ISSA Proceedings 2010 – From Liberation To Liberty: Strategic Ambiguity And Politicization in Berlusconi's 1st Liberation Day Speech: "April 25: A Honor And A Commitment"

Italy is the country I love. Here I have my roots, my hopes, my horizons. Here I have learned, from my father and from life, how to be an entrepreneur. Here I have acquired my passion for Liberty. . . . Never as in this moment does Italy . . . need people with a certain experience, with their heads on their shoulders, able to give the country a helping hand and to make the state function. . . . If the political system is to work, it is essential that there emerges a *pole of Liberty* in opposition to the left-wing cartel, a pole that is capable of attracting to it the best of an Italy that is honest, reasonable, modest.

Silvio Berlusconi, "Let Us Build a New Miracle"

The *People of Liberty* is a movement of women and men who believe in *Liberty*, want to maintain their *Liberty*, and identify themselves in the values of the Party of European People: the dignity of the person, the centrality of family, *Liberty* and responsibility, equality, justice, legality, solidarity. The People of *Liberty* was born in *Liberty*, from *Liberty*, and for *Liberty* so that Italy, respectful of its traditions and national unity, could increase its *Liberty*, justice, prosperity and become truly supportive.

Silvio Berlusconi, "People of Liberty Statute"

1. Berlusconi's second thoughts on Liberation Day: April 25, 2009
Many journalists and politicians described April 25, 2009 as a watershed moment in the history of the Italian second Republic. Indeed Liberation Day 2009 seemed

to symbolize a turning point in Italian political life: For the first time in fifteen years the controversial Italian Prime Minister and media tycoon, Silvio Berlusconi, participated in the sixty-fourth celebration of Liberation from Nazi-Fascism.

Berlusconi's participation greatly surprised the Italian public: During the previous year there had been a heated debate between Silvio Berlusconi, leader of *Popolo della Libertà* (PdL) and Walter Veltroni, ex-leader of *Partito Democratico* (Pd), about the continued and disrespectful lack of participation of the right-wing coalition in Liberation Day celebrations. **[i]** The controversy centered on Berlusconi's April 25 meeting in *Palazzo Grazioli* with Giuseppe Ciarrapico, a PdL senatorial candidate in the upcoming national elections and a notorious admirer of the Fascist period. **[ii]** During the month of March, Ciarrapico's candidacy, supported by Berlusconi, generated great embarrassment inside and outside of Berlusconi's party because of Ciarrapico's nostalgia for Fascism and his open admiration for Benito Mussolini.**[iii]** Berlusconi's rejection of the invitation to participate in the national Liberation celebration, and his meeting with the neo-Fascist and future PdL Senator on Liberation Day, have been perceived and interpreted by the Democratic Party as an open insult to both democracy and the Liberation that is celebrated on that day.

In response to this criticism, Berlusconi dismissed the accusation of the Pd as "a mean and vulgar controversy" and foreshadowed his argument about the necessity for a national pacification around the divisions between parties and individuals concerning the Resistance and the Liberation. Berlusconi, often referred to as *Cavaliere* or Knight, replied to critiques and to the accusation of a lack of a serious political conscience, saying that his thoughts about the Liberation Day were at that point quite clear: It was time for the Liberation Day to become a celebration of Liberty for the whole Italian people, a celebration that should transcend the sole recognition of the merits of the Resistance and become, definitively, a celebration unifying the Italian people around the achieved liberty of all.**[iv]**

On April 25, 2009, Berlusconi, consistent with the previous year's declarations, finally joined the celebration of the Liberation Day for the first time. This event was remarkable, not only because it was the first time that this happened, but also because Berlusconi decided to celebrate Liberation Day in Onna, the destroyed town in Abruzzo, which was the epicenter of the deadly earthquake that

struck the city of L'Aquila on April 6, just a few weeks earlier. In these painful days for the region of Abruzzo and for Italy in its whole, the Prime Minister found the perfect strategic rhetorical situation to participate in the celebration for the first time.**[v]** Onna, the destroyed little town outside of L'Aquila, had been the hometown of a famous Partisan Brigade and it also suffered from an attack by Nazis during the Resistance. Its recent destruction by the earthquake, and its history as a site of Resistance provided Berlusconi with a reason not to miss again the celebrations of Liberation Day. The context of pain and desolation and the need for national cohesion to face the dire tragedy in Abruzzo provided the Prime Minister with the occasion to present his revision of the celebration of Liberation: For Berlusconi April 25 in Onna became, as forecasted in 2008, "Liberty Day."

2. Reading the Speech: from Liberation to Liberty
The speech Berlusconi delivered in Onna is strategic: On the one hand, Berlusconi finally recognized the "fundamental value of the Resistance for our nation" and for the Italian democratic and republican Constitution.**[vi]** This important statement allowed Berlusconi to open up a dialogue with the left-wing party in a moment of extreme political division and public discontent.**[vii]** On the other hand, Berlusconi felt the urge to recognize the value "of those who fought for the wrong side" as well, thus balancing his nod to the left-wing coalition worldview and his own party worldview. Recognizing the value of those who fought for the wrong side is indeed a direct reference to the proposal by the PdL to make the financial benefits of the *Partigiani* (the Resistance Partisans) and the *Repubblichini* (those who fought defending the Fascist Republic of Salò) equal under law.**[viii]**

In the introduction of his speech Berlusconi sets up the ideological shift from *Liberazione* (Liberation) to *Libertà* (Liberty). Liberation as such is, paradoxically, mentioned only once in the very first sentence and then subsequently replaced, and subsumed by Liberty, which is used instead throughout the whole speech until the very end, when Berlusconi, in his concluding remarks mentions Italy, the Republic, and April 25 defined as "the celebration of all Italians who love liberty and want to stay free" and "the celebration of the reconquest of Liberty." *Liberazione*, in other words, literally disappears from the speech to make space for a more Berlusconi-friendly concept, *Liberty*. Its absence in the conclusion of the speech is very significant as well because it marks a definitive absorption into the idea of *Libertà*.

At this point it may be useful to venture briefly beyond the borders of this text and take a look at the passages in the epigraph of this essay.**[ix]** Ginsborg, in his 2004 book about the Prime Minister, transcribes Berlusconi's first television speech in 1994, which marked the beginning of his political career (Ginsborg, 2004, p.65). In this excerpt, Berlusconi positions the rise of his "pole of liberty" against the "left-wing cartel." Liberty, in fact, seems to be the leading motif of Berlusconi's political campaigns. Consider, for instance, the very first lines of the statute of Berlusconi's political Party, *Il Popolo della Libertà* (we can see that "Liberty" is always included even in the name of the party, "the pole of Liberty," or "the house of Liberties," or "the people of Liberty"): It is evident that for Berlusconi the concept of Liberty is not only central in the expression of his political creed, but it also assumes a symbolic value as it represents the key belief around which all of the politics of his party supposedly align. Moreover, in Berlusconi's rhetoric, this central belief of Liberty represents an expression of dissent, disagreement, refusal, and distance from the left-wing party. Therefore, it is clear that Berlusconi, in his Liberation Day speech, is not using the term "Liberty" in a neutral way: Liberty is the vehicle that brings Berlusconi's ideology into this speech, transforming this ceremonial/epideictic oration into a controversial political statement.

The use of the theme of Liberty in Berlusconi's first Liberation Day creates a strategic ambiguity in the aim and scope of the speech that merits closer examination of the text. I argue in what follows that the introduction of the theme of Liberty creates a significant semantic shift from the theme of Liberation that promotes different themes appealing to different political orientations and allows different interpretations to arise.

This particular case represents an anomaly in the reception of Berlusconi's speeches because the reactions of public opinion are surprisingly unified and cross-partisan between the center-left and the center-right, with the only exception being the reaction of the extra-parliamentary Communist Party. Thus, the majority of political forces appreciate Berlusconi's speech, but this appreciation revolves around different interpretations of Berlusconi's statements on Liberation Day. The center-left, in fact, praises Berlusconi's oration, but not for the same reasons as the center-right: the interpretations of the speech by these two groups in Berlusconi's audience are quite different, but at the same time they converge in a bi-partisan praise of the text.

Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech is thus an example of the kind of "polysemy" that Leah Ceccarelli defines as "strategic ambiguity." Ceccarelli asserts that this kind of polysemy occurs when a text is rhetorically designed by its author to allow different groups in the audience, characterized by different ideologies and attitudes, to see different meanings arising from the same text. Each group reads the text as supporting its own beliefs and ideas and all of the groups converge in its praise because of their divergent interpretations. Polysemy, Ceccarelli explains, "is the existence of determinate but nonsingular denotational meanings," and "strategic ambiguity" is that specific kind of polysemy that "is likely to be planned by the author and result in two or more otherwise conflicting groups of readers converging in praise of a text" (Ceccarelli, 1998, pp. 399-404). As I anticipated earlier in this paragraph, the shift from the use of "Liberation" to the use of "Liberty" is the main rhetorical strategy that enhanced the strategic ambiguity of Berlusconi's speech.

In the next paragraphs I will explain in detail how the Prime Minister puts this strategy in practice, politicizing an epideictic oration by introducing his partisan ideology in the Liberation Day Speech, and crafting consensus by providing different paths of interpretations to his different ideologically oriented groups in the audience. Believing, like Brummett, that rhetorical theory and method are not to be separated from the understanding of everyday living, and assuming that their functions can be described as "heuristic" and "moral" (Brummett, 1984, p. 364), I hope to provide with this analysis a reading that augments our understanding of this speech in the context of Berlusconi's broader political discourse.

3. <Liberty> as an Ideograph

In 1980 Michael McGee attempted to reconcile two apparently opposite currents of thought: symbolism or the "philosophy of myth" as interpreted and practiced by Kenneth Burke and materialism or the Marxist concept of ideology. Myth and ideology are not to be considered as opposites for McGee. They should instead be considered as "supplemental" rather than "alternatives": Symbolism and its focus on language and socially constructed realities should be taken into account along with the materialist approach and its focus on the impact of material phenomena that influence the construction of social reality (McGee, 1980, p. 3). McGee proposed a theoretical model that accounts both for ideology and myth, a model that links rhetoric and the emphasis on language to ideology and the emphasis on

power and political consciousness. McGee introduced the concept of "ideograph" to deconstruct the false dichotomy of symbolism/materialism. He states: "I will suggest that ideology in practice is a political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior. Further, the political language which manifests ideology seems characterized by slogans, a vocabulary of ideographs easily mistaken for the technical terminology of political philosophy"(p.6). Ideographs are therefore to be considered, according to McGee, as being the "building blocks of ideology," a "one term-sum of an orientation" (p.7). They always contain a unique ideological commitment that is expressed in real discourse whenever they are used, so that they function as agents of political consciousness.

Berlusconi, during his fifteen years of political activity, shaped an idea of Liberty that is peculiar to his political party and it is this specific idea, or "ideograph," that we need to understand in this context in order to reveal the meaning(s) of the Prime Minister's first Liberation Day oration. <Liberty> is initially disguised as a neutral term in an epideictic context, and its purpose at the beginning is to invisibly politicize a typically non-controversial and non-deliberative kind of discourse, the epideictic oratory, that is the macro-genre to which this speech apparently belongs.**[x]** Therefore, its first function is that of pushing politics, namely Berlusconi's ideology, into a controversy-free and deliberation-free environment (celebration of the historical memory of the Liberation).

Furthermore, we can explain the cross-partisan reception of this speech with the audience's level of awareness of the ideological burden carried by the <Liberty> ideograph. The reaction of those who recognized that it was not a neutral term generated an interpretation that is different from the interpretation of those who instead believed in the neutrality of Berlusconi's argument for the creation of a new national feeling around the universal and unifying value of Liberty.

If language is a "mechanism of power" as Palczewski puts it (Palczewski, 2003), and as McGee and other scholars suggest, then Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech deserves to be analyzed to thicken our understanding of how language and ideology together can become tools of oppression when used by a skilled orator in order to manufacture consent, or tools of liberation and awareness for the public and for the rhetorical critic.

4. Contrasting Ideographs in an Epideictic Frame

Liberation Day speeches in general, with no exception for Berlusconi's, belong to the macro-genre of the epideictic discourse. Aristotle in his treatise about rhetoric defined the epideictic discourse as the third kind of oratory in addition to forensic and deliberative (Chase, 1961, p. 293). "Epideictic" designates a macro-genre characterized by an oration that expresses praise and blame and this macro-genre is made up of three distinct sub-genres: *encomium* (praise and blame), *panegyricum* (festival orations), *epitaphios logos* (eulogies). The existence of this macro-genre can be justified by the fact that typically the three micro-genres are associated with ceremonies/rituals, featured a display of the orator's mastery in public speaking, and focused on praise and blame (Jasinsky, 2001, p.209). Moreover, while in deliberative and forensic rhetoric the audience is called to make clear decisions and this is defined by Aristotle as "judge." In epideictic discourse the role accorded to the audience is less clear but the term often used to indicate it is "spectator" (Murphy, 2003, 609).

Condit's article about the Boston Massacre speeches is an exhaustive review of the literature about epideictic discourse and it is also an attempt to categorize this genre in a functional and more comprehensive way. Each of the three reasons mentioned above to justify the existence of the macro-genre of epideictic are, according to Condit, incomplete in describing the actual category of this genre. Therefore Condit rejects a univocal definition for epideictic and advances instead a "functional" definition which identifies a set of characteristics that are expected to be found (in part or all) in the epideictic discourse. Thus, she proposes "epideictic discourse can be located by its tendency to serve three functional pairs: definition/understanding, display/entertainment, and shaping/sharing of community" (Condit, 1985, p.288). In Condit's functional pairs the first term refers to the speaker and the second term to the audience. Also, the paradigmatic epideictic is that which features all three elements and can be defined as a "communal definition."

Berlusconi's speech is epideictic because it is a commemorative speech; secondly, its purpose, in concert with Berlusconi's symbolical act of joining the celebrations, is that of "finally building a new unitary national feeling" and to finally overcome the internal divisions of the Italian people in relation to this important event of our history. It also definitely expresses praise and blame. Berlusconi says in this speech: "Communists and Catholics, Socialists and Liberals, Monarchists and Actionists, facing a common tragedy, wrote, each for

their part, a great page of our history." He also says he wants to "remove from this celebration the character of opposition that the revolutionary culture gave it in the past and that today divides more than it unifies." Denotatively, it is a speech that wants to define a new community, united around the reciprocal acknowledgement and appreciation of the values of the Resistance, an important movement of Italian political heritage. It surely wants to create a new unity as well, through a new communal definition of a democratic nation founded on the values of the Resistance as opposed to totalitarianisms. Moreover, this speech generates an understanding of two troubling events, the Nazi attack on the town of Onna, symbolically associated with its recent destruction by the earthquake of April 6. Berlusconi claims that the Italian people can once again face the destruction and the sorrow and can get through the catastrophic event of the earthquake exactly as it did after the catastrophic destruction caused by the Nazi attack in the 1940s. He makes sense of the natural catastrophe as an unforeseen event that the Italian people can overcome with solidarity and unity. In developing this communal definition, the speech also shows an eloquence that appealed strongly to its audience, especially the audience present in Onna on April 25 in the very place of the devastation. The location of the speech in fact allowed it to have a strong pathos effect.

Thus, this speech seems to have an incontrovertible epideictic veneer. Nevertheless some passages do not fit in the context of an epideictic discourse and reveal the fact that Berlusconi is using a controversial appeal within an epideictic speech, politicizing it by encouraging the audience to embrace the core value of his own political party. Put simply, Berlusconi makes an attempt to appropriate the epideictic genre typical of the Liberation Day commemorative speeches in order to serve his partisan political interests.**[xi]**

Berlusconi's move is, in fact, the partisan politicization of this epideictic oration. He politicizes it mainly through the introduction of the ideograph <Liberty> as a substitution for <Liberation>. By introducing the ideograph <Liberty> in the speech, Berlusconi introduces his political party and his political creed and frames them as forces of unification, as agents for the creation of a new unitary national feeling. He says, "A commitment, that needs to enliven us, is the need not to forget what happened here and to remember the horrors of totalitarianisms and of the suppression of Liberty."**[xii]** Introducing <Liberty> instead of <Liberation> at the beginning, as the counterpart of totalitarianisms, is very

effective and gives us a sense of circularity when, at the end, Berlusconi cheers for the celebration of April 25, defining it as "the celebration of the reconquest of Liberty". He says in fact: "Long live to Italy! Long live to the republic! Long live to April 25, the celebration of all Italians who love Liberty and want to stay free! Long live to April 25 celebration of the reconquest of Liberty."

These two passages taken together give us a good sense of what Berlusconi is doing in this speech. At the beginning and at the end, where we would have expected to hear the word <Liberation> we only hear <Liberty>. The latter is presented by Berlusconi as the supreme value of which Liberation has been only a momentary symptom, important, but not to the point of being the focus of the speech. When I claim <Liberation> is an ideograph that is in direct opposition to <Liberty> in the Italian political landscape, I am associating the former with a left-wing ideology and the latter with the right-wing and neo-liberal one, the *Berlusconismo*.

The leftist connotation of <Liberation> goes back to the Resistance itself, which was an anti-Fascist movement made up of people of different political orientations united around common opposition to Fascism and Nazism in the early 1940s. The political force numerically more relevant and more active for the Resistance was the Communist group. Inside the *Brigate Partigiane* (Resistance Brigades) there were also Christian Democrats, Socialists, Liberals, Anarchists, Monarchists, and Actionists, and all these people fought together with the Allies against Fascisms, invasion and oppression. Throughout the years this revolutionary and mythic character of the Liberation period has represented an important cultural background especially for the left-wing coalition and the radical left that regularly celebrate the anniversary of the Liberation and the sacrifices and merit of the *Partigiani*. In the course of time, the absence of the right-wing leaders in the celebration of this important historical moment for the Italian republic confirmed and reinforced the leftist connotation of Liberation Day. A symptom of this characterization is perhaps the fact that the official national newspaper aligned with the Communist Party in Italy is called precisely *Liberazione* (Liberation).

In contrast, for Italians, <Liberty> is now indissolubly associated with Berlusconi's political party specifically, and with the larger right-wing coalition. As a counterpart of the newspaper Liberation, Italians also have a national newspaper called *Libero* (meaning "free") that is openly aligned with Berlusconi's PdL and with his neo-liberal political orientation.**[xiii]** The absence of

<Liberation> from Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech and its replacement with <Liberty> must therefore be taken into account seriously. Berlusconi crafted a speech around his political ideology that is conveyed in the text by the ideograph <Liberty>. Also, by completely eliminating the ideograph <Liberation> Berlusconi is also dismissing the leftist ideology usually associated with this recurrence.

