

# ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Rhetorical vs. Syllogistic Models Of Legal Reasoning: The Italian Experience



## *1. Introduction*

The aims of this paper are (1) to outline the historical path that gradually led to the formation of a meta-discursive space founded upon argumentative accounts in Italian jurisprudence after the end of the Second World War, but without entering into detailed criticism of these accounts and their applications; (2) to identify, within such space, a peculiar approach (at once metaphysical and practice-oriented) which started from some universities in North-East Italy (Padua, Trento, Verona, Trieste). Following the basic studies of Francesco Cavalla, this approach has to date produced a research centre (CERMEG: *Research Centre on Legal Methodology*) and numerous scientific and experimental initiatives. Its representatives are known in Italy for their activities in the specific field of legal rhetoric - that is, the rhetorical method applied to legal reasoning - and for their cooperation with lawyers' associations.

## *2. An historical reconstruction of Italian Jurisprudence after the Second World War*

After the Second World War and the experience of legal positivism as an instrument of political coercion, the world's ideological division in two opposing blocs - liberal-democrat and social-communist - produced in Italian jurisprudence an antagonism between proponents of natural law (understood as a limit to the state's power) and those favourable to legal positivism (understood as a guarantee of the rule of law). The tradition of legal thought connected with neo-idealism, and considered excessively compromised with the fascist regime, disappeared. The phenomenological, existentialist and intuitionist currents of philosophy that developed between the two world wars resisted precise translation into the terms of legal philosophy. Curiously, the new supporters of legal positivism, all connected with the Turin School founded by Norberto Bobbio, mainly relied on the logical neo-empiricism of the Vienna Circle, despite the

already ongoing crisis of neo-positivism. As a consequence, the theoretical and methodological formalism distinctive of nineteenth-century legal positivism and Kelsenian theory continued to characterize Italian jurisprudence, encountering only very weak opposition (also political) from the supporters of natural law.

The legal positivism inspired by Bobbio thus tended to convey into legal science a sort of 'resurgent scientism' apparently unaware of the discussions (as conducted by Edmund Husserl for example)**[i]** concerning the crisis of the sciences. It was dominated by the desire to furnish scholars of theory of law and specialists (in civil, criminal, constitutional, etc., law) with a rigorous method able to give the same logical certainty distinctive of the sciences, especially the formal ones, to jurisprudence.

We can therefore distinguish the following main features in this new legal positivism: axiom of axiological neutrality (based on David Hume's Great Divide)**[ii]**; adoption of the analytical method (formalism), or, in some cases, of the empirical method (legal realism, sociology of law). These scholars believed that the certainty of the law, also in theory, could be ensured by assuming the postulate that by 'law' is meant a 'set of positive legal norms' - a postulate favoured by the codified regimes typical of the continental civil law countries. Bobbio himself applied the normativist formalist scheme developed by Hans Kelsen**[iii]** as the guarantee of a scientific jurisprudence. We may therefore say that the experiment proposed by Bobbio consisted in a merger between Kelsen's normativism and neo-empiricist doctrines, that is, between normative rationality and logical rationality. A problematic undertaking indeed.

However, it was again Bobbio**[iv]**, in his preface to the Italian translation of *Traité de l'argumentation* by Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (1966: the same year in which the so-called 'crisis of legal positivism' began), who opened a small breach in the rigid neo-positivist separation between rational certainty (the exclusive preserve of demonstrative reasoning) and the irrationality of all other kinds of discourse (ethical, political, artistic etc.). Bobbio wrote:

"The theory of argumentation refutes such too-easy antitheses. It demonstrates that between absolute truth and non-truth there exists room for truths to be subjected to constant revision, thanks to the technique of adducing reasons for and against" (Bobbio 1966, p. 322).

Bobbio's position represents the first and most authoritative acknowledgement in

Italian jurisprudence of the 'argumentative turn' which came about in philosophical thought following publication of Perelman's *Traité* and Stephen Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument*, both of which appeared in 1958 (this position was then carefully cultivated by Uberto Scarpelli)[v]. The authors of the argumentative turn evinced the weakening of the Cartesian separation between what Charles P. Snow[vi] called in those years (1959) "the two cultures": humanistic knowledge (emotional, irrational) and scientific knowledge (neutral, rational). As recently pointed out by Adelino Cattani[vii], the term 'argumentation' (and its derivatives) is simply a politically correct form of the ancient term 'rhetoric', which is still viewed with suspicion. It serves to introduce the idea of one or more kinds of rationality distinct from the formal-demonstrative one.

What Bobbio does not explain, however, is the relation that can be established between this or these kinds of rationality and Kelsenian methodological formalism in the field of legal science. In substance, he does not tell us in what sense the "truths subjected to constant revision" are truths, and how this "revision" is performed. For formalist legal positivism, legal reasoning is a type of logical inference whose premises are authoritative in nature: the legal norms established by the legislator. Ultimately, the will of the legislator is exempt from the deductive and, therefore, logical procedure. Rationality intervenes subsequently by operating on the system of the sources. The logical control of normative statement does not necessarily have legal weight, since the value of the norm does not reside in its intrinsic or systematic consistency, but rather in the 'fact' that it has been legitimately promulgated. Hence, rationality and normativity are not perfectly synonymous.

On the other hand, Perelman himself believed that argumentative rationality is 'quasi-logical' or 'analogous to empirical reasoning'. That is to say, it has more persuasive efficacy the more it *resembles* the deductive and inductive procedures, which are therefore the most certain forms of reasoning. The *nouvelle rhétorique* must therefore be understood as the study of the factors that make a discourse persuasive: it is measured not (a priori) by the *method* used, but (a posteriori) by the *results* produced, by the 'fact' that it orients the audience's judgement in a particular direction. This is a form of utilitarian empiricism that restricts argumentative theories to a subordinate level 'weaker' than science from the logical point of view.

I shall explain later why this point is crucial, and I shall propose a way to deal with it. What is certain is that all the authors of the argumentative turn took the same line: that rationality is 'weak', and that persuasion is a 'fact' rather than the result of a logical procedure in the proper sense.

From the 1970s onwards, 'attempts at dialogue' proliferated between theorists of the law tied to the analytical form of legal reasoning and the proponents of various non-formalist approaches. Perhaps the more evident of them is legal hermeneutics. According to Cattani[viii], hermeneutics, as the "art of *understanding* the text" (i.e. of interpretation) is "the other side of the rhetorical coin (which is instead the art of *constructing* the text)" (Cattani 2009, p. 23). This is therefore an argumentative theory which confronts legal positivists with the problem of decoding the prescriptive content of normative statements: for the hermeneuticists the premise of a judicial syllogism is not a *given* (as are definitions in the formal sciences), rather, it must be 'found' (*Rechtsfindung*) in the context of application. It is therefore necessary to illuminate interpretative processes, which are almost always implicit, in order to assess their rationality.

During the 1980s, the spread to Europe of the Hart/Dworkin debate[ix] directed attention to the question of the principles (political, ethical, social, constitutional) that should yield knowledge of the meaning of legal norms, especially for the judges that must apply them. The theme of justice thus re-entered the field of studies on law, after being excluded by the formalism of the legal positivists.

Also very influential were other philosophical and epistemological currents of thought: in particular those connected with the linguistic pragmatics introduced by the early Ludwig Wittgenstein (of the *Philosophical Investigations*)[x], which showed that the meaning of a normative statement necessarily depends on the context of reference and the subjects participating in the discussion. The subject thus returned to the philosophical debate, after the term 'subjective', as opposed to 'objective' (i.e. scientific), had for centuries been considered synonymous with irrationality. We may say that through these various processes of de-objectivation - which are very evident in contemporary epistemologies - the field of knowledge descended from an abstract to a concrete level.

Today, although all proponents of the analytical philosophy of law still profess legal positivism, they are prepared to admit that normative material does not constitute given premises with well-founded content. Rather, it is still raw material on which the judge works in an interpretative and 'constructivist'

manner. Most of them no longer believe that legal reasoning can be reduced to a perfect syllogism, but instead that it is a composite and complex set of rational procedures. From this point of view, they regard argumentative theories as more or less attractive attempts to study legal interpretation[xi].

### 3. *The argumentative turn*

The opening in Italy, even if only partial, of legal positivism to the argumentative turn exhibits what I consider to be a very interesting feature: it tends to shift the legal philosopher's attention from the field of encoded law to the activities of the judge. One might say that the 'heroes' of the legal sciences are no longer *only* the legislator, the state, and the law in the books. To a greater or lesser extent, now also of importance are the time and place in which we effectively know the norms: the domain of their application - that is the trial, which is the main semantic context of legal language.

In Italy, the scholars who have most forcefully posited the trial (and not norms) as the fulcrum of juridical experience have been Giuseppe Capograssi, Salvatore Satta and Enrico Opocher[xii]. These are authors who have tenaciously fought against formalist legal positivism, albeit from different perspectives. Capograssi and Opocher in particular, both of them legal philosophers, have adopted a perspective influenced by existentialist philosophy characterized by identification of the law as a value essential for human coexistence. The law is not neutral but has a positive axiological valence. (In truth, even a highly authoritative Italian scholar like Sergio Cotta has devoted his studies to the existential value of the law[xiii], but we cannot say that Cotta's philosophy of law is expressly processual). Perhaps, however, it is precisely the existentialist emphasis of these philosophies that has prevented more direct and fertile contact with those scholars of legal positivism willing to consider anti-formalist accounts, like the *nouvelle rhétorique* or legal hermeneutics, which are less 'compromised' by metaphysics.

It is in this context that, since the 1970s, Francesco Cavalla[xiv], a pupil of Opocher (and in many respects Cotta) has worked at the University of Padua. Openly opposed to natural law theories, which he terms rationalist and dogmatic, Cavalla has developed an original body of thought focused on the logic of decision-making in the trial. He criticises the authors of the argumentative turn, and Perelman in particular, for lacking a rigorous theory on the rationality of argumentation. Persuasion, according to Cavalla, is not a factual (psychological,

emotional) question but a methodological one. It is necessary to identify a logic of persuasion able to produce reasonings that are rationally verifiable in the same way as the results of proofs are rationally verifiable. Cavalla identifies this logic in classical thought, in authors like Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine and, later, Cicero and Quintilian. Between the mid-1970s and the 1990s, Cavalla deepened his studies on the dialectic, the topic and rhetoric, producing numerous publications and forming a school of young scholars. In 2004 he took part in the foundation of CERMEG (Research Centre on Legal Methodology)[xv], expressly devoted to the study of judicial rhetoric, at the University of Trento.

This school of legal philosophy has innovated the field of legal studies by introducing into the analysis of legal reasoning not only the rational activities of the judge in the final stage of taking the decision, but also those of the other parties to the trial, principally the lawyers. Because the logical model is that of the dialectic, in which the reasoning begins and develops from the discourses of the parties that propound conflicting opinions, it seems incorrect to restrict verification of rationality to the decision alone. For this reason, the CERMEG has undertaken an unprecedented series of projects and experiments with lawyers' associations.

However, as I have said, although Cavalla's account is practice-oriented, it has a solid metaphysical basis due to his studies on the notion of "principle" (Gr. *arché*) drawn mainly from the pre-Socratic philosophers (Thales, Parmenides, Heraclitus) and from Aristotle[xvi]. On the basis of this conception, developed by his scholars in various directions (e.g. theory of punishment, bio-law, legal epistemology, artificial intelligence and law, study of metaphors and brocards, etc.), "rhetorical truth" (and therefore trial truth) is established by a logical non-axiomatic method. The pragmatic conditions which distinguish the formation of rhetorical truth are dissimilar from those of formal and empirical procedures.

Consider the following table:

	LANGUAGE	CONTEXT	PREMISES
SCIENCE	FORMALIZED LANGUAGE (artificial)	MONOLOGIC (no discussion during the proof)	AXIOMS (stipulated)
RHETORIC	VAGUE LANGUAGE (natural or semi-natural)	DIALOGIC (constant discussion)	COMMONPLACES (found in public discourse)

The conditions that characterize every scientific reasoning are essentially those relative to the language, the context, and the type of premises. The language of science is a language whose terms have meanings established through nominal definitions (e.g. 'point' or 'number'); these meanings are never discussed during development of the proof. Finally, these meanings are conventional in nature and they are used to obtain particular practical results. A scientist, for example, can assume the (opposing) definitions of 'light' as an electromagnetic wave or as a corpuscle depending on the purpose of his operations. However, once one definition has been assumed, he cannot interrupt his logical operations and introduce the contrary definition.

By contrast, the rhetorician uses for his logical operations terms whose meanings are not the result of nominal definitions, but which are 'found' already associated with certain meanings that hold in a circumscribed space-time context  $x$  (e.g. 'appropriate clothing' in the context of a scientific conference may or may not include a tie, but not a tie worn around the neck without a shirt, although no formal definition on the matter has been stipulated). These terms, moreover, can be constantly disputed during the logical operation (for example, I can protest that a tie worn with a shirt but decorated with a frivolous and garish pattern is admissible as 'appropriate' to a scientific conference). Hence semantic fluctuation must be governed by the rhetorician, who must justify his semantic choices at every point of the logical operation. The question is: *how* can he/she do so?

As we know that the answer of argumentative theories is: through the forms of argumentation[xvii]. But the forms of argumentation produce *persuasion*: does this also mean that they produce *truth*? The problem becomes clear when conflicts arise among forms: what criterion obliges me to choose one form rather than another, a criterion which is not that of simple efficacy? (For this reason I previously said that argumentative theories risk being reduced to a kind of utilitarian empiricism).

If we really want to build a bridge between the "two cultures"[xviii], we must find a criterion of truth to associate with the use of the forms of argumentation. Cavalla believes that this is possible if one takes as 'true' every reasoning whose conclusions do not encounter logically consistent oppositions in the space-time context  $x$  in which it is developed. This logical consistency, exactly as in deductive or empirical reasoning, is governed by the principle of non-contradiction: if I have assumed premise  $p$ , I cannot reject conclusion  $q$ , regardless of whether the

premise is axiomatic or non-axiomatic. The only difference consists in the fact that the conclusions obtained from axiomatic premises, being abstract, last as long as the nominal definition is accepted (and not disputed), while rhetorical conclusions must be defended whenever doubt is cast on the meanings of the terms (e.g. If  $p = \text{tie}$ , then  $q = \text{appropriate}$ ; but now  $p = \text{tie worn around the neck, or = decorated with a frivolous and garish pattern}$ , so it is necessary to reformulate the meaning of 'appropriate' to maintain consistency between premises and conclusion). Varying the premises does not make rhetorical reasoning less logical (and verifiable) than formal reasoning: in both cases, the truth is founded on non-contradiction. This fact enables Cavalla to extend his argumentative theory into the metaphysical domain (on the base of the question: what is it that compels us to accept a non-contradictory conclusion?), but this point will not be discussed in this brief paper.

The principal features of the argumentative account proposed by the CERMEG in Italy can be summarized as follows (the s. c. "Heptalogue of CERMEG").

1. Because the rigour of the rhetorical conclusions is guaranteed by the logical principle of non-contradiction, it has the same nature as proofs; it consists in the undeniability of the conclusions with respect to the premises;
2. Rhetorical truth is not based on a psychological 'fact': persuasion is the product of a logical operation (as Aristotle maintained); otherwise one must speak, not of 'rhetoric' but of 'sophistry' (persuasion without truth);
3. It is not true, as Perelman claims, that a reasoning which uses 'probable' premises determines solely probable conclusions: if there is consistency between conclusions and premises, the result is not 'probable' but 'certain', albeit within a particular space-time context  $x$ ;
4. If this is so, there is no reason to maintain an absolute distinction between the "two cultures" (scientific and rhetorical): also rhetoric uses rational operations; also science uses argumentative forms (e.g. when it discusses the choice of premises, attributes greater or lesser authoritativeness to a scientific journal or to a team of researchers, etc.);
5. Because the premises of rhetoric are identified within concrete discursive contexts, its logical operations adhere more closely to concrete states of affairs, and are therefore particularly suited to being applied and experimented. This is especially important in politics, the economy, and the law (where decisions are taken);
6. The use of rhetorical argumentation is functional to the 'identity of the



European jurist', because it extends its roots into the Greco-Roman conception of the rationality of the law dominant in Europe at least until the modern advent of formalist legal positivism (symmetrically with Cartesianism in philosophy);

7. For this reason, rhetorical argumentation is particularly suited to the scenarios of the Third Millennium, in that it rejects both dogmatism (which imposes the premises without allowing their discussion) and radical skepticism (which holds that the premises are of equal weight): these two approaches, in fact, consign decisions to the power of those able to impose their own opinions, while rhetoric keeps the intersubjective (ethical, political, economic, juridical) relationship open to rational discussion.

#### *4. Possible perspectives of CERMEG's approach*

The above listed 7 features can be interpreted as the synthesis of a working program linking together various directions in the fields of metaphysics and logic, history of philosophy, epistemology, jurisprudence, theory of norms in legal procedure (civil, penal, labour, etc.), to mention only the principal ones. In all these fields different expertises could converge to check each single proposal.

The advantages of a rhetorical approach to the theory of legal argumentation especially deal with a double overtaking: on one hand, that of formalism (peculiar to all syllogistical models of legal reasoning, which are hardly enforceable to the concrete trial situation); and on the other hand that of indeterminacy (peculiar to all interpretive accounts, which excessively stress the judge's role), being capable to enhance also the other actors of the trial (lawyers, prosecutor).

In Italy, such a working perspective is getting results in the field of legal education and training of young lawyers. Many established lawyers' organizations ask CERMEG for arranging seminars and courses on legal methodology and for lifelong learning, and this cooperation does help in shortening the distance between academic studies and the world of practice.

The methodological formalism being largely responsible for the separation between legal theory and practice, it is also possible that the domestic activities of CERMEG could be seen as an example for other countries. Besides that, a number of shared issues between the CERMEG's approach and the argumentative legal accounts based upon pragmatics (such as, for instance, the Pragma-Dialectical theory)[**xix**] or inspired by Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (e. g. the Dennis Patterson's account about the truth of legal propositions)[**xx**] give

the chance for converging researches on the nature of legal argumentation.

## NOTES

**[i]** See Husserl (2007).

**[ii]** See Hume (2010), b.III, p.I, s.I.

**[iii]** See Kelsen (1966).

**[iv]** See Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1966).

**[v]** See Toulmin (1969). See also Scarpelli (1976) e (1997).

**[vi]** See Snow (1959).

**[vii]** See Cattani (2009): in this essay, the authors (Cattani, Testa & Cantù) provide a brief description of the process of loss and resumption of the argumentative reasoning from the origins to the turn of 1958. After that year, they point out a renewed attention for the theory and the practice of argumentation. On the same topic, are noteworthy Cattani (1994) and (2001).

**[viii]** *Loc.ult.cit.*

**[ix]** For a concise description of the Hart/Dworkin debate see Schiavello-Velluzzi (2005).

**[x]** Wittgenstein (1989).

**[xi]** For the Italian legal philosophy see spc. Villa (1999) (but *contra* see Ferrajoli (2007)).

**[xii]** I will confine myself to pointing out their most representative production: particularly, see Capograssi (1959-1990), Satta (1994), Opocher (1966) (1983), Cotta (1979) (1981). For a more detailed description of this approach based on trial, see Cavalla (1991).

**[xiii]** See Cotta (1991) .

**[xiv]** For a complete outline of the perspective of studies developed under the mastership of Francesco Cavalla concerning the argumentative topic, see Cavalla (1983) (1984) (1991) (1992) (1996) (1998) (2004) (2006) (2007), Fuselli (2008), Manzin (2004) (2006) (2008) (2008a) (2008b) (2010), Manzin & Sommaggio (2006), Manzin & Puppo (2008), Moro (2001), Puppo (2006) (2009).

