ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Gwen Ifill: Moderator Or Opponent In The 2008 Vice-Presidential Debate?

The October 2008 Vice-Presidential debate between Senator Joe Biden of Delaware and Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska drew over 70 million US viewers to their television sets. It was the second most watched political debate in the modern era of televised debates, surpassed only by the 80 million viewers for the Carter-Reagan debate in October of 1980. The Biden-Palin debate had a higher viewership that the first McCain-Obama debate or the George HW Bush-Geraldine Ferraro debate of 1984 which had previously held the record for the most viewed Vice-Presidential debate in American political history (Bauder).

By late September 2008 there was widespread speculation in the mainstream press that Sarah Palin was not prepared to participate in a Vice-Presidential debate. In the period leading up to the debate, she had very few unscripted public events. And, her performance in mainstream media interviews heightened the concern that Governor Palin was not prepared for high office. Against this backdrop, an important element of the McCain campaign's pre-debate preparation was an orchestrated effort to place the moderator, Gwen Ifill, into an adversarial role. In making this move, Governor Palin was provided a rhetorical location from which she could successful dismiss many of the inquiries made by Ms. Ifill during the debate.

In this instance, traditional debate theory can be used to unpack the relationship between the moderator, a designated member of the press, and the political candidate. Gwen Ifill was transformed from a debate moderator into an opponent for many who observed the debate. The McCain team nurtured the expectation that Ifill would join with Joe Biden to question Governor Palin's fitness for office. In many respects this was the same rhetorical transformation of a journalist's role found in the 1988 Vice-Presidential debate between Dan Quayle and Lloyd Bensen

(Weiler). This instance differs from the 1988 Bensen/Quayle debate, in that the characterization of the debate as the Republican candidate versus the media and the Democratic candidate was an orchestrated element of the pre-debate preparation by the McCain campaign.

In the 2008 Vice-Presidential debate, Republican partisans attacked the moderator's objectivity. This line of argument created a situation in which the moderator was perceived as favoring Biden and opposed to Palin and hence Ms Ifill could not press Governor Palin for evidence of her claims or contest her non-factual statements. The result was that Governor Palin delivered answers that were not responsive to questions and she spoke directly to the television audience unmediated by the debate context, which resulted in turn in a more favorable showing by Palin than the content of her answers might have warranted.

This particular case study hints at a recurrent tension that surfaces each time a moderator is selected for a general election debate. In the last four election cycles, the vast majority of these debates have been single moderator debates (Schroeder). The moderator is asked to participate in an event that is planned and structured by the two major parties. Those parties must approve the moderator and that person may feel a need to satisfy the parties to receive consideration in future iterations of these high profile events. Yet, the moderator is usually a noted journalist who is also expected to serve the interests of the viewing public. The moderator must satisfy the hosts while serving the public interest.

The political parties take a risk when selecting a moderator. For example, the most noteworthy moment in the 1988 election cycle was when CNN newsman and debate moderator Bernard Shaw asked Michael Dukakis how he would have reacted if his wife were raped. The answer Dukakis provided to this rather personal question led some to question his sense of human warmth. While this particular essay does not provide a theory of the argumentative role that a moderator should play in a debate, it does highlight the impact that a compromised moderator can have on the development argumentation in a political debate.

By framing the debate as a 2 on 1 exchange, Sarah Palin was free to redefine the 2008 Vice-Presidential debate as an opportunity to speak directly to the American public rather than as an argument on a defined set of topics with Joe Biden. In response to an early question in the debate about medical care, Governor Palin

revealed this strategy for the viewership: “And I may not answer the questions that either the moderator or you want to hear, but I’m going to talk straight to the American people and let them know my track record also” (Commission on Presidential Debates, p. 7). Palin signaled early on in the debate that she would not answer some questions and Ifill did little to facilitate an argumentative clash between the two contestants.

A review of the transcript, using some elements of the theoretical frameworks constructed by Rowland (1986) and Riley and Hollihan (1981), provides insight on the types of arguments Palin used in the debate. In reviewing the debate for complete, partial, and non answers to questions, this study finds that Governor Palin did not answer one-third of the questions asked in the debate. Additionally, when one looks at the types of arguments used by Palin in the debate, there are few if any instances in which she uses evidence to buttress her claims.

Given that a number of recent Vice Presidents have assumed the Presidency, one might assume that the ability to construct arguments under pressure is a skill we would look for in our candidates. Unfortunately, we do not always look at the Vice-Presidential debates as a moment to validate the choices of running mate by a Presidential nominee or on the argumentative capacity of the Vice-Presidential contender. In many instances, Vice Presidential debates are both political and academic afterthoughts. This analysis is one of only a handful of studies that look at the argumentation in Vice-Presidential debate and in particular the Biden-Palin debate of 2008 (Benoit & Henson).

The remainder of this paper will be divided into three sections. The first traces Governor Palin’s’ ascendancy to the national political stage. The second section describes the evolution of the pre-debate strategy to define Gwen Ifill as an opponent rather than a moderator for the debate. The third section reports on Ifill’s performance in the debate and the argumentation strategies deployed by Palin in response to Ifill’s questions.

1. Governor Palin’s Entry to the National Political Stage

There are a number of explanations for the number of viewers who tuned into the Biden-Palin debate in 2008. At that time, a widely held position was that the slotting of the first presidential debate into Friday night, a night of limited television viewership, explained the low numbers for the McCain-Obama debate. The assertion was that the outsized viewership tuned into the Biden-Palin debate

because it was the second debate in the series and it was broadcast on a Thursday night, a night that regularly produced large numbers of television viewers. Given the state of the US economy in September of 2008, and the McCain decision to suspend his campaign days before the first debate, one would have expected very high viewership for the McCain-Obama debate.

People did not watch the Biden-Palin debate simply because of the placement of the first Presidential debate on a Friday night. Sarah Palin was, and is, one of the most charismatic politicians in American public life. Despite her position as the failed Vice-Presidential candidate for a ticket that lost in what many consider a rout, Sarah Palin remains popular today. For example, a review of her Facebook page in June of 2010 found 1,672,554 friends. In contrast, Mitt Romney, a politician who some believe may be the early favorite for the Republican nomination in 2012, has 382,612 friends on his page. She remains a powerful political force in the United States. In a Newsweek article entitled "Saint Sarah" Lisa Miller (2010) lays out a compelling case that Sarah Palin is revitalizing the Evangelical Right in American politics by remaking that movement in her own image. While there is disagreement over her influence in politics, no one would contest the claim that she is a presence on the American political scene in 2010.

Looking back from our current vantage point, it is quite clear the reason for the high ratings of the debate was the curiosity about and interest in Sarah Palin. She was selected to serve as the Republican Vice-Presidential nominee the day after the Democratic Convention in August of 2008. This was an effective tactical move by the Republicans to tap down the media attention on the newly minted Obama/Biden ticket. She quickly became a national phenomenon. Palin's public and personal life in Alaska were scrutinized by the media. We learned that that her son left high school and joined the military and that her high school aged daughter was expecting a child. A widely read political blog, The Daily Kos, went so far to claim that Sarah Palin was the grandmother rather than the mother of her newborn child Trig.

Governor Palin was favored by many conservative Republicans because of her opposition to abortion, support of tax cuts, and commitment to the use of Alaskan oil to resolve the energy crisis in the United States. Her selection to serve as the Vice-Presidential nominee for the Republican Party in 2008 was an effort, by the McCain campaign, to mobilize the conservative base of the party. Palin was a strong pro-life advocate with a Down Syndrome infant child who energized the

base of the Republican Party. In the first twenty-four hours she was on the ticket, the McCain web site saw a seven fold increase in traffic and it collected $7 million dollars in on-line contributions (Baltz & Johnson). In the first few weeks after her selection, Sarah Palin was able to breathe life into the sagging McCain campaign. In early September, some polls showed the two campaigns in a statistical dead heat.

Her media interviews in mid-September did little to enhance her reputation with political moderates and her popularity waned. Her initial national television interview was with Charles Gibson of ABC News. While Palin was the celebrity de jour, Gibson avoided questions that would have highlighted that status. He focused on her knowledge of international and national issues. When the interview was over, the focus of the media and public's attention was on her understanding of the Bush Doctrine and not the questioning technique of Gibson. Additionally, she uttered the sentence that some people in Alaska could actually see Russia and that monitoring Russian activity was a part of the foreign policy agenda for a Governor of Alaska.

Palin's second national television interview was with Katie Couric of the CBS Evening News. In this interview, the governor was unable to identify a United States Supreme Court case, other than Roe v Wade, which she disagreed with. Palin was also unable to identify any vote that John McCain cast in a twenty-six year career that called for additional banking regulations. This was a problem for the campaign due to the state of the US economy in October 2008. Governor Palin declined to identify a newspaper she read on a regular basis when questioned by Couric about her reading habits. Finally, she once again articulated the oft ridiculed argument that Alaska's proximity to Russia established a foreign policy expertise for a Governor of that state. Voters from across the political spectrum expressed serious concern over Palin's performance in the multi-day Couric interview. Moderates and some conservatives worried that Palin was not prepared to hold national political office. Following the Couric interview, a noted Republican commentator, Kathleen Parker (2008), called for Palin to step down from the Republican ticket.

The interview was followed by a spoof done by the comedian Tina Fey on Saturday Night Live (SNL), a weekly US television comedy show. The Fey impersonation was widely circulated on the internet and led to a spate of Fey guest appearances on SNL where she played the role of Palin. One reason the Fey

impersonation was so successful was that she used Palin's language verbatim to answer the questions about the state of the economy. Such answers were supplemented by clearly absurd statement, including a hope that the numbers of foreigners working at the United Nations could be reduced.

The poor performances in the Gibson and Couric interviews, combined with Tina Fey's remarkable impersonation seriously eroded Palin's approval with many in the voting public. In the period immediately following her selection, Governor Palin's approval ratings topped out in early September at around 50%. Her positive ratings exceeded both those of John McCain and Barack Obama. Her meteoric rise in national politics in August and September was followed by a near total collapse in her popularity. While most conservatives continued to support Governor Palin, she found herself with little political support outside of the Republican base.

2. Framing the Debate for the American Public

The harsh light of the national media attention had undermined Palin's public standing and there were reports that it impacted her debate preparation. After joining the campaign, Palin began preparation by construction and studying a stack of index cards. The picture of someone studying groups of index cards should be a familiar one for people who engaged in intercollegiate debate before the emerging era of paperless debate. These cards had a varied set of facts and names that the Governor studied regularly. A sympathetic member of the McCain team reported that the memorization of facts for the debate was indeed undermining her confidence and preparation. The Governor was being schooled in facts with little attention paid to the method of delivering an argument (Baltz and Johnson p, 358).

In late September, the McCain debate preparation team decided to take control of the sessions from Palin's handlers and moved them to the McCain ranch in Arizona. While in Arizona, the number of people with access to the Governor was restricted. The McCain campaign was aware of the damage created by the suspect interviews and they adapted the preparation in the week leading up to the Vice-Presidential debate. According to the Wall Street Journal, the McCain team worked to eliminate the communication patterns that had eroded her rhetorical effectiveness in public interviews (Langley).

The team had about a week to prepare Palin for a debate that was governed by a

set of rules that differed from those agreed upon for the Presidential debates. The Vice-Presidential debate format was negotiated between Democrats and Republicans only after each party had selected a nominee. Throughout the fall, the McCain team pressed for a format that limited the time that a candidate would have to answer a question. In the end, individual answers were limited to ninety seconds with a two minute follow-up period in the debate. This compares to two minute answers with a five minute follow-up for the Presidential debates.

This more restricted format was helpful when preparing Palin for the debate. Her initial answers could be brief and a two minute follow-up meant she would not be required to articulate heavily evidenced answers to questions. The preparation team could provide Palin with a number of arguments on topics she excelled at, and in many cases, she could simply redefine a question to provide answers that played to her strength.

A potential vulnerability associated with this format was that a moderator could elect to ask a set of questions that while not identical, would solicit a repetitive set of answers from the candidate. This was the situation that Dan Quayle confronted in 1988 when the journalists asked him a set of overlapping questions about his fitness for high office. In this instance the focus of the debate turned to Quayle's qualifications for office and he was left to repeat the same answer over and over again. With each set of repetitive answers, his credibility was further eroded. Under these conditions, narrowing the debate to that one controlling proposition undermined the contestant.

Interestingly, while the format for the Vice-Presidential debate was negotiated after each candidate was selected by the respective campaigns; the moderator was announced in mid-August when the details of the Presidential debates were unveiled. Included in the memorandum of agreement was the designation of moderators for the three Presidential debates, Bill Moyers, Tom Brokaw and Bob Schieffer, and the moderator for the Vice-Presidential debate, Gwen Ifill.

Gwen Ifill was the host of the Public Broadcasting System's weekly television panel discussion of national politics, "Washington Week" and a senior correspondent on the national television political commentary program, "News Hour." She was a protégé of the late Tim Russert of NBC News and a frequent participant on a staple weekly program of American political commentary television, Meet the Press. Additionally, Ifill had served as the moderation of the

2004 Vice-Presidential debate between Vice President Dick Cheney and Senator John Edwards. While some Republicans complained about her treatment of Cheney in that debate, most pundits believed she performed effectively in the 2004 Vice-Presidential debate. Gwen Ifill remains an anomaly in the world of politics. She is an African American woman with a successful track record as a journalist in both the print and mass media. The political commentator, Howard Kurtz (2008), believed that it was her personal identity that allowed her to ask important public policy questions of Cheney and Edwards in 2004 that others might have ignored. Her question about HIV/AID in the African American population led the audience to understand that neither candidate had considered this public health crisis.

In the days leading up to the debate, Ifill's contract for a book on the 2008 campaign cycle became the subject of controversy in some political circles. *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama*, was scheduled for release on January 20, 2009. It was described as a review of the modern African-American politician and included chapters on Barack Obama, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick and Cory Booker the Mayor of Newark New Jersey. The contract was reported as early as May 8, 2008 in a *Philadelphia Inquirer* interview with Ms. Ifill (Schaffer). A cursory internet search in the summer of 2008 would have found the *Inquirer* article or the pre-sale for the book on Amazon.com.

The popular conservative web page World Net Daily released a story entitles "VP Moderator Ifill releasing pro-Obama book" on September 30, 2008. This headline was quickly picked up by the Drudge Report and the story spread into the blogosphere. The McCain campaign and its surrogates affirmed Ifill's journalistic professionalism and her capacity to moderate the debate. But, the campaign's statements were constructed in a fashion to authenticate the suspicions of Republican partisans. John McCain's commented that he believed that Ifill would be objective but reiterated that the disclosure of the book contract wasn't helpful (Rutenberg). His comments were circulated on Fox News, the media outlet that was running a number of stories about the Ifill controversy in the days before the debate. Sarah Palin told Sean Hannity, a conservative talk show personality, that the Ifill controversy would simply encourage Republicans to try event harder to get their message out to the public. Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, a regular surrogate speaker for the McCain campaign, stated that that Ifill could be fair in moderating the debate. He did, however, raise doubt by about Ifill by

suggesting that a moderator who wrote a book in support of McCain might be forced from the post. Giuliani was explicitly tying this controversy to the larger political narrative that the mainstream media in the US attacks political conservatives and protects political liberals. While it is likely that some Republican partisans may have deployed the media bias argument against another journalist holding the moderator post, Ifill's financial motive added a great degree of force to the claim. To borrow from the language of academic debate, in this particular instance there was a strong link to the widely circulated impact of the left leaning media in American politics. The comments of McCain, Palin and Giuliani that commentators on cable television networks and in the blogosphere would lay bare the interests that undermined Ifill's position as moderator (ABC News).

This controversy provided Fox News with a couple days of programming. Megyn Kelly and Bill Hemmer fleshed out the financial investment that Ifill had in the outcome of the election (Fox News, America's Newsroom). An Obama win would certainly lead to greater sales of the book and financially benefit Ms. Ifill. Bill O'Reilly, host of the O'Reilly Factor, complained the Gwen Ifill refused to take his call for an interview and called for her to step aside (Fox News, O'Reilly Factor). Greta Van Susteren provided a coherent case against Ifill's selection to moderate the Vice-Presidential debate. Her rationale was that while the book's existence may have been in the public domain, Ifill had an obligation to disclose the potential conflict before accepting the moderator's post. Van Susteren suggested that journalists should be expected to follow the ethical code prescribed for lawyers in the US (Fox News, On the Record). The call for Ifill to withdraw was a constant refrain on the FOX Network in the days leading up to the debate.