Moreover, other passages do not fit in the epideictic genre and that contribute to politicize Berlusconi's speech. For instance, Prime Minister links the Resistance tradition to Italy's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan:
"Today the young generation is facing new challenges: to defend the Liberty conquered by their fathers and broaden it always more, being aware of the fact that without Liberty there is no peace, no justice, no well-being. Some of these challenges are planetary and we are committed together with other free countries in the fight against terrorism, in the fight against fanatic fundamentalism, in the fight against racism, because Liberty, dignity, and peace are rights of every human being, everywhere in the world. This is why I want to remember the soldiers at work in the mission of peace abroad, and in particular all those who died during these noble missions. There is an ideal continuity between them and all of the heroes who sacrificed their life more than sixty years ago to give us back our Liberty in security and in peace."

In this passage Berlusconi suggests the continuity between the Resistance partisans and the soldiers supporting the American "missions of peace" in Afghanistan and Iraq. This statement is controversial. Berlusconi's military support for the USA had been granted in the face of strong opposition by Italy's left-wing coalition. Associating these soldiers to the *Partigiani* who fought for the Italian Liberation is therefore risky for the reception of the speech and an anomaly in the context of this genre of oratory. Berlusconi advances a parallelism that could result in a very controversial response depending on the ideology of the spectators, eventually jeopardizing the main purpose of his speech, which is, as mentioned above, to craft a new communal and unitary national feeling. Another example of politicization of the epideictic discourse in this speech is represented in another controversial passage: "Today we have to remember all of the fallen, even those who fought for the wrong side sacrificing in good faith their life to their ideals for a cause already lost. This does not mean of course neutrality or indifference. We are, all free Italians are, on the side of those who fought for

the Liberty, for our dignity and the honor of our country."

This passage directly refers to the then political proposal of the PdL of making equal under law, in terms of financial benefits, the *Repubblichini* of Salò (those people who during the Liberation's civil war fought to defend Benito Mussolini in his last bulwark, The Republic of Salò), and the *Partigiani* who fought for the Italian Liberation from Nazi-Fascism. Obviously this statement in the Liberation Day speech is highly controversial given that it betrays the very essence of Liberation Day, which is the celebration of the anniversary of the Liberation from the Fascist regime and the Nazi occupation in Italy on April 25, 1945.

All of these examples confirm that Berlusconi's purpose in this speech goes far beyond the sole celebration of Liberation Day. He attended the celebration with a political aim, and this is made evident in the text of his speech. Berlusconi pushes politics into this apparently commemorative speech and he even proposes a change of name of this historical celebration.

The politicization of Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech through the use of the ideograph <Liberty> represents yet another rhetorical success for Berlusconi. The speech has in fact been received with cross-partisan praise and only a few critiques, like the disagreement on the change of the traditional name of the celebration from a portion of the left-wing. An exception, in this context of widespread consensus, is represented by the harsh critique of the radical extra-parliamentary Communist Party that expressed its dissent and disagreement through the newspaper *Liberazione.*

5. Conclusion: The "watershed moment" revisited
By coming to understand how Berlusconi's Liberation Day speech works rhetorically, I offer a solution to the disputes around this speech: a rhetorical analysis helps us understand how and why a highly controversial text received praise by Berlusconi's followers, and even more surprisingly by his opponents. Participating in the Liberation Day celebrations was a risky undertaking for the Prime Minister, on the one hand because his participation could have potentially been interpreted as an inappropriate celebration of the left by the leader of the right, and on the other hand because it could have been interpreted by the left as an appropriation of the celebration by the right.

Neither of these eventualities materialized. On the contrary, both the center-left

and the center-right appreciated Berlusconi's speech despite his overt use of the rhetorical situation generated by the earthquake to appropriate the celebration and to propose a historical and political revision of April 25.

The analysis of this text from a rhetorical perspective provides an explanation of the uncommon reactions to Berlusconi's speech by disclosing the stratified meanings enmeshed within it that have been able to generate different interpretations in different publics characterized by different ideological commitments and worldviews. Indeed my analysis makes sense of the odd reaction of the Pd to Berlusconi's attempt to appropriate of the Liberation for his partisan aims and acknowledges the motivations behind the center-right's step toward the recognition of the Liberation. PdL's opening was indeed possible only insofar as Berlusconi would negotiate carefully between a partisan historical revisionism and a partial opening to the values and figures of the left.

Finally, the analysis of this speech from a rhetorical perspective also offers a solution to the disputes in the press and in the public opinion about the actual significance of Berlusconi's participation in the Liberation and about its symbolic and material consequences. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister's use (whether he was aware or not) of strategic ambiguity, necessarily puts the description of this event as a "watershed moment" for the Italian political life in perspective.

NOTES

[i] PdL is an acronym for *Popolo della Libertà*, the name of Berlusconi's Party. I translate it in English as "People of Liberty." Pd is the acronym for *Partito Democratico*, the name of the main Party in the opposition's coalition, in English "Democratic Party."

[ii] "25 Aprile, Duello Veltroni-Berlusconi. Il leader Pd: sfregio alla Democrazia," *La Repubblica Online*, April 25, 2008. *http://www.repubblica.it/2008/04/sezioni/politica/25-aprile-celebrazioni/veltroni-sfregio/veltroni-sfregio.html* (accessed May19, 2010).

[iii] "Pdl, è polemica su Ciarrapico e il Fascismo," *Il Corriere della Sera Online*, March 10, 2008. *http://www.corriere.it/politica/08_marzo_10/ciarrapico_bufera_a26bb7d6-ee9b-11dc- bfb4-0003ba99c667.shtml* (accessed May 19, 2010).

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[iv] Cavaliere" (Knight) is an order of merit of the Italian Republic, received by Mr. Berlusconi in 1977. He is very often called by this name.

[v] Considering Bitzer's concept of "rhetorical situation," it seems obvious that Onna's setting for the speech presented the "exigency" of a rhetorical discourse rooted in historical commemoration and mourning. Nevertheless this speech seems to respond to a different and very specific need of the Prime Minister, that he tried to mask under a genuine attempt to advocate for a new national unity in a moment of difficulty for the nation. Belusconi's need, the actual exigency that inspired this oration, is the constant political need of crafting consensus around his controversial persona and around his internally divided coalition.

For literature on the concept of "Rhetorical Situation" see: Loyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric,* 1(1968): 1-14. Richard Vatz, "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 6 (1973): 154-161. Barbara Biesecker, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from within the Thematic of 'Différance'," *Philosophy & Rhetoric, 22(1989):110-130.*

[vi] Berlusconi Silvio. "25 Aprile: un onore e un impegno," *Il Corriere della Sera Online,* April 25, 2009. *http://www.corriere.it/politica/09_aprile_25/discorso-berlusconi-25-aprile-on na_00e34c08-31b6-11de-98f0-00144f02aabc.shtml* (accessed May 22, 2010).

All the citations from Berlusconi's speech are from this article. All translations from the speech are mine.

[vii] It is important here to consider the problematic context around the Prime Minister's persona: the sex/divorce scandal is about to explode publicly, the controversy with the press and the tension with the opposition are already high while the country is facing an unexpected catastrophe a few months before the G8 Summit is scheduled to take place in Italy.

[viii] I translate *Partigiani* with "partisans." In this context partisan does not have a connotation of bias, it is just the name given to the Resistance patriots.

[ix] About the passages in the epigraph, the first one is retrievable in: Silvio Berlusconi, "Costruiamo un Nuovo Miracolo," *Il Giornale*, January 27, 1994.

For a commentary on this speech and its staging, see: Deni and Maresciani,

"Analisi del primo discorso di Berlusconi. Indagine semiotica sul funzionamento discorsivo," in Livolsi and Volli (editors), *La comunicazione politica tra prima e seconda Repubblica*, (Milan: 1995), 227-41.

The second passage is retrievable in the Pdl's website: "Statuto del Popolo della Libertà. Articolo 1," *Il Popolo della Libertà Official Website.*

http://www.ilpopolodellaliberta.it/notizie/arc_15377.htm (accessed May 19, 2010). For both passages, the translations from Italian to English are mine. Moreover, I added the emphases on the occurrence of the term "Liberty."

[x] Condit, *The Functions of Epideictic,* 1985. For more about Epideictic, see: J.R. Chase. The Classical Conception of Epideictic. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 47, (1961): 293-300. James Jasinski, "Rearticulating History through Epideictic Discourse: Frederick Douglass's 'the Meaning of the Fourth of July to the Negro,'" in *Rhetoric and Political Culture in Nineteenth Century America*, ed. T. W. Benson (East Lansing: Michigan State UP, 1997), 71-89. Jhon Murphy. ""Our Mission and Our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11th,"*Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2003): 607-32.

[xi] For a controversial use of epideictic oratory, see: Jhon Murphy. "Our Mission and Our Moment": George W. Bush and September 11th", *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 6. 4 (2003): 607-32. In this article Murphy talks about Bush's use of epideictic to subvert deliberation and serve his own partisan interests post 9/11.

[xii] N.d.A. All the translations from Italian throughout this article are mine.

[xiii] *Liberazione Online. http://www.liberazione.it/* (accessed May 19, 2010). *Libero Online, http://www.libero-news.it/* (accessed May 19, 2010)

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 – A Doctor's Argumentation By Authority As A Strategic Manoeuvre

1. Introduction
Argumentation can play an important role in medical consultation. Central to medical consultation is a patient's health related problem and a doctor's medical advice, diagnosis and/or prognosis concerning this problem. Especially when such advice, diagnosis and/or prognosis can be expected to have a big impact on the patient, a doctor might assume the patient to be hesitant to immediately accept his claim(s). The doctor could attempt to overcome such hesitance by presenting argumentation. For instance, a doctor who advises a patient to drastically change his diet might attempt to make such advice acceptable by arguing "Your cholesterol level is too high".

The context of a medical consultation does not just enable the doctor to present argumentation; it also affects the way in which the doctor provides this argumentation. Medical consultation is a regulated institutionalised communicative practice that is conducted in a limited amount of time. The health related problem that is central to such a consultation might be of vital importance to the patient, making the discussion of this problem potentially emotion laden. Furthermore, the doctor and patient differ in the amount of knowledge and experience they possess about the patient's health related problem. As a result of these characteristics, the argumentation by a doctor in medical consultation typically differs significantly from that in, say, informal argumentative exchanges.

Because of a medical consultation's limited amount of time and the fact that the doctor can be considered an authority on the patient's health related problem, a doctor might decide to present argumentation by authority in support his claim(s). After all, the patient has acknowledged the doctor's authority on medical knowledge by requesting a medical consultation, so it could be effective for a doctor to refer to this authority in support of his medical claim(s). On the other hand, a doctor's argumentation by authority could essentially exclude the patient from the decision making process about the patient's health related problem. This would limit the patient's autonomy, reflecting a paternalistic form of the doctor-patient relationship that goes against the idea that medical consultation should be based on *shared decision-making* by the doctor and patient (see, on paternalism, Roter & Hall 2006; and, on shared decision making, Légaré et al, 2008; Frosch & Kaplan 1999). To what extent can a doctor's argumentation by authority then be regarded as reasonable?

To determine the extent to which a doctor's argumentation by authority in medical consultation can be regarded as reasonable, it is necessary to first provide a detailed account of a doctor's rationale for presenting this kind of argumentation. Based on the extended pragma-dialectical theory, I shall provide such an account by analysing a doctor's argumentation by authority as a *strategic manoeuvre*. Concretely, I shall, first, discuss the extended pragma-dialectical theory. Second, I shall provide a description of what I regard as argumentation by authority. Third, I shall examine a doctor's argumentation by authority as a strategic manoeuvre, focussing on the doctor's selection from topical potential, adaptation to audience demand and the presentational devices that he employs when presenting authority argumentation.

2. The extended pragma-dialectical theory

According to the extended pragma-dialectical theory, developed by Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (Van Eemeren, 2010; and Van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 1999; 2000; 2002a and 2002b), a discussion party always strategically aims at obtaining the dialectical goal of reasonably resolving a difference of opinion and, at the same time, at obtaining the rhetorical goal of resolving this difference of opinion in his own favour. To pursue these goals, the discussion party *manoeuvres strategically*. In other words, he simultaneously makes a selection from the topical potential, adapts to audience demand and uses particular presentational devices in each of his discussion moves to obtain his dialectical and rhetorical goals.

The term *topical potential* refers to the collection of issues that a discussion party could discuss at any particular point in an argumentative discussion (Van Eemeren, 2010, p. 95). The topical potential depends on the context in which the discussion is conducted and the discussion stage in which a discussion party wants to make a contribution. A discussion party selects from the topical potential in, for example, the argumentation stage by choosing a particular propositional content (from all possible propositional contents available in the context at hand) for the argument that is to be presented and choosing to give this argument a particular justificatory force (from all possible justificatory forces available in the context at hand). A doctor might, for example, support a medical advice by choosing to refer to himself as an authority on the patient's health related problem as the argument's propositional content and choosing to give it the justificatory force that is captured in the premise "If an authority on the patient's health related problem says X, then X is the case".

In addition to selecting from the topical potential, discussion parties simultaneously try to adapt their discussion contributions to *audience demand* (Van Eemeren, 2010, p. 94). They attempt to adjust their moves to the opinions and preferences of their intended audience in order to create rapport with this audience. A discussion party's audience consists at least of one interlocutor who acts, or is presumed to act, as the opposing or doubting discussion party.**[i]** The audience could also consist of a multiple audience, in which case the discussion party addresses not only his *primary audience* (consisting of the interlocutor(s) that he mainly wants to convince), but also of a *secondary audience* (consisting of the interlocutor(s) that he does not necessarily want to convince, but all the same listen to the discussion party) (see Van Eemeren, 2010). In a discussion between a

paediatrician, a child patient and the patient's parent, for instance, the paediatrician and parent might regard each other as their primary audience, while viewing the patient as their secondary audience.**[ii]** To convincingly adapt to audience's demand, a discussion party will adjust his strategic manoeuvres in a way that optimally agrees with the (multiple) audience's starting points.

For optimally conveying discussion moves, discussion parties use *presentational devices* in each and every discussion contribution (Van Eemeren, 2010, p. 94). Van Eemeren (2010, p. 120) states "Although in strategic maneuvering it may be more conspicuous which stylistic choice is made in one case than in another, cases that are stylistically "neutral" do not exists, so each choice always has an extra meaning". Discussion parties use presentational devices – such as word choice, sentence structure and rhetorical figures – to achieve the rhetorical and dialectical goals that they pursue in the discussion stage at hand. Their use of presentational devices, in other words, strategically frames their selection from topical potential and adaptation to audience demand. For instance, a patient might indirectly justify his request for a medical consultation by stating "I read about it on the internet and they advise you to see your doctor if it doesn't change in a fortnight", rather than directly arguing "I've suffered continuously from it for a fortnight, so I'd like to get your advice on it".

Although from an analytical point of view, a discussion party's selection from topical potential, use of presentational devices and adaptation to audience demand can be analysed separately, in actual argumentative discourse, all three aspects work together at the same time. A discussion party selects to address a certain topic in his discussion contribution because of what he thinks the audience prefers in the context at hand by the stylistic means he deems most suitable in this context. Based on this idea, a doctor's argumentation by authority will be reconstructed and evaluated in the remainder of this study. However, before starting the actual reconstruction and evaluation of a doctor's argumentation by authority, let me clarify what I understand by such argumentation.

3. The argument scheme of argumentation by authority
To accurately reconstruct and evaluate a doctor's argument by authority, it is necessary to provide a description of this kind of argumentation first. The standiard pragma-dialectical theory provides a good starting point for this. In this theory, authority argumentation is regarded as a subtype of the argument scheme

based on a symptomatic relation (see Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 160; and Garssen, 1997, p. 11). A pragma-dialectical argument scheme denotes a conventionalised way of representing how the content of an argument relates to the content of the (sub)standpoint in support of which the argument is presented (see Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 96; and 2004, p. 4). In symptomatic argumentation, this relation is such that the content of the argument is given as a sign for the acceptability of the standpoint (see Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p. 97 and Garssen, 1997, pp. 8-14). The argumentation "She must be a doctor, because she wears a white coat" is an example of symptomatic argumentation. In this argumentation, the discussion party (rather simplistically) regards "wearing a white coat" as a sign of "Being a doctor".

In subtypes of argument schemes, the pragma-dialectical main types are used in a specific way. The subtype's soundness conditions are, therefore, specifications of the soundness conditions for the corresponding main type. A discussion party who uses authority argumentation, for example, presents the agreement of a supposed authority with the discussion party's standpoint as a sign of the acceptability of this standpoint (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p.163; Garssen, 1997, p.11; and Schellens, 2006, p.6). It takes the form "He must be ill, because the doctor said he was and doctors are credible authorities on diagnosing people's illnesses". Authority argumentation is consequently considered to be a subtype of symptomatic argumentation. According to Van Eemeren (see 2010), one of the soundness conditions for authority argumentation is that the authority referred to in the argumentation is recognised as pertinent to the issue under discussion.**[iii]** This condition can be regarded as a specification of the soundness condition that applies to all symptomatic arguments, namely that the symptom mentioned in the argument is necessary for that which is mentioned in the standpoint.

Example (1) illustrates how a discussion party can use authority argumentation in actual practise. In this example, a paediatrician (D) discusses the diet of a child patient (C) with the patient's mother (M) and father (F). The child patient is a little boy suffering from asthma.

