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UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE

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TOWARDS A DIALECTIC OF TOLERANCE

MARCELO DASCAL

Hommage à Sorin Stati

I was in Bucharest for a few days, not long before the fall of Ceaucescu's regime. The fear, both of the authorities and of the people, which reigned in the city was vividly felt everywhere.

To be sure, the communist regime was based on a doctrine that called itself "dialectic". Unfortunately, it was a "dialectic" that had nothing to do with dialogue, with listening to the other, respecting the other, and learning from the other. It assumed that "truth" and "justice" were the absolute monopoly of one side – the side which enforced its monopoly by the sheer force of power. The atmosphere couldn't but be of repression, since there was no room for alternative ideas, which for the dominant "dialectic" were necessarily wrong. There was no room for argument, debate and persuasion other than brainwashing and the passive acceptance of the ideas in power. The reigning doctrine was the nemesis of dialectic, for it denied its *sine qua non*: tolerance.

Sorin grew up in this atmosphere, where in spite of its oppressive character, he developed a concern for truth, a tolerant and gentle character, and a sense for the fundamental value of rational persuasion. No wonder that he was attracted by dialogue and argumentation, and devoted his research to them – not merely as an object of study, but also as a method of research and a form of life.

It is an honor for me, as a member of IADA, the association devoted to the study of dialogue founded by Sorin, of ISSA, the society whose object of study is argumentation, of IASC, the association that recognizes and investigates the essential role of controversy in the growth of knowledge and in the improvement of society, and as a friend, to pay a well deserved tribute to Sorin Stati's memory and to his achievements. He was one of the pioneers in the contemporary study of argumentation. Although his research in this field focused on the linguistic analysis of argumentative discourse, he did not neglect other approaches. His role in leading to the organization, in July 2002 in Lugano, of a memorable conference where the above mentioned three international associations joined forces with the Università della Svizzera Italiana in an interdisciplinary, cooperative as well as contrastive drive for increasing our understanding of the multi-faceted phenomenon of argumentation, was decisive. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it is thanks to him that we are able to be here in Milano today, discussing together, from each of those perspectives, a topic so close to his work and interest, "Word Meaning in Argumentative Dialogue".

In his lecture on *The argumentative text*, delivered in the Prague IADA conference twelve years ago, Stati addresses certain “critical points and methodical doubts about the linguistic analysis of argumentation as it is conceived recently” (Stati 1998: 3). He undertakes to propose an approach to argumentation viewed as a linguistic, discursive process, a process that “unfolds through a succession of linguistic acts”, which he called “argumentative roles” (*ibid.*)¹.

On Stati’s view, the argumentative nature of an utterance is defined by its aim, namely, persuading. He stresses that “persuasion” refers to both, the intention of the speaker and the effect it produces in the audience – that is, what other scholars would dub, respectively, the “illocutionary” and “perlocutionary” forces of the utterance. The first point of his critique of current approaches to argumentation targets their attempt to replace persuasion, which he views as “a subjective and uncontrollable notion”, by “acceptability”, as in the definition of argumentation by van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1991: 154-155):

Argumentation = a speech act designed to justify or refute a proposition by convincing another person, who acts reasonably, of the acceptability of a position or negative standpoint with respect to this proposition.

Stati points out that “to be persuaded by a thesis is as subjective as accepting the thesis”, and reminds us that the same is true of Perelman’s expression “adhesion to a thesis”. This, for him, is not a flaw, for

subjectivity, far from being a shortcoming, is the main characteristic of argumentative discourse, since the speaker builds his discourse for a certain hearer (and not for whoever is endowed with reason) (Stati 1998: 4).

In what follows, I will elaborate upon this point. But I will first address a related issue discussed by Stati, namely whether argumentation is inherently connected with conflict, that is, with “resolving a dispute” – a suggestion he also attributes to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1991: 162).

Against this view, Stati argues that verbal conflict is only one of the types of argumentation, for there are also supportive argumentative dialogues, in which “the interlocutors cooperate in order to jointly solve a problem” (Stati 1998: 5). As an example of collaborative argumentation he mentions Lo Cascio’s (1991: 229) observation that we can manifest our “support for an opinion expressed by someone else by justifying it through arguments other than those employed by the person who has initially expressed that opinion”. Another example of non-polemical argumentative acts he gives is interpretation in the legal context, when “one argues for a particular understanding of authoritative texts or materials as a special kind of justifying reason for legal decisions” (MacCormick 1993).

I don’t quite agree with Stati in considering the examples above, especially the second, as cases of “non-polemical argumentative acts”. Whether they are or not depends on the con-

¹ Nevertheless, he acknowledges that arguing is also a mental process whose study belongs to logic as well as to psychology.

text in which they are performed. Interpretation, for instance, as practiced in a court, is usually controversial, so that the parts can and often do disagree about it; consequently interpreting in a context of litigation any “authoritative text” – be it a law, a statute, a precedent, or a testimony – in a particular way amounts, in such a context, to providing an argument in favor of one side *and* against the other. Similarly, resorting to a supportive argument which is different from the one originally employed by the holder of a position can be in fact a polemic move if it turns out to be used in the context of defending that position from an objection attacking the original justification – whose repetition would be ineffective for this purpose. In a sense, one could describe the second argument as “repeating” the original one as far as its supportive function is concerned. This is perhaps the reason why Stati views the second too as non-polemic. But, although both indeed support the same position, the interposition of the objection endows the second with an additional, polemic function the first presumably does not have².