**[xv]** For further information, see the web site [www.cermeg.it](http://www.cermeg.it).

**[xvi]** I am mainly referring to Cavalla (1996).

**[xvii]** Cf. Patterson (2010) and Manzin (2010).

**[xviii]** Cf. Snow (1959).

**[xix]** See van Eemeren & Grootendorst (2004), van Eemeren (2010).

**[xx]** See Patterson (2010).

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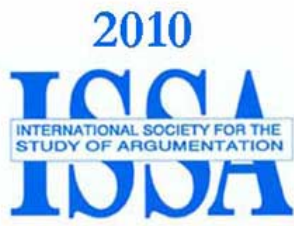
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# **ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Argumentation, Debate And Refutation In Contemporary Argentine Political Discourse**



## *1. Introduction*

My presentation deals with political discourse but also refers to the theory of argumentation, policy theory and political debate. It has four points, apart from the introduction, the first point points out the history of a conflict in Argentina between government and the farmers lobby. The second point is a theoretical one and it is referred to in the “argumentative turn”. The third point deals with the rhetoric and the concept of ethos. The fourth point tries to connect the Rhetoric with political discourse and the fifth point, the theory with the speeches of the President to show how she managed the ethos and the problems she has had to face in order to become credible. The end is the Conclusion in which I try to synthesize the mistaken attitudes that led her to the present situation in which she has been involved for some years.

I would like to present some general thoughts about multi disciplinary and multi dimensional approaches illustrated by some examples of the present political debates in Argentina.

One often uses multi disciplinary in order to characterize approaches where clearly separated disciplines are involved, such as linguistics, sociology and political theory, or as in my work, politics and rhetoric.

Why do I consider this multi disciplinary and multi dimensional approach to be preferable to a more mono dimensional approach? The reason is that if one wants to study and clarify a complex phenomenon of verbal as well as of non-verbal nature, like political discourse, in a better and more comprehensive way, it is necessary to add different viewpoints. The complexity of the subject, as in this case, connected with political power leads to breaking down some of the boundaries, considered as ‘artificial’, between different disciplines. In this context, eclecticism can be understood as the practice of selecting what seems best and more fruitful from several sets of concepts, beliefs or theories.

A researcher who wants to work with social discourses is always in permanent danger of being trapped in uncontrolled eclecticism. This is a danger in which a discourse researcher must be particularly aware of. Uncontrolled eclecticism means that one keeps in consideration different perspectives without evaluating in which way they can match and how different terminologies can be unified.

## *2. History of the conflict*

Export duties to farmers were introduced in 2002 by president Eduardo Duhalde to cope with the country's worst financial meltdown on record that caused the fall of the Alliance government in late 2001 amid deadly riots.

The economy recovered at an average of nearly nine percent in each of the five years approximately that of which Fernández de Kirchner's husband, Néstor Kirchner, governed the country. However he maintained and even increased export taxes in which his wife refused to lower.

When Cristina Fernández de Kirchner replaced her husband on 10th of December 2007 as president, she inherited a relatively favorable position. On the heels of an economic recovery and high popularity ratings, she seemed poised to continue the policies that helped rid Argentina of its debt. Less than eight months later, she was in the driver's seat of what could become quite the lame-duck presidency in Argentine history. Much of the instability stems from the conflict between the agricultural sector and the government.

In response to tax hikes on the 11th of March 2008 on main exports such as soybeans and other farm products, with Argentina's most powerful group, El Campo and the entities that comprise it took to the streets blocking domestic and international trade routes in the largest protests against the government since the financial meltdown of 2001.

Demonstrations in favor of the government and in favor of the agricultural sector were staged as a way of exerting pressure to support each of the two opposite positions. On the one hand farmers who demanded soybean export taxes slashed-out and on the other hand the government increasing export taxes.

The standoff was partially resolved when a controversial vote by Cristina's own vicepresident Julio Cobos voted against her various tax hikes. The situation was an embarrassment to the administration and her often criticized stubbornness succeeded in alienating the president further from her supporters. More importantly, the result of "Resolution 125", as it was known in the Argentine Congress, may be a sign that the unsustainable "Kirchnerista" policies that propelled Argentina out of its economic crisis may have reached their limit.

With more than two years remaining and a dismal approval rating hovering around 20-30%, the question remains as to whether Fernández de Kirchner can reclaim the popularity that catapulted her into the role of Argentina's second woman's presidency back in October 2007.

High commodity prices, which could be of great benefit for Argentina given that

they are one of the worlds largest commodity exporters, have failed to come to fruition-out the fear of out-of-control inflation. However, while she may not have the status of her husband/predecessor, the amount of time left on her term means that she has the chance to win back the hearts and minds of the Argentine people. Distancing herself from her husband's policies would be a good place to start. For Cristina's presidency to maintain any credibility, she might have to go back to the issues that most affect her constituency base and bridge the wide gap that her unrelenting stance which the "el campo" has created.

Cristina's presidency will always be marred by the failure to reach an agreement with one of Argentina's wealthiest and most powerful entities and the embarrassing outcome of her own vice-president voting against her. However, with over almost two years left, it remains to be seen if Cristina can rebound from the onslaught of negative events that have occurred since she assumed the presidency. Working in her favor are her alliances with other left-leaning presidents in the region such as Evo Morales and Hugo Chávez who can provide cheap energy to Argentina, and a commitment to strong business relationship with Brazil. She has her work cut-out for her but all is not lost for the beleaguered Argentine president.

Mr. Cobos was forced to vote as senators from Argentina's provinces were at a deadlock with 36 in favor of the government and 36 in favor of the agricultural sector. In his speech prior to his vote, Mr. Cobos expressed his hope that his decision would not be considered a betrayal to President Cristina Kirchner. He expressed his desire to continue his role as Vice President. It was Cobos that recommended to the President that the conflict should be decided by the legislative branch rather than an executive mandate. Beyond the political and financial impacts of the decision, the result, respected by the executive branch, sent a clear message to investors that the democratic process is securely in place.

From the very start until its closure, the conflict can be seen as a battle for control of the construction of meaning. Each sector fought to win the discursive production space in all areas. The public scene became a semiotic crusade by production, circulation and consumption of significance.

The period was rich in terms of the proliferation of linguistic and non-linguistic signs, involving the definition of distinct high value areas. The gamble was about more than a mere tax amendment.



### *3. The argumentative turn*

I will refer to the “argumentative turn” (Turnball, 2005, p. 39) in policy theory that represents an important critique of the traditional conception of policy making. “It showed that uncertainty and contingency characterize policy discourse, and that policy making is argumentative and rhetorical rather than scientific. The scope of this recovery of rhetoric is limited because of the classical philosophical division between logic and rhetoric. These two domains also remain separate in contemporary theories of rhetoric, such as those used in the argumentative turn, preventing us from further incorporating rhetoric within policy theory. But Michel Meyer shows that the division between logic and rhetoric relates to the suppression of questioning in philosophy. By recovering questioning as the principle of reason, he establishes rhetoric upon a foundation of questioning, and thus provides a new way forward”. (Turnball, 2005, p. 42).

The “argumentative turn” in policy theory digressed from the rational model of policy making by focusing on language, interpretative epistemology, and plausible reason rather than formal logic. While policy theorists only recently took an interest in argumentation and rhetoric, specialists in rhetoric certainly took notice of Harold Lasswell, one of the founders of the ‘policy sciences’ field. Lasswell was interested in persuasion and propaganda, and the rhetorical effects of mass communication in policy making. He thought that rhetoric was important for the ancient Greek philosophers, and believed that the discredit directed towards it ever since Plato’s condemnation of the Sophists represented an obstruction to proper inquiry into it. Despite this attention to language and argumentation, the argumentative turn in policy studies did not arrive for some time. Even today we have not realized the full implications of rhetoric and argumentation for studying policy and politics.

The argumentative turn is related to the scholarly interest in discourse. Policy theorists have studied the role of language in political discourse, refusing the idea that meaning is attached to ontological truth. Political discourse is framed in ordinary language, which is capable of considerable flexibility of meaning. Policy discourse takes on different meaning in different contexts and for different audiences. Because knowledge, in particular policy knowledge, is bound within ordinary language, it is a social process and therefore argumentative. Decisions do not settle the meaning of policy, which remains subject to debate, and consequently the policy process is less than the problem solving idea proposed by

Lasswell, and more of a struggle to create meaning throughout the policy process and in different locations. Policy actors try to persuade others to share the meaning they attribute to events. Political actors employ arguments to bring others around to their position and justify themselves with respect to the public interest. The double mission of persuasion and justification henceforth constitute the basis of the argumentative turn.

We need the argumentation because we do not answer in pre-programmed ways to events but can change our minds on the meaning of something, rethink our values, and vary the degree to which we support someone or some policy. This requires persuasion. Political actors usually use rhetoric to secure the assent of others to their views or their cooperation. And in this way we think that discourses pronounced during the conflict by President Cristina Fernández had the problem of persuading the audiences.

If we understand rationality as contingency, indeterminacy, uncertainty, or argumentation, problemat�city defines the qualities of contemporary discourse in many fields. Problemat�city is the domain of rhetoric. In general, rhetoric appears in times of crisis when stable systems of values break down and new systems co-exist with the old. It appeared in ancient Athens as a response to unresolved conflicts in pre-Socratic cosmologies, and today we see a breakdown of traditional value systems with the arrival of the 'postmodern condition'. At a general level the rhetorical or argumentative turn forms part of the critique of Enlightenment thought. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca explain this by pointing out that whereas Descartes eliminated the probable from knowledge, the non-compulsive element of argumentation is directly opposed to the idea of self-evident truth in which propositions follow upon each other necessarily and without appeal. Hence this contemporary revival of the ancient tradition of rhetoric constitutes a break with the dominant form of philosophical reason.

#### *4. Rhetoric in political discourse*

With Erik C. W. Krabbe (Krabbe, 2002, p. 29) we shall understand by "dialectics" the practice and theory of conversations; by "rhetoric" the practice and theory of speeches. Conversations, then, constitute instances of the practice of dialectics, whereas speeches constitute instance of the practice of rhetoric.

Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever" (Rhet. I. 2.1, 1355b26-27). These means encompass not only arguments (logos), but also display of character

by the speaker (ethos) and arousing emotion in the hearers (pathos) (Rhet. I 2. 3-6, 1356a 1-20). Thus the definition covers a wide range of speech activities, be it that they must all be related to persuasion. Logos constitutes the core-business of rhetoric, but other means of persuasion are not neglected by Aristotle. The range of rhetoric is narrowed down to three main types or genres of speeches, each with its own ends: the deliberative, the forensic, and the epideictic; there is an alleged proof that these are all the kinds there are.

Aristotle's remarks on the usefulness of rhetoric. Rhetoric can be used:

- (1) to defend proper decisions (you may be right, but you will still need to convince others, otherwise you are to blame)
- (2) to convince those who cannot follow scientific arguments;
- (3) to be able to argue both for and against the same proposition; not, indeed, in order to actually do so, but in order to have a realistic view of an issue and not to be duped by fallacies.

I. A. Richards (Richards, 1950, p. 33) defined rhetoric as "the studies of the causes and the remedies of misunderstanding". This standpoint will be useful to see why Cristina's speeches had so many problems to become convincing about the justice of the proposal made about taxes.

### *5. Ethos in Cristina's speeches*

Ethos (Greek for 'character') refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of the writer or speaker. Ethos is often conveyed through tone and style of the message and through the way the writer or speaker refers to differing views. It can also be affected by the author or speaker's reputation as it exists independently from the message, his or her expertise in the field, his or her previous record or integrity and so forth. The impact of ethos is often called the argument's ethical appeal or the appeal from credibility.

People interpret the world more easily through narratives and characters than legal-rational discourse, so they follow political action and debate the legitimacy of government through the ethos of the players. This is why commentators even attribute 'character' to a government and seek an identity in it which matches popular perceptions of national culture and the spirit of the times.

During the conflict, the President had a strong presence in media through demonstrations in order to explain the tax structure for agricultural products. But she, as her husband, was not accustomed to give press conferences, to have a

fluid contact with journalists and distrust of interviews on radio or TV. At the end of the conflict she gave the first press conference and it was clear that she was able to answer every question made fluently even if one could be in disaccord with her. The style of the couple is weird and at the same time it seems that they make politics like gambling, building a betting system. Dialog is an activity that is not in their agenda. They are not accustomed to reach a consensus in way.

She called for major popular demonstrations. Each of them displayed the use of fiery rhetoric and at the same time, the construction of an erratic ethos. The last major demonstration was resolved with the intervention of the president's husband, former president and chairman of the Justice Party who the orated much of the discussion as the main debator.

In her first presentation she argued that nobody could do anything to persuade her to change her position. then after another demonstration she spoke to her "voters", then to her party, then to the "citizens" but in a later demonstration she remembered that at the beginning of her presidency she had said that everything will be more difficult for her because she was a woman and that for women everything in this society is more difficult. So in a short period, she used different arguments to establish her viewpoint.

At the same time, in some demonstrations she mentioned "The People" and in other demonstrations she spoke to the "citizens", in some cases she aimed at those who were always against her popular projects.

## *6. Conclusion*

From the beginning of her presidency it was clear that she had a long and strong career in the political arena. She was a representative and senator and had a pompous eloquence in the Representative chamber and in the Senate. She was well recognized by her epic magnificent discourses but at the same time during her husband's mandate she did not try to appear frequently so not to cast a shadow over him.

In some moments she said that a political woman must not use the name of her husband to make political hay or to be recognized. But, at the same time, she uses her husband's name and everybody knows that they act like a couple acting in politics. This is not the case of Michele Bachelet, the former president of Chile, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State of the Unites States or Angela Merkel, Germany's Prime Minister, who are political women that act alone in the political arena.

Since Cristina became president, her husband continued to doggedly make political hay from a non-located place. In January he went to Colombia to try to solve a conflict with the FARC. In February he became president of the Justice Party and in March triggered the conflict. So, problems are not only from the opponents but also from the way in which the couple split their work in order to clarify and strengthen the executive branch.

This situation contributes to weaken the president because nobody knows where the power is and who is making the decisions. The erratic ethos is a consequence of an uncomfortable place that they choose because they thought that could be a way to maintain the power for a third period.

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Presidential Arguments In Post- Soviet Russia: An Enthymematic Return To National Identity As**

# Argumentation Of Citizenry?



## 1. Introduction

In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Russian Federation has re-emerged as a most important political and economical participant in current global times, but also rhetorically a most successful case of redefinition of national identity. During Vladimir Putin's presidency and continued through Dimitri[i] Medvedev's current lead, public Russian discourse actively re-affirms and re-constructs relationships with topoi of national identity, history in its large span of past, present and future, and with nationalist and authoritarian valences for its new Russian (former Soviet) citizens. In a world full of political dilemmas and debates over global or/over domestic issues, Putin and Medvedev's rhetorical and political actions highlight the importance of redefining Russian citizenship and democratic values on basis of national(ist) pride and culturally-specific definitions of 'sovereign democracy.' [ii]

As recent political analyses recognize (Aron, 2007; Hale & Colton, 2010; Linan, 2010), whether delivered by Putin till 2008 or by Medvedev since that time, Russian Presidential discourse presents its citizens effective cultural and political arguments that glorify the traditions and exceptional history of the pre- and Soviet past, reposition the geo-political role of the country, redefine state-nation with a vertically empowered political structure, and delineate political relationships with the West and with the world as a whole. [iii] Russian citizens are called to engage politically, emotionally, and of course, pragmatically by aligning with (*the*) proposed set of political and cultural narratives that explain and enhance the (re)building of the Russian Federation from past to future through current times. And as a result, recent polls (Hale & Colton, 2010) show that most Russians consent the country has found its identity and voice again as a nation of power and redemption, proud of its pre-, Soviet and post-Soviet past, vigorously optimistic for its future and its role in the world!

From a rhetorical standpoint, such political articulations of new and old national arguments that motivate and invoke culturally-specific and politically-specific definitions of national identity bring into play a series of complex questions. What kind of discursive strategies create effective correctives of the Russian and/or

Soviet past history in order to create a meta-cultural and coherent context for national identity and presidential/state support? After all, by revisiting the old discourse of power from Tsarist and Stalinist Russia, Putin in particular along with Medvedev have presented Russian Federation and its citizens with a political and a rhetorical success story. How can such political arguments function so effectively in the current Russian political sphere, engaging its citizens to support a Kremlin coined “sovereign democracy” reminiscent of authoritarian discursive patterns, dependent on well crafted rhetorical policies on history and its impact on public memory?

This article examines how enthymemes of national identity pre- and post-Soviet collapse in order to create effective political arguments from definition as well as cultural interpellations of historical redefinitions of national identity as two concurrent analytical frameworks in support of a coherent rhetoric of citizenry in post-Soviet times. The objective of the paper is to identify what rhetorical enthymematic projections of the role of citizenship/citizen validate ideological arguments of Russian-style “democracy” and national identity in Medvedev’s “Go Russia” speech and article, as an emblematic Presidential address in current Russian political sphere. **[iv]**

## *2. Definitional Arguments of Identity*

Examining how presidential addresses for over a decade continue to shape rhetorically its national understanding and mission of the strategically redefined democratic sphere, the article acknowledges two complementary discursive frameworks that support a coherent rhetoric of citizenry in current Russia. Previous research by Williams, Young, & Launer (2001) bring forth arguments *from* definition as part of one rhetorical analytical framework operational within the Russian redefinition of national identity.

The presidential election of Vladimir Putin in 2000 marks a cultural and rhetorical revolution in the Russian Federation as the official public discourse makes a dramatic turn, offering novel arguments from definition, and with them, new propositions addressing how Russian people can and should(?) look at old Soviet times, while aiming to define its national identity, yet again. For over a decade, Vladimir Putin as President of Russian Federation (2000-2008) and Dimitri Medvedev (2008-on) as the current President of Russia have invoked history as a victorious ally in redefining new/old Russian political discourse infusing it with topoi like nationalism and authoritarianism, with historical narratives pertaining

to new ways to look at old times, at culturally-specific definitions of the glorious past even during Soviet times. A rhetorical and a political accomplishment undoubtedly!

Williams, Young, & Launer (2001) analyze specific examples of Putin's restorative rhetorical strategies, like his proposal to the nation to adopt symbols of old history. Such a restorative argument from definition explains the reconceptualization of the national anthem of Russian Federation as the melody of the old Soviet anthem with new lyrics (provided by the same author, Sergei Mikhalkov, a national poet in Soviet times). Other similar examples of arguments from definition involve strategies to revalidate the traditional Red Army banner, the tricolor flag and the double-headed eagle, symbols of former Soviet and pre-Soviet eras of glorious past.

But Putin's main campaign theme was that the time had come for the Russian people to pause and consider their situation. He encouraged them to situate themselves historically, as a Russian people, not as refugees from some other nation's political structure. Nevertheless, he suggested that they relinquish their new position as the agents of change, returning that power to the state. This, he argued, would bring true freedom. It would also reconstitute the people as a product of history, which is how he seems them. (2001, p. 471)

Of note that we have introduced arguments from definition and arguments of definition on basis of previous work done by Williams and Young (2006) on Russian presidential discourse of the 1990s. While both arguments from and of definition address citizenry as enactment of national identity, they are not synonymous in the ways they engage cultural discourse. Hence in our next section we attempt to demonstrate how cultural enthymemes interpellate both arguments from and of definition to create distinct yet complementary dimensions of national identity in Russian presidential appeals.