Example (1)
Excerpt of an argumentative discussion between a paediatrician (D), the mother (M) and father (F) of a child patient (C) who suffers from asthma (example obtained from the database compiled by the *Netherlands Institute for Health Services Research*, my transcription and translation, original conversation in

italics)

1 D: By the way, I have to say that, about his, about what he eats, I'm not really concerned to be honest.
(*Ik moet trouwens zeggen, over zijn, over wat hij eet maak ik me niet zoveel zorgen eerlijk gezegd.*)

2 M: No.
(*Nee.*)

3 D: Look, I can imagine that, as mother and father, you are concerned, but if I look at the way he's grown. Well, one of those things you need for growing well is eating well …
(*Kijk, ik kan me voorstellen dat als moeder en als vader je je zorgen maakt, maar als ik kijk naar hoe hij gegroeid is. Nou één van die dingen die je nodig hebt om goed te groeien, is goed te eten…*)

4 M: Yeah.
(*Ja.*)

5 D: So he has had, he has had a sufficient amount in the past few months, so…
(*Dus hij heeft, de afgelopen maanden heeft hij genoeg gehad, dus…*)

6 F: Yeah.
(*Ja.*)

7 D: In that respect, it isn't the most necessary thing for me to say: well, you have to eat. A little [incomprehensible].
(*Wat dat betreft is het ook niet het meest noodzakelijke vanuit mij om te zeggen: nou, je moet eten. Een beetje [onverstaandbaar].*)
[…]
18 M: No, but yeah, things are sometimes being said about it and in the end you also think like: what should I do here? Right? One says this. The other that. And then you also think like:
(*Nee, maar ja hè, er wordt wel eens wat over gezegd en op het laatst denk je ook van: wat doe ik hier nou? Hè? De één zegt dit. De ander dat. En dan denk je ook van:*)

19 D: It's also good to come here then.

(*Dan is het ook goed om hier te komen.*)

20 M: "I've had enough." You just don't know what you have to do in the end.
(*"Ik ben het nou zat." Je weet op het laatst niet meer wat je moet.*)

21 D: No, that, I can imagine that and, erm, well, if you encounter problems with that again, just say "I've been to the pediatrician"…
(*Nee dat, dat kan ik me voorstellen en, uhm, nou, als u daar weer problemen mee heeft, zeg maar gewoon "Ik ben naar de kinderarts geweest"…*)

22 C: Eeweeeeeeeeee.
(*Iewieeeeieeeee.*)

23 D: I've studied for it, which is the case. And, erm, he said…
(*Ik heb daarvoor geleerd, dat is ook zo. En, uhm, die heeft gezegd…*)

24 C: Pfoof.
(*Pfoef.*)

25 D: "We do that this way" and …
(*"Dat doen we zo" en…*)

26 M: Just stop that [to child].
(*Hou jij [kind] eens even op.*)

27 D: And [incomprehensible] with evidence: he's growing just perfectly, which is the most important issue.
(*En [onverstaanbaar] met bewijs: hij groeit gewoon perfect, dat is het belangrijkste.*)

28 C: Pfoof, lelelelele.
(*Pfoef, lèlèlèlèlè.*)

29 D: Haha, little tyke.
(*Haha, mooi kereltje.*)

In *example (1)*, the doctor presents the standpoint that he does not believe it necessary to change the child patient's diet (turn 7). The doctor states that he is not concerned about the patient's diet (turn 1), indicating that the patient's parents should not be either. He subsequently argues why they should not be

concerned: the patient has grown well in the past few months, so he must have eaten well (turns 3 and 5). The mother nonetheless continues by indirectly expressing doubt about the doctor's advice; she knows that people hold views that contradict the doctor's advice and would be confused if she were confronted with them (turns 18 & 20). In reaction, the doctor presents his authority argument. He argues that it is good that he mother has come to him then (turn 19), because he is a paediatrician and has studied for providing medical advice on issues such as her son's diet (turn 23). In other words, he uses authority argumentation by stating that "You should disregard other people's advice on the matter of changing your son's diet, because I say so and I am a credible authority on this matter (as I am a paediatrician and I have studied for it)".

Instantiations of authority argumentation such as the one in *example (1)* are quite similar to appeals to *ethos* as described in the literature on rhetoric. In these authority arguments as well as in appeals to *ethos*, the discussion party refers to his own capacity or character to make his standpoint more acceptable. The rhetorical term *ethos* is, however, not only restricted to discussion moves by which a discussion party explicitly refers to himself as the authority on the issue under discussion, but the term *ethos* is also more generally applied to the impression a discussion party gives when presenting argumentation, for instance, by his overall fluency. Because of this difference and because the doctor in *example (1)*, in principle, presents a statement by an authority as a sign of the acceptability of his standpoint, I prefer to think of the doctor's reference to his authority in *example (1)* as an instance of authority argumentation.'

The instances of authority argumentation in *example (1)*, difference from authority arguments in which a discussion party refers to the authority of a third party when presenting authority argumentation. Such an argument nonetheless relates in the same way to the content of the standpoint as the doctor's authority argument in *example (1)*; the unexpressed premise for both amounts to a statement like "X is a credible authority on Y". These authority arguments, consequently, not constitute distinct subtypes of symptomatic argumentation in terms of the pragma-dialectical theory. To nonetheless denote the difference between the two, I propose to call them kinds of authority argumentation. I shall use the term *argument from authority* exclusively for the kind of authority argumentation in which the authority referred to is a third party, and the term *argument by authority* for the kind in which the authority referred to is the

discussion party that presents the argumentation.

Distinguishing between these kinds of authority arguments helps to determine the strategic advantages of presenting authority argumentation. For each kind, it can be specifically determined how the authority argument furthers the discussion party's purchase of his dialectical and rhetorical goals. Additionally, based on the distinction between the two kinds of authority arguments, the general soundness criteria can be specified for a particular context – thereby making them specific soundness criteria. For example, to evaluate when a doctor can soundly use an argument by authority in medical consultation, the soundness criterion that the authority referred to should indeed posses the professed authority (Van Eemeren 2010, pp. 202-203; Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, pp. 136-137; and Woods & Walton 1989, pp. 15-24) can be specified by reference to the qualifications that a doctor should have obtained before being able to practise medicine or a particular branch of medicine.

4. A doctor's strategic use of argumentation by authority

Based on the distinction between the two kinds of authority argumentation, the doctor's rationale for chooses to present argumentation by authority can be examined. What alternative strategic manoeuvres could a doctor have performed at the time that he chose to argue by authority? What are the strategic advantages of presenting an argument by authority?

To see what alternative strategic manoeuvres a doctor could have performed when he chose to argue by authority, the distinction between an argument's *propositional content* and its *justificatory force* is useful. According to Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004, p. 144), single arguments can vary in the propositions that they consist of (their propositional content) and the relation that is expressed between the standpoint and the argumentation in them (their justificatory force). For example, in the argumentation "He must be ill, because the doctor said he was", the propositional content consists of the proposition "the doctor said he was ill" ("X says Y"), while the justificatory force is captured in the argument's unexpressed premise "doctors are credible authorities on diagnosing people's illnesses" ("X is a credible authority on Y"). By presenting such argumentation, the discussion party chooses this particular propositional content for his argumentation from the topical potential that consists of every possible proposition that he can think of and he selects this particular justificatory force from the topical potential that consists of all the possible justificatory forces that

he can think of.

The idea that a single argument can vary as to its propositional content and its justificatory force means that there are, theoretically speaking, three alternative topical choices available to a doctor at the moment that he chooses to present an argument by authority. First, the doctor could have chosen to present an argument with the same justificatory force as the argument by authority, but with a different propositional content (*figure 1b*). The doctor then still chooses to present an argument based on the justificatory principle "X is a credible authority on Y", but the "X" in this argument is not the doctor himself. An example of such an argument would be "He should go on a diet, because the genetic counsellor said that he runs a high risk to get diabetes". This alternative, in fact, comes down to the kind of authority argumentation that I call argumentation from authority.

Figure (1)

A schematic representation of the topical choices available to a discussion party in the argumentation stage of an argumentative discussion. The topical choices are described in terms of the similarity with ("=") and difference between ("≠") the justificatory force ("JF") and propositional content ("PC") of the argument by authority (a) and of alternative strategic manoeuvres (b, c and d)
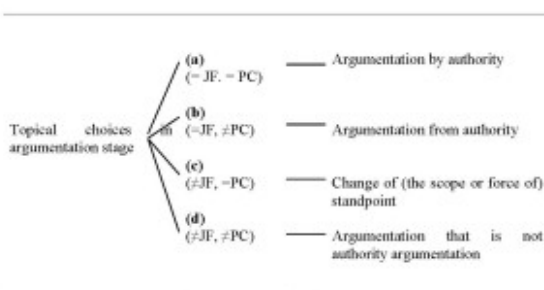

Figure 1

Second, a doctor could choose to present an argument with a different justificatory force than the argument by authority, but the same propositional content as the argument by authority (*figure 1c*). The doctor then chooses to present an argument based on the proposition "X says Y", but not in combination with the justificatory principle "X is a credible authority on Y". An example of such an argument would be "I was right about him all along, because I said that

he runs a high risk to get diabetes".

Note that, if the doctor were to present an argument of the kind (≠JF, =PC), he necessarily changes the (scope or force of the) standpoint in the argument by authority that he would otherwise have presented. This is due to the fact that, because the doctor chooses to use a different kind of justificatory force than in the argument by authority but also chooses to use a propositional content that is identical to the one in the argument by authority, an argument of the kind (≠JF, =PC) can only be logically valid if the standpoint that the argument supports is different from the one in the argument by authority. Concretely, in the example "I was right about him all along, because I said that he suffers from diabetes", the justificatory force is captured in the premise "If I said he suffers from diabetes, I was right about him all along", which means that the advanced standpoint has to be "I was right about him all along" to make the argumentation logically valid.

Third, a doctor could have chosen to perform a strategic manoeuvre that neither has the same justificatory force nor the same propositional content as the argument by authority (*figure 1d*). Opting for this alternative inevitably means that the doctor does not present authority argumentation. Instead, he could present other symptomatic arguments, causal arguments or analogy arguments. An example of such an argument would be "He should go on a diet, because he has a BMI of 32".

For the purpose of discussing what the topical potential amounts to when a doctor chooses to present an argument by authority, the alternative strategic manoeuvre of presenting an argument of the kind (≠JF, =PC) is irrelevant. Arguments of the kind (≠JF, =PC) require a change of the doctor's standpoint. Yet, by discussing the topical potential when a doctor presents an argument by authority, the topical potential that needs to be examined is the potential from which the doctor selects during the argumentation stage of an argumentative discussion. The standpoint that the doctor advances should therefore be considered as a given. This means that changing (the scope or force of) a standpoint cannot be regarded as a selection from the topical potential in the argumentation stage. At the moment that a doctor chooses to present an argument by authority, the topical potential that he selects this argument from hence consists of presenting an argument by authority (=JF, =PC), presenting an argument from authority (=JF, ≠PC) or presenting non-authority argumentation (≠JF, ≠PC).

What strategic advantage does a doctor's choice for presenting an argument by authority have over the alternative strategic manoeuvres in the topical potential? Let me examine this, by means of the doctor's argument by authority in *example (1)*. Recall that the doctor in *example (1)* argues that the patient's mother should disregard other people's advice on the matter of changing her son's diet, because he say so and he is a credible authority on this matter (as he is a paediatrician and has studied for it) (turns 19 & 23). Given that the doctor presented an argument by authority rather than performing the alternative strategic manoeuvres depicted in *figure (1)*, it can be assumed that he thought this argument to strategically be the best selection from the topical potential available to him. To determine what the doctor's rationale behind this could be, the audience demand that is placed on the doctor in this fragment of the medical consultation should be taken into account.

In the argumentative discussion in *example (1)*, the mother, as a representative of the child patient, takes upon her the role of the doubting antagonist of the doctor's advice. The doctor tries to take away her doubt by presenting argumentation in favour of his advice, which makes him the protagonist in this discussion. By indirectly presenting her doubt (in turns 18 and 20), the mother can be regarded as not only expressing her doubt about the acceptability of the doctor's advice, but, in fact, also expressing her doubt about the doctor's professional capabilities. If she were sure about the doctor's professional capabilities, she would not have mentioned the different advices that others give. So, the audience demand that the mother places on the doctor in this part of the argumentative discussion consists of a request for further justification of the advice to refrain from changing her son's diet as well as a request for further justification of why the doctor should be regarded as the credible authority on this matter.

In terms of the options in *figure (1)*, just presenting argumentation from authority (*figure 1b*) or just presenting argumentation that is not authority argumentation (*figure 1d*) might take the mother's doubts about the acceptability of the doctor's advice away, but not necessarily her doubts about the doctor's professional capability. Recognising that the audience demand that mother places on the doctor in this excerpt also implies doubt about the doctor's professional capability next to doubt about the doctor's advice indeed seems to request from the doctor that he presents argumentation by authority (*figure 1a*) in combination with other

argumentation (so, argumentation from authority or argumentation other than authority argumentation). The argument by authority could rebut the mother's doubt about the doctor's advice (by indicating that the doctor is a credible authority, because he is a paediatrician and has studied for advising on medical issues) and the other argumentation could rebut the mother's doubt about the professional credibility of the doctor (by taking away the criticism that makes his advice unacceptable, because he is a credible authority). Moreover, in this example, the doctor additionally refers to his earlier argumentation that the patient grows just perfectly (turn 27). The doctor thereby stresses that he has good reasons for giving the medical advice.

The idea that the doctor selects to present an argument by authority to adapt to audience demand in *example (1)* is reflected in the doctor's use of presentational devices. In the consultation, the doctor strikingly refers to himself in the third person singular when presenting his argument by authority (in turns 21 and 23) and only continues in the first person singular to assure that he really studied for providing advices like the one about the child patient (in turn 21). Baring in mind that the medical consultation can be characterised as a cooperative conversational exchange, the doctor's choice for these presentational devices can be explained by politeness considerations. In contrast with argumentative discourse such as a presidential debate, this means that the doctor can be expected to limit the mother's potential face loss. Presenting his argumentation by authority in the third person makes it seem as though the doctor's argument is not directed at the mother, but at the other people that give different advice. So, the doctor only indirectly counters the mother's doubt about his professional capability to adapt to the audience by mitigating potential threats to the mother's *positive face* (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 62).**[iv]** Indeed, he does so in a similar manner as the way in which the mother presents the doubts to the doctor herself (in turns 18 & 20).

By an analysis such as the one I have just provided for the doctor's argumentation by authority in *example (1)*, a doctor's argument by authority in medical consultation can be analysed in general. It provides a systematic and context sensitive means to examine the strategic functions of this manoeuvre, which makes it possible to evaluate the doctor's argument by authority in detail.

5. Conclusion
In medical consultation, argumentation may play an important role. A patient's

health related issues, and the doctor's medical advice, are central to such a consultation. A patient's (potential) hesitance about such advice could be overcome by the doctor when providing information about the patient's health problems and argumentation in support of (parts of the) advised treatment(s).

The context of the medical consultation affects the manner in which the doctor and patient discuss health related issues. A doctor has to conduct the medical consultation in an efficient manner. During a consultations, he might not only have to provide the patient with a diagnosis, prognosis and/or medical advice, but also has to fully inform the patient about the reasons for the diagnosis, prognosis or advised treatment option(s), alternative treatment option(s) and consequences of refraining from treatment. This can be particularly complex given that the doctor's medical claims about the patient's health related issues might have a big impact on the patient and are, therefore, potentially emotion laden. What is more, the participants in a medical consultation characteristically differ in the amount of knowledge they possess about, and experience they have with, the health issues in question.

As a result of these characteristics of medical consultation, a doctor may present argumentation by authority. After all, the patient recognizes the doctor as an authority on health related problems by virtue of requesting a medical consultation. So, the doctor's presentation of an authority argument in which he refers to himself as the authority could be quite effective.

By means of the analysis of an example of medical consultation taken from actual practice, I show that a doctor's argument by authority could indeed constitute an opportune selection from the topical potential available to the doctor, which – when conveyed by appropriate presentational devices – a doctor could make to adapt to audience demand. Based on this analysis, I argue that the extended pragma-dialectical theory provides a systematic and context sensitive means to examine the strategic functions of the argument by authority in medical consultation.

NOTES
[i] This is recognised in the pragma-dialectical principle of *socialisation*, according to which an argumentative discussion is always an interactional process that is conducted between two or more interlocutors (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992, p.10).

[ii] Note that a discussion party does not necessarily have to consider the party that he directly faces as his primary audience. This is only the case if the discussion party regards that party as the audience that he first and foremost wants to convince. For example, in a televised presidential debate, the presidential candidates can be considered as constituting each others' secondary audience, while those who watch the debate on television can be considered as the candidates' primary audience (see Van Eemeren, 2010).

[iii] The other soundness conditions for authority argumentation that Van Eemeren (see 2010) list are that (1) the person referred to in this type of argumentation indeed possesses the professed authority, (2) the discussion parties in principle agree on referring to authority in the discussion, (3) the authority referred to is about a subject-matter that falls within the area of the authority's expertise and (4) the authority is correctly cited at a place in the discussion where this is relevant.

[iv] According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 62), a person's "positive face" can be defined as "the want of every member that his [or her] wants be desirable to at least some others".

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Parrying Ad-Hominem Arguments In Parliamentary Debates
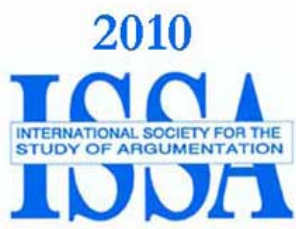
1. Introduction

One of the fallacies Members of Parliament may be confronted with in a parliamentary debate is the ad hominem fallacy (See Plug 2007 and 2010a). This fallacious move may, just as other fallacious moves, vary from deliberate and disruptive to quite harmless and humorous. Although the seriousness may vary, a fallacious move can be seen as detrimental to the development of the discussion on the main standpoint an MP is trying to defend. From responses to fallacies as recorded in parliamentary proceedings, it becomes clear that MPs are very much aware of the disruptive effect a fallacious move may have on the progress of a parliamentary debate.

In a debate in Dutch parliament on metropolitan problems, an MP of the Green

Party, Mrs van Gent, states that the Green Party refuses the proposal to ban socially less privileged persons from problematic neighbourhoods. She argues that it is too crude a measure and that 'we will have to invest time in these people' rather than 'mistrust these people or assume that these people will cause or add to problems once they move into a certain neighbourhood'. Mr Bruls, MP of the Christian Democrats, who introduced the proposal, replies by saying 'I will leave this for what it is: the Greens are dodging like they always do when the problems of the big cities are under discussion'. From this response it becomes clear that Mr Bruls refuses to continue the discussion and does not want to discuss the argumentation that was brought forward by Mrs van Gent. By using the word 'dodging', he accuses Mrs van Gent and all the other members of the Green Party of avoiding responsibilities not only towards the actual problem that is under debate, but towards all problems that relate to big cities. In her reply to Mr Bruls, Mrs van Gent brings forward the following:

Mrs van Gent (the Green Party): It is alright for you to use words such as dodging and by doing so launch an aggressive attack on my person, but it will only deepen my conviction that in this debate fundamental issues are at stake. One could disagree over such matters but it is no use denouncing one another in such a debate because that will not bring us any closer to a solution to these problems.**[i]**
(Second Chamber, 7 September 2005, TK 103 metropolitan problems)

Mrs van Gent responds to the accusation of avoiding responsibility by explicitly characterizing the accusation as a personal attack and then pointing out what consequences personal attacks may have on the resolution of the difference of opinion that is subject to the discussion. In the pragma-dialectical argumentation theory (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004), this personal attack may be seen as an abusive ad hominem argument; a fallacious move by which the opponent is discredited as a serious discussant and denied freedom to express opinions.

Besides the response by Mrs van Gent to the abusive ad hominem, many other responses to the fallacious move are conceivable. In a situation in which an MP is confronted with a fallacious move by an opponent the question arises how in practice fallacies could best be addressed. Several argumentation theorists proposed to counter fallacies. A possibility to continue the discussion in a constructive way after being confronted with a fallacy is proposed by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2007, 2009) and van Eemeren (2010). The responses to

fallacies that argumentation theorists propose, are, in principle, not geared toward a specific fallacious move, nor are they focused on a specific institutional context. In this contribution I will discuss if and how institutional constraints that are inherent in a parliamentary debate, may influence an adequate response to a fallacy, in particular to an abusive ad hominem argument.

