

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Discourse Correspondence Between Argumentative And Grammatical Sequences



1. The meaning of parallelism

'Parallelism' in linguistics became a familiar term in the 20th century, thanks to Charles Serrus' book "Le parallelism logico-grammatical" (1933). But the relationship between logic and grammar has been the subject of research since the end of the 19th century. See, for instance, "Raporturile între gramatică și logică" by the Romanian scholar Lazăr Săineanu (1891) and especially the long methodological tradition called 'the logical analysis of the sentence'. Are subject and predicate logical or grammatical units? To what extent must the grammatical sequence of units assimilate logical terminology, and vice-versa? I suggest recognising two levels in the content of argumentative texts, the S-level and the A-level (syntactic and argumentative levels), each one with its specific items. This is our first hypothesis. It was set up because of several terminological analogies, such as '(grammatical) proposition' vs '(logical) proposition', 'concessive clause' vs the argumentative figure called 'concession', the 'cause' considered with this name in grammar as well as in logic, and so on and so forth. For more details concerning this kind of analysis see Stati, 2002. In the model of van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1981) segmentation in A-units is constantly compared with that in speech acts, whereas in our model the sequence of A-units is paralleled with the sequence of S-functions. The researcher who adopts the hypothesis of a parallelism between these two levels of analysis has to accept some prerequisites.

A complete parallelism would mean at least two properties:

- an inventory of units, equal in number, on both levels; the units enter into syntagmatic relations in the text; these relations belong to a relatively small paradigm;
- a certain x-type relation may either belong to a traditional species (our old and familiar acquaintances 'coordination' and 'subordination') or to a new species,

common to both levels; a strong parallelism could mean that to an S-relation x in $(a \times b)$ in texts always corresponds the same relation x on the A-level of the same texts considering the A-sequence $(m \times n)$. Here a , b , m , n are variables and x is a constant.

2. Confronting reality

The principal conclusion is that if it is parallelism, then it is far from being complete.

a. It is true that the terminology is similar, but only for a part of the meta-language (proposition, predicate, consecutive, conditional, concessive clauses, cause etc.);

b. another positive argument is the existence of a lexical class called 'connectives'. It is well known that in ordinary language the same lexemes often play their role on the S-level and on the A-level as well; they signal the 'argumentative text' property and underline the syntactic articulation of any discourse, but the number of A-connectives which do not appear in the S-connectives list is considerable. The two paradigms of units are quite different, as a number, as well as a form of manifestation. And when we compare their actualisations in discourse we note that their correspondence is far from being bi-univocal. For instance, sometimes a couple of grammatical sentences correspond to one argumentative move, and sometimes one S-unit corresponds to a sequence of A-moves;

c. and what about the relations? In syntax we speak of co-ordination and subordination, terms quite infrequent in logical analyses. They are, however, applicable in A-analysis since situations such as the following are trivial: We may have a co-ordinative couple $(a + b)$ not only in syntax but also in A-analysis, for example when a thesis is justified or rejected by means of two moves: $a \times (b + c)$.

d. many A-units have no equivalent on the S-level (thesis, rectification, objection, criticism, agreement etc.;) and several syntactic functions are without equivalent on the A-level (for example, clause, subject-clause, temporal subordinate clause, etc.);

e. some sequences are formed by complementary units in the sense that if a unit 'a' is present in the text, then unit 'b' should also be present. There are complementary propositions and complementary A-roles;

f. on both levels there are relations that cross the sentential frontiers;

g. the organisation is hierarchical on both levels (h) a relation 'x' does not only bind the elementary terms 'b' and 'c' but also complex units like $(a \times b)$ and we so

obtain formula:

$$/(a \times b) \times (c \times d)/$$

and this formula means that the same relation 'x' binds the elementary items 'a' and 'b' and the complex items '(a x b)' with '(c x d)'; (i) synonymy of two chunks of text occurs on the S-level and on the A-level as well. We obtain pairs of synonyms on the argumentation level by means of condensation and dilution. Numerous such synonym constructs result from the omission of one or more moves; economy does not alter the meaning of the text.

3. Two subordinate clauses

From the point of view of parallelism two categories of subordinate clauses are particularly interesting – the conditional and the concessive. The difference between the sequences which are built on the implication (if p...then q...) and those based on the equivalence relation (q... if p...) is relevant in logic and in argumentation theory, but absent – but neither impossible nor incorrect – in ordinary spoken language, cf. “You may get to speak to him if and only if you have a great mutual friend”. Logicians discuss certain types of if-clauses are of no interest for A-studies, nor for syntax, cf. “If he is a good singer, I am the king of Norway”: “If Sweden is in Africa, then Japan is a republic” (Allwood et al. 1961, 132). Obviously only grammarians investigate if-clauses that have the function of a principal sentence, cf. “If I accept this situation, it is because I love him” which means precisely “I accept this situation because I love him”. See also the status of exclamative conditional clauses, cf. Fr. “Ah, si j'étais riche!” For the analysis of if-clauses and their equivalence in French and Italian, see Weinrich, 1989, 445-446; Mazzoleni and Prandi, 1997; Stati, 2002. Finally, in A-studies, as well as in logic and in grammar, the category of counter-factuals is a common subject of research, cfr. “Les possibilités de sa non-réalisation sont plus grandes que celles de sa réalisation” (Weinrich, 1989, 445. The argumentative roles played by the if-clauses are hypothesis, condition, objection and justification As far as the concessive subordinate clauses are concerned, the lack of parallelism with the rhetorical figure called ‘concessio’ is evident.

Compare this dialogue excerpt:

A: You are obsessed with your health; death is inevitable!

B: It is true that death is unavoidable, but this does not justify neglecting one's health...”.

Compare the definitions of the two phenomena. The argumentative item means “an obstacle which was overcome”; the syntactic clause means a momentary agreement with the antagonist’s thesis immediately followed by a polemic move (criticism, objection, rectification, contest).

Relatively rare are the occurrences of constructions which are at the same time S-concessions and A-concessions. Three disciplines investigate concessions: grammar, logic, argumentation theory. But a fundamental question arises: we have to deal with a single concept, or with two or three? Whatever the case, we are faced with a phenomenon of non-parallelism (cfr. Stati 1998).

4. Implicit propositions

Separate mention should be made to the frequent omission of propositions belonging to both species, i.e. syntactic and argumentative. I am referring to the controversial phenomenon of ellipsis, as it is called in syntax, or ‘implicitness’ as we prefer to call it in argumentation analysis. Take, for example, the formula:

“Do p, because otherwise the event q will take place”

where the proposition “and you know that q is negative for you” is implicit but present in the deep structure. Sometimes we think that the analysis could accept that two propositions are implicit, as happens in:

“Do not accept p, otherwise event q will take place, and you know that q is negative for you”

The number of implicit propositions depends on the status of “otherwise”, which seems to be equivalent to a negative conditional clause “if you do not, then q”.

Depending on the decision preferred by the researcher, we shall have one or two implicit propositions.

5. A second hypothesis: isomorphism

A second hypothesis states that the argumentative structures are similar to the syntactic structures (and to other linguistic structures too) thus participating in the more general property of linguistic forms called isomorphism, which is a kind of analogy underlined by some prominent structuralist scholars, for instance by the glossematicians. It seems that a certain methodological advantage could be obtained by applying in the A-analysis a number of categories more or less frequently employed by structuralist linguists. Among possible examples we may cite the concepts of opposition, paradigm, the extraordinary relevance of form and relation, the distinctive features, etc.. I have chosen one instance.

6. *Form and substance*

What corresponds in the A-analysis, to the glossematic levels form of content, and substance of content? I am talking about the dual dichotomy content vs expression and form vs substance which may represent the richest and most enduring heritage of Danish glossematics (Louis Hjelmslev). It goes without saying that here 'form' does not concern the material shape (the subject matter of phonetics), but the features of organisation. The four terms are combined according to the same principle, so that form is at the same time isomorphic and parallel. With 'substance' the question is the same, but we must pay attention to the role played by extra-linguistic features. As is well-known, the substance of the content is somehow mysterious, and the unique certainty is its vagueness. To mention but one puzzling example of an unresolved issue we may ask what synonymy actually is: a relation at the level of the form of content or at the level of the substance of content. Obviously, we mean synonymy in syntax. There is one way to draw the issue to a close by answering "syntactic synonymy does not exist at all", nor does it exist between words.

7. *Conclusions*

Our cursory investigation has shown that the term 'parallelism' suggests a stronger relation of similarity between S-structures and A-structures than an examination of reality confirms. Nevertheless, a sort of intuition suggests that a vague affinity does exist, though it is not clearly delimited. The terminological overlaps and a long tradition that explains the syntactic articulation of language by so-called 'logical content' are corroborated by the scholastic 'logical analysis of sentences' still in use. At the same time we should stress the positive fact that implementing 'logical analysis of the sentence' could be helpful to teach argumentation theory. If the analogies are not exaggerated, the approximate and loose parallelism between S-structures and A-structures could turn out to be very useful. Last but not least, we should note that a constant consideration of the affinity whose limits we have underlined functions, or is apt to function, as a supplementary didactic means for the teaching of logic.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Argument As Empire Formation: The Letters Of Elihu Yale



A chronicle of the history of British empire in India as it was staged from within the confines of Fort St. George in Madras, India has this to say about one of the governor-generals of the British East India company:

An old feeling comes over us directly we leave the highroad and make our own way down the sloped passage across the drawbridge over the moat, past the massive gates and under the echoing tunnel that leads through the mighty walls. Within we see the parapets on which in bygone days the cannon thundered at the foe. We pass on into the great spaces of the Fort; and in our imagination we can people them with ghosts of the illustrious-or notorious-dead. It was here that, in the reign of King James the Second, Master Elihu Yale, assumed the Governorship of Madras, did hard work on the Company's behalf but also made a large fortune for himself, lost his son aged four, quarreled long and bitterly with his councilors, and was at last superseded (Barlow and Milford 1921: 16).

A leading public intellectual, S. Muthiah, who is part of an emergent cultural movement to preserve British architecture in Madras observes of Elihu Yale "Yale, a strong personality who is alleged to have hanged his groom for being absent without leave, got on well with Europeans and Indians alike" (Muthiah

1999: 43).

Elihu Yale was the governor in residence at the fort between 1687 and 1692 as he sought to secure trading rights, within a larger mission of firmly establishing Great Britain as sole economic and political masters of the vast regions of the Indian subcontinent from a tract of land which to this day houses the bedrock of British Empire, Fort St. George. Yale took over the helms of the British East India company at a time when Madras became an embattled zone among the Portugese, Dutch, and the British. The quest for gaining commercial monopoly and its political concomitant, ascendancy over Portugese and Dutch, which subsequently spawned the birth of Empire, consumed the administrative agendas of a succession of governor-generals between mid and end of the 17th century, including Yale.

Between the grand sweep of history and the finer intricacy of historical figures, between gallantry and notoriety, visionary politics and strategic practices, can be found a series of letters penned by Yale from within the fort. While Yale is sometimes the sole writer, other letters are the work of a cohort of councilors or affectionately called 'the Gang'. The grand irony that the edifice of one of the most expansive, durable, and larger-than-life colonial regimes, that of Britain in India, was put in place through the simplicity and personableness of letters is only matched by the majesty, decorum and strategic choices embedded in the form and tone of the arguments advanced by Elihu Yale in service of the Crown of England as one of its administrative heirs. And there is an uncanny continuity between the tragedy that ensued from the English will to colonize Indian people and the vulnerability of turbulent precolonial times. This can be semiotically traced across the universe of arguments that emerged to manage the exigent and beleaguered enterprise that was the British East India Company. The turbulence can be understood as the effect of embarking upon an expansionist mode that is clearly evidenced in these missives.

This paper has as its critical task retrieval of argument types in selected texts from within the repertoire of letters written by Elihu Yale and on occasion, by his councilors, to consolidate the British East India Company that in turn led to Empire. These arguments are then arranged within two political discourses that provide reciprocal and dynamic contexts for interpretation and criticism. One of these is a discourse of political solicitation that emerges from arguments addressed to local rulers, Nabobs or Nawabs, on the significance of enabling the

British to procure sole trading rights over the Portuguese and Dutch in Madras and attendant issues. The other which is more of a discourse of political strategy can be found in what basically constitutes internal memos; a series of correspondence with administrative agents who were designated as 'factors'. Jacobs and Jackson's paradigmatic application of the groundbreaking differentiation proposed by O'Keefe to analyze two grounds of arguments has enormous critical value within the aforesaid historical context of political argumentation. This differentiation between making an argument and having an argument is, in fact, the driving force behind the critical maneuvers of this paper (1981: 119). Jacobs and Jackson capture the distinction saying, "argument1 refers to a kind of speech act, something a person makes; argument2 refers to a kind of interaction, something people have" (Jacobs and Jackson 1981: 119). Simply put, this fine differentiation animates a critical distinction between Yale arguing *for* sole commercial rights in Madras and Yale arguing *that* there are strategic and imprudent ways of doing so. This distinction can be mapped to the addressee of the letters showing the radical contingency of the argument types employed and deployed by Yale to achieve suasive ends of securing British monopoly. In argumentation terms, Yale makes an argument to the ruler while arguing, sometimes vociferously, with British agents in the vicinity. Taken together they constitute an expansionist rhetoric of British empire that compels a philosophical return to the elusive question of the origins of British colonial rule in India and its argumentative underpinnings during a moment that can certainly be imagined as the precolonial moment. Before I proceed to discuss the methodology and present my criticism, I venture into the postcolonial implications of my reading of Yale's letters.