Ifill's treatment by media personalities on Fox News seemed tame when compared to the comments on talk radio and blogs. Rush Limbaugh, the most successful radio personality in the US, began a segment of his show by reporting to the audience that Ifill was "totally in the tank" for Obama. Later in his monologue Limbaugh asserted that Ifill was on the front line of the feminist assault on Sarah Palin (Limbaugh). The phrase "in the tank" osculated in the blogosphere. The political blogger, Michelle Malkin (2008), published a piece titled "Debate, Tanked." In the post she wrote: "But there is nothing moderate about where Ifill stands on Barack Obama. She's so far in the tank for the Democratic presidential candidate; her oxygen delivery line is running out". She

proceeded to outline what she believed was an orchestrated effort by Ifill to financial benefit herself with a book about Obama. For Malkin, it was a financial motive that caused Ifill to withhold the status of her book deal, when offered the opportunity to moderate the debate.

Ms. Ifill was transformed from a journalist into an Obama apologist with a financial interest in his success. Andrew McCarthy (2008) summarized this position in an on-line essay: “Ifill has shed whatever patina of objectivity she had to become Obama’s amanuensis. In the process, she has shrewdly designed a commercial transaction that gives her a hefty stake in the outcome of the election – if Obama wins and the inauguration book roll-out goes as planned, she’ll make a bundle”.

An effect of the line of attack on the moderator, in the three days leading up to the event, was summed up by a liberal blogger, Cenk Uygur (2008), in a Huffington Post entry: “These attacks against Gwen Ifill are so transparent. I don’t know why we’re even having a legitimate discussion about their validity. The McCain campaign is desperate to have the moderator of the VP debate go easy on Palin. So, they are working her over, ahead of time”. The strategy of redefining Ifill as an opponent rather than a moderator may have effected Ifill’s approach when dealing with the inevitable Palin misstatements in the nationally televised debate. Furthermore, Palin was provided license to ignore the question of a moderator whose impartiality had been compromised in the firestorm leading up to the debate.

3. Debate and Argumentation in the Vice-Presidential Debate

While Palin’s arguments may not have differed significantly with another moderator, the Ifill controversy provided her with political cover following the debate. She had a plausible reason to avoid Ifill’s questions. Ifill was both a member of the left leaning press and someone with a vested interest in an Obama victory. There were a conflicting set of reports on Ifill’s performance in the debate. Many in the mainstream media suggested Ifill did a commendable job under trying circumstances. And, interestingly many of the voices who complained about Ifill before the debate were silent on the question in post-debate commentary. Perhaps, their silence reflected that the pre-debate tactic was successful. There were some commentators who suggested that the tactic had succeeded and Ifill had failed to serve as an effective moderator. Lenny Steinhorm, a political communication professor at American University, alleged

that Ifill had abdicated her responsibility by failing to ask probing questions. His position was that a debate was more than a joint press conference, and it was not a communicative exchange in which the moderator pushed the candidates to test their fitness for high office (Gough).

Interestingly, Ifill's own comments following the debate hint that she had abdicated the responsibilities of a moderator. On Meet the Press she stated that the role of the moderator was to control the debate. However, she then went on to point out that the decision to avoid or answer questions resided with Palin and Biden in the debate. While Ifill defended her performance in the debate, her comments point to her constraints that night in St. Louis. To avoid sparking a post debate controversy, she was forced to restrict the role that a moderator often plays in a debate. Ifill seemed to have defined control of the debate as nothing more that regulating the length time each candidate would get to speak. Ifill was fully aware that she had ceded, to Palin, control over the content of answers to questions in the debate. In response to a query from Tom Brokaw about Palin ignoring questions in the debate, Ifill was quick to confirm that "she blew me off" (NBC News).

In reviewing the transcript of the debate, there are few, if any, instances in which Ifill probed the candidates. The most obvious use of a follow up took place when Ifill waited more than 30 minutes before asking a second set of questions about the Office of Vice President. In that particular instance Ifill did not highlight the fact that Palin could not accurately describe the constitutional obligations of a Vice President.

Joe Biden found himself alone in pointing out the factual inaccuracies of Governor Palin in the debate. When answering the question about the role of the Vice President, Biden reminded the audience that the Vice President does not preside over the Senate as Palin had suggested. And, rather than targeting Palin, Biden then redirected the answer to assail the job Dick Cheney had done as Vice President in the Bush Administration. Biden had made the factual correction without victimizing Sarah Palin.

In answering another question, Biden implied that Ifill wasn't fact checking the Alaska Governor. When Palin delivered an answer on Afghanistan that bore little resemblance to the reality of the situation, Biden implored Ifill to check Palin's answers. Biden began a foreign policy answer with the statement "With

Afghanistan, facts matter, Gwen (Commission, p.24).” The moderator was reduced to a time keeper and Governor Palin was free to either ignore a question she was not prepared for or she could simply produce an answer with very little evidence.

Ifill bore little resemblance to what we might consider a moderator or judge in a debate. Absent a moderator focusing the debate on questions of public policy with an expectation that answers would contain both warrants and evidence, Palin was free to respond in a less traditional fashion. A review of the transcript of the debate provided additional support for the conclusion that the appeals used by Plain were not regularly found in a political debate.

Dating back to the 1960, argument scholars, debate coaches and political debate scholars have undertaken a variety of analyses of the debates. This essay utilizes elements of the approaches used by Rowland in his essay on the Carter-Reagan debate and the work of Riley and Hollihan who reviewed the same debate to assess the quality of Palin’s argumentation. When looking at the 1980 transcript, Rowland identified full answers, partial answers, and non-answers to questions. His essay called into question a widely held position that Jimmy Carter was a more substantive debater than Ronald Reagan. Before and after that 1980 debate, the media reported on the debate as a clash between Carter’s substance and Reagan’s style. Rowland’s conclusion was that Ronald Reagan, and not Jimmy Carter, won the 1980 debate when one employed the standard of complete, partial, and non answers.

A review of the 2008 Vice-Presidential debate using an independent critic was employed to assess Palin’s argumentation. The evaluator read some samples of answers from previous debate that met the criteria of complete, partial and full answers before assessing the debate transcript. I then followed up that assessment by reviewing the debate to provide a second glimpse at the answers to Ifill’s questions. The finding in this case was that Sarah Palin answered a total of 29 questions for Gwen Ifill. Six of the answers were determined to be full answers. Thirteen of the answers were determined to be partial answers. Finally, ten of the answers were determined to be non answers.

In this particular debate, the widely held expectation that Palin would not answer the questions with the specificity exhibited by Joe Biden was validated. Joe Biden answered 28 questions for Gwen Ifill. Fourteen of his answers were identified as

complete answers. Nine of his answers were determined to be partial answers. And, there were five instances in which Biden did not directly answer Ifill's question. Early on in the debate, Palin suggested that she might not answer the moderators question and she intended to speak directly to the American people. This analysis confirms that she elected to follow that path on numerous occasions during the debate.

Beyond looking at whether Governor Palin answered particular questions, there are some interesting results when one looks at the types of support she uses when addressing questions. Riley and Hollihan produced a content analysis of the arguments in Presidential debates which they applied to a number of debates including the Carter-Reagan debate. Their system was based, in part, on the work of a political scientist, John Ellsworth (1965), who looked for "rational" arguments in the Kennedy-Nixon debates of 1960. The argument types coded in the Riley and Hollihan essay were clustered into three categories: Analysis: Any statement of a position supported by reasoning and/or discussion of consequences is classified as analysis. Declarative/Declaration: Any statement which neither reasons not offers a discussion of the consequences nor offers evidence for support of the statement is classified as declaration. Evidence: Any statement that utilizes evidence in a non-analytic fashion to support a position either specially espoused or assumed to be espoused by the candidate is classified as evidence.

The Biden-Palin debate was reviewed to see what types of statements Governor Palin made when responding to the moderator's questions. In the debate, there were 20 instances in which Governor Palin used statements of declaration when addressing Gwen Ifill's questions. There were four instances in which she used analysis to support her statements. The reviewer found no instances in which evidence was deployed by Governor Palin. My review of the transcript found two instances in which Palin used evidence to craft an argument. Joe Biden's argumentation patterned differed significantly from that of the Alaska Governor. The reviewer found one instance of declarative argument, two instances of analysis used to buttress the argument and ten cases in which Biden deployed evidence in support of his claim.

The substantive analysis of this debate resulted in two interesting findings. First, Governor Palin did not answer one-third of the questions asked by the moderator in the debate. Without the moderator controversy that preceded the debate, this might have been the focus of the post-debate commentary. Fortunately for

Governor Palin, Ifill was viewed by many as an opponent rather than a moderator. And, for those of us who have judged more than a few debates, the Vice-Presidential debate looked like a cross-examination period in many intercollegiate debates. Often debaters do their best to avoid answering opposition questions and they are only forced to do so because of the presence of a moderator. For many viewers, the Vice-Presidential debate did not have a moderator, just a series of contestants. So, questions simply went unanswered. Second, in most cases, Governor Palin did not deploy evidence to answer questions. In place of evidence, Governor Palin deployed conclusions without warrants and folksy stories drawn from stump speeches to directly address the American voters.

While this study highlights some shortcoming in Palin's argumentation, it does not presume to declare Biden the winner of the debate. Many voters were probably tuning into the debate for something other than recitation of a substantive set of policy arguments. With the failed mainstream media interviews and the Tina Fey impersonation serving as the backdrop to this event, the expectations for Governor Palin were extraordinarily low and even a marginal performance could have been described as effective. Viewers monitoring the debate in the hopes of watching Palin implode on national television left disappointed. And, given that was the expectation for many of the 70 million viewers, the night was a relative success for Governor Palin.

The debate served as a moment in which Governor Palin elected to remind the audience that she was a mother who was committed to improving the lives of middle class Americans. In this instance, the political handlers let Sarah be Sarah. Rather than defended the policies of Republicans and the Bush Administration, Palin told the voters that she was a soccer mother who polled other soccer mothers about pocketbook issues and she even had a "shout out" for a third grade class assigned to watch the debate. This rhetorical approach allowed Governor Palin to present little if any real evidence for her positions in the debate.

This rhetorical technique served, and continues to serve, Sarah Palin well with the conservative base of the Republican Party. However, the use of personal anecdotes as a replacement for evidence when discussing the economy did little to assure moderate voters that she was capable of leading the country. Her folksy charm was not effective when discussing issues that included Middle East policy and nuclear doctrine (Calellos).

The commentators were quick to point out what Palin herself suggested and this study affirmed; Governor Palin did not engage the moderator's questions. In reviewing the debate the *Los Angeles Times* Media Critic Mary McNamara wrote: "Indeed, with her "bless his/her hearts" and knowing laughs, Palin may have invented an entirely new rhetorical style: random folksiness. Each bit of lighthearted "Sarahness" was followed by a Serious Face as she got down to the issues. Or at least the issues she was comfortable with. . .Palin pronounced early on that she wasn't necessarily going to answer questions but would instead address the American people directly" (McNamara, 2008, p. A16).

Further, this paper hints at an innovative strategy that can be deployed when a candidate with a low national profile and limited experience is pushed onto the national stage. A campaign can succeed when it further exacerbate the asymmetry between debate contestants. By redefining the debate to be a 2 on 1 exchange, the McCain campaign afforded Governor Palin with the ability to effectively ignore questions. In this debate, the moderator was disempowered and elected not to ask follow up questions or press Governor Palin to clarify factual inaccuracies. Perhaps, most importantly for Governor Palin, conservatives viewing the debate were inoculated against the liberal media and its representative, Gwen Ifill, by the controversy in the pre-debate public dialogue.

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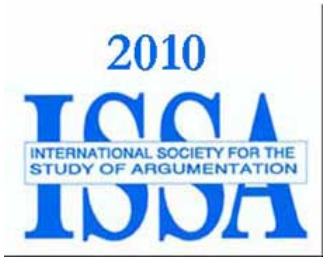
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Argumentation: Problems Of Style And The Contribution Of Kenneth Burke



In the fourth ISSA Conference in 1998, George Ziegelmueller and Donn Parson proposed a perspective on what constituted linguistically sound arguments. It included provisions that (1) it conforms to the traditional field invariant standards of inductive and deductive argument, (2) is based upon date appropriate to the

audience and field, and (3) is expressed in language that enhances the evocative and ethical force of argument. What was missing was the development of the third characteristic of linguistically sound arguments: the problem of language.

There has always been some division between logos and lexis. From the time of Aristotle, whose view of argument validity is determined by the underlying notion of mathematical validity, to Stephen Toulmin, who chose to substitute the jurisprudential model for the mathematical model, logos was still the dominant approach to argument. One of the arguments Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca make is that formal systems of logic, which are dependent on mathematical reasoning, seem unrelated to rational evidence. They therefore propose a new look at argumentation – a new rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 3-9).

The problems of language in argument are susceptible to numerous approaches, but the approach of Kenneth Burke may be an effective one in discerning "language that enhances the evocative and ethical force of argument." He suggests that key to understand the concept of lexis is the examination of tropes, and that examination be broader than in their typical literary context. In *The Grammar of Motives* essay, "Four Master Tropes," Burke explores four "literal" or "realistic" applications of these tropes, as their substitutions:
For metaphor we could substitute perspective;
For metonymy we could substitute reduction;
For synechdoche we could substitute representation;
For irony we could substitute dialectic (Burke, *Grammar of Motives*, 503).

None of the approaches to these tropes at first glance seem terribly revolutionary.

Metaphor, for Burke, becomes "a device for seeing something *in terms of* something else. It brings out the thisness of that, or the thatness of a this" (Burke, GM 503).
In his discussion of irony, he attempts to separate Romantic irony, in which the relation of superior of inferior is always present, to "true irony" which reverses the situation. "True irony, however, irony that really does justify the attitude of 'humility,' is not 'superior' to the enemy…True irony, humble irony, is based upon a sense of fundamental kinship with the enemy, as one needs him, is indebted to him, is not merely outside him as an observer but contains him within, being consubstantial with him" (Burke, GM 514). We shall later discuss how argument and the use of tropes in argument can create consubstantiality.

1. Metaphor

Our initial focus on tropes was on the metaphor, which (we then thought) was the trope of tropes for Burke. This was in part because metaphor had feet in both the literary and logical tradition, starting with Aristotle. Two problems arise. The first is that Aristotle wrote of the metaphor in both the *Poetics* and the *Rhetoric*. In the *Poetics* he states that "Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy." (*Poetics*, 1457b6-9). Paul Ricoeur makes the observation that in both works, "Metaphor is placed under the same rubric of lexis." Whether the metaphor performs the same function in poetics as in rhetoric is more complex, as Ricoeur argues:

The duality of rhetoric and poetics reflects a duality in the use of speech as well as the situations of speaking.

We said that rhetoric originally was oratorical technique; its aim and that of oratory are identical, to know how to persuade.

Now this function, however far reaching does not cover all the uses of speech.

Poetics – the art of composing poems, principally tragic poems – as far as its function and its situation of speaking are concerned, does

not depend on rhetoric, the art of defense, of deliberation, of blame and of praise (Ricoeur, 12).

Metaphor was the "foundational trope" for Burke (Tell, 37) from the time of *Permanence and Change* (1937) when he "developed at some length the relationship between metaphor and perspective" (Burke, GM 504). When in this work he discusses Bergson's "planned incongruity" and its resulting "Perspective by Incongruity," the metaphor as a naming process thrived. (The very creation of "perspective" by incongruity indicates its metaphorical nature.) His discussion of "Word Magic" and the creation of the scapegoat in *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (1941) continued the tradition. Burke's shortened discussion of the metaphor in *Grammar of Motives* (1945) should not confuse us, since he had discussed the metaphor in prior works. He goes so far as to consider all language development through metaphor: "Language develops by metaphorical extension, in borrowing words from the realm of the corporeal, visible, tangible and applying them by analogy to the realm of the incorporeal, invisible, intangible; then in the course of time, the original corporeal reference is forgotten, and only the incorporeal, metaphorical extension survives" (Burke, GM 506). Since

perspective became a key term for Burke and was produced by metaphor, it is easy to see why it could be considered his "foundational trope."

2. Metaphor and Deviation

A theory of language and metaphor developed by Jean Cohen may be helpful in explaining the power of metaphor. He posits that there is a stratum of language which excludes figuration. As Paul Ricoeur comments in explaining Cohen's approach, language "consists in choosing as point of reference not absolute degree zero, but a relative degree zero, i.e., that stratum of language usages that would be the least marked from the rhetorical point of view, and thus the least figurative. This language exists; it is the language of science" (Ricoeur, 139-40). Cohen considers the metaphor a violation: "Metaphorical meaning is an effect of the entire statement, but it is focused on one word, which can be called the metaphorical word. This is why one must say that metaphor is a semantic innovation that belongs at once to the predicative order (new pertinence) and the lexical order (paradigmatic deviation)" (Ricoeur, 156-157). The creation of metaphor is a disturbance; it is a deviation from degree zero. The reaction to the metaphor, the reduction of deviation from degree zero takes us to audience, and to the enthymeme, which we will explore for its ability to provide methods of understanding of all four tropes, and the reduction of deviation created by each.