2. Proposals for dealing with fallacies

In the pragma-dialectical argumentation theory as it is extended by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (1999) and van Eemeren (2010) fallacies are seen as derailments of strategic manoeuvring. The concept of strategic manoeuvring refers to the effort arguers make to keep the balance between reasonableness and effectiveness. In case the manoeuvring derails and the strategic manoeuvring is fallacious, the process of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits gets distorted. The response to the derailment by the arguer who is confronted with it may be decisive for whether or not the distortion will be fatal for the resolution of the dispute.

Van Eemeren (2010) discusses several responses to fallacies that are proposed by various authors and then presents a response that is preferred from a pragma-dialectical perspective. The following overview follows van Eemeren's findings.

Under (1) we find the situation in which an arguer (A2) is confronted with a fallacy (or an alledged fallacy) that should not be taken seriously because it is a joke or a mistake. Since such a move may not be of any importance to a serious evaluation of the argumentation, arguer (A2) could just as well ignore the fallacy. This might even be the best thing to do from a dialectical as well as from a rhetorical perspective, since ignoring the fallacy and continuing the discussion contributes to the resolution of the dispute.

(1) A1: derailment (fallacy)
A2: ignores the (assumed) fallacy

If the fallacy is indeed meant to be taken seriously, the dialectical adequacy of a response to this fallacy depends, according to van Eemeren (2010, p. 253), on the impact the fallacy has on the argumentative situation the arguers are in. If an arguer (A2) is confronted with a fallacy that signals a fundamental rejection of the principle of reasonableness, he has, in principle, the right to bring the discussion to an immediate end. If, however, the fallacy does hinder the discussion but does

not block it, arguer (A2) should respond to the fallacy and try to continue the discussion.

(2) A1: derailment (fallacy)
A2: stops the discussion

The question van Eemeren (2010) addresses, is how to respond in a constructive way to a fallacy in the other party's strategic manoeuvring. He starts this quest for an adequate answer to this question from proposals made by Jacobs (2000) and Krabbe (2003).

According to van Eemeren, the pragma-rhetorical approach by Jacobs, as presented under (3), has the advantage that it is, or at least seems to be, realistic. What arguer (A2) should do when he is offended, is strike back and thereby restore the balance between the offender (A1) and himself.**[ii]** Jacobs does not explain, however, what kind of balance is being restored: whether it is the power balance, a psychological balance, or any other balance. Moreover, why exactly does this balance need to be maintained? What has also been left out of in this approach is the damage that may be caused in the process. In some cases making the move that may have the appearance of a counter-fallacy could indeed have the effect of setting the issue of the discussion straight, but in other cases the effect might be that the relation between the parties is damaged to such an extent that the continuation of the discussion is in danger.

(3) A1: derailment (fallacy)
A2: derailment (counter fallacy)

The proposal under (4) is Krabbe's (2003), and boils down to the following. An arguer (A2) who perceives a move made by the other arguer (A1) as a fallacy, makes it explicitly clear to A1 that, in his view, a fallacy was committed and that the discussion cannot be continued unless the fallacious move has been retracted. One of the advantages of this approach is that it is eventually up to both parties to determine whether the alleged fallacy was indeed a fallacy. Another advantage of the formal dialectical approach is that it provides the parties with the tool of conducting a regulated "meta-dialogue" to argue this dispute out in a civilized, i.e. reasonable, manner.**[iii]** What van Eemeren regards as a disadvantage of the formal dialectical approach, however, is that it presupposes a permanent willingness on the part of the arguers to engage in meta-discussions about the

things they are doing in the (ground-level) discussion. As Krabbe acknowledges, this approach allows the participants to delay the discussion indefinitely by seizing any opportunity to initiate a meta-dialogue about a supposedly fallacious ground-level move. Krabbe's suggestion to attach a penalty to such obstructive behaviour should, according to van Eemeren, perhaps not be seen as merely a joke. If it is a joke, then the problem is not solved; if it is not a joke, the problem is solved, but not in a theoretically motivated way.

(4) A1: derailment (fallacy)
A2: 'A1 should *retract* fallacy X'

Van Eemeren (2010) is of the opinion that in responding to fallacies the best option is to adopt a middle course and regard every response to a supposedly fallacious move as part of strategic manoeuvring in a sub-discussion. In this sub-discussion the responding party assumes that the other party still aims to resolve the difference between them by means of a critical test of the standpoints at issue, and at the same time tries to make it clear to the other party that this party's strategic manoeuvring as regards *this issue*, in response to *this opponent*, and *presented in this way* has *in this case* derailed and does not bring the parties any closer to a resolution of the difference of opinion. Rather than stating right away that the denounced move must be withdrawn altogether, he may suggest to the other party that there is a need to *readjust* this move and re-rail the manoeuvre. What arguer (A2) could do to make arguer (A1) 're-rail' the derailed move is to make clear that he should readjust one or more aspects of his manoeuvring, for example the verbal presentation of the move. In comparison with Krabbe's solution, van Eemeren does not consider his own solution 'as a 180-degree turn'. He does, however, consider it as being more subtle and realistic.

(5) A1: derailment (fallacy)
A2: 'A1 should *revise* 'fallacy' X'

This theoretically motivated proposal for the way in which fallacies should be addressed be seen been seen as the one that in principle will lead to the most adequate response to a fallacy.

The question I will be dealing with in the next chapter is if and how institutional preconditions for Dutch parliamentary debates allow for the different responses that are proposed and in particular if these preconditions in any way hinder the

pragma-dialectically preferred response to an abusive ad hominem.

3. Dealing with the abusive ad hominem in parliamentary debates
In the pragma-dialectical argumentation theory a parliamentary debate is considered to be one of the communicative activity types within the domain of political discourse. A personal attack that is brought forward within this communicative activity type is not necessarily an (abusive) ad hominem argument. In Plug (2007) it is argued that institutional rules that are pertinent to Dutch parliamentary debates may allow for a personal attack on the credibility of a politician without this being a violation of the pragma-dialectical freedom rule.**[iv]** However, if in a parliamentary debate a personal attack could be determined as an abusive ad hominem, there are several institutional preconditions that may affect the possibilities to attend to this fallacy. These preconditions may, as was demonstrated in Plug (2010a, 2010b), vary with every different instantiations of the communicative activity type.

If, for example, we take a look at the codified institutional preconditions for plenary debates in the European parliament, it becomes clear that the Rules of Procedure hinder a Member of this Parliament to act in accordance with the pragma-dialectically preferred response to an abusive ad hominem. As is prescribed in article 145 of the Rules of procedure, MP are only allowed to respond to a fallacious personal attack at the very end of the debate. This makes it impossible for the 'offended' Member of Parliament to make the other party 're-rail' the derailed move immediately after the offense.

Article145 of the Rules of Procedure (European parliament)
1. A Member who asks to make a personal statement shall be heard *at the end of the discussion* of the item of the agenda being dealt with or when the minutes of the sitting to which the request for leave to speak refers are considered for approval.

The Member concerned may not speak on substantive matters but shall confine his observations to rebutting any remarks that have been made about his person in the course of the debate or opinions that have been attributed to him, or to correcting observations that he himself has made.

In Dutch parliament, however, a Member of Parliament is in principle allowed to respond immediately to a fallacious move. One of the preconditions that may

influence the way in which an MP responds is the rule that prescribes the presence of a President. From a pragma-dialectical point of view, an MP who advances a standpoint has no difference of opinion with the President. An MP does address the President when presenting his or her standpoint, but the President is officially not a party in the discussion. However, based on for example article 6, 47, 56 of the Rules of procedure of the Dutch parliament, the President has the ability, or rather the duty to intervene if MPs are obstructing the debate in any way at all. These interventions may influence the argumentative moves of the Members of Parliament.

These preconditions, together with article 58 in the Rules of procedure that may provide a justification to disqualify a personal attack and the limited right of Members of Parliament to respond to their opponent immediately, may be of influence on the opportunities for addressing an abusive ad hominem.

Article 58. Warning; withdrawal of words (Rules of Procedure Dutch Parliament)
1. If a person who has the floor strays from the subject of debate, the President shall call on him to return to the subject in hand.
2. If a member or a Minister uses offensive language, causes a disturbance, violates his duty of secrecy or signifies his approval of or incites the commission of unlawful acts, he shall be reprimanded by the President and given the opportunity to withdraw the words that have given rise to the warning.

Considering these specified conditions pertinent to the institutional context of Dutch parliamentary debate, the following responses to an abusive ad hominem are conceivable.

If an MP is confronted with an abusive ad hominem, he or she may decide to ignore the fallacy explicitly. The MP, similar to an ordinary arguer in an unspecified context, may choose for this option in case a personal attack should not be taken seriously, but should merely be seen as a joke or a mistake. However, the MP may also choose to explicitly ignore the personal attack, even when it is unlikely that the attack should be interpreted as a joke or a mistake, but rather as a fallacy. In, for example, a parliamentary debate in 2004, one of the MPs says: 'I think the personal attack by Mr Timmermans is below the mark, I won't even go into that.' By choosing for this option, the MP demonstrates his opponent and the audience that he did notice and even disapproved of the fallacy, but that he does not want to start a sub-discussion on the unreasonableness of the

argumentative move of his opponent. In both cases, the MP makes clear that he prefers to continue the main discussion. The codified institutional preconditions do not preclude this option.

(1) MP1: abusive ad hominem
MP2: explicitly ignores the (assumed) fallacy

The most rigorous option open to an MP when his opponent brings forward a serious abusive ad hominem, is, as presented under (2), to stop the discussion entirely. Although the Rules of procedure do not preclude this possibility, it is not a very plausible option for an MP to choose for. After all, the 'offended' MP himself may decide to withdraw from the discussion, but he cannot prevent the other politicians that are present in Parliament from continuing the discussion on the topic that is under debate. The consequence may be not only that the MP cannot contribute to this discussion any longer, but also that, starting from the idea that Parliament should be seen as the arena for debate, his 'audience' and fellow MPs may not approve of his withdrawal or interpret it as a sign of weakness or of being unprofessional.

(2) MP1: abusive ad hominem
MP2: stops the discussion

The next options that I will discuss are those that are suggested by Jacobs, Krabbe and van Eemeren. If we look at the third option, the one that is suggested by Jacobs, we find that, in practice, an MP who is confronted with an abusive ad hominem, may respond by bringing forward a counter-fallacy.[v] However, apart from the disadvantages mentioned in the previous chapter, there are institutional preconditions that may interfere with this option. The MP runs a serious risk of his response being criticised or condemned by the President, in particular if the response consists of an abusive ad hominem.

(3) MP1: abusive ad hominem
MP2: presents counter-fallacy

Regarding option four, as suggested by Krabbe, in which the offended arguer asks the other arguer to retract the fallacy, institutional preconditions of parliamentary debate allow for different possibilities. Not only the MP who is confronted with a personal attack may demand the attacker to retract the personal attack, the situation we find under (4), the President too, may demand the personal attack to

be retracted (option 4a).

(4) MP1: abusive ad hominem
MP2: 'MP1 should *retract* fallacy X'

An example of a request to retract an abusive ad hominem can be found in a debate in Dutch Parliament that took place in May 2010. After the Secretary of State, Mrs Bijleveld-Schouten was confronted by MP Mr van Raak of being a liar, she responded: 'Madam President. This is where I draw the line. I expect Mr van Raak to retract his statement accusing me of being a liar.'

(4a) MP1: abusive ad hominem
President: 'MP1 should *retract* fallacy X'

Although the President has the authority, based on article 58 of the Rules of Procedure, to ask an MP to retract an abusive ad hominem, he may decide not to make use of this prerogative and decide not to interfere in the debate. In that case, MP2 who is attacked personally, may disagree with this (implicit) decision by the President and, as presented in (4b), call upon the President to demand MP1 to retract the fallacious move.**[vi]**

(4b) MP1: abusive ad hominem
MP2: 'The President should ask MP1 to *retract* fallacy X'

In the option that has been proposed by van Eemeren (2010) the offending party is not suggested to retract the fallacy, but to revise it. With regard to this option, the institutional preconditions of parliamentary debate provide us with possibilities for responses to an abusive ad hominem that resemble those under 4 and 4a. In the first place, the MP himself may ask his opponent to revise the abusive ad hominem, option (5). An example of a request to revise the fallacious move can be found in a debate that took place in May 2004 in which Mr Woldring (Christian Democrats) responds to an abusive ad hominem by stating 'Pointing a finger at me is infamous: he [Mr van der Lans] should not do that. He ought to correct himself or say: I did not mean to say this.' In the second place, a revision may be demanded by the President, as is represented under (5a). With respect to an abusive ad hominem it is most likely that the revision concerns the presentational design of the denounced move. However, a revision of the topical choice or of the adaptation to audience that was made, is possible as well.

(5) MP1: abusive ad hominem
MP2: 'MP1 should *revise* 'fallacy' X'

(5a) MP1: abusive ad hominem
President: 'MP1 should revise fallacy X'

If the President does not take the initiative to demand MP1 to revise the abusive ad hominem, again MP2 could make an attempt to persuade the President to ask MP 1 to revise the fallacy.

(5b) MP1: abusive ad hominem
MP2: 'The President should ask MP1 to *revise* fallacy X'

4. Concluding remarks

In this contribution I set out to apply the insights in constructive responses to fallacies as discussed by van Eemeren (2010) in relation to the communicative activity type of parliamentary debate. The response that may be seen as potentially preferred is the one that aims at making the arguer who committed a fallacy revise the fallacious move in order to be able to continue the principal discussion. In the context of a parliamentary debate there are no formal institutional obstacles preventing this option. The institutional context of Dutch parliamentary debate even leaves room for variants of this option, each making the MP who brought forward an abusive ad hominem revise the fallacy. The institutional rules that prescribe the presence and the powers of a President enable an MP to try to bring about a revision of the abusive ad hominem he is confronted with either in a direct, or in an indirect way, via the President. The response aiming at making the arguer who committed a fallacy retract the fallacious move, could be seen as another option to attempt to continue the argumentative exchange constructively. There are no institutional constraints that stand in the way of this option and it could also be brought forward via the Present in the same way as a response that concerns the revision of an abusive ad hominem. The fear that this option could result in arguers starting a meta-discussion time and again, thus delaying the discussion indefinitely is, in the context of parliamentary debates, unjustified. The institutional rules with respect to the allotted speaking time and the powers of the President to interrupt the debate will prevent MPs reverting to such obstructive behaviour.

NOTES

[i] All examples in this contribution are taken from Dutch parliamentary debates and are translated by the author. The original Dutch texts, the so called Handelingen (Parliamentary Proceedings), can be found on (https//:zoek.officielebekend-makingen.nl).

[ii] See also Walton (1985, p. 50) who states that 'given that an ad hominem is such an aggressive attack that virtually forces its victim to reply to it and thus change the subject, or risk sacrificing credibility entirely, it is a moot point just what sorts of responses to it are legitimate and fair.' In one of the examples an arguer responds to a fallacy by bringing forward a counter fallacy. According to Walton, this response 'seems not unfair, and can certainly be effective in nicely turning the tables on the attacker.'

[iii] Any discussion rising over a rule is a meta-discussion (Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, p. 163). Sub discussions arise when a statement by the protagonist in the principal discussion is called into question by the antagonist in the principal discussion, when insufficient justificatory or refutatory potential is ascribed to the protagonist's argumentation or when all or part of the argumentation is 'bombarded' with contra-argumentation. (ibid, 1984, pp. 89-90).

[iv] See also Garssen (2009).

[v] An example can be found in a parliamentary debate that took place on 17 September 2006. After an MP, Mr Dittrich (Liberal Democrats), committed an ad hominem argument, his opponent Mrs Halsema (Green Party) replies by committing an ad hominem herself: '*You have a tendency* for bringing forward personal attacks, but I never find that the strongest way of defending'.

[vi] Since in Dutch parliament, an MP is assumed to speak via the President, it may in practice be difficult to distinguish this option from the option that is presented under (4).

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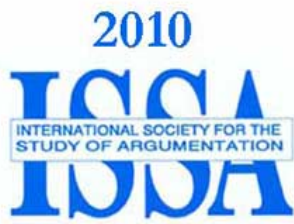
I tell you he [Abraham Lincoln] got more arguments out of stories than he did out of law books, and the queer part was you couldn't answer 'em – they just made you see it and you couldn't get around it. (Tarbell 1907, p. 9)

The common view (at least among nonrehetoricians) is that no novel *is* an argument, though it might be *reconstructed* as one. This is curious, for we almost always feel the need to reconstruct arguments even when they are uncontroversially given as arguments, as in a philosophical text. What are we doing then? We are making the points as explicit, orderly, and (often) brief as possible, which is what we do in reconstructing a novel's argument. Moreover, the reverse is also true. Given a text that is uncontroversially an explicit, orderly, and brief argument, in order to enhance plausibility, our first instinct is to flesh it out with illustrations and relationships to everyday life. In other words, we expand the premises. If this process is fictive (as with "thought experiments") and orderly, it is story-telling. So there is intuitive reason to think that a novel can be an argument, whether the argument is taken as writ large or writ small – full or condensed.

Is this intuition true? This matters because if novels can be arguments, then perhaps the fundamental value and defense of the novel is that reading novels may be critical to *one's learning how to think*. If novels can be arguments, then that fact should shape literary studies, and it should shape logic or argumentation studies. Ayers draws a useful distinction between two senses that the term 'narrative argument' might have: (a) a story that offers an argument, or (b) a distinctive argument form or structure (2010, pp. 2, 11-12, 36-37). After drawing further preliminary distinctions in section 1 below, in section 2 we will consider whether there is a principled way of determining or extracting a novel's argument in sense (a). The views of such authors as Nussbaum and Fisher will be evaluated. The possibility indicated by (b) will be taken up in section 3. This possibility is particularly interesting for argumentation studies insofar as it seems that the *source* of an argument need not imply anything about the argument's structure. It is only rarely claimed that fictional narratives themselves, as wholes, can exhibit a distinctive argument structure (form, scheme). We will consider Hunt's view that many fables and much fabulist literature inherently have the structure of a kind of analogical argument. I will then propose what seems to be a better account,

which takes some novels to inherently exhibit the structure of a kind of transcendental argument.