The figuring of the spatial and temporal axes of these letters in terms of the 'precolonial' compels scrutiny of the politics of postcolonial criticism that both underwrites and is in turn rewritten through such an archaeological project. A more conventional postcolonial criticism, such as the incisive essay by Bjork on cold war colonialism, works with the objective of exposing arguments made in postcolonial times that sustain colonialist ideology and practices into an ever unfolding neo (Bjork 1995: 225-231). This paper turns this type of intellectual practice on its head by recovering the discourses made in precolonial times. Such a turning of the postcolonial head runs counter to a critical practice that is concerned with the production of a colonialist ideology in the aftermath of colonial rule, a practice that glosses over discursive intricacies to offer broad texts, in the order of Lyotard's notion of *meta recits* (1984), on the premise that

domination/oppression is a concomitant of foreign rule. The trajectory of this critical essayist is to trace an alternate path in postcolonial criticism which foregrounds the interrogation of discursive strategies that led to the founding to British Empire in India. This in some way extends postcolonial intellectual work to negotiate the 'precolonial' which I find to be a catalyst for intellectual enlargement and enrichment of postcolonial scholarship. This points to a moment of suasion prior to a period of force that in Yale's works is realized in the exemplary embodiment of political argumentation even as it is disturbed by a sort of ambivalence of a very different order than the one delineated within postcolonial criticism which focuses on the English-speaking Indian native (Bhabha 1986: 163-84). I specifically mean a sort of vulnerability that comes out of Yale, an Englishman having to master intercultural communication, so as to overpower the Portuguese and Dutch trading entities in what became a fractious and embattled zone of trade in Southern India. This discursive blending of two very different alignments, as Olson puts it in a far-reaching explication of the argumentative aspects of ethics and effectiveness, was most evident, when much to my ethnographic delight, I found the word 'argue' nesting within this corpus of letters (1995: 81-83). It was spelt and used as such! This aspect of reflexivity provides both academic and political justification for scrutiny of these letters through the critical tools of argument criticism.

Which brings me to the specific postcolonial interventions that I see to be suggested by such a criticism. In contemporary times, my engagement of Yale's letters through the modalities of argument criticism opens up a space, as yet foreclosed within postcolonial criticism, to practice an embedded critique. I embed an aesthetic criticism of the constitutive features of the discourse of political solicitation in these letters in a political critique of the discourse of strategy. As an ambassador of the British Crown, who assumed the reins of the East India Company at the relatively youthful age of 37, just 15 years after setting foot in what was later to become Madras as a company writer (Muthiah 1999: 43), Yale's intercultural sensitivity, decorum, and elegance stand the test of time in that as a culturally-attuned and other-oriented discourse, his letters are ahead of its time and anticipate a very eminent mode of culturally nuanced diplomacy befitting inter-sovereign communication. However his arguments within the discursive parameters of, what has been here termed as, political strategy is much more contingent and precarious and this limits the radical potential of the arguments when taken in its entirety.

What this 'other' more desirable mode of argumentation is or ought to be is a matter of exorcising the demons of deferral, occasioned by the deconstructive turn in rhetorical criticism, by inverting the rhetorical supplement into a cultural *weltenschaung*. I allude to what intercultural communication scholars Chen and Starosta elsewhere refer to as 'third culture building', a dynamic process of cultural synergy geared towards maximizing intercultural possibilities, as a personal orientation towards an even more effective argumentation (Chen and Starosta 1998: 133). This is the political and cultural lesson that I take away from reading Yale. In more disciplinary terms, it marks a turning away from a critic and text centered reading to an actor and performance driven approach to postcolonial criticism where the critic is reflexively bound at once by the ethos of study and scrutiny and the will to instruct the self about otherness in contexts that exceed and explode the distinction.

1. Methodology for Argument Criticism of Yale's Letters

The textual analysis of the discourse is circumscribed by an ethnographic exploration, commenced and completed in 1999, of the vectors of cultural memory that run across the length and breadth of Madras, now Chennai. These take the form of historical sites such as Fort St. George Museum and various symbols of Yale's times, including his consecration challis and bridal registry, which were hailed within a ceremonial discourse in the museum at the time when I was conducting my ethnography. The display of key letters as an artifact in the museum sparked my interest and subsequently led me to the archives wherein I found these letters that were intact originals. I here present a close reading of two letters, which have been selected based on an emergent aesthetic criterion of exemplary texts that I am elsewhere developing. I use Jasinski's explication of Beiner's 4-part analytical scheme of political judgment (Jasinski 1990: 195-196). This scheme of coding for role, community, political and temporal orientations can be used a powerful technique whose driving principle is textual groundedness within a political context of judgment. I layer the ensuing readings with contextual interpretations wherein the meanings I ascribe to the discourses and the critical moves I make through them are entirely derived from my intensely personal and sensuous ethnographic understanding.

This is a kind of 'standing in the place' of, what Cox characterizes as, the tense and fruitful interplay of distancing and historicizing of the mythical and mystical consciousness that marks the time before Empire (Cox 1990: 27). This was also the time and space of Elihu Yale, Governor of the British East India Company and

founder of Yale University, New Haven, construed centuries later by a nomadic postcolonial from within the affective, auratic, and esoteric space that is the Fort through an ongoing postcolonial rhizomatics, an intellectual practice that is intensely of a time and place which is the here and now of postcolonial India where it took root. McKerrow's (1990: 9) useful distinction between 'weak' and 'strong' senses of the enriching discourses of history tied to Jackson and Jacob's performative differentiation between argument orientations, making and having, brings me back full circle to the critical energies that drive this paper.

2. Reading Yale's letters: Discourses of Political Solicitation and Strategy

The two letters that will be my occupation for the remainder of this paper were retrieved from a host of them written between 1688 and 1689. Schematically, I first read a letter written solely by Elihu Yale to a local ruler followed by a letter, an internal communication, co-written with his councilors and addressed to a factor of the slowly expanding 'Right Honorable Company', a corporate honorific for the British East India Company. The thematic unity of these letters can be discerned in Yale's concern over what he perceives to be a crisis in the successful management and growth of the company of which he was governor. This crisis is the murder of some factors by seemingly unruly natives in a nearby province whose ruler was the former addressee. To reiterate, my readings are arranged within two argument types that include a discourse of political solicitation and political strategy. These are treated as intersecting and mutually situating argument types.

3. A Discourse of Political Solicitation

I execute my criticism following performative readings of the transcribed letters as inscriptions of an arcane form and texture of English. Within a discourse of political solicitation, Yale appeals to the good offices and graces of the Nabob for the Mogul forces of the Government of Gingelee, which appears to have been a strategic outpost of the emergent trading zone of the British. In both letters, the role played by Yale is one of actor, the community that circumscribes his use of argument is that of British administrative officers and tradesmen, and his political orientation is borne out of both loyalty to the Crown and recognition of the sovereignty of the Indian ruler although these have a different resonance depending on the addressee. The temporal orientation that mark these letters signify a fusion of the synchronic and diachronic through a ritual invocation of the past, as a time of establishing intercultural trust and eliciting and making

promises, to the present of the crisis toward a more productive and peaceful future for the British East India Company. The letter to the Nabob, Yale is interested and invested in a delicate rhetorical balancing of what Jasinski refers to as 'interests and ambitions' on the one hand with, on the other, a vision of civic harmony (Jasinski 1990:195). Yale begins his letter stating:

May it please your excellency: "I was lately surprised and astonished with the strange sad news we received from our people in your parts that our chief and second and several others of the company as servants were barbarously murdered in our factory by your forces and that the rest of our people who were saved from these cruelty were carried captives up the country..."

The complementary tropes of 'strange sadness' constitute the argumentative *raison d'être* for Yale as he turns it into a *tour de force* of reasoning through evidence of the irony intrinsic to a situation where the benefits that could accrue to the ruler's people, under his benevolent patronage to the British, was undercut by the seeming barbarity and cruelty of his people themselves under his very reign. Such a bold argument is finessed with an ethical use of a qualifier that bespeaks the masterful use of decorum in a politically charged and culturally-loaded context. Yale writes, "I cannot yet be informed nor can imagined it to be occasioned by you since it was by your encouragement and invitation I sent people and ye' honorable Company that" thus sealing the relationship at a time when it faces the threat of hostility and animus. He continues to construct his credibility as an elegant emissary. Yale pays tribute to his agents, living and deceased, as men who have "always deported themselves peaceably and quietly never having given the least occasion of offences or complains against them and much less for such cruel and inhuman usage" (The latter can also be seen to be a loyalty clause and oath since the letters were plausibly subject to scrutiny by higher authorities).

For evidence of what was sad and strange about a situation that was in dire need of attention and action, Yale evokes the goodness of his men whose lives were laid waste by less-than-good natives. This is an iterative evocation. In one place Yale laments "In maintaining and employing many thousands of them (natives) with very little advantage to your honorable company" while in another he all but demands to know why "any of these kindnesses and services deserve such cruel usage as we have received from your people." The force of his perception of injustice done to men who he upholds for their valor and commitment gains

momentum in his expression of a tempered sense of outrage as he states in the terminal part of the letter “these bloody villains that so barbarously murdered our people unarmed and in cold blood without the least offence or provocation to you or your Govt...” The warrant is then made that the ruler act in the best interest of his own rule. I consider this move to be a argumentative *coup* because its ground is as much the protection of the interests and agents of the Crown of England as the desire for preservation of sound relations with the local ruler, twin principles that underlie Yale’s tenure as governor of the company. Yale makes a fervent appeal to the Nabob:

“but I believe you good and wise I must desire you to make ye case your own and consider of these actions... and repair them as much as possible since I do hereby require and expect a just and full satisfaction for all the Injuries does us and the Rt. Honorable company that our people under confinement with you be restored to their liberties and our treasure and good, be freely and punctually delivered to them and that they have freedom either to continue at our factor or returned...”

Yale cloaks his pragmatic argument for the utter urgency of the ruler acting in the service of the British, by putting an end to the cruelty perpetrated against his factors, with an aura of solemn and heartfelt reverence, tinged by somber remorse, for the Nabob and the office he symbolizes. And in unifying what could be competing argumentative goals of instrumental and relational outcomes through the trope of the good intentions and character of both his factors and the ruler himself, Yale is a noble and valiant figure of a personalized form of civil and cultured diplomacy. This can be summed up as a unique strategy of making an argument for good action by, to carry in the vein of Jackson and Jacobs, arguing about good actors that entails and is entailed by the goodness of particular actors.

3. Discourse of Political Strategy

This is the point of departure for the letter written to Mr. Fleetwood by Yale and his councilors at Fort St. George. This letter can be located within the discourse of political strategy that is produced through an extensive argument with Mr. Fleetwood about the most efficacious course of action. I find the concept of having an argument to be of analytical value minus the connotations of bellicoseness. This demeanor may be explained by the august manner in which Yale practices a mode of compassionate authoritarianism as he turns the speech act of issuing orders and fiats as Governor to a more evenhanded communication. Yale argues strategy with Mr. Fleetwood as if to invoke the authority of the office of

governor without autocracy. In this manner he appears to effectively convey the rhetorical force of decisiveness in a hierarchical form of authority that came to be the hallmark of British rule in India by resorting to a more lateral type of communication. Yale's letter to Mr. Fleetwood begins as an expression of the sentiment of bereavement as he writes, "we were extremely surprised and sorry for your sad news lately received from your parts of the inhuman murder of Mr. Stables and Mr. Hall." However the use of the words 'surprise' and 'sorry' can also be read as Yale arguing with Fleetwood on the right course that could have been taken to avert the tragedy and ought to in the future.

In this letter, three sets of distinct and disparate evidentiary units are offered which are nevertheless unified by what they purport to demonstrate. Yale argues in one fell swoop:

"you may accordingly reason and argue the matter with him (possibly a native foreman or supervisor) which we hope will procure your freedom of yourselves and coffers and return to your factory which so we would have you get all the goods you can in readiness and send them to us by your first opportunity... However in your meantime report yourselves with all the 'sincerity' and prudence that you may oblige these friendships and enlargement... Our ship from England with considerable supplies of golde, with forces and ammunition fit for any exploit we may have occasion for which you may accidentally let them know of which."

I especially want to remark on what strange bedfellows the merchandises of gold and ammunition make. Yet a connecting thread across Yale's letters are cryptic references to 'presents' or gifts that were to be offered the local rulers. In this instance, Yale appears to warn that this could become its deadly double, the use of ammunition, should such gestures of amity and friendship be overlooked by the local recipients of gifts. The closing gesture in the letter can also be read as the warrant or projected outcome and justification for the entire communication as Yale bids "Our wishes for your health and liberty's is all from, Your affectionate friend Elihu Yale, Will Fraser, William Caley, John Littleton, Thomas Wavell, Thomas Gray, and John Cheney." Simply put, health and liberty can be seen as bearing a synechdochal relation to the company and hence the crown. The vulnerability of this discourse of political strategy then points to a sense of uncertainty and confusion over the right course of action to take by the British. This may be attributed to a paradoxical mode of reasoning the right thing to do. During a time of political siege, certainty over the right course of action is but a

masquerade of a *fait accompli*, while in actuality it is argued through a radically contingent and *ad hoc* marshalling of actions of the speculative and retroactive, “what would have worked” kind.

And it is this political indecision over mutually negating courses of action such as confrontation, endearment, ingratiation, and military repression, that disturbs this argument type showing its potential and limits. In short, the various approaches to handling the affairs of the British East India Company undercut each other and hence render the argument into an unsure and uneasy discourse.

4. *Translating the Good and Right*

Reflecting on what might have secured an otherwise precarious argument type, so as to render it something tentative and provisional, is a road into the future. It could call for a connecting thread across the evidence that conceptualizes political strategy in terms of political solicitation. The weaving of such a thread is an act of translation where the meaning of the right is thought alongside with the good. In this sense, the right action is bound up by the good. Alternatively I venture to argue that rightness can be discerned *sui generis* as the generation of a priority of actions, an ordering of what ‘could have been’ based on what ‘ought to be’, so as to decipher the most effective actions based on a principle of elimination of inconsistency. I close my paper by suggesting that the principle of maintaining friendship through argument, that is both an object and the very form of Yale’s letter to Mr. Fleetwood, is a step in the right direction as we inexorably head toward the bearing out of the legacy of British Empire in contemporary times.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Bakhtin's Theory Of Argumentative Performance: Critical Thinking Education In Japan



There may be no rational way to convert our point of view people who honestly hold other positions, but we cannot short-circuit such disagreements. Instead, we should live with them, as further evidence of the diversity of human life. Later on, these differences may be resolved by further shared experience, which allows different schools to

converge. In advance of this experience, we must accept this diversity of views in a spirit of toleration. Tolerating the resulting plurality, ambiguity, or the lack of certainty is no error, let alone a sin. Honest reflection shows that it is part of the price that we inevitably pay for being human beings, and not gods.

(Stephen Toulmin, 1990, 30)

1. Introduction

In recent years there has been a growing interest in critical thinking on the part of Japanese educators. They have been attempting to realize the paradigm shift from knowledge and memorization-oriented education to critical thinking and opinion-formation education. Actually, in 2001 the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology proposed the 'Educational Reform Initiative' that emphasized the power to think (Suzuki, 2001a, 17). Also, in 1994 the Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET) formulated the Special Interest Group on Critical Thinking across the Curriculum.