This analytical framework stemming from the play between arguments *from* and *of* definition (Williams & Young, 2006) as indispensable rhetorical processes that assist in understanding the restorative cultural arguments proposed to Russian citizens for over a decade. And yet, as the political and rhetorical powers of presidential appeals continue to develop into an effective discursive arena for Russian national identity, what other public arguments and/or cultural enthymemes take active role in redefining the new and stronger Russian



Federation and its people? We argue that by invoking and interpellating enthymematic clusters of pre-and post-Soviet discursive structures, such Presidential addresses engage political and *cultural* (emphasis added) arguments of Russian identity as part of a coherent rhetoric of citizenry in post-Soviet times. [v]

### 3. *Interpellation and Identity*

How else but calling into action Russian and Soviet history as a strategic rhetorical meta-context of cultural enthymemes can Putin and/or Medvedev provide such extensive programs intended to redefine, restore, and re-invigorate the new and old Russian citizenry?

Looking for rhetorical ways in which culture creates relationships shared by rhetors and their audiences, enthymemes of “Soviet” and/or “Russian” identity demand evocative powers of cultural memory and cultural consensus[vi] to act as contextual and constitutive forces that drive the success of Russian presidential discourse. Thus, we argue that by continuing Putin’s groundbreaking rhetoric of Russian identity, Medvedev’s discourse makes skillful use of cultural evocation and rhetorical interpellation as strategic ways to engage history and its enthymematic points of reference pertinent to redefine citizenship and democratic values for the nation of former Soviet/current Russian state.

Charland’s (1987) work on constitutive rhetoric brings about Althusser’s notion of interpellation to assist in working with cultural public arguments that engage legitimacy, power and context within the texture of public arguments at stake. Interpellation becomes a rhetorical strategy that legitimizes constitutive arguments of national identity, which in the Russian case, assists with understanding the effective enthymematic usage of history as public argument of identity. Borrowing the term from Althusser, Charland (1987) defines ‘interpellation’ as an active term, as follows:

Interpellation occurs at the very moment one enters into a rhetorical situation, that is, as soon as an individual recognizes and acknowledges being addressed. An interpellated subject participates in the discourse that addresses him. . . . Note, however, that interpellation does not occur through persuasion in the usual sense, for the very act of *addressing* is rhetorical. (p. 140)

For example, in order to explore (Putin and) Medvedev’s appeals that legitimize Russian national identity and state authority, a significant rhetorical issue

consists of cultural negotiations of identity and citizenry in relation to political power. Legitimacy of political voice implies a social, political, and cultural context within which voice exercises power. This requirement proposes a notion of rhetoric that *interpellates* the rhetor and his/her culture through discourse.**[vii]**

In the rhetorical action of interpellation, the context within which presidents like Putin and Medvedev articulate constitutive loci for identification and identity becomes a discursive site for cultural enthymemes. Aron (2007) presents in detail the new institutionalized version of democratic life in Russia as defined through a vertical power structure where the State Duma and the regional governances become unified both in vision and in action and where the United Russia model of political leadership brings up the Kremlin as the constitutive voice of power.**[viii]** For how else can one start to identify good reasons for adherence to the proposed nation-state of Russia, but via some carefully crafted, calling for enthymemes that sustain *the* (emphasis added) cultural and political view of a successful, exceptional Russian nation and citizenry?

Interpellation as a rhetorical active strategy can also bring forth words or fragments of arguments that invite audiences to create a consensual link to previous or well known cultural and political arguments, which is the case for most of post-Soviet Russian presidential discourse. When applied to Russian citizenry and/or Russian national identity, we consider that both Putin and Medvedev interpellate cultural arguments to locate their appeals either in the glorified version of Soviet identity as public arguments from definition (Williams and Young, 2006), as well as in defining new citizenry (arguments of definition) as enactments or interpellations of past- and post-Soviet identity. By utilizing the rhetorical strategy of interpellating cultural enthymematic arguments from and of Russian identity as new and old enactments of national voice, such play creates, we argue, an effective rhetorical body of appeals that sustain the uniqueness of Russian citizenry.**[ix]**

We consider that this salient strategic action relies on enthymematic public arguments that the Russian people can identify and also agree with, providing a consensual agreement to redefine national identity along the terms proposed by the Russian officials. Accordingly, Burke's (1968) notion of identification, along the dialectic relationship with identity, is fundamental to the framework proposed.

Identification constitutes for Burke a dialectical process in which the speaker draws on shared interests to establish “rapport between himself [herself] and his [her] audience.” [x] Burke’s emphasis on the relationship between identity and identification assists, in our view, in understanding the transformative rhetorical relationships between culture and [national] identity by focusing on the rhetorical process of *evocation*. Marin (2007) articulates that central to such rhetorical endeavor is the reinvention of identity rhetors invoke and evoke in their discourse, in that it transcends singular, limited definitions of their identity and creates plural ones (anew) for themselves and their audiences. When creating and recreating identity, in this case national Russian identity, rhetors (Putin and Medvedev) bring forward a specific interpellated historical experience that calls for audiences to instantiate those cultural arguments.

Consequently, this rhetorical approach emphasizes the reconstitutive powers of discourse by illuminating an analytical framework of interpellated consubstantiality in order to ensure persuasion in the complex and complicated rhetorical arena of current Russia. As such, this framework offers an invitational role for the (Russian) audience to partake in important rhetorical and political strategies to engage in new ‘sovereign democracy’ and in its national redefinition of Russian identity. In setting the terms for a national identity official discourse always reinvented for the new/old Russia, specific rhetorical interpellations and cultural evocation of arguments from history appear to facilitate a consubstantial participation on the part of the Russian people. And it is by invoking and evoking restorative reconstitution of public arguments that Putin and Medvedev continue to articulate Russian citizenry for over a decade, marking an important rhetorical shift in Russian national identity.

#### *4. Application of the Analytical Framework to Medvedev’s “Go Russia!” Address*

On September 10, 2009, Medvedev surprised with “Go, Russia!” a speech held in the Kremlin’s St. George’s Hall while at the same time its identical written address was posted as an “article” on the official site of Russian Presidency. The article invited for response and over 19,000 comments were received shortly after (Tkachenko, 2009). “Go Russia” presents the Russian President’s “vision for the country’s future” by placing ‘modernization’ as key to Russian political path. “Unlike all previous annual Russian presidential addresses, the contents of which were kept secret until the very moment of their delivery – including his own in 2008 – Medvedev published the concept of his 2009 address” in his September

article (Tkachenko, 2009, p.2).

Abdullaev (2009) describes the speech as “the blueprint” for Medvedev’s 2009 state-of-the-nation address which “many political pundits have described as the president’s modernization manifesto” as it “stirred up a public reaction on an almost forgotten robustness and scale. More than 13,000 comments have been left on Medvedev’s blog, and scores of political analysts, spin doctors and even jailed Yukos tycoon, Mikhail Khodorkovsky have published articles, arguing the merits of Medvedev’s arguments”(p. 1).

Empowered by its very title, “Go Russia!” address unequivocally declares that Russia’s future is a democratic one:

Today is the first time in our history that we have a chance to prove to ourselves and the world that Russia can develop in a democratic way. That a transition to the next, higher stage of civilization is possible. And this will be accomplished through non-violent means. Not by coercion, but by persuasion. Not through suppression, but rather the development of the creative potential of every individual. Not through intimidation, but through interest. Not through confrontation, but by harmonizing the interests of the individual, society and government. (Medvedev, 2009, p.2)

But what exactly does this mean? What is the vision of “democracy” in Russia’s future, how does that relate to its present, its past, and the status and roles of its citizens? Does Medvedev’s use of “democracy” re-engage Putin’s “sovereign democracy,” an already interpellated term based on the identification of certain cultural and political arguments of Russian identity? The answer is in the affirmative.

For even as the future of Russia is declared to be a “democratic” one, the definitional construction of “democracy” in Medvedev’s “Go Russia!” address suggests that democracy is an outcome of economic forces (not the creation of human intellectual choices), that “freedom” results from prosperity, and that a well-trained economy is the key to human fulfillment:

...scientific and technological progress is inextricably linked with the progress of political systems. Experts believe that democracy originated in ancient Greece, but in those days there was no extensive democracy. Freedom was the privilege of a select minority. Full-fledged democracy that established universal suffrage and legal guarantees for all citizens before the law, so called democracy for everyone,

emerged relatively recently, some eighty to one hundred years ago. Democracy occurred on a mass scale, not earlier than the mass production of the most necessary goods and services began. When the level of technological development of Western civilization made it possible to gain universal access to basic amenities: to education, health care and information. Every new invention which improves our quality of life provides us with an additional degree of freedom. It makes our existential conditions more comfortable and social relations more equitable. The more intelligent, smarter and efficient our economy is, the higher the level of our citizens' welfare, and our political system, and society as a whole will also be freer, fairer and more humane. (Medvedev, 2009, p.3)

The basis on which the advent of "democracy for everyone" is dated to "eighty to one hundred years ago" is never stated, and the association between technology and democracy is implied to be causal, but there is no link actually provided. However, our focus is on a somewhat different point about this passage: Medvedev smoothly redefines "freedom" from that of the presumably political and social freedom of the Athenians (as these are frequently associated notions) to "freedom" provided by a technologically enhanced "quality of life." In this manner, it is through "information technologies" that Russia may realize "fundamental political freedoms, such as freedom of speech and assembly." The freedoms are reductively equated with the mediums or channels: the louder the microphone, the greater the freedom (although one has to wonder how this might work with respect to the freedom to assemble: The bigger the chat room, the greater the freedom of assembly?). Associations with these freedoms other than those technological (such as the content of the speech or the purpose of the assembly) are generally absent when such political rights and freedoms are being endorsed; they do not appear to be integral aspects of the emerging definition of Russian "freedom." Rather, continuing the consubstantial string of already agreed-upon public arguments for "freedom" provided via a vertical structure of power since Putin-era, the new added-on values of "freedom" evoke the past as a historical argument only to readjust it to engage the mere technological access to information.

### *5. Interpellation of Citizen*

Primary vehicles for the interpellation of citizen in the new Russia arise out of arguments from history, particularly from the victory narrative of the Great Patriotic War. But the Great Patriotic War public narrative carries with it a

specific interpellation of Soviet and/or Russian consubstantial contribution to world history. Vladimir Putin, since the inception of his first presidential term, introduces a restrictive definition of the World War II as a powerful yet uniquely morphed Soviet/Russian argument for national identity. On the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Beginning of the Great Patriotic War, Putin (2001) defines the war and its repercussions in the history and public memory of the people of Russia: June 22 is one of the most tragic dates in our history. On that day, 60 years ago - today we are marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary - the Great Patriotic War began. That was a terrible stab in the back for the *Soviet* people (emphasis added). It was the attack on the USSR that initiated the most bloody phase of the Second World War... the memory of those terrible war years will remain forever as an undying national sorrow etched into the hearts of all those who lived together in our united country... (p. 1).

Almost a year later, commemorating the 57<sup>th</sup> anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War, Putin mentions one time only the word "Soviet" infusing the speech with the "we" and "our" personal pronouns, locating 1945 victory within a Russian Federation locus of discourse, as he states that after "our victory in the war came victories in peacetime: victories in rebuilding our economy, achievements in education, culture in the exploration of outer space and the development of science" (Putin 2002, p.1). Medvedev continues the same enthymematic strategy of collapsing the Soviet and Russian victory in a single consubstantial evocation of the past, as he pays tribute to veterans (former Soviet, current Russian only?) as winners of peace "for our country and for the whole world" (Medvedev, 2010, p.1).**[xi]**

Important to note that while the original Russian phrase of "Great Patriotic War" identifies the well-known cultural notion of Soviet victory and its historical account of World War II, the "Go Russia" phrase plays the new, post-Soviet identification as part of the cultural appeals pertaining to the new (and old) Russian national identity. These distinct historical and rhetorical phrases that create premises for Russian citizenry as cultural arguments from definition, strategically interpellate in the presidential appeals examined novel arguments of identity, novel arguments of defining national identity as a play between the past and the present of Russian history.

While Medvedev begins his "Go Russia!" address by expressing concerns about

the Russian economy, in particular with economic problems of reliance on raw materials exports and “endemic corruption,” to turn to a national identity argument, asking whether Russia can “really find its own path for the future?” After posing this question, Medvedev (2009) shifts immediately to the topic of the Great Patriotic War:

Next year we will celebrate the sixty-fifth anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. This anniversary reminds us that our present day is the future of the heroes who won our freedom. And the people who vanquished a cruel and very strong enemy back in those days must today overcome corruption and backwardness. . . . As the contemporary generation of Russian people, we have received a huge inheritance. Gains that were well-deserved, hard-fought and well-earned by the persistent efforts of our predecessors. . . . How shall we manage that legacy? What will the future of Russia be for my son, for the children and grandchildren of my fellow citizens? (p.1)

Although there are legitimate questions about Medvedev’s framing of the victory in the Second World War as the winning of freedom for the Soviet Union, our immediate concern moves in a different direction: Within Medvedev’s generational construction, the “glorious history” of yesterday’s “heroes who won our freedom” models appropriate actions for today’s “people” to fight against today’s “strong enemy” of corruption and economic “backwardness.” Both to honor the inheritance received from yesterday’s heroes and to improve upon or “magnify” that legacy for future generations, today’s “citizens” of Russia are interpellated into a specific subject position relative to both the past and the future, and a key to that interpellation is the construction of what Ivo Mijnsen (2010) and others have called the “victory myth” of the Great Patriotic War.

The myth of victory appears to provide a basis for the identity of Russian society, yet the political community that attained victory was Soviet, not Russian. However, since ethnic Russians played a leading role in the victorious Soviet community, the historic outcome in this interpretation legitimates Russian demands for close cooperation in the post-Soviet space under its leadership. (Mijnsen, 2010, p.8)

Medvedev eventually links this explicitly to concerns with self-definition: “We must understand and appreciate the complexity of our problems. . . . In the end, commodity exchanges [relying on oil and gas exports] must not determine Russia’s fate; *our own ideas about ourselves, our history and future must do so*”

(emphasis added) (2009, p. 2). We like to pinpoint here that the pronoun “we”, which in this speech collapses only Soviet/Russian identity, carries long-lasting history of communist enthymemes, invoking for multiple audiences a set of consubstantial arguments of national identity and communist history in use for several decades in former Eastern and Central Europe (Marin, 2007).

Examining Medvedev’s interpellation of Russians into this relatively new role as citizens of a democracy, we focus on his projection of “our own ideas about ourselves” (what we are viewing as key components of national identity) especially as these projections relate to relationships between the individual and mother Russia (and/or the political state) both historically (especially in the immediate post-Soviet period) and in the future.

As has been a consistent feature of contemporary Russian presidential discourse, Medvedev posits a historical continuity of Russia, the Russian people, and implicitly the Russian “nation” (in a sense similar to that invoked by Benedict Anderson (2006), that “nations” are states of mind, or common identification that creates, in Burke’s (1968) terms, a consubstantiality among the “citizens” and the “nation”). This continuity rises above any particular historical political arrangements of the State: the “State” may be tribal, imperial, monarchal, Communist, or totalitarian, but Russia and the Russian “nation” have persevered intact through it all. “Russia,” as Medvedev puts it (ironically in the context of corruption) has a history from “time immemorial.” Here again, the interpellated “nation” as a multifold cultural enthymeme of historical arguments calls for audiences to co-create a consubstantial Russian oneness that rhetorically can move forward the political arguments for the modernization stage of its future.

Medvedev (2009) is explicit in his ‘description’ of the civic attitudes and engagement of the Russian as citizen, embedding his characterization in both broader descriptions of “national habits” and fabric of Russian history:

Paternalistic attitudes are widespread in our society, such as the conviction that all problems should be resolved by the government. Or by someone else, but never by the person who is actually there. The desire to make a career from scratch, to achieve personal success step by step is not one of our national habits. This is reflected in a lack of initiative, lack of new ideas, outstanding unresolved issues, the poor quality of public debate, including criticism. Public acceptance and support is usually expressed in silence. Objections are very often emotional, scathing, but superficial and irresponsible. Well, this is not the first century that



Russia has had to confront these phenomena. (p.2)

Medvedev proceeds to challenge the view that these “steadfast” traditions in a history that “tends to repeat itself” are “chronic social diseases” that cannot be conquered, maintaining that like serfdom and illiteracy they too can be overcome. Despite this overt claim, interpellations of the citizen of the new Russian sovereign democracy suggest enthymematical counterarguments that invite citizens to enact certain prescribed roles and attitudes with respect to civic involvement and political agency.

He shows the way relative to the *dangers* from the past – with an emphasis on the alleged “chaos” and threat of national disintegration that came during the Yeltsin years. This works to dampen the support for “radical democracy” and to invite the citizens to *trust the authorities* to make the proper decisions for the stability of the nation. Here again the authoritarian theme inaugurated by Putin’s presidential addresses emerges as invoked political argument of implied citizenry previously identified and tested by Russian nation as effective. In contrast with the Yeltsin era, the Putin-Medvedev-to-be-continued political guidance stems from the vertical powers of political life:

Not everyone is satisfied with the pace at which we are moving in this direction. They talk about the need to accelerate changes in the political system. And sometimes about going back to the ‘democratic’ nineties. But it is inexcusable to return to a paralyzed country. So I want to disappoint the supporters to permanent evolution. We will not rush. Hasty and ill-considered political reforms have led to tragic consequences more than once in our history. They have pushed Russia to the brink of collapse. We cannot risk our social stability and endanger the safety of our citizens for the sake of abstract theories. We are not entitled to sacrifice stable life, even for the highest goals . . . . Changes will take place, but they will be gradual, thought-through, and step-by-step. But they will nevertheless be steady and consistent. (Medvedev, 2009, p.4)

In equating “‘democratic’ nineties” (already undercut in legitimacy by the quotation marks) with “paralyzed country” and “permanent revolution,” Medvedev energizes the association of democracy with chaos; by implicitly linking “democracy” as an “abstract theory” with the enthymematically present abstract theory of communism and in turn associating the chaos of democracy with the domestic horrors of the Soviet regime under the umbrella of “tragic

consequences,” Medvedev presents Russia’s “path for the future,” a path that will provide order and stability, a path that will tame the chaotic excesses of undisciplined democracy. It is a path of “managed democracy” in which the steps of change are “thought-through” and then directed from above.

Through culturally-specific constructions of “democracy” and “citizen,” the transformation of the governance system in Russia gains both *necessity* (it is “called for” by the needs of the citizens) and legitimacy. Here again, presidential appeals calling for new Russian citizenship become sustainable political enthymemes reminiscent of the old Soviet discourse on freedom and civic participation. As Medvedev asserted, the leaders are “not entitled to sacrifice stable life, even for the highest goals” (such as the abstract theory of democracy) (2009, p.1). The *vision* of “democracy” that emerges is a top-down democracy in which the authorities guide, regulate, and manage social and economic change. This re-defined democracy is currently being implemented in the Russian Federation, and the interpellated roles for patriotic and loyal citizens are concomitantly becoming institutionalized.

#### *6. Crafting New Cultural Arguments from History: Interpellation and Tandem Rhetoric*

While “Go, Russia!” speech and article surprised the world as Medvedev’s manifesto, his official rhetoric remains to be read within yet another interpellated cultural and political context, namely as part or as a continuation of Putin-era official discourse. As such, Medvedev’s speech is salient to a larger rhetorical context for political arguments on national identity, to the cultural realm of consubstantiality of politics between two Kremlin official voices, the current President of Russia (former Prime Minister) and the former President (current Prime Minister), both voices of a somewhat similar rhetorical tone. Thus, “sovereign democracy,” authoritarianism and nationalism as two main pillar themes addressed from the Kremlin, and Putin’s definition of citizenship for the Russian nation can all be identified as rhetorical and political arguments effective in their own right (Williams, Young, & Launer, 2001; Williams & Marin, 2009).