1. Further Preliminary Distinctions

I mean 'argument' in the logical sense of a timeless, Platonic object, as opposed to a rhetorical or historical creation that is dependent in an essential way upon the circumstances or intentions of the audience or author (which is perhaps a common conception; cf., e.g., "the coherence or significance of a text is, so to say, a variable property, dependent upon the contextual knowledge, interests and viewpoint of a particular reader" – Jones 1975, p. 8). The logical or philosophical notion of arguments taken to be abstract sequences of propositions seems to be the ordinary notion, at least when we are thinking clearly. The contrasting relativistic notion of an argument seems to be a product of confusing the means by which we *access* arguments with arguments themselves. This distinction is particularly pertinent here because of the 'messiness' of novels, which might be thought to mean that the argument would have to be a rhetorical or historical creation. As Doody writes (2009, pp. 154–155, 158):

Philosophy [is]. . .proudly divorced from the mess of living. . .The Novel, however, lives in the kitchen, the bedroom, the street and the marketplace. . .[It] is full of characters chattering, giving themselves away as we say, making an exhibition of themselves. . . It is never transcendent. The novel never flies. Its strength is in what it is accused of – that it is a bundle of lies. Morally transgressive from that simple fact, it cannot commit the bad faith of offering pure solutions or a timeless world.

My point is that however messy the vehicle by which a novel's argument may be expressed, and however relative to contingencies its identification may be, the argument itself would have to be as timeless or abstract as any.

This is not to say that the *subject matter* or topic of a novel's argument could be as timeless or abstract as any. Given the messiness of novels – the fact that they are one and all primarily about (human) psychology, action, and society – the argument of a novel could not be on a wholly unrelated topic. For example, the argument of a novel could not be a mathematical proof or even make the physical case for the existence of a postulated entity (although a science fiction novel might push the envelope about what is physically possible). The primary elements and connective of a novel are events and causality, not propositions and logical consequence.

This indicates a fact about technique that should be disentangled: the argument of a novel, if indeed a novel can be an argument, would have to be indirectly or implicitly conveyed. A novel cannot be an overt argument any more than there could be logical relations between events. In contrast, philosophy, for example, generally wears its cognitive content on its sleeve. I will return to this point in section 3.

In rhetorical studies, discourse or communication is traditionally divided into "four parts" or types: exposition, description, narration, and argument (e.g., McKeon 1982, p. 25; Rodden 2008, pp. 161–162). Plainly, I am embarked on collapsing two of these types of discourse to some degree. But my focus will be limited to discerning argument in narration, rather than narration in argument. Discerning argument in narration on the face of it is the more interesting question insofar as there is no question that narration can occur in argument – arguments can be expanded or embellished with story-telling. On occasion this latter kind of view is taken to an extreme and narration is seen in almost all discourse, not just sometimes in argument. Perhaps the best-known such view is Fisher's "narrative paradigm": "The logic that I am proposing, narrative rationality, presupposes a narrative world. . .a world constituted by the nature of human beings as *homo narrans* and the stories they tell in all sorts of discourse" (1994, p. 23; cf. 1987). This view has been sharply and effectively criticized for being too broad, among other things (Rowland 1987). There is no doubt value in the traditional four-part division of discourse, so we must be careful. I think that the concept of argument is clear and strong enough that it will hardly become seriously blurred if we allow that some novels may be taken to be arguments. Nothing I say is meant to deny that by their formal features, effect, etc. those novels are still *primarily* narratives.

Why is my focus on novels rather than other forms of fictional narration? Again, this seems to be the more interesting and challenging question. The novel is generally regarded as the pinnacle of fictional narrative art. Other forms of fictional narration such as short stories, plays, and films might be easier to manage or analyze because they have shorter or simpler structures. I do not see anything *essential* in focusing on novels in the attempt to discern argument in fictional narration; indeed, in section 3 we will see what can be learned from considering the question in connection with fables. However, it does seem essential or necessary that the narration be fictional – that it not be, for example,

history. This is not because history, biography, etc. need be any less *vivid* than fictional narration (the chain of thought is not: 'vivid, therefore persuasive, therefore an argument'). Rather, it is because, by definition, the point of nonfictional narration involves veracity – sticking to the facts, telling what happened – so there is no theoretical room for the creativity that is needed to construct an argument by inventing what happens. (That is to say, more precisely, there is no theoretical room for the creativity that is needed to construct the means of accessing or identifying an argument by inventing what happens.) Perhaps Aristotle meant something like this when he famously said in the *Poetics* that "poetry is a more serious and philosophical business than history; for poetry speaks more of universals, history of particulars" (1451b 5 – 9).

2. Extracting a Novel's Argument

An approach to literary studies that might *appear* to offer help in determining a novel's argument is called "ethical criticism" or the "edifying tradition." This approach holds, first, that immersion in literature can make us ethically better people, second, that the quality of a literary work is in part a function of the moral correctness of the views it may be taken to express, and third, that the author's personal moral qualities may legitimately affect the evaluation of the work. The opposing approach is "aestheticism," which holds the contradictory of each of the three claims (these definitions are derived from Posner 2009, esp. p. 458). Plato originated a version of ethical criticism, and a prominent recent proponent is Nussbaum (e.g., 1995; cf. Booth 1988 and 1998). Aestheticism has it roots at least as far back as Kant, with his view that (proper) judgments of beauty are disinterested, and are made apart from any consideration of the usefulness of the object. Posner is an example of a recent aesthetic.

The third tenet of ethical criticism (that the author's personal moral qualities may legitimately affect the evaluation of a literary work) is not relevant to our topic. The other two tenets are. How might immersion in literature make us ethically better people, and how might a novel be taken to express a (moral) view? Our concern is what role or roles argument is supposed to have here. Nussbaum's answer revolves around the point that immersion in literature helps to develop the sympathetic imagination, which works toward a good end or has good social effects, at least in the case of some novels. She says, for example (1995, pp. 5, 34):

. . .literary works typically invite readers to put themselves in the place of people

of many different kinds and to take on their experiences. . .The reader's emotions and imagination are highly active as a result. . .reading a novel like this one [Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*] makes us acknowledge the equal humanity of members of social classes other than our own, makes us acknowledge workers as deliberating subjects with complex loves and aspirations and a rich inner world.

For Nussbaum, novels stimulate the sympathetic imagination; that is what they contribute that is special in *making* us recognize such things as the equal humanity of others and *making* us have respect for them as persons. It is not supposed to be argument. Nussbaum says, for instance, "an ethics of impartial respect for human dignity will fail to engage real human beings unless they are made capable of entering imaginatively into the lives of distant others" (1995, p. xvi). Nussbaum writes as if stimulation of the sympathetic imagination is needed simply as a complement to more formal ethical approaches. Other ethical critics, however, are radically anti-argument. For example, Crocker (2002) discusses the "moral transformation" of Huck in coming to *see*, in a kind of *Gestalt* shift, the escaped slave Jim as human in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Crocker says about this transformation that some might hold that "to be legitimate, it must be possible to reconstruct the transformation according to rational considerations. The ability to 'get behind' the transformation in some justificatory way is what I am denying here (as is Wittgenstein)" (p. 58). The same applies for any reader who experiences a "moral transformation" like Huck's, something that was presumably more common in Twain's day.

So what Nussbaum is postulating here with the stimulated sympathetic imagination, and Crocker with coming to see the world in a certain way (e.g., p. 72), is a nonargumentative vehicle, yet one that is nonetheless a vehicle of persuasion or "moral conversion" (Crocker, p. 70). I think that if this sort of thing is *all* there is to the persuasive force of novels, then that force is cheapened compared to what it would be if it *also* included an argumentative component. Noncognitive avenues of persuasion tend to be fickle (lacking the reliability of 'the caustic of reason') and even dangerous. It seems to be a psychological fact that "the effort to picture the inner lives of others most exerts itself when the others are strange, not when they are pitiable" or when their "poverty is drab, depressing, and common" (Pappas 1997, p. 286). Even defenses of the value of noncognitive vehicles of persuasion such as iconic photographs, against the view that they are "threats to practical reasoning," allow (for example) that they may

"create a strong but open-ended emotional response" (Hariman & Lucaites 2007, pp. 14, 21). Certainly, it seems pretty obvious that reading novels produces much or most of its effect on us through affective means such as vivid description and situation or character identification. What I would like to urge, however, is that the effect that reading novels has on us is in fact much greater than it would be if Nussbaum and Crocker were right. Correspondingly for the novelist, if Nussbaum and Crocker were right, there would be far less point in writing a novel.

One might wonder, moreover, how did developing the sympathetic imagination or compassion get to be the *sine qua non* of becoming ethically a better person or experiencing a "moral conversion"? As far as I can tell, this is a result of a kind of bias and censorship. Certainly, this view about compassion is antithetical, for example, to the views Nietzsche develops in various works, including the "novel," *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. For Nietzsche, compassion is ultimately a dangerously life-denying sentiment. Recall that the second tenet of ethical criticism is that the quality of a literary work is in part a function of the moral correctness of the views it may be taken to express. There are of course two claims here (as applied to novels): that a novel may be taken to express an ethical viewpoint, and that this viewpoint may be judged as correct or incorrect. We see these two claims and the call for a kind of censorship where Nussbaum says (1995, p. 10), for example, ethical assessment of the novels themselves. . .is therefore necessary. . .We are seeking, overall, the best fit between our considered moral and political judgments and the insights offered by our reading. Reading can cause us to alter some of our standing judgments, but it is also the case that these judgments can cause us to reject some experiences of reading as deforming or pernicious.

Now our question is, exactly how do ethical critics discern the ethical viewpoint of a novel?
We have already seen that it is not supposed to be by discerning the novel's argument. As far as I can tell, at least Nussbaum and Crocker do not propose and defend any method of discerning the ethical viewpoint of a novel. Rather, what are generally regarded as didactic or polemical novels are chosen, and the ethical viewpoint expressed is simply identified, more or less, with what the polemic is generally regarded as for or against.

In contrast, Fisher and Filloy (1982) do suggest a method. Indeed, they believe that "some dramatic and literary works do, in fact, argue" (p. 343), and they indicate a procedure for determining the argument: First the reader or "auditor is

induced to a felt belief, a sense of the message advanced by the work." This sense of the message is "aesthetic" in that it is an "immediate, emotional, intuitive response to the work," based on simply experiencing the work and its characters involved in various situations and conflicts whereby "different value orientations" are exhibited. Then "the auditor returns to the work and recounts the elements" that led to the initial sense of the message. This becomes "the reasoned account of the message" through a process of discerning "patterns" in the work of consistent descriptions as well as character actions that "dominate and survive" in the various situations and conflicts. Such patterns support conclusions, and this puts the work "within the realm of argument" (p. 347).

Since they hold that only "some dramatic and literary works. . . argue," presumably Fisher and Filloy would say that a work argues if (and only if) this process can be applied naturally – without being forced – to the work. In their paper, they apply it in detail to Arthur Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. As summarized above, their account seems reasonable as an outline of how one would extract a literary work's argument. However, they do make additional points that make the account uncomfortably relativistic. One point is that the argument so-derived is an "aesthetic proof" since it has its "origin in an aesthetic response to the work's elements" on the part of the auditor or reader (p. 347; cf. p. 346). The argument seems to depend in an essential way on the response of the audience. This is confirmed where Fisher and Filloy indicate that in arriving at the "reasoned account of the message" one is supposed to test "the validity of characters" against one's own sense of reality or plausibility *and make adjustments to the account accordingly*, so that "different auditors may arrive at different interpretations" (pp. 347–348).

Fisher and Filloy also make some interesting but vague remarks indicating that they think that "aesthetic proofs" are not narrative arguments simply in the sense of (a) a story that offers an argument, but also constitute (b) a distinctive argument form or structure. They say (p. 247) that "aesthetic proofs"
are outside the traditional realm of argumentative proof in that they are neither general principles that form the basis of deduction nor are they real examples that can be the basis of induction. Such proofs offer a special representation of reality somewhere between analogy and example: what they represent is not exactly our own world but it must bear a relationship to it more essential than

that of analogy.

This is, I think, all they say in attempting to spell out a distinctive structure for fictional narrative arguments. So let us turn to this topic directly, beginning with a view that appears to deny part of what Fisher and Filloy claim.

3. Two Proposed Structures of Narrative Arguments
I take Hunt (2009) to propose that many fables and much fabulist literature inherently has the structure of a kind of analogical argument (esp. p. 380). What is often cited as the form of an argument from analogy – X and Y have certain properties in common, X has some further property, so Y has the further property as well – Hunt sees as wanting, for the usual reason that having the first properties in common might not have anything to do with having the further property in common (p. 372). Instead, he proposes that at least literary arguments from analogy have a 'first case/principle/second case' structure, where the principle is in Peircean fashion 'abduced' from the first case – the principle "is supported to the extent that it is a good explanation of the first case." The second case, however, is deduced from the principle (p. 373; cf., e.g., Beardsley 1975, pp. 113-114). For illustration, consider this short fable, "The Boy and the Filberts" (www.aesopfables.com):
A BOY put his hand into a pitcher full of filberts. He grasped as many as he could possibly hold, but when he tried to pull out his hand, he was prevented from doing so by the neck of the pitcher. Unwilling to lose his filberts, and yet unable to withdraw his hand, he burst into tears and bitterly lamented his disappointment. A bystander said to him, "Be satisfied with half the quantity, and you will readily draw out your hand." Do not attempt too much at once.

The first case is the boy's experience with the filberts that is described. The principle is stated prescriptively or as a moral here, but stated as an explanation, the problem is that the boy attempted too much. (Of course there are other possible explanations or variations of this explanation, notably, that the boy was greedy.) The deduction of the second case is where readers apply the principle "to guide their own moral conduct or persuade others" (Hunt 2009, p. 379).

Hunt indicates that, typically, the written analogical argument, as in the Filberts case, is incomplete or enthymematic. It must be completed by the reader. Often not only the second case, but the principle as well, must be filled in by the reader for fables and fabulist literature. One thing Hunt says about this is that "readers

have only gotten the point of the narrative when they have, in one way or another, completed the analogy" (p. 380). Does all fictional literature have a point? No. Consider, for example, the recent U.S. television series *Lost* and perhaps James Joyce's *Ulysses.* But it does seem, essentially by definition, that fabulist literature has to have a point. Such literature is in that way argumentative even if Hunt's particular analysis is wrong. That some novels do not have a point indicates that not all novels are arguments, a qualification to which we shall return. Another idea to consider in this connection, which Hunt seems to suggest (pp. 379–381), is that how *literary* a fable is, is in part determined by the extent to which its (analogical) argumentative structure is incomplete. The more overtly moralistic the piece is, or the more the author supplies details of the second case, the less literary the piece tends to appear. An example Hunt mentions is Arthur Miller's 1953 play, *The Crucible*, about witch-hunting in old Salem, Massachusetts, with parallels to anti-Communist 'witch-hunts' to be supplied by contemporary audiences. But any number of polemical or didactic novels would serve just as well, for example, the novels of Ayn Rand. Perhaps because the novelist's focus becomes diverted from character and plot development, the preachier the approach, the greater the risk of alienating the reader with a less-than-rich fictional world populated by wooden characters.

This confirms a point I made earlier – that if indeed a novel can be an argument, it would have to be indirectly or implicitly conveyed. For otherwise, the piece's literary status (in the sense applied to fiction), and hence its status as a novel, would be called into question. Moreover, it seems that, by extension, Hunt's view about fables furnishes the outline of a way of understanding some novels as exhibiting a distinctive argument structure: they are a kind of enthymematic argument from analogy. Notions similar to this have been advocated by others; for example, Rodden in a vaguer way discusses how the "enthymematic" analogy between our world and the world of George Orwell's *1984* may "move" or persuade us (2008, e.g., pp. 165–167).

Nevertheless, this derived account of (some) novels as arguments has several shortcomings. First, let's face it, as it stands the account is not very deep. Second, it seems basic to the concept of analogy that two different kinds of things are compared; "to say that two pigs are both fat is not to analogize" (Beardsley 1975, p. 111). Given this, it is at least questionable for many novels that would certainly appear to be arguments if there are any, whether they are actually arguments.

Consider *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Are the events and the kind of racism described in the novel (first case) different enough from the kind of racism the reader would be aware of (second case) to count as an analogy? Which readers – those of Twain's time or our own? This brings us to a final criticism, which I think is fatal, viz., the account is inherently relativistic. Insofar as the reader fills in the second case, the account has the absurd consequence, for example, that a dead author might never have had access to his or her own argument.

I think a better model is that some novels are *transcendental* arguments. The distinctive power and majesty of the novel is its unrivaled potentiality for intricate plot and associated character development. For any given plot/character development complex, we can ask – what principles or generalizations would have to be true about the real world (of human psychology, action, and society) for the fictional complex to be believable? So it seems that this is the basic structure of the argument of a novel:
(1) This story (complex) is believable.
[(2) This story is believable only if such and such principles operate in the real world.]
(3) Therefore, such and such principles operate in the real world.

The believability claim, (1), is self-referential and normally implicit (although, e.g., in parts of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* the claim seems explicit). (2) expresses the basic idea that allows a novel to be an argument, according to the present theory. This idea is that the believability of a novel requires that certain principles or generalizations be true about the actual world. (2) is in brackets because it is not a premise that any novelist need intend or even be aware of; rather, it is the specific inference license that the present theory is proposing. (3) is the conclusion. It indicates which principles operate in the real world and is normally largely enthymematic, though the preachier the novel, the less enthymematic this will be. As Rodden says, "in more didactic novels such as George Orwell's *1984*, we are often aware of a presence arranging and evaluating ideas and characters in building a convincing argument" (2008, p. 155).

Notice that because the "real world" in (3) refers primarily to *human nature*, the transcendental argument of a novel is not seriously susceptible to Stroud's famous objection (1968) to many philosophical transcendental arguments. These arguments reason that since certain aspects of our experience or inner world are

undeniable, the external world must have certain features, on the grounds that the latter's being the case is a necessary condition of the former's being the case. Stroud argues that the only condition that is in fact necessary is that we *think* or *conceive* of the external world as having certain features. My point is that the leap from the inner to outer worlds is quite limited in the case of the argument of a novel. This is not only due to the fact that the worlds are largely the same, but is also due to whatever 'privileged access' or psychological attunement we have to (our own) human nature. Moreover, where there is any leap, it does not appear that damage is done by understanding (3) to be about how we must conceive of the real or actual world.

Believability is the central element of the transcendental argument and is, incidentally, at least a necessary condition for a novel to be a good novel (which I take to be obvious). Is the novel successful 'make-believe'? Curiously, when we ask about this, we know we are asking about how believable a work of fiction or "bundle of lies" is. So clearly, we are not asking how much we can presume that the events the novel relates actually occurred. Rather, we are asking about how well the novel succeeds in getting us to suspend disbelief or believe that the event complex could have been true. The novel aims at verisimilitude, while nonfictional narration (history, biography, etc.) aims at veracity. A novel's believability seems to be determined mostly by what can be called the 'internal' and 'external' coherence of the event complex. I take Schultz (1979, p. 233) to be nicely explicating internal coherence where he says: "the events must be *motivated* in terms of one another. . . either one event is a causal (or otherwise probable) consequence of another; or some events [sic] happening provides a character with a reason or motive for making another event happen" (cf. Cebik 1971, p. 16). A novel is not believable if in it things keep happening for no apparent reason or in a way that is inadequately connected with the other events in the novel. Again, perhaps James Joyce's *Ulysses* or William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* fall into this category. But even if the events of a novel are fully connected, the novel may still not be believable because those connections do not cohere well with our widely shared basic assumptions about how human psychology and society not only actually, but necessarily work. This is the main component of external coherence. The believability of a novel requires that its plot and characters be developed in ways that conform to our fundamental shared assumptions about human nature.**[i]**

The events of a novel, as mere possibilities, can be as far-fetched or remote as you like, as in an allegorical, fantasy, or science fiction novel. Extremism of this sort seems to have little effect on believability so long as the events related are reasonably well-connected, and our fundamental shared assumptions about human nature, and about physical nature of course, are respected. Consider the novels of Franz Kafka. Here, what is believable may not be so much the depicted events themselves as the event complex's implied commentary on the real world. On the other hand, a science fiction novelist may push the envelope regarding physical nature, to the point where neither we, nor the characters, nor the author really understand what is going on (consider, e.g., H. P. Lovecraft's novella *The Call of Cthulhu*). Here, believability breaks down.