In this essay, I would like to discuss first the definition and curriculums of critical thinking. Second, let me explain why the Japanese people need to learn critical thinking skills. Next, let me offer the cooperative learning method as an example of a critical thinking-oriented classroom based on Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts. Fourth, let me present sample programs of critical thinking education in Japan. Finally, I would like to propose a critical thinking course combined with English education for the Japanese students.

2. The Definitions and Curriculums of Critical Thinking Education

To begin with, critical thinking can be defined as the ability to analyze information and ideas from multiple perspectives carefully and logically. It also asks students to critically examine commonly accepted beliefs and claims. Therefore, some say that critical thinking is "thinking about thinking" (Sproule, 1987; Suzuki, 2001b).

There are several approaches to critical thinking in the United States as well as Europe. Although it is impossible to cover all specific curriculums, let me present

some major cases. First, a critical thinking movement started in the American educational community in the late 1970's (Sproule, 1987). As a result, a number of American schools now make critical thinking courses mandatory for graduation. Rather than focusing on rote memorization and testing, the students are required to learn how to think logically and present critical ideas.

At the college level, there are two types of courses that are held to be most effective: 'logic' courses directed by the philosophy department and 'argumentation' courses directed by the speech communication department. For instance, in the early 1980's the California State University and College (CSUC) system decided to include a semester-long course in critical thinking as a graduation requirement. The CSCU requirement is stated as follows:

Instruction in critical thinking is to be designed to achieve an understanding of the relationship of language to logic, which should lead to the ability to analyze, criticize and advocate ideas, to reason inductively and deductively, and to teach factual or judgmental conclusions based on sound inferences drawn from unambiguous statements of knowledge or belief. The minimal competence to be expected at the successful conclusion of instruction in critical thinking should be the ability to distinguish fact from judgement, belief from knowledge and skills in elementary inductive and deductive process, including an understanding of the formal and informal fallacies of language and thought (Ganer, 1989, 1).

Thus, as Patricia M. Ganer argues, the CSCU system has perceived that the "efforts entailed in teaching and learning argumentation closely parallel the desires for the development of such analytical skills on the part of college graduates" (1989, 1).

Another model of critical thinking education is the one in the Netherlands. Until about 1950, according to F.H. van Eemeren and R. Grootendorst, the study of argumentation in the Netherlands was either purely practical or a continuation of the classical logic and rhetoric tradition. They explain: "In the former, the aim was to search out clues to the improvement of the practice of argumentation. In the latter, argumentation was dealt with only when in the context of explaining logic or the rhetoric of Aristotle *cum suis*" (1987, 56).

In later years, Stephen Toulmin provides an analytic model which "works on the assumption that when a person puts forward an argument, he/[she] always defends a claim (...), which by means of a justification often only implied, is linked to the claim" (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987, 56). The soundness of argumentation is largely dependent on the support that renders the plausible

justification. Chaim Perelman presents an audience-centered view on argumentation, or “a description of argumentative techniques used to win the approval of an audience of a certain point” (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987, 56). Also, recently there has been a rise of important trends in informal logic. A number of authors assume, in a variety of ways, that argument is carried out in colloquial language, and this has a clear bearing on their approach (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987).

Eemeren and Grootendorst identify the three minimum components that any sound argumentation analysis should comprise:

1. the analysis of argumentative discourse,
2. the identification of fallacies, and
3. the evaluation of argumentation (1987, 60-61).

Since no human activities occur in a vacuum, critical thinking curriculum should not be intended to merely learn the theory of argumentation in itself, but be designed to teach the method to cope with communicative situations. In fact, Dutch critical thinking instruction has been developed as one element of interpersonal and public communication, and not merely as a skill to distinguish inadequate logical inference schemes from adequate ones (Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1987).

Given the two models of critical thinking education mentioned above, I would like to point out that critical thinking must be recognized both as ‘method’ and ‘attitude’ in the sense that the critical thinking education should go beyond merely generalized reasoning or thinking, pedagogies in which critical analysis itself may play but a small role. Recent critical thinking education tends to focus on message-sending skills, or ‘method’, rather than on message-evaluating stance, or ‘attitude’. J. Michael Sproule notes how the recent trends focus on “analytical operations as applied to problems presented in textbook form and occasionally complemented with either introspective self-analysis or original compositions by students” (1987, 13).

According to Nickerson, Perkins & Smith (1985), a survey of educational programs focusing on thinking identifies five general approaches prevalent today. The first of these approaches – that of cognitive operations or basic skills – usually focuses on such essentially content-free activities as comparing and classifying. A second approach, heuristics, encourages introspection and employs prepared booklets and exercises that convey strategies for dealing with problems. Today’s third approach, formal thinking, often relies on Piaget’s model of cognitive

development, endeavoring to take students from the level of concrete operations to that of higher-order abstractions. Tests assess the progression from concrete ideas to make abstract methods of discovery including classification and the formation of hypotheses. A fourth prominent contemporary approach is that of instruction in language and symbol manipulation. This pedagogy includes attention to such matters as semantics and computer languages, and sometimes becomes a fairly complex program of education in constructing original written compositions. A final category, termed 'thinking about thinking', is an approach characterized by the philosophy-for-children movement. In this program, students consider their own processes of thought, attending to such elements as inference, styles of thinking, generalizing, recognition of contradiction, causes and effects.

Therefore, as Sproule concludes, "[r]ational constructs such as reflective thinking or the informal fallacies are useful so far as they go; but message-centered pedagogies carry a danger" (1987, 14). Sproule further argues:

"These instructional programs promise to fully empower students as critical consumers of communication, while at the same time ignoring such crucial features of modern suasion as the differential access to the mass media of social groups, the importance of visual imagery on television as compared to verbal argumentation, the use of entertainment as a vehicle for persuasion, and the ability of advocates to embed self-serving ideologies in such ostensibly neutral sources of information as news and popular films. It is likely that contemporary pedagogies of critical thinking will provide only weak inoculations until they include attention to such key players in the media age as news organizations, media managers, public relations counsels, advertisers, pollsters, and market research analysts" (1987, 14).

Thus, it is clear that we need to expand the instruction of critical thinking from the method of critical analysis and message-sending pedagogies to the critical evaluation of social and cultural issues so that the students can form and develop their critical attitude through the instruction. Unfortunately, until recently, the Japanese educational community has not developed adequate critical thinking practicum based on its historical background and social situation. Therefore, in the next section, let me discuss why now is the time for the Japanese people to instill critical thinking in their educational system.

3. Reasons why the Japanese Need Critical Thinking Education

The year 2001 was the first year of the Japanese government's 'Educational

Reform Initiative' based on recommendations in the final report of the National Commission on Educational Reform (Suzuki, 2001a). Recently, debate has surfaced over the commission's proposal that Japan reduce the current curricula by approximately 30 percent at primary and middle schools in 2002 and at senior high schools in 2003.

Most agree that the existing Japanese education system is not without problems. Although it has achieved higher education standards than those in any other advanced nation, including the United States, it has forced Japanese students to burn the midnight oil and neglected to find and foster unique talents among them. Proponents of the proposal, on the one hand, believe that the new system will bring about the *yutori kyoiku*, or a more relaxed educational environment. Some of them contend that the current memorization-oriented and knowledge-based method is responsible for producing many students who have a learning disability at high schools. Opponents, on the other hand, worry that the proposal to reduce the curricula will invite a significant decline in educational standards. They believe that this will become especially obvious in 2006, when the first group of students to have completed high school under the reduced curricula will start university. They argue the traditional system is essential for maintaining Japan's competitiveness in the fields of science and industrial production.

I argue that the debate should not center merely on how much education the students need, but on the content of the new curricula. Those involved seem to be siding with either the present system or the reduced curricula. My view is that the direction of the change is right, but that the Japanese need to discuss the content more. Otherwise, the proposal would be a case of plowing the field but forgetting the seeds.

Let me examine the arguments of both sides. First, *yutori kyoiku*, which aims at the development of individual talent rather than rote learning, is a good idea in itself. In debating a policy, it is important to assume both the risks and consequences associated with the proposed change. If people change something within a system, that change entails expected as well as unexpected consequences, both within that system and in others. For instance, it is uncertain how the curriculum change will affect entrance exams, or what kind of programs will be needed to help teachers cope with the changes. The real issue is not only determining what goals to pursue in education – the people concerned also need to spend more time figuring out how to build a better system. They need to develop a program that meets each individual's needs and nurtures his/her

talents, helping them to grow.

The opponents' argument is based on a faulty assumption. Japanese students used to study hard to enter competitive high schools since they had no choice. In the 1970's or 80's, people often heard the phrase *yon-to-go-raku*, which means: "To pass, you must sleep only four hours a night. If you sleep more than five hours, you will fail."

However, the recent declining birth rate of Japan is making the process of entering a well-known school less and less competitive these days. According to the *Asahi Shinbun* (2002), the birth rate of Japan used to be around 2.1 between 1965 and 1974. When it became below 2.0 in 1975, and has been declining. For instance, it was 1.33 in 2001, which is not only an all-time low but also the lowest among industrialized nation. So, children are losing a reason to study so hard under the increasingly less competitive entrance examination race.

Therefore, it is necessary to provide them with attractive programs and freedom of choice in the curricula at every level of education. It is well known that since the Meiji Restoration (1841-77) Japan has set 'catching up with the Western advanced nations' as the ultimate national mission. As a consequence, its higher education whose apparatus are imperial or national universities were apt to be knowledge-transmission centered. It is until recently that the need to emphasize critical inquiry-oriented education to let the students think on their own. Needless to mention the contemporary period when its academic, scientific, technological disciplines are dramatically transforming, it is essential to develop the critical thinking abilities of the students (Shimura, 2001).

Clearly, now is the time to introduce critical thinking as an essential component in Japanese education. What is needed is no longer to provide one-sided teaching, but to engage in cooperative-learning, which is often conducted in the United States classrooms. By 'cooperative-learning'. I mean the interactive learning process between an instructor and each individual student so that the students can learn each other from others' comments and questions. However, it is relatively unknown that even in the United States such a teaching style had not started to grow until the student movement in the 1960s (Suzuki, 2001c).

Before the transition, their teaching style was similar to its Japanese counterpart. Although American professors used to lecture a lot, asked their students to memorize information, and tested their knowledge in paper exams, the student movement in the 1960s changed such a rote memorization and test-oriented

system. The students wanted to learn how to think, rather than mere knowledge and information, which have little flexibility. The professors, then, came to be required to foster and develop the students' ability to provide solutions to real-world problems. Nowadays most American professors spend less than a one-third of their class hours for lecturing, and spend the rest on discussion and the questions and answers.

When only professors are allowed to speak in a class, and students are not allowed to ask questions, it is much easier for both sides. The professors have no need for up-dating materials since the students make no complaint regardless of what they lecture. As a result, the professors can use the same lecture notes every year, and the students only need to borrow the notes from old students who have taken the professor's class already. Under this situation, many students are tempted not to attend the class, and this is often what happens in Japan.

I believe that the key to achieve the cooperative-learning classroom in Japan is Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of a dialogic model of the world. So, in the next section, let me consider the relationship of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory and critical thinking.

4. Bakhtin's Theory of Thinking

There are three ways in which Bakhtin's theory can contribute to the formation of successful critical thinking education. First, it is important to recognize Bakhtin's conception of the truth as dialogic. Namely, he emphasizes the importance of an ongoing, unfinalizable nature of dialogue, which takes place at every moment of daily life:

The dialogic nature of consciousness. The dialogic nature of human life itself. The single adequate form for *verbally expressing* authentic human life is the *open-ended dialogue*. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium (1984b, 293).

Hence, Bakhtin concludes that "Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction" (1984a, 110). Existing forms of knowledge rather monologize the world by making an open-ended dialogue into a monologic statement.

Second, it is necessary to consider everyday knowledge and experience as the

source of all social change and individual creativity. Since Bakhtin believes that the everyday is a sphere of constant activity, unfinalizability is for him an essential concept. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson explain:

Bakhtin advances the term *unfinalizability* (*nezavershennost'*) as an all-purpose carrier of his conviction that the world is not only a messy place, but is also an open place. The term appears frequently in his works and in many different contexts. It designates a complex of values central to his thinking: innovation, 'surprisingness', the genuinely new, openness, potentiality, freedom, and creativity – terms that [Bakhtin] also uses frequently. (1990, 37)

As a result, Bakhtin distinguishes between *znachenie*, or abstract or dictionary meaning, and *smysl*, or contextual meaning and the sense of a situation. Corresponding to these two kinds of meaning, it is necessary to draw a distinction between two kinds of understanding: passive and active understanding. Morson and Emerson again explain:

"Passive understanding" (Voloshinov's term is 'recognition') is what one uses to grasp the meaning of a sentence and is all that traditional linguists posit. ... Each act of real, 'active understanding' is much more complicated than that. The listener must not only decode the utterance, but also grasp why it is being said, relate it to his own complex of interests and assumptions, imagine how the utterance responds to future utterances and what sort of response it invites, evaluate it, and intuit how potential third parties would understand it. Above all, the listener must go through a complex process of *preparing a response* to the utterance" (1990, 127).

Thus, every word is directed toward an answer and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that is anticipated. John M. Murphy argues that rhetoric, of all things, becomes the key example of this orientation. While monologic in their constitutional structure, rhetorical forms are oriented toward the listener and his/her answer. Murphy argues: "Rhetoric engages in 'responsive understanding', recognizes that such understanding is a 'fundamental force', and views the world of the listener 'as resistance or support enriching the discourse'" (2001, 270).

Finally, the dialogic model of the world opens the possibility of creative understanding. Bakhtin argues: "There exists a very strong, but one-sided and thus untrustworthy, idea that in order better to understand a foreign culture, one must enter into it, forgetting one's own, and view the world [entirely] through the

eyes of this foreign culture" (1986, 6-7). Bakhtin further contends that we should pursue what is called 'creative understanding':

"Creative understanding does not renounce itself, its own place in time, its own culture; and it forgets nothing. In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding - in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space and because they are others" (1986, 7).

Thus, Bakhtin viewed outsidership not as a limitation for communication, but as the possibility of dialogue that enables us to understand a culture in a profound way. "For any culture contains meanings that it itself does not know, that it itself has not realized; they are there, but as a *potential*" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, 55). Given the importance of critical thinking education, let me present some possible critical thinking courses to be taught in Japan in the next section.