Due to effective interpellation of historical enthymemes, the Russian people also enters the realm of consubstantial identification, providing electorate and political support in vast majority to the United Russia party (Putin being the current president) and to the current presidency. Dmitri Medvedev, former Prime Minister during last Putin electorate, Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister due to

Constitution legislation (1993) participate in a “tandemocracy” difficult to understand without knowledge of historical background of pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet nation-state called Russian Federation. In an extensive survey study of the 2007-2008 election season, Hale and Colton (2010) depict a complex political arena for citizenry: the role of state is by a large margin is seen as necessary to remain dominating; United Russia (Putin’s Party) is the Party of choice to continue and deepen market reforms, as well as the leading party to restore Russian identity; along with the “Putin factor,” the overwhelming argument (98% of the voters) that lead to the current political scene of the Medvedev-Putin duumvirate. From the perspective of our overall argument, such “tandemocracy” notion translates well rhetorically into interpellated and co-shared enthymematic cultural arguments that prepare, assist, and continue to persuade the Russian people about national identity as past- or post-Soviet citizenry. **[xii]**

Hale and Colton (2010) state that that the presidential campaign of 2007-2008 was “managed by the authorities (read state) and was, by most disinterested accounts, the most meticulously engineered since the Soviet allots of the mid-1980s” (p. 18). We want to highlight that if we consider political context a macro level of discourse, cultural enthymemes contribute as discursive strategies to engage previously-agreed upon public arguments, thus offering a locus for consensual audience to redefine and strengthen the meta-argument of national identity, Russian national identity in the case examined.

Paying attention to strategic re-conceptualization of history (read ‘national Russian history’) as part of the cultural meta-context for effective public arguments, Linan (2010) argues that the well-designed political use of history with the aim of justifying current policies presents a vision “that makes Russian citizens be aware of their mission in the world and feel proud of their history, looking to the future with optimism” (p. 167). Linan (2010) adds that “*discursive control in a regime like the Russian one during the Putin era comes in very useful for influencing the social memory of Russian citizens, in order to build or impose consensus* (emphasis added) (p. 168).

In conclusion, we argue that Medvedev’s presidential discourse provides an effective use of the framework of rhetorical interpellation and cultural enthymemes, thus engaging culture-specific, Soviet/Russian definitions of citizenship and democratic values appealing to contemporary Russia. And Medvedev (2009) promises to continue to do so: “We will create a new Russia. Go

Russia!" (p.6)

## NOTES

**[i]** Dimitri, Dmitri or Dmitry are three spellings utilized for Medvedev's first name in most of the sources cited.

**[ii]** As indicated by Masha Limpan in the article "Putin's 'Sovereign Democracy'" in 2006, this term is a "Kremlin coinage that conveys two messages: first, that Russia's regime is democratic, and second, that this claim must be accepted, period. Any attempt of verification will be regarded as unfriendly and as meddling in Russia's domestic affairs" (p. A.21). See Lipman, M. (2006). "Putin's 'Sovereign Democracy.'" *The Washington Post*. Saturday, July 15, 2006. A. 21. <http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/14/AR200607141534.html>

**[iii]** We acknowledge a large body of political science scholarship on Russian Federation since 1991. However, for the purpose of this article, the authors' intent was to focus as much as possible on the current state of affairs, discussing less the political strategies of previous Russian Federation presidents like Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. Rather, the political analyses consulted narrow the scope of the explorations on the contemporary Russian President, Dimitri Medvedev, and his continuation of Putin-style presidency.

**[iv]** "Enthymeme" is used in accordance with the Aristotelian concept presented in his Rhetoric, namely as a rhetorical argument (deductive in form) missing one of the premise yet inferring it on basis of a shared opinion in the public domain. Of note that "enthymeme" is considered the core of persuasion process in Aristotelian view. For a brief description of "enthymeme" as part of Aristotelian rhetorical theory, see *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/#enthymeme/>.

**[v]** We recognize that this article utilizes a small sample of presidential addresses, yet we consider these speeches are emblematic, hence, definitional and used as such in our rhetorical examination. In addition, we suggest readings of both authors' previous research on the topic of both Russian and Eastern European cultural arguments, as listed in the reference section.

**[vi]** In this sense, culture becomes a dynamic rhetorical concept transforming speakers, audiences, and critics by bringing out fragmentation of identity, previous experiences, and contexts of interaction within rhetorical discourse. A basic definition of "culture" stemming from the intercultural research in communication can represent an operative assumption for this research.

Accordingly, culture involves a holistic set of values, interrelationships, practices, and activities shared by a group of people, influencing their views on the world. One such definition, although not necessarily the most exhaustive, is provided by Dodd (1998) in his textbook on intercultural communication. Carley H. Dodd, *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication*, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998, p. 36).

**[vii]** The authors consider Charland's usage of the term in its active function permits our usage of "to interpellate" accordingly. Maurice Charland, "Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Québécois*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 73 (1987): 133-50.

**[viii]** How is democracy enacted in recent, post-Yeltsin constrictions of the Russian Federation? Aron (2007) summarizes the new institutionalized version of democratic life in Russia, reminiscent of past histories and past discursive strategies in Soviet times: [1] Governors in turn appoint one of the regional representatives to the Federal Assembly and the Council of Federation ("the regional legislature selects the other members") (p.8). [2] Independent candidates are barred from running for Duma seats; "all candidates must belong to a party" (p. 7). [3] The Central Election Commission, "which is now completely subservient to the Kremlin," creates party registration obstacles and expenses that allow it to disqualify "any party" (p. 7). [4] The "post" which a party must pass in order to qualify for proportional representation in the Duma has been raised from 5% to 7%, and "blocs of smaller parties are outlawed" (p. 7). [5] "United Russia" - "party of the Kremlin" (Putin/Medvedev) - is defined by leaders, not ideology, and it is far and away the most dominant political party." The new Party Chair for United Russia is Vladimir Putin. [6] The state now owns or has "firm control of all national television channels;" "a majority" of "independent newspapers and magazines have either been forced to fold or have been 'tamed' by change of ownership;" and an estimated 80-85% of Russians do not have internet access" (p. 8). In reality, no real public debate exists on major issues. "Government supervision of television programming," for instance, "reportedly includes weekly lists of 'recommended' topics for coverage and lists of opposition leaders, independent commentators, and journalists who under no circumstances should be allowed to be interviewed or appear as guests on talk shows" (p. 8). [7] Finally, in Aron's (2007) assessment, "the judiciary" - "(a)long with the legislative branch" - "now appears to be under almost total dominance by the Kremlin" (p.8).

**[ix]** One additional layer that is worth developing in a future scholarly article relates specifically to the play between arguments of and from definition in Putin

and Medvedev enthymematic use of the term “democracy.” Both presidents utilize the term “democracy” defined as interpellating the “state” as a sine qua non condition, while “democracy” as “the Russian people” is only under the qualifier of “state as “people” (authors’ emphasis).

**[x]** Burke, K. (1969). *A Rhetoric of Motives*. (1950. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 46).

**[xi]** For a closer linguistic analysis in line with the overall argument of this article, it might be of interest to further investigate the original Russian forms of pronouns, verbs, and possessives in order to check how are they played, again, enthymematically, in order to create deductive cultural arguments of national identity as Soviet/Russian.

**[xii]** By studying a larger number of presidential addresses by both Vladimir Putin or Dimitri Medvedev this *political tandem* can be viewed also from the persuasive and enthymematic angle of shared interpellated arguments of definition, naming Soviet identity similar to Russian identity, Soviet history as a selected Russian history, to name a few such arguments. An additional inference of the tandem bicycle as a political pedaling through Soviet and Russian history can easily bring further interesting views on the current political life in Russia. This tandem imagery works also well metaphorically presenting insight into the selection of cultural arguments and the rhetorical strategies necessary to create effective appeals that work for the Russian citizens in current global times.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Is Natural Selection A Tautology?



## 1. Introduction

Many people, when I suggest that the Natural Selection theory may be incomplete, look at me in surprise and reproach me for rejecting evolution, believing that I fail to accept that complex forms of life arose out of other simpler ones. I should say, to reassure you, that I am a convinced evolutionist. This reaction, however, shows that both terms, “*evolution*” and “*Natural Selection*”, are seemingly mistaken, understandably, since both come from the same theory of evolution by Darwin. But *fact* and *explanation* are different things, and for those people’s sake I should stress the difference: evolution is the *fact*, the speciation phenomenon of the variety of species that we find with a common origin, and yes, it is a fact, or at least that is how I see it, after the overwhelming fossil evidence (Foley, 2010; Hunt, 1997). But there are many ways of explaining that fact, and Natural Selection, despite its relevance, is just one of them.

Yes: Natural Selection is just the peculiar and personal explanation that Darwin gave to evolution, which can be condensed in the well-known “struggle for survival” and “survival of the fittest” arguments. In this paper I present a critique to this philosophy of evolution, which does not mean that I question either the evolution or the correctness of Natural Selection.

## 2. The Clues to the Success of Natural Selection

Natural Selection is an amazingly successful model, still in force after more than a century and a half. This period is very long for any scientific theory, especially



these days when knowledge advances so fast.

Several factors have contributed to this success. One is the strange phenomenon of identification that the terms “evolution”, “Darwinism” and “Natural Selection” have suffered. They seem to come in one single package, synonymous, which makes it very difficult to separate what is right and what is wrong in them. The amazing discovery that evolution represents, and the appreciation for his author, Darwin, are worth the small price we have to pay in accepting his weak explanation by means of Natural Selection.

A second factor that has contributed to the strength of the Natural Selection model is what I call “scientific inertia”: it is hard for a new idea to be accepted, but once it is, it becomes the “established” or “official truth”, the “orthodoxy” , and it is difficult to change the scientific mind afterwards. Planck put this very well in one of his most famous quotes:

*“A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it”.*

This is especially flagrant in Science: despite it being rationally-based, it does not seem to progress on rational grounds, but rather is moved by the same fears and influences that move sensitive human beings, well in tune, for their own good, with the mentality of the time.

This “inertia” affects all scientific theories, and Natural Selection is not an exception. It does, however, have one peculiar advantage over the rest, which makes it even stronger and more difficult to refute. It does not deal with the typical scientific topic, usually mysterious and uninteresting for most people. On the contrary, it deals with a very deep question at the very heart of every human being: the origin of their own existence. It is such a deep question that human beings have had an ancestral necessity to answer it, developing a whole system just to do it. The system was Religion, and the given answer was “life comes from God”. In this context, Natural Selection arises, as the first scientific theory that dares to answer the same question. And it does, by taking the prerogative from God, and handing it to Nature. At first, this was highly challenging for traditional thinking. But once religious prejudices are broken, the theory becomes reinforced, after all those unfair attacks it had to endure.

It is so strong that today any criticism of Natural Selection is suspected of being retrograde or primitive. The religious character of the critiques in the past now

turns the defence of “Darwinism” into a kind of defence of “science” against “religion”: if you attack Darwinism, you are a fanatic, old-fashioned, or even worse: anti-science. **[i]**

These are, in my view, the main factors that have contributed to the dominance of Natural Selection over the rest of evolutionary models. But what does Natural Selection actually mean, what is it about? Some inconsistencies in the meaning of this model are dealt with in the next section.

### *3. The Principle of Selection*

The principle of Selection is the basis of Darwin’s evolutionary model for explaining the mutability of species. This principle is the extrapolation to Nature (hence *Natural* Selection) of the artificial procedure performed by the human being, for achieving new and more efficient species. “*Can the principle of selection, which has been so potent in the hands of man, apply in nature?*” Darwin wonders in his book “*The Origin of Species*”, (Darwin, 1968, p.130).

Darwin misses the fact, though, that the artificial selection performed by man, (whether for biological, or any other general purpose) requires necessarily a diverse set of elements, if a single one is to emerge from the set (see fig. 1.a). Therefore, when the human being makes his selection, he needs to choose from among various elements in order to obtain just one (it is then when the act of “selection” makes sense), finding the required variety that allows his choice already at hand.

The phenomenon of evolution, instead, starts from a single cell, which evolves by itself, despite being alone (Poole, 2002). In such a circumstance, no kind of “selection” is possible, while evolution still remains. If we accept that a single principle motivates the whole evolutionary process, that could not be a “selection principle”, since we could not explain why the very first cell evolved alone, not to mention why it *arose*, which is the maximum evolutionary leap ever.

In fact, evolution seems to be the opposite process of a selection: the very first cell evolves by itself, with no need for the presence of other elements (see fig. 1.b). A more detailed look into each new element reveals the same pattern of variability repeating itself over and over again, variations upon variations, producing an unimaginable spread of life: kingdoms, phyla, classes, orders, families, genera, species, types, races, individuals, etc. Such variety, all coming from one single cell, filling the gaps of almost any physical habitat, rather than a “selection”, seems like an “explosion” of life **[ii]** (fig. 1.c).

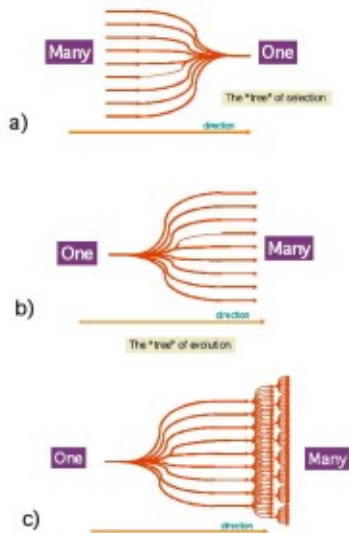


Fig. 1: The meaning of "selection". (a) The usual meaning: a choice of a single element from a set. (b) The tree of evolution: the spread of life forms from a single cell. (c) The "fractal" form of Life.

Fig. 1: The meaning of "selection". (a) The usual meaning: a choice of a single element from a set. (b) The tree of evolution: the spread of life forms from a single cell. (c) The "fractal" form of Life.

And the question is inevitable: this explosion of life obviously provokes a "struggle for survival", with species and individuals all struggling against each other, in order to achieve their space. However, Darwin does not say that; again he means exactly the opposite: it is not evolution which causes competition, but competition which causes evolution, meaning it is that fight for life which produces the modification and filtering of the most favourable genetic patterns which lead to improvement. Again, this conclusion collides with the lack of competition in the earliest stages of evolution: in the beginning there was room for them all, no need to "fight" or compete, and yet, they evolved. In fact, the first cell was by itself, and it evolved. It is inevitable to think that the same principle which pushed the first cell to evolve, is the same one that pushed the subsequent forms forward. This should be clarified by any evolutionary model.

#### 4. *The philosophy of Natural Selection*

The philosophy of Natural Selection is enclosed in the well-known phrases: the "struggle for survival" and the "survival of the fittest". These seem to say that evolution goes on thanks to the fittest, "the winners" of the fight, making this model a kind of "philosophy of success". But what about the "losers", what

happens to them? According to Darwin, the answer is clear (Darwin, 1968, p.147): *“If any one species does not become modified and improved in a corresponding degree with its competitors, it will soon be exterminated”*.

If we have a look at our evolution line (see fig. 2), this means that if individual B is fitter than A, B will survive, and A will be extinguished. In the same way, if C is fitter than B, C will survive, and B will be extinguished, and so on. According to this, one could think that we have left behind a trail of extermination. However, this is not the case: many species have escaped evolution, and survived till today, without evolving fortunately for us, otherwise we would be alone at the top of “Mount Evolution”, and we could not survive on our own: we need plants, insects to fertilize the plants, birds, mammals, even the bacteria that live in our stomachs.

In fact, in order for a few species to evolve substantially, it is necessary that many others do not. Evolution requires a substrate of more primitive and basic life, to support the progression of subsequent improvements. Thus, there is a limitation to the term “struggle for surviving”, and a compromise is required between “survival” and “extinction”, “struggle” and “balance”, “quality” and “quantity of life” (see fig. 3).

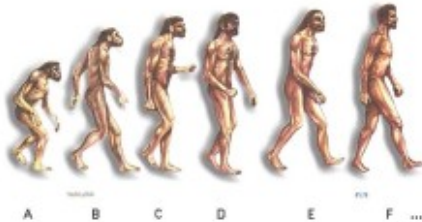


Fig. 2: Our evolution line, illustrating the argument behind the “survival of the fittest”.

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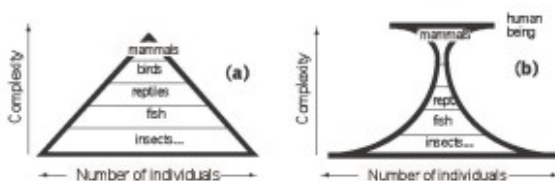


Fig. 3: The pyramid of evolution: The progression of complexity requires a base of primitive life which does not evolve, a necessary compensation between complexity and number of individuals (higher complexity requires a lower number of individuals, and vice versa, in order to keep the quantity & quality life-balance). a) Before the appearance of consciousness. b) After the appearance of consciousness, the pyramid starts to collapse at the apex. Figurative sketch, based on data in (UCM, n.d.).

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##### 5. *Is Natural Selection a tautology?*

This “survival of the fittest” argument has been described by some authors as almost tautological.**[iii]** Who survives? The fittest. But who are the fittest? Those who survive. And it is very difficult to escape that circle (Haldane, 1935; Popper, 1978; Brady, 1979; Peters, 1976; Hoyle, 1983).

If we organized a contest to cover some work posts, and after some interviews, we published a list of the selected candidates, in which we added as the reason for their selection that “they were the best for the post”, probably the rest of the non-selected candidates would be wondering what they did wrong, because there is no clear and specific criteria of why those were the best. In a contest or a game, those who win are always the winners, but that is not the explanation of their victory, it is just a definition, an identification of the victory. In the life race too, those who survive are the best for surviving, but that is not any explanation of their survival. That is why Natural Selection is not an explanation, or an argument or hypothesis: it is just the identification of a factual result.**[iv]**

Note that there is no problem that Natural Selection cannot explain: for instance, the great enigma of dinosaurs. So it can easily explain both their total domination and their sudden extinction, although they are two contradictory phenomena: the

dinosaurs dominated the other species because they were more adapted to the environment, but when the environmental circumstances changed, they died out because they were no longer adapted.

If individuals "A" have survived individuals "B", that will mean that the "As" are better adapted than the "Bs". So we can always say, without fear of contradiction, that those who survive are the fittest, (the criteria to recognize adaptation is survival), so since they have survived, we will find in that some justification of their adaptation. And that will be a handicap, which will prevent us from knowing, lost in rhetoric, the true causes of their survival.

Darwin himself falls into this trap when using Natural Selection to explain two contradictory phenomena (Darwin, 1872, p.208):

*"In certain whole groups of plants the ovules stand erect, and in others they are suspended; and within the same ovarium of some few plants, one ovule holds the former and a second ovule the latter position. These positions seem at first purely morphological, or of no physiological signification; but Dr. Hooker informs me that within the same ovarium, the upper ovules alone in some cases, and in other cases the lower ones alone are fertilised; and he suggests that this probably depends on the direction in which the pollen-tubes enter the ovarium. If so, the position of the ovules, even when one is erect and the other suspended within the same ovarium, would follow from the selection of any slight deviations in position which favoured their fertilisation, and the production of seed."*

In order to explain why one species exhibits one trait rather than another, we need to know what the advantage is (otherwise our explanation would fit both the case and its opposite equally well). The traits generally depend on the epoch or the environment, and we do not see much collapse in the explanation given by Natural Selection, since the advantage can always be vaguely attributable to "the change of circumstances". The problem arises when, like in the above case, we face the explanation of one trait and its opposite - ovules erect and ovules suspended - which share the same individual (a kind of plant), the same time, and the same circumstances. If supposedly the trait is the advantageous one, then its opposite is not. If the opposite trait is the advantageous one, the same reasoning stands for the former. In default of an explanation of why both appear in the same conditions, Darwin needs to admit that his selective explanation surprisingly fits in *any possible case*.