Incoherent novels either do not make the believability claim, (1), or the claim is false. In either case the argument does not get off the ground because no conclusion, (3), can be reached on the basis of the inadequate plot and character development that is provided. So some novels are not arguments. Contrast novels that are typically bad arguments – pulp fiction, 'bodice-rippers', and the like. These typically have formulaic plot and character development. Here the problem essentially is that they tell us little that we do not already know; their derivable conclusions about which principles or generalizations operate in the real world of human psychology, action, and society contain little insight. Still, they might be entertaining.

Though we, as researchers, can analyze and give an account of believability as in the preceding, there is no necessity at all in the reader's having such thoughts. It would appear that generally, believability is experienced by the reader as a simple datum or measure of the novel, continuously updated as the reader progresses through the novel. And, like Aristotle said about judging the happiness of a person, you do not know for sure about believability until you reach the novel's end. Believability might prompt the reader to reflect on what truths about human nature are implicated. But again, there is no necessity in this. The novel's argument is there, whether or not anybody notices.

How does the novel move from the premise, (1), to the conclusion, (3)? The most interesting cases, and the height of the art form, are big, good, minimally didactic novels. I take the *whole* novel to be the argument. By inventing, in seemingly infinite detail, who the characters are and what happens to them, the novelist constructs a rich fictional world. Such a world (and hence, argument) can be an

awe-inspiring *tour de force*. The novelist probes, and shows us different ways we might be or live, shows us different ways we might interact, and shows us the consequences that might result from adopting these ways. Given that the novel is good, all this is believable, and so it unfolds largely according to recognizable principles and generalizations. But it is where these implicated principles are tweaked, highlighted, rearranged, and pushed to limits in unexpected fashions that gives the good novel a uniqueness of vision. Consider, for example, D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow*. Here is a passage about the novel's most reflective character (1915, pp. 447–448):

"The stupid lights," Ursula said to herself, in her dark sensual arrogance. "The stupid, artificial, exaggerated town, fuming its lights. It does not exist really. It rests upon the unlimited darkness, like a gleam of coloured oil on dark water, but what is it? – nothing, just nothing."

In the tram, in the train, she felt the same. The lights, the civic uniform was a trick played, the people as they moved or sat were only dummies exposed. She could see, beneath their pale, wooden pretense of composure and civic purposefulness, the dark stream that contained them all.

In a line, Lawrence's view is that you should develop your passionate self to an equal or greater extent than your civic self; otherwise, your happiness will suffer.

Certainly, a novel's argument can be summarized or abbreviated. But no such abbreviation is *identical* to the novel's argument. It is a very common view that being able to "accommodate incompatible moral responses" or interpretations is "typical of great literature" (Posner 2009, p. 471; cf., e.g., Cebik 1971, p. 22). I think this is confusion. Space constraints will permit me only to suggest here that the view derives from our own limitations of finding it difficult or impossible to take in, all at once as it were, the textured nuance of the argument of a work of great literature. So we focus on what we can handle ("any number of arguments become compatible with *significant portions* of the narrative" –

Cebik, p. 22, my emphasis). A novel's argument is the one that 'best fits', even if no reader has succeeded in adequately spelling it out, which does not mean that the reader will not be affected by the argument. A great novel's argument operates on the mind like millions of years of evolution may operate on a creature, possibly radically transforming it. In the evolution case, it seems we find it essentially impossible to imagine the sequence of all the relevant events that could have transpired in such a large amount of time. Similarly, reconstructing

how a novel's argument may affect us is no task for a simpleton.

If correct, my account means that the phenomenon of *coming to see the world in a certain way* as a result of reading a novel is misdiagnosed by the ethical critics we considered. The vehicle of persuasion is argument after all; it is just that it may be very difficult to flesh out. The ability to get behind what ethical critics call "moral conversions" in some justificatory way is what I am *affirming* here.**[ii]**

NOTES

[i] My notions of internal and external coherence bear some resemblance to Fisher's notions of "narrative probability and fidelity" in the "narrative paradigm" that he proposes for almost all discourse, which was briefly discussed above in section 2. Fisher (1987) says "rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings – their inherent awareness of *narrative probability*, what constitutes a coherent story ["coherence in life and literature requires that characters behave characteristically" – p. 47], and their constant habit of testing *narrative fidelity*, whether or not the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives. . and thereby constitute good reasons for belief and action" (pp. 5, 105). For the believability of a novel, I see external coherence operating on a more fundamental level than Fisher's notion of narrative fidelity: with respect to human psychology and society, in order to be believable a novel need only cohere with our widely shared *basic* assumptions. Later I will illustrate the point that it is where these implicated principles are tweaked, highlighted, rearranged, and pushed to limits in unexpected fashions that gives the good novel a uniqueness of vision.

Moreover, Fisher's view is nothing less than a proposal to revamp logic as a whole, whereas mine concerns the believability of novels. While Fisher's view is still discussed and applied (e.g., Roberts 2004), as a viable new logic I think it has been refuted: "a story may ring true and be coherent, but still false. . . a story may not ring true, but in fact be correct. . . If narrative fidelity and probability are to be useful tests of public argument, they must test not merely the story, but the story in relation to the world. And as soon as the tests are extended in this manner, they become essentially equivalent to the tests of evidence and reasoning that are traditionally applied to public argument" (Rowland 1987, pp. 269-270).

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Solving Potential Disputes In Health Brochures With Pragmatic Argumentation

1. Introduction

Governmental institutions and non-profit organizations regularly publish health brochures and leaflets in which they offer health advice. The readers are, for instance, encouraged to improve their diet or are discouraged to consume alcohol. An obvious way to promote certain behavior is to point at the positive consequences of that behavior. To discourage certain behavior one can mention the negative consequences of that behavior.

By going into the desirable or undesirable effects, brochure writers try to remove possible doubt or opposition towards the given advice, so that the reader is more likely to accept it. In other words, an attempt is made to convince the reader of the standpoint that the given advice is acceptable. Pointing at the advantages or disadvantages of a promoted or discouraged course of action can thus be

interpreted as argumentation that is given in support of a standpoint. This type of argumentation is called pragmatic argumentation. In example (1) we see a manifestation of this type of argumentation in a health brochure:

(1) Place your baby on the back to sleep from the very beginning. This will reduce the risk of cot death. ('Reduce the risk of cot death', UK Department of Health, 2007)

In the example, pragmatic argumentation is used to justify why it is desirable to place a baby on the back to sleep: this way of putting the baby to sleep namely has the desirable effect of reducing the risk of cot death.

Besides the standard positive form of pragmatic argumentation exemplified in (1), brochure writers have three more variants of this type of argumentation at their disposal. In this paper, I will examine what dialectical and rhetorical considerations steer the choices for one or the other variant in argumentative discourse in this specific context. To explain this, I will depart from the extended pragma-dialectical theory, developed by Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984, 1992, 2004) and Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002, 2006).

In pragma-dialectics it is assumed that arguers engage in an argumentative discussion with a dialectical objective, which means that they want to solve their difference of opinion on reasonable grounds. To reach this goal, they ideally go through four discussion stages: the confrontation stage (in which the dispute is externalized), the opening stage (in which the roles, rules and starting points are established), the argumentation stage (in which the standpoints are critically tested), and the concluding stage (in which the outcome of the discussion is established) (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992). From this perspective, pragmatic argumentation should be seen as a move in the argumentation stage that should contribute to the resolution of the dispute over the acceptability of an advice.

According to Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002, 2006) discussants have, besides their dialectical objective, also a rhetorical goal: they want to win the discussion. That is why Van Eemeren and Houtlosser introduced the concept of strategic maneuvering to refer to the efforts of arguers to find a balance between their wish to get their standpoint accepted by the audience and their wish to get there in a reasonable way. In every discussion stage and in every move three aspects of strategic maneuvering can be analytically distinguished: discussants make a selection from the topical potential, they use certain stylistic devices and they

adapt their move to the preferences of the audience.

In this paper, I try to explain the choices for particular manifestations of pragmatic argumentation by reconstructing the argumentation as a complex move in a critical discussion. To do this, I will, in section 2, first discuss the dialectical options available to the writer in the argumentation stage. In section 3 I will give a more elaborate account of the pragma-dialectical approach to pragmatic argumentation and present the four distinguishable variants of the pragmatic argumentation scheme. In section 4 I will discuss the choice for pragmatic argumentation and for each specific variant of the scheme in terms of strategic maneuvering. By using speech act theory I will explain why pragmatic argumentation plays such a prominent role in health brochures. Finally, I will discuss how specific choices from the available options may be instrumental for brochure writers to balance their dialectical and rhetorical goals.

2. Dialectical options in the argumentation stage
The dialectical goal of the argumentation stage is to test the tenability of the standpoint at hand. The tasks of the discussion parties depend on their role in the discussion and the type of dispute that gave rise to the discussion. Discussion parties can either adopt the role of protagonist or proponent of a standpoint, or antagonist or opponent of a standpoint. The dispute can be either mixed or non-mixed.**[i]**

In a non-mixed discussion one language user advances a point of view in respect to an expressed opinion while another language user casts doubt on the expressed opinion. In this case, the first speaker adopts the role of protagonist and he is the only party with a burden of proof, while the other party adopts the role of antagonist and only responds to the moves of the protagonist. In a discussion like this the protagonist's task in the argumentation stage is to defend his or her standpoint by putting forward argumentation and to respond to the antagonist's doubt and criticism expressed towards the argumentation

In a mixed discussion, more than one language user advances a point of view. This means that there are (at least) two parties who assume the role of protagonist of their own standpoint and antagonist of the other party's standpoint. In the argumentation stage, both parties have a burden of proof and have the task of putting forward pro-argumentation for their standpoint, but since they also have to deal with an opposing standpoint, they will have to address the

argumentation of the other party as well (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984, pp. 78-83).

In a health brochure, and in other written texts, a difference of opinion cannot explicitly come to the fore: since only one of the parties expresses his or her view, the discussion always remains implicit. Nevertheless, the writers undertake an attempt to convince the readers of their opinion and hence the brochure can be reconstructed as (one side of) a critical discussion in which the writers act as protagonist and the (absent) readers as antagonist.

Ideally, the parties exchange moves and countermoves but in an implicit discussion the writers can only anticipate possible views and responses of the absent audience. They thus have the choice to interpret the possible difference of opinion as either non-mixed or mixed. They can choose to deal with potential doubt, criticism and opposing standpoints or not, whereas, in an explicit mixed discussion the writers would have to address all criticism towards their case to fully comply with their dialectical obligations.

The two main options for brochure writers as they adopt the role of protagonist are to defend their own standpoint and to attack the argumentation in support of the opponent's standpoint. In principle they could also choose not to give any arguments, but it is unlikely this serves their dialectical or rhetorical aspirations. When they decide to defend their standpoint, they can choose from different types of argumentation, each of which is based on a different argument scheme. In the pragma-dialectical theory, the three main categories of argument types that are distinguished are symptomatic, causal and analogy argumentation. Pragmatic argumentation is categorized as a subtype of causal argumentation. The writers have the possibility to combine (different types of) arguments and to give supporting subordinative argumentation.

If the writers expect the audience to not only doubt the standpoint, but even to disagree, they may ascribe an opposing standpoint (a negative standpoint) and even possible arguments for that standpoint to the audience. In that case, they have the option to respond to the arguments that the audience might give in support of their own views.

From all the options available, pragmatic argumentation is the type of argumentation that is predominantly used in health brochures to justify the claim (See, for example, Schellens & De Jong 2004). Before I discuss why there is a preference for pragmatic argumentation, I will first give an account of the

pragma-dialectical approach to pragmatic argumentation.

3. Pragma-dialectical approach to pragmatic argumentation
Pragmatic argumentation always involves a standpoint in which a claim is made about the desirability of a course of action, plan or policy.**[ii]** In its most explicit form, pragmatic argumentation consists of two statements: an empirical statement about the consequences of the action mentioned in the standpoint and a normative statement about the desirability of those consequences. In the so-called negative variant of pragmatic argumentation one points at the negative consequences of the action that is discouraged in the standpoint (Feteris 2002, p. 354). The desirability or undesirability usually remains implicit, as was the case in example (1): it is obvious that the mentioned consequence (reducing the risk of cot death) is a desirable result. The basic form of pragmatic argumentation is based on the following scheme:

1 Action X is desirable

1.1a because: Action X leads to consequence Y

1.1b and: Consequence Y is desirable

1.1a-1.1b' (If X leads to desirable consequence Y, then X is desirable)

On the basis of this scheme, three more variants can be distinguished. These are the negative variant (Variant II), and two variants in which the causal connection between the action in the conclusion and an undesirable (Variant III) or a desirable (Variant IV) consequence is denied (see also Feteris 2002):

Variant II:

Action X is undesirable

Because: Action X leads to consequence Y

And: Consequence Y is undesirable

(If X leads to undesirable consequence Y, then X is undesirable)

Variant III:

Action X is not undesirable

Because: Action X does not lead to consequence Y

And: Consequence Y is undesirable

(If X does not lead to undesirable consequence Y, then X is not undesirable)

Variant IV:

Action X is not desirable

Because: Action X does not lead to consequence Y

And: Consequence Y is desirable

(if X does not lead to desirable consequence Y, then X is not desirable)

The pragma-dialectical approach offers the following critical questions for the evaluation of pragmatic argumentation:

Is the mentioned effect (Y) really so (un)desirable?

Will that which is presented as the cause (Z) indeed lead to that which is presented as the (un)desirable effect (Y)?

Are there any other factors that need to be present together with that which is presented as the cause (Z) to achieve the mentioned (un)desirable effect (Y)?

Does the mentioned cause (Z) not have any serious undesirable side effects?

Could the mentioned effect (Y) be achieved more easily by way of another measure? (Garssen 1997, p. 22)

These questions not only serve as a tool for the analyst to assess whether the argument scheme is correctly applied, but they also function as a point of departure for discussants to determine what type of criticism they can expect when using pragmatic argumentation. In the next section on the strategic function of the variants of pragmatic argumentation I will come back to these questions.

4. Maneuvering strategically with pragmatic argumentation

4.1. The function of pragmatic argumentation in health brochures

In order to explain the choice for a specific variant of pragmatic argumentation it is important to consider why pragmatic argumentation plays such a prominent role in health promotion in the first place. Insights from speech act theory, adopted in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, help to shed light on the connection between pragmatic argumentation and the specific context discussed here.

The preference for pragmatic argumentation stems from the fact that the central speech act in health brochures is the speech act of advising. According to Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1991, p. 163) every language user will assume that the speech act he performs is, in principle, correct and acceptable from his own perspective and from that of the listener or reader. Therefore, one can ascribe the presupposition to the writer that 'the performed speech act is acceptable'. When doubt about the acceptability of the speech act is expressed or expected, the

presupposition that the speech act is acceptable is no longer justified and is open to debate.**[iii]**

Since the audience might oppose advice in health brochures, writers will attempt to remove potential doubt or criticism. On the basis of Austin (1962) and Searle's (1969) speech act theory Van Eemeren and Grootendorst's (1984) additions, correctness conditions can be formulated that indicate when an advice is acceptable. Readers will only accept an advice when certain conditions have, in their eyes, been fulfilled.

A distinction can be made between positive advice, in which behavior is advocated, and negative advice, in which behavior is discouraged. An important preparatory condition for accepting positive advice is that the writer believes that the advocated behavior is in principle desirable for the reader (see Searle 1969, p.67). For accepting negative advice the discouraged behavior should be considered undesirable for the reader's health.**[iv]**

In written texts writers can, in anticipation of criticism, try to justify their claim that the given advice is acceptable by stating that certain correctness conditions are fulfilled. Pragmatic argumentation can fulfill the function of showing that an action is desirable by indicating that it has desirable effects, or that an action is undesirable because it has undesirable effects for the health of the addressee. In this way, putting forward pragmatic argumentation may contribute to solving a potential difference of opinion about the acceptability of the given health advice.

On the basis of this speech act perspective, the main standpoint in health brochures can best be reconstructed as 'The advice to do X is acceptable'.**[v]** Since the desirability of the advocated or discouraged action is a crucial condition for the acceptability of the advice, the main argument can be reconstructed as 'Action X is (un)desirable'. It is this (sub)standpoint that is supported with pragmatic argumentation.

Figure 1 represents a general pragma-dialectical reconstruction of the main argumentation in health brochures.**[vi]**

(1. Standpoint: The advice (not) to do X is acceptable)

1.1 Action X is (un)desirable

1.1.1a Because: Action X leads to consequence Y

1.1.1b And: Consequence Y is (un)desirable

(1.1.1a-1.1.1b' If X leads to (un)desirable consequence Y, then action X (un)desirable)

Figure 1: Reconstruction of pragmatic argumentation in a health brochure

The reconstruction shows that the normative (sub)standpoint 1.1 is supported with argument 1.1.1a that the advocated or discouraged action leads to consequence Y and argument 1.1.1b that consequence Y is desirable or undesirable for the addressee.

1.1.1a-1.1.1b' is the unexpressed or linking premise which connects the coordinative arguments 1.1.1a and 1.1.1b to substandpoint 1.1.

In practice, the underlying structure of the argumentation in health brochures will not always coincide with the structure represented in figure 1. First, figure 1 represents only one line of defense, while a brochure may contain many more arguments and types of argument, which may refer to other correctness conditions pertaining to the speech act of advising. I will not go into those arguments in this paper.

Second, figure 1 departs from the basic form of a difference of opinion in which a discussant puts forward a positive standpoint while expecting only doubt. Differences of opinion can be much more complicated than that, for example when other parties express opposing standpoints or counterarguments. These more complicated situations will be discussed in section 4.3 after I deal with the strategic function of choosing pragmatic argumentation to defend a standpoint.