3. Irony

In Burke's discussion of irony, the focus is on the irony-dialectic relationship. He illustrates the concept with a comparison to relativism; he argues that relativism sees everything "in but one set of terms" – "in relativism there is no irony." His discussion seeks to separate Romantic irony, in which the relation of superior to inferior is always present to "true irony" which reverses the situation. Burke develops a discussion of Falstaff as a "gloriously ironic conception" because it creates a sense of identification; Falstaff identifies himself with the victims. Rather than steal a purse, he would "join forces with the owner of the purse" (Burke, GM 515). The distinction is that he displays true irony, which is based on humility and kinship; it creates consubstantiality. When Burke takes as one part of the definition of humans that they are "Rotten with Perfection" he has not only created a metaphor but done so by joining it with irony. In Permanence and Change (1937) in which even the title embraces irony in its substitution of "and" for "or," he treats of "Perspective by Incongruity" whereby one takes the opposite view. "These are historical perspectives, which Spengler acquires by taking a

word usually applied to one setting and transferring its use to another setting. It is a 'perspective by incongruity,' since he established it by violating the 'properties' of the word in its previous linkages" (Burke, Permanence and Change, 90). He would equate this incongruity with dialectical irony, and feature its humility. Perspective by incongruity links to Burke's comic frame which "should enable people to be observers of themselves, while acting" (Burke, ATH, 171). Irony becomes one of the chief devices for operating within the comic frame; as such, irony is an ultimate corrective.

4. Metonymy and Synecdoche

There is no clear cut distinction separating the master tropes, and for Burke this aids rather than impairs the understanding. He observes that "A reduction is a representation. If there is some kind of correspondence between what we call the act of perception and what we call the thing perceived, then either of these equivalents can be taken as 'representative' of the other. Thus as reduction (metonymy) overlaps upon metaphor (perspective) so likewise it overlaps upon synecdoche (representation)" (Burke, GM 507).

Burke presents a standard definition of synecdoche, with 'such meanings: part for the whole, whole for the part, container for the contained, sign for the thing signified, material for the thing made (which brings us nearer to metonymy), cause for effect, effect for cause, genus for species, species for genus, etc. All such conversions imply an integral relationship, a relationship of convertibility, between the two terms"(Burke GM 507-8). In a series of letters between Burke and John Crowe Ransom, a dispute arose over whether the tropes operate differently when used by the scientist and the poet. Ransom's insistence met Burke's stubborn refusal to separate scientists and poets as users of the master tropes. One clear distinction occurs between metonymy and synecdoche in the exchange. Burke argued that "the lesson of metonymy is that language is always already metaphorical and thus poets and scientists can be placed in the same metaphoric bin" (Tell, 41). Metonymy, for Burke, becomes a strategy "to convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible (Burke 506). When we speak of "the heart" to describe "the emotions," we are engaging in a metonymic reduction. As such it is a device of "'poetic realism' – but its partner, 'reduction,' is a device of 'scientific realism'" (Burke GM 506).

The overlap between terms is discussed with Burke's observation that "a reduction is a representation" (Burke, GM 507). Tell comments that "if metonymy

is the reduction from the immaterial experience of shame to the material experience of colored cheeks, synecdoche is the 'conversion upwards' by which the poet understands that the colored cheeks represent shame…It is synecdochic conversion upwards that 'induces' the audience to overcome the limitations of language. Metonymy limited language by restricting it to 'metaphorical extension'; synecdoche overcomes this limitation by inducement" (Tell, 43). This may be a major reason that Burke argued to Ransom that synecdoche should be considered 'Trope No. 1″ (Tell, 43) in contrast to earlier positions in which the metaphor would have held that rank. Burke notes, however, that metonymy may be treated "as a special application of synecdoche" in part because "a reduction is a *representation*" (Burke, GM 509). Since synecdoche is the trope of representation, and since all reductions create representations, we might consider synecdoche the dominant trope for Burke.

5. The Representative Anecdote

The concept of the representative anecdote is a key to Burke, for it relates to the major tropes. He begins the section in the *Grammar of Motives* with the now famous observation that in selecting vocabularies of motives, we search for "faithful reflections of reality. To this end, they must develop vocabularies that are selections of reality. And any selection of reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a deflection of reality" (Burke, GM 59). He develops the anecdote with a comparison of dramatism and behaviorism. His complaint against behaviorism is that its anecdotes are not representative of the complexity of human motives. "A representative case of human motivation must have a strongly linguistic bias, whereas animal experimentation necessarily neglects this" (Burke, GM 59). Initially his discussion of the representative anecdote includes the relation between synecdoche and metonymy: "It is enough to observe that the issue arises as soon as one considers the relation between representation and reduction in the choice and development of a motivational calculus" (Burke, GM 60).

Burke's purpose is both to develop the representative anecdote and demonstrate how it is the appropriate form to encompass dramatism. But what must it include? It must be "supple and complex enough to be representative of the subject matter it is designed to calculate. It must have copes. Yet it must also possess simplicity, in that it is broadly a reduction of the subject matter" (Burke, GM 60). In this sense, then, it functions as a metonymy. Burke selects drama as

his representative anecdote; he thinks it meets these requirements. Dramatism has another characteristic: it features "the realm of *action*" in comparison to "scientific reduction to sheer *motion*" The anecdote must also become a summation, "containing implicitly what the system that is developed from it contains explicitly" (Burke, GM 60).

Brian Crable suggests that the representative anecdote may in fact be the summing activity of all four master tropes. He argues that in any inquiry, "the inquiry's process of selection and reduction can result in either *re*flection or *de*flection. In the first case, the anecdote is a *representative* anecdote; in the latter, it is merely *informative* (Crable, 324). The problem, he asserts, is that deflection forces one to look "away from one's subject matter in hopes of seeing it more clearly–and it therefore leads to an inadequate, incomplete interpretation and observation of the subject at hand" (Crable, 325). He illustrates the deflective anecdote as a cookie cutter which creates special patterns but which leaves remaining dough to be discarded.

His position is that a representative anecdote combines all four tropes. "A representative anecdote goes further, however than an informative or deflective anecdote–incorporating not merely perspective and reduction, but also synecdoche and irony. A representative anecdote is characterized by all *four* major tropes" (Crable, 325).

6. Epistemic Functions of the Four Tropes

In an excellent article on the epistemic function of the four master tropes, Dave Tell explores seventeen exchanges between Burke and John Crowe Ransom, then editor of the *Partisan Review.* Part of the argument centered on Ransom's belief that "scientific knowledge" and "poetic knowledge" created incommensurable epistemologies and Burke's rejection of that position. In addition, Tell explores each of the tropes' epistemic functions. "At the very least, then, language for Burke is epistemic; it creates meaning. The lesson that knowledge is perspectival, the tutelage of metonymy is that language demands such perspectivism, and the exhortation of synecdoche and irony is that knowledge is inescapably rhetorical" (Tell, 37). One might then consider how these tropes function to create that meaning.

Knowledge is produced by the creation of tropes. The metaphor, for example, in Aristotle's writings "conveys learning and knowledge through the medium of the

genus" (1410b13). This leaning is produced by understanding the substitution of one term for another. So in the relationship of terms, the metaphor becomes a deviation from that relationship. The metaphor, in the opinion of Paul Ricoeur, "destroys an order only to invent a new one" (Ricoeur, 334). Yet the invention must be recognized to create that knowledge, for each metaphor contains new information; it either redescribes or recreates a new reality. Creating this new reality is a joint project of the rhetor and audience. This process of metaphoric understanding is included in Lloyd Bitzer's definition of the enthymeme: "a syllogism based on probabilities, signs, and examples, whose function is rhetorical persuasion. Its successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of speaker and audience, and this is its essential character" (Bitzer, 409). While not all enthymemes are metaphors, all metaphors function enthymematically.For a metaphor to function as a comparison, or create perspective, the grounds on which the comparison is based must be "available" to audiences.

The effect of any of the master tropes occurs in relation to its audience. The creation of the metaphor, for example, is a joint effort of rhetor and audience; it may use the name of signs, probabilities and examples. It may then occur as part of an enthymeme and may be negotiated in the same way aspects of an enthymeme are negotiated. For a metaphor to function as a comparison, the grounds on which comparison is based must be available to the audience. While Richard Moran is focusing on the metaphor, his observations apply to all the master tropes:

Such imaginative activity on the part of the audience contributes directly to the rhetorician's aim of persuasiveness.…

But the crucial advantage here is not simply the surplus value obtained by having others work for you, but rather the miraculous fact

That shifting the imaginative labor onto the audience makes the ideas thereby produced infinitely more valuable rhetorically

than they would be as products of the explicit assertions of the speaker (Moran, 396).

Moran's description of the use of metaphor and its value to the rhetor are strikingly similar to Bitzer's description of the possibilities of the enthymeme. "It is because the implications of the imaginative activity of the audience themselves that the ideas elicited will borrow some of the probative value of their personal discoveries, rather than be subjected to the skepticism accorded to someone

else's testimony" (Moran, 396). Thus an audience gains pleasure from completing a rhetor's enthymeme; it may gain both pleasure and knowledge from understanding a rhetor's metaphor. Hence one can "double their pleasure" by understanding that tropes function enthymematically. While there is always the possibility that the enthymeme may not be completed, or the audience gain pleasure, when successful it increases the audience estimate of the rhetor: they praise the rhetoric by praising themselves.

A similar concept of the function of tropes is formulated by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca in The New Rhetoric (1969) in their concept of "presence" in argument. They see presence as an "essential factor to argumentation" because "through verbal magic alone," a rhetor can "enhance the value of some of the elements of which one has actually been made conscious" (Perelman-Olbrechts-Tyteca, 116-7). Presence becomes the quality arguments possess to varying degrees, endowment them with a sense of immediacy, of importance, even of urgency. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest the key is the imagination, with a nod to Bacon. One way to talk about presence is to say it is the clothing on the argument, and their suggestion of available strategies to create presence include the metaphor, synecdoche and amplification. Clearly the creation of presence by trope is an exercise in "verbal magic." The statement could have come from Kenneth Burke.

Jean Cohen's writings demonstrate how metaphors create deviation from a "relative degree zero, i.e. that stratum of language usages that would be the least marked from the rhetorical point of view, and thus the least figurative" (Ricoeur, 140). Referring to the poet, Cohen observes "The poet plays upon the message in order to change the language. Should he not also write: the poet changes the language to play upon the message?" (Ricoeur, 154). Would Burke's rhetor act any differently, creating the metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, irony to play upon the message? The act of reduction of deviation is one method for creating consubstantiality between rhetor and audience. Ricoeur extends the position: "If all language, all symbolism consists in 'remarking reality,' there is no place in language where this work is more plainly and fully demonstrated. It is when symbolism breaks through its acquired limits and conquers new territory that we understand the breadth of its ordinary scope" (Ricoeur, 237). While Ricoeur limits his focus to metaphor, my argument is that tropes, especially Burke's master tropes, are the way that, enthymematically, arguers recreate or remake reality.

For that reason, both Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's notion of presence and Burke's dominant notion of master tropes and how they "escape literature" to cover all means of symbolic acts, give import to these symbols in arguments.

In *Kenneth Burke and the Conversation after Philosophy*, Timothy Crusius makes the claim concerning tropes in Burke's writings: "For Burke all language use, including the philosophical and the scientific, is dependent upon tropes" (Crusius, 56). Part of Burke's argument with Ransom was over the nature (or existence) of scientific tropes. Burke believed that even scientific discourses "are dependent on 'root metaphors,' analogies that inform entire movements in philosophy and what Kuhn calls paradigms in science" (Crusius, 60-1). So a rhetor may engage in a dialectic: "you tell me your metaphor and I'll tell you mine." There is always the possibility of the dialectic of dueling metaphors. "Show us, Burke suggests, what your metaphor can do – how much it can account for. We'll put our metaphors to collective testing and critique. And we will find in the process that, relative to a given interest, some metaphors are in fact better than others" (Crusius, 63).

Similar dialectical testing can occur with metonymy and synecdoche. And since there is an overlapping, and there is no clear line between the tropes, the possibility of such testing is always present. Since dialectic is the substitution for irony, the ironic possibilities of tropes always linger. To the extent the representative anecdote is the combination of tropes, the trope of tropes, the trope sufficient for Burke to encompass dramatism, it functions as the method of consubstantiality. "The anecdote prompts the audience not only to induce knowledge from a reduction, but also to see further reductions from which they might induce further knowledge" (Tell, 47).

In sum, the tropes in Kenneth Burke are epistemic; their creation is enthymematic; the reduction of their deviation is a method of consubstantiality. There will not necessarily be agreement. As Crusius observes, "Nor does Burke's conversation end in agreement.… Our goal may be to prevail or to reach consensus, but we rarely do, and even when we do, agreement is almost always short lived. That is why the conversation is unending." (Crusius, 56). So we may enter or exit the conversation on Burke. With our tropes. If Burke's reading of history is as argument, our reading of Burke, our conversation with Burke, will be about argument, tropologically presented, of course.

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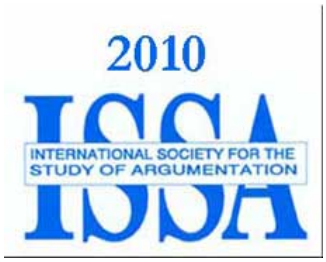
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Dancing, Dueling, And Argumentation: On The Normative Shape Of The Practice Of Argumentation



1. Introduction **[i]**

Do we have an obligation to argue? If so, where does that obligation come from and how does it bind us? Is the obligation to argue a moral obligation, or a prudential one, or is it perhaps an obligation of some other sort? These questions all fall within a more general sphere of concerns that I believe would be aptly labeled the sphere of *normativity in argumentation*. These questions are not the whole of this sphere of concerns, but they are important members of it—perhaps even essential starting points. In this paper I will address this sphere by arguing: 1) that we do have an obligation to argue, and 2) that the obligation to argue applies to us by virtue of our standing as co-participants in a convention of argumentation. My account has its basis in social philosophy, and so is somewhat unlike other contemporary views on offer regarding the obligation to argue. It will be worthwhile to begin with a brief review of these accounts before proceeding to my own.**[ii]**

2. Two Views of the Obligation to Argue

Most positive treatments of the obligation to argue are individualistic in their construction. In them the obligation to argue is treated analogously to moral obligation. This individualistic focus is understandable—it is a great aid in moving, via easy conceptual transits and analogies, between the familiar territory of philosophical ethics and the less-settled country of normative considerations about argumentation. That said, I wish here to think about the obligation to argue from the standpoint of the social and pragmatic context. I wish to think of the obligation to argue not as it applies to individuals in particular instances of argumentation, but in terms of *the practice of argumentation taken as a whole*.**[iii]** But is there any such thing as a practice of argumentation within which one could find an obligation to argue? At least the idea is not an entirely new one. In *Manifest Rationality* Ralph Johnson, for example, characterizes the practice of argumentation as

...the sociocultural activity of constructing, presenting, and criticizing and revising arguments. This activity cannot be understood as the activity of any individual or group of individuals but rather must be understood within the network of customs, habits, and activities of the broader society that gives birth to it, which continues to maintain it and that the practice serves (Johnson 2000, pp. 154-5).

Johnson goes on to suggest that his view of practice is not unlike that of Alasdair MacIntyre. MacIntyre's view is explicitly normative, sounding in as it does the idea that the form of the activity named by the practice is bound up with standards of excellence, and with particular goods embraced by anyone who sincerely does the activity. Of course in Johnson's case the activity is argumentation, and the value of manifest rationality gives life both to the standards that arguers (in theory) follow and to the goods that that arguers (again, in theory) seek via argument.

While this view of the practice of argumentation may fit the presentation of ideas in Johnson's work, it seems susceptible to an obvious attack. For it seems that persons do argue with different purposes in mind besides the upholding of rationality in communicative acts. Persons argue to impress or annoy or entertain one another, to slow deliberations down or speed them up, or just because they plain feel like it.**[iv]** Fred Kauffeld is one who seizes on this heterogeneity in the purposes of arguers. He holds that not only is it the case that persons engaged in argumentation cannot plausibly be cast as always aiming at the achievement of rationality in their discourse (even in ordinary cases!), but they have other discursive obligations that cannot be accounted for in terms of rationality (Kauffeld 2007). The latter of these charges is the more serious, since the first has an easy answer.

The first objection to Johnson's view– that persons argue for reasons other than to manifest rationality– involves a conflation between *a person's telos* in using argumentation and the *telos of argumentation in general*. Johnson's position can easily be defended from this objection by restricting its scope so that it applies only to the *telos* of argumentation in general. Then, if persons use argumentation for reasons outside of that *telos*, the case is no different than using one's shoe for a hammer, or the edge of one's desk for a bottle opener. Johnson could, if he wished, even go so far as to claim that those who argue for reasons other than the manifesting of rationality are misusing argument. Of course this defense depends on there *actually being* a *telos* of argumentation in general! I shall return to that notion momentarily.