5. Sample Critical Thinking Courses to be Used in Japan

Critical thinking education should be so comprehensive that it may cover a wide range of activities in order both to foster analytical ability and cope with ideological manipulations. Since it is impossible to list and explain any and every possible critical thinking course curriculum for Japanese students, let me present three major cases of critical thinking courses for Japanese students in terms of objectives and significance.

1. *Debate course*: this course has three objectives. First, debate promotes a critical mind-set. In participating in educational debate, students can learn argument as a productive process to compare merits and demerits of the policy in question. Ideally, the students should form such an attitude, and be able to propose alternatives to the proposal. In addition, debate provides a framework for critical analysis. For instance, the stock issue paradigm asks the following questions: 'Is there a need for change?', 'is the present system inherently incapable of solving the problem?', 'is the proposed plan capable of solving the problem?', and 'are there any disadvantages accrued from the adoption of the plan'? Finally, debate teaches the dichotomy of logic as a communication activity. In debate, you cannot avoid taking sides on an issue, but must clearly say 'yes' or 'no' and provide reasons for your position.

While traditional language education focuses on these areas in mainly formal and unnatural ways, debate creates the need for students to process information for meaning and to use language creatively in prepared arguments and spontaneous speech.

2. *Critical listening course*: In this course, when listening to news in English the students do the following: First, the test of evidence and source. E.g., 'is the evidence accurate, current, and true?', 'is the evidence appropriate (i.e., examples are typical)?', 'is the source accurately cited?', and 'is the source competent and unbiased?' Second, the test of analogies. E.g., 'are analogies appropriate?', and 'is the analogy figurative or literal?' (comparing two cities is a literal analogy: comparing a city to heartbeat is figurative). Third, the test of inferences, or reasoning. E.g., 'are there a sufficient number of examples?', and 'are there typical examples?' Finally, the test of causation. E.g., 'are a cause and its effects appropriately labeled?', and 'is correlation being confused with causation?'

3. *Cross-cultural understanding course*: This is a course to aim at fostering an attitude to understand the substance of other cultures without prejudice, obtaining accurate knowledge about them, and skills to achieve productive interactions with people of different cultural backgrounds. In the United States, Myron W. Lustig at San Diego State University and Jolene Koester at California State University, Sacramento, have written about 'Intercultural Competence'. They emphasized a need to learn such things as display of respect, orientation to knowledge, empathy, task role behavior, relational role behavior, interaction management, tolerance for ambiguity, and interaction posture (1996). Also, in Europe Mike Byram has developed the notion, 'Cross Cultural Awareness', at Durham University, Great Britain.

In short, each activity serves an important function to instill critical thinking ability in Japanese students. Specifically, debate teaches them how to analyze the problem logically and to argue public issues effectively. The critical listening program develops their ability of media literacy. And cross-cultural understanding helps them to form an attitude to think about their own culture and prejudice critically.

6. Conclusion

I have so far argued that it is the time for the Japanese educational community to introduce critical thinking courses. Although most people do not have the talent

of a great musician or sculptor, all human babies do possess the ability to be creative. Unfortunately, such a creativity is often crushed by the time they enter school. This happens primarily because society emphasizes doing the right thing and finding the correct and only answer. Since people want to be accepted by others, they are usually afraid to be different from others. As a result, while they are children, they start trying to be the same as others rather than different. Therefore, it is important to free the students from the danger of normalization. Michel Foucault contends:

“The Normal is established as a principle of coercion in teaching with the introduction of a standardized education and the establishment of the *ecoles normales* (teachers’ training colleges); it is established in the effort to organize a national medical profession and a hospital system capable of operating general norms of health; it is established in the standardization of industrial processes and products (...). Like surveillance and with it, normalization becomes one of the great instruments of power at the end of the classical age” (1995, 184).

Hence, Foucault concludes that “the power of normalization imposes homogeneity; but it individualizes by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another” (1995, 184). Obviously, people should be freed from the social pressure of normalization, and be given the freedom to foster their creativity.

Specifically, I believe that the Japanese students could benefit uniquely from the critical thinking course offerings for the following reasons. First, they can get a better understanding of what argument truly is. Although most Japanese tend to avoid confrontation and to value harmony in society, argumentation can be viewed as a cooperative activity between the proponent and the opponent, intended to reach the best possible conclusion through an engagement in critical/rational discourse.

Second, they can learn the importance of being open to other ideas. Japanese people are apt to follow the custom and precedents or to leave the decision up to superiors and seniors, but their attitude often hinders the development of new perspectives and novelty in activities.

Finally, they can realize the importance of taking a stance on difference issues. It is natural that different people have different opinions since they have different interests, value systems, and personal experiences. It is even necessary to state their own opinion and try to find the middle ground or possible combination of

different proposals. Without the process of productive discussion and debate, people might end up with sabotage or unexpected repercussion after the plan is put into practice.

In the final analysis, I would like to see more courses in critical thinking at Japanese schools in the future because such courses provide the Japanese students with a clue of how to approach socially conditioned issues, and to analyze information and ideas from multiple perspectives carefully and logically.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Keywords As Passwords To Communities



The purpose of this paper is to assess the role of cultural keywords in argumentation processes which take place within communities' boundaries.

The paper will focus on the relationship between keywords and endoxa, i.e. that set of values, rules, knowledge and beliefs that are assumed to be shared within a community.

In particular, it will analyze one of the main argumentative functions of keywords: the negotiation of the membership to a community. Keywords, in fact, might be considered as passwords that allow or disallow individuals to be part of a community, to enter it, and to understand it.

1. Cultures and communities

In order to better understand the role of cultural keywords in argumentation processes that take place within given communities, it will be useful to outline in brief the relationship between the concepts of 'culture' and 'community'. These two concepts, in fact, are strictly related to each other: culture can be considered as the substance of communities, since it is their non-hereditary collective memory, it is what enables them last over time (Lotman & Uspenskij 2001: 43). The relation between communities and cultures is a relation of mutual implication: on the one hand, in fact, cultures offer the conceptual categories of communities and generate their grammars and their signs; on the other, a community necessarily shares, in some ways or in some respects, a culture, and in

the same time it generates a culture. We can conclude that culture is the shape of the communal life of a community, and that on the other hand communities can be considered as 'instantiations' of cultures.

The Semiotic School of Moscow-Tartu has singled out three different but complementary ways in which culture can be conceived of from a semiotic point of view: culture can be considered as a hierarchy of particular semiotic systems, as a family of texts linked to a set of functions, or as a device that generates these texts (Lotman & al. 1975). We can thus distinguish two basic meanings in the word 'culture': culture as a system, and culture as a family of texts, i.e. as a 'hypertext'. Both meanings can be led back to a common root: the concept of culture as a structure of reception: culture, in fact, is a structure that welcomes man on the one hand by teaching him the nitty-gritty of reality, on the other by providing him with its categories, by teaching him how to relate with reality (Rigotti 2002).

Corresponding to the two basic meanings of 'culture', two ways of conceiving of communities can be pointed out: a community can be seen as a set of people who just have something in common, i.e. who share a culture as a system, or as a group of people who interact, who share common texts, i.e. who share a culture as a hypertext. We call the former 'paradigmatic communities', the latter 'syntagmatic communities'. Paradigmatic communities are characterised by similarity: their members are similar, they share similar interests, similar ways of thinking and of arguing, similar features, and so on. Syntagmatic communities, on the contrary, are characterised by differences: through members' interactions, in fact, combinations of elements emerge, which can carry out both different and complementary functions.

To the first typology belong communities such as the community of the Italians, the community of the inhabitants in Milan, the community of English speaking people, the community of pediatricians, the community of the Catholics, and so on. Usually the members of such communities don't know each other, they don't communicate each with all the others, but they have the perception of belonging to the community, they are aware of being part of it. Examples of syntagmatic communities are communities of practice **(i)** such as the families, the colleagues, the members of a work group, the classmates, the members of a club, and so on.

The difference between syntagmatic and paradigmatic communities is basic, since it has to do with the level of the common ground that needs to be shared among two or more people in order to allow them to communicate **(ii)**. The members of a

paradigmatic community share a communal common ground, i.e. they have a common encyclopedic knowledge, they share an evidence about the cultural communities people belong to; the members of a syntagmatic community, on the other side, share not only a communal common ground, but also a personal common ground, which derives from people's direct personal experiences with each other and has thus its roots in the interactions that took place among them (Clark 1996: 100).

2. *Keywords and endoxa in enthymematic arguments*

Both the concepts of 'community' and 'culture' are strictly related to those of 'keyword' and 'endoxon'. According to linguist Anna Wierzbicka (1997: 1), cultures can be analyzed through their keywords, due to the 'very close link' existing between the life of a society and the lexicon of the language spoken by it. The concept of 'key words' is a principle that links vocabulary and culture, since keywords are words that result to be very important and revealing in a given culture (Wierzbicka 1997: 15-16).

Aristotle defines the endoxa as the remarkable opinions of a community: they are those propositions that are in the common opinion (*doxa*), they are those opinions which are shared by everyone, or by most people, or by the experts of a given community (*Topics I* 100b).

Endoxa are therefore the very core of enthymematic arguments, since enthymemes differ from analytical syllogisms in that enthymemes' premises are not necessary, but only probable, or rather endoxa, i.e. shared and accepted by a community (*Rhetoric II* 1402a). This is also probably the main reason why in enthymemes one of the premises is often left unexpressed. Aristotle explains this point through the well-known example of Dorieus, the winner in an Olympic competition: if I want to show that Dorieus has won a competition where the prize is a crown, it's enough for me to say that he won the Olympic games; I don't need to add that the prize of the Olympic games is a crown, since everybody knows it. In this case the hearer is able to add the unexpressed premise himself (*Rhetoric I* 1357a). The speaker, thus, leaves unmentioned the taken-for-granted aspects of an assertion ('everybody knows it'), and leaves unsupported those aspects which get immediate assent ('everybody agrees on it') (Jackson & Jacobs 1980: 262).

Endoxa have thus largely to do with presuppositions: in an enthymeme a premise is presupposed exactly because it is assumed to be an endoxon, it is assumed to be shared by a given community in that it is known and it is agreed on. Therefore, not only it is unnecessary to state the shared premise, but it would even be

injurious to the audience, since it would prejudice that confidence between the speaker and the hearer which is required by any persuasive discourse **(iii)** (Tardini 1997: 440); furthermore, giving too much support for an assertion would be detrimental also for the argumentation, since it would increase the number of places where disagreement may occur, without improving prospects for agreement (Jackson & Jacobs 1980: 264).

We can thus single out three basic reasons for the presupposed premise not to be expressed: a cognitive one, which can be led back to the need to proceed in the interaction and not to come back again to what has already been agreed on; a psychological one, in order not to hurt the interlocutors by explaining them what they already know well (Rigotti 1999: 49); and an argumentative one, intended as a recommendation not to offer to the interlocutor 'for free' grounds for disagreement.

In this perspective, keywords might be considered as a constituent part of the endoxa of a community: they are terms (predicates or arguments) which refer to specific endoxa; their meaning, thus, is no longer matter of discussion, insofar as they are shared and accepted by the community itself. If so, then the concept of 'keyword' proves to be significant also with respect to argumentation theory. On the one side, in fact, the analysis of arguments can help hypothesizing and testing those terms which can rise to the status of cultural keywords, i.e. those terms which are particularly significant inside a specific culture or community. On the other side, the analysis of cultural keywords can provide us with a better understanding of the role of endoxa and *topoi* in argumentation (Rigotti & Rocci, paper presented at the ISSA Conference 2002).

In particular, cultural keywords can play a significant role in enthymemes, acting in the argument as the middle terms, as we will show further on. Keywords, in fact, are the predicates that result to be decisive in order to create enthymematic arguments, in that they are linked to the endoxa which act as the unexpressed major premises of the enthymemes; these endoxa, in their turn, define keywords' positive or negative value for the community with regard to the action.

Obviously, in enthymematic arguments keywords might function in the same time as tools for manipulation practices as well, due exactly to their strict relationship with endoxa and presuppositions. Well-known is Gottlob Frege's example concerning 'the will of the people', an expression which has no generally accepted reference, but has often been demagogically abused in order to achieve the agreement of the audience (Frege 1952: 70).

3. Communities in argumentation theory

Endoxa and cultural keywords are inserted into the common ground of a community. In particular, they operate at the level of the communal common ground of a cultural community. Cultural communities can be defined as sets of people with a shared expertise that other communities lack; this shared expertise consists of facts, beliefs, procedures, norms, and assumptions that members of the community assume they can take for granted in other members (Clark 1996: 102).

With respect to the argumentation processes that take place within given communities, endoxa are propositions which need not to be expressed because they are part of the common ground shared by a community. They can thus be considered as a constituent component of that shared expertise which shapes a cultural community. Cultural keywords, in their turn, are the constituents of the endoxa of a community. Keywords, in fact, can not stand by themselves: they must be anchored to propositions (endoxa) that found them as such, as we will show.

If we move from the field of cognitive sciences to that of argumentation theories, the notion of 'cultural community' can be associated to that of 'field of argumentation', which was first proposed by Stephen Toulmin (1958: 14). According to Toulmin, fields are 'rational enterprises', 'logical types', and can be equated with intellectual disciplines. He exploited this notion in order to set the soundness' conditions for an argumentation, since the soundness of argumentation is an 'intraterritorial', not an 'interterritorial' notion (van Eemeren & al. 1996: 134). In other terms, according to Toulmin, arguments can be field-invariant, when they remain the same in all fields of argumentation, or field-dependent, when they are different in each field of argumentation; the claim of the so-called field theories is that there are no significant field-invariant standards for the evaluation of arguments (Johnson 2000: 191-192).

The notion of 'argument fields', as it has been defined by Toulmin, is indeed vague, and it has each time been interpreted as 'rhetorical communities', 'discourse communities', 'disciplines', 'collective mentalities', and so on (van Eemeren & al. 1996: 204). According to David Zarefsky (1996: 49), the term 'field' was a metaphor for the location of arguments. In this sense, Toulmin's argument fields resemble very much Aristotelian topoi, which are nothing but the most important means of selecting the arguments for the enthymemes: they are a repository of arguments. Aristotle distinguished between common topoi, which can be applied in many cases, and specific topoi, which are peculiar of a subject

(*Rhetoric II* 1396b). In general, we can conceive of the Aristotelian *topos* as the plot of the enthymemes, as the template (pattern) of enthymematic arguments, as the application of the general rule of the deductive implication to the various fields of human arguing; these patterns, or these templates, are drawn from the shared experience of the community which uses them (Tardini 1997: 440). The *topoi* have thus their roots in the *endoxa* of a community.

