

The various ideological and social evils of present-day Japan are the fruits of ignoring the fundamentals and of running into the trivial, or lack in sound judgment, and of failure to digest things thoroughly; and this is due to the fact that since the days of Meiji so many aspects of European and American culture, systems, and learning have been imported, and that, too rapidly. (52)

The Imperial Forces, hence, are given the mission to spread the Japanese moral superiority over the world. Of course, territorial aggrandizement is the only way to fulfill the cosmopolitan mission. So the spirit of harmony is elaborately transformed into the justification for Japan’s war efforts and imperial acts.

4. Conclusion

I have so far argued that ideological pronouncement is fascist/anti-realist discourse, and should be discounted and criticized as such. The problem lies in the fact that when such a discourse proliferates and is accepted by the general public, it is often difficult to counter it by critical/rationalist discourse as Japan's wartime experience indicates. The situation is, I believe, a cultural or even mythical domination of ideology over argumentation. In other words, the whole book can be regarded as a "mystification of social reality" insofar as the text represents the fascist regime's attempt to indoctrinate the people by combining its own aims with Japan's indigenous religion, Shinto. Japanese mythology is made into mythos of the state for the sake of rationalization.

The "mystification of social reality" is a process through which a grand narrative is logically rationalized by social agents depending upon, rather than opposing a mythos. By "mythos" I mean people's appreciation of their cultural heritage or membership in society. Here the rhetorical construction of mythic authority is used for the purpose of ordering the Japanese youth to serve the country. It is necessary to realize that the outcome of such a fascist/anti-realist discourse would be a disaster. Further efforts should be devoted by rhetorical communication scholars in order to attain freer and more reflective societies, and against the emergence of controlled and uncritical societies in the future.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - The Pragma-Dialectics of Visual Argument



1. Introduction A number of recent commentators (among them Birdsell & Groarke 1996, Blair 1996, Groarke 1998, and Shelley 1996) have discussed the role that visual images play in public argument. The present paper is an attempt to sketch a pragma-dialectical account of this role. I will call the argumentation which employs such images “visual argumentation” in order to stress the extent to which the images in question can be compared to verbal claims. Because a detailed account of the pragma-dialectics of visual argument is beyond the scope of a short paper, I will more modestly attempt to sketch some central features of such an account. In the process I will emphasize two aspects of pragma-dialectics: (i) its commitment to speech act theory and (ii) the principles of communication it uses to explain implicit and indirect speech acts. I end with some remarks on an approach to visual argumentation which is fundamentally at odds with the one that I propose.

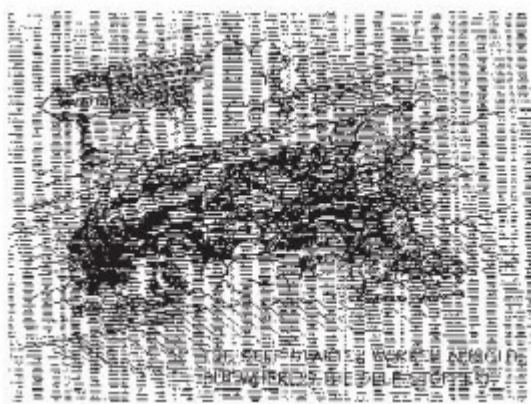
2. Visual Images as Speech Acts Any pragma-dialectical attempt to understand how visual images inform public argument must begin with the recognition that such images can, like verbal claims, function as speech acts in argumentative exchange. Understanding such exchange in a pragma-dialectical way, we can say that argumentation is a reasoned attempt to resolve a dispute, that a dispute centers on a standpoint which is “entails a certain position in a dispute,” and that an argument is an attempt to defend a standpoint (Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992, 14). The question whether visual argumentation is possible thus reduces to the question whether visual images can be used to express standpoints and defend them, and can in this way contribute to the critical discussion which revolves around disputes.[i] A comprehensive account of visual images in argumentative contexts requires a detailed account of visual meaning. Because such an account is beyond the scope of the present paper[**ii**], I will instead demonstrate the possibility of visual argumentation with some select examples. The first is reproduced below. It is a World War I American political cartoon drawn by Luther Bradley and published in the *Chicago Daily News*. Though the message is in part visual, it functions as a pointed comment on the causes of the war. Ingeniously, Bradley portrays the world at war as a person afflicted with a terrible tooth ache and the world’s “old” monarchies as dental crowns. The nurse labelled “The Spirit of Peace” provides his own diagnosis: the war will end and the world will enjoy peace and comfort only when its old crowns are removed.



“The Spirit of Peace”

Press has described the view of international politics which characterizes this and other American cartoons of the same period in his book, *The Political Cartoon*. “War is,” it holds, “made necessary by the machinations of corrupt and archaic feudal monarchs. Such outmoded feudal leaders seek war because they glory in the pomp of military splendour and aggrandizement, or else they are prone to excesses and saber rattling that inadvertently leads to war. The root cause of war is thus... feudal monarchs and self-proclaimed Emperors [who] vie with each other for the spoils of empire, in a manner suited to the Middle Ages or to Graustark or Zenda, but not to modern times. The solution to war is to replace an outdated feudalism...” (Press 1981, 158). In presenting the standpoint this implies, Bradley’s cartoon functions as a speech act which may appropriately be called an “assertive.” The proposition it asserts might be summarized as the claim that “If the world is to enjoy peace, then old monarchies must be removed.” In the present context, it illustrates the point that a visual image may present a standpoint and in this way initiate or contribute to critical discussion. As in the case of standpoints expressed in purely verbal ways, one might agree with Bradley’s position and adduce evidence in support of it. Alternatively, one might – like Press – argue that it is founded on the simple minded view that American democracy is a panacea which can, if propagated, solve the world’s problems. The important point is that Bradley’s standpoint can thus become the locus of argumentative exchange. Bradley’s cartoon might usefully be described as a sophisticated visual metaphor. His standpoint might therefore be said to express the view that “The world is (like) a person with a bad tooth ache who needs old crowns (monarchies) removed.” Not all visual images can be classed as metaphors, but the role that visual and verbal metaphors play in critical discussion makes the important point that standpoints are often expressed in ways that extend beyond literally intended verbal claims. The study of visual argumentation in this way extends argumentation theory beyond this narrow

compass. But critical discussion implies something more than the expression of a standpoint. It is, therefore, important to see that visual images can occupy other argumentative roles. Most significantly, they can incorporate attempts to justify a standpoint and can in this way function as arguments, not only in a pragma-dialectical sense, but also in the traditional sense which implies premises and a conclusion. The nature of visual images can be illustrated with another Luther Bradley cartoon, this one from September 15, 1914, shortly after World War I began (below). In this case, the cartoon presents war as a runaway automobile speeding down a slope. The driver, EUROPE, sits beside the car's "self-starter," looking in dismay for its "self-stopper." Much to her chagrin, it turns out that war is not equipped with one. The message might be summarized as follows.



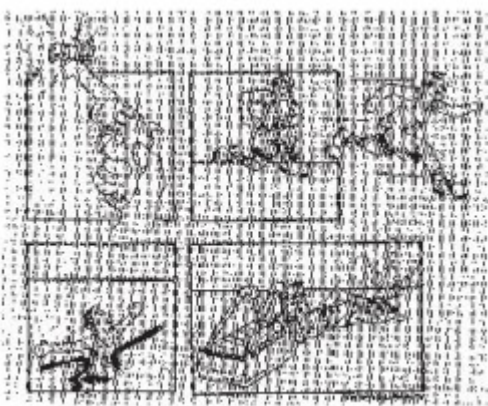
(Standpoint/Conclusion:) Europe is naive and foolish beginning a war for (Premise:) it should know that war is not easily stopped and is bound to end - like Bradley's runaway automobile - in ultimate disaster. The sign beside the car that points ahead to "Bankruptcy" clearly tells us that there will be an economic side to this disaster. So understood, Bradley's

cartoon expresses a standpoint but also provides grounds for believing that it is true. It can, therefore, be understood as a visual argument. Once we recognize Bradley's second cartoon as a visual argument, we can analyze it in much the way that we analyze verbal arguments. It is in this regard significant that the argument has close affinities to slippery slope arguments, for they also argue against some action by suggesting that it will initiate a chain of consequences which will have some undesirable result. It might be added that the argument is founded on a generalization about war which is applied to a particular war. The argument is in this way comparable to many verbal appeals to general and universal statements. Many other examples of visual argumentation can easily be found in other political cartoons, in visual art, in magazine and television advertising, and in political campaigns of all sorts. The prevalence of such argument well establishes it as an important species of reasoning which needs to be recognized by any comprehensive theory of argumentation. In the case of pragma-dialectics, the first step in this direction must be a more explicit recognition of the role that speech acts often play in critical discussion, especially in the public sphere. This said, something more is required if visual arguments

are to be fully integrated into a pragma-dialectical account of argument. This “something more” can be achieved by turning to the pragma-dialectical account of implicit and indirect speech acts, for it readily explains the way in which visual images function as contributions to argumentative exchange. It is here that pragma-dialectics has the most to offer to our understanding of visual argument, for its account of the principles of communication provides a ready explanation of the mechanics of visual argumentation and the indirect arguments that makes it possible.