Such a loose explanation seems to blur the regular aim of Science, no longer like

hitting the target with a well-aimed shot, but rather like moving the target to catch the bullet in flight, wherever it goes. Thus, nobody knows with certainty why the dinosaurs came into being, or why they were dominant, or why they died out, despite the fact that, by Natural Selection, we can be sure that they were perfectly adapted for a time, and perfectly unadapted, some time later.

The answer is always the same: “Evolution goes on thanks to the fittest species”, but actually it does not mean anything by it, since there is no identification of any real reference or cause that made those species more efficient.

The strange thing about Natural Selection is not that it does not fail, but it *cannot* fail. Any scientific theory can be falsified, (with mental experiments, for instance). Natural Selection cannot: it is *only* and *always* correct, by definition. Any experiment we can imagine, will always be attributable to Natural Selection. If we asked: why did they survive? The answer is: “because they were fitter”. But how do we know they were fitter? And the answer is “because they survived”.

From this vague and circular argument, the only thing we can conclude is that the fittest do survive *at each moment*, without specifying why, nor the strange directionality of evolution, that does not go back to retake species once they have died out, even if the environmental conditions are the same ones that propitiated their appearance.

Another strange feature of Natural Selection is that it cannot predict. A scientific theory, in order to be recognized as such, requires *falsification* and *prediction*, both based on the model’s ability to predict phenomena, in order to be validated (if the prediction is correct) or refuted (if it is incorrect). Natural Selection is not able to predict, *a priori*, which individuals or species will survive others; the only thing it does is to note their survival *a posteriori*, and look for the justification of their adaptation in it. That is why, actually, it is not a scientific theory: its hypothesis is the pure observation of facts. Its pseudo-prediction on “the survival of the fittest”, is equivalent, in our football example, to predicting that “the team that scores the most goals will win”, or in the medicine example, that “the one who stops breathing will die” (see Endnote iv).

Darwin himself concedes this lack of ability for prediction:

*“Who can explain why one species ranges widely (...), and why another allied species has a narrow range and is rare?”* (Darwin, 1968, p.68)

And elsewhere:

*“(...) Probably in no one case could we precisely say why one species has been*

*victorious over another in the great battle of life*". (Darwin, 1968, p.127)

Note that the past tense of his last phrase "*has been victorious*", is indicative of the impossibility of explaining survival, not even *a posteriori*, when we already have the result in front of us.

Since both features, *falsification* and *prediction*, are required for any scientific theory in order to be considered as such, we are forced to wonder: "*Should we then acknowledge the enviable status of the Natural Selection hypothesis, and abandon the requirement of refutability as a symptom of good Science, and the theoretically controlled prediction as its main objective?*" (Marone, 2002).**[v]**

## 6. *Beyond the Tautology*

The first sentence of a letter to the Editor, signed by Ledyard Stebbins, in response to a paper by R.H. Peters, reads as follows (Stebbins, 1977, p.386):

*"The article by R.H. Peters (1976) which leads off 110 volume of the American Naturalist could be dismissed by evolutionists as so far removed from evolutionary theory and experimentation as not to be worthy of attention were it not the lead article in a journal which in the past has been an outstanding organ of communication between biologists interested in major theories (...)"*

As we can see, Darwinists' reactions against those, like Peters (Peters, 1976), who maintain the tautological character of Natural Selection, are anything but moderate -Stebbins, for instance, does not even cite Peters's paper in the section "Literature cited". It seems that, for them, critics of this kind are just "wealthy amateurs" (*Objections*, n.d.), (an implicit accusation of intrusiveness), and accuse them of simplification, misunderstanding, misquoting or quoting out of context, or even misunderstanding the notion of "circularity" (an implicit accusation of not understanding anything at all) (Caplan, 1977). So much sensitivity is understandable, since it would be terrible for top scientists - supposedly reasonable - to recognize that they have fallen into the syndrome of "the emperor's new clothes", fooled by false bafflements, moved by the fear of not being considered smart enough, if they don't agree with the orthodoxy.

In the introduction I pointed out the difference between *fact* and *explanation*; now I would like to point out the difference between *explanation* and *understanding*. Many times in Science we have thought we understood, when we just had an explanation. If the explanation is good enough, knowledge increases on a solid basis, but in some cases the explanation is poor or out of date, and still, in the lack of something better, reaches a position of "orthodoxy", growing artificially



upon more or less redundant justifications. This produces an *inflation of knowledge*, a knowledge bubble, which bursts when a new discovery shows its incorrectness, or its obsolescence.

This has happened in the past (the paradigmatic example is the hypothesis of the “ether”), and in my view, it is what is happening with Natural Selection now. For its time, when it was believed as an unquestionable matter that species were created by God such as they were, the explanation that species change over time through natural processes was undoubtedly revolutionary. For one hundred and fifty years afterwards, though, this explanation is taken for granted, not anymore a challenge for our minds.

I think those of us that dare to think Natural Selection is a tautology, do not have any intention to fool Science with artificial matters or empty rhetoric. Deep down within this controversy, there is a fundamental question: whether competition, the survival instinct, can be the explanation for the lives and progress of species, given that, at heart, this is an inherent instinct to life, and cannot be removed in any experiment for comparison purposes.

Even if that causal link “survival-evolution” were real, is it testable? Stebbins’s paper, for instance, talks about “*experiments*” that “*have, of course, enabled evolutionists to falsify definitely and for all time the Lamarckian hypothesis (...)*”, as if the falsification of the Lamarckian hypothesis was the confirmation of Natural Selection (Stebbins, 1977, p. 388).

Apparently, in these experiments, the “population pressure” (competition) is what forces the change of species, with the individual being more or less irrelevant. “*The individual*”, he says, “*is never identified as such any more than is the individual molecule in experiments dealing with the dynamics of gases (...)*” (Stebbins, 1977, p.388).

However, we also know that, according to Natural Selection, the essential change from one species to another comes precisely from the individual, more concretely, from a microscopic change within a gene of the individual. And that is why this hypothesis of competition causing the species’ change is so strange: it is as if a tank of Oxygen could turn into Hydrogen just because a single molecule reacted to a change of pressure, taking his gas example. **[vi]**

This question has been taken very seriously by Marone *et al.*, who have tried to clarify once and for all the supposed causal connection competition-adaptation in their own field, (Ecology), not in purely epistemological terms, but in practice, by

measuring its impact on a practical work in the field on desert communities (Marone, 2002). *“We want to avoid the temptation of criticizing Natural Selection from a purely epistemological point of view”*. They, however, *“beyond any reasonable doubt”*, could not find any connection between the identified selection pressures and the expected adaptation results. This negative output prompts the authors to ask: *“if we are right, it seems fair to wonder why we demand certain scientific canons in Ecology, which we suspend - without criticism?- when we are dealing with Natural Selection”*.**[vii]**

It seems as if Natural Selection was, rather than a scientific theory, a frame of work, into which the observable needs to fit (Popper, 1974). That is why it is so surprising that, when dealing with Natural Selection, our work is restricted to finding “the explanation of why it explains”, limiting our research to justifying why the observed fits within it.

In my view, its lack of predictive power resides in that it involves the typical uncertainty of randomness (environmental historical accidents, random mutations), on which it still tries to build the causal evolutionary connection. As a scientist, of course I am ready to accept that random events show a statistical distribution, which becomes apparent, not in the single event, but in the long-term series of events: For instance, if we roll a pair of dice, we will observe that the combination “7” is much more frequent than the combination “2” in the long term, since it is much more probable.

Thus, according to some authors, evolution is not a problem of “survivability”, but a problem of “probability of survival”, which weighs the long term result on the side of “the fittest”. For them, *“(…) fitness is more accurately defined as the state of possessing traits that make survival more likely; this definition, unlike simple “survivability”, avoids (Natural Selection) being trivially true”* (Objections, n.d.). Or, in a more developed explanation by H. Pagels (Pagels, 1990, p.118):**[viii]**

*“The probability distribution is like invisible hands. A good example is the slow and invisible process of biological evolution. This process is only real when we go beyond the apparent random events, and we examine a distribution of probabilities which gives an objective meaning to the environmental pressure on those species over others, better prepared for surviving in that environment”*

Yet, if it was so, it will be reasonable to expect that those who are fitter - i.e. those who have a higher probability of survival, in fact will survive more easily, i.e. they will occur more frequently, in the same way that our combination of “7”,

because it is the most probable, is also the most frequent in a pair of dice. Therefore, according to that, the more evolved the species is, the more frequent it will be, or in other words: elephants would be much more common than flies. However, we do not observe that in nature: the pyramid of evolution is as shown in Fig. 3.a, not inverted, only changing its tendency with the appearance of human beings, when it starts to collapse at the apex (see Fig. 3.b).

Probably this little paradox - brought about by the redefinition of "the fittest" - is which has obliged some to relax the definition of "evolution" as well: "*Biologists do not consider any one species, such as humans, to be more highly evolved or advanced than another*". "*Evolution does not require that organisms become more complex. (...) there is a question if this appearance of increased complexity is real, (...) Complexity is not a consequence of evolution. (...) Depending on the situation, organisms' complexity can either increase, decrease or stay the same, and all these trends have been observed in evolution*" (We find this in Wikipedia, under the entry "Objections to evolution").

Immersed in that relativism, we need to stop in our attempt to understand a process that we cannot even define.

### 7. Shortfalls of Natural Selection

Besides this, the argument of Natural Selection based on "struggle" suggests the question: struggle, against what? The answer could be against other individuals, other species, or against adverse environmental circumstances, in general. In any case, it implies that evolution is driven by "something", however imprecise it may be, which is *external* to the species.

This idea avoids the possibility that the life of species is something inherent, essentially evolutionary (*per se*), in the same way as many other natural processes. For instance, the life of an individual follows a defined evolutionary pattern of birth-growth-&-death imprinted in its genes, no matter whether there is another individual developing next. The life of a species could just be the temporal extrapolation of the life of individuals, and therefore, with the same birth-growth-&-death pattern.

There are many other processes of this kind (essentially evolutionary), which follow a cyclic pattern of birth-growth-&-death imprinted in the system, with no connotations of any kind of competition or struggle against external factors: The life of a star, the life of a galaxy, the life of the Universe, (space-time), or even the life of scientific ideas, ruled by a rather different dynamic from fight or struggle,

according to Planck (see quote in section 2).

Finally, in the evolution of species we can clearly identify two changes of paradigm that so far cannot be explained by Natural Selection: one is the origin of life itself, the other one is the origin of consciousness (intelligence). These are represented schematically by the two leaps in fig. 4. The first one represents the origin of life, emerging from an inert substrate, the second represents the origin of consciousness, emerging from unconscious life.

The first of these phenomena (the appearance of life from an inert substrate) cannot be explained by Natural Selection, since a statement based on surviving obviously only makes sense for organisms that are already alive. Therefore, the lower limit of validity of Natural Selection is clear: just beyond the border between the alive and the inert, not managing to explain such a leap: how or why that first living cell arises. The second of these leaps, the appearance of consciousness, marks a turning point in evolution, and still remains an enigma for anthropologists (Flinn, 2005, p.10). Both changes of paradigm fully enter in what we call the evolution phenomenon, and should not be ignored by any theory that aspires to explain it.

It is far from my intention to propose an alternative, pseudo-scientific model for evolution. Still, let me say that we might need to seek the explanation of life at the heart of the physical laws that explain the evolution of the Universe, not in an isolated way within Biology, as if the evolution of life were an independent phenomenon from everything else, and could evolve as if it were alien to it. In other words, life could be an evolutionary phenomenon, in the context of an evolutionary Universe. If that were right, the arrow of life's complexity would inexorably point towards the future, regardless of competition or eventualities, parallel to the arrow of time.

Of course, we are far from understanding the laws of nature, as to reach an understanding of its connection with the enigma of life and consciousness. But for the XXI century, this line of research, in my view, is much more challenging.

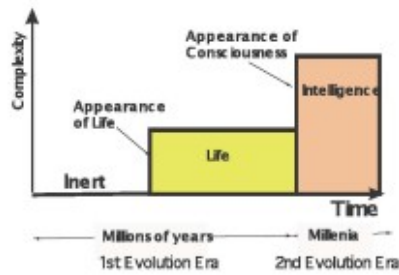


Fig. 4 Evolution, in perspective. This schematic drawing shows the different stages of evolution. The first era corresponds to unconscious life, which starts with the appearance of the first living cell (origin of life), and ends with the appearance of consciousness. This latter leap represents a change of paradigm comparable to the origin of life, and marks the second era of evolution.

Fig. 4. Evolution, in perspective. This schematic drawing shows the different stages of evolution. The first era corresponds to unconscious life, which starts with the appearance of the first living cell (origin of life), and ends with the appearance of consciousness. This latter leap represents a change of paradigm comparable to the origin of life, and marks the second era of evolution

## 8. Conclusion

In his last chapter, "Recapitulation and Conclusion", Darwin writes:

*"Although I am fully convinced of the truth of the views given under the form of an abstract, I by no means expect to convince experienced naturalists, whose minds are stocked with a multitude of facts all viewed, during a long course of years, from a point of view directly opposite to mine. It is so easy to hide our ignorance under such expressions as the "plan of creation", "unity of design", etc. and to think that we give an explanation when we only restate a fact".* (Darwin, 1968, p. 453)

I cannot think of a more accurate conclusion for my paper; let me borrow it, just changing the words "plan of creation" and "unity of design" for others like "natural selection", "survival of the fittest" or "struggle for life".

## NOTES

**[i]** To be honest, this suspicion is sometimes justified. Some very conservative religious parties are still reluctant to accept evolution today, others do accept

evolution but promote strange (not scientific) initiatives with scientists in support of their thesis, see for instance the manifest “against Darwinism”, signed by one hundred scientists (ASDD, 2001). Since when do so many scientists need to co-sign a statement against, or in support of a scientific theory? But even stranger is the over-reaction of Darwinians, by collecting seven thousand scientists’ signatures in just four days (ASDD, n.d). The battle still continues, giving an idea of how contaminated the debate is on both sides, on not so purely scientific or argumentative grounds.

**[ii]** A “Big Bang” of Life, comparable to the Big Bang of the Universe.

**[iii]** Popper, in his article “Natural Selection and the Emergence of Mind”, regrets in the past having described the theory as almost tautological (Popper, 1978, p. 345). To understand this change of mind, it is useful to know that this paper is actually the speech he delivered at Darwin College (Cambridge) on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 1977. He may have fallen under the spell of the high reputation of both Darwin and Cambridge, when he was invited to give the first Darwin lecture. Such a “*great honour*”, as he says, not being “*a scientist nor (...) a historian*” (Popper, 1978, p.339), may have conditioned his change of mind.

**[iv]** Identifying *result* and *process* is the main mistake of Natural Selection. It is as if, in a football match, for instance, we tried to explain the reasons for the victory in terms of the score, we would not have the chance to understand the *tactics* that propitiated that victory. A characteristic of the result (the survival, the victory) cannot be identified with, and used to explain, the *process* that led to that result, or the causes that conditioned it. If we explained, for instance, the death of somebody by saying that “he stopped breathing”, it is obviously true, everybody dies for that reason, but the “stop-breathing” argument would not explain much about *why* that death came about. In the same way, “the survival of the fittest” is a *result*, and not the only one, of the process of evolution. Natural Selection fails in using it to explain the deep reasons that drove that process (evolution) throughout time. Despite the redundancy of this model, its wide success is surprising. A similar argument such as the one above to explain someone’s death would not have had any credit in Medicine.

**[v]** Original in Spanish. Translation by the author.

**[vi]** The irrelevance of the individual on one hand and his relevance on the other seems to be a contradiction of the theory, and the step from the outside macroscopic pressure to the inner microscopic mutation is not clear - especially now that the Lamarckian hypothesis, according to Stebbins, has been dismissed.

**[vii]** Original in Spanish. Translation by the author.

**[viii]** Source in Spanish. Translation by the author.

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# ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Persuasive Definitions In Ethical Argumentation On Abortion



## 1. Introduction

Disputants in the abortion debate employ persuasive definitions of the notions *abortion* and *fetus* to plead a pro-life or a pro-choice cause. Pro-lifers define *abortion* as an “unspeakable crime” or as a “deadly sin” and the *fetus* as “an innocent human being” or “a person from the moment of conception” while pro-choicers define *abortion* as “an operation performed to



end an unwanted pregnancy” and the *fetus* as a “newly implanted clump of cells” or a “potential human being”.

This paper [i] is concerned with the dialectical and rhetorical effects of the use of persuasive definitions in ethical argumentation on abortion. Using the pragma-dialectical framework (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984, 1992, 2004) within which persuasive definitions may be viewed as a form of strategic maneuvering (Zarefsky 2006), I will show that in ethical argumentation on abortion persuasive definitions mainly function as rhetorical means by which the parties convey an attitude of approval or disapproval of abortion and attempt to gain the audience’s adherence to one position or another. The paper is structured as follows: in section 2 I briefly review some of the most known approaches to persuasive definitions that have been instrumental in the analysis of persuasive definitions in the abortion debate; in section 3 I examine the persuasive definitions used in some excerpts of pro-life and pro-choice argumentative texts focusing on the effects intended by the arguers.

## *2. Approaches to persuasive definitions*

Generally, the main function of a definition is to clarify a notion or a term. Ilie (2007) holds that the act of defining “involves processes of identification, categorization and particularization of the entity or phenomenon to be defined. [It] implies the communicative act of making something clear and tangible. [It] entails determining the outline and boundaries of the entity or phenomenon to be defined” (2007, p. 669). Similarly, according to Viskil (1994), the acceptability of a standpoint depends on the clarity with which “*unknown or obscure terms*” (emphasis in the original) are defined (1994, p. 79).

However, when a definition contains emotionally loaded language, it is no longer a neutral definition but a persuasive one which conveys and stirs attitudes towards the thing that needs clarification. In other words, what a persuasion definition does is to “clarify” things by presenting them in a certain light conveying the attitude of the speaker / writer and seeking to stir similar attitudes in the intended interlocutor or audience.

Persuasive definitions in which terms are defined using emotional language are an essential characteristic of ethical argumentation. Stevenson (1944) has done extensive work on persuasive definitions as employed in ethical disagreements. The author argues that “in any ‘persuasive definition’ the term defined is a

familiar one, whose meaning is both descriptive and strongly emotive. The purport of the definition is to alter the descriptive meaning of the term; [...] but the definition does not make any substantial change in the term's emotive meaning" (1944, p. 210). Persuasive definitions are usually accompanied by the words "true" or "real" used in a metaphorical way which have the force of "to be accepted". Stevenson considers that persuasive definitions are deceptive in the sense that they can serve as argumentation tactics to manipulate an audience, hence he recommends prudence when facing such definitions.