Argumentation can thus be considered as a social activity, not only because it implies two or more interlocutors (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1991: 153) (iv), but also because every argument is deeply rooted in the common ground of a community, i.e. it is rooted in its shared experience. With regard to this, Ray McKerrow spoke about 'argument communities', claiming that argument can be discussed in terms of the community, field or sphere in which it takes place (McKerrow 1990: 27). By doing so, McKerrow emphasizes the relationship that exists among shared values, common personal bonds, and argument evaluation, since communities are characterized by the specific rules which govern their argumentative behavior, by the social practices which determine their communication rules, and by their own 'display' of these rules and social practices in response to challenges from within or outside the community (McKerrow 1990: 28).

The relation between argumentation and communities is also stressed by Blair & Johnson (1987), who determine argumentation by a community of interlocutors. They regard argumentation as a particular activity regulated by the community of model interlocutors; therefore, acceptability of premises and arguments depends on this community, which is defined in normative terms.

On the one hand, thus, argumentation is a constitutive property of communities (Maier 1995: 369); on the other the existence of a community is a necessary condition in order for an argument to take place and to be effective. All the implicit premises of the enthymemes, their reference to the *endoxa* and the *topoi*, in fact, can only be effective when a common ground (both personal or communal) is established among the interlocutors, i.e. when an even minimal form of community already exists.

4. Keywords as passwords to enter virtual communities

We define virtual communities as the new social realms that emerge through on-line interaction, capturing a sense of interpersonal connection as well as internal organization (Baym 1998: 35); they are thus social relationships forged in

cyberspace within a specified boundary or place (e.g., a conference or chat line) that is symbolically delineated by topic of interests (Fernback & Thompson 1995). The term community occurs in the virtual world also in another sense. It is, in fact, often employed to refer to the regular visitors of a website and to the habitual users of a web service: it refers to the stable community that is recognizable behind a hypertext. In the former case, we have to do with syntagmatic communities, in the latter with paradigmatic communities.

Dealing with paradigmatic communities, both on-line and 'real', we can determine a first role played by keywords: they help to outline communities' symbolic boundaries. In this perspective, they can be considered as the bricks that build what semiotician Yuri Lotman called the 'semiosphere' of a culture (or community), i.e. the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages; outside this space no communicative event can take place (Lotman 2001: 123-124).

This is particularly clear in virtual communities: as a matter of fact, on-line communities have no real (physical) boundaries which delimit them. Their boundaries are only symbolic(**v**), and are represented by the topics of interest which people discuss about, and by the corresponding keywords. Virtual communities, in fact, normally gather people around a common topic of interest, which is proposed and established by the founder of the community. He has also the chance to supply a short description of the community, which usually is required by the web services which host the community, in order to classify the community in the proper public directory.

For example, Classic Movies(**vi**) is a community hosted on the MSN website which gathers together movies fans from all over the world. This is the description of the community given by the founder: "We're a community that celebrates Hollywood from the early days of the silents through the New Hollywood Era of the 70's". MSN requires the founder to supply, in addition to the short description, also some keywords which have the main function to help the search engine to easily find the community. In the case of Classic Movies, they are: "movies, classics, Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe, silent films, western, classic films, classic movies". These keywords can be considered as the elements that delineate the semiosphere of the community: outside these semiotic boundaries, no communicative event is allowed to take place inside the community.

In a certain sense, these keywords act as passwords to the community: who is not

interested in movies, classics, Clark Gable, and so on, is not allowed to access the community; or rather, he can physically access the community, but takes no real part in it, he really does not belong to the community. Keywords act as the passwords that users must enter in order to access reserved areas of web services or limited-access websites. The mechanism at work here, in fact, is the same, and it can be led back, on the side of the website or of the community, to the conditional proposition: “if you tell me the right password/ keyword, you can access the website/ community”. Depending on whether the condition comes true or not, the whole structure follows the *modus ponens* or the *modus tollens*: “if you tell me the right password, you can access the website; you told/ did not tell me the right password; so you can/ can not access the website”.

These keywords have in themselves no explicit argumentative function; they are the keys that open the doors of the community, both in a physical sense, as is the case of passwords allowing access to a website, and in a semiotic sense, as with keywords that disclose the understanding of a semiotic world, that outline the semiosphere of a community. Actually, this function of keywords has an argumentative value as well, in that the semiosphere defines the relevance for a given community, it establishes the community’s field of argumentation. Furthermore, if we analyze the communicative exchanges that take place in on-line communities, we can see that keywords are often exploited for their argumentative power. A significant example of keywords’ argumentative value occurs when they are used to negotiate the belonging of a single to the community.

5. Negotiating the membership to a community: examples from the cyberspace

We are going now to analyze an example taken from an Italian on-line community, CurvaNet(vii). It is one of the biggest and most active Italian virtual communities for football supporters. CurvaNet has the structure of a newsgroup, i.e. it consists in a big archive of the messages posted by the members, subdivided into boards, which in their turn are subdivided into discussions (forums). The community is free, has nearly 2500 members, and it collects about 700 messages per day. It is indeed an unusual community, since it was founded directly by MSN (which also hosts it), and it is maintained and administered by it. The description of the community is very simple: ‘The Serie A league championship’; the keywords provided by the administrator are: ‘football’, ‘support’, ‘team’. The messages we are going to take into consideration are taken from a discussion that took place in February 2001 in a board called ‘Racism’ (‘Razzismo’); the discussion was opened

by the community's administrator with the title: 'Mr. Crimar, I have deleted your nonsense'.

The first message is worth reporting integrally(viii):

1. Dear mr. Crimar, I wanted to inform you of a great pleasure: I have deleted your insane speeches. Probably, you don't know - but there are a lot of things you don't know - the limits of decency. Don't stick to your racist howlers, for I'll throw you out of this community. Mr. Crimar, you'd better conform yourself to the directive. Understand? Or not?

Without my best regards,

Ulisse

Administrator of the Community

The prevailing illocutionary act in this message is clearly a warning: what the administrator is doing through the message is warning a member of the community not to write further racist messages, otherwise he will be thrown out of the community. The warning is accomplished through different speech acts: a prohibition ('don't stick to your racist howlers'), followed by the threat of the foreseen sanction ('I'll throw you out of this community'); a direct advice ('Mr. Crimar, you'd better conform yourself to the directive') followed by a rhetorical question ('understand?') which has the function of sealing the whole warning. It is worth noticing here that the administrator could also warn the member through a private e-mail message; he has instead chosen to do it in public: this means that the addressee is not only the 'racist' member, but the whole community, and the message acquires thus the function of a public warning.

The message is clearly not argumentative in itself. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to recognize that it has a rigorous logic structure, since the warning takes the shape of a conditional proposition: $p \rightarrow q$ (if p , then q : "if you go on writing racist messages, then I'll throw you out of this community"). A warning, in fact, can be led back to a conditional proposition which has some peculiar features that the conditional relation imposes to both the condition (p) and the consequence (q): in the first place, p must be an action the addressee has in mind to do (or not to do), and must therefore depend on the addressee's will; secondly, since q is a threat, it must be something negative for the addressee and it must depend on the sender's will; finally, the sender must be in a position hierarchically higher than the addressee, or anyway he must be in the right condition to make a warning.

Moreover, a warning is nothing but an attempt to induce somebody not to do something; it presupposes a disagreement about something, a conflict which is

carried on verbally and which can be supported, although this does not always happen, through justifications, reasons, explanations, and so on. Thus, in the warning of the administrator an argumentative value can also be recognized. The argument that underlies and founds the warning can be traced back to the following enthymeme: 'you posted racist messages, so you can be thrown out of the community'. The argument, in other words, is constituted by the threat and by its reason.

Finally, a strong argumentative value can also be recognized in the signature of the administrator. In fact, it was not necessary for the administrator to sign as 'Ulisse Administrator of the community', since everybody in the community knows that Ulisse is the administrator; nevertheless he signed in that way, because it was important to stress that fact in order to strengthen the warning. We can see here a sort of argument *ex auctoritate*, which the administrator uses to validate his warning: "the warning I made is valid, because I am the administrator of the community; and I stress it by reasserting it in the signature". Actually, this argument is implicit in the semantics of the warning, since for a warning to take place, the warner must be hierarchically higher than the warned, he must be in a position of power, as we have noticed above.

The keyword of the whole message is 'racist'. This is, in fact, the middle term of the enthymeme underlying the administrator's threat. The major premise of the enthymeme can indeed be rendered explicit in this way: "racists are not allowed to belong to the community" **(ix)**. This is clearly an endoxon, since it is a common opinion shared and accepted by the whole community - and not only by this specific one. Keywords are always linked to endoxa, they are pointers to endoxa which often act as major premises in enthymematic arguments, or, according to Toulmin's terminology, as warrants (Toulmin 1958: 98); the more endoxa a keyword points to, the more significant would be that keyword for a given community or culture. Our keyword 'racist' is linked to the aforementioned endoxon, which acts as the major premise in the argument; but it is also linked to a further endoxon that supports the former: 'racism is contrary to the nature itself of communities'. As a matter of fact, there cannot exist a racist community, since, as Raymond Williams has pointed out, the concept of community has only favorable connotations (Williams 1983).

We can reconstruct the whole argument in this way:

a. Racism is contrary to the nature itself of communities

- (endoxon founding the major premise, unexpressed);
- b. Racists are not allowed to belong to the community
(major premise, consequence of the endoxon, unexpressed);
- c. Crimar is racist
(minor premise, stated);
- d. Crimar is not allowed to belong to the community
(conclusion, unexpressed);
- e. Crimar should be thrown out of the community
(consequence of the conclusion, unexpressed);
- f. Either Crimar stops writing racist messages, or he will be thrown out of the community
(implication, stated).

The enthymeme, thus, shows a contradiction between the behavior of a member and the nature of communities. It is worth remembering here that the ancient rhetoric explicitly linked the enthymeme to the contradiction (*contrarium*); in particular, Anaximenes, the author of the *Rhetoric to Alexander*, which is not much prior than the Aristotelian *Rhetoric*, first defined the enthymeme as being characterized by showing contradictions (*Rhetoric to Alexander* 1430a). Anaximenes' concept had particular influence with the most important Latin rhetoricians, such as Cicero, Cornificius, and Quintilian (Tardini 1997: 429-431).

The keyword 'racist' acts as the turning point in the enthymematic argument, since it points to the endoxon that states the contradiction. By showing a contradiction, the enthymeme implies also the necessity of a choice for the member whose behavior is fallen into contradiction. Keywords, thus, are linked to endoxa which have also the function of directing community's and people's attitude toward action by defining the positive or negative value of the keyword with regard to the community. In our example, the endoxon which the keyword is linked to sets the value of 'racism' as negative, and it implies the necessity for the racist member to change his behavior and the possibility for the community to expel the member.

It is worth noticing here that from the linguistic perspective of text analysis the middle term of our enthymeme coincides with the rheme of the sequence, since, as we have seen, it is through this term that the sequence can carry out its function (Rigotti 1993: 90); thanks to the keyword 'racist', in fact, the sequence can act as a prohibition linked to a threat.

After some other messages posted by other members and by the administrator, Crimar replied in this way:

2. Hi Ulisse, I'm sorry you are as intolerant as you censor the opinions that don't agree with yours. (...) You have used such heavy terms as 'stupid', 'ignorant', and so on, but don't you think that, when a behavior involves thousands of people, (...) they can't be anymore branded with exceptions? Are we all stupid? All ignorant? Or rather are we just people who think otherwise? You may believe it or not, but I don't think I'm a racist (...).

The accused member grounds his counter-argument by denying the truth of the minor premise of the administrator's enthymeme ('Crimar is racist'). He accepts the formal validity of the argument, and also the validity of all the endoxa involved, but challenges the truth of a premise stated by Ulisse. He does so by shifting the attention on different keywords: from 'racism' to 'tolerance' and 'difference'. These new keywords lead us to endoxa such as 'Different opinions must be accepted (tolerated)', 'Who doesn't accept different opinions is intolerant', 'Intolerance is a negative quality', 'Intolerance is contrary to democratic communities', and so on.

The argument of Crimar starts with the negation of the minor premise of Ulisse's one: it is not a matter of racism, it is just a difference of opinions. Crimar supports his claim through a particular argument, which deals with the nature itself of endoxa.

We can render explicit his argument in this way:

- a. If a behavior is shared among many people, it must not be rejected
(endoxon, major premise, stated);
- b. My behavior is shared among many people
(minor premise, stated);
- c. My behavior must not be rejected
(conclusion, unexpressed);
- d. Racism must be rejected
(endoxon, unexpressed);
- e. My behavior is not racist
(conclusion from c. and d., stated).

The first endoxon which supports this enthymeme is about the concept of endoxon itself; in this case we can consider the term 'endoxon (shared opinion)' as a keyword which points to the endoxon that acts as the major premise.

Crimar, then, develops his enthymeme in the following way:

- a. Who doesn't accept different opinions is intolerant
(major premise, endoxon, unexpressed);
- b. Ulisse censored my opinions
(minor premise, stated);
- c. Ulisse is intolerant
(conclusion, stated);
- d. The administrator of a community must not be intolerant
(endoxon, general rule, unexpressed);
- e. The administrator of a community must accept different opinions
(conclusion from a) and d), unexpressed);
- f. Either Ulisse stops censoring my opinions, or he is a bad administrator
(implication, unexpressed).

Also in this case the argument shows a contradiction that implies an alternative. The contradiction is between Ulisse's behavior and the rules imposed by his role of administrator: the administrator of a community must be just, democratic, tolerant, and so on, while Ulisse has been intolerant. This contradiction implies the necessity for him to change his behavior.

All the keywords Crimar used to found his arguments act as middle terms in the preceding enthymemes: 'tolerance' and 'difference' point to the endoxa necessary to reach the conclusion that Ulisse must stop censoring Crimar's messages; 'shared opinion' is the keyword which permits Crimar to assert that his behavior must not be considered as racist.

6. Conclusions

The analyzed examples help us to understand the role of keywords in enthymematic arguments, and to explain their relationship to the endoxa of a community. We have analyzed two moves of a discussion which deals with the belonging to a football fans' community of a member who wrote racist messages. Neither the warning of the community's administrator nor the reply of the member are explicitly argumentative texts; they present only a few argument markers, as 'for' in the administrator's message. Nevertheless, a clear argumentative structure underlies these messages, since they present a conflict that needs to be solved: arguments are one of the means the interlocutors use to solve the conflict; in particular, arguments are used to ground a warning, to reject a premise, to support a claim, to show contradictions, and so on.