It is important to stress that Kauffeld's objection to Johnson's view is not that Johnson claims that we have obligations to manifest rationality when we argue Rather, Kauffeld objects to the notion that appeals to rationality can tell the whole story about why and how human beings legitimately deploy argumentation. It is

this reservation that motivates the second half of Kauffeld's objection, namely that arguers bear discursive obligations to one another that are not directly related to considerations about rationality. How then does he think arguers incur obligations?

Kauffeld suggests that we incur obligations in argumentation through what he calls the *"Principle of Pragmatically Incurred Obligations"*: In serious human communication, pragmatically necessary presumptions are strategically engaged by openly manifesting addressee-regarding intentions and, thereby, incurring corresponding obligations (Kauffeld 2007b, p. 6).

The upshot of this principle is that arguers are obligated by what they *do*, not by the kinds of beings that they are, and not in virtue of considerations about the inner moral workings of argumentation considered as a practice. Kauffeld's inspiration, one might say, is not practices but promises. Drawing on Geoffrey Warnock's account of moral obligation, Kauffeld suggests that an arguer incurs only those obligations that she voluntarily takes on by clear indications to her audience that she intends to argue, and intends to be taken as arguing (Kauffeld 2007a, pp. 6-9). One of the obligations she thereby takes on is an obligation to display rationality in her argumentation, but the reasons for her entering into argumentation in the first place might have other motivations—a desire to display concern about a particular issue, say, or perhaps to advance a larger political or diplomatic strategy.

For Kauffeld, then, to argue is to put oneself into a particular relationship with one's audience– a relationship in which they, among other things, rightly expect (good) reasons to be given on behalf of the claims one advances. These expectations run in both directions, for to argue (at least in the ideal case) is also to construe the audience as fair, impartial, and rational, and thus to put *them* on notice that one expects one's arguments to be evaluated accordingly. For Johnson, by contrast, to argue is to participate actively in an independently existing practice of reason-giving and evaluating that is embedded in a socio-cultural and an historical context that to some degree guides one's sensibilities for when argumentation is appropriate (or necessary), supplies the norms by which we critique not just arguments but arguers in their role as arguers in a given situation, and which animates argumentation through provision of a *telos* unique to it: the manifesting of rationality.

It can certainly be agreed that both Johnson's and Kauffeld's views capture important insights about the human activity of argumentation. The issue between them really is one of the location of the *telos* of argumentation. Does it rest with the speaker's *telos* in using argumentation, or does argumentation have it's own *telos*? If it is the former, then argumentation is like social dancing. It cannot be said to have a purpose beyond the situational purposes for which agents engage in it (e.g. for courtship, for enjoyment, for entertainment, or for bragging rights). If it is the latter, then argumentation is like dueling. It has an express *telos* of its own (in the case of dueling this is the settlement of disputes and the preservation of honor through regulated rather than unregulated violence) that is its *raison d'etre*, whatsoever the purposes of the individual persons who partake of the practice. Which then is it? Has argumentation its own *telos* or not?

In the remainder of this paper I wish to explore the possibility that it does. Certainly there is no denying that persons argue for their own reasons, just as they dance for their own reasons, but argumentation seems importantly to be disanalogous to dance. The practices of argumentation, though not identical, are remarkably similar across cultures (Harpine 1993; Suzuki 2008). Dance proliferates in truly wondrous variety. More to the point, cultures have used dance in a multitude of ways, whereas argumentation routinely tends to be used for the same tasks (on which more will be said soon).

Another difference between dancing and argumentation is that while one may at times be right to demand an argument from someone, one would never be in a position to demand a social dance *regardless of the preferences of the person or persons involved*. As one widely repeated source on the ettiquette of dancing puts it (the emphasis is mine):
The first thing to do when one is turned down for a dance is *to take the excuse at face value*. Typical social dance sessions can be as long as three to four hours, and there are few dancers who have the stamina of dancing non-stop. Everyone has to take a break once in a while, and that means possibly turning down one or two people each time one takes a break (Nosratinia 2005).

By contrast, it often seems as though the giving of reasons is in order, that argumentation is what we *owe* to others or what they *owe* to us, and that sometimes the preferences of persons are worth contravening in order to get them to argue. There is no standing norm of argumentation that says that excuses must be taken at face value. In this respect argumentation is more like dueling,

wherein refusals to particpate expose one to risks somewhat more serious than exclusion from the activity. I will have more to say on this in the later sections of this paper. For present purposes however, I take it that the possibility that argumentation has a *telos* is at least initially plausible enough to motivate the attempt to sketch it that I will make here. My proposal will turn on the attempt to characterize argumentation as a convention, after the fashion of David Lewis.**[v]**

3. Argumentation as a Convention

Convention, David Lewis tells us in the 1969 book of the same name, is a response to what he calls "coordination problems". To illustrate the nature of coordination problems Lewis provides several examples, including this well-known one from Rousseau:

Suppose we are in a wilderness without food. Separately we can catch rabbits and eat badly. Together we can catch stags and eat well. But if even one of us deserts the stag hunt to catch a rabbit, the stag will get away; so the other stag hunters will not eat unless they desert too. Each must choose whether to stay with the stag hunt or desert according to his expectations about the others, staying if and only if no one else will desert (Lewis 2002, p.7).

The general account of coordination problems that emerges from Lewis's examples is that they are, generally, …situations of interdependent decision by two or more agents in which coincidence of interest predominates and in which […] relative to some classification of actions, the agents all have an interest in doing the same one of several alternative actions.**[vi]** (Lewis 2002, p.24)

Note that 'coincidence of interests' does not mean 'identity of interests', here. It simply means that all the agent-parties to the decision share *at least some* interests. In a communicative setting we might think of these as being on the order of interests in being understood, interests in being able to speak, and so on.

Of course, coordination problems call for solutions, or at least strategies. Lewis argues that the strategies that emerge over time and become the regularities that we call convention will most often have begun as salient alternatives to the solution of a novel coordination problem. A salient strategy is one that stands out among the alternatives as unique—not uniquely good or bad, just unique. If successful, the strategy becomes a precedent for what to do in further, analogous coordination problems (this has the effect of bestowing a sort of salience by precedent on the strategy). Precedents are important not just because they are, in

effect, immediately salient, they are important because the condition the *expectations* that all parties to analogous coordination problems have, given that they have at least some contact with the precedent. Precedents, then, shape the expectations of parties to a coordination problem, and thereby shape their actions as well. Over time, among persons who typically encounter the same sort of situation with some frequency they become the "default" set of strategies for handling that particular problem. They become *conventions*.**[vii]**

A convention, according to Lewis, is a regularity in the behavior of members of a circumscribed population that obtains when they find themselves in a recurring situation. In order for a convention to exist, it must be true that, and it must be common knowledge among members of the population that in almost any instance of the recurrent situation almost everyone will act in conformity with the regularity. It must also be true, and be common knowledge that almost everyone *will* conform to the regularity, and further, that doing so *will* satisfy the preferences of almost everyone regarding the alternatives in such situations. Finally, if a convention holds in the recurring situation then almost everyone will have a preference to act in accord with the regularity provided that everyone else does too.

Can we say that argumentation is a convention? I believe that we can. To see how, we must first describe the sort of recurring situation to which the convention applies. My hypothesis is that such situations are of a sort that calls for what I will call *rational doxastic coordination*. That is, they are situations that call for the production of cognitive equilibrium among multiple agents. In some cases this means the resolution of differences of opinion, in others it means only the achievement of a greater transparency among agents as to each others' viewpoints. The practical upshot of rational doxastic coordination is one of two scenarios: either agents will gain greater intersubjective alignment (their "maps" of the "territory" will come to match to a greater degree), or they will gain a clearer understanding of each other's points of view (that is, even if their "maps" do not come to match, the parties to the argumentation will leave with a more informed view of how the others see the "territory"). The idea of cognitive equilibrium among agents is thus a family resemblance notion, of which multiple, diverse instances are possible. What holds the family together is that the coordination is achieved through the use of more or less cognitive methods of reasoning—via the giving, hearing, and evaluation of reasons for claims. It is

when we find ourselves in coordination problems with others that call for rational doxastic coordination that we naturally gravitate towards argumentation as the method of choice for solving the problem.**[viii]**

In such situations we *do* argue, and it is at least somewhat common knowledge that this is what we do. That this is so is shown by the readiness with which we enter into argumentation in certain situations, even though no one ever tells us explicitly that argumentation is appropriate. Situations involving group deliberation over a range of possible actions, for instance, nearly always give rise to argumentation, even when things aren't that serious (e.g. when deciding which movie to see, or where to go to dinner). Our expectations in such situations quite naturally incline to the giving and evaluation of reasons for the proffered alternatives, and this is so regardless of whether or not anyone makes explicit an intention to argue. It is simply understood that this is what is happening. To adapt a famous line from William James, we simply find ourselves arguing, we know not (most of the time, anyway) how or why.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to think that argumentation accords with our preferences in such situations when one considers the other ways in which the coordination problem could be solved. The alternatives to argumentation in group deliberation situations aren't that palatable. Coercion or domination, such as silencing dissent by violence is one such alternative. Simply doing nothing and "letting whatever happens happen" is another. Still another might be settling things with a coin flip, or by a contest of strength. If the question were put seriously to people which of these methods they would prefer over argumentation in settings of group deliberation over non-trivial choices, it doesn't seem unreasonable to suppose that the answer would be "none".**[ix]** Too, it is worth pointing out that among the reasons for which persons abandon argumentation is a reasonable belief that others have done so already (or at least have done so with regard to *them*).

If the account so far is a reasonable one, then it makes sense to think of argumentation as a convention. We therefore potentially have an alternative to Johnson's and Kauffelds's views of the obligation to argue. Recall that Johnson's obligations are rooted in our nature as rational beings, and hold primarily because our arguing manifests rationality. Kauffeld's obligations were rooted in the bilateral expectations a speaker creates (perhaps even imposes upon) an audience by indicating that she wishes to be taken as arguing. If we apply

Lewis's model to the case of argumentation then a third, different story emerges.

On the Lewisian model, if we think of argumentation as a convention then the expectations we have are grounded neither in a morally salient feature of persons, as is the case on Johnson's view, nor in the act of will of a particular speaker, as is the case on Kauffeld's view. Rather, the expectations are grounded in the fact of the coordination problem being the sort it is, and the fact that there is a precedent for using argumentation in those sorts of cases of which persons generally are aware even if in ways they cannot always articulate. The Lewisian account, I think, is much closer to how we actually do things than the rivals I have discussed here. The choice, however, is not a mutually exclusive one between the three. Important aspects of both Johnson's and Kauffeld's views are consistent with the Lewisian picture. It is, in many ways, a middle ground.

To begin, it may be that Johnson's emphasis on rationality is correct given that a situation can be constructed as one in which argumentation is an appropriate solution only if the parties *do* hold an image of each other as rational beings with whom argumentation is at least possible. Johnson is also right in seeing argumentation as having a *telos*. It's just that the *telos* isn't rationality *per se*, but the resolution of coordination problems that call for rational doxastic coordination.

Likewise, Kauffeld's perspicuous description of the dynamic nature of the way in which argumentative burdens are assigned to the speaker and the audience can be retained even if we do not agree that those burdens are *created* by the speaker-audience relationship, but insist instead that those burdens arise naturally out of the precedent-based expectations of the parties. What Kauffeld will have given us then, is a picture of at least one of the sets of rules governing the giving and receiving of reasons for claims. One who declares an intention to argue doesn't just create expectations in the minds of her audience as to the nature of her discourse, but frames the entire situation as one in which argumentation is appropriate. The audience probably knows this already, however, so her framing of the situation doesn't so much create the space for argumentation and its attendant obligations as it does emphasize to them that she is (correctly) following the appropriate convention and expects her audience to do so as well. In such occasions, where explicit emphasis is placed on the convention, all parties are held to higher standards perhaps than in ordinary cases, but the convention works as it always does. The difference between cases

like those Kauffeld discusses (e.g. Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail") and more ordinary cases of argumentation is like the difference between intramural and competitive (i.e. collegiate or professional) football. The "game" is the same in its essentials, but the expectations in the competitive case are heightened, and the rules that govern the practice are attended to with more scrutiny.

But what of the obligations of individuals in argumentation, conceived of as a convention? Both Johnson and Kauffeld offer a robust grounding for these obligations. What does the Lewisian account offer?

4. Dueling Revisited: The Moral Dimension of the Obligation to Argue

At first blush, it may not seem to be much of an account at all. In fact, it one could be forgiven for criticizing the Lewisian account as morally deflationary compared to both Johnson's and Kauffeld's accounts. Both of their accounts provide moral resources for criticism of those who fail to live up to their argumentative obligations. On Johnson's view such persons are irrational. On Kauffeld's view such persons have betrayed the trust of their audience. As first impressions go, it simply doesn't seem that a Lewisian account carries the same sense of *gravitas*. What sanctions are there for derogation from convention?

Interestingly, Lewis allows for sanctions only when a convention is or involves rules (not all do). He cites game rules as the central example of what rules are, observing that they are partially constitutive of the activity of playing the game they define, and that "violation [of the rules] would be taken as decisive evidence of inability or unwillingness to play" (Lewis 2002, p.104). He is also quick to point out that the stipulated rules "are not the only conventions in the game. Any group of players will develop understandings—tacit, local, temporary, informal conventions—to settle questions left open by the listed rules." (Lewis 2002, pp. 104-5). These are two very important ideas for answering the objection: (1) that violation of the rules is evidence of inability or unwillingness to participate in the convention and (2) that the "game" is larger in scope than the stipulated rules that govern it.

The first point prepares the way for a kind of virtue-ethics of argumentation wherein a participant's character as an arguer is determined by the degree to which she shows willingness and ability to abide by all aspects of the convention of argumentation, both "written" and "unwritten".**[x]** The importance of the

second point concerning the scope of the game, and thus the "unwritten" aspects of the convention cannot be overstressed. For it is only when we have them in view that we can see the mistake in endorsing any particular construction of the explicit rules of argumentation as eternal and binding. The rules are only a part of the larger practice. The practice itself continually evolves along with its socio-cultural (and yes, moral) context. It is the idea that there are "unwritten" guidelines (and this is just another way of expressing the point that the "game" is more than the rules that constitute it) that allows us to evaluate a person's argumentation behaviors on grounds that go beyond mere technical competence in stringing together chains of reasons for his claims, and thus allows our assessments of argumentative virtue to carry more substantive moral weight. This dual-aspect way of looking at the obligation to argue has something of a precedent. Kuno Lorenz was onto much the same idea when he wrote:

Hence, norms in argumentation are *technical norms* which when appropriate are called rational with respect to purpose; the norm of argumentation itself is a case of *practical norms*, that is, the actions following it—in our case certain sequences of social encounters involving arguments—exhibit ways of life of the agents concerned and don't serve further extrinsic ends. Internally they show 'intentions', externally they are 'behaviour', which, in traditional terminology, is expressed by saying that such actions are *constitutive* of the agents (Lorenz 1989, p.18).

If all this is right, then the sanctions one suffers for flouting the obligation to argue are to be labeled, as Lewis suggests, as either incompetent or unwilling to argue. These are not charges to be taken lightly. To briefly return to the metaphor of dueling, incompetence (usually due to age or infirmity) was one of the only excuses that one could legitimately deploy for not answering a challenge to one's honor (Wilson 1838). Even for those who do not believe in honor, it should be easy to see that to be branded with incompetence as an arguer would be no small slight, and would have enormous practical implications among one's fellows, especially at work or in politics. One need only think of those circumstances in which it would be right to judge that a person was incompetent to argue in order to see what those consequences might be. For, truly incompetent argumentation means exclusion from participation in deliberative processes.**[xi**] In those cases the best the incompetent could hope for would be representation a competent advocate. Failing that, the only hope would be for deliberators who sincerely and honestly weighed one's own interests alongside

the others under consideration. This, of course, is not something upon which one can always count.

The same is true of those who are unwilling to argue. Those who will not engage in argumentation when they should exhibit a kind of cowardice. Those who, by contrast, engage in argumentation too much or at inappropriate times show a kind of hubris, or pride that equally makes them unwelcome participants in collective deliberation, and likely candidates for marginalization. The bully is as unwelcome as the coward at times when deliberation is necessary. Thus one must not only be competent to argue, but willing to do so in those occasions that call for it. Otherwise one faces real setbacks to one's own interests and the interests of anyone one happens to represent. Hence there are substantial sanctions for failing to uphold the obligations of argumentation on the Lewisian conventionalist view, and the objection that it lacks the resources to frame the moral dimension of argumentation fails.

So there is a story to be told about the sanctions that come into play if one derogates from the norms of the convention of argumentation. Hence the norms of argumentation can be said to have at least some binding force on the Lewisian conventionalist account. Still, one might say, "so what?" Suppose we grant there is a convention of argumentation. What follows from that? There are also conventions for standing in line at the bank. What makes the norms that flow from the convention of argumentation (if we are prepared to grant such a thing) any more important or special than those of more ordinary social conventions? The convention of argumentation as a whole needs defense. This objection is a good one and it demands an answer. Though constraints of space make it impossible to give the answer here, I believe that the defense of the convention of argumentation ultimately lies with an explication of the function that this convention is uniquely suited to perform.**[xii]** For now however, the purpose of this paper will be met if I have established simply that there is a Lewisian conventionalist alternative to the contemporary interpretations of the obligation to argue, and that this alternative merits further exploration.