Walton (2005) objects to this view of persuasive definitions and persuasive language as always misleading or fallacious. He argues that "if the purpose of a persuasive definition is to persuade, and if rational persuasion can be a legitimate goal, putting forward a persuasive definition can have a legitimate basis in some cases" (2005, p. 159). Persuasive definitions are placed into a new dialectical framework in which they are evaluated in light of their purpose as speech acts. The author proposes a persuasion dialogue model, "a formal structure with moves and rules in which the aim of each participant is rational persuasion based on the values and other accepted premises of the other party" (2005, p. 177). Within this dialogue, a persuasive definition has the function of an argument and can be considered a legitimate move as long as it contributes to rational argumentation in a given case and helps the dialogue fulfill its collective goal (2005, p. 178).

According to Zarefsky (2006), a persuasive definition is "a non-neutral characterization that conveys a positive or negative attitude about something in the course of naming it. The name is, in effect, an implicit argument that one should view the thing in a particular way. [T]he definition is put forward as if it was uncontroversial and could be easily stipulated" (2006, p. 404). For this reason, the author considers persuasive definitions "a form of strategic maneuvering" (2006, p. 399). In other words, by means of this type of definition, the speaker can put forward certain values and beliefs without arguing in support of them. This has been called by Zarefsky (1997) an argument by definition.

Macagno and Walton (2008) claim that persuasive definitions often "involve a conflict of values, in which the interlocutor founds his implicit argumentation upon a value that the interlocutor does not share. However, sometimes this conflict of values depends on the interlocutors' arguing about two different realities, two different concepts named in the same fashion" (2008, p. 205).

Dissociation and persuasive definitions are effectively combined in argumentative discourse. As argued by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), “[definition] is an instrument of the dissociation of concepts, more especially, whenever it claims to furnish the real, true meaning of the concept as opposed to its customary or apparent usage” (1969, p. 444). Sometimes by means of a dissociative definition a new characteristic is introduced as the criterion for the right use of a concept. The authors consider that “a definition is always a matter of choice. Anyone making such a choice, particularly if a dissociative definition is involved, will generally claim to have isolated the single, true meaning of the concept, or at least the only reasonable meaning or the only meaning corresponding to current usage” (1969, p. 448).

According to van Rees (2005), distinction and definition are two speech acts performed in a dissociation. Both speech acts belong to the class of usage declaratives (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984) whose role is to clarify linguistic usage. For a dissociation to be dialectically sound, the two speech acts inherent in it should be performed recognizably that is explicitly, implicitly or indirectly. When the distinction or the definition is just presupposed, the procedural requirements for a dialectically sound dissociation are not met<sup>[ii]</sup>. Thus the distinction or the definition introduced by means of dissociation is meant to be taken for granted with no further discussion (van Rees 2005, p. 388).

In line with Zarefsky (2006), I consider persuasive definitions to be a form of strategic maneuvering which should both clarify or precizate things and convey a certain attitude towards the issue at stake thus achieving dialectical reasonableness and rhetorical effectiveness at the same time (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002). In argumentative practice, however, persuasive definitions arise from a clash of values as Macagno and Walton (2008) also suggest and serve the interests of the arguers that use them. These arguers may be so strongly attached to their positions which they want to impose that they are more interested in winning the dispute in their favor than in resolving the disagreement. Therefore the strategic maneuvering with persuasive definitions derails when a party’s rhetorical aim of naming things in such a way as to convey and stir a certain attitude overrides the dialectical aim of clarifying matters on the merits. In Walton’s (2005) terms, the use of persuasive definitions becomes fallacious when it hinders the fulfillment of the general goal of the dialogue where it occurs.

As Stevenson (1944), van Rees (2005) and Zarefsky (2006) point out, the fact that persuasive definitions can be advanced as indisputable arguments which need no further critical testing to be accepted makes them a powerful instrument of persuasion. In my view, persuasive definitions are used in argumentative discourse less for their dialectical potential of clarifying or precisating things and more for their rhetorical potential to convey the speaker's attitude towards an issue and redirect or influence the interlocutor's or the audience's attitude towards the respective issue.

### *3. Persuasive definitions in ethical argumentation on abortion*

In ethical disputes, defining key terms by means of persuasive definitions has significant implications for the resolution of the differences of opinion. Usually, the core of ethical dilemmas is represented by the conflict between persuasive definitions of the issue at stake. Such a case is the abortion dispute in which the clashing definitions of the key notions of *abortion* and *fetus* make the resolution of the difference of opinion impossible.

In ethical argumentation on abortion, arguers make strategic use of persuasive definitions in order to convey their pro-life or pro-choice attitude towards abortion as well as to redirect or influence the audience's perception of this controversial issue. The present analysis of the use of persuasive definitions in the abortion discourse starts from three major assumptions that I have previously made about the abortion debate.

First of all, the abortion controversy is a case of *deep disagreement* (Fogelin 1985) in which the arguers hold incommensurable positions on the status of the *fetus* and hence on the significance of *abortion* (Mazilu 2009a). The two notions *abortion* and *fetus* may be conceived of in contradictory ways so as to serve a pro-life or a pro-choice interest.

Second, given the fact that the abortion controversy is a case of deep disagreement in which the parties share no common ground of values and preferences and lack a resolution-minded attitude, it appears that both pro-life and pro-choice argumentation is directed at the audience that plays the role of a "third party" in the dispute. The arguers make use of *strategic maneuvering* with dissociation and persuasive definitions aimed more at winning the dispute in their favor by gaining the third party audience's adherence to one position or another and less at resolving the difference of opinion on the merits (Mazilu 2008b).

Third, the emotional appeal is the main tactic employed by the parties to

influence the third party audience's perception of the reality of abortion (Mazilu 2008a, 2009b).

On the basis of these premises my first hypothesis is that the conflicting persuasive definitions of the notions *abortion* and *fetus* manipulated by the arguers in the abortion debate represent one of the causes of the deep disagreement the parties find themselves in. The persuasive definitions advanced by the two opposing parties convey two "incommensurable" attitudes towards abortion and the fetus. Thus, pro-life activists define abortion as an "unspeakable crime" or as a "deadly sin" and the fetus as "a human being" or "a person from the moment of conception". Pro-choice supporters, on the other hand, define abortion as an operation performed to end an unwanted pregnancy and the fetus as a "newly implanted clump of cells" or "not a person at least up to a certain moment". Following Macagno and Walton (2008), I hold that these contradictory definitions "involve a conflict of values" which relies on different perceptions of what human life is. These ways of defining the key notions of *abortion* and *fetus* in the abortion debate have profound dialectical and rhetorical consequences for the resolution of the dispute in case.

My second hypothesis is that persuasive definitions are part of the arguers' emotional appeal directed at the audience and therefore their main function is a rhetorical one meant to help the arguers win the discussion over in their favor.

Before examining the persuasive definitions of the notions *abortion* and *fetus* in pro-life and pro-choice argumentation, it is necessary to know what lexical definitions of these notions can be found in various dictionaries. It is interesting to see how the lexical definitions of the two notions have been adjusted to serve a pro-life or a pro-choice interest.

The notion *abortion* is defined as:

*[T]he act of giving premature birth with loss of the fetus in the period before a live birth is possible; the procuring of induced termination of pregnancy to destroy a fetus (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary); [T]he intentional ending of a pregnancy, usually by a medical operation" ([http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/abortion\\_1](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/abortion_1)); [T]he termination of a pregnancy after, accompanied by, resulting in, or closely followed by the death of the embryo or fetus; spontaneous expulsion of a human fetus (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/abortion>); [A] medical operation to*

*end a pregnancy so that the baby is not born alive [=termination]"* (<http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/abortion>).

As far as the notion *fetus* is concerned, it is defined as:

*[A]n unborn human more than eight weeks after conception* (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary); *[A] young human being or animal before birth, after the organs have started to develop* (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/foetus>); *[A] developing human from usually two months after conception to birth* (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fetus>); *[A] baby or young animal before it is born* (<http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/foetus>).

### *3.1 Persuasive definitions in pro-life argumentation*

Pro-life argumentation frames abortion as a criminal act by which an innocent human being is deliberately killed. This way of framing abortion is meant to convey the pro-life activists' attitude of disapproval and to influence the audience's perception of this issue. The following pro-life excerpts are illustrative of explicit, implicit and indirect persuasive definitions of the notions *abortion* and *fetus*.

According to van Rees (2005), a definition is made explicit by means of a performative formula of the type "I define" (p. 384). A definition is performed implicitly when there is no performative formula but "the expressions that are used have syntactic and semantic characteristics that make them preeminently fit for performing the speech act that is intended" (p. 385). An indirect definition is performed by means of expressions which have "syntactic and semantic characteristics that make them preeminently fit for performing *another* (emphasis in the original) speech act than the one intended" (p. 385). A definition is presupposed when no explicit, implicit or indirect speech act is performed. In this case the meaning introduced by the definition is intended to be taken for granted (p.386).

An explicit persuasive definition of abortion can be found in John Paul II's argumentation against abortion as a representative of the Catholic Church.

(1) *The Second Vatican Council defines abortion, together with infanticide, as an "unspeakable crime". (...) Especially in the case of abortion there is a widespread use of ambiguous terminology, such as "interruption of pregnancy", which tends to hide abortion's true nature and to attenuate its seriousness in public opinion.*

*But no word has the power to change the reality of things: procured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth. The one eliminated is a human being at the very beginning of life. From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already. This has always been clear, and modern genetic science offers clear confirmation.*

(Excerpt from John Paul II *Encyclical Letter on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life / Evangelium Vitae*, <http://www.newadvent.org/>)

The arguer as a pro-life advocate makes strategic use of dissociation when he pretends to reveal the “true nature” of abortion: “But no word has the power to change the reality of things”. Pro-choice supporters are therefore accused of manipulating the public opinion by promoting the “false nature” of abortion when they call it “interruption of pregnancy”. This dissociation between the “true nature” and the “false nature” of abortion is followed by a persuasive definition of *abortion* meant to reinforce the “real” significance of this act: “The Second Vatican Council defines abortion, together with infanticide, as an “unspeakable crime”. (...) [P]rocured abortion is the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth”.

Moreover, the uncontroversial human nature of the fetus is emphasized by a persuasive definition: “The one eliminated is a human being at the very beginning of life. From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth”. Putting abortion whose legal status is uncertain on a par with infanticide which is generally considered a crime is a persuasive argumentative tactic meant to evoke negative attitudes in the audience.

Furthermore, defining *abortion* as an “unspeakable crime” or as “the deliberate and direct killing of a human being” where the adjectives “unspeakable”, “deliberate” and “direct” have been carefully selected leaves no room for further debate on the definition. Such a persuasive definition qualifies as an indisputable argument aimed at stirring in the audience an attitude of disapproval of abortion.

The two definitions of the notions *abortion* and *fetus* instantiate what Zarefsky

(1997) calls “argument by definition”. By means of this type of argument the speaker advocates values and beliefs that he does not have to defend explicitly. This is the case of our pro-life protagonist who simply stipulates that abortion is a crime and that the fetus is a human being from the moment of conception without supporting his claims with arguments or leaving room for critical doubts from the part of the virtual interlocutor or of the audience. The two definitions are put forward as if they were indisputable facts.

An implicit persuasive definition of *abortion* is present in the following fragment illustrating the Orthodox perspective.

*(2) Interruption of pregnancy, no matter how it is performed, has been always considered a fearful crime. (...) So, we can consider abortion to be premeditated murder; although according to human laws it is not punished, according to God's judgement it will be punished even more harshly than the killing of a man. Abortion is double murder: first, against God who created that being, and then against that soul (...). Abortion is one of the greatest sins which bring about God's wrath on us all. (...) Abortion is a revolting sin. (my translation)*

(Excerpt from *On Abortion, with Father Serafim Man*, <http://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/avortul/serafim.shtml>)

The protagonist strategically uses the term “interruption of pregnancy” favored by pro-choice advocates instead of the term “abortion”. By this move, the term adopted from the opposing party, “interruption of pregnancy” is made equal to abortion and is persuasively named a “fearful crime”. Indirectly, the well-known pro-choice definition of interruption of pregnancy as an operation is cast doubt on. As a result, an interruption of pregnancy should count *in reality* as a “fearful crime” before the audience.

In addition, a distinction is made between the human laws and the divine laws in what punishment of abortion is concerned. According to the speaker, the divine laws are the “real” laws by which the gravity of abortion has to be judged. The next move made by the protagonist is to replace the term “interruption of pregnancy” with the term “abortion” and name it “premeditated murder”, “double murder”, “one of the greatest sins” or “a revolting sin”. All the terms chosen to qualify abortion have the potential to evoke negative feelings in the audience. At the same time, by these persuasive acts of naming the protagonist conveys his attitude of profound disapproval of abortion. These definitions are proclaimed as indisputable facts that need no further arguments in support.



As far as the notion *fetus* is concerned, no explicit definition is provided but we can infer from the context of the murder scenario reproduced in the text that the fetus is considered a human being from the moment of conception. The fetus is referred to by means of a metonymic expression “that soul” which is meant to appeal to the audience’s feelings of compassion. All in all this strategic manner of framing abortion conveys the speaker’s attitude of disapprobation, on the one hand, and attempts at making the audience feel the same way by stirring their fear or compassion, on the other hand.

A persuasive definition of *abortion* is indirectly performed in the following excerpt which illustrates a similar Orthodox position on abortion.

*(3) By abortion we understand the killing of babies in the womb by all kinds of means. Because the fetus has a live soul created by God at the very moment of conception, that is why abortion is so strongly disapproved of by the Church and the Holy Fathers, because life is killed, the soul is lost, both of the killed one and of the one who kills. (my translation)*

*(Excerpt from On Abortion, with Father Cleopa Ilie, <http://www.orthodoxphotos.com/readings/avortul/cleopa.shtml>)*

The protagonist chooses to use an expression that has the syntactic and semantic characteristics of another speech act than the one intended. An assertive speech act (“we understand”) is used instead of the more direct usage declarative primary performative “we define” or indirect usage declarative “abortion is” with the same purpose of defining abortion.

There are some obvious similarities between this text and the previous one as expressions of the same Orthodox vision. First, the murder scenario in which a murderer, a victim and different methods of killing are involved. Thus, *abortion* is persuasively called “the killing of babies in the womb by all kinds of means”. Second, the notion *fetus* is not given an explicit definition but the context helps us understand that it is considered a human being from the moment of conception: “Because the fetus has a live soul created by God at the very moment of conception”. Moreover, the consequences of abortion for the victim and the murderer are strategically emphasized: “life is killed, the soul is lost, both of the killed one and of the one who kills”.

By this manner of framing abortion as a threat to life, the representatives of the

Orthodox Church convey their strong disapproval of abortion and evoke negative feelings in the audience. Therefore the use of structures such as “the killing of babies in the womb”, “life is killed”, “the soul is lost” is a characteristic of religious argumentation which is targeted mainly at the audience’s emotions. The terms employed by the protagonist in depicting this murder scenario belong to the category of terms that according to Zarefsky (2006) “facilitate visualization”. The term “killing” for instance suggests images that can frighten the audience, a fact which might lead to disapproval of abortion on the basis of the emotions evoked by these images. This way of entitling abortion is a very persuasive argumentative tool that may work where rational persuasion is not successful.

The following excerpt puts forward a definition of *abortion* from a double perspective, medical and religious coming from a doctor who fights against abortion.

*(4) Abortion is, from a medical point of view, an operation about which one cannot say that is beneficial. It's the first time in medicine when the doctor-patient relation doesn't have a healing purpose. It's the first time when the doctor-patient relation turns upside down and loses its value, because two healthy patients go to the doctor: one of them leaves in a state of illness, the other one dies. (...) Abortion is, from a religious point of view, an instance of infanticide. How can we prove it? It's very easy to prove it and I'm glad that medicine has reached so far that it can prove today all the stages of abortion but especially why abortion is murder. Lots of films have been made in which one can see what is a human being, how this human being is born, but above all why we believe it is a human being from conception to birth. (my translation)*

*(Excerpt from Mrs Christa Todea-Gross, Conference on Abortion, Oradea 2004, <http://www.avort.ro/avortul.php>)*

Defining *abortion* from this double perspective is not accidental taking into consideration that the author of the text is both a doctor and a pro-life activist. The protagonist takes full advantage of her two roles in order to make her argumentation against abortion more persuasive.

From a medical perspective, *abortion* is defined as “an operation about which one cannot say that is beneficial” because, as the protagonist states, the doctor-patient relation is distorted (“the doctor-patient relation doesn’t have a healing purpose, the doctor-patient relation turns upside down and loses its value”). In support of this statement, the protagonist brings as a major argument the

negative consequences that this operation has upon the two patients involved in it, the mother and the fetus (“two healthy patients go to the doctor: one of them leaves in a state of illness, the other one dies”).

As *illness* and *death* are what people fear most, the protagonist strategically selects these two effects of abortion in order to evoke negative feelings in the audience. In this scenario the doctor is considered responsible for what happens to the two “healthy patients” that come to him. Thus, the protagonist makes an indirect plea that doctors should stop performing abortions so that the doctor-patient relation preserve its value.

From a religious perspective, *abortion* is defined as “an instance of infanticide”. Interestingly, no religious argument is advanced in favor of this position as we might have expected. Instead, the protagonist turns to her first role, that of a doctor and tries to support this religious point of view by medical evidence (“I’m glad that medicine has reached so far that it can prove today all the stages of abortion, lots of films have been made in which one can see what is a human being”). This is a strategic move from the part of the protagonist, to make a religious statement and to back it up using scientific support. According to the protagonist, the films that have been made can indisputably prove that the patient killed by abortion is a human being from the moment of conception. Moreover, appealing to films as visual evidence is meant to “facilitate visualization” and thus to persuade the audience more easily.

Framing abortion as an operation which kills a healthy patient or as an instance of infanticide or murder can be considered an argument by definition that conveys the protagonist’s attitude of disapprobation and is aimed at arousing the same attitude in the audience.

### *3.2 Persuasive definitions in pro-choice argumentation*

Pro-choice advocates frame abortion as an operation by means of which an unwanted pregnancy is ended at the mother’s request. This way of framing abortion is meant to convey the pro-choice supporters’ approval of abortion as a fundamental right of a woman and at the same time to influence the audience’s view of the issue. The following fragments illustrate instances of implicit persuasive definitions in pro-choice argumentation.

The first excerpt is part of a series of arguments advanced to reject the pro-life

position that abortion is a crime on the basis of the premise that the fetus is a human being.

(5) *The fetus is a part of the woman's body, like the bile or the appendix. One cannot take seriously the fact that a human embryo is a real person. Pregnancy is an embryo or a fetus - that is a mass of tissues, a product of conception - not a baby. Abortion is the termination of a pregnancy not the killing of a baby. The fetus may be live, but the same are the ovum and the sperm. The fetus is a potential human being, not a real one; it's the design not the house itself; it's the acorn, not the oak tree. A fetus is not a person before implantation or before the first kick or the first breath. That's the moment when it proves its viability.* (my translation)

(Excerpt from *39 Pro-choice Arguments and Their Refutation*, <http://www.provitabucuresti.ro/argument/39.arguments.pdf>.)

As one can see, the text abounds in persuasive definitions through which pro-choice advocates support their own theory of abortion and of the status of the fetus. These definitions are put forward in such a manner as to be taken as indisputable facts, the virtual interlocutor or audience having to accept them without argument. Regarding the notion of *fetus*, it is implicitly defined as "a part of the woman's body, like the bile or the appendix". Framing the fetus as a kind of an annex organ that a woman can get rid of without doing herself an injury appears as a strong argument advanced in support of the standpoint that abortion is not a crime but a common operation.