3. Visual Images as Implicit and Indirect Speech Acts Often, the possibility of visual argumentation has been overlooked because the visual images which function as argumentative speech acts are best classified as implicit and indirect. It would be a mistake to conclude that visual argumentation is necessarily vague and imprecise. Visual images are often explicit in the sense that their meaning is clear and unambiguous. Our first examples are a case in point. Visual images are necessarily implicit and indirect only in the sense that they are not explicitly verbal and must, therefore, be made verbally explicit when we pursue argument analysis. In many ways, the suggestion that argumentative visual images function as indirect speech acts is very much in keeping with a pragma-dialectical point of view, for it holds that “[i]n practice, the explicit performance of a speech act is the exception rather than the rule” (Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992, 44). If we extend its account of other implicit and indirect speech acts to the visual realm, then we must give argumentation visuals a “maximally argumentative interpretation,” in order to ensure that their argumentative function is fully recognized. In doing so, we can apply the “principles of communication” that govern all speech acts (Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992, 49-55). They can be summarized by stipulating that speech acts should not be (i) incomprehensible, (ii) insincere, (iii) superfluous, (iv) futile, or (v) inappropriately connected to other speech acts. The extent to which the principles of communication can be usefully applied to visual images warrants special comment. Consider the cartoon I have reproduced below. Because I want to stress the wide applicability of the principles of communication in the visual realm, I have in this case picked an image which is not an example of visual argumentation. Instead, it functions as a simple joke. Significantly, it is a joke which is founded on a visual contradiction. Its punch line is found in the last frame, which visually contradicts the earlier frames, which portray the runner running and winning a race. We instinctively avoid this contradiction by interpreting the sequence of visuals in the comic strip in a way that adheres to the principles of communication and avoids the conclusion that they are

incomprehensible, superfluous, etc. We do so by interpreting the runner in the different frames as the same runner, and by interpreting the first four frames as an account of his imagination. The joke occurs because his athletic prowess and accomplishments are, in no uncertain terms, revealed to be a figment of his imagination when he crashes to the floor in the final drawing. No verbal or visual cues are needed to guarantee this interpretation because it is instinctively established by our commitment to the principles of communication. Similar appeals to the principles of communication explain how we understand many images that occur in critical discussion. In the present paper, I want to illustrate this point with two examples. The first is the following 1997 recruitment poster for the British Army (reported in *The Guardian Weekly*, Vol. 157, No. 16, Oct. 19, p. 9). It is a remake of a famous World War I recruitment poster which featured Lord Kitchener pointing his gloved hand at the viewer declaring "Your country needs YOU." In due course the poster became a patriotic symbol. In the 1997 version it is altered by replacing Lord Kitchener's face with the face of a black officer. Looked at from the point of view of the principles of communication, the purposeful disruption of the traditional image calls for an interpretation of the poster which does renders this disruption meaningful and significant. We can begin to construct a plausible interpretation by noting that the 1914 poster which is the basis of the 1997 remake is readily understood as a visual argument which attempts to convince potential recruits that "(Conclusion/Standpoint:) You should join the army because (Premise:) Your country needs you." One might include as an implicit premise or assumption the patriotic principle that you should do what



your country needs you to do. The 1997 version of the poster presents a similar argument, but with a new twist which overshadows the original meaning. Clearly, the poster is an attempt to "reach out" to ethnic minorities which are now explicitly recognized by the poster, even though they do not fit the traditional image of the white anglo saxon British

soldier. This change in the image has two significant consequences for its meaning. First, it directs the original argument of the poster to a particular audience, i.e. ethnic minorities. Second, and perhaps more significantly, it attempts to convince this audience that the British Army is committed to ethnic diversity. We might therefore summarize the 1997 argument as follows. Premise

1: Your country needs you. Implicit Premise 2: You should do what your country needs. Premise 3: The army is committed to ethnic diversity. Standpoint/Conclusion: You (i.e. members of ethnic minorities) should join the British Army. It is in passing worth noting that this is a case in which the existence of the visual image in an argument is itself offered as evidence for its conclusion. A second example which can illustrate the way in which the principles of communication allow the interpretation of visual argumentation is a recent advertisement for Bacardi Rum. Under the title "Just add Bacardi" it features a huge bottle of Bacardi which is being emptied on a sleepy little village. In a different light and from a different angle, the village scene could be a charming rustic landscape scene, but the time of day (dusk), the lack of activity, and the lonely lights in the windows now suggest a boring hamlet where there is nothing to do. The lack of activity contrasts sharply with the image which appears where the Bacardi splashes onto the scene below. Like a miracle fertilizer, it produces a bustling Manhattan-like cityscape complete with skyscrapers, lights, nightclubs, glitzy restaurants and a thriving night life. Taken as a whole, the advertisement contrasts this exciting scene with the sleepy village which surrounds it. The message is obvious: "If you drink Bacardi, your sleepy life will be transformed into something as exciting as downtown Manhattan." As this suggestion is offered as a reason for believing that "You should buy Bacardi Rum," this is another good example of a visual argument. Significantly, this is a visual argument which seems guilty of the fallacy affirming the consequent, for it argues that you will have an exciting night life if you drink Bacardi, implicitly assumes that you want an exciting night life and concludes that you should drink Bacardi. In the present context, it is enough to note that the meaning is clear, even though any attempt to understand the picture literally entails a series of absurdities - bottles of Bacardi are not so absurdly huge, they do not pour their contents onto sleepy unexpected villages and if they did the result would be sticky streets and dead plants rather than a Manhattan streetscape. Looked at literally the image is therefore incongruous. We nonetheless manage to easily understand it because we automatically assume the principles of communication, which require that we find some plausible way to make the visual images coherently tied to one another in a way that produces a plausible meaning. We succeed by interpreting the image as a metaphor which is not intended literally. We use the principles of communication in a similar way when we interpret verbal metaphors. We do not, therefore, have problems understanding the verbal claim that "Jackie is a block of ice" and do not interpret it to mean that her temperature is zero degrees celsius,

she turns into liquid at room temperature, is composed of nothing but water and so on. Drastic misunderstandings of this sort are as infrequent in the visual as the verbal sphere, because in both cases the principles of communication undermine them. *4. Two Approaches to Visual Argument* Because the role that visual images play in public argument can be explained in the way I have suggested, pragma-dialectics provides a relatively simple way to assess and evaluate visual argumentation. In the present context, it is enough to say that the account I have proposed suggests that it can assess visual argumentation in essentially the same way in which it assesses other instances of indirect argument. While I will not pursue this point, it is one of the strengths of the proposed approach, for it allows us to assess visual argumentation as fallacious, valid, sound, etc. without requiring that we devise a new theory of argument which is restricted to the visual realm. One might therefore contrast my approach to visual argumentation with attempts to formulate a theory of visual argument which treats it and verbal argument as irreconcilably distinct. One approach to non-verbal arguments which tends in this direction is found in Gilbert 1997, but I will in this paper focus on the account of advertising found in Johnson and Blair 1994. In the present context advertising is significant because it tends to emphasize visual components and is in this way heavily committed to visual argument. Given this feature, one might expect an attempt to come to grips with advertising to result in an expansion of the standard account of argumentation which allows it to encompass visual statements and arguments, in a manner analogous to the expansion of pragma-dialectics I have suggested here. Instead, Johnson and Blair argue that advertising only “mimics argumentation,” that its argumentative leanings are a “facade,” and that “most advertising works not at the rational level but at a deeper level” which implies a fundamental difference between its “logic” and “the logic of real arguments” (Johnson and Blair 1994, 220-221). One might summarize their view by saying that it treats advertising as a form of persuasion which is distinct from argument. It in this way suggests that the visual images that proliferate in advertising should be seen as instances of persuasion, and not in the manner I have proposed – as instances of argument. In many ways, Johnson and Blair’s account of advertising is impressive and insightful. It convincingly makes the point that advertising is characterized by many sophistic ploys, and is firmly built upon a self-interested attempt to understand what motivates human action. Granting all these points, one might take their comparison of advertising and ancient sophism in the direction I have already proposed. For though one might criticize the sophists for their slippery tactics, it is clear that they saw themselves

as experts in argumentation, and not as individuals who gave up argument for some other form of persuasion. Protagoras' famous claim is, therefore, the claim that he can make the weaker argument (*logos*) the stronger. In view of this, one might compare advertisers to sophists without concluding that they exchange argument for persuasion. Such a view is more in keeping with the pragma-dialectical approach I have developed here, for it proposes a "maximally argumentative" interpretation of the visual images which are employed in advertising contexts, and this implies an emphasis on the attempt to interpret a visual as an explicit argument or the expression of a standpoint which calls for



one. It does not follow that the criticisms of advertisements which Johnson and Blair make no longer apply, but that they must frequently be applied to attempts to argue rather than persuade. Suppressed evidence is not, for example, less problematic (and perhaps more problematic) when one describes a visual advertisement as an attempt to argue for the conclusion that one should buy a certain product. The illegitimate appeals to pity, fear and other emotions which Johnson and Blair identify as a key ingredient of advertising

remain similarly problematic even when advertising is understood as a form of argumentative appeal. Looked at from this point of view, it might seem that my approach and the approach to visuals implicit in Johnson and Blair are equal, for either can explain the problems with the images that characterize contemporary advertising. To some extent this is true, though I believe that there are four problems with the attempt to drive a wedge between argument and advertising and, more specifically, argument and advertising visuals. I will end this paper by proposing them as four reasons which favour a theoretical approach to visual argumentation which construes it as an extension of verbal arguments rather than a species of persuasion which abides by a different 'logic.' One problem with the attempt to treat advertising visuals as persuasion rather than argument arises in the context of the sophistic features of the former which motivate this view. Here the problem is that these aspects of advertising have clear analogues in verbal argumentation. Purposeful ambiguity and vagueness, slippery allusions, the suppression of evidence, and self-serving appeals to fears, pity and other emotions are not, for example, the sole preserve of advertising and their visuals.