NOTES

[i] This paper has benefited substantially from a number of discussions with people at various points over the last year, beginning with and especially Jean Goodwin, Ralph Johnson, Tony Blair, Fred Kauffeld, Bob Pinto, Hans Hansen, Constanza Ihnen, Kelly Webster, Frank Zenker and nearly everyone associated

with the Center for Research in Reasoning, Rhetoric, and Argumentation at the University of Windsor while I was a Visiting Research Fellow there in the 2009-2010 academic year. Any errors here naturally are mine.

[ii]__Certainly there are many argumentation theorists who are hostile to the notion that we have an obligation to argue. Jean Goodwin, for example, offers several strong arguments against the notion that we have such obligations (Goodwin 2001).

[iii]_I am here using argumentation in O'Keefe's second sense, as "process" rather than "product".

[iv]_ That we should ever feel like it at all is interesting. An exploration of such feelings by evolutionary biology in the same vein as the recent research into heuristics and biases could prove very useful for argumentation theorists.

[v]_ In (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984) Franz van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst also consider Lewis's account—though they take quite a different position on it than I do here.

[vi]_ Unfortunately space limitations preclude a treatment of Lewis's more detailed, technical, and enlightening description of coordination problems in terms of coordination equilbria. For now, I direct the reader to Lewis' discussion in Chapter 1 of *Convention*.

[vii]_ There is an interesting parallel here with the way that heuristics are described in cognitive psychology.

[viii]_ It would be natural at this point to ask how argumentation came to be the method of choice for such coordination problems. It is my hunch that there is an evolutionary story to be told here that hinges upon the inability of non-argumentative methods of decision-making to handle novel situations of choice. At some point deferring to elders, or following the directives of mythological meta-narratives may simply have proved inadequate to the task at hand. One thinks here of crisis situations, perhaps environmental collapses, encounters with heretofore unknown peoples, or unprecedented social upheavals as the sorts of instances in which persons would have found themselves driven to give each other reasons rather than to simply follow the guidance of whatever system of stock reasons was already in place in their society. In such situations group reasoning of the sort argumentation theorists study would have stood out as salient in Lewis's sense, and it is easy to see how over time argumentation could have taken on the status of a precedent that says "Where appeals to tradition and mytho-cultural meta-narrative are of no avail, the thing to do is enter into argumentation." Although this is just a hunch, I think it a rather plausible one.

[ix]_Deliberative democrats have long observed that properly conducted deliberations involving argumentation have numerous benefits, including a feeling among participants that their points of view have been respected, that the results of the deliberation are fair, that group solidarity has been enhanced, and so on. See, for example Dryzek's recent work. (Dryzek 2000)

[x] I owe the inspiration for the idea that moral qualities of character can be revealed in one's habits of argumentation to a CRRAR colloquium presentation by J. Anthony Blair.

[xi]There is an interesting flip-side to this coin. For inasmuch as one might worry about being saddled with a burden to answer every single argument one encounters, the account on offer here explains why that worry is unfounded. The arguments of advertisers and hardcore religious proselytizers, for instance, can be rejected on grounds of incompetence if one takes almost any dialectically-influenced view of argumentation. This is because such arguers typically have no intention whatsoever of adjusting their commitment stores, and indeed no intention of truly listening to any objection, challenge, or question for any purpose other than using it to deploy a pat counterargument. I would also argue that such arguers sometimes ply their "wares" in situations that do not call for argumentation at all, and thus fall well outside the boundaries of the convention of argumentation as described here.

[xii]I offer this account in a forthcoming paper in *Informal Logic*.

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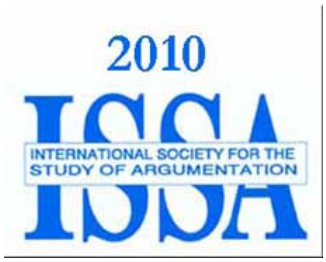
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Reasonable Non-Agreement In Critical Discussions



1. Introduction

In current scholarly literature both in and around the field of argumentation theory, a debate has arisen over the topic of disagreements. In particular, scholars are devoting attention to the issue of whether it is possible for two parties engaged in a fully reasonable discussion to end their discussion without reaching an agreement on the acceptability of the point at issue. In the literature, such an outcome of an argumentative discussion is typically referred to by means of expressions such as e.g. "reasonable disagreement," (Feldman, 2006; Kelly, 2007) or "legitimate dissensus" (Kock, 2008). Opinions are divided on the issue of whether such an outcome of an argumentative discussion is possible.

In this paper, I refer to such an outcome of an argumentative discussion as "reasonable non-agreement."**[i]** Whether reasonable non-agreement is possible of course crucially depends on the underlying normative question of what in fact

counts as reasonable discussion behaviour. With regard to this question, theorists differ substantially in their views, and it is this disagreement that gives rise to different answers to the question of whether reasonable non-agreement is possible.

In this essay I will focus on the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation theory and the pragma-dialectical conception of reasonableness. As opposed to other – less mature – theories of argumentation, the pragma-dialectical theory is equipped with an explicitly developed perspective of reasonableness. In pragma-dialectics, reasonableness is fleshed out through systematically formulated standards known as "rules for a critical discussion." From the pragma-dialectical perspective, argumentative moves are regarded as reasonable only if they do not breach any of the rules for a critical discussion. But what is the effect of these rules on the possibility of reasonable non-agreement? Or put more specifically: Do the rules for a critical discussion permit or prevent reasonable non-agreement? That is the general issue of this essay, which can be phrased somewhat more carefully in the following way:
Q: Is it possible for a protagonist and an antagonist conducting a discussion in full accordance with the pragma-dialectical rules for a critical discussion to end their discussion without reaching agreement on the acceptability of the standpoint at issue? In other words, is pragma-dialectical reasonable non-agreement possible?

The structure of this essay is broadly the following. In Section 2, I provide a very brief introduction to some presently relevant concepts of pragma-dialectics. Section 3 motivates the research question further by showing that the possibility of reasonable non-agreement depends directly on the underlying perspective of reasonableness adopted by the analyst. Particularly, I show how reasonable non-agreement is *possible* from a so-called "anthropological perspective" of reasonableness, and how reasonable non-agreement is *impossible* from a "geometrical perspective" of reasonableness. This sub-conclusion is then used to pose the question of whether reasonable non-agreement is possible from a "critical perspective" of reasonableness – the perspective of reasonableness adopted by pragma-dialectics. Then, in Section 4, I provide a brief survey of selected passages from the pragma-dialectical literature. These passages give rise to the hypothesis that reasonable non-agreement should indeed be possible from a pragma-dialectical perspective of reasonableness. In Section 5, I loosely test this hypothesis by critically examining a recent pragma-dialectical analysis of the

concluding stage of an argumentative discussion. In Section 6, I conclude that the example – at least according to my reading – does not achieve what it is meant to achieve, namely provide an example of a pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreement. Thus, despite the clues in the pragma-dialectical literature pointing to the possibility of pragma-dialectical reasonable non-agreement, it remains to be shown exactly how a reasonable non-agreement can occur within the limits of reasonableness circumscribed by the rules for critical discussions.

2. A Very Brief Introduction to Pragma-Dialectics

Due to space limitations, a full introduction to pragma-dialectics is outside the scope of this paper. It will, however, be useful to start out by considering a few basic concepts of the theory that are relevant for agenda of the present paper.

As mentioned, the pragma-dialectical conception of reasonableness is based on the rules for a critical discussion. These rules constitute the basic framework of the ideal model of a critical discussion. By viewing argumentative discourse from the perspective of the ideal model, it becomes possible to analyse and evaluate argumentation starting from explicit standards (namely those embodied in the rules) rather using muffled intuitions. When viewed from the perspective of the ideal model, argumentation is always an attempt at resolving a difference of opinion between a protagonist affirming the acceptability of a standpoint and an antagonist doubting the acceptability of that standpoint. (Note: that argumentation is always viewed as an attempt at resolving a difference of opinion does not imply the empirical claim that real-life arguing is always and only about resolving a difference of opinion). A resolution of a difference of opinion entails either (1) that the doubt pertaining to the standpoint at issue is overcome in a reasonable way, i.e. in accordance with the rules for critical discussion, or (2) that the standpoint at issue is retracted because the protagonist realises that it cannot stand up to the criticisms of the antagonist.

The resolution process, i.e. the discussion, will ideally pass through four stages: the confrontation stage, the opening stage, the argumentation stage and the concluding stage. The confrontation stage is where the difference of opinion becomes manifest. The opening stage is where the procedural and material starting points of the discussants are agreed. The argumentation stage contains the actual argumentation proper in the form of a sustained attempt at overcoming the antagonist's criticisms of the acceptability of the (sub-)standpoint(s). The concluding stage is where the result of the discussion is pronounced.**[ii]**

Together, the rules for a critical discussion cover all four stages mentioned above. The rules make it possible to conduct a reasonable argumentative discussion by ruling out certain obstacles to a resolution. One of the key principles of a critical discussion relevant for the present purpose of this paper is the observation that making contradictory statements is not allowed, for if it were then "talking about disputes loses its point" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 17). As van Eemeren and Grootendorst note (2004, p. 58, fn. 38): "Dialectical approaches to argumentation place a lot of emphasis on the need for consistency. In accordance with Popper's critical rationalism, the scrutiny of statements is generally equivalent to the tracing of contradictions, because if two contradictory statements are maintained, at least one of them has to be retracted." So, we note (and this is important for the later argument) that being committed to a statement and its contradiction is impermissible according to the conception of reasonableness found in the pragma-dialectical ideal model and therefore unreasonable.

With this brief overview of some of the presently relevant pragma-dialectical concepts, let me move on to a discussion about perspectives of reasonableness. Particularly, I would like to consider how different perspectives of reasonableness make it either possible or impossible for two parties to finish a reasonable discussion without agreement on the standpoint at issue.

3. Perspectives on Reasonableness

At the basis of any normative view of argumentation is a concern with the question of what counts as acceptable argumentation. The answer to this question again depends crucially on the underlying philosophical perspective on reasonableness adopted by those passing judgment. Toulmin (1976, ch. 2-4) famously defined three broad perspectives on the notion of reasonableness.

First, there is the *geometrical perspective* on reasonableness. When viewed from this perspective, argumentation is only acceptable if it lives up to very strict standards. Particularly, in order to be acceptable, the argumentation needs to start from true premises and proceed with absolute certainty from these premises through to an undisputable conclusion. Such a view of reasonableness is for instance embodied in Descartes' philosophy and leads, if consistently applied, to scepticism due to the so-called Münchhausen Trilemma (see Albert, 1985, pp. 16-21 and van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 131).**[iii]**

Secondly, and in contrast, there is the *anthropological perspective* on reasonableness. According to this perspective, the acceptability of argumentation simply depends on whether or not the audience judging the argumentation happens to find the argumentation persuasive. This dependence on changeable, tacit and informal evaluative standards of different audiences therefore in an important sense leads to a relativistic view on reasonableness.

Thirdly, as a kind of middle ground, there is the *critical perspective* on reasonableness, in which argumentation is regarded as acceptable if it coheres with certain rules for the critical testing of positions, given that these rules are (or at least aspire to be) simultaneously problem valid as well as conventionally valid (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 16-17).**[iv]**

The geometrical and anthropological views of reasonableness have some interesting corollaries pertaining to the possibility of ending a reasonable discussion without reaching agreement on the point at issue. To see this, consider the following thought experiment: If we imagine a discussion carried out in full accordance with the strict standard of reasonableness embodied the geometrical perspective, is it then possible to think of a way of ending a reasonable discussion with no agreement on the acceptability of the issue at the centre of the discussion?**[v]** The answer is no. If two parties cannot agree on the acceptability of the point at issue in a discussion governed by a geometrical conception of reasonableness, then this must be because at least one of the parties is somehow mistaken with respect to the application of the formal system by use of which the point at issue is being tested. For an analogy of this view, think of a context of arithmetic: If two parties suddenly find themselves in disagreement with respect to whether 234 x 12 = 2808 and they cannot agree on whether or not a calculation of the indubitable givens on the left sign of the equality sign lead to the result proposed on the right hand side of the equality sign, then this must necessarily be because at least one of the parties is somehow applying the rules of arithmetic wrongly. If there is disagreement, at least one person must be in error. From the perspective of geometrical reasonableness, then, the initial doubt with respect to the acceptability of some point at issue must necessarily end in agreement after the relevant compelling procedures have been applied to test the acceptability of the point at issue. If not, then an unreasonable move must have been committed along the way.

From the anthropological view, things look rather different. To see this, consider

another thought experiment. This time image a discussion carried out in full accordance with standards of the anthropological view of reasonableness. Is such a discussion capable of ending with no agreement on the disputed issue, if all the (potentially very relativistic) requirements of the anthropological view are followed? The answer this time is positive. This is because the anthropological view comprises not of one strict standard, but rather several audience-dependent standards all of which are reasonable from within their own relative perspective. If two parties discuss an issue and this results in no agreement on the acceptability of the view at issue, then this is not necessarily because an unreasonable move has been performed by one of the parties along the way. Rather, the failure to reach agreement might plausibly be due to the different evaluative standards held by the two parties in the discussion. After all, it is very possible that each person in the dialogue views the argumentation adduced as being persuasive to different degrees. And there is nothing wrong with this from the anthropological perspective. So ending a reasonable discussion with no agreement on the point at issue is definitely possible from this perspective.

But what about the *critical perspective*? The theory of pragma-dialectics embodies a conception of critical reasonableness in the form of rules for critical discussion. An interesting question therefore is whether it is possible to finish a discussion carried out in accordance with these rules without reaching agreement on the point at issue. The answer is not immediately clear. After all, the critical perspective – and thus pragma-dialectics – incorporates elements from both the geometrical perspective and the anthropological perspective (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 16). Since ending a reasonable discussion without reaching agreement on the point at issue is impossible from the geometrical perspective, but possible from the anthropological perspective, it takes further investigation to assess whether the critical perspective allows for ending a reasonable discussion with no agreement on the standpoint at issue.

4. Pragma-Dialectical Indications of Reasonable Non-Agreement

Such further research might of course be carried out in a number of ways. Krabbe (2008) provides an interesting example of one such way. By scrutinizing the rules for a critical discussion, he reaches – in a "top-down" fashion – the conclusion that reasonable non-agreements are in no way possible in a pragma-dialectical critical discussion; if the two parties reach the concluding stage, they are forced to either agree that one and only one party "wins", or they break the rules. In this essay I

adopt a different, more “bottom-up” oriented, strategy than Krabbe. I concur with Krabbe that the rules seem at first glance to rule out the possibility of reasonable non-agreement, but I remain open to the possibility that the rules can somehow be interpreted in such a way that they do in fact (in a way yet to be discovered) permit reasonable non-agreements. I examine an example provided in a recent pragma-dialectical publication that is seemingly supposed to exemplify a reasonable non-agreement. The aim is to see whether the example indeed can be reconstructed in such a way that it fulfils the two conditions of a reasonable disagreement: (1) the concluding stage is completed without agreement on the standpoint at issue, and (2) no rules are broken. This quite charitable method of investigating the possibility of reasonable non-agreement in critical discussions is driven by some quotes in the pragma-dialectical literature that seem to me to indicate that the conception of reasonableness in the pragma-dialectics should in principle permit reasonable non-agreements.

I begin my exposé of such passages with the earliest manifestation of the pragma-dialectical theory (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984). In this work, van Eemeren and Grootendorst describe the four stages of the ideal model embodying the rules for a critical discussion. In their discussion of the concluding stage, they note the following (1984, p. 86; original emphasis):
A discussion designed to resolve a dispute will have to be concluded with an answer to the question of whether the dispute has been *resolved (stage 4)*. Naturally, not every discussion will automatically lead to the resolving of the dispute, and it sometimes happens that when the discussion is over the protagonist still takes the same attitude and the antagonist still has his doubts, without either one of them being open to an accusation of irrationality.