As stated before, persuasive definitions may strategically combine with dissociation for a more effective impact on the audience. Thus, the statement that "One cannot take seriously the fact that a human embryo is a real person" contains a presupposed definition of the *embryo* and a dissociation between an "apparent" and a "real" person. The presupposed definition of the *embryo* is that it is not a person in the "real" sense of the word and consequently, it has only characteristics of an "apparent" person.

Additionally, the term "pregnancy" is made synonymous with the terms "embryo" or "fetus" and is defined as "a mass of tissues, a product of conception - not a baby". The scientific terms "mass of tissues" and "product of conception" as opposed to the term "baby" are strategically selected for their "disposition to affect" the audience's cognition not emotions. This is an indirect way of rejecting the pro-life argument that the fetus is a human being / a baby from the moment of

conception. From the pro-choice perspective, the equivalence product of conception - human being / baby is inconceivable.

Pro-choice supporters take one step further in arguing in favor of abortion by dismissing the criterion of "liveliness" introduced by their opponents in assigning the fetus the status of a human being : "The fetus may be live, but the same are the ovum and the sperm". They place the fetus on a par with the elements it is made up of, the ovum and the sperm. As one can notice, the product is not at all viewed as superior to the two elements that have contributed to its appearance. All three are seen as "live" elements but none of them is attributed the status of a live human being.

Another dissociation is introduced between a "potential" and a "real" human being in order to establish the status of the fetus: "The fetus is a potential human being, not a real one". This dissociation is followed by two analogies between the fetus as a potential human being and the design of a house which is not a house and between the fetus as a potential human being and an acorn which is not an oak tree. All these moves are aimed at deconstructing the pro-life theory of the fetus' humanity and at changing the audience's attitude towards abortion as well.

"Viability" is a criterion often employed by pro-choice advocates to clarify the moment when the fetus becomes a human being: "A fetus is not a person before implantation or before the first kick or the first breath. That's the moment when it proves its viability". Therefore there is a difference between a fetus before implantation / the first kick / the first breath and the fetus after these moments. As one can see, this moment of viability is quite relative, it may coincide with implantation, the first kick or the first breath. Choosing one moment or another is not accidental, it depends on the interest which is at stake: granting personhood to the fetus earlier or later during the pregnancy period.

On the basis of these arguments related to the fetus, pro-choice advocates define *abortion* as "the termination of a pregnancy not the killing of a baby". The term "termination of pregnancy" conveys a positive attitude towards the practice of abortion and seeks to elicit an attitude of approval in the audience as well. By emphatically opposing the two possible interpretations of the abortion act - the termination of a pregnancy vs the killing of a baby - of which the first one is viewed as the correct one, the pro-choice protagonist argues in favor of the moral permissibility of abortion. His persuasive definition of abortion as

interruption of pregnancy is intended to be taken as an uncontroversial fact. Since the fetus / the embryo is only “a product of conception”, “a mass of tissues” or “a potential human being” at the most, no criminal act is performed by abortion.

Unlike the pro-life texts in which the emotive meaning of terms is exploited, in the pro-choice argumentation above medical terms such as “fetus”, “embryo”, “bile”, “appendix”, “pregnancy”, “mass of tissues”, “product of conception”, “ovum”, “sperm” or “termination of pregnancy” are strategically selected to convey a scientific view of abortion and of the fetus and to appeal to the audience’s reason. Nevertheless, although not emotional, these terms can evoke positive attitudes towards abortion which is intended to be seen as a simple operation and not as a crime.

The second excerpt is part of “a defense of abortion” in which the protagonist, a philosopher, attempts to prove that the pro-life premise that the fetus is a human being from the moment of conception is false.

*(6) Most opposition to abortion relies on the premise that the fetus is a human being, a person, from the moment of conception. (...) I think that the premise is false, that the fetus is not a person from the moment of conception. A newly fertilized ovum, a newly implanted clump of cells, is no more a person than an acorn is an oak tree. (Excerpt from Judith J. Thomson, A Defense of Abortion, in Philosophy and Public Affairs, vol.1, no.1, Fall, pp. 47-48)*

The protagonist provides an implicit definition of the notion *fetus* as “not a person from the moment of conception”. She further argues that “a newly fertilized ovum, a newly implanted clump of cells, is no more a person than an acorn is an oak tree”. By this manner of defining the fetus, the author conveys her attitude of approval of abortion and at the same time she tries to influence the audience’s perception of the issue. She operates a strategic selection of medical terms in order to define the fetus so as not to make abortion a condemnable act. “A newly fertilized ovum” or “a newly implanted clump of cells” cannot possibly be conceived of as a human being.

The analogy between such an ovum or clump of cells which is not a person and an acorn which is not an oak tree is meant to reinforce the effect of the definition. It is to be taken as an indisputable argument in favor of the moral permissibility of

abortion at a very early stage of the fetus' life. The terms chosen by the protagonist to define the fetus have the potential to evoke positive attitudes in the audience in the sense of viewing abortion as a morally permissible option for an unwanted pregnancy. Moreover, this way of framing the fetus may be considered a form of comfort offered to the women who might have doubts about their decision to have an abortion. As the fetus is not a person from the moment of conception but merely "a newly fertilized ovum" or "a newly implanted clump of cells", performing an abortion is not a crime.

#### 4. Conclusion

The analysis of some pro-life and pro-choice texts has shed light on how pro-lifers and pro-choicers make use of persuasive definitions to convey their attitude towards abortion and to influence the audience's perspective on the issue. Two patterns of use have been identified with respect to how the key notions abortion and fetus are defined by the parties and how these are intended to be perceived by a third party, the audience.

Pro-lifers dissociate between the "real" and the "false" meaning of *abortion* focusing on the criminal aspect of this deed. As for the notion *fetus*, pro-lifers do not make any distinction between the fetus as a "potential" human being and the fetus as a "real" human being, in this way human development being seen as a continuous process. In their attempt to persuade the audience that abortion is immoral, pro-lifers may define it as an "unspeakable crime" or "the direct killing of an innocent human being". The fetus whose personhood represents the key issue in the abortion debate from the pro-life perspective is defined as "a human being from the moment of conception". The terms used to depict the abortion scenario in which an innocent human being is deliberately killed are highly emotional and are strategically selected to evoke negative attitudes in the audience.

Pro-choicers do not separate any particular aspect from the unitary notion *abortion* but when discussing about the key issues in the abortion controversy, they distinguish between the "real" key question (term II - women's rights, valued positively) and the "false" key question (term I - the status of the fetus, negatively qualified). As far as the notion *fetus* is concerned, pro-choicers make a distinction between the fetus as a "potential" human being and the fetus as a "real" human being when the personhood of the fetus is debated on. Pro-choicers define *abortion* as "interruption of pregnancy" or "termination of pregnancy" and the

*fetus* as “a mass of tissues”, “a product of conception”, “a cluster of newly fertilized cells” or “a potential human being”. The terms chosen to frame abortion as an operation by means of which a woman ends an unwanted pregnancy belong to the medical field and they have the role to convey a scientific perspective on abortion.

Pro-lifers make use of “real” definitions based on facts of “essence”, the terms *fetus*, *human being* and *person* being considered equivalent. Pro-choicers combine definitions based on facts of usage according to which the term *person* does not apply to fetuses with “real” definitions.

The “incommensurable positions” of the disputants are reflected by the definitions of *abortion* and *fetus* they advance as indisputable facts that cannot be critically scrutinized. The way these controversial notions are defined widens the disagreement space between the two parties and makes the resolution of the dispute impossible. Although dissociation is capable to clarify or precizate things, its use in the abortion debate cannot resolve the contradictions in the starting points of the two parties. Additionally, despite their clarifying potential as dialectical tools, the definitions employed in ethical argumentation on abortion do not clarify the controversial notions *abortion* and *fetus* so as to facilitate the resolution of the dispute, but convey an attitude of approval or disapproval of abortion and function as rhetorical tactics intended to move the audience.

## NOTES

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**[ii]** A dialectically sound dissociation has to concomitantly meet two types of requirements: procedural and material. Procedural requirements are met if the protagonist puts the change in starting points up for discussion in a side-discussion to get the antagonist’s acceptance. Material requirements are met if the antagonist accepts the change in starting points brought about by the dissociation the protagonist has introduced (van Rees 2005, p. 387).

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# **ISSA Proceedings 2010 - “Palmerston Bustles Around With The Foreign Policy Of This Powerful Nation, Like A Furious And Old Drunkard...”: On The Discursive Formulation Of Argument By Analogy In History**



## *1. Introduction*

Over the last few decades, there has been a remarkable spate of interest for the discipline of history. On the one hand, scholars have focussed on some crucial epistemological and methodological underpinnings of this academic field. Thus, Koselleck (1986) describes historians' task by means of Comenius's image of a backward-oriented vision through a spyglass on a shoulder: however accurate their search for truth, their views are bound to be constrained by the multiple perspectives the spyglass may offer. For

this reason, history is often interpreted as a research territory in which the empirical ratio of documentary evidence is intertwined with the analyst's own effort to construct a convincing representation of past events (Tosh 1989; Lozano 1991).

On the other hand, history has been tackled for the captivating co-presence and cross-fertilisation of narrative (White 1978, 1987 and 1999) and argumentative components (Perelman 1979; Ricoeur 2000) in professional historians' scientific prose: in this respect, the reconstruction of a spatio-temporal background constituted by key-events and issues selected and foregrounded by the historian as meaningful is tightly knit to the formulation of the scholars' possibly authoritative argument.

As far as the study of historical argumentation is concerned, a fruitful line of research has been the parallel drawn in a fairly large number of works between the figure of historians and that of judges (Ginzburg 1991 and 2000; Bloch 1998; Thomas 1998; Prost 2002). The main tenet of these contributions is that the historian's endeavour resembles the judge's task when it comes to the retrieval of hints and clues aimed at grounding a rigorous reconstruction of facts; still, historians detach themselves from judges because they are also expected to pay attention to contextual factors bringing about cause-effect relations in time, and they are ultimately requested to analyse rather than acquit or condemn. Additionally, a few attempts have been made to classify the most widely spread forms of argument in history: for instance, Carrard (1992, p. 201-202) delves into the use of figurative language on the part of the so-called New Historians such as Le Goff and Braudel, and he describes the rhetorical strength attained through geological metaphors - cf. the terms 'successive layers', 'residue' and 'amalgam' by Braudel - employed to define the central question of France's identity. Moreover, Prost (1996) concentrates on the increasing tendency of using systematic exemplification and statistical evidence as cornerstones in the unfolding of convincing historical arguments.

However, in spite of the inspiring nature of these rich accounts of the disciplinary practices of history, only tangentially have scholars become interested in the inherently textual dimension of historical argumentation. In the light of this, the primary aim of this paper is to bring insights into the linguistic construction of argumentation in historical text (cf. Bondi and Mazzi 2007 and 2009), by choosing one specific form of argument as a case in point, notably argument by analogy.

The latter has been the object of centuries of intellectual debate: it is discussed by Aristotle in Book II of the *Rhetoric*, further dealt with in Book IV of Locke's *Essay*, and more recently investigated by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1966). Apart from the exhaustive body of research produced by such classics, argument by analogy is addressed by Juthe (2005, p. 5), who sees analogy as a "one-to-one correspondence" between the elements determining the "Assigned Predicate" shared by two objects, namely the "Analogue" and the "Target-Subject". Interestingly, Juthe (2005) expatiates on Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1966) definition of the association of 'themes' with 'fora', by distinguishing between same- and different-domain analogies, depending on the different degree of proximity between the two entities involved in the one-to-one relationship determined by analogy.

This paper draws on applied linguistics studies on academic discourse (cf. Hyland and Bondi 2006), and it therefore combines the tools of corpus linguistics (Hunston 2002) and discourse analysis (Brown and Yule 1983; Bhatia 2004; Swales 2004) in an investigation of the broader discursive mechanisms activated by the occurrence of argumentation by analogy in a large sample of authentic history prose. As such, the study is less concerned with a conceptualisation, let alone a redefinition, of analogy in history than with a closer empirical examination of the discursive operations performed by professional historians whenever they decide to avail themselves of analogy as a powerful rhetorical tool.

Findings will show that the reiterated expression of analogy serves as a clue to understand some crucial features of the organisation of historical text, i.e. broader argumentative sequences whereby argumentation is followed by explanation based on examples, the formulation of the writer's own evaluation (Hunston and Thompson 2000) and the overall fleshing out of the metadiscursive substance characterising the interactive plane of historical text (Hyland 2005). As regards the latter, results reveal that analogy plays a central role in the organisation of discourse in line with the reader's needs as well as in shaping authorial intervention in text by means of a variety of devices going back to Hyland's theorization on interactional metadiscourse.

The thesis argued here is that analogy is a chiefly interactive device, which combines with a set of discursive tools securing a fruitful relationship between writers and readers in the development of historical narrative and argument. Section 2 will now illustrate the methodological premises to the study, whereas

Section 3 will explore the main findings, which are eventually discussed in Section 4.

## 2. Materials and methods

This study is based on the so-called *HEM-History* corpus, an English monolingual corpus comprised of 306 history research articles. These were taken from the 1999 and 2000 editions of the following specialised journals: *Labour History Review* (LHR), *Historical Research* (HR), *Gender & History* (GH), *Journal of European Ideas* (JEI), *Journal of Medieval History* (JMH), *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (JIH), *Journal of Social History* (JSH), *Studies in History* (SH), *American Quarterly* (AQ), *American Historical Review* (AHR). Even though journals were partly identified through exogenous criteria such as availability in electronic form, recourse was made to disciplinary experts who suggested a set of reliable publications to choose from. The corpus contains 2,416,834 words, and it consists of full texts, whereby only footnotes, tables and bibliography have been removed. bv

From a methodological point of view, the study developed through a quantitative and a qualitative stage. For a preliminary quantitative investigation, the linguistic software package *WordSmith Tools 5.0* (Scott 2007) was used, which allows the analyst to access and process corpus data in a reliable and systematic way. In particular, we focussed on the linguistic items that may be most straightforwardly associated with the expression of analogy in text as a starting point for the study of this argument form: selected items were therefore *like*, *as* and the lemmas *similar\** and *analog\** containing all forms like *similar*, *similarity*, *similarly* and *analogy*, *analogous* respectively. These items will be referred to as ‘analogy markers’ in the rest of the paper.

For each analogy marker, a concordance list (Sinclair 2003) was generated. Concordance is *WordSmith*’s on-screen function enabling one to have all corpus entries of a certain word/phrase displayed in context at once. Concordances were used as a basis to sort the corpus entries manually for the purpose of distinguishing and discarding all non-analogical occurrences of selected items – e.g. the verbal use of *like* – the latter being immaterial for the analysis proposed here.

The quantitative exploration of data was finally integrated with the attempt to classify arguments by analogy first by following Juthe’s (2005) framework, and

then by statistically verifying to what extent recourse to analogy is more closely linked with argumentative rather than narrative passages of historical research articles (cf. Section 3).

From a qualitative point of view, the analysis centred on the study of the broader textual functions of analogy in the argumentative discourse of professional historians, by focussing on the collocational surroundings of analogy markers. Collocation denotes the regular co-occurrence of words (Sinclair 1991 and 1996), and it is frequently used in applied linguistics studies as a clue to phraseology as well as, at a deeper level, the broader textual sequences of the genre under examination. The main findings of the study are presented in the upcoming section.

### *3. Results*

The corpus-based study of selected analogy markers points, first of all, to the fuzziness of a distinction such as that proposed by Juthe (2005) between same- and different-domain analogy. This is not to say that such a classification of arguments by analogy is unjustified; quite the opposite, it is a sensible categorisation that improves Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1966) somewhat rigid view that analogy by definition implies a certain distance between themes and fora. However, it suffices to take a look at the following examples to realise that the applicability of Juthe's categories does not necessarily occur smoothly:

(1) Just as physicians and surgeons in their medical works warned patients of the dire consequences they might suffer should they have recourse to other practitioners less qualified than themselves, so the saints too issued warnings in mysterious ways by striking here at the very badge of the medical profession. (JMH)

(2) Sometimes, where we have only one manuscript and little evidence of the reception of a text, the modern historian, like the medieval historiographer, must depend on imagination and experience to fill the gap. It is after all not just the medieval historian who must be creative. The studies of Blacker and Spiegel paved the way for Peter Damian-Grint's major study of vernacular historiography in the Anglo-Norman realm. (JMH)

(3) In other words, we resort to the ancient dating mechanism of relative chronology, centred on persons and offices, with synchronisms. And this is just how we go about assigning dates to any undated material. Like geologists with strata, or archaeologists with chronological levels, or dendrochronologists with

tree-rings, we identify synchronistic layers, one after another. Medievalists treat the witness-clauses of undated charters in this way: all the named persons were together on one occasion. (HR)

In (1), there is little doubt that physicians and surgeons on the one hand, and saints on the other, are two fairly distant entities involved in a different-domain analogy, whereas in (2) and (3) the status of analogy is more controversial. Hence in (2), modern historians may be distinct from medieval historiographers in terms of the specificity of the respective object of study, and yet they may share research methodology, at least partially; in (3), furthermore, there is much common sense in the belief that geologists as well as archaeologists and dendrochronologists are hardly the same as historians, but it could easily be counter-argued that regardless of their distinctive disciplinary issues they all belong to the domain of researchers.

By reason of these pitfalls, a preliminary overview on data can be better obtained by observing less the nature of each target-subject and analogous than the broader co-text in which selected analogy markers are embedded. In this respect, it is interesting to note that analogy is employed to varying extents in narrative or argumentative passages of historical research articles. Table 1 below shows the percentage distribution of *like*, *as*, *similar\** and *analog\** across the two main configurations historical academic prose is known to take:

Item	Narrative	Argumentative
<i>Like</i>	25	75
<i>As</i>	28.6	71.4
<i>Similar*</i>	18.9	81.1
<i>Analog*</i>	0	100

Table 1. Narrative or argumentative contexts of items (%)

The table shows that in spite of a predictably more restricted frequency, analogy can also be retrieved within more distinctively narrative contexts, in which the writers' concern is to provide accurate spatio-temporal representations of significant events on which they centre their reconstruction. This is well illustrated in (4), where the analogy between Virgil and Metastasio is set in an essentially narrative context signalled by the reiterated occurrence of temporal

expressions:

(4) Like Virgil in the Aeneid, Metastasio moves beyond the immediate situation to open up a grand historical vista, setting this particular episode in the larger and rather more positive political context of international tranquillity and ultimate peace on earth, the famous pax Romana to be achieved by Aeneas' descendants. It has been noted that this was designed to flatter the peace-loving policies of Ferdinand IV of Spain after the Treaty of Aix La Chapelle (1748) which ended the War of the Austrian Succession [40]. The works of Metastasio, poet in residence at the imperial court of Vienna, were available in English translation from 1800, and even before that his Dido abbandonata had been performed in London. In 1792 an adaptation by Prince Hoare was staged at the Haymarket, with some new music by Mr Storace. (HEI)

With regard to the preponderance of argumentative contexts in which writers resort to analogy in order to argue for or against a particular thesis or interpretation of historical facts, there is good evidence that analogy occurs within the writer's discourse or counterdiscourse. By 'analogy in counterdiscourse', we refer here to those sequences of the research article, whereby authors aim either to dismantle analogical reasoning that was set up or may be set up by other disciplinary experts, or otherwise to construct their argument on the basis of the explicit refutation of an analogical relationship. By contrast, we take 'analogy in discourse' to mean that writers make use of argument by analogy as a backbone of his own argumentation, in order to provide their discourse with a definite orientation towards an intended conclusion. To be brief, analogy in counterdiscourse is refutative, whereas analogy in discourse is constitutive of the author's standpoint. Table 2 below provides a precise statistical quantification of the positioning of argument by analogy within discourse and counterdiscourse for each selected marker:

Item	Discourse	Counterdiscourse
<i>Like</i>	77.3	22.7
<i>As</i>	83.6	16.4
<i>Similar*</i>	85.8	14.2
<i>Analog*</i>	100	0

Table 2. Argumentation by analogy in discourse and counterdiscourse (%)



The figures reported in the table demonstrate that history writers tend to conceive of analogy more as an active tool in shaping their argument than as a weapon to defuse any competing discourse on the part of qualified disciplinary peers. The forays into the general configuration of argument by analogy as revealed by the close examination of analogy markers leads to the more specific question of what linguistic resources are more likely to be correlated with this form of argument.