They are, on the contrary, a constant feature of verbal critical discussion, especially in the public sphere. So long as their existence there does not show that verbal argumentation of this sort needs to be classified as persuasion rather than argument, it is difficult to see why it should entail this conclusion in the case of advertising images. It is precisely because there is this kind of overlap that it is useful to apply pragma-dialectical accounts of fallacies to visual argumentation. In marked contrast, the attempt to divorce visual and verbal arguments seems to unnecessarily separate two kinds of arguments which may be more efficiently understood in terms of a unified theory of argument. A second problem with the attempt to treat visual advertising images as instances of mere persuasion arises in cases in which they do not seem to be sophistical, even if they are problematic. Here the problem is that many instances of visual argument seem to clearly conform to standard forms of argument. A Canadian television advertisement for Cooper hockey equipment features players from the National Hockey League using and recommending Cooper equipment. Though the appeal was primarily visual this seems a clear case of argument by authority. The same can be said of many other advertisements which are similarly constructed around some alleged expertise. When a man with horn rimmed glasses, a white lab coat, and a stethoscope tells us that this pain killer relieves headaches faster than that one, we know that he is being presented as a medical expert. Because visual appeals to authority of this sort demand the same kind of analysis as verbal appeals to authority - an analysis which asks whether the authority's credentials have been properly presented, whether he or she is an appropriate authority in the case in question, whether they have a vested interest in a particular conclusion, etc. - it seems a mistake to treat them as anything other than arguments in the traditional sense. One might respond to such examples by trying to distinguish between visual images which function as arguments and those which function only as persuasion. But this requires some principle of division which can clearly distinguish these two sets of images. I propose this as a third problem for the persuasion account, for it is not clear what principles can be employed in this regard. In contrast, the interpretation strategy which I have gleaned from pragma-dialectics - which proposes that we interpret argumentative visuals in a maximally argumentative way - establishes clear priorities which are relatively easy to implement in the practice of argument analysis. A fourth and final problem with the kind of approach proposed by Johnson and Blair is its emphasis on the negative aspects of advertising and the visuals it employs. This is in many ways in keeping with their emphasis on fallacies, which teach argumentation

skills by identifying the mistakes that frequently occur in ordinary argumentation. A number of commentators have criticized this approach on the grounds that it emphasizes instances of poor rather than good reasoning (see, for example, Hitchcock 1995 and Tindale 1997). In their own discussion of advertising, Johnson and Blair themselves point out that it is a mistake to dismiss all advertisements as deceptive and misleading, but their decision to treat them as attempts at persuasion which only mimic arguments still has a very negative slant and invites this conclusion, especially in students. It is in this regard worth noting that the persuasion approach to visual argumentation supports a common prejudice against the visual which has tended to characterize argumentation theory. In view of this prejudice, it is all the more important that we emphasize the possibility of good visual argumentation. In some ways and in some contexts, I would argue that visual argumentation is actually preferable to verbal argument. If one wishes to argue about the horrors of war or the desperate plight of children in the developing world, for example, then it is arguable that it is not visual images but words which tend to be inadequate conveyers of important truths. If this is right, then there are practical contexts in which visual argumentation is more appropriate than its verbal analogue. A more detailed discussion of visual argumentation lies beyond the scope of the present paper. In the present circumstances, I hope I have given some reasons for believing both that we should accept the possibility of visual argumentation, and that pragma-dialectics can provide a basis for an understanding of its content.

NOTES

i. The most-cited study here is by Tversky and Kahneman. They conducted an experiment in which a witness' testimony had to be combined with knowledge of prior probability to yield a value for claim probability - a simpler situation than the one being discussed here. Their subjects were told the following story. A cab was involved in a hit and run accident at night. Two cab companies, the Green and the Blue, operate in the city. You are given the following data: (a) 85% of the cabs in the city are Green and 15% are Blue, (b) a witness identified the cab as Blue. The court tested the reliability of the witness under the same circumstances that existed on the night of the accident and concluded that the witness correctly identified each one of the two colors 80% of the time and failed 20% of the time. What is the probability that the cab involved in the accident was Blue rather than Green?" (From Baron, J., *Thinking and Deciding*, 1988, p.205) Most subjects gave estimates near 80%, as if ignoring the base rate for Blue cabs, which is 15%. The Bayes Theorem shows that the correct answer is 41%! Using the procedure advocated in this paper, we would not accept the eyewitness claim that it was a

Blue cab. To warrant accepting the claim, the witness' error rate would have to be less than $1/4$ (we are dealing with a claim, not an argument) \times 0.15 (the initial probability that a cab would be a Blue cab), or 0.04. But it is actually 0.20. ii. In part because visual images may gain meaning in such a great variety of ways (by convention, by demonstration, by purposeful exaggeration, and so on).

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - On The Fallacy Of Fallacy: Arguing For Methodological Difference:

Producing vs Processing



1. Introduction

Fallacies have always been in the centre, or near the centre, of argumentation studies. In fact they lie at their roots in two senses: most approaches to argumentation have sprung from a consideration of what is amiss in human reasoning or thought, and theories of argumentation stand and fall with their capacity for detecting errors. In other words, fallacies are the cornerstone of argumentation theories very much like paradoxes once perceived by Russell as the stumbling block of scientific theories: they constitute the boundary conditions within which human thought and action remain to be *rational*. For a long time fallacies and rationality had been taken to be the two sides of the same coin, until certain evidences appeared to undermine their interdependence. They came basically from two sources: the psychology of decision making and the semantics and pragmatics of inferences in language use. Now it is no longer the exclusive power of argumentation theory that matters but their inclusivity, i.e. how charitable they are with faulty reasoning, error making and unjustified action. If fallacy theory does constitute a major divide, it works rather like a filter through which the beyond normal is let upon the territory of the rational; or at most it is a tradeoff between the rational and the irrational.

In this paper I am not going to take stock of the enormous data corroborating the “legal status” of irrational moves in thought and action; I only elaborate a little on the diagnosis that with the *cognitive turn* in the 70s a new look on the methodological basis of argumentation is needed. Yet I will not adumbrate a methodology here because, as I see it, there is an important, and not clearly noted, distinction underlying most of the insights in cognitive science that should be reckoned with in the first place before any stand on argumentation can be taken. Since there is not enough room here to fully elaborate this distinction, I have to suffice with some important consequences. Thus I am doing a kind of archeology of knowledge in the Foucaultian sense, which may fall beyond the proper scope of argumentation theory, but if there is anything wrong with the idea of fallacy, as I think there is, it can only be identified in its undepinnings and its undepinnings are in cognition.

It is a most common opinion that the idea of fallacy is theory-laden: no fallacy without a theory. Now I want to oppose that view and try to argue for a rather

strong claim that there are - at least some interesting - cases of language use when what appears to be fallacious or misplaced is not the given move itself but rather the *attempt* to judge what has been said or done as acceptable by some pre-set theoretical standards. Fallacies result then from a fallacious methodology; the methodology is fallacious for two reasons, which are however related.

2. *The outline of the argument*

I start then with the first reason why fallacies are originally methodological. It is constituted by what I take to be a major tension between the *descriptive* and *normative* ideal of argumentation theories. It is the basic claim of this paper that conflating the two inevitably leads to apocalypse. Thus it is because of the trafficking between the two ideals that John Woods could once call relevance theory as developed by D. Sperber and D. Wilson *apocalyptic*.

Since most frequently argumentative structures are the result of re-descriptions of utterances, in illustrating the first reason I will draw upon certain tenets from linguistic theory. This does not mean that I am necessarily biased by linguistic theorizing; rather the principles of understanding and producing language like relevance, graduality, similarity or structure mapping etc. should cohere with the more general principles of argumentation. If our understanding of language, i.e. of what is said, is apocalyptic, there is not much chance of constructing a - let alone sound - argument out of it.

Next I present my second reason by outlining a basic distinction that results from the findings of cognitive science. The distinction is between *producing* and *understanding*. My supposition is that even if the structure of our cognitive apparatus might at some future time be found the same in both cases, the terms of its operation, the aims and the procedural conditions, significantly differ.

The distinction has much to do with the debate of the continuity thesis of *similarity* and *rule-governedness* that has recently surfaced in cognitive psychology. (See e.g. the special issue of *Cognition* (65) 1998) Thus in this part I will cite some examples from categorization and topical research in linguistics and criticize their treatment for not taking heed of the above distinction. The basic idea is that rules are abstract and context-independent, whereas similarity-driven processes are particular and contextual.

Finally I bring together the two distinctions within general rationality in terms of Donald Davidson's principle of charity. I also hint at an evolutionary framework to be developed along the lines proposed by R. Garrett-Millikan. The basic idea is

two-tiered: i.) what is fallacious or not depends on the evolving of discourse and thus it cannot and should not be stated *a priori*; ii.) tampering with a rule is acceptable as long as both verbal and non verbal behavior preserve the biologically and culturally vital boundaries. This may be taken as a solution to the paradox of the sorites to which boundaries which are not fallacy-proof can easily give rise to. It is the reason why I consider my approach anti-apocalyptic.