4.2. Defending a standpoint with pragmatic argumentation
In the argumentation stage, discussants have, besides the dialectical objective to test the tenability of the standpoint, the rhetorical aim to give the most effective defense and most effective attack. The choice for pragmatic argumentation instead of another type of argumentation should thus be considered as a strategic move in the pursuit of reconciling both goals.

Pragmatic argumentation can be seen as an opportune choice from the topical potential in the argumentation stage, because it refers to the crucial condition

that must be fulfilled in order to get an advice accepted. In principle, writers have the burden of proof for the fulfillment of all correctness conditions. Writers may, however, strategically choose to give presence to those aspects of the advice that serve their case best. The desirability of the advocated or discouraged action will in many cases be easiest to justify. The basic positive and negative forms of pragmatic argumentation (Variant I and II) are therefore suitable to give presence to a desirable or undesirable outcome, respectively.

To illustrate this, I will discuss the Dutch 2009 brochure entitled 'Prik en bescherm. Voorkom baarmoederhalskanker' ('Vaccinate and protect. Prevent cervical cancer') published by the RIVM, the National Institute for Public Health and Environment. The brochure was part of a campaign to encourage young girls to get vaccinated against the human papillomavirus (HPV) to prevent cervical cancer. The rapid introduction of this vaccine in the country's vaccination program in 2008 caused great consternation in the media and the political arena, partly because of the marketing strategies pharmaceutical companies employed to influence the public and politicians. Moreover, the RIVM was criticized on its method and on the message it had distributed.

The slogan of the 2009 vaccination campaign was, translated into English, 'Vaccinate and protect. Prevent cervical cancer'. These encouragements in imperative form state that the reader should get the vaccination because that is the way to prevent getting cervical cancer. From this directive speech act, the standpoint can be reconstructed as 'The advice to vaccinate against HPV is acceptable'.

The main reason that is given to follow up on the advice is that 'if you vaccinate against HPV, then you reduce the chance of getting cervical cancer'. This pragmatic argument is meant to indicate the desirability of doing what was recommended. The desirability of the effect is not made explicit, but in the first part of the brochure it was already presupposed that cervical cancer is 'a serious disease' which causes 200 deaths a year. For a lot of girls, the idea of being able to undertake action themselves to prevent a possibly fatal disease will sound attractive. In this brochure, the writer chose to use the basic positive form of pragmatic argumentation (Variant I) to give presence to the desirable consequence that vaccination would prevent cervical cancer. In case of negative advice, Variant II of pragmatic argumentation would have been the opportune choice.

The writer also has the option of choosing multiple or coordinative argumentation to show that other conditions have been fulfilled as well, for example that the writer assumes that the reader in principle is capable of performing the advocated behavior or stopping the discouraged behavior. When the writer suspects that the ability to live up to the advice may be problematic, this could be an opportune move. In the mentioned campaign, this possible hindrance was anticipated by pointing to the fact that girls could get the vaccination without permission of their parents.

4.3 Addressing possible counterarguments with pragmatic argumentation
Besides the aforementioned option to defend their own standpoint, writers have the possibility to anticipate possible countermoves by readers who potentially disagree. Health brochures obviously only represent one side of the discussion, but writers may still try to address counterclaims and arguments in order to strengthen their own position. When writers anticipate a mixed dispute, they presume that another party is of the opinion that the writers' advice is unacceptable or that another advice is (more) acceptable than that of the writers. The brochure writers can choose to anticipate the arguments the other party would have put forward in an explicit discussion by using variant III and IV of pragmatic argumentation.

The critical questions belonging to the argument scheme of pragmatic argumentation (see section 3) represent the kind of criticism one might expect when defending a claim with this type of argumentation. Two of these questions can be dealt with by using variant III and IV of pragmatic argumentation and are thus especially relevant here. These are question 4 ('Does the mentioned cause (Z) not have any serious undesirable side effects?') and question 5 ('Could the mentioned effect (Y) be achieved more easily by way of another measure?').

By means of Variant III of pragmatic argumentation it is possible to address the presence or absence of certain undesirable side-effect to which question 4 refers. To show this, I use material from the HPV-campaign that was launched in 2010. The HPV-campaign in the Netherlands was renewed in 2010 to be able to deal better with the audience's criticism. In the new HPV-brochure in 2010, pragmatic argumentation was chosen to anticipate the criticism that the HPV-vaccination may lead to infertility. The counterargument was attacked by denying that vaccination leads to the undesirable consequence of infertility:
(2) "Can the vaccination cause infertility?"

No. The injection affects your immune system, your natural protection against infections. The injection has no effect whatsoever on your hormones and you reproductive organs and so it can never cause infertility. (My trans. from 'Prik en bescherm. Laat je inenten tegen baarmoederhalskanker.' RIVM, March 2010)

The writers could also try to tackle possible opposing standpoints of the readers. In the case of the HPV-vaccination campaign, for instance, the Vaccination Institute decided to address the standpoint of the Dutch organization 'Vaccinate critically', which discouraged people from letting themselves or their daughters get vaccinated. In this situation, the writers chose to attack another party's standpoint, in other words, the writers tried to show that the advice of the organization was unacceptable.

The burden of proof for such a standpoint is smaller than for a standpoint with the proposition that the advice to do X is acceptable. When attacking, one only has to show that one of the correctness conditions is not fulfilled, while when defending, one has the burden of proof for the fulfillment of all conditions.

In this situation, writers have the option to point out by means of pragmatic argumentation that vaccination is not undesirable (as is presupposed by the advice not to vaccinate). In the new campaign, the writers refer to one of the arguments that the organization Vaccinate critically gave in defense of its negative advice. The organization argued that vaccination is undesirable, because is may lead to paralysis. In the campaign brochure, it was denied that this negative effect could occur, so that the negative advice was no longer acceptable. This move is in fact a way to deal with critical question 4 about possible side-effects of the promoted behavior:

(3) "I heard you can get paralyzed because of the injection, is that true?"

No, in America, a girl got paralyzed, just after she got a HPV- vaccination. The paralysis was not caused by the injection, but had other causes. So she would have been paralyzed without the vaccination as well. Unfortunately, this has been picked up by the media in the wrong way and was then spread. (My trans. from 'Prik en bescherm. Laat je inenten tegen baarmoederhalskanker.' RIVM, March 2010)

The pragmatic argumentation in both example (2) and (3) can be reconstructed as 'X (vaccination is not undesirable', because 'X (vaccination) does not lead to

undesirable consequence Y (infertility/paralysis)'. In both examples the argumentation is based on variant III of the pragmatic argumentation scheme.

Another option is to address possible alternative actions that another party might propose instead of the brochure writer's advice, which is an aspect that is dealt with by critical question 5. Variant IV of pragmatic argumentation is a strategic way to deal with this possibility. In a brochure about fruit and vegetables, for example, the writers anticipate the alternative to take vitamin pills instead of eating fruit and vegetables:

(4) Is a vitamin pill a good alternative to vegetables and fruit?

Vitamin pills or other supplements cannot replace vegetables and fruit. Vegetables and fruit contain, apart from vitamins and minerals, many other useful substances. It is still unknown which of those exactly protect against illnesses. Research shows that it is important to get these substances in all together. A vitamin pill does not have the same effect. (My trans. from 'Groente- en fruitwijzer', Voedingscentrum)

The fragment stems from a brochure that contains the advice to eat a lot of fruit and vegetables. The desirability of this behavior is supported with pragmatic argumentation in which it is pointed out that eating fruit and vegetables has the desirable effect that it offers nutrients that reduce the risk of cancer. In the brochure, the writers anticipate a possible objection to the advice that there is an alternative, and easier, way of obtaining these nutrients, namely by taking vitamin pills or other supplements. In example (4), the writers attack this objection by saying that the alternative does not have such positive effects as eating fruit and vegetables does. The argumentation can be reconstructed as 'X (taking vitamin pills) is not desirable', because 'X (taking vitamin pills) does not lead to Y (the same positive effect as eating fruit and vegetables)' and has variant IV as the underlying scheme.

By considering the dialectical options arguers have in the argumentation stage it can serve both their dialectical and rhetorical goal to choose for one of the variants of pragmatic argumentation. In defense of their standpoint they can focus on the desirable outcome that can be reached by following up positive advice (with variant I), or they can focus on the undesirable outcome that can be prevented by following up negative advice (with variant II). When they expect

opposition, they can use pragmatic argumentation to strategically erase criticism with respect to possible side-effects of the proposed action (with variant III), or they can attack a possible alternative to the proposed action (with variant IV).

5. Conclusion

By using the extended pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation I have tried to make clear that an advisory health brochure can be reconstructed as an implicit discussion between writers and readers in which a difference of opinion about the acceptability of advice is presupposed. I have argued that there is a systematic relation between the performance of a particular move with pragmatic argumentation and the speech act of advising, that is central to the health brochure.

On the basis of the type of advice writers try to justify and the type of criticism they anticipate, writers have four variants of pragmatic argumentation to choose from. The choice for a particular option can be explained by the fact that each choice contributes to the resolution of the presupposed difference of opinion in a specific way by justifying that the preparatory condition concerning the desirability of the action recommended by the writers or another party is fulfilled or not. So the choice for one variant of pragmatic argumentation or another is not a matter of style, but should be considered as a dialectically and rhetorically relevant move.

So far, the argumentative aspects of health promotion have mainly been the subject of persuasion research. In this type of research the focus is usually limited to the relative persuasiveness of evidence types which can be put forward in support of pragmatic argumentation (see Hoeken 2001; Hornikx 2005). The strategic use of variations in the presentation of pragmatic arguments has been studied in research on the effects of message framing (Tversky & Kahneman 1981; Block & Keller 1995; Rothman & Salovey 1997), but these studies usually lack a theoretical foundation on the basis of which (variants of) argument schemes can be distinguished and they do not address dialectical criteria. In contributions that up to now have been written on pragmatic argumentation from an argumentation-theoretical perspective (see Schellens 1985; Kienpointner 1992; Garssen 1997; Feteris 2002) no specific attention is paid to the context of health promotion in which this type of argumentation plays such an important role.

The proposed pragma-dialectical analysis shows that there is a systematic connection between the advice and potential criticism towards it, and a specific variant of pragmatic argumentation, and enables a theoretically founded evaluation of such forms within the context of health promotion.

NOTES

[i] In a pragma-dialectical analysis another distinction that is made is between single and multiple disputes: single disputes have to do with only one proposition while multiple disputes concern more than one proposition (Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984, pp. 78-83). In the context of this paper, this distinction is irrelevant.

[ii] In principal one could also point at desirable or undesirable consequences to support a factual claim, for example when a discussant defends the standpoint 'men are not better drivers than women' by arguing that it would have very negative consequences for women if this were true. From a pragma-dialectical perspective, this way of substantiating the claim is usually considered as an argumentum ad consequentiam fallacy. Since health brochures normally do not contain factual main standpoints, I will leave this issue out of consideration for now.

[iii] Van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson and Jacobs (1993, p. 95) argue that in fact all presuppositions and commitments associated with the performance of a particular speech act could turn into an expressed opinion. They call these commitments 'virtual standpoints' because they are not really put forward as such in the discussion, but the speaker implicitly accepts them by performing the speech act that is under discussion. Together these commitments that can be called in question form the so-called 'disagreement space' of the speech act.

[iv] Other preparatory conditions are for instance that the speaker believes that the addressee in principal is able and prepared to perform the advised action.

[v] The main standpoint could also be reconstructed as 'You should (not) do X'. However, when also other arguments that are put forward in the brochure are also taken into account in the analysis, it is useful to reconstruct the main standpoint as 'The advice (not) to do X is acceptable'. Such an analysis does better justice to the function of statements in health brochures that refer to other correctness conditions of the advice (such as the preparatory condition that the speaker believes that the addressee in principle is able to follow up on the advice). These statements can then be reconstructed as (coordinative) arguments supporting the claim about the acceptability of the advice. In this paper I leave

these arguments out of consideration so a simpler analysis suffices.

[vi] The reconstruction proposed here is comparable to Schellens (1985) who represents the scheme as follows: 'Action A leads to B, B is desirable. So: A is desirable'. Kienpointner (1992) surprisingly mentions the unexpressed or linking premise (1.1a-1.1b' in figure 1) in his pragmatic argumentation scheme, but leaves out the premise in which a claim about the causal connection between X and Y is made: 'Wenn die Folgen einer Handlung eine Bewertung X rechtfertigen, ist auch die Handlung selbst mit X tu bewerten/(nicht) zu vollziehen. Die Folgen der Handlung sind mit X zu bewerten. Also: Die handlung ist mit X zu bewerten/ (nicht) zu vollziehen' (p. 341).

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ISSA Proceedings 2010 – Argumentation Without

Arguments

1 . Introduction

A well-known ambiguity in the term *'argument'* is that of argument as an inferential structure and argument as a kind of dialogue. In the first sense, an argument is a structure with a conclusion supported by one or more grounds, which may or may not be supported by further grounds. Rules for the construction and criteria for the quality of arguments in this sense are a matter of logic. In the second sense, arguments have been studied as a form of dialogical interaction, in which human or artificial agents aim to resolve a conflict of opinion by verbal means. Rules for conducting such dialogues and criteria for their quality are part of dialogue theory.

Both logic and dialogue theory can be developed by formal as well as informal means. This paper takes the formal stance, studying the relation between formal-logical and formal-dialogical accounts of argument. While formal logic has a long tradition, the first formal dialogue systems for argumentation where proposed in the 1970s, notably by the argumentation theorists Hamblin (1970,1971), Woods & Walton (1978) and Mackenzie (1979). In the 1990s AI researchers also became interested in dialogue systems for argumentation. In AI & Law they are studied as a way to model legal procedure (e.g. Gordon, 1995; Lodder, 1999; Prakken, 2008), while in the field of multi-agent systems they have been proposed as protocols for agent interaction (e.g. Parsons et al., 2003). All this work implicitly or explicitly assumes an underlying logic. In early work in argumentation theory the logic assumed was monotonic: the dialogue participants were assumed to build a single argument (in the inferential sense) for their claims, which could only be criticised by asking for further justification of an argument's premise or by demanding resolution of inconsistent premises. AI has added to this the possibility of attacking arguments with counterarguments; the logic assumed by AI models of argumentative dialogues is thus nonmonotonic. Nevertheless, it is still argument-based, since counterarguments conform to the same inferential structure as the arguments that they attack.

However, I shall argue that formal systems for argumentation dialogues are possible without presupposing arguments and counterarguments as inferential structures. The motivation for such systems is that there are forms of inference

that are not most naturally cast in the form of arguments (e.g. abduction, statistical reasoning or coherence-based reasoning) but that can still be the subject of argumentative dialogue, that is, of a dialogue that aims to resolve a conflict of opinion. This motivates the notion of a theory-building dialogue, in which the participants jointly build some inferential structure during a dialogue, which structure need not be argument-based. Argumentation without arguments is then possible since, even if the theory built during a dialogue is not argument-based, the dialogue still aims to resolve a conflict of opinion.

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 the basics are described of logics and dialogue systems for argumentation, and their relation is briefly discussed. Then in Section 3 the general idea of theory-building dialogues is introduced and in Section 4 some general principles for regulating such dialogues are presented. In Section 5 two example dialogue systems of this kind are presented in some more detail.

2. Logical and dialogical systems for argumentation

In this section I briefly describe the basics of formal argumentation logics and formal dialogue systems for argumentation, and I explain how the former can be used as a component of the latter. A recent collection of introductory articles on argumentation logics and their use in formal dialogue systems for argumentation can be found in Rahwan & Simari (2009). An informal discussion of the same topics can be found in Prakken (2010).

2.1. Argumentation logics

Logical argumentation systems formalise defeasible, or presumptive reasoning as the construction and comparison of arguments for and against certain conclusions. The defeasibility of arguments arises from the fact that new information may give rise to new counterarguments that defeat the original argument. That an argument *A defeats* an argument *B* informally means that *A* is in conflict with, or *attacks B* and is not weaker than *B*. The relative strength between arguments is determined with any standard that is appropriate to the problem at hand and may itself be the subject of argumentation. In general, three kinds of attack are distinguished: arguing for a contradictory conclusion (rebutting attack), arguing that an inference rule has an exception (undercutting attack), or denying a premise (premise-attack). Note that if two arguments attack each other and are equally strong, then they defeat each other.

Inference in argumentation logics is defined relative to what Dung (1995) calls an *argumentation framework*, that is, a given set of arguments ordered by a defeat relation. It can be defined in various ways. For argumentation theorists perhaps the most attractive form is that of an argument game. In such a game a proponent and opponent of a claim exchange arguments and counterarguments to defend, respectively attack the claim. An example of such a game is the following (which is the game for Dung's 1995 so-called grounded semantics; cf. Prakken & Sartor, 1997; Modgil & Caminada, 2009). The proponent starts with the argument to be tested and then the players take turns: at each turn the players must defeat the other player's last argument: moreover, the proponent must do so with a stronger argument, i.e., his argument may not in turn be defeated by its target. Finally, the proponent is not allowed to repeat his arguments. A player wins the game if the other player has no legal reply to his last argument.

What counts in an argument game is not whether the proponent in fact wins a game but whether he has a winning strategy, that is, whether he can win whatever arguments the opponent chooses to play. In the game for grounded semantics this means that the proponent has a winning strategy if he can always make the opponent run out of replies. If the proponent has such a winning strategy for an argument, then the argument is called *justified*. Moreover, an argument is *overruled* if it is not justified and defeated by a justified argument, and it is *defensible* if it is not justified but none of its defeaters is justified. So, for example, if two arguments defeat each other and no other argument defeats them, they are both defensible. The status of arguments carries over to statements as follows: a statement is justified if it is the conclusion of a justified argument, it is defensible if it is not justified and the conclusion of a defensible argument, and it is overruled if all arguments for it are overruled. (Recall that these statuses are relative to a given argumentation framework.)

Argument games should not be confused with dialogue systems for argumentation: an argument game just computes the status of arguments and statements with respect to a nonmonotonic inference relation and its proponent and opponent are just metaphors for the dialectical form of such computations. By contrast, dialogue systems for argumentation are meant to resolve conflicts of opinion between genuine agents (whether human or artificial).