Starting from counterdiscursive contexts, analogy markers often correlate with what Thompson (2001) calls 'low-value subjective modalisation'. This is a chiefly dialogic context in which the writer's voice engages in a dialogue with the expert reader's voice, and it is primarily signalled by the occurrence of such modal operators as *may* or *might*. In historical research articles, the dialogic use of these modal verbs frequently acts as a preamble for the writer's counterdiscourse introduced by adversative connectives like *but*, *however* or *on the other hand*:

(5) One might argue that the legal system, like medicine, should use a fairly conservative and rigid definition of science, since mistakes in this realm can lead to dire consequences, such as wrongful convictions or civil liability (Angell and Huber). Justice is achieved when guilty people are convicted and innocent people are set free, and when civil liability decisions reflect causal responsibility. [...] The conservative approach to the Daubert ruling reflects this viewpoint. On the other hand, relying on this definition of science may have an adverse impact on the legal system's other goals, such as the protection of legal rights or due process. (SH)

In (5), the analogy between legal system and medicine is part of the modalised statement prefaced by *one might argue that*, which is later on refuted by the writer - *On the other hand,...* - who points to the adverse effects of retaining the definition of science spelt out earlier on. Alternatively, the formulation of the writer's counterdiscourse is secured by the collocation of analogy-markers and meta-argumentative expressions (Stati 2002), i.e. the open-ended set of words, phrases or even whole clauses that do not only belong to the lexical field of argumentation but at once reveal the argumentative properties and development of the text - e.g. *argument*, *demonstrate*, *proof* and related expressions:

(6) As pointed out by Carmichael, in 1913, these do not correspond to the clothes worn by Humility and the other nuns in the altarpiece. This is not, per se, a definitive argument. The habit of Saint Clare's successor, the abbess Benedetta, is

not the same as that of the foundress in the Benedetta Crucifix in Santa Chiara, Assisi (Fig. 21 and Fig. 22). The most conclusive argument against the commissioner being a nun is the veil of the tiny kneeling commissioner. A fully professed nun would almost certainly have worn a black top veil. It seems likely therefore that the commissioner was a wealthy lay woman. This in itself makes the commissioner a highly unusual one. According to one survey, only three percent of votive portraits during this period were of sole laywomen. (JMH)

In extract (6), the author starts by re-directing an argument s/he intends to rectify, notably Carmichael's statement reported in the opening sentence. The author's intention is corroborated by the meta-argumentative sentence *This is not, per se, a definitive argument*, which in turn grounds on the refutation of the analogy between abbess Benedetta's habit and that of the foundress in the Crucifix in Santa Chiara. What is more, the writer's refutation of the one-to-one analogical relationship between the two habits precedes the last and decisive step in his/her rectification of the opening argument, as can be seen by the other meta-argumentative statement in bold, i.e. ***The most conclusive argument...is***, which makes it plain that the propositional content of the sentence lies in disclosing the argument perceived to have the upper hand in settling the issue.

As far as the articulation of the writer's argumentative discourse is concerned, the collocational surroundings of markers indicate that argument by analogy is closely connected with three inter-related discourse operations: the crafting of textual sequences of argumentation and explanation, the formulation of the writer's evaluation and, most importantly, the elaboration of the metadiscourse substance on the interactive plane of historical text.

To begin with argumentation-explanation sequences, corpus data suggest that the use of analogy in argumentation can give rise to explanatory passages where writers clarify the content of analogies, by narrowing their perspective down to specific cases taken as examples. In these cases, the textual transition from argument by analogy to explanations based on examples is generally realised through operators such as *for instance*, *for example* and *in this case*:

(7) The thrust of Sorrell's book is that Francis must have been - and was - aware of the beauty and usefulness of creation; and while Sorrell believes this was a thorough-going religious attitude on the part of Francis, yet he also believes that it was similar to the modern environmental or ecological sentiment. These ascriptions to St Francis of a "love of Nature" and of being a proto-ecologist have

been taken up by scientists. For instance, a famous modern “ecological” bacteriologist, René Dubos, has claimed that “It is not unlikely that the Franciscan worship of nature, in its various philosophical, scientific, and religious forms, has played some part in the emergence of the doctrine of conservation in the countries of Western civilization and its rapid spread during the last century” (Dubos, 1974, p. 124).

In (7), the writer is dealing with the somewhat ambitious analogy between Saint Francis’ preaching and modern environmental or ecological concerns hypothesised in Sorrell’s book. In order to make sure that readers can fully appreciate the merits of the striking parallel, the historian restricts his argument from the general claim contained in the analogy to a specific point which s/he introduces through *for instance* and s/he substantiates by means of a quote from a purportedly authoritative source, bacteriologist René Dubos. In this way, an adequate explanatory background is provided in support of authorial argumentation elicited before.

As regards the formulation of authorial evaluation, intended here as a broad term to designate the writer’s stance towards or feelings about the entities he or she is writing about (Hunston and Thompson 2000, p. 5), it can be noted that professional historians are prone to evaluate either in terms of value or in terms of status. The former kind of evaluation presupposes that writers express their viewpoint about the propositional content of the text along the good/bad axis, as it were, whereas status implies that writers are evaluating as to the degree of certainty they ascribe to the topic they are dealing with. An effective instantiation of the collocation of analogy markers with value-oriented evaluation, as it were, is (8) below: the author sets up an analogy between Iran’s political leaders and medical doctors, and he then provides a back-up to that argument by quoting the writings of Mudabbir al-Mamalik, an influential editor s/he aligns him/herself with – *He had a point*. By contrast, (9) exemplifies the combination of analogy with evaluation in terms of status: the core of the argument lies in the matching of false prophets and tyrannical rulers, supported as it is by the writer’s careful evaluation – *perhaps the closest...* – bearing on the probability that David Austin deserves to be estimated as a case of charismatic prophet of the 1790s:

(8) Like medical doctors, Iran’s political healers, then, had to diagnose this metaphorical national body. If decades earlier, some thinkers such as Malkum Khan had isolated lawlessness as a debilitating contagion weakening Iran, during

the Constitutional Revolution others would identify other viruses invading the country. One writer in April 1907, for example, was Mudabbir al-Mamalik – the editor of the newspaper *Tamaddun*.<sup>106</sup> In an earlier article, Mamalik had used anatomical metaphors to make this diagnosis: “If we examine closely the nerves and muscles of this country, we will see that many types of pains have been inflicted upon this weak body . . . and despite the affliction of many disasters at the same time, it has not collapsed and still has half a life.”<sup>107</sup> He had a point. (AHR)

(9) False prophets, like tyrannical rulers, use “unintelligible jargon” to lead the common people astray. Another ardent republican prophet, William Scales, styled himself an American Jesus, of lowly origins and simple understanding. [...] The best example of this fusion of republican and millennial language can be found in the writings of David Austin, perhaps the closest thing America had to a charismatic prophet in the topsy-turvy decade of the 1790s. Recovering from a near fatal bout with scarlet fever in 1796, Austin – then a well-respected Presbyterian preacher in Elizabethtown, New Jersey – heard the voice of God calling him to the prophetic... (AHR)

Finally, evidence points to the collocation of analogy markers with the metadiscursive component of historical text. ‘Metadiscourse’ is defined by Hyland (2005) as a cover term denoting all self-reflective expressions through which writers negotiate meanings with readers. As such, it is a peculiarly interactive device that assists readers both in expressing their point of view and in engaging a readership of expert disciplinary members. Metadiscourse accounts for a crucial aspect in the unfolding of the interactive plane of discourse, because it integrates the chiefly propositional topic-related dimension of text with a wide range of writer-generated signposting responding to readers’ need for clarification and guidance. It is significant that the use of argument by analogy in historical text is recurrently associated with the deployment of metadiscursive devices.

More precisely, it can be observed that analogy markers tend to co-occur with both interactive and interactional metadiscourse. With regard to interactive metadiscourse, which fulfils the key-function of organising discourse in line with the reader’s needs, there appear to be four main kinds of metadiscursive devices tied to analogy: transition signals, code glosses, frame markers and endophoric markers (Hyland 2005, p. 50-52). First of all, transition signals indicate the pragmatic connections between the various stages of argument. Corpus data

emphasise that *but, therefore* and *so* are the most widely attested members of this class in association with analogy:

(10) David Nirenberg has recently reinterpreted the 1320 *pastoureaux* movement in France, which also took the form of a crusade, as a ‘rebellion against royal fiscality, camouflaged with the very language of sacred monarchy and Crusade that had helped to legitimize the fiscality under attack’. But the case is much less clear-cut than the Dózsa rebellion. There is no evidence, for example, of crusading ideas being mediated to participants by a group like the Observants. More convincing precedents are the peasant unions of 1469 and 1478 in Styria, where a similar pattern can be traced: failure on the part of the landed nobility to provide defence against Turkish incursions, and consequential measures of self-defence by the peasants which included the rejection of noble privileges forfeited through this inactivity.<sup>5</sup> There was therefore a specific regional context in the form of the pressing Ottoman menace and resistance to any centralised form of defence mounted by a particularist aristocracy. [...] (JMH)

In (10), the writer is crafting his/her argumentation around the analogy between the so-called Dózsa rebellion and the peasant unions in Styria - *where a similar pattern can be traced...* In doing so, s/he articulates his/her reasoning first as a response to Nirenberg’s allegedly misconceived interpretation of the *pastoreaux* movement in France (*But the case is...*); then, s/he fleshes out the analogy constituting the bearing wall of his/her argument, before drawing the conclusion that the parallel between Dózsa and peasant unions holds owing to a shared regional context exposed to the Ottoman threat (*There was therefore a specific...*).

In second place, code glosses serve to supply additional information, conventionally by rephrasing or elaborating what the writer has asserted before. In the HEM-corpus, a privileged code gloss seems to be the reformulation signal ‘Negation + *rather/instead*’, employed for the purpose of expatiating on the prior analogy:

(11) From Russia, Maxim Gorky observed in late November 1917 that “the working class is for [V. I.] Lenin what ore is for a metalworker...He [Lenin] works like a chemist in a laboratory, with the difference that the chemist uses dead matter...[whereas] Lenin works with living material.”<sup>7</sup> But Bolshevik Marxism was not alone in its refusal to accept human nature and society as they were. Rather, the tension between nature and nurture was encoded within the larger pan-

European view of modernity whereby political authorities increasingly sought to define and manage virtually all critical public and private spheres. (AHR)

In (11), the writer borrows from Gorky the analogy approaching Lenin to a chemist, the only difference being that the former works with living rather than dead material. S/he builds on this image, by pointing out that Bolshevik Marxism in general is characterised by a refusal to passively accept human nature, which in turn rests in a whole network of correspondences with a broader pan-European view of modernity - *Marxism was not alone...Rather, the tension...*

Thirdly, frame markers accompany analogy as they increase its rhetorical strength by setting it into a well-devised text where boundaries are explicitly marked, discourse goals are clearly announced and the development of authorial argument is neatly ordered. The most frequent frame markers attracted, as it were, by the presence of analogy are items that indicate additive relations - namely *first* and *second* - or prospective statements predicting discourse goals - cf. *my purpose is...*:

(12) At one point, Bauer describes the relation between Judaism and Christianity as analogous to that between mother and daughter. The point of this analogy is not only to make vivid the conflict between the two religions - thus, as the daughter is "ungrateful" to her mother, so, in turn, the mother refuses to "acknowledge" her daughter - but also to suggest the notion of an historical progression between generations. There are two striking features in Bauer's account of this historical progression. First, the daughter (Christianity) has "the higher right", has "progress" on her side [8]. Second, it appears that the mother (Judaism) and daughter (Christianity) cannot both survive; "the new", Bauer insists, "cannot be if the old endures" [8]. Both of these claims require some elaboration. (HEI)

As we can see from excerpt (12), the analogy between Judaism and Christianity as target-subjects, and mothers and daughters as analogous finds its place in a passage where the discourse is tersely organised in its following steps. The writer prospectively announces that s/he will deal with as many as *two striking* features in Bauer's theorisation, which he accomplishes through *First* and *Second* as introductory signals. Finally, s/he moves on by predicting that he will devote part of the upcoming text to an additional reflection upon Bauer's notions, as signalled by the forward-oriented statement *these claims require further elaboration* labelling the propositional content of the next paragraph or two.

Fourthly, analogy can be noted to collocate with endophoric markers directing readers to other parts of the research article, and hence guiding them to the retrieval of relevant information somewhere else in the text (14) or maybe throughout the rest of the text as in (13):

(13) ...one might argue that M. C. Escher's paintings are scientific without implying that they are science, just as a coating of paint may have a metallic sheen without being a metal. For the purposes of this essay, I will use the word 'scientific' to refer to properties (or characteristics) that we ascribe to those disciplines or human activities that we call 'science'. (SH)

(14) Herder writes: These patched up fragile contraptions known as State-machines are wholly devoid of inner life. There is no sentiment, no sympathy of any kind linking their component parts. Just like Trojan horses they move together or against each other. Without national character, they are just lifeless monsters. [...] In the following section, however, I shall point to some aspects of Herder's anthropological and historiographical work that imply that his concept of community is not as totalizing as his idea of organistic politics and his theory of language may at first suggest. By pointing to some key passages, I will show that his concept embraces the idea of contingency, ... (HEI)

The writer in (13) plays on the term 'scientific' to establish an analogical relationship between Escher's paintings and coatings of paint; with the aim of specifying how the analogy must be interpreted by the reader, s/he argues that in the rest of the paper, the word 'scientific' will be taken to fall within the definitional statement comprised in the rest of the sentence - *properties...that we ascribe to those disciplines or human activities that we call 'science'*. Furthermore, (14) is a remarkably illustrative extract: the writer goes back to Herder's thesis that State-machines are close to Trojan horses, by giving the reader adequate feedback on how s/he will pick up on the analogy *in the following section*.

If we move from interactive to interactional metadiscourse associated with the spread of analogy markers, we note that boosters are by far the most pervasive interactional device attested by corpus data. Interactional metadiscourse concerns authorial interventions in text through comments, acknowledgments, suggested interpretations or critical positions with respect to divergent opinions. Of the various sub-categories included by Hyland (2005, p. 52-53) in interactional metadiscourse, boosters appear to be the most widely represented alongside

analogy markers. Boosters denote the writers' assertive voice closing down the room for competing views, with the effect of narrowing down the space for alternative, let alone conflicting opinions set aside through a particularly confident voice. Common boosters retrieved in the collocational surroundings of analogy markers encompass the correlative *not only...but also*, emphatic formulae such as *what...is that* and *it is precisely because...*, *this is why...*, *this is precisely the...*, and the intensifier *indeed*.

The presence of boosters co-occurring with argument by analogy might not come as a surprise, because the writer's expression of certainty is highly likely to confer more authority to the argument itself, as can be seen from the examples reported below:

(15) Like historians, autobiographers implicitly or explicitly suggest causal connections, underline discrepancies between intentions and results, and point out ironies that are only recognizable with the benefit of hindsight. [...] They must face questions of style and structure, just as they do in writing history. It is precisely because history and autobiography are so closely related that historians who decide to cross the line from one to the other find themselves uneasy about what they are doing. (AHR)

(16) This is precisely the sort of universal/imperial/millenarian mission that seems to have inspired Russia's Communist leaders. Just as Marxism can be considered a secularized form of Judeo-Christian eschatology, the Communist revolution can be seen as a revolutionized form of Russian imperial ideology. [...] Like the American notion of Manifest Destiny, Bolshevik millenarianism was secular. [...] Indeed, the leaders of the new Soviet state merely recast the Russian Empire's old universalist and religious style of expression into the equally universalist but secular language of international socialism. (AHR)

By briefly browsing through (15)-(16), one realises how close the link is between argument by analogy and boosting. In (15), the booster *It is precisely because...that* marks the straightforward connection relating the argument - i.e. the analogy between historians and autobiographers - to the conclusion that *historians...find themselves uneasy* crossing the border with autobiography. In (16), similarly, the analogical relationship between Marxism/Judeo-Christian eschatology and Communist revolution/imperial ideology supports the prior thesis highlighted by *this is precisely...*; conversely, *indeed* acts as the trait-d'union, as it were, between the argument by analogy involving Manifest Destiny and Bolshevik



millenarianism, and the conclusion pointing to the perceived correct reading of Soviet leadership.

#### *4. Conclusions*

The findings presented in Section 3 suggest that the discursive construction of argument by analogy acts as a clue to some crucial argumentative sequences and organising principles of historical discourse. First of all, data show that the formulation of analogy tends to disclose the dialogic interplay of voices in the historical research article - as is the case with counterdiscursive responses provided by writers to the voice of competing interpretations of events and trends; secondly, analogy markers are often observed to lie at the basis of the two related steps of argumentation and explanation. Finally, there is a considerably interesting relation between the use of argument by analogy and the complex network of writer-reader interaction both in terms of authorial evaluation and with regard to the full deployment of metadiscourse.

In this respect, there is convincing evidence that historical discourse is a site where analogy markers display a significant tendency to attract interactive and interactional metadiscourse, and/or vice-versa. Consequently, results indicate that historians may resort to argument by analogy as a rhetorical strategy consolidating the interactive plane of text that frames the propositional contents of authorial argumentation (Hyland 2005). Indeed, by operating as a strategy through which language is best adapted to the expert audience of historical narrative and argument (cf. Perelman 1979), the collocation of analogy markers with metadiscourse highlights the fundamentally interactive status of analogy: in order to reinforce their points, historians establish a link between a fact or a notion and an analogous object they assume to be close to the readers' existing knowledge and cultural imagery[1]. In a word, just like metadiscourse, analogy is a tool in the historian's hands to engage the reader by making sure that authorial argument is constructed with the intended audience's needs in mind.

Obviously enough, the analytical parameters adopted in the paper may usefully be extended for further investigations. To begin with, it would be worth looking for other linguistic indicators of argument by analogy: the somewhat restricted range of elements considered here proved a good starting point in order to devise a more systematic analysis; yet we are far from claiming that the whole range of potential signals of this form of argument are exhausted here. In addition, an opportunity worth exploring might be to set up a cross-linguistic comparative

framework within history: is argument by analogy used to the same extent and in the same way by historians writing in other languages such as Italian? Do we find a similar correlation between analogy markers and metadiscourse? Finally, a promising line of research could lie in the cross-disciplinary study of analogy, in order to verify whether other more or less close disciplinary cultures (e.g. economics) also display a preference for argument by analogy or whether they generally privilege other argument forms as a way of entering a dialogue with disciplinary peers.

## NOTES

**[i]**In this respect, an issue worth further investigation is the heuristic function analogy may have in history. For instance, a sample of professional historians could be interviewed in order to enquire whether and to what extent they are aware that analogy might well contribute to the construction of historical truth, as it were, by fostering the understanding of admittedly controversial historical facts by virtue of their established proximity with more well-known events.

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