To sum up: cases of rule-governedness, which is descriptive, cannot always mean rule-following, which is normative, and vice versa: cases of not following a rule does not necessarily result in violation *simpliciter*: it may amount to tampering with meaningful content: the domain covered by the the rules in question. One may wish to distinguish between motor activities, which *appear* to be rule-following to the external observer because they respect the evolutionary important boundaries without a proper representation of content, whereas higher cognitive activities *appear* to be rule-following to the internal observer because they are truth-preserving in inferencing and representing content. However, if the continuity thesis is correct, any attempt to separate out the normative element in the two cases is doomed to fail. One should look instead at how much producing speech and action and interpreting incoming stimuli are task-centred.

3. *The graduality principle*

Producing and interpreting differ in the first place as to their criteria of success. No doubt that in producing some behavior I have to cope with certain constraints or expectation environmentally determined. My behavior is rule-governed precisely in the sense that the constraints are out there: it is always rational to respect them and set the aim of my action accordingly. Yet their observance need not be normative in the full sense: I may be careless or lazy enough, or too roughly - even differently -disposed to come up with an optimal "solution". What I thus produce, my performance, is rarely ideal or "well-formed". This does not exclude that I may consciously chose to follow some abstract rule and approximate an ideal as closely as possible. Most (re)actions are however coarse-grained and/or come off the target, while their aims may be properly defined.

In contrast when I interpret natural signs or other people's behavior, I always do it by relating it to what is given inside my mind, to what I know and believe. But it cannot be said that they are a kind of inner constraints with which strictly speaking I have to cope; rather they form the background for my understanding. Thus it follows naturally that *any way* I interpret what has been said to, or

performed before, me IS rational. In other words the descriptive and normative ideals coincide. What I do is *eo ipso* optimal with respect to the *available* alternatives. Most interpretations are fine-grained and relevant to previous knowledge, although they can many times become automatic and similarity-driven. It appears then that, though rules and similarity in principle form a continuum, they are prototypical of two diagonally different activities: producing and processing. And while rule-following is the prototype of producing and shows more flexibility as a result of the working principle of optimality, similarity being the prototype of processing yields more rigidity in structure because of the underlying principle of mapping.

One - if not the only - reason that producing and processing are not mirror-images and rely on different mechanisms is that language use in humans amounts to more than communicating information. The idea is at least as old as the Gricean maxims. Today the clearest formulation of the common core of its "additional" - if not *sui generis* - dimensions is the *graduality principle* (GP). It is a structural principle of human knowledge in that it places the items in long term memory upon a scale or within a hierarchy of levels on the basis of the similarity among them. (Cf. Dubois \ Resche-Rigon 1996: 37) We can identify three important characteristics of GP. First that it allows for a categorical structure based on typicality *à la* Rosch. Second that it is value-laden in that it expresses a point of view and hence it can be utilized for argumentation. And third that it figures in lexical-linguistic structure. (Cf. Raccach 1993) Thus it results that the structure of cognition need not reflect - counter what Rosch claims - the ontological structure of our world, and neither does it follow formal-logical rules; rather it is governed by the orientations expressed in graduality. Language use "involves the application of general principles which we call *topoi* (*pace* Aristotle)." (Anscombe \ Ducrot 1989: 80) The *topoi* constitute an argumentative potential: they are correspondences among a series of gradations which allow for a set of possible inferences and can be exemplified with a comparative (the more/the less..., the less/the more...) structure.

Clearly, the aim here is to discover a common basis for our conceptual and linguistic apparatus. Accordingly, the commonality is found in the task-centredness of categorization as well as of the manipulation of knowledge: it is always relative to a given task that category judgements are made and decisions are arrived at. And the list is by all means extendable to many kinds of contextual approaches, especially to relevance theory proposed by D. Sperber and D. Wilson where contextual selection is a primitive, an unreducible hallmark of rationality,

rather than something awaiting rational explanation. It is the bare fact that the stimulus is “worth the audience’s attention. Any utterance addressed to someone automatically conveys a presumption of its own relevance. This fact, we call, the *principle of relevance*. ... it is not something that they (the people) obey or might disobey; it is an exceptionless generalization about human communicative behaviour.” (Wilson \ Sperber 1988: 140)

The authors’ purpose is to find the rock bottom of communicative activity where a deviation from the norm comes to constitute the norm itself. No wonder that John Woods found this conception apocalyptic. If relevance theory is however aligned with typicality and topical argumentation, its rationale appears to be not so much the wielding of formal-logical structure - although Sperber \ Wilson do make such a claim - but rather the search for non-logical constraints on interpretation. Whether the constraints imposed by what is known include or not the utilization of demonstrative logic is a separate matter. As prototypical categorization represents a move away from taxomical systems, so do relevance theory - and other context selection approaches - make a step toward informal inferencing. That the idea of relevance in question leads to apocalypse in logic may well be true. Sperber\Wilson’s real fault does not lie there. It lies rather in occupying two contrastive positions concerning rationality in cognition and in argumentative behavior. On the one hand they set the task to explain how communication even without an explicite code can become successful; that is how things can be inferred instead of being decoded. But if this is so, it appears on the other hand that what people in fact do is not understanding each other but rather conducting a monologue. In order to be otherwise, the speakers should be saddled with the extra burden of optimizing their talk *in such a way* that it facilitate the context selection by the hearers. To do that they should also be ascribed the mutual knowledge the pertinence of which Sperber \ Wilson argue against. Thus, however, we would soon be lead back to the original code model. And indeed, if the speaker were so keen on communicating the same idea, it would be more economic for her to use the latter than sending the hearer into an amazinglabirynth of dubious and intricate - i.e. non-computable - inferences. Moreover, we have seen that, while we are more often than not optimizers as interpreters, we are quite nonchalant in producing proper behavior. So if the apocalypse is there, it is on the side of the speakers, not on that of the hearers. I will even venture to add that the more we are optimizers as producers, the more hard wired the given reaction becomes. In fact, as we will later see, *it is precisely*

because we ascribe the same optimizing rationality to others that we are prone to be nonchalant in producing behavior. Sperber \ Wilson cannot have it both ways: retaining the rich inferential potential on the part of the hearers and securing the uptake of the communicative intent of the speakers. That is they cannot account for the fact that we are cognitive satisficers and productive optimizers at the same time. Yet that is what “the exceptionless generalization about human communicative behaviour” would require them to do. Else there is no rational explanation for language to have evolved.

4. The categorization problem

I illustrate the above point with a categorization problem. Thus the second reason for the methodological character of fallacy theories surfaces in cognitive psychology. Subjects are often tested for categorizing with a selection task in which they must perform pairings of figures and/or names, while it is the whole structure of training and testing they have undergone that should explain why they succeeded or not in their task. Yet it is highly dubious that the structure of the experiment correctly mirrors the structure of “inner” processing, i.e. the bridging between stimuli and output. In many cases “subjects are asked to provide a report under conditions where they would ordinarily not see anything meaningful. Knowing that the figure contains a familiar object results in a search for cues.” (Pylyshyn 1998) Still in other cases subjects must judge a statement like “A canary is a bird” either true or false. Such tasks are rather imposed on them and constitute “closed paradigms”. (Cf. Dubois 1991: 43) What psychological experiments are supposed to show is that the same principles that discriminate among the categories are also working within the categories themselves in producing prototypical effects. Thus - as Rosch puts it - there would be no sense in dissociating these principles. But since furthermore prototypicality is only a matter of best example within a category and not to be confused with the question of belonging, in many cases it seems to be enough if only the boundaries between categories (such as human and non-human, friend and enemy, etc.) are represented and the content either simply does not matter, or if it matters, it matters only to the extent of delineating contrastive categories. Note that in such psychological experiments what goes on in the mind is taken to be mirrored by how the subject reacts to the target problem, that is by producing. Psychological testing reduces inner processes to simulation, that is to outward behavior and thus it commits the methodological fallacy of pulling down the distinction between interpretation and production. Such analyses are open to the

criticism that representations are emptied out of content. By content I mean anything from feature-detection to nearest neighbour or averaged vectorial distance among affiliated items in connectionist networks. Representing boundaries may be as congenial (or conducive) to survival as ranking an instance within some category. Representing boundaries, however, implies that behavior relies so heavily on context that it is neither rule-based, nor similarity-based. It is not rule-based because it is an essential feature of rules that they are non-contextual. But it is neither similarity-based because, as e.g. Ellard reports, certain species “respond to *all stimuli* as threatening or to *no stimuli* as threatening depending on their familiarity with the context in which the stimulus is presented” irrespective of the local configuration of the stimulus, since there is an “obvious adaptive advantage... that it pushes the time-consuming and computationally expensive problem of stimulus recognition to a point in time that actually *precedes* stimulus onset.” (Ellard 1995: 681) In other words it does not imply structural mapping, but rather a pre-tuning to current context. I do not see any reason why such behavior could not appear to be significant in man.