The belonging of the member to the community is negotiated through the reference to keywords that are particularly significant within the community, in that they point to the endoxa that constitute its communal common ground. The analysis of the keywords of a community, thus, can be very useful to well understand the arguments that occur in it; it is important for the social studies about communities as well, since it helps understand the identity of the community and of its members.

We can single out two different kinds of keywords which play a significant role in the negotiation of the membership to a community: the 'relevance keywords', i.e. those terms which outline the semiosphere of the community and set the relevance conditions for the communicative acts that take place inside it; and the 'cultural keywords', i.e. those terms which are shared by a whole culture and by all the communities generated by it. Going back to the football fans' community, relevance keywords are all those terms which concern football; cultural keywords are, for instance, those we have singled out in the messages, such as racism, tolerance, difference, democracy, and so on. The former keywords are valid only for a specific community; the latter count in all the communities generated by a culture, exactly because they are constituent parts of the concept itself of 'community', as it is conceived of inside that culture.

NOTES

- i.** "A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage" (Lave & Wenger 1991: 98).
- ii.** "Two people's common ground is the sum of their mutual, common, or joint knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions" (Clark 1996: 93).
- iii.** Also Lloyd Bitzer argued that the incompleteness of the enthymemes is due to the essential features of the interaction between speaker and audience, which in rhetoric takes on a particular form (Bitzer 1959: 408).
- iv.** Even in the case of one person conferring with himself, argumentation can be considered as social (see van Eemeren & al. 1996: 2).
- v.** Obviously, real world communities can have symbolic boundaries, too. Anthropologist Anthony Cohen, for example, considers communities as entities of meaning rather than structures, and their boundaries as symbolic entities which encapsulate the identity of the community (Cohen 1985: 12).

vi. <http://groups.msn.com/ClassicMovies/>.

vii. <http://groups.msn.com/CurvaNet>. It is worth noticing that from June 2002 the section of MSN website which had always been called “Communities” changed its name in “Groups”.

viii. The original messages are in Italian. Crimar is the nickname of a member of the community, Ulisse is the nickname of the administrator.

ix. The argument needs also a general rule in order to proceed to its conclusion, a rule such as “who posts racist messages is a racist”; this rule is a topos, and it proves to be necessary to link the major premise, which remains unexpressed, to the minor stated by the administrator.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - The Conceptual Basis Of Visual Argumentation - A Case For Arguing In And Through Moving Images



1. The problem of explicating images as arguments

Argumentation theory in the past decades have evolved basically from what was once called new rhetoric. This genetic trait has considerably determined both the methodology and the scope of the theory. It determined its methodology in the sense that the definition of argument always already implies that an argument is something that can be made explicit; that is it is explicated formally as a step within a chain of reasoning. This requirement imposes propositionality on anything to be assessed as argument. Let us call this *the requirement of propositionality*. No wonder that those forms of communication which do not bear propositionality on their sleeves like pictures, music or smell should fall outside the scope of argumentation theory. But not entirely. Undoubtedly there is a growing interest in analyzing images (first and foremost advertisements or cartoons) as explicit arguments or as potential sources for retrieving arguments in certain contexts (especially when they are used with an identifiable intention to persuade). In these cases images, sounds or other non-verbal objects (henceforth we sample out images as a paradigm case)

are treated *as* texts or conveyors of texts. It is in this manner recent approaches to extend argumentativity to visual objects (e.g. Groarke, 1996) tend to see a continuity rather than a rupture between the verbal and the visual (forms of argumentation): they are looking for a general level at which verbal and non-verbal forms of argumentation can be equally described and compared. This general level is expressed in a meta-language and it is only in the latter that images can be said to fulfill the requirement of propositionality.

Yet, with the studies of intermediality on the horizon, it seems to be a more tenable alternative to drive a wedge between image and text, instead of giving full vent to their convertibility. The main reason is that there is an equivocation in the explication of images as arguments. For, when images are 'translated' into a meta-language to compare with verbal arguments, they are taken to *represent* arguments, viz. they are seen as *intrinsically* argumentative. The theorist's aim then naturally is to recover 'those' arguments in his meta-language. On the other hand, images can be used *as a whole* as arguments, just like any object can. For example, Sperber & Wilson describe a situation when Mary wants Peter to mend her hair drier not by asking him openly but by leaving it lying around. They call such cases as instances of ostensive-inferential communication, viz. communicating without a code. (Sperber & Wilson, 1968, 30) It can hardly be said that the hair drier represents an argument. Rather it is meant to elicit some inference in the target person, viz. it is used to persuade him (or her) or to make him (or her) perform a particular action. The theorist's aim can only be to reflect the cognitive effect achieved by the hair drier left lying around, and the thus recoverable arguments are *external*, and not intrinsic, to the object in question. If we accept that images can be used in this manner, they can fulfill the requirement of propositionality but indirectly: they cannot be said to 'translate' into the meta-language.

The difference between the internal and the external question of argumentativity regarding the visual may be compared to the difference between the description or report of a performative act and the making of it. One can describe or report the meaning of an image like a traffic sign as, say,

1. You should turn left.

but it is totally different from actually using that sign for some corresponding purpose. That latter may be expressed as an imperative (2):

2. Turn left!

(2) differs from (1) in that the latter can be true or false, but not the former. (1) is a deontic statement, whereas (2) is a performative. We do not claim that the deontic/performative distinction is the same as the internal/external argumentativity of the visual, but it can be used to illustrate it. Another analogy in a similar vein is the difference between asserting that one has some pain or other sensory experience and the corresponding phenomenal consciousness of it. Or still going further, and following Wittgenstein, we could venture to say that the performative use of images is similar to aspect seeing like, for example, hearing a tune as sad or joyous. The latter two analogies may even be better in revealing that the translation or verbalization of the visual cannot capture the performative uses of images. For there are no proper linguistic forms to express phenomenal experience or aspect, which would be analogous to (2). Forms like (3) or (4) appear to be ungrammatical in the Wittgensteinian sense.

3. Taste it bitter!

4. See it vertical!

With (3), (4) and their likes we get as far as possible from the fulfillment of the requirement of propositionality. Then the crucial question for the present argument concerning the visual is the following: Can we still do argumentation theory without the requirement of propositionality? In other words, can images and other non-verbal objects persuade, or rather be used to persuade, in a way that is essentially (i.e. intrinsically) non-propositional? This seems to constitute a non-sequitur, since reasoning is most often, if not always, taken to be a chain of arguments leading from premises to some conclusion. It seems to be hard to imagine what a non-propositional chain of arguments would look like. One could certainly try to avoid this problem by saying that 'argumentation aims at the adherence of minds' (Perelman & Olbrecht-Tyteca, 1971, 14), and since adherence is to values and topoi, images can be seen as a means other than verbal to bring about such an adherence. It is acknowledged that when the theorist makes explicit an argumentation conveyed by (a sequence of) images, he or she does a work of hermeneutic reconstruction: he or she constructs an argumentation (premises and conclusion) on the basis of:

- a. the hierarchy of meanings associated with, or conveyed by, the images (logos),
- b. the rhetorical situation they occur in, or the intention (ethos), and
- c. the emotional effect evoked (pathos). It is in this sense that 'some topical arguments can be manifested both in verbal and visual communication' (Kjeldsen, 1998, 457). To repeat, propositionality is not a property of the images, but of the

meta-language in which the arguments associated with, or elicited by, them are made explicit. More loosely put, it is 'instantiated' visually.

One basic problem with this all-inclusive rhetorical approach to visual argumentation is that it widens the door of rhetoric too much; e.g. an act of shooting can be an instance of argumentation, if done with proper intention in a proper context. A more interesting point not unrelated to the previous one, however, is that it abstracts away from the specific traits of the visual, their perceptual quality, the mode of articulation and the mode of (perceiving) their physical substance. It has become a common contention in the study of visual metaphors that metaphors or analogies are 'grounded in perceptual similarity' (Veale, 1999, 39). This fact has not received enough attention by argumentation theorists despite the claim that the figurative aspect of both the verbal and the visual can be covered by an all-inclusive rhetorical approach like the one above, one can hardly see, however, how the figurative force of the visual could be captured in a rhetorical approach to visual argumentation with almost all its attention devoted to the *topoi*; so much so that it is said to be difficult to achieve a change in topical hierarchy (of values), if the opposition in the viewer is too strong: it would require the much more explicit and clear verbal argumentation.

The appeal to verbal argumentation we contend is a false start here. The argument proposed in this paper takes its start from the fact that the power of the visual is actually so strong that it might even overcome the most fierce resistance of existing opinion. And this power is independent of the emotional effect that visual images are often said to cause. It is indeed acknowledged by the all-inclusive rhetorical approach that images may well have a greater emotional effect than texts. For take e.g. advertisements or political campaign posters, which are most often the target of visual argumentation theory. No doubt that these are designed in a way to achieve the maximum effect (as great as possible) on the (change in the) adherence of minds. Yet what we claim here is not that certain images achieve a significant effect because they act upon our emotions; rather it is vice versa, they are emotionally laden because they operate at a relatively low level of psychological or cognitive operation. The point is that 'associations between concepts are automatically recognized and noted' (Veale, 1999, 39), and thus it precedes, if not grounds, all 'higher-level' conscious construction of arguments and metaphors.

The all-inclusive rhetorical approach bypasses this inherently perceptual aspect of images when it makes the retrieval of arguments dependent on the topical

hierarchy of values. In other words, it trades the formal pragmatic aspect (logos: topoi) for the structural or compositional aspect of the visual by associating the latter to a strictly semiotic, hence outdated, analysis. But there are certain 'compositional' features that are there to drive or guide the eye (or any other sense organ) in exploring the images for possible arguments. By compositional we do not mean simply the non-linear, non-discursive aspects emphasized in (Gilbert, 1997); we mean visual cues (of depth, motion, distance, etc.) which are directly perceived as it is theorized in ecological psychology after the pioneer work of J. J. Gibson. These features we argue are intrinsically perceptual, and they are perceived and processed at a relatively low level. In the remaining part we will refer to them in short as the genuinely visual. It remains to see, however, how this low level processing of the genuinely visual could be identified and characterized.

2. The identification of a lower bound of visual argumentation: from ecology to the theory of blends

The suggestion is then that the genuinely visual be defined as a lower bound of argumentation precisely in the sense that it serves as a condition of possibility for producing and retrieving arguments. No doubt that the identification of such a low level is highly controversial at least for two reasons. First and foremost because there exists a long tradition of an inferential theory of perception, often attributed to Helmholtz, that considerably determined both the hermeneutics of art and the theory of perception (See e.g. Rock, 1983, 1997). Briefly, the claim is the operation of our sense organs (or whatever it is that computes and processes sense data) can be described as an inferential activity under the level phenomenal consciousness (The strongest version that our eyes 'argue' can be found in Bonfantini, 1987). Certainly there is a difference between the claim that they could be *described* inferentially and that they actually compute inferences. Yet the adherents of the inferential theory have not made much of this distinction. Maybe the reason is analogous to why the all-inclusive rhetorical approach neglects the aforementioned 'compositional' features of the visual: any concession that there might be something non-inferential in the processing of the visual would be tantamount to admitting that the requirement of propositionality does not apply unrestrictedly to visual images. In other words, it would be the acknowledgement of a lower bound to argumentation. The retrieval of arguments should not be confined to higher – semantic and pragmatic – level of processing, but it should be grounded on certain 'automatic' processes. But what are these automatic processes? Well, the appeal to direct, or lower level, processing as a

lower bound of argumentation avoids the pitfalls of describing inferences. For if it can be proved that there are certain features which are directly perceived, the description of these features as arguments (added premises) can never be taken to mean that the image in question represent arguments. Clearly, the description belongs to a meta-language in which it makes explicit the conditions of possibility of *using* the image for some argumentative purpose.

The second reason why the identification of low level can appear controversial is methodological. The retrieval of arguments from images trades on the – in our mind most problematic – aspect of verbal argumentation: the reconstruction of missing premises. It constitutes the problem of making explicit. While it is an adage in verbal argumentation that it is seldom, if ever, the case that all the premises are explicit (note the need for principles of bridging), the reconstruction of the missing premises has always certain given ones to start with (it never starts from nil). Visual arguments, however, in most cases have to be recovered in their entirety (We say most cases only to exclude the ones when the image is accompanied with some verbal explanation or inscription). One can easily formulate a kind of slippery slope by saying that if one premise can (and in fact should) be reconstructed, why not reconstruct all the premises? It leads to a *reductio ad absurdum* of visual argumentation to the effect that any image could be interpreted argumentatively in some way.

Many would interject at this point that visual arguments presuppose visual hermeneutics, the recognition of figures, scenes etc. which would considerably restrict argument reconstruction. No doubt that it would, but appealing to such a hermeneutics would not in itself help with the *reductio* in question. For it is functionally equivalent with the pragmatic move in the all-inclusive rhetorical approach above to draw upon the topical hierarchy of values as a condition on argument retrieval. But while verbal argument analysis (the identification of *topoi*) has a semantics to start with, there is no such semantics of images other than the one ‘grounded in perceptual similarity’. Without clarifying what this similarity is, the appeal to pragmatic factors remains circular: an image is argumentative if there is a certain hermeneutics that its use makes accessible. But the accessibility of the hermeneutics rests with its intended argumentativity. Any approach that disregards the grounds in perceptual similarity is bound to make authorial intention and hermeneutical interpretation interdependent, that is, pragmatically given.

We find this second methodological problem of argument retrieval analogous to the traditional problem of the potential narrativity of images. While otherwise narrativity and argumentativity are complementary (and many times exclusive, see Parret, 1986), the narrative and argumentative interpretation of images face the same problem of sequentiality: how can a sequence of steps (be them narrative or argumentative) recovered from the depiction of a single step (still image)? The methodological answer is of course that it can be done by drawing upon, viz. extracting, the missing steps. This is already implied in the instruction given by Lessing that painters should try to depict the 'fertile moment' (the one immediately preceding the climax of the action to be represented) in order to enable the viewers to recover the entire story. Lessing, no doubt, wants the viewers to replicate the authors cognitive processes. Disregarding the problem of cognitive symmetry, narrative reconstruction follows the same model as argumentative interpretation. Both run the risk that the recovered sequentiality is nothing but the property of the cognitive process itself, and not the property of external events (story) or arguments (premises-conclusion). Without grounding the interpretation *in* the image itself, the circularity cannot be avoided.