An important thing to note here is the use of the word ‘irrationality.’ For our purposes, this is practically synonymous with ‘unreasonableness,’ since van Eemeren and Grootendorst assume that the discussants have the sole aim of resolving the difference of opinion according to the rules for a critical discussion. If this is indeed the case, then performing unreasonable moves (i.e. moves that are impermissible from the perspective of the ideal model) can be said to amount to a kind of irrational behaviour, since it goes against the goal of each discussant. In this light, it should be clear that pragma-dialectics in the quote is leaning heavily toward a commitment to the existence of pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreement. However, on the basis of the above quote we should not quite yet

be prepared to conclude that pragma-dialectics is indeed committed to the existence of reasonable non-agreement from within its own perspective of reasonableness. One point of potential concern is the use of the phrase "without either one of them being open to an accusation […]" Here, a dual interpretation of the expression "being open" is possible. Either it means that (1) from the perspective of the ideal model of a critical discussion, there is no basis for accusing any of the parties of performing any unreasonable discussion moves. Or it means that (2) it sometimes happens in real-life discussions that one (or more) of the parties in the discussion refuses to give up their position despite facing accusations of irrationality which are justified from the perspective of pragma-dialectics.**[vi]**

So, on the second reading, the pragma-dialectical quote from above could be referring merely to a real-life situation in which the parties are really behaving unreasonably, although they refuse to admit that this is the case. Granted, this interpretation seems a bit far-fetched – especially given that van Eemeren and Grootendorst use the terms 'protagonist' and 'antagonist.' The use of these technical terms implies that we are talking not about real-life situations, but rather about the ideal model of a critical discussion. Still, it remains that it is possible to interpret the quote in a way that does not commit pragma-dialectics to the existence of reasonable non-agreement. Instead of concluding anything on the basis of this quote, let me therefore move on to look for more indicators as to which of the two above interpretations is the more likely.

A very interesting passage on the sufficiency of the pragma-dialectical rules for a critical discussion for resolving disputes is expressed in van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, p. 134). In the passage we learn that:
The rules of procedure that apply to the different stages of a critical discussion are problem-valid because each of them makes a specific contribution to solving certain problems that are inherent in the various stages of the process of resolving a difference of opinion. Of course, the rules cannot offer any guarantee that discussants who abide by these rules will always be able to resolve their differences of opinion. They will not automatically constitute a sufficient condition for the resolution of differences of opinion, but they are at any rate necessary for achieving this purpose.

This quote seems supply further evidence to the reading that pragma-dialectics is committed to the existence of reasonable non-agreements. After all, since it is

clearly expressed in the quote that the rules governing the stages of the ideal model are not alone sufficient for achieving the purpose of resolution, it seems to be a corollary that it is somehow possible for two discussants to be completely in line with all the rules for a critical discussion and still reach no agreement on the standpoint at issue.

The last passage to be highlighted is from van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, and Jacobs (1993, p. 26). In this work we find what is probably the most unequivocal evidence of the supposed existence of pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreements. The passage contains the following assertion:
An ideal system for resolution of disputes must be capable of […] ending with […] a mutual recognition that no agreement is (currently) attainable.

And on the next page (my emphasis):
The concluding stage fixes the outcome of the discussion: either a resolution or a decision that no resolution can be reached.

Now there can be no doubt: If the ideal model for a critical discussion is considered to be an "ideal system," (and this certainly would seem to be the case) then it follows that two discussants acting in full accordance with the rules for a critical discussion must be capable of ending with no agreement on the standpoint at issue.

5. An Example of a Pragma-Dialectical Concluding Stage Non-Agreement
The previous section showed a collection of passages from the pragma-dialectical literature, which give rise to the hypothesis that it is possible for two parties following all the rules for a critical discussion to end their discussion without reaching agreement on the standpoint at issue. Especially the last quote seemed to firmly commit pragma-dialectics to the existence of pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreements. But how might such a discussion outcome look? That is the question I deal with in this section. To do so, I examine an example of a supposedly reasonable non-agreement from a recent publication in pragma-dialectics about indicators of argumentative discourse, namely van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans (2007, p. 223-226).

The example goes as follows. Two friends are having an argumentative discussion about whether or not to go on holiday. One party adopts the standpoint that they should go on holiday, and the other party adopts the contradictory standpoint that

they should not. This means from the perspective of the ideal model that the confrontation stage has given rise to a so-called mixed dispute in which both parties are committed to the acceptability of their respective (and mutually contradictory) standpoints. To defend her standpoint, one party adduces the argument that "it is a psychological necessity for both of them to get away from it all in whatever way." The other party adduces the argumentation that "there is no money for a holiday of any kind." (p. 226). So far, so good. But consider the following issue: According to van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Snoeck Henkemans, in this discussion both of these arguments are taken to be "conclusive" by both discussants (p. 226). But how can this be? Normally, if an argument is conclusive, this obliges the antagonist to give up his doubt with respect to the standpoint at issue and commit himself (through an assertive speech act) to this standpoint (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004, p. 154 and p. 195). But if that happened here, we would be in a strange situation indeed. Namely one in which both parties (1) have given up their original doubt with respect to their opponent's standpoint and (2) adopted the standpoint of their opponent. So, the party who before maintained that the two should go on holiday would now be committed to the standpoint that they should not, and the party who before maintained that the two should not go on holiday would now be committed to the standpoint that they should go! This kind of "double resolution" with a switching of the standpoints and commitments does not seem to be the right way of analysing cases of reasonable non-agreement. The explanation of the holiday example provided by the authors is not of much help:

[I]n a mixed dispute it may occur that both parties are entitled to maintain their standpoint at the end of the discussion. While classical logic does not allow two opposite statements to be true (or untrue) at the same time, viewed dialectically, it is quite possible for two opposite standpoints to be tenable (or untenable) on the basis of the discussion that has been conducted. This becomes visible exactly because the discussion is analytically broken down into two discussions resulting from a non-mixed dispute.

This quote seems puzzling. It is clear that according to the pragma-dialectical theory, any real-life mixed dispute needs to be analytically broken down into two non-mixed disputes before a systematic evaluation is possible. However, performing this analytical operation does still not explain how two contradictory standpoints end up being tenable on the basis of one and the same empirical discussion, even given that the actual empirical discussion was mixed. After all,

we may assume that the pragma-dialectical emphasis on consistency we encountered earlier extends beyond the narrow theoretical confounds of the analytical realm into the real-life behaviour of real arguers. If this very reasonable assumption (that any given real-life arguer is not permitted to commit himself to two contradictory propositions in one and the same real-life discussion) holds, then it is outright unreasonable for two contradictory standpoints to become simultaneously tenable on the basis of the same empirical mixed discussion, since this would imply that both discussants were committed to contradictory standpoints in their real-life discussion. And, again, as mentioned earlier: if we allow for real-life discussants in mixed discussions to commit themselves to contradictory propositions, then we end up with grim prospects of real-life resolution of differences of opinion. After all, we learn that no discussion may "contain any propositions that are inconsistent with other propositions. Otherwise it would always be possible to successfully defend any arbitrary standpoint against an attacker, which inevitably renders the resolution of a difference of opinion impossible." (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 145). So, even though the example briefly analysed in this section is supposed to show a case in which both parties are entitled to maintain their standpoints at the end of the discussion, I do not see how this is possible without disregarding one or more of the standards of reasonableness implicit in the pragma-dialectical model.

6. Conclusion

The issue of this essay was whether it is possible for two discussants behaving fully in accordance with the pragma-dialectical rules for a critical discussion to complete their discussion without reaching agreement on the standpoint at issue; in other words, whether pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreements are possible. Taking an alternative approach to that of Krabbe (2008), I investigated the issue by attempting to reconstruct an example of a supposedly reasonable non-agreement in such a way that it constitutes a dialectical path to the completion of the concluding stage without any breach of the pragma-dialectical rules. The reconstruction showed that the example could not be reconstructed so as to be an instance of a pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreement, since it violated requirements of consistency. The "bottom-up" approach chosen in this paper does not enable me to conclude categorically that pragma-dialectically reasonable non-agreements do not exist. It does, however, enable me to conclude that it still remains to be seen whether and, if so, how it would be possible for two discussants to follow all the rules for a critical discussion and complete this

discussion with no agreement on the standpoint at issue.

NOTES

[i] I prefer this stylistically somewhat suboptimal term, since it avoids a certain implication of the term "disagreement", namely that it only pertains to what is called "mixed disputes" in pragma-dialectics.

[ii] This superficial overview of the basics of the pragma-dialectical theory is based on van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, pp. 42-68).

[iii] Descartes famously captures the geometrical perspective on reasonableness, when he states in the introduction to his "Discourse on Method" (1637/2008, p. 51): "… I deemed everything that was merely probable to be well-nigh false."

[iv] Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992, p. 6, fn. 8) point out, again following Toulmin, that the geometrical view seems to be prominent in logical approaches, the anthropological perspective seems to be prominent in rhetorical approaches and the critical approach seems to be prominent in dialectical perspectives. While there is undoubtedly some empirical support for this categorisation, I prefer not to put too much emphasis on this. I believe, like van Eemeren and Grootendorst, that e.g. logical approaches can espouse a critical perspective of reasonableness, just like I believe it is possible for rhetorical approaches to adopt a critical perspective.

[v] Here we assume, along with the proponents of the geometrical view, that it is indeed possible to proceed from premises known to be true beyond doubt. This is of course a highly controversial epistemological position, which both Popper (1971, 1972, 1974) and Albert (1985) have pointed out relentlessly.

[vi] This reading is, however, complicated by the fact that van Eemeren and Grootendorst use the expression "when the discussion is over," which – as far as the ideal model is concerned – implies that all four stages have been completed. If all four stages have been completed, there is no real point in launching an attack on the adversary and accusing him of being irrational. Analytically, the accusation of irrationality would have to be regarded as part of the discussion itself, wherefore it does not make sense to talk about the accusation as happening after the discussion. However, another reading of the phrase "when the discussion is over" could be "after the argumentation stage," which in a way could be said to contain the "discussion proper."

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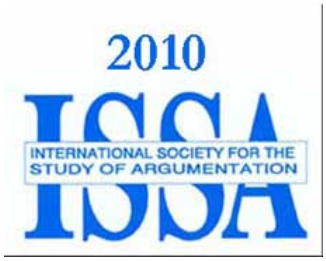
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Epistemic Foundationalism and Aristotle's Principle of the Absolute



1. Turtles all the way down

According to an ancient Hindu myth, the earth is a flat disc resting on the back of a tiger. The tiger stands on an elephant, and the elephant in turn stands on the carapace of Chukwa, a gigantic tortoise. The obvious question 'What is Chukwa standing on?' was already posed by John Locke in the seventeenth century and again by William James two centuries later (Locke 1959, p. 230, p. 392; James 1931). Not that Locke and James were particularly interested in an answer: it seems that they simply wanted to make fun of a cosmogony that reduced the world to an exotic version of the Grimm's Bremen Town Musicians.

A variant of this myth is to be found in the first lines of Stephen Hawking's bestseller *A Brief History of Time:*

"A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the centre of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: 'What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.' The scientist gave a superior smile before replying: 'What is the tortoise standing on?' 'You're very clever, young man, very clever', said the old lady. 'But it's turtles all the way down!' (Hawking 1988, p. 1)

The idea of an infinite sequence of turtles supporting the earth is, if anything, even more absurd than that of one reptile doing the job. An infinite set of turtles,

assuming that they could exist, would after all still need to stand on some ground. What could that ground be? Not a turtle, for every turtle has another turtle under its feet. But it can be nothing other than a turtle, after all *it's turtles all the way down.*

Throughout the ages philosophers have thought it obvious that such unending series of reasons are absurd. Whether it be turtles that stand on other turtles, or events that arise from other events, or actions performed for the sake of other actions: in all cases it is thought to be incoherent that such a series might consist of an infinite number of steps. At some point the series will have to stop: either at a turtle that supports but is not supported, or at an event that causes but is itself uncaused, or at an action for the sake of which all other actions are performed, but that itself is performed for its own sake.

A veto on a *regressus in infinitum* is a *Leitmotiv* that resounds down the ages throughout the annals of philosophy. Innumerable proofs of God's existence depend on this proscription. Even philosophers who expressed doubts about it, such as Kant in his discussion of the antinomies, thought it better to go quietly along with the embargo. Clearly the tendency to call a halt to threatening endlessness is deeply anchored in our cognitive apparatus.

In his inaugural dissertation as an extraordinary professor in Amsterdam, the logician and philosopher Evert Willem Beth subjected this tendency to searching scrutiny (Beth 1946). The prohibition on infinite series or sequences is, according to Beth, a crucial component of traditional metaphysics. Moreover, Beth sees much evidence that this ban on infinite sequences is mostly implicit and not openly addressed. He himself goes on to make it fully explicit in what he calls 'Aristotle's Principle of the Absolute' (APA):
"Suppose we have entities u and v, and let u have to v the relation F; then there is an entity f, which has the following property: for any entity x which is distinct from f, we have (i) x has the relation F to f, and (ii) f has not the relation F to x." (Beth 1968, p. 9).

In symbols:
$(\$u)\ (\$v)\ F(u, v) \rightarrow (\$f)\ (\text{“}x)\ [\ x \neq f\ \rightarrow \{\ F(x, f)\ \&\ \neg F(f, x)\}\ ]$.

Applied to our turtles, this principle would say that, if turtle a is supported by turtle b, and b by c, and so on, there must be a turtle f that (perhaps indirectly)

provides support for turtles *a,b,c,* and so on, but which itself is not supported by any of the other turtles.

Of course no-one takes this turtle example seriously. And indeed, the illustrations of the principle that Beth gives of APA are historically more responsible. Here are three of them.

(1) Interpret '*a* has the relation *F* to *b*' as '*a* comes into being through *b*'. Then the absolute entity *f* is that through which all others come into existence, but which does not exist by virtue of any of the other entities. Beth argues that this *f* has all the characteristics of the *archè* in the sense of Presocratic philosophy.
(2) Interpret '*a* has the relation *F* to *b*' as '*a* is desired because of *b*'. Now *f* becomes the *summum bonum,* i.e. the Supreme Good in the sense of Aristotle and of the Mediaeval church fathers.
(3) Interpret '*a* has the relation *F* to *b*' as '*a* is moved by *b*'. In this case *f* is Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, i.e. that which sets all else in motion but remains itself unmoved.

However often APA has been applied in philosophy, including natural philosophy (for Beth suggests that Isaac Newton uses it in his arguments for absolute space), the principle itself is of course invalid. This can be simply shown by giving a counterexample. Take for *a,b,c,…* the integers (positive, negative, and zero), and interpret '*a* has the relation *F* to *b*' as ' *a* is larger than *b*'. Then APA leads to the false conclusion that there is an integer, *f*, that is smaller than any of the other integers.

The fact that APA is not valid does of course not imply that it sometimes cannot lead to true statements. Indeed it can. If one changes the domain of *a,b,c,…* from that of the integers to that of the natural numbers, 1,2,3,… only, then there is indeed a natural number that is not larger than any of the others, namely 1.
Accordingly, the lesson that Beth draws is not that APA is worthless, but that it has to be applied with care. It depends on the nature of the relation *F*, and nature of the domain *a,b,c,…* whether APA leads to a correct conclusion or not. Under the interpretation of *F* as 'is larger than' the conclusion is correct if *a* and *b* are the natural numbers, but incorrect if *a* and *b* are the integers.

2. A chain of reasons
Why am I explaining this matter? Not merely to laud Evert Willem Beth, but to

draw attention to recent developments in epistemology.

An important question in modern epistemology is what it means to say that a given belief or proposition is *justified* by another belief or proposition. In an epistemic chain a proposition p_0 is justified by another proposition p_1 that, in its turn, is justified by a third proposition p_2, and so on. Another way of expressing this is by saying that a reason for p_0 is p_1, and a reason for p_1 is p_2, and so on. Exactly as in the case of the turtles and the examples of Beth, the question arises whether this chain can extend indefinitely. Does an infinite sequence of reasons make sense?

Most epistemologists assume without much debate that such an endless chain is absurd. The majority of these philosophers insist that the chain must terminate in a ground that is not justified by another proposition, but is true, or is probably true, *tout court.* These are the epistemic *foundationalists,* who number among their ranks giants like Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Berkeley, and in the first half of the 20th century C.I. Lewis and Moritz Schlick. In the second half of the 20th century foundationalism lost some ground, but it has in the last few decades made a strong comeback, witness books with titles such as *Resurrecting Old-Fashioned Foundationalism* (DePaul 2001).

This comeback should not surprise us. For foundationalism is a position that has a great intuitive appeal. Indeed, what is more natural and obvious than the idea that our knowledge is grounded, that one cannot go on and on with justification. Moreover, it seems that, as Jonathan Dancy has it: "if all justification is conditional …, then nothing can be shown to be actually … justified" (1985, p. 55). A proposition p_0 whose justification is conditional on that of p_1, whose justification is conditional on that of p_2, and so on, *ad infinitum*, is not justified at all, so it seems. If we want to justify p_0 at all, the sequence of justificatory propositions will have to terminate at a source from which the ultimate justification springs (cf. Gillet 2003, p. 713).

However, choosing foundationalism means no more nor less than opting for Aristotle's Principle of the Absolute in the field of epistemic justification. And the lesson of Evert Willem Beth was that this principle, however intuitively plausible it may be, does not always lead to a correct conclusion. Sometimes it does, but sometimes it does not: it all depends on the domain in which it is applied, and the relation between the elements in the domain. Let us look more closely both at the

domain and the relation. We will then find out whether APA applies or not.