A particularly interesting case is the experiment reported by Smith and Sloman who repeated a test by Rips to highlight the difference between the two categorization processes (similarity-based and rule-based). The task was to decide whether the test object with some characteristic attribute(s) belong to one of two target categories, of which one was fixed, while the other was variable with respect to the given attributes. (The attribute was shape falling in between the regular sizes of quarters and pizzas.) When there was only one such attribute, namely size (a round object 3-inch in diameter), most subjects judged that it belong to the category of pizzas rather than to the category of quarters. The explanation went that in case of boundary conditions subjects categorize on the basis of rules and rank the vague object with the variable category, while, and despite, noticing its similarity with the members of the fixed category. Whereas with the test object having more attributes similar to the members of the fixed category (e.g. silver color) subjects tended to judge it not only more similar, “but also as more likely to belong” to the fixed category. (Smith et alii 1998: 182) This experiment however does not prove -as the authors want it - that categorization is similarity-based, since the attributes in question were necessary and/or perceptually *salient* features, which attest rather the application of rules. Experiments with boundary conditions do not show that people, if made to give all-or-none responses, indeed *represent* the test object as this or that. They rather

show to the contrary that subjects are reluctant to tamper with represented boundaries, and so they temper with content: if presented with something conspicuously similar to the target object, they adjust, or temper with, the precise “rule” of what belongs to that category. Note also that such experiments completely disregard the role of context. How would subjects decide if the test object is presented to them within a restaurant or buy-and-sell frame?

Thus we reach the conclusion: the fact that people follow rules in their behavior above - behavior in processing stimuli - is a phenomenon resulting from the contrived character of the situations they are tested or observed. There is nothing like inherently normative here. It is rather that the horizontal organization of categorial structure appears to be far more *relevant* to selective action than the vertical structure. To sum up:

(T1) Human categorization is such that it reflects the evolutionary important boundaries among the objects of environment, but there is no objective mapping between the content of coded categories and external reality. (Cf. Pólya \ Tarnay 1997)

Coded boundaries may naturally shift with evolution, hence there is objective necessity for the semantic transparency of the boundaries themselves. Yet it is crucial that there be observed boundaries, which can be reflected linguistically as well.

5. Normative vs descriptive: rule-governed vs similarity-based

Thus we are confronted with contrastive evidences or conflictive demands: on the one side we have experimental results in developmental psychology, pathology and animal behavior which attest of high contextuality and dispositionality in behavior; hence they point to similarity-based rather than rule-governed behavior. Yet - and this is partly my point here - they *appear* to be rule-following to the external observer since - at most - coding of category boundaries may be inferred in certain cases. Furthermore, it turned out that prototypical categorization prompted by E. Rosch and her followers frequently mirror prior training and external activity rather than the inner structure of representation; thus typicality should also be ranked here, which accords well with the fact that they are similarity-based.

On the other side we have the topoi or argumentative inference conceived along the lines of J.-C. Anscombe and O. Ducrot. By all means inferential activity implies rule-following, hence it cannot exclude normativity in its entirety. Given

the rhetorical nature of language it arises that the scope of inferential activities cannot be wholly captured by a theory of relevance as Sperber \ Wilson want it. Yet it must have also become clear that their theory occupies a middle position in my ranking in that for them context selection is primary and similarity based, while it is only fuel and/or input to the main operation: the producing of contextual effects by means of - demonstrative - rules.

Suppose for the moment that the picture linguists and psychologist with an argumentative bent is close to the truth. Suppose furthermore that it is the best explanation one can offer of what goes on in the hearer's mind. Then we have a blatant inconsistency. When we interpret we are cognitive satisficers, that is we try to extract with the least effort as much content as we can from what has been said. In other words we set our aims too high: we strive to construct a distinctive - fine-grained - picture of the world on the basis of structural and inferential relations between incoming new and retrievable old information. But when it comes down to responding or (re)acting, unless we are *rationalized* experts - we observe only the most "relevant" - coarse-grained - boundaries of our cognitive structure.

Whence such an inconsistency? I have already hinted at one possible answer: evolution driven selectivity. This may well cover low-level - dispositional - action. But I have presented high-level, categorical thinking very much like autonomous, similarity-based action. Can I be justified in making that move? Now here is the source for a second answer, quite orthogonal to the first; it is the principle of charity proposed by Donald Davidson. It says briefly that in evaluating the speakers' behavior we aim at giving the best possible explanation of their - linguistic - behavior. That is we rationalize their activity. At face value, rationality is not an ideal by which we automatically assess their action, but it is rather a result of our interpretative activity. The question is: Can we reconcile the principle of charity with the principle of relevance or argumentative normativity? At first sight it seems yes, since both approaches aim at at a full-blown interpretation of utterances, at exploiting its inferential potential, at resolving conflicts, etc. This latter task most often amounts to supplying missing premises. But on what basis should such premises be determined? On the argumentative approach, it is a set of agreed upon rules - either semantic or pragmatic - that constrain both interpretation and possible responses (i.e. speech acts). Violations of such rules would then naturally amount to committing a fallacy. But if so, most argumentative-communicative situations are doomed to break down. For what if the best possible explanation of inconsistent or incoherent speech behavior comes

from unique or “irregular” sources of the situation in question, from ideosyncratic aspects which are not given or storable once for all. What if the point of a semantic or pragmatic rule consists precisely in tampering with, or manipulating, it? This is a moral to be learnt from oral communication, ordinary and artistic, in primitive and as well as higher cultures. But a moral also rendered by categorization testing in experimental psychology when it is acknowledged that “a change in the activation level of a feature has the effect of changing the criteria of arbitrarily many categories into which that feature could enter, including ones that the investigator may have no interest in or may not have thought to test.” (Pylyshyn 1998)

If we take the principle of charity in an argumentative vein we have our second answer: we are nonchalant in our behavior *just because* we ascribe the same kind of rationality to others. We suppose there is a rock bottom of rule-following, some abstract set of rules upon which agreement must sooner or later be reached. It is an overgeneralization: *an extrapolation of external behavior onto the domain of what goes on in the head*. But it is just this supposition of general rationality that appears to be a fallacy as soon as we take content seriously. Inconsistency may not be right word to apply to what is meant here: tampering with the rules may well be just another metaphor of constantly jostling the boundaries of our inner categorical structure. Redrawing the horizontal structure of our categories cannot be made to follow some pre-set rule, it cannot be normative. There may well be external constraints originating with the changing of our environment, but there is no direct internal response to that change; cognition has its own plasticity but it is essentially constrained by its former structure. If relevance bears any selective advantage, it is in (re-)utilizing “cognitive parts” as building blocks already there rather than starting anew. (Cf. The Gouldian idea of evolution as assembling old parts together - ones adapted to a previous purpose - for a new purpose.)

This may be taken to be a stretched - even a too charitable -interpretation of the principle of charity to cover cases of blatant inconsistency. Yet I think it is not. I agree with Z. Pylyshyn that inference is an activity “where the semantic property truth is preserved. But we also count various heuristic reasoning and decision-making strategies (e.g. satisficing, approximating, or even guessing) as rational because, however suboptimal they may be by some normative criterion, they do not transform representations in a semantically arbitrary way: they are in some sense at least quasi-logical. This is the essence of what we mean by cognitive penetration: It is an influence that is coherent or quasi-rational when the meaning

of the representation is taken into account.” (Pylyshyn 1998) The use of term “rational” is meant to indicate that in characterizing such processes we need to refer to what the beliefs are about - to their semantics. The important point is that such processes can be suboptimal. I think Pylyshyn hits the right note when he asserts that “most psychological processes are cognitively penetrable, which is why (cognitive) behavior is so plastic and why it appears to be so highly stimulus-independent.” Hence cognition is both stimulus-independent and meaning dependent. That could well be the reason of its suboptimality. Suboptimality does not mean however that cognition is not task-centred as most cognitivist conceive of it. But that is not enough reason to treat motor and processing activity on a par. The difference may be analogous to that between “systems that have constraints on interpretation built into them that reflect certain properties of the world” (Pylyshyn 1998) and systems that access and use knowledge. While the first is cognitively impenetrable, the second is not.

To sum up: higher cognition may *appear* rule-governed to the extent that it is stimulus-independent and meaning-preserving in exploiting more or less abstract structural correspondences. Even so, even if it is cognitively penetrable, it cannot become normative, since it always works with used materials.

6. Concluding remarks

Let me conclude with giving vent to a good and a bad consequence. The good one may be that the black box of the mind has not been wholly and adequately opened yet, so there is much work to be done in this field. It is plausible that man is capable of high-level cognitively penetrable activity, of understanding complex relation structure, etc. I take it to be part of the good news that such ability is highly plastic, and even if abstract, it cannot be ranked with rule-following. Quite clearly so because it involves analogical thinking which has much in common with primary similarity-governed processing. But there is the bad news. It starts with the simple observation that if communication (and cognition) is task-centred, then an important part of it must be constituted by the attempt of securing the uptake and the “correct” interpretation of any utterance. Otherwise - and in lack of some other meaning independent social function - selection should have driven it out. But should it? If what has been said of production is only partially true, we are surrounded with a huge mess of carelessly formulated and misfired talk and misunderstanding. How is it that selection has not already driven out our communicative ability? I can give two brief answers here. The first is simple and a bit cheating. It runs that the evolutionary story of literacy is too short to be a

proof of its selective advantage. The second is more complex but I cannot elaborate it here. It starts by seemingly overturning my argument in this paper in that it claims that what we are almost smothered with is not a mess of misfired talk, but rather a “cognitive” technology, factories of ideologies, which not only reproduce the same forms of talk like e.g. the ads, but they self-reproduce as well. That is they do not overturn the communicative function but overexercise it. So far so good. Communication should not be wiped out then. But there is a corollary to this answer: the overarching function of exact communication will result in the wiping out of the meaning-dependent and rule tampering cognitively penetrable higher activity, since any tampering with the rules slows communication down or may even end up blocking it completely. But once again our past is only a drop in the evolutionary ocean. So we are stuck with our morsel of hope.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - Totalitarian Argumentation: Theory And Practice



In the history of the 20-th century totalitarianism has left a deep and bloody trace. It has been connected not only with destroying civil public institutes and different deformations of people's private and social life. This century totalitarianism turned out to be an Intellect of Devil with a capital letter which forced people to realize the necessity of replacing monistic Ratio by numbers of autonomous and competing with each other intellect instances. The connection between totalitarianism and intellect is paradoxical. Destroying the intellect with a small letter and thus discrediting the great Ratio totalitarianism created special communicative practices.