We have already proposed that low level processing should be understood in the sense of direct perception in ecological psychology after the pioneer work of J. J. Gibson. We cannot recapitulate the whole history of the debate between the Gibsonian theory of perception and the inferential approach. The debate has flamed up most recently with growing empirical evidences which seem to underscore either the one or the other. It culminated in approaches to reconcile the two theories (See most recently Norman, 2002). It also seems to settle on the issue of the division of labor of two visual processing systems, the dorsal and the ventral ones. Without going into details at the neurobiological level, the crux of the matter is the relation of the two systems. Are they functionally distinct? Do they have access to different types of information? Do they differ in the way they operate? That is, do they constitute two different modes of processing? Or are they rather structurally different? In the light of currently available data, it seems that both systems have access to all kinds of visual information, which explains – together with the plasticity of the brain – why one can take over a task assigned to the other in case the latter should be impaired. On the other hand, they show considerable difference in the types of information processed: the dorsal is responsible for the perception of real and short range apparent motion, and possibly, depth (linear perspective and motion parallax), for it can very fine

discriminations in time, while the ventral system is slow in time, but processes distance, shape and color, and in general, is very good at observing details. It is this fact that explains why categorial thinking and phenomenal consciousness are most often associated with the ventral system. So, they constitute partially distinct pathways with different processing capacities, but still with the ability to take over certain functions. Furthermore, and not with the least importance, the capacity to draw inference or to deliberate is also assumed to be essential ventral, whereas the dorsal system is characterized as a means of direct perception (especially of motion).

For our argument here, however, the most important question is whether there exist cases of rivalry between the two systems. At first sight, the division of labor seems to exclude rivalry. Yet, since we know little of how the different types information are integrated, if they are, *after* the two systems have done their share of processing, we should be very cautious in our answer. Thus, when it comes to the question of identifying low level processing as a lower bound of argumentation, basically we have two choices; either single out the type information processed by the dorsal system as the condition of possibility of all argumentative interpretation (of visual character), or concede that at least certain information carried by the ventral system occurs at this level. We do not want to settle this issue here. We would like, however, to appeal to one particular dominant theory in cognitive science, namely, the theory of blends, or Conceptual Integration Networks (see e.g. Fauconnier & Turner 1998, Hofstadter, 1995), which makes use of so-called image-schemas operating at a 'low-level of description' and 'serve both as selectional filters and basic structure combinators for input spaces' (Veale, 1999, 42). Furthermore, and more importantly, it is such image-schemas that makes it possible to recruit 'perceptually-grounded conceptual blends' so much so that concepts which otherwise have nothing in common become related by means of a bridge-relation, or in fact a *mediating blend* which connects concepts with common 'perceptual (i.e. appearance-related) properties' (Veale, 1999, 45). In other words, metaphoric relations are made possible by resemblance-relations through mediating blends. It is visually given resemblance, or iconicity in short, that gives way to higher-order inferences and reasoning.

The perceptual grounding of Conceptual Integration Networks constitutes, in our mind, that lower bound or low level processing that can lead us out of the

hermeneutic circle of topological hierarchies applied in visual argumentation theory. It also explains how the requirement of propositionality is bypassed when establishing a framework for visual argumentation. No wonder that certain approaches to visual arguments, like Groarke, 1996, try to extract a coherent propositional structure from images which contain the depiction of physical incongruities, looking for a direct mapping between the elements (tenor and vehicle), instead of searching for mediating blends. Whether blends have a propositional structure, or they could be made explicit propositionally, does not influence our argument here. For it is not them (the blends themselves) that matter but that they are presented visually, or rather, they are perceptually cued. Were it not so, and this is the very basic of our argument here, visual argumentation in any sense would be impossible. This is not to deny the relevance of other pragmatic factors, like hierarchies of values, but to contend that they are not sufficient to identify visual arguments. The perceptual grounding also explains how and why metaphoric relations can become a source for higher order reasoning.

3. Three modes of visual argumentation

In the rest of the paper we identify and describe briefly three different modes of what could be called visual argumentation. It is important to emphasize that we do not claim that these modes constitute visual argumentation in themselves. The most we can say at this stage of the research is that they constitute modes in which the visual appears to be translatable, or transferable, into the verbal. This may be very strong, maybe even self-evident, in the first mode. The modes can be ordered from the purely textual to the genuinely visual. In the *purely textual mode* images are nothing but the visualization of verbal arguments. Or vice versa, they appear to be entirely verbalizable. Classical allegories belong to this mode, which is also the one on which the all-inclusive rhetorical approach to visual argumentation capitalizes. For example, in Daumier's drawing 'The New Aerodynamics' cited and analyzed in Groarke, 1996, we see Europe as a woman impersonating Peace resting on the tip of a bayonet. In Groarke's interpretation, the picture says that 'European peace is not stable because it rests on armement' (Groarke, 1996, 109). This interpretation is typical of visual argumentation theory that 'extracts' propositions from images. The approach seems to be justified by the allegorical quality of the drawing. We do not want to deny the relevance of such interpretations. In fact, we propose that allegorical representations should be singled out as a first mode of visual argumentation when the image is meant to

translate the verbal.

Yet even in classical allegories like Daumier's which are a kind of visualization of some text or verbal argument, one can trace elements which have an intrinsically visual character, viz. they do not wear propositionality on their sleeves but are directly (or indirectly) perceived. Such is for instance the perception of planes, the 'cues' of gravitation, depth or shape. To consider these genuinely visual elements as co-constituents of visual argumentation (together with verbalizable elements) is to switch to another mode – let us call it *mixed* – in which essentially *tropological*: it consists in making an essentially creative attempt to combine incongruous elements within a blend, viz to see the figure of Europe *as* a blend. For the construction of blends is motivated by incongruities or even contradictory properties (of the different input spaces, say, of peaceful rest and restless armament). In this case the drawing gathers its force not only from the fact that the woman is resting on a bayonet; actually, such an interpretation overlooks the allusion in the title to flying objects. The force of picture is due to the incongruity between two states: lying and floating. The question of Europe's personification as a woman (representing Peace) can only be answered within the blend. The meaning of instability could not be created with other representations of Europe (e.g. its map), nor with some flying object. Or at least the visual impact would have been much diminished (Cf. Veale, 1999, 44). What we have in the blend instead is a kind of aspect change, or double-think, in that we see a human figure both lying firmly on the ground and floating on the tip of a bayonet at the same time. This feeling can be explained by recalling the dorsal/ventral divide of visual processing. There is little doubt that we perceive a figure drawn on a flat surface as standing or lying on the ground. In fact with a lying figure the chances are greater for seeing the surface as horizontal, while with a standing one they are more balanced, viz. the figure could be ambiguously standing on and in front of a plane. Note that the upper part of the bayonet may well be seen as pointing to the sky, and hence being diagonal to the ground, viz. to the same plane on which the woman is taken to be lying. To see the figure as resting on the bayonet would require that we take the surface to be both horizontal and vertical at the same time. An impossible visual manoeuvre.

Add also the fact that we tend to see masses like a human figure as gravitating to the ground, and you get a neat example when our visual processing systems vacillate between alternative 'strategies'. Surely we could construct a blended

space in which lying and floating are merged like levitation. But then we would not be able to account for the presence of the bayonet. To achieve that, we may activate our knowledge of acrobatics and see the drawing as an incredible circus performance. And certainly we could go on in recruiting elements from within and from without the blend, or making use of its rich internal structure. But maybe it is enough to demonstrate how much visual argumentation trades on perceptual resemblance or iconicity instead of propositional knowledge. If we are right, the argumentational meaning 'extracted' from the picture is much more than the simple observation that peace is unstable. It can be taken, for instance, to allude to a kind of somnambulism like sleepwalking, when acrobatic acts are performed unaware and to aim at awakening the peoples of Europe from that torpor.

It is important to note once again that the 'rivalry' in visual processing is not one between possible inferences. We do not infer that the figure is lying or floating, or that the bayonet is pointing to the sky; we perceive them this or that way directly. It is this aspect of direct perception which can account for the fact that 'the visual is more powerful than the verbal' (Groarke, 1996, 106).

That not all visual representations are mere allegories and the visualization of verbal arguments is attested by the 'thickness' or density of the visual medium vis à vis the articulation of the verbal, a fact emphasized in (Barthes, 1977). Any account of visual argument would have to clarify how images can be articulated (Let us note in passing that what Barthes and some other visual hermeneutics foregrounded in the first place is the specific quality of sensory, and thus visual experience, like Ivan's beard in Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*, that will resist all efforts of verbalization. We would say, accordingly, that it is beyond the lower bound of visual argumentation). As we have seen, visual images could be articulated in two ways; either by retracing some linear order within the image structure analogously to narrative understanding, and re-describing it accordingly, or by constructing 'bridges', mediating blends, grounded in perceptual similarity. Against the first, we argued that visual processing is qualitatively different from verbal - argumentative or narrative - understanding: it is distributed among at least two different pathways, it involves rivalry between them, it can result in continuously changing aspects, incongruencies or ambiguities. Such perceptual incongruencies or ambiguities are 'solvable' only by constructing blends. Yet blends should not be taken as a way to translate arguments. They can give way to arguments, but they are not arguments themselves. We called the second mode of visual argumentation mixed precisely

because it makes use of both verbal or textual and visual capacities. It can be compared to higher order reasoning in that it aims at creating new concepts. In this sense it could also be said to reach an upper bound of argumentation: it provides new input spaces (viz. new premises) to build new blends out of blends (giving thus fuel for further argumentation). Yet it could not be over-emphasized that the construction of blends, and thus the second mode, is conditioned by direct perception of the genuinely visual which constitute the lower bound of visual argumentation. Now the logical question is: Is there a distinctly visual mode of argumentation at this low level?

Well, the logical and empirical answer is yes. Indeed, the idea taken over from ecological psychology that a considerable part of perception is direct, and not inferential, there is the source of a third – *genuinely visual* – mode for the visual to *appear* to be translatable into the verbal. It is the most often quoted case of staging narratives in film. Take the classical Hollywoodian movie, for instance. Almost all approaches in film theory, the theory of the moving image, agree that it presupposes transparency of its medium, instead of foregrounding its physical substance. It is claimed that Hollywoodian film makers arrived at certain ‘thumb-rules’ in order to provide a realistic effect (See e.g. Anderson, 1996). All these rules serve the common goal to create the sense of continuity through shots. Fortunately enough, we do not have to develop a full argument how these rules are parasitic on ecological and psychological laws operating in real life situations, since it has been done by ecological film theorists. It has been elaborated in details in (Anderson, 1996). What should be emphasized here is the fact that the rationale for the thumb rules is nothing less than rendering the scenes as credible as possible. If the ecological approach is right, then we have a clear case which appears to be a kind of visual argumentation based especially on the persuasive (ethos) and emotional (pathos) elements. That is it is not dependent on the represented topoi or the ‘content’ of the images that the rhetorical approach makes pains to extract. But the ecological account of classical film can also be characterized by a lack of reference both to visual tropes and topological hierarchies of values. This way it constitutes a counterpart both to the theory of blends and the pragmatically motivated standard view of visual argumentation (following the new rhetoric).

4. Perspectives

It is not simply for architectural reason that we conclude with the re-formulation

of the second mode in which the visual serves as a source for discovering emergent structures, or new concepts, by constructing mediating blends. We think that the most part of (moving) images belong to this mode which can be summarized with the adage that image is thought and thought is image. We also think that just as there is always a way to go beyond pure allegory, there is no purely realist movie, an ideal target of ecological analysis. The second mode is a mixed, or impure, mode in that the medium is neither totally transparent (purely perceptual), nor is it subservient of some verbalizable argument. Instead, it presupposes medium-consciousness as it is parasitic on associative mechanism and ideology. The term 'intellectual movie' was already used by Eisenstein to highlight that fact that films are made to cause a particular effect (both intellectual and emotional) on the viewers. This it is meant to achieve by means of juxtaposing distinct, often incongruous or even contradictory, elements both within the frames and through editing. No wonder that this technique has been seen as the visual counterpart of verbal argumentation (Kjeldsen, 1998, 458). But we should be cautious in taking mise-en-scene, editing, disposition to be the counterpart of logos (speech) in visual art. For one reason, because we have seen that they are the very means by which continuity (suture) is realized in classical film. For another, if they are revealed as conveyors of thought, they are dependent on conceptual integration or blending. In other words, topology is always already tropology in visual art.

Let us end this paper with a brief examination of a clip from a movie which sums up the very basic of our argumentation. In the first scene of *The Sweet Hereafter* by the Canadian director Atom Egoyan the camera pans in a continuous shot parallel with a plane onto which a shadowy texture is overcast. It takes some 40 second till it settles on the frame of a family all naked and asleep in a more than ideal position. The music accompanying the pan of the camera also enhances the idyllic quality of the scene. Yet, the continuity of the shot is by no means unproblematic. Just as in Daumier's litograph the lying and floating positions of the woman are incongruously superimposed on each other, here we are kept in uncertainty as to the position of the plane with which the camera runs parallel. First we may have the feeling that it is vertical (in fact, we seem to see a fence-like row of wooden panels), later it slowly dawns on us that it is horizontal (a wooden floor), which is then corroborated by the figures lying on the floor. Thus, we are subjected to going through a continual change of aspects. Yet, although the last frame shows an idyllic scene of love and sleep, the fact that the viewer

has been offered a series of incongruous visual cues seems to mar the idyllic quality of final picture. Now there are at least three different ways in analogy to our three modes to formulate what we have seen. First, it seems plausible that the moving images 'argue' that there is something wrong with this family. And indeed, the rest of the film seems to be nothing but the making explicit of the uncanny quality of the first shot. We are confronted with consecutive scenes of bribing, violence, crash, and even incest. But on second thought, we become aware that the previous interpretation is the result of higher order cognitive operation in which the idyllic family becomes a trope for imminent danger. That is, the interpretation of the whole film is dependent on the construction of a blend in which the incongruity of the vertical and the horizontal planes is 'resolved', or (elements from) the two planes are somehow merged.