3. Truth and probability

The nature of the domain that applies to an epistemic chain is obvious enough: it is that of propositions or beliefs in propositions. At first sight the identity of the relation seems clear too, it is that of epistemic justification. In an epistemic chain, proposition p_n is justified by proposition p_{n+1}, so p_{n+1} is an epistemic reason for p_n.

The matter is however not so simple. What exactly do we mean when we say that one proposition is a reason for another? What is the precise nature of the justification relation? Today the answer to this question differs from what used to be thought. Epistemologists in the past generally supposed that justification is some sort of inference: to say that p_n is justified by proposition p_{n+1} meant for the traditional epistemologist that the truth of p_n is inferred from the assumed truth of p_{n+1}. Modern epistemologists have a different approach. They stress "the widely accepted point", in the words of Jeremy Fantl, "that justification comes in degrees" (Fantl 2003, p. 537). In other words, justification is seen as a gradual concept: it can be more or less. Consequently, present-day epistemologists are more sympathetic to the view that justification is to be understood in probabilistic terms rather than as a form of inference. Below we shall consider chains of justification both according to the old interpretation of justification, and according to the new probabilistic interpretation. We will see how epistemic chains of infinite length fare in both cases.

First the old understanding: epistemic justification as a form of inference. The inference may be deductive or inductive, but here we will concentrate on deductive relations.**[i]** Is it coherent to maintain that a chain of deductive implications could go on and on indefinitely? We saw that Dancy thinks not. If one justifies p_0 by pointing out that it follows deductively from p_1, and p_1 by showing that it deductively follows from p_2, and so on, then that means, according to Dancy, that there is no justification of p_0 at all.

Dancy presumably means that we *can never know* if p_0 is true or false if the chain of implication is infinite in extent. If this is what he means, he is not necessarily right. It all depends on what the negations of the various propositions in the chain imply. If p_{n+1} implies p_n and $Øp_{n+1}$ implies $Øp_n$ for all n=0,1,2,…, then the chain is one of bi-implications, and so all the propositions are together either true or false.

Indeed, in this case we would not know which was the case. But if $Øp_{n+1}$ implies p_n instead of $Øp_n$ for all n=0,1,2,..., then all the propositions in the chain are true. This may not be a very interesting situation, for all the propositions would be tautologies, but it is a case in which we would know the truth value of p_0.

What happens to an infinite chain when justification is interpreted as a probabilistic relation that satisfies the Kolmogorov axioms, as many modern epistemologists are wont to do? The great majority of contemporary epistemologists still think that an infinite chain of justification makes no sense, but not everyone agrees as to why this is so. Sometimes it is thought that the probability associated with a proposition is necessarily *undefined* if the chain is infinitely long (Dancy), and sometimes it is claimed that it is defined, but is necessarily *zero* (Lewis 1929, pp. 327-328; Lewis 1952, p. 172). In the first case the probability of p_0, say $P(p_0)$, has no value, and in the second, $P(p_0) = 0$.**[ii]**

In recent years I have argued that these claims are incorrect (Atkinson & Peijnenburg 2006; 2009; Peijnenburg 2007; Peijnenburg & Atkinson 2008). Modern foundationalists of all stripes, whether they think that an infinite series of probabilistic relations must lead to probability zero or to none at all, are mistaken. Not only is it possible that such an infinite series leads to a definite and sensible value, it is in fact a very common situation. The assumption that we need to make is that the conditional probabilities along the chain obey the following inequality:

$$P(p_n|p_{n+1}) > P(p_n|Øp_{n+1}),$$

for all n. This is a very natural assumption indeed. It states that p_n is more likely to be true if p_{n+1} is true than if p_{n+1} is false, and thus that p_{n+1} makes probable p_n. For p_0 to be *justfied* we require in addition that the resulting probability $P(p_0)$ is greater than $P(Øp_0)$, and often one requires more than this, namely that $P(p_0)$ be greater than some agreed upon theshold of acceptance, say 0.9.

Under the above inequality, the usual situation is that $P(p_0)$, and indeed all the unconditional probabilities $P(p_n)$ in the chain, have well-defined, nonzero values. Aristotle's Principle of the Absolute thus generally fails in the case of chains of probabilistic justification. True, there *are* sequences of conditional probabilities in which $P(p_0)$ is undefined by the infinite series, and others where $P(p_0)$ is defined

by the infinite series but is zero. But far from being always the case, such sequences are demonstrably very exceptional special cases. The generic situation is that in which the unconditional probability of p_0 is well-defined and nonzero, even if the justification of p_0 consists of an infinite chain of conditional probability statements.

It will be clear that epistemic justification in a probabilistic context is much more interesting than it is when justification is conceived as implication. As we saw, in the latter case the possibility of an infinite series leading to a well-defined probability was restricted to an exceptional and not very interesting state of affairs. When the series is one of probabilistic justification, however, the matter is precisely reversed. Now it is the norm that an infinite series leads to a well-defined and significant probability, and exceptions are rare and not very important.

The reason that we can often complete an infinite probabilistic series is that the contribution from the conditional probabilities, $P(p_n|p_{n+1})$ and $P(p_n|\emptyset p_{n+1})$, becomes smaller and smaller as n becomes larger and larger. This does not mean that the conditional probabilities themselves need to tend to zero, for they could even tend to one, or they may indeed become smaller: that is of no import. The essential thing is that their contribution to $P(p_0)$ becomes smaller and smaller as n increases, and that the infinite series of probabilities is always convergent. Elsewhere we have proved that the sum of the series indeed always converges and that it differs from $P(p_0)$, the probability of the target proposition, only in very exceptional cases (Atkinson & Peijnenburg 2010).

Another interesting consequence of these results is as follows. Suppose that the epistemic chain in a particular case *is* finite, but *very* long. Because of the finitude, there must be a last proposition, say p_{1000}, separated from p_0 by a 999 links. For the foundationalist p_{1000} is the ultimate ground on which the justification of p_0 rests. After all, it is p_{1000} that justifies p_{999}, and p_{999} that justifies p_{998}, and so on. To determine $P(p_0)$ we need to know not only all the conditional probabilities, but also the unconditional probability $P(p_{1000})$. At first sight this looks like grist to the foundationalist's mill, but the opposite is in fact the case! The numerical contribution of the probability $P(p_{1000})$ to $P(p_0)$ will generally be very tiny, for $P(p_{1000})$ is multiplied by a coefficient that involves all the conditional probabilities

along the entire chain, and this coefficient is small. The lion's share of the contribution is provided by the conditional probabilities alone, without hardly any help from $P(p_{1000})$. The 'ground' p_{1000} may be very probable, even certain, $P(p_{1000}) = 1$, or very improbable, even absent, $P(p_{1000}) = 0$; all this makes very little difference to the calculated value of $P(p_0)$. It should be clear that this fact flies in the face of the foundationalist who insists that the series, and the probable truth of the proposition in question, is completely supported by one solid foundation.**[iii]**

In conclusion, I have claimed that an infinite chain of propositions that support one another epistemically is not absurd. The situation is however radically different if epistemic support is construed as implication on the one hand, or in probabilistic terms on the other. As we have seen, an infinite epistemic chain almost never leads to a *truth value* as such for a target proposition, but almost always to a *probability value.*

4. Two objections

One might cavil at the above conclusions in two ways. The first complaint could be to claim that I have merely shown there to be a conceptual, but not a physical possibility of an infinite epistemic chain. Is this not simply a mathematical trick? The second, related objection is that the argument tells us nothing about the world.

Concerning the first objection, it is of course true that we are not able to give unlimited reasons for our reasons *sub specie aeternitatis*. We are mere mortals who have only a limited time at our disposal. Unending epistemic chains in *this* physical sense are for practical reasons impossible. The interesting objections against infinite regression do not have to do with this physical impracticability, but rather an imagined conceptual impossibility (Post 1980). Surprisingly this does not refer to our inability to argue for or retain an infinite *number* of thoughts or reasons, for many foundationalists are quite happy to admit that this is in some sense possible. Fumerton, for example, admits roundly that "we do have an infinite number of beliefs" (Fumerton 2001, p. 7). What foundationalists deny is that all these beliefs could be tacked on to one another in an infinite chain in such a way as to lead to a well-defined (generally gradual, i.e. probabilistic) belief. They deny, in other words, that we can *complete* an infinite epistemic chain: "we cannot complete an infinitely long chain of reasoning" (Fumerton 2004, p. 150;

2006, p. 40). Or in the formulation of Robert Audi:
“For even if I could have an infinite number of beliefs, how could I ever know anything if knowledge required an infinite epistemic chain?” (Audi 1998, p. 183).

Above I asserted (and elsewhere I have demonstrated) that one can indeed have knowledge that presupposes an infinite epistemic chain; knowledge of a unique value for a probability, $P(p_0)$, is obtained from the consideration of an infinite, convergent series of conditional probabilities. Although *coming into possession* of the knowledge involved a conceptual exercise (namely the summation of a convergent series), the knowledge itself is not a mere conceptual business. It tells us something about the material world.

This brings us to the second objection. *Have* we really learned something about the empirical world if we have computed a probability on the basis of an infinite series? I can most readily explain how this can be so by giving an example. Imagine colonies of a bacterium growing in a stable chemical environment known to be favourable to a particular mutation of practical interest. The bacteria reproduce asexually, so that only one parent, the ‘mother’, produces ‘daughters’. The probability that a mutated daughter descends from a normal, not mutated mother is known to be very small (say 0.02); but the probability that a mutated daughter descends from a mutated mother is on the other hand high (say 0.99).

Let p_n be the proposition: ‘the ancestor in generation n, reckoned backwards from the present, was a mutant’. We are told further that each batch develops from a single, mutant ancestor. In this situation, in which the conditional probabilities are the same from generation to generation, $P(p_0)$ is equal to a geometric series that can be summed explicitly. Imagine a batch to be sampled after, shall we say, 150 generations since the seeding of the batch. The original great-great-grandmother, in generation 150 before the generation sampled, is known to be a mutant, so $P(p_{150}) = 1$, and we find that $P(p_0)$ is perfectly well defined: it works out to be 0.670.

Now we can just as easily calculate $P(p_0)$ on the assumption that the number of the preceding generations of bacteria was not 150, but infinite. We now have a geometric series with an infinite number of terms; but it can nevertheless be completed in the sense that its sum can be calculated exactly. We compute two thirds, which is only half a percent less than the 0.67 that we obtained using the

assumption that the ancestor in the 150th generation was a mutant. Evidently we have made a very useful statement about the empirical world.

At this point, a foundationalist objecting to infinite chains might argue that our story about the bacterial colonies is not an example of infinitism at all. For no bacterium has an infinite number of ancestor bacteria, if only because of the fact of evolution from more primitive algal slime, which had evolved from earlier life forms, which sprang from inanimate matter, which originated in a supernova explosion, and so on, back to …. to what? To the Big Bang? But it seems that the Big Bang may well not represent a beginning, in view of the deformation of spacetime. The whole point here is precisely the question whether or not there was a starting point. The foundationalist's postulate that in the bacterial case there was a start begs the question.

NOTES

[i] Whereas deductive relations are clearly nonprobabilistic, inductive connections may be regarded as first steps towards a full understanding of justification in probabilistic terms. The latter remains however a matter of debate, since contemporary epistemologists are not in agreement on the sort of probability central to inductive justification.

[ii] As is well known, the concept of probability that satisfies the Kolmogorov axioms is open to several interpretations. For the purpose of this article it does not matter which interpretation is favoured, although it would be natural to think of probability as degree of belief.

[iii] John Turri has argued that foundationalists are not committed to finite epistemic chains, let alone to the idea that such chains must have a solid foundation (Turri 2009). Elsewhere it has been argued that Turri's argument rests on a confusion between the limit of a series and its ground (Peijnenburg and Atkinson, forthcoming).

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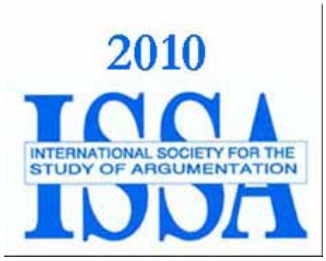
ISSA Proceedings 2010 – How Authors Justify Their Participation In Literary Interviews: Analyzing The Argumentative Dimension Of The Interview Through Its Interactions



Disinclination to participate in interviews is common to some authors, for whom this kind of journalistic practice contradicts with the raison d'être of a writer, which is to express herself via her novels and other writings. The interview challenges this idea by shedding light on the image of the author and her personality, in a way that sometimes casts a shadow over her works. But literary interviews are telling, not only because of what they disclose on the author of the novels we love to read, but also because they may reveal other aspects, world views, attitudes towards literature, and so forth. In this particular paper, we choose to focus on ways in which reluctant authors justify their choice to be interviewed during the interview. The theoretical framework in which we discuss this is based on three elements.

One has to do with the literary interview and its significance to the study of literary criticism. As a genre which brings to the fore the personality of the writer, it has been subject to criticism and belittling (Barthes 1984; Deleuze

1977), even by the writers themselves. Hence some authors are reluctant to be interviewed, as we shall see in specific cases. Furthermore, little was thought of it as a framework where knowledge can be produced. However, in the recent decade, a few studies (Rodden 2001; Lavaud & Thérenty 2004; Yanoshevsky 2004, 2009), actually show its importance. In particular, Yanoshevsky has demonstrated through the study of the verbal interaction that takes place during the interview, how theoretical information about writing is processed and conceptualized (Yanoshevsky 2004, 2009).

The second is the project which is of particular interest to argumentation scholars. It concerns the argumentative approach developed by Amossy (2000, 2005, 2009), entitled Argumentation dans le discours (Argumentation in Discourse), to which we will refer here as ADD. Most approaches to argumentation (various approaches to rhetorical discourse like van Eemeren 1984, 1992, 2008; Leff 1997; Plantin 1990, 1998) concentrate on discourse aiming specifically at persuasion (speeches, pamphlets, conflict resolution or mediation, advertisements, etc.). However, ADD chooses to address not only discourses having an explicit argumentative aim, but also those comprising an argumentative dimension, like news reports, novels, etc. (Amossy 2005, p. 13). According to this approach, such discourses, too, belong to the realm of persuasion insofar as they tend to orient the audience's ways of seeing and judging the world, or their reflection on a given problem (Amossy 2000, p. 29). It is in this theoretical context that we choose to place the study of the literary interview. In this paper, our aim is thus not so much to ask whether the author's interview can be considered as a literary genre. Nor will we deal with the question of whether it is worthwhile to be studied per se, which to us is a given. But rather, we view it here as a verbal interaction, in the framework of which meaning is negotiated: the cooperation between interviewer and interviewee yields a certain knowledge of the author , and produces, via the interaction, ways to view literature. It is in this respect that the literary interview can be viewed as a discourse conveying an argumentative dimension.

The third element, inseparable from the two previous ones, is the adoption and adaptation of interactionist perspectives, within the study of the interview. Elaborated by Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni **[i]** , this approach examines speech acts "in context […] and within a sequence of acts that are not randomly linked" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005, p.53; our translation). It emphasizes the dialogic and

dialogical character of the interview in which participants "build together a more or less coherent discourse" and at the same time "establish between themselves a certain type of relationship (of distance or proximity, hierarchy or equality, conflict or collusion), which continues to evolve over the course of interaction" and contributes to the co-construction of meaning (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005, p. 68; our translation).

By combining the three elements, we demonstrate through the analysis of the interaction of the author and her interviewer, how justification takes place. We identify the interlocutors' communicative strategies such as paraphrasing [relances], introduction of new themes [consignes] (Blanchet 2004), evading the question, as well as other strategies which have not been listed in the current literature on conversation analysis, like theorizing and theme extension. We also look into the interlocutors' positioning, i.e. the fact that they are alternatively situated in the dominating/ subjugated position (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1992; Yanoshevsky 2009), and their cooperation strategies (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1992, pp. 141 – 155), such as challenges and the co-constructing of an agreement. In the course of the analysis we also take into account what Genette (1987) calls paratext, that is, the prefaces to the interviews, and other relevant writings by the same authors. This allows us to show how justifying one's participation in the interview is the result of the interaction within the interview, but is also produced by the text surrounding it.

We demonstrate the above by studying sequences of interviews with two authors Milan Kundera and Andrei Makine. Both authors are known for being hostile to interviews. While Kundera rejects the genre in general, both authors are averse to highlighting the author's personality, rather than his works.

1. Milan Kundera and the Interview

1.1. Author's rights and the interview

From 1985 on, French speaking author of Czech origin, Milan Kundera, decided to refuse giving interviews to the media, unless they appear in written form. Despite that, and breaking his own rules, he accepted a conversation with Lois Oppenheim in 1989 **[ii]**. A writer herself and a university professor, Oppenheim is known for her work on Beckett and Butor, as well as for her interviews with numerous writers, amongst whom avant-garde authors.