It's wrong to believe that the power of totalitarianism can be explained exceptionally by the power of its repressive structures. A great role in its expansion is played by unrepressive mostly [first of all] verbal practices the core of which was an argumentation. "Argumentation is a social, intellectual, verbal activity serving to justify or refute an opinion, consisting of a constellation of statements and directed towards obtaining the approbation of an audience" (Eemeren, Grootendorst, Kruijer 1987:7). Argumentation is a way of human deeds coordination.

As Ch. Perelman says, that activity is the communication of intellects, American philosopher H.W. Johnson says, that activity is the most adequate way of realizing the human nature. In connection with totalitarianism argumentation becomes the devil of homo sapiens and needs the most serious attention. Analysing it we may probably come to answer the question inspired by H. Arendt: How a physically normal healthy person may lose the interest to his own being to realize himself as a screw, soldier of Totalitarian one. (Arendt 1951) Totalitarianism isn't the antipode of democracy, but its another genesis, plebiscite-acclamatorian form, as J. Habermas says on the point. Some democracy theorists consider that totalitarianism and democracy are antipodes. There are two forms of democracy: a representative democracy and a democracy of participation "For the survival of democracy in Eastern Europe, where tough economic and social measures are to be taken, participation is a prerequisite. But more participation will also be indispensable in solving some of the problems inherent in the democratic system institutionalised in the West" (Eemeren 1996:9) Only an inaccurate look perceives acclamation as one of false democracy. The estimation of totalitarianism as external displaying of domination and as a false arche is also simplified. It's more realistic without declaring the totalitarianism visibility what is forbidden by the voice of its victims, which is knocking in the contemporaries hearts, to try to understand which properties the argumentation must have to be an effective megaphone, the way of totalitarianism implementation. These properties were dissolved in communicative practices of totalitarianism and were not recorded by means of language.

On the one hand, we can't speak about one as totalitarian one without putting it into a complete totalitarian content. The concept of "totalitarian control" will be intelligent if and only if, the control will be really total.

On the other hand, the control can't be organized. A screw of the totalitarian State isn't an atom in sense of Epicurus and isn't capable of self deviation. Totalitarian argumentation must provide forming of a screw, which is capable of self deviation in principle as a screw. We conducted an empirical analysis of totalitarian argumentation features based on the content analysis of the Soviet press, and it enables to note the following features of totalitarian argumentation. Soviet republican and regional newspapers in 1950-s had practically no one issue which didn't contain a totalitarian argumentation text. Usually, there were two or three messages in one issue which couldn't be

qualified as patterns of the totalitarian argumentation usage.

Studying these messages shows that there were communicative, control and motive-organizing functions of totalitarian argumentation. Any problem discussed in the newspaper's texts we are interested in was covering in the way to set up an invisible control over intellects and hearts of the readers using its ideology.

An empirical study of structural properties of totalitarian argumentation shows that in the epoch of stalinism the motive - organising function of totalitarian argumentation was not connected with such argumentation elements (according to St. Toulmin) as qualifier and rebuttal. It's not surprising that almost 80 per cent of ordinary totalitarian messages were built with a peripheral course (O'Keefe 1995) of persuasion. They were based on using very simple and primitive arguments oriented on actualization of the masses' basic instincts. The processual structural properties of totalitarian argumentation were connected with a canon compound (in sense of F. van Eemeren) argumentation.

According to the canon argumentation is the system all elements of which are intelligent only in the totalitarian total message context. We discovered compound argumentation in 60,5 per cent of analyzed totalitarian issues.

One may speak about such property of totalitarian argumentation as strategy of its claim immunization (Andersen 1995:193). According to the strategy a slight criticism of the claim of totalitarian argumentation is strengthening its persuasiveness and acceptance. That strategy was used in 70 per cent of analyzed totalitarian messages.

Between relatively independent elements of totalitarian argumentation text as something whole such subarguments as arguments to authority, provincialism, death are notable. An argument to the authority (or *ad verecundiam*) can be effective due to totalitarian power mechanism. A listener is more likely to accept what State says the more he is afraid of it. This argument is a special totalitarian kind of argument *ad verecundiam*. Even such a statement as "Elephants Fly" backed by the Authority of a Totalitarian State is acceptable to its recipients.

An argument to provincialism was very widespread in the USSR and is used in the CIS. It means that something is unacceptable to an audience if it is connected with a deviation from the general canon of totalitarian ideology. This deviation is special kind of ignorance in sense of once's inability to accept totalitarian ideas. An argument to provincialism is a totalitarian turned form of the argument *ad ignorantiam*.

There are three levels of an argument to death: logical, rhetorical and dialectical. Syllogisms: "All humans are mortal; Socrates is a man; Socrates is mortal" is an example of 'argument to death' logical version. It illustrates a high level of validity and persuasiveness of a verbal message appealing to limits of life. 'Argument to death' rhetorical form appealing to limits of human life may be persuasive not being valid in a logical sense.

What is more this form may be logically contradictory'. The argument to death' dialectical form illustrates principle impossibility to continue human intercourse after the use of argument to death. This argument shows an unsteady border between totalitarian argumentation as an example of the verbal violence and totalitarian physical repressions as a brutal and bloody force. The most popular for users of totalitarian argumentation were the arguments located in the following order: to[ad] authority, death, provincialism. If the argument to authority in totalitarian argumentation being subargument played a role of support also, the next arguments to provincialism and death, being relatively independent subarguments, were connected with the methods of totalitarian statements backing.

Despite the ordinary structure and organisation of totalitarian argumentation in the epoch of stalinism internally, it was a rather complex formation being very dynamic and relatively independent phenomenon in comparison with its supporting state institutes.

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ISSA Proceedings 1998 - Arguing For Bakhtin



“Bakhtin’s thought is so many-sided and fertile that he is inevitably open to colonization by others.” David Lodge, After Bakhtin.

In a recent paper, J. Anthony Blair (1998) laments a proliferation of terms that appear to be employed without discrimination or distinction: ‘dialogue’, ‘dialogical’, ‘dialectic’, ‘dialectics’, and ‘dialectical’. While he doubts it will occur, Blair proposes that ‘dialectical’ be reserved for “the properties of all arguments related to their involving doubts or disagreements with at least two sides, and the term ‘dialogical’...for those belonging exclusively to turn-taking verbal exchanges.” Setting aside his pessimism, what Blair identifies amounts to a clear trend toward ‘dialectical’ or ‘dialogical’ models of argumentation, a trend that has become more pronounced particularly among informal logicians in the last few years (Cf. Gilbert, 1997; Johnson, 1996; Walton, 1996, 1997).**[i]**

Of course, emphasizing the two-sidedness or turn-taking nature of argumentation may not amount to very much. Douglas Walton’s centralizing of ‘dialogue’ in his pragmatic account means that the dialogue provides the context which will determine the argument by virtue of telling us how the set of inferences or propositions at its core is being used (1996:40-41). And Ralph Johnson’s recent focus on a dialectical tier exists in relation to an underlying illative tier which is the premise-conclusion part of the argument’s structure (1996:264). But with these senses, it is possible (though not necessarily the case) for dialogue-focussed or dialectical argumentation to involve no more than an exchange of distanced, monological positions (perhaps through turn-taking, perhaps in whole), where each side presents its argument for acceptance or rejection (Shotter, 1997). Were such to occur, the current drive for a more genuinely interactive or ‘involved’ perspective might be lost.**[ii]**

It is here that the dialogism of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) seems particularly appropriate and in many ways an anticipation of current trends in argumentation theory (as with so much else). Shotter (1997) turns to Bakhtin’s views for an

understanding of dialogical communication and argument within actual communities. I want to take this further and look for an actual perspective on argumentation, one that really captures the interactive nature of dialogue.

While Bakhtin was a philosopher of language and literature, it is primarily the latter that has been championed in the west where his theory of the novel has been particularly influential. But for argumentation theorists, there is much more to be culled from his ideas on language and communication generally. This paper will both explore what 'arguing' is for Bakhtin, showing how his general theory of speech and meaning implicates a particular concept of 'argument', and argue for Bakhtin's role as an important figure in argumentation studies. I will approach the first task through paying attention to special features of Bakhtin's concept of dialogism (here understood provisionally as the relationship of every utterance to other utterances). Extending beyond Shotter (1997), I derive a concept of argument totally embedded in context (no detached reconstruction of premises and conclusions can be true to it), where even the situation itself enters as a constitutive element. Arguments are essentially co-operative enterprises, opening up meanings to mutual (and third party) understanding, exploring others' positions, and developing consensus.

Limited by the constraints of time and page-length, I illustrate the prospects for success with the second task by exploring ways in which Bakhtin anticipates an important aspect of Perelman's work. In particular, I discuss Bakhtin's treatment of audiences and the importance for him of the "hovering presence" behind conversation of a third part "superaddressee" (1986, 126)[iii]. This concept and Bakhtin's associated discussion has compelling and instructive parallels with the "universal audience" of the *New Rhetoric*.