And last but not least, we should be reminded that the incongruity of the vertical/horizontal is the result of direct perception of invariants in the optic array; that is, we do not infer that the plane is vertical or horizontal. We cannot but see it as this or that according to our ecologically determined capacities. Thus we reach the lowest level, or the rock bottom, of visual argumentation. By incorporating the incongruous perceptions of the plane into a full range of arguments we definitely verbalize the seen. This may be just as long as the extracted arguments are said to explicate how certain images are used to convey meaning. What we have been trying to show among other things in this paper is that the extracted arguments are not represented by the (moving) images.

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ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Argument To Death And Death As An Argument: Logic, Rhetoric, Dialectics, And Economics



In the ordinary English the expressions containing an appeal to death are used very often. During Christian marriage service is used, for example, the famous phrase: “Till death us do part”, that is, people will stay together and love each other until one of them dies. Football fans know very well the meaning of term “sudden death”.

“Death rattle” and “death wish” are another examples of verbal constructions containing in it an appeal to death. In perspective of philosophy of argumentation (argumentology) death is not only the natural end of life; time and manner of dying; the state of being dead. A death phenomenon occupies a specific place in human communication as a whole and in verbal intercourse, in particular. To elucidate the death’s unique role in argumentative discourse I coined the term “an argument to death” and tried to discover some elements (or probably only some hints) about nature of the argument as well as its place in totalitarian argumentation (Tchouechov, 1999, 784). Argument to death is a verbal construction (discourse (text)) containing appeal to natural and social end of life, time and manner of dying and is a very important means of convincing and (or) persuasion.

If we look through any textbook on logic written in English, Russian, Belorussian and many other languages, we certainly find this argument. Stephen N.Tomas wrote for example:

“Anyone who said, “All men are mortal and Socrates is a man, but Socrates is not mortal” would be involved in a self-contradiction. Here, as in any other deductively valid argument, if one accepts the truth of the reasons, then one has no choice but to acknowledge the truth of the conclusion. But *few* (stressed by me – V.Tch.) important arguments are this simple” (Tomas, 1981,105-106). This is using the argument to death in evident way.

In other textbooks we can not find using the argument evidently, like in the textbook written by Morris R. Cohen and Ernst Nagel. In their textbook the following discourse about radicalism is used: “All social radicals are a danger to society; Tom Mooney is a social radical; it follows that Tom Mooney is a danger to society” (Cohen and Nagel, 1993, 76). The authors supposed that in radicalism anyone is balanced on the border of death and life, and social radical Mooney is a real danger to society.

Unlike Cohen and Nagel, Howard Kahane used the argument to death but he did not realize it more evidently when he gave the following simple example: “*Since* it

is wrong to kill a human being (premise); *it follows* that capital punishment is wrong (conclusion), because capital punishment takes the life of (kills) a human being (premise) (Kahane, 1995, 4).

In such a way Trudy Govier reasoned when giving her illustration of logical sense of the argument to death: "All consistent opponents of abortion are opponents of capital punishment. No opponents of capital punishment are orthodox traditional Catholics. So, no consistent opponents of abortion are orthodox traditional Catholics" (Govier, 1985, 162).

It is quiet possible that Thomas can not be considered as a servant of Thanatos (Greece mythical representative of death) in logic as well as Cohen, Nagel, Kahane, and Govier are not the Thanatos agents too. If we compare their textbooks we will find out that the argument to death is used when an intellectual force of deduction and categorical syllogism are discussed. Often this argument is used as an illustration of deductive validity of another kinds of logical discourse. "Thus, - wrote Cohen and Nagel, - if *All men are mortal* required that there should be men and mortals, since we may validity infer *All immortals are non-men*, we would be compelled to affirm that there are immortals as well as non-men" (Cohen and Nagel, 1993, 63). Consequently the authors of the textbooks on logic who used this argument in evident way, knew about its valid force probably by intuition, learning experience, and tradition. The difference between textbooks is that in some of them the argument to death is used in evident way, in others we can find only the trace of the argument. It is interesting to stress that in *Prior Analytic* Aristotle, one of the founders of logic as science, the argument to death was not used in evident way. In *Prior Analytics* he described syllogism as a kernel of deductive and demonstrative reasoning and avoided giving examples of "death form" of categorical syllogism. At the best he showed that major, minor and middle terms of syllogism might be connected with life as death opposition. For Aristotle the typical terms of syllogism were "a living being, essence and a man". Though we can not find the famous syllogism: "All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; Socrates is mortal" in the Aristotle work but we can find the ideas that Socrates is the best representative of humanity and a living being is a very instructive term of categorical syllogism shows his high standard of logical validity. In accordance with personal experience of Greek philosopher we could suppose that his teacher - Plato was the first thinker who realized that death was a strong, probably the strongest argument.

It is known that Anikered Kirenskey saved Plato's life when he ransomed him out of slavery. As to Socrates, he refused to save his life himself. Plato offered him escape, because he considered life being the great value, but in *Apology of Socrates* he reasoned differently. He substantiated the right of Socrates to accept death. Plato was the first who realized the meaning of death as an argument. Aristotle, his disciple, had to begin understanding of an argument to death, at least unconsciously, in a logical manner.

In addition by influence of Christianity an argument to death became an example of high level of logical validity. In the book of *Being* (2,16-17) God reported to Adam and Eve if they ate from the Tree of Knowledge they would die. By the way it means that in the Testament the argument to death is initially considered the strongest means of persuasion. Not surprising that when theorists of argumentation today discuss Aristotle's study of syllogism they use the death form of syllogism evidently. Frans van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and Tyark Kruiger wrote: Here is an example of a syllogism of the type treated by Aristotle:

1. All humans are mortal,
 2. All Australians are humans,
 3. All Australians are mortal (Van Eemeren, Grootendorst, and Kruiger, 1987, 60).
- Aristotle understood that categorical syllogism and deduction were a corner stone of logical discourse. In order to show the valid characteristics of the discourse he had to appeal to the life and Socrates as a figure of humanity and death according to tradition and Plato.

In the post-Aristotelian formal logic an argument to death is something like the Freudian slip, or a product of rationalization of logical unconsciousness, the valid means of persuading and convincing.

The correct (valid) arguments used in logic are best known as *ad rem* arguments. The arguments used in rhetoric are quite different. These arguments include an interaction of an orator and an audience and usually called *ad*-arguments. Hamblin listed the following forms of the *ad*-arguments: *ad passiones*, and *superstitionem*, *ad imaginationem*, *ad invidiam*, *ad crumenam*, *ad quietum*, *ad metum*, *ad fidem* etc. as well as well-known *ad hominem*, *ad vericundiam* arguments and etc (Hamblin, C. 1970, 41). English scientist did not discuss an argument to death. The Russian theorist G.Toulchinsky who was developed my analysis of the argument to death proposed to replace our name of the argument by the name of "*argumentum ad mortem*" (Toulchinsky, 2000, 1-3). More essentially that before Hamblin *ad*-arguments were often considered as logic fallacies. A

reducing of this argument to so called arguments of “ad series” will be connected with fallacious connotations. Humblin pointed out: “A fallacy is a fallacious argument” (Humblin, 1970, 224). I believe that the argument to death could not be considered as an argument from so called “ad series”, that is as absolutely similar to arguments ad hominem, ad verecundiam and so on, especially in light of contemporary studying of fallacies.

In a light of logic a valid form of the argument to death is not a fallacy at all. In perspective of rhetoric the argument to death is not discussed specially and, for example, the Humblin’s ignorance of the argument may give us an additional reason to the hypothesis about bilateral nature of the argument. Indeed, if we take into account a very wide ordinary context of this argument using we can believe that the argument to death is a very sound rhetorical argument. To stress its rhetorical force it will be reasonable to distinguish logical and rhetorical forms of the argument to death and save a name of “an argument ad morti” for the latter. In difference to the argument to death an argument ad morti can be persuasive not being valid in logical sense of the word. In one of Alabama undertaker’s office ad was offered, for instance, free funeral for those drunk drivers who would be killed since 31st December till 1st January 2002. Another example can be given. Let us imagine a discussion in a Soviet totalitarian state about harvest. Every summer during Soviet history Belarussians, Russians were involved in a struggle for a good harvest. In Soviet epoch the following messages were widespread: “Every should assist in the struggle for a good harvest: doctors, pilots, students, professors etc. Professor X does not want to assist. By refusing to struggle for a good harvest he contributes to the annihilation (to the death) of the country”. The rhetorical form of the argument to death may be and very often is invalid but it is very effective in a process of persuading. The rhetorical force of the argument depends on characteristics of audience, its culture, and traditions. When anyone uses the argument he does not see in his audience a responsible and free interlocutor. It is interesting to stress that not only in Hamblin’s book but and in the contemporary compendium on rhetoric by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca we do not find the argument to death too. One hint about Perelmanian ignorance of the argument may be connected with status of human death in a big industrial city.

In *The New Rhetoric* Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca wrote: “Conversely, a death among the inhabitants of a big city is an absolutely routine matter, but if it

strikes the small circle of our acquaintances, we find it extraordinary” (Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, 73). Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca pointed out a meaning of an audience of death as an argument, or a role of, psychologically speaking, of reference group of language appeal. “Opposition between the two reference groups that is between group of inhabitants of a big city and relatives, or acquaintances enables some to be astonished that a mortal being should be dead and others to be astonished by this astonishment” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969,73). Belgian rhetoricians believed that above-mentioned presumption about status of death is normal and has to be an object of an agreement.

An argument to death has a special role in a framework of dialogue (debate, critical discussion etc.), or in dialectics perspective. According to Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst there are some traditional fallacies as violations of rules for critical discussion that are using of all stages of critical discussion. They are the fallacy of ambiguity (misusing referential, syntactic or semantic ambiguity) and the fallacy of straw man. The argument of straw man imputes a fictitious standpoint to the other party or distorting the other party’s standpoint. One may suppose that an argument to death can be used at all stages of critical discussion (opening stage, confrontation stage, argumentation stage, and concluding stage). Van Eemeren and Grootendorst did not stress specially a unique role of ambiguity and straw man arguments in critical discussion. We may suppose that these arguments are specific modification of an argument to death.

At stage of confrontation the argument to death can stimulate a possibility to begin of discussion. This argument will block a discussion possibility as well as at the opening stage of critical discussion. At the stage of argumentation the argument is one of the crucial means of providing an exchange of opinions, as authors of logic textbooks believe. At the final stage of critical discussion the argument to death may create the high level impressions of persuasiveness of discourse. In this sense the argument to death has a unique role in critical discussion and has an essential difference to the above-mentioned arguments. The unique role of death phenomenon in verbal intercourse may be illustrated by logic, rhetoric, and dialectic aspects of an argument to death and may be exposed in following manner. In formal logical perspective the argument to death is of high validity example. From rhetoric point of view the argument to death is an instance of high level of argument’s persuasiveness. If the argument is logically invalid it has to be called an argument *ad mortem*. In dialectic framework the

argument to death is an argument that can and it is to destroy human intercourse possibility.

One may suppose that the argument is a rhetoric contraband to formal logic and dialectical contraband to rhetoric.

In theory of dialogue (dialectics) the argument to death is not any kind of contraband or fallacy (an argument ad mortem). It is one of the cornerstones of argumentation possibility itself. For better understanding of the argument in dialectic argumentative perspective one should analyze death as "argument" in human culture too. This another sense of "the argument to death" is connected with human history and culture, religion, tradition, economy, and etc.

In theory of economy the argument to death, for example, plays a very essential role too. If we compare various paradigms of economics – Mercantilism and Physiocracy (Physiocrats), Marxism, Institutionalism (Institutionalists), Monetarism (Monetarists) etc. we will find that demarcation between these theories is connected with appeal to limits of State or individual existence. Mercantilism was based on the beliefs about a nation's wealth counted by gold and the world had a limited supply of wealth. According to physiocrats land was the single source of wealth. Institutionalists believed that governments could end depressions by increasing their spending. Monetarists believed that government should increase the money supply at a constant rate to promote economic growth. In perspective of classical political economy and the study of the ways nations use of wealth very important is a slightly changed phrase of Benjamin Franklin, that *Nothing is certain but death and taxes*. A state that has no any taxes is not a state at all. In economics perspectives there are many specific economic forms of the argument to death. These forms of the arguments to death are used as the criteria of punishment, social utility, economic growth etc.

To analyze death phenomenon farther we should take into account death as an argument. Death as an argument depends on social and personal experience.

In contemporary Russia and Belarus the number of murders is less than the number of suicides. One of the important reasons for suicide in Belarus society in transition is economic situation of the society and a person. It means that in a proper social context (the context of transforming economy) the economics realities can be transformed into death (suicide) as an argument. After the terrorist's attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on 11 September 2001 death became obviously not only an acute private, practical, and cultural human problem but also an urgent public and intercultural one.

However, death was a less convincing argument than life in Ancient Greece for Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle as well as for some contemporary religious fanatics. There are various hierarchies of values. According to Greek philosophers, hierarchy of values, the death of man deserved praise only if he died with fortitude during the war. The philosophers of Ancient Greece believed that "Gods and people honored only the people, or warriors killed by Ares (Greece God of war-V.Tch.)" (Heraclitus). Ares was considered the strongest and the cruelest God in the Ancient Greece mythology. Fortunately, a war in the context of which death as the argument has the highest level of persuasiveness, for philosophers of Ancient Greece as well as to non-fanatics, was not a universal, and absolute context of their being. That is why in spite of the fact that Plato did not use and study the argument to death he could not disregard death as an argument. There were at least two events in the Plato's biography, which made him, think on death as an argument. The first was the execution of his teacher, Socrates. The second was Plato's fear of death after he was sold into slavery by the tyrant Dionis and found himself on the island of Egina. According to the laws of the island the first Athenian came to Egina had to be executed without trial. The legend reports when the people on the island learned that the first Athenian who came to the island was a philosopher they decided to let him stay alive.

It can be supposed that after Plato's studying of death as an argument death phenomenon could become an object of studying and using in logic, rhetoric, and dialectics, especially in rhetoric of undemocratic dialogue. But even J. Stalin understood clearly that death is a very weak argument. Stalin widely used the statement: "There is a man - there are problems; if there is not a man - there are not problems". It means that death solves all problems and not only problems of reasoning, but and life. Russian philosopher N. Fedorov considered victory over death to be the main object of the humanity (Fedorov, N., 1982). This object could be fulfilled only by common efforts of all people. It was the main idea of Fedorov's philosophy of common business. Fedorov died in 1903, but even today his ideas are directed to future.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by Research Support Scheme of the Open Society Support Foundation, grant No: 42/2000.

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