As an interviewer, Oppenheim was well aware of Kundera's unwillingness to participate in interviews. Oppenheim therefore opens the conversation with an

explicit question concerning his lack of enthusiasm. She first reminds her reader (by talking to Kundera and for the protocol) that the writer condemns "the interview as it is traditionally practiced", and notes his decision " not to grant any more interviews unless they are accompanied by your copyright". She then expresses solidarity with Kundera ("I understand your frustration…") and accepts the distinction the author has drawn between dialogue where there is a real give and take, a sincere sharing of thoughts on issues of mutual interest, and interview, where only those questions of interest to the interviewer are posed and only those answers that serve his purpose are reproduced… (Oppenheim 1989, p.7)
This opening, considered as part of the so-called "Face Flattering Acts" strategies**[iii]** , enables Oppenheim to win over the good-will of her interlocutor and to weaken his resistance. As Blanchet would have it:
The main thing in strategies and tactics [of the interview] is to diminish the factors that are susceptible of inhibiting the communication during the interview and to increase the factors which contribute to it (2004, p. 146).

At the same time, Oppenheim challenges Kundera by asking questions in a way which casts doubt upon the latter's decision not to give interviews ("Nevertheless, I wonder if you are not somehow depriving your public in restricting the interviews you grant to those that you will co-edit?"). Kundera willingly responds to the challenge and retorts by confirming his dislike of the interview. The confirmation is followed by an explanation of such a negative attitude towards the genre: it is because the published text is reported by a journalist who becomes thus the "proprietor" of the discourse. Such a situation, according to Kundera, gives way to approximations, inaccurate citations and perversions, things which a writer cannot possible accept: 'An author, once quoted by a journalist, is no longer master of his word; he loses the author's right to what he says." The interview's major faults are imprecision and the author's lack of power with regard to the interviewer. In other words, Kundera resents the interview because it fails to convey the author's intentions.
However, Kundera's response does not end here. He goes on to provide a solution that will enable him both to avoid the embarrassment of a traditional interview, and yet not to renounce entirely this practice:
The solution, however, is easy and, I hope, agreeable to you : We have met, you and I ; we have spoken at length ; we have agreed to the subjects that interest us ; you have composed the questions ; I have composed the answers and we are adding at the end a copyright. (Oppenheim 1989, p.7)

We can see that Kundera's reluctance is mitigated by reviewing the rules of the interview. Kundera's proposal here can be interpreted as a new communication contract to which he and Oppenheim should abide during the current interview.

Hence, the genre's rules are redefined during the interview and are inserted in a larger theoretical framework, namely Kundera's thought on Author's copyright, rewriting and the author's control of his text. Reframing thus the question, Kundera achieves a dominant position in the interview, which in theory is reserved for the interviewer. He seems to play the interviewer's role by dictating the rules and by doing so, he thus justifies his participation. Oppenheim is voluntarily game ("This seems entirely reasonable to me. In fact, I can't see what more could be wanted than the guarantee of authenticity that the copyright provides."). Thanks to her compliance, complicity is established between the interlocutors, contributing thereby to the productive continuity of the dialogue.

We have previously mentioned the need to look into the paratext of the interview in order to further investigate the question of justification. Indeed, we studied the preface to Oppenheim's interview with Kundera. It is here that we can find an explicit reference to the "initial communication contract", which – according to Blanchet (2004, p. 149) "has very important consequences on the way to achieve" an interview. In the preface, Oppenheim starts out by explaining her view of the author's interview ("To esteem an artist is to esteem his art, not his person") and her expectations vis-à-vis the interviewee ("the modesty of his responses […] and the steadfast refusal to ever, even momentarily, take refuge behind any sort of facile rhetoric…"). This meta-discourse on the interview is followed by specific observations she makes on her interview with Kundera:
The scope and purpose of the interview ultimately derived from our conversations were refined, however, by a mutual interest in particularizing, in clarifying a number of concrete, and not necessarily related, points of interest. (Oppenheim 1989, p.7)

Thus, the preface is the place where the contract of communication is defined. Besides the fact that it has a bearing on the interlocutors' positioning game ("mutual interest" implies a more or less equal relationship between the participants), it also determines the way the reader should read the interview.

1.2. "The novelist is not a public figure"
The explanation supplied by Kundera during the interview on why he rejects this

genre – because of the loss of the mastery on the expression of his thought – is accompanied by other justifications, as he explains in another interview: "the novelist is not a public figure obliged to speak of all the small and big problems of the moment" (Chantigny 1987; our translation). Kundera repeats here an idea he has previously expressed in his 1985 Jerusalem Discourse, where he makes a distinction between a novelist and a writer:

…novelist, I am not saying a writer. The novelist is he who, according to Flaubert, wants to disappear behind his work […] It is not easy today, where everything of minor importance has to pass through the unbearably illuminated scene of mass media, which contrary to Flaubert's intention, make the work disappear behind the image of its author. (Kundera 1986, p. 186; our translation)

In fact, in his correspondence, Flaubert often turns to the idea that "art […] needs to remain suspended in infinity […] independently of its producer" (1995, vol. 13, 27.03.1852, p.174) and a "novelist does not have the right to express his opinion of whatever it is" (1995, vol. 14, 05/06.12.1866, p. 315). On the one hand, this idea is part of Flaubert's vision of art, and on the other hand, it is a criticism directed towards his contemporaries or predecessors, especially Balzac**[iv]** . As for Kundera, by appealing to Flaubert's authority, he implicitly positions himself against the interview tradition as it was introduced and developed by French journalist Jules Huret, at the end of the nineteenth century in France. As a founder of the genre, Huret was mainly interested "in the personality of the writer with whom he met and whose portrait he vividly traced" (Royer 1987, p. 18; our translation).

In response, the interviewer uses paraphrasing (Blanchet 2004), with a take on Kundera's concession: "In your prize of Jerusalem speech you have said: […] by taking on himself the role of public figure, the novelist endangers his work which might be considered as a simple appendix of his gestures, his declarations, his taking a stand…" Do you still think that?" Kundera confirms this idea laconically ("more than ever"), but uses the occasion to expand his reflection on the issue:

The Agelasts, whatever one may say, are always in power…the word Agelast means: he who never laughs, who doesn't have a sense of humor. It is in this context that I have quoted this remarkable Jewish proverb: Man thinks, God laughs. Rabelais himself had heard God's laughter. Hence, his terror and his hatred of the Agelasts of his time, just as we should be fearful of those of our time. […] Only laughter, God's laughter, can save the individual (Chantigny 1987;

our translation)

Siding with Rabelais, Kundera thus implicitly justifies his participation in this dialogue: one should save the world, we should therefore speak, we should make sure the voice of those who laugh are heard. At the same time, it is precisely by an answer which does not respond to the question asked, that the interviewee proceeds in reversing once more the roles, as he takes again the dominant position in the interview.

It should be noted that in the preface to this interview, the interviewer writes:
Can you imagine a writer who settles for writing nice books and refuses all interviews with those Misters and Missis of the press? Hence like a sly [sournois] hypocrite, I ask him to kindly write a dedication in his last book (ibid.; our translation)

This preface's double meaning is of significance. First, by revealing to the reader his own slyness, the journalist regains the dominant position that was initially his, but was confiscated by his interlocutor during the interaction. Secondly, this starting point, different from the one posed by Lois Oppenheim in the interview we analyzed earlier, can provide justification for reversing the roles: given that this is not an interview but a conversation**[v]**, one shouldn't have to abide to the normative laws of interview, and dialogue takes place spontaneously.
Despite the initial difference between the two situations (determined and concerted interview in the first case vs. spontaneous conversation in the second), the interviewee uses the same justification strategies in both cases, that is, the reversal of roles and the integration of ideas which surpass the questions posed by the interviewers. These strategies allow him to gain back his position as an author and to present his point of view on questions which seem of importance to him.

2. Andrei Makine and the Interview
A French writer of Russian origin, Andrei Makine is equally negative about the interview, which to him, as for Kundera, is a place where the author's reputation is celebrated. For the sake of justifying his hostility, he, too, appeals to Flaubert's authority**[vi]** : "to speak of one self is a petit-bourgeois temptation which one should always resist […]. If not, one becomes miserable, looking to sculpt out one's own statue" (Thibeault 2004; our translation). Why then give interviews? While justification is never really made explicit, it seems to lie in what he says

during interviews with journalists. As an example, we chose Makine's interview with Catherine Argand, a *Lire* magazine journalist and an expert on author interviews**[vii].** It is perhaps her expertise that allows her to constantly keep her dominant position throughout the interview, as we can see in the introduction of new themes, requests for precision, and reformulations.

Her command of the interview is visible from the onset, as she announces a provocative theme, which may be considered as a challenge for the interviewee: "It seems like you are not very sociable or talkative…" (Argand 2001, p. 24; our translation). Makine chooses to ignore this challenge and responds in a generalization in which he compares Russian civilization – silent and grounded on the "ontological communion" of souls – and the French one belonging to a discursive culture "worried about controlling the world"(p.24). The inference allows him both to avoid a direct response to the interviewer's question and to regain his own place, by continuing to discuss the essence of literature. By not providing a direct answer he continues to refrain from speaking in personal terms while developing themes in which he is particularly interested:
… when one writes [in Russia], it is for the sake of saying something very important, […] to establish a communion between the souls, the hearts, human beings. The novel's ideal is that one is unable to say anything about it…(Argand 2001, p.24; our translation)

Using this strategy of avoidance Makine is able to confirm his dominant position because he is able to outdo his interlocutor's expectations by offering an unexpected point of view.

The interviewer then challenges Makine once more (in an effort to take hold of her dominant position) and asks for a clarification of the meaning of a word "soul, a word which is rarely used by French contemporaries…" This time, the writer cooperates with his interviewer and tries to explain to her the reasons for his love for this word:
I like this word "soul", because it avoids social, professional, racial etiquettes […]. It is the story of my novel by the way, of a man without characteristics who manages to get rid of everything that society has imposed on him, like denominations. It is a stripped soul under the skies (ibid., p. 24; our translation).
Nevertheless, he remains silent with regard to Argand's remark on contemporary French, that is, he uses a strategy of avoidance. By choosing to respond to some questions and themes while ignoring others, he once more regains his strong

position in the interview. The short discussion on the soul's liberty is followed by a series of rephrasing on the meaning of Makine's works and the role of literature. These questions tend to side with Makine, enabling him to render explicit his thoughts on literature. He cooperates voluntarily with the interviewer and gives several definitions of what literature is to him**[viii]** .

Argand's dominant position is also evident in the frequent paraphrasing of Makine's replies. For instance, Makine's reflection on "the stripped soul under the skies" is met with the following paraphrase: "In other words, existential liberty?" (p. 24) or:
Makine : … When I describe the battle field […], I speak of bodies that stink and groan and it isn't art for art sake . Do you know that in a battlefield it is not the odor of blood which dominates?
Argand : Er, no…
Makine : It is excrements, exploded intestines.
Argand : Shit, to put it crudely? (ibid., p.25; our translation)

These two deliberately provocative paraphrases, where the interviewer seems to get a hold on Makine's vocabulary, give the impression of a stranglehold on the interview by the interviewer, who seems to know where she is heading. The objective of these paraphrases seems to be to force Makine out of his own territory and perhaps to extract from the writer opinions and ideas which he would not have otherwise shared or discussed during the interview. However, Makine does not comply with these attempts to extract responses. Instead, he constantly manages to introduce into the conversation themes he considers worthy of being elaborated, such as literary creation, the language of literary works, and literary thought on society and Man. In fact, following the question on "shit", Makine revolts against the sinking of language and indulges in a thought on French language. His obsessive revisiting of the same themes is significant. It seems like the need to expose them to the public explains and justifies the author's participation in an interview, where he nevertheless expresses his dislike of the genre.

During their conversation and by recurring to the strategy of definition, Argand tries to define Makine as a rebel ("Wouldn't you be a rebel?"). While confirming this definition, Makine extends the discussion:
The writer has the power to recreate time, to abolish it, to dominate it by words; the power to recreate a being according to his own experience. He is the only one

capable of transforming reality, that is to see it as it is under the golden, silver or copper layers shown by TV on the one hand and intellectuals subjugated to political, media and sociological discourses on the other. Sub-culture floods the air and the screens. By promising happiness, songs, millions, it works like a mental drug… Literature is the last square of resistance in face of the dumbing down machines. It is the last safe haven of free thought… (ibid., pp.25-26; our translation)

Makine's generalization here contains a grain of provocation. We can see how, while accepting the interviewer's definition, he takes advantage of it for his own sake: he wants to discuss the role of literature in contemporary culture. Thus, despite the dominant position held by the interviewer during most of the interview (it is she who determines the questions and their order, the demands for clarifications, the paraphrasing etc.), Makine confirms his dominant position too, by constantly subverting the meaning of the questions and bringing the discussion back to things he considers cardinal.

We have seen how from the moment Makine accepts to be interviewed, he advances his own agenda. Since he is convinced that the novel should neither be intellectualized nor theorized (Authier 2001), his thoughts on literature and its role in contemporary society cannot be expressed directly in his novels. He then uses the interview as a framework to develop his own literary theory. In this way, Makine's reader can find in the interview not only a certain physical presence of the writer, but first and foremost a fresh outlook on literature, which complements his previous works.

3. Conclusion

The application of interaction analysis to the literary interview, for the purpose of exposing the argumentative dimension of discourse shows that despite their explicit hostility to the interview as a genre, the authors implicitly justify their participation in the interview. Using different strategies, they manage to turn the interaction into something that corresponds with their aims or points of view. In both cases discussed, the interviewees benefited from the exchange because they were able to discuss their respective viewpoints. Thus, Kundera redefines the roles of the interlocutors as he wishes and appeals to the authority of other renowned writers (Flaubert and Rabelais) to justify his position vis-à-vis the interview. Makine chooses the strategy of avoidance and generalization in order to ignore the topics suggested by the interviewer and emphasizes themes he

believes are of importance.The interview thus becomes an additional framework for the authors, where they can develop their non-published ideas or propose their own interpretations of their works.

In addition, in both cases it was found that the respective positions occupied by the participants during the interaction are constantly reshuffled. Despite the efforts of the interviewers to occupy the dominant position, strategies such as paraphrasing, reformulation of the game's rules, theme extension, and avoidance of questions allow interviewees to switch to the dominant position and justify thereby their participation in the interview. This provides an additional explanation of the interviewees' dominant position: as the interview is the product of a constant interaction, whose objective is to obtain information from the interviewee for the benefit of the reader, interviewers often follow the interviewees' initiatives.

Finally, the analysis can benefit from an understanding of the paratext. Thus, the inclusion of interview's prefaces in Kundera's case enables us to see how the author's dominance is counter-balanced by the interviewer's constant quest to control the interaction, by way of introducing a preface that orients the reader's perspective.

We have thus seen how the analysis of the interview enables us to solve the apparent tension between the author's reluctance to take part in an interview and his actual participation in the interaction. It is within the interaction itself that the arguments in favor of such participation are produced.

NOTES

[i] It should be stressed that this perspective has already been initiated by Goffman's sociological theory that studies face-to-face interactions and according to which "the individual will have to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally express himself, and the others will in turn have to be impressed in some way by him" (Goffman 1969, p.2).Without going into the details of Goffman's theory, however, it should be noted that Goffman is concerned not only with speech but with all social behavior in a given context as it is reflected in the gestures, facial expressions or clothing (Amossy 2010, p.26).

[ii] One should note that even prior to his decision not to give any interviews Kundera has always chosen his interviewers with great care. Some of the more renowned include Alain Finkielkraut, Guy Scarpetta, Normand Biron, and Philip Roth.

[iii] This term is a positive variant of "Face Threatening acts" (FTA) first conceptualized in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987). It has been taken up and developed through the analysis of verbal interactions by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1986; 2005). It takes into account not only negative speech acts, which threaten the faces of the interlocutors (the FTA) but also the positive acts which she calls "rewarding Face Flattering Acts" (FFA).

[1v] Regarding Flaubert's contempt of public life, cf. Wall 2006.

[v] The journalist does not introduce himself as one to Kundera, neither does he ask him to participate in an interview, but he pretends to be a simple reader who tries to engage in a conversation with his favorite author. This is why we claim that the rules of the interview as such are not really applicable here.

[vi] This quotation seemingly represents a reformulation of Flaubert's idea expressed in his letter Alfred le Poittevin: "The only means not to be unhappy, is to lock up oneself in Art and not to consider at any price all the rest; vanity replaces all when it is seated on a large basis" (Flaubert 1995, vol.12, 13.05.1845, p. 449).

[vii] Among her interlocutors we can find Pascal Quignard, Michel Houellebecq, Linda Lê, Annie Hernaux.

[viii] "Let these people speak, these phantoms of ordinary life confined to the limbs [sic.], give them life, it has been for me a true literary challenge" (p. 25); "To me it is the writer's task: to show that beyond the troops of victims or idiots, there were rebels and men who did not comply with their role as hangmen" (p.25); "Today, only literature can synthesize, avoid quick schematizing, abusive generalization" (p.25), etc.

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