1. Dialogism

Let's begin with the utterance. For Bakhtin the utterance is the basic linguistic act, and utterances acquire their meaning only in a dialogue. Words and sentences are impersonal, belonging to nobody. They can become the tools of the logician who may centre them on a page and look at *their* relations, the relations of statements. By contrast, an 'utterance' is marked by "its quality of being directed to someone, its *addressivity*" (Bakhtin, 1986:95). An utterance, then, has essentially both an author and an addressee.[iv]

Moreover, the utterance arises within the context of a particular situation. Or, to put it in Bakhtinian terms, the situation is a constitutive element of the utterance.

As Todorov (1984) notes, the existence of a nonverbal element to an utterance that corresponds to the context was known prior to Bakhtin. But he treated it not as external to the utterance, but integral to it. The extraverbal does not influence the utterance from the outside. “On the contrary, *the situation enters into the utterance as a necessary constitutive element* of its semantic structure” (Todorov, 1984:41).

So understood, ‘utterance’ can help us to appreciate how Bakhtin employs the term ‘dialogism’. Enough has been said to indicate that more is at stake than what we might commonly associate with the term ‘dialogue’ or with ‘speaking’. As Michael Holquist (1990) indicates, normally ‘dialogue’ suggests two people in conversation. “But what gives dialogue its central place in dialogism is precisely the kind of *relation* conversations manifest, the conditions that must be met if any exchange between different speakers is to occur” (1990:40).

Bakhtin himself marvelled at the way that linguistics and the philosophy of discourse had valued an artificial, preconditioned notion of the word, which was lifted out of context and taken as the norm. By contrast, “[t]he word is born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object” (1981:279). In this dynamic conception the word finds its meaning. Bakhtin continues: But this does not exhaust the internal dialogism of the word. It encounters an alien word not only in the object itself: every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates.

The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer’s direction... Responsive understanding is a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an *active* understanding, one that discourse senses as resistance or support enriching the discourse.

Linguistics and the philosophy of language acknowledge only a passive understanding of discourse, and moreover this takes place by and large on the level of the common language, that is, it is an understanding of an utterance’s *neutral signification* and not its *actual meaning*(280-281).

This clarifies, or furthers, the essential notion of addressivity mentioned earlier. The word is directed towards a reply, it “anticipates it and structures itself in the answer’s direction.”

2. Argument

"We learn to cast our speech in generic forms, and, when hearing others' speech, we guess its genre from the very first words" (1986:79). I want, in these terms, to treat argumentation (broadly conceived here as the activity of arguing) as such a speech genre. A 'speech genre', as defined by Bakhtin (1986:60) is a sphere of communication which has its own relatively stable types of utterances. I take it as uncontroversial that 'argumentation' fits this description. We can also take confirmation of this judgement from the kinds of things Bakhtin himself includes as speech genres, beyond the frequently studied literary genres. Bakhtin includes the "short rejoinders of daily dialogues...everyday narration, writing (in all of its various forms), the brief standard military command, the elaborate and detailed order, the fairly variegated world of business documents," (60) as well as scientific statements. The types of utterances specific to arguers, and identifiable as parts of arguments such that "we guess its genre from the very first words," given the kinds of contextual considerations mentioned earlier, clearly delineate the sphere 'argumentation'.**[v]**

This said, I want now to turn to considering what important elements Bakhtin contributes to a model of argument. That is, as a speech genre, argumentation will be characterized by the features common to it. I want to focus upon three specific ideas.

(1) A concept of argument conceived along Bakhtinian lines will not pull discourse from reality and treat it as a series of statements (premises and conclusions) disconnected from arguer and audience/respondent. In this, Bakhtin would not differ from some recent proposals (cf. Gilbert, 1997). But Bakhtin stresses the uniqueness of meaning that a sentence has within an utterance (that rich concept discussed earlier) to the extent of insisting that the repetition of the sentence makes it a new part of the utterance (1986:109). A sentence changes (or adds to) its meaning in the course of an utterance. In fact, Bakhtin specifically excludes logical relations, like negations and deductions, from those relations that are dialogical (Todorov, 1984:61), presumably for reasons noted here. Dialogical relations are "profoundly specific," (Cited in Todorov, 61) logical relations are not. This sets a Bakhtinian model of argument quite beyond the boundaries of traditional formal deductive logic, a point that cannot be stressed too strongly.

(2) The second thing to note about a Bakhtinian model is that it will be a context-dependent model where the context includes the particular agents involved. Again, this does not at first seem remarkable, but the notion of addressivity

brings a very original element to the discussion. Here, we might conceive argumentation as being predicated upon response. "It" is a site of response. And Bakhtin captures this responsiveness. But this is more than the accommodation of a reply, the anticipation of objections to one's position. Here, "addressivity" captures the way an argument is always *addressed* to someone, and thus needs to include an understanding of that other (audience/respondent) in its structures or organization. **[vi]** Hence, the argument while having the arguer as its principal author, can be said on this level to be co-authored by the addressee. Bakhtin suggests more of what I have in mind here when he writes:

"[E]very word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates. The word in a living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it, and structures itself in the answer's direction" (1981:280). We can imagine here two people in a dialogue (the site Walton envisages for pragmatic argument), anticipating and responding in a way that makes their argument a common discourse, and in a way that precludes the isolation of positions, speaking back and forth across a gulf. This is clearly to bring dialogism to the arena of argument. And in particular, speaks to the trend in argumentation that I identified earlier. It implies the importance to argument that listening must have. It is also a model of argument that aims for agreement. **[vii]** According to Todorov (1998:7), for Bakhtin "[t]he goal of a human community should be neither silent submission nor chaotic cacophony, but the striving for the infinitely more difficult state: "agreement."" The Russian word used here, *soglasie*, means, at root, "co-voicing."

In the first case here we might note that directing a discussion of language or words in terms of voices personalizes it in a way that a traditional model of argument would not. Secondly, it would be important to recognize that agreement, where achieved, does not mean an identity between positions, it does not involve a winner and a loser who gives up her or his position. Rather than the holding of the same position, agreement stresses an understanding of the position involved. As Todorov (1984:22) recognizes, understanding is a type of reply, it is that to which both arguer and respondent move through the utterance. In this sense, understanding is dialogical, and can be seen as a goal of argumentation within the perspective being extrapolated from Bakhtin's statements.

(3) This last remark leads to a third, briefer, point. And this has to do with the affect that arguing has on the arguer. Typically, in similar kinds of models we might talk about the way the arguer/argument aims to persuade the audience.

The movement of change is centrifugal. Where change does take place, it is in the audience. Overlooked is the way in which the act of engaging in argument can change the arguer her or himself. The dialogical argument being discussed here lays stress on the relation between the arguer and respondent in the form of the utterance/argument they co-author and come to understand.

As we might anticipate from what has been said so far, Bakhtin's work offers a particular notion of the self or I that is not isolated from its context (nothing is anything in itself for Bakhtin). The self arises in relation with others. While there is no room here to pursue this particular notion of the self, it suggests a sense in which we can think about the thought of the self being tied to the thought of the audience. As an arguer, when I consider my audience, I must of necessity consider my self, my beliefs and attitudes. And articulating my position for my audience, I also articulate it for myself. Arguing is self-discovery. And with such insight comes the possibility of change, of development of the person initiating the argument. **[viii]** This clearly relates to the sense of agreement as understanding expressed above. Accordingly, we will have here a model of argument that eschews the metaphors of war that have been the subject of a number of critiques (Cohen, 1995; Berrill, 1996), and adopts the kinds of metaphors more agreeable to recent feminists critics (Gearhart, 1979; Foss & Griffin, 1995).

3. Bakhtin & Perelman

Enough has been said to show the plausibility of extracting a rich and useful 'dialogical' model of argument from Bakhtin's work. Obviously, such a model needs development, and there is much to be addressed by way of concerns and problems. But I want now to turn to a more explicit way in which Bakhtin anticipates twentieth century argumentation, and to illustrate this through a brief discussion of Perelman's notion of the universal audience.

There are a number of audiences recognized in Perelman's texts (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969:30). But he makes an important distinction between the particular audience being addressed and the universal audience somehow lying within, or framed by, or participating in, that particular audience. The relationship between the two audiences has occasioned considerable debate and several key criticisms have been brought against it. As a concept, it is deemed to be riddled with inconsistencies (Ray, 1978; Ede, 1989), or even unnecessary for Perelman's (and Olbrechts-Tyteca's) own project (Johnstone, 1978:105).

To a certain extent, Perelman must share some responsibility for criticisms laid

against his notion of the universal audience, insofar as those criticisms may be based on misunderstandings. Perelman is a writer who often discusses ideas or views without clarifying his attitude towards them. Only in a subsequent discussion do we realize that an idea he has been explaining is not one he is endorsing, or at least, not one he is endorsing in the way it has been explained.

Thus, some charges that the universal audience is too ideal or hypothetical a concept (Ray, 1978; Ede, 1989) stem from the following passage:

Argumentation addressed to a universal audience must convince the reader that the reasons adduced are of a compelling character, that they are self-evident, and possess an absolute and timeless validity, independent of local or historical contingencies (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969:32).