2.2. Dialogue systems for argumentation
The formal study of dialogue systems for argumentation was initiated by Charles

Hamblin (1971) and developed by e.g. Woods & Walton (1978), Mackenzie (1979) and Walton & Krabbe (1995). From the early 1990s researchers in artificial intelligence (AI) also became interested in the dialogical side of argumentation (see Prakken 2006 for an overview of research in both areas). Of particular interest for present purposes are so-called persuasion dialogues, where two parties try to resolve a conflict of opinion. Dialogue systems for persuasive argumentation aim to promote fair and effective resolution of such conflicts. They have a *communication language*, which defines the well-formed utterances or speech acts, and which is wrapped around a *topic language* in which the topics of dispute can be described (Walton & Krabbe 1995 call the combination of these two languages the 'locution rules'). The topic language is governed by a *logic*, which can be standard, deductive logic or a nonmonotonic logic. The communication language usually at least contains speech acts for claiming, challenging, conceding and retracting propositions and for moving arguments and (if the logic of the topic language is nonmonotonic) counterarguments. It is governed by a *protocol*, i.e., a set of rules for when a speech act may be uttered and by whom (by Walton & Krabbe 1995 called the 'structural rules'). It also has a set of *effect rules*, which define the effect of an utterance on the state of a dialogue (usually on the dialogue participants' commitments, which is why Walton & Krabbe 1995 call them 'commitment rules'). Finally, a dialogue system defines *termination* and *outcome* of a dispute. In argumentation theory the usual definition is that a dialogue terminates with a win for the proponent of the initial claim if the opponent concedes that claim, while it terminates with a win for opponent if proponent retracts his initial claim (see e.g. Walton & Krabbe 1995). However, other definitions are possible.

2.3. The relation between logical and dialogical systems for argumentation
A stated in the introduction, formal dialogue systems for persuasive argumentation assume an underlying logic. In argumentation theory it is usually left implicit but in AI it is almost always an explicit component of dialogue systems. Also, in early work in argumentation theory the logic assumed was monotonic: the dialogue participants were assumed to build a single argument (in the inferential sense) for their claims, which could only be criticised by asking for further justification of an argument's premise (a premise challenge) or by demanding resolution of inconsistent premises. (In some systems, such as Walton & Krabbe's (1995) PPD, the participants can build arguments for contradictory initial assertions, but they still cannot attack arguments with counterarguments.)

If a premise challenge is answered with further grounds for the premise, the argument is in effect 'backwards' extended into a step-by step-constructed inference tree.

Consider by way of example the following dialogue, which can occur in Walton & Krabbe's (1995) PPD system and similar systems. (Here and below P stands for proponent and O stands for opponent.)

P1: I *claim* that we should lower taxes

O2: *Why* should we lower taxes?

P3: *Since* lowering taxes increase productivity, which is good

O4: I *concede* that increasing productivity is good,

O5: but *why* do lower taxes increase productivity?

P6: *Since* professor P, who is an expert in macro-economics, says so.

The argument built during this dialogue is the one on the left in Figure 1.

AI has added to this the possibility of counterargument: an argument can in AI models also be criticised by arguments that contradict a premise or conclusion of an argument or that claim an exception to its inference. The logic assumed by AI models of argumentative dialogues is thus nonmonotonic, since new information can give rise to new counterarguments that defeat previously justified arguments. Nevertheless, in most AI models it is still argument-based, since counterarguments conform to the same inferential structure of the arguments that they attack.

In our example, counterarguments could be stated as follows:

O7: But professor P is biased, *so* his statement does not support that lower taxes increase productivity

P8: *Why* is professor P biased?

O9: *Since* he has political ambitions, and people with political ambitions cannot be trusted when they speak about taxes.

O10: Moreover, we should not lower taxes *since* doing so increases inequality in society, which is bad.

The argument built in O7 and O8 argues that there is an exception to the argument scheme from expert testimony applied in P6, applying the critical question whether the expert is biased (this paper's account of argument schemes is essentially based on Walton 1996). A second counterargument is stated at once

in O10, attacking the conclusion of the initial argument. Both arguments are also displayed in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – an argumentation framework

3. Theory building dialogues

Now it can be explained why the inferential structures presupposed by a dialogue system for persuasion need not be argument-based but can also conform to some other kind of inference. Sometimes the most natural way to model an inferential problem is not as argumentation (in the inferential sense) but in some other way, for example, as abduction, statistical reasoning or coherence-based reasoning. However, inferential problems modelled in this way can still be the subject of persuasion dialogue, that is, of a dialogue that is meant to resolve a conflict of opinion. In short: the 'logic' presupposed by a system for persuasion dialogue can but need not be an argument-based logic, and it can but need not be a logic in the usual sense.

This is captured by the idea of theory-building dialogues. This is the idea that during a dialogue the participants jointly construct a theory of some kind, which is the dialogue's information state at each dialogue stage and which is governed by some notion of inference. This notion of inference can be based an argumentation logic, on some other kind of nonmonotonic logic, on a logical model of abduction, but also on grounds that are not logical in the usual sense, such as probability theory, connectionism, and so on. The dialogue moves operate on the theory (adding or deleting elements, or expressing attitudes towards them), and legality of utterances as well as termination and outcome of a dialogue are defined in terms of the theory.

4. Some design principles for systems for theory-building persuasion dialogues
I now sketch how a dialogue system for theory-building persuasion dialogues can be defined. My aim is not to give a precise definition but to outline some principles that can be applied in defining such systems, with special attention to how they promote relevance and coherence in dialogues. A full formal implementation of these principles will require non-trivial work (in Section 5 two systems which implement these principles will be briefly discussed).

Throughout this section I shall use Bayesian probabilistic networks (BNs) as a running example. Very briefly, BNs are acyclic directed graphs where the nodes stand for probabilistic variables which can have one of a set of values (for example, true or false if the variable is Boolean, like in 'The suspect killed the victim') and the links capture probabilistic dependencies, quantified as numerical conditional probabilities. In addition, prior probabilities are assigned to the node values (assigning probability 1 to the node values that represent the available evidence). The posterior probability concerning certain nodes of interest given a body of evidence can then be calculated according to the laws of probability theory, including Bayes' theorem. Below I assume that the dialogue is about whether a given node (the dialogue topic) in the BN has a posterior probability above a given proof standard. For example, for the statement that the suspect killed the victim it could be a very high probability, capturing 'beyond reasonable doubt'.

The first principle then is that the communication language and protocol are defined such that each move operates on the theory underlying the dialogue. A move can operate on a theory in two ways: either it extends the theory with new elements (in a BN this can be a variable, a link, a prior probability or a conditional probability) or it expresses a propositional attitude towards an element of the theory (in a BN this can consist of challenging, conceding or retracting a link, a prior probability or a conditional probability). This is the first way in which a system for theory-building dialogues can promote relevance, since each utterance must somehow pertain to the theory built during the dialogue.

The second principle is that at each stage of a dialogue the theory constructed thus far gives rise to some *current outcome*, where the possible outcome values are at least partially ordered (this is always the case if the values are numeric). For example, in a BN the current outcome can be the posterior probability of the dialogue topic at a given dialogue stage. Or if the constructed theory is an

argumentation framework in the sense of Dung (1995), then the outcome could be that the initial claim of the proponent is justified, defensible or overruled (where justified is better than defensible, which is better than overruled). Once the notion of a current outcome is defined, it can be used to define the *current winner* of the dialogue. For example, in a BN proponent can be defined the current winner if the posterior probability of the dialogue topic exceeds its proof standard while the opponent is the current winner otherwise. Or in an argumentation logic the proponent can be defined the current winner if his main claim is justified on the basis of the current theory, while the opponent is the winner otherwise. These notions can be implemented in more or less refined ways. One refinement is that the current outcome and winner are defined relative to only the 'defended' part of the current theory. An element of a theory is undefended if it is challenged and no further support for the element is given (however the notion of support is defined). In Prakken (2005) this idea was applied to theories in the form of argumentation frameworks: arguments with challenged premises for which no further support is given are not part of the 'current' argumentation framework. Likewise in a BN with, for example, a link between two nodes that is challenged.

The notions of a current outcome and current winner can be exploited in a dialogue system in two ways. Firstly, the ordering on the possible values of the outcome can be used to characterize the quality of each participant's current position, and then the protocol can require that each move (or each attacking move) must improve the speaker's position. For dialogues over BNs this means that each (attacking) utterance of the proponent must increase the posterior probability of the dialogue topic while each (attacking) utterance of the opponent must decrease it. This is the second way in which a protocol for theory-building dialogues can promote relevance. The notions of current outcome and winner can also be used in a turntaking rule: this rule could be defined such that the turn shifts to the other side as soon as the speaker has succeeded in becoming the current winner. In our BN example this means that the turn shifts to the opponent (proponent) as soon as the posterior probability of the dialogue topic is above (below) its proof standard. This rule was initially proposed by Loui (1998) for dialogues over argumentation frameworks, in combination with the protocol rule that each utterance must improve the speaker's position. His rationale for the turntaking rule was that thus effectiveness is promoted since no resources are wasted while fairness is promoted since as soon as a participant is losing, she is given the opportunity to improve her position. The same rule is used in Prakken

(2005). This is the third way in which a dialogue system for theory-building dialogues can promote relevance.

5. Two example systems

In this section I summarise two recent systems of the theory-building kind that I developed in collaboration with others: Joseph & Prakken's (2009) system for discussing norm proposals in terms of a coherence network, more fully described in Joseph (2010), and Bex & Prakken's (2008) system for discussing crime scenarios formed by causal-abductive inference, more fully described in Bex (2009).

5.1. Discussing norm proposals in terms of coherence

Paul Thagard (e.g. 2002) has proposed a coherence approach to modelling cognitive activities. The basic structure is a 'coherence graph', where the nodes are propositions and the edges are undirected positive or negative links ('constraints') between propositions. For example, propositions that imply each other positively cohere while propositions that contradict each other negatively cohere. And a proposal for an action that achieves a goal positively coheres with that goal while alternative action proposals that achieve the same goal negatively cohere with each other. Both nodes and edges can have numerical values. The basic reasoning task is to partition the nodes of a coherence graph into an accepted and a rejected set. Such partitions can be more or less coherent, depending on the extent to which they respect the constraints. In a constraint satisfaction approach a partition's coherence can be optimized by maximising the number of positive constraints satisfied and minimising the number of constraints violated. This can be refined by using values of constraints and nodes as weights.

Building on this, Joseph (2010) proposes to model intelligent agents as coherence-maximising entities, combining a coherence approach with a Belief-Desire-Intention architecture of agents. Among other things, Joseph models how agents can reason about the norms that should hold in the society of which they are part, given the social goals that they want to promote. She then defines a dialogue system for discussions on how to regulate a society (extending the preliminary version of Joseph & Prakken 2009). The system is for theory-building dialogues in which the theory built is a coherence graph. The agents can propose goals or norms and discuss related matters of belief. The notions of current outcome and winner are defined in terms of the agents' preferred partitions of the coherence graph, which for each agent are the partitions with an accepted set that best

satisfies that agent's norm proposals and best promotes its social goals: the more norms satisfied and the more goals promoted, the better the partition is.

5.2 Discussing crime scenarios in terms of causal-abductive inference
Building on a preliminary system of Bex & Prakken (2008), Bex (2009) proposes a dialogue system for dialogues in which crime analysts aim to determine the best explanation for a body of evidence gathered in a crime investigation. Despite this cooperative attitude of the dialogue participants, the dialogue setting is still adversarial, to prevent the well-known problem of 'tunnel vision' or confirmation bias, by forcing the participants to look at all sides of a case.

The participants jointly construct a theory consisting of a set of observations plus one or more explanations of these observations in terms of causal scenarios or stories. This joint theory is evaluated in terms of a logical model of causal-abductive inference (see e.g. Console et al. 1991). In causal-abductive inference the reasoning task is to explain a set of observations O with a hypothesis H and a causal scenario C such that H combined with C logically implies O and is consistent. Clearly, in general more than one explanation for a given set of observations is possible. For example, a death can be caused by murder, suicide, accident or natural causes. If alternative explanations can be given, then if further investigation is still possible, they can be tested by predicting further observations, that is, observable states of affairs F that are not in O and that are logically implied by $H + C$. For example, if the death was caused by murder, then there must be a murder weapon. If in further investigation such a prediction is observed to be true, this supports the explanation, while if it is observed to be false, this contradicts the explanation. Whether further investigation is possible or not, alternative explanations can be compared on their quality in terms of two criteria: the degree to which they conform to the observations (evidence) and the plausibility of their causal scenarios.

Let me illustrate this with the following dialogue, loosely based on a case study of Bex (2009), on what caused the death of Lou, a supposed victim of a murder crime.
P1: Lou's death can be explained by his fractured skull and his brain damage, which were both observed. Moreover, Lou's brain damage can be explained by the hypothesis that he fell.
O2: But both Lou's brain damage and his fractured skull can also be explained by the hypothesis that he was hit on the head by an angular object.

P3: If that is true, then an angular object with Lou's DNA on it must have been found, but it was not found.

In P1 a first explanation is constructed for how Lou died, and in O2 an alternative explanation is given. The latter is clearly better since it explains all observations, while the first fails to explain Lou's fractured skull. Then P3 attacks the latter explanation by saying that one if its predictions is contradicted by other evidence. The resulting causal-abductive theory is displayed in Figure 2, in which boxes with a dot inside are the observations to be explained, solid boxes without dots are elements of hypotheses, the dotted box is a predicted observation, solid arrows between the boxes are causal relations and the dotted link expresses contradiction. This theory contains two alternative explanations for Lou's death, namely, the hypotheses that Lou fell and that he was hit with an angular object, both combined with the causal relations needed to derive the observations (strictly speaking the combination of the two explanations also is an explanation but usually only minimal explanations are considered).
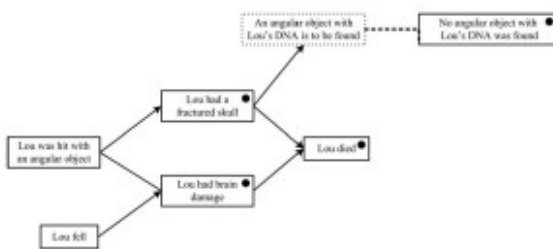

Figure 2 – a causal-abductive theory

But this is not all. In Section 4 I said that, by way of refinement, parts of a theory built during a dialogue may be challenged and must then be supported, otherwise they should be ignored when calculating the current outcome and current winner. In fact, Bex here allows that support for elements of a causal-abductive theory is given by arguments in the sense of an argumentation logic. Moreover, he defines how such arguments can be constructed by applying argument schemes, such as those for witness or expert testimony, and how they can be attacked on the basis of critical questions of such schemes. So in fact, the theory built during a dialogue is not just a causal-abductive theory but a combination of such a theory with a logical argumentation framework in the sense of Dung (1995).

Consider by way of illustration the following continuation of the above dialogue.

(Here I slightly go beyond the system as defined in Bex (2009), which does not allow for challenging elements of a causal-abductive theory with a 'why' move but only for directly moving arguments that support or contradict such elements.)

O4: But how do you know that no angular object with Lou's DNA on it was found?

P5: This is stated in the police rapport by police officer A.

P6: By the way, how do we know that Lou had brain damage?

O7: This is stated in the pathologist's report and he is an expert on brain damage.

P8: How can being hit with an angular object cause brain damage?

O9: The pathologist says that it can cause brain damage, and he is an expert on brain damage.

O10: By the way, how can a fall cause brain damage?

First O4 asks for the ground of P's statement that no angular object with Lou's DNA on it was found, which P5 answers by an application of the witness testimony scheme. Then P6 asks where the observation that Lou had brain damage comes from, which O7 answers with an argument from expert testimony. Then P8 challenges a causal relation in O's explanation, which O9 then supports with another argument from expert testimony. In his turn O10 challenges a causal relation in P's explanation, which P fails to support. The resulting combination of a causal-abductive theory with an 'evidential' argumentation framework is displayed in Figure 3 (here shaded boxes indicate that the proposition is a premise of an argument, and links without arrows are inferences, in this case applications of argument schemes).
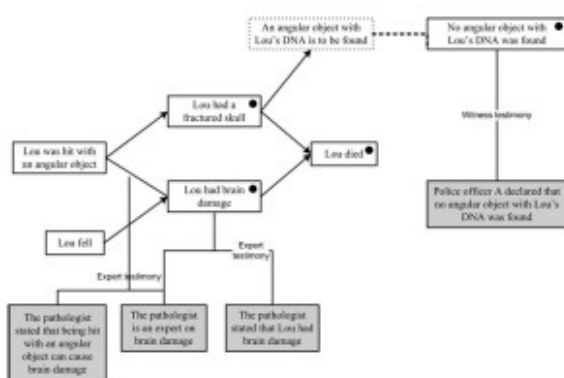

Figure 3: a caual-abductive theory combined with an argumentation framework

To implement the notions of a current outcome and current winner, Bex (2009) first defines the quality of causal explanations in terms of two measures: the extent to which they explain, are supported or are contradicted by the evidence, and the extent to which the causal relations used in the explanation are plausible. Roughly, the plausibility of a causal relation is reduced by giving an argument against it, and it is increased by either defeating this argument with a counterargument or directly supporting the causal relation with an argument. (Bex also defines how the plausibility of an explanation increases if it fits a so-called story scheme, but this will be ignored here for simplicity.) Then the current outcome and winner are defined in terms of the relative quality of the explanations constructed by the two participants. It is thus clear, for instance, that P3 improves P's position since it makes O's explanation being contradicted by a new observation. Likewise, O4 improves O's position since it challenges this new observation, which is therefore removed from the currently defended part of the causal-abductive theory and so does not count in determining the current quality of O's explanation, which therefore increases. In the same way, P8 improves P's position by challenging a causal relation in O's explanation, after which O9 improves O's position by supporting the challenged causal relation with an argument (note that in this example the criterion for determining the current winner, that is, the proof standard, is left implicit).

A final important point is that the arguments added in Figure 3 could be counterattacked, for instance, on the basis of the critical questions of the argument schemes from witness and expert testimony. The resulting counterarguments could be added to Figure 3 in the same way as in Figure 1. If justified, their effect would be that the statements supported by the attacked arguments are removed from the set O of observations or from the set C of causal relations. In other words, these would not be in the defended part of the causal-abductive theory and would thus not count for determining the current outcome and winner. For example, if O succeeds in discrediting police officer A as a reliable source of evidence, then the quality of O's position is improved since its explanation is no longer contradicted by the available evidence.

6. Conclusion

This paper has addressed the relation between formal-logical and formal-dialogical accounts of argumentation. I have argued how persuasive argumentation as a kind of dialogue is possible without assuming arguments (and

counterarguments) as inferential structures. The motivation for this paper was that the object of a conflict of opinion (which persuasion dialogues are meant to resolve) cannot always be most naturally cast in the form of arguments but sometimes conforms to another kind of inference, such as abduction, statistical reasoning or coherence-based reasoning. I have accordingly proposed the notion of a theory-building argumentation dialogue, in which the participants jointly build a theory that is governed by some notion of inference, whether argument-based or otherwise, and which can be used to characterize the object of their conflict of opinion. I then proposed some principles for designing systems that regulate such dialogues, with special attention for how these principles promote relevance and coherence of dialogues. Finally, I discussed two recent dialogue systems in which these ideas have been applied, one for dialogues over connectionist coherence graphs and one for dialogues over theories of causal-abductive inference. The discussion of the latter system gave rise to the observation that sometimes theories that are not argument-based must still be combined with logical argumentation frameworks, in order to model disagreements about the input elements of the theories.

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