Simply put, the view expressed here *is not* Perelman's view. What he is outlining is the traditional conception of a universal audience to which philosophers have long appealed. It is *against* this conception, and more generally the conception of certitude in philosophy it characterizes, that Perelman's new rhetoric is reacting. His reason for rejecting the traditional conception is simple: "[It] links importance to previously guaranteed objectivity and not to the adherence of an audience, rejects all rhetoric not based on knowledge of the truth" (Perelman, 1989:244). Elsewhere he calls it a "supraindividual and antihistorical conception of reason" (1967:82). So, we must recognize at least two notions of 'universal audience'. That employed in the tradition being rejected; and the modification proposed by Perelman.

James Crosswhite (1989), in his apology for Perelman's concept, distinguishes the universal audience from ideal audiences and criticizes the latter. On Crosswhite's thinking, argumentation addressed to ideal audiences must be couched in the most abstract and formal terms. "The agreements such audiences are capable of reaching never concern the concrete and substantive kinds of issue such audiences were designed to deal with" (1989:161). This contrasts markedly with Perelman's universal audience, which is designed to consider concrete issues addressed in arguments directed across times and cultures.

There is an important connection between the immediate, particular audience and the universal model drawn from it. Perelman begins with a particular audience and then looks at *its* universal features. Constructing these universal audiences involves defending one's conception of universality. The philosopher addresses the universal audience as he or she conceives it (Perelman, 1989:244).

Perelman likens this universalizing to that of Kant's categorical imperative (1967:82; 1989:245), and not to the general will of Rousseau's small political community, as Ray (1978:366) had proposed. The philosopher attempts to universalize the specific features of the situation and solicits general agreement for them in this way. Only arguments which can be universally admitted are judged reasonable. This does not preclude arguments about what constitutes the universal audience for a specific case. Dialectical exchanges may ensue where opponents disagree on this. This is, after all, an essential feature of what is at stake in argumentation. Here agreement on the universal audience must be achieved through dialogue before the stage of appealing to that audience (Perelman 1982:16-17).

The universal audience is not an abstraction, then, but a populated community. It derives from its conceiver, conditioned by her or his milieu (Perelman 1989:248). The universal audience is a concrete audience which changes with time and the speaker's conception of it (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969:491). It is far from being a transcendental concept borne out of a rationalism (Ray, 1978). But although the universal audience will change, the test of universality goes on - *it* transcends a milieu or a given epoch.

Universal audiences can be constructed from particular ones by universalizing techniques that imaginatively expand audiences across cultures and time and apply notions like competence and rationality. What results is an audience that can assent to concrete propositions and not simply formal proofs and empty platitudes. But the starting point, here and in all argumentation, has been a fully-conceived audience, real or imagined, which listens, reads, and reacts. The universal is fully grounded in the practical requirements of the real. Perelman stresses this when he indicates the need for the philosopher (arguer) to guard against errors in her or his argumentation by testing theses through "submitting them to the *actual* approval of the members of that audience" (1967:83; my emphasis).

So the universal audience, it transpires, is the distillation of the concrete audience, comprised of the common features as imagined by the arguer (speaker). For an argument to be strong it should elicit the agreement of this universal audience, insofar as the arguer determines it. Put another way, a convincing argument is one whose premises are universalizable (1982:18).

While being a hypothetical construction, the Perelman model is not, on this reading, an ideal model. What this allows us to do is to keep our focus on the

immediate audience with its particular cognitive claims, while recognizing a standard of reasonableness which should envelop that audience and which it should acknowledge whenever recourse to the universal audience is required. In this way we can understand Perelman's repeated insistence that the strength of an argument is a function of the audience, and that in evaluating arguments we must look first and foremost at the audience.

One can appreciate from the preceding discussion of the universal audience why critics might be moved to charge that Perelman espouses a relativism. As van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1995:124) explain it, Perelman reduces the soundness of argumentation to the determinations of the audience. "This means that the standard of reasonableness is extremely relative. Ultimately, there could be just as many definitions of reasonableness as there are audiences." Introducing the universal audience as *the* principle of reasonableness to mitigate this problem only shifts the source of the concern to the arguer. Since the universal audience is a mental construct of the arguer, now there will be as many definitions of reasonableness as there are arguers.

Turning back to Bakhtin, let us recall that the utterance is a contextually-grounded event of which the speaker and respondent (first and second parties) are constituents. Now, to these two Bakhtin adds a third: "Each dialogue takes place as if against the background of the responsive understanding of an invisibly present third party who stands above all the participants in the dialogue (partners) (1986:126)." This third party has a special dialogic position (because, of course, there can be an unlimited number of participants in a dialogue, so this is not simply a third member). As Bakhtin (1986:126) further explains this role:

But in addition to this addressee (the second party), the author of the utterance, with a greater or lesser awareness, presupposes a higher *superaddressee* (third), whose absolutely just responsive understanding is presumed, either in some metaphysical distance or in distant historical time (the loophole addressee). In various ages and with various understandings of the world, this superaddressee and his ideally true responsive understanding assume various ideological expressions (God, absolute truth, the court of dispassionate human conscience, the people, the court of history, science, and so forth).

That we have here an entity on par with Perelman's universal audience, a similar active participant, is clear. How exactly we should understand it is less clear. On the face of it, it *looks like* the more traditional model of the universal audience, against which Perelman is rebelling. Yet at the same time, a reliance on such a traditional model seems inconsistent with what we have understood of Bakhtin's

project. Bakhtin uses the analogues of “including the experimenter within the experimental system...or the observer in the observed world in microphysics” (1986:126), to stress that there is no *outside* position. Likewise, we cannot expect the superaddressee to stand outside of the utterance, unaffected by it.

Insofar as the superaddressee represents responsive understanding, and understanding cannot be from the outside, then the superaddressee is internal to the utterance. Furthermore, this superaddressee is “presupposed” by the author of the utterance, it is controlled by the author like Perelman’s arguer “creates” the hypothetical universal audience. What is less clear is whether the third party superaddressee is related to the second party respondent in as intricate a way as Perelman’s universal audience is related to the particular audience. But here again, a remark of Bakhtin’s is instructive: “The aforementioned third party is not any mystical or metaphysical being (although, given a certain understanding of the world, he can be expressed as such) – he is a constitutive aspect of the whole utterance who, under deeper analysis, can be revealed in it (126-127).” Like the first and second parties (and other features discussed earlier) the third party is a constitutive aspect of the utterance. As presupposed by the author, this party must be understood in some essential relation to the second party who is being addressed and who is, as we have seen, co-authoring the utterance itself. Still, there is more that needs to be explored here at a later date, especially as we look to transfer the discussion to the specific concerns of argumentation.

On another front, understanding the superaddressee/universal audience from within Bakhtin’s project may allow us to resolve some of the concerns about Perelman’s model. In particular, the concern that we have an extreme relativism at work here, where there will be as many universal audiences as there are arguers.

What this criticism misses that Bakhtin has made clear, is that in a very real sense the “arguer” will only exist for us in relation to an “argument” (understood now in these dialogical terms). And this argument is a unique event involving the particulars of speakers and their situation and the universal audience relevant to them. It is not a matter of each arguer deciding the universal audience in some arbitrary way, such that there are as many universal audience as there are arguers. It is a matter of the argumentative context dictating to the arguer how the universal audience can be conceived, and the respondent/particular audience playing a co-authoring role in that decision. More appropriately, then, there will be as many universal audiences as there are arguments; as many arguers as there are arguments; as many audiences, and so on. But this relativism is no relativism

at all in the way that concerns the critics.

4. Conclusion

What I have attempted here is to show the ways in which Bakhtin's ideas bear upon the concerns of argumentation in order to further the attention that Bakhtin has received in this field (Billig, 1996; Shotter, 1997). There is obviously much more to be said, and I have only made a start here. But I hope at least to have shown the viability of such a project. In one of the few specific references Bakhtin makes to argument he refers to the narrow understanding of dialogism involved (1986:121). But this is argument as conceived in the tradition, not argument as currently understood in argumentation theory which, in many of its essential elements is much closer to the kind of notion that Bakhtin could embrace. **[ix]**

NOTEN

- i.** The interest in dialogue models is not itself recent, of course- see Barth & Krabbe (1982), or the pragma-dialectical model of van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1984; 1992). But the latest innovations, in some cases developing out of what have become the received models like that of the pragma-dialecticians, mark a clear departure from the logical model of the premise/conclusion set tradition.
- ii.** I have in mind here Gilbert's (1997) mutual investigation of positions and Johnson's insistence that exchange must be present for there to be an argument.
- iii.** Or "super-receiver", as Todorov (1984:110) translates it.
- iv.** Where an actual interlocutor is not present, "one is presupposed in the person of a normal representative, so to speak, of the social group to which the speaker belongs" (Todorov, 1984:43). I do not want to overlook the kinds of problems that can come with such a projected "objective" standard, but this is not the place to take them up.
- v.** This is the place where I can imagine revisiting the debate of the past decade as to whether or not argument/informal logic/critical thinking is discipline specific (here, read 'genre specific'). I will not pursue this particular tangent; it suffices that we can recognize the utterances and contexts of 'arguments'.
- vi.** A text like the *Cratylus* indicates what is involved here: depending on who is being addressed, we see three very different kinds of discourse. I am grateful to John Burbidge for suggesting this example.
- vii.** Not all commentators interpret Bakhtin this way: some stress the sense of social struggle rather than amicable disagreement. Cf. Ken Hirschkop, 'A response to the forum on Mikhail Bakhtin' in Morson, 1986: 73-79.

viii. 'Person', for Bakhtin, "is a dialogic, still-unfolding, unique event" (Holquist, 1990: 162).

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