But I do agree with the spirit of his remark, because argumentation is not necessarily conflictive. In fact, it not only comprises the inherent cooperative element present in every act of communication, but this component may overcome its conflictive counterpart. No doubt, the agreement underlying argumentative cooperation in human affairs usually remains implicit, but it is not as rare as one tends to believe, and certainly not impossible³. Furthermore, as I have often argued (e.g., in Dascal 1998a, 1998b), controversies and other forms of polemic exchanges turn out to be, precisely because they are the activity *par excellence* where criticism is exercised, the most valuable – indeed, the essential – tools for the advancement of knowledge and human development. However, as we shall see, in order to achieve this, argumentation and controversy, as well as communication, must involve more than the usual kind of instrumental cooperation we are familiar with through research in pragmatics, dialogue analysis, argumentation theory, and conflict management.

Communication, as we all know, is an exercise in cooperation. As pragmaticists and analysts of dialogue, we have been focusing our attention on the study of the rational tools interlocutors employ in order to achieve success in this extremely complex social enterprise. And we may be proud of how much we learned about its mechanisms, its “logic”. We must acknowledge, however, that this is not enough. For communication requires more than instrumental rationality. It implies an ethics, a moral attitude towards the very acts of speak-

² Stati (1996), in his study of repetition in literary dialogues, observes that even in the case of lexical repetition the change of context within the dialogue usually implies a change in the pragmatic function of a repeated lexeme. *A fortiori*, one should not presume that argumentative moves conserve their “basic” polemic or non-polemic dialectical status if their position in the dialogue changes their function from “justification” to “counter argument”.

³ Leibniz’s realistic cum optimistic attitude in this respect is worth recalling. He opens a text about how to develop his project of a “General Science” with the following words: “It is well known that of all visible things man is what can contribute most for human happiness; what is bad is that we do not join forces enough...; were we to work all in cooperation to achieve the common good, each of us would be happier” (*Recommandation pour Instituer la Science Générale*, 1686; in Leibniz 1999: 692).

ing and listening. Without it, no matter how well we master the communicative tools and use them efficiently, doubt always remains about whether we are communicating in the full sense of the term.

The moral attitude I have in mind is, essentially, an attitude of respect for the other. It is not only a matter of granting each other the turns of speech each of us is entitled to, nor of making the necessary effort for understanding the interlocutor and being understood by her, nor even of applying the principle of charity when interpreting the other. The moral respect interlocutors owe each other for communication to succeed implies also their belief that they have something to say to each other, and that this something is valuable: not only instrumentally useful, but intrinsically valuable. The ethics of communication transcends the instrumentality of information. Humans are worth listening to and speaking to not just as sources or users of useful information, but *per se, qua* beings intertwined with us in such a way that we belong to a shared communicative network which is a major component of our lives. This moral attitude is inseparable from what dialogue is all about.

It is also an essential ingredient of confrontations of ideas and attitudes which, thanks to the presumption that each of the parties is a valuable contributor to the debate, permit and stimulate the contenders to be at their best in actually making their contributions – be it critical or supportive of their own or of their adversary’s position. Confrontations based on this presumption fulfill one of the central requirements of what I mean by “dialectic of tolerance”⁴.

You might think that I am referring to the attitude characteristic of that privileged kind of dialogue between persons that reach each other as persons, which Martin Buber calls an “I/Thou” dialogue, in contradistinction to “I/It”, in which one of the sides is treated as a mere object. No doubt the person-to-person relation is an important component of the moral attitude I am talking about. But on Buber’s view an I/Thou relationship goes beyond that, for it refers to the most genuine and most demanding form of contact between human beings, which requires nothing less than “the perception of one’s fellow man as a whole, as a unity, and as unique” (Buber 1965: 80). The privileged character and rareness of this kind of inter-human relation is easily understood once one realizes the enormity of what it demands in order to be achieved. In Buber’s words:

To be aware of a man ... means in particular to perceive his wholeness as a person determined by the spirit; it means to perceive the dynamic centre which stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude with the recognizable sign of uniqueness. Such an awareness is impossible, however, if and so long as the other is the separated object of my contemplation or even observation, for this wholeness and its centre do not let themselves be known to contemplation or observation. It is only possible when I step into an elemental relation with the other, that is, when he becomes present to me (*ibid.*).

⁴ For further discussion of the relationship between tolerance and mutual respect, in the inter-personal as well as inter-group levels, see Dascal 2003 (Chapters 20 and 21).

Although Buber highlights a set of requirements that might prevent the realization of the kind of relationship he privileges⁵, the basic characteristic of the inter-human for him is that it consists in the meeting of *particular* persons:

The only thing that matters is that for each of the two men the other happens as the particular other, that each becomes aware of the other and is thus related to him in such a way that he does not regard and use him as his object, but as his partner in a living event (Buber 1965: 74).

In this respect he is much closer to the kind of moral attitude to dialogue that I am trying to characterize. For, though relatively common, since it occurs also in simple happenings such as exchanging glances in a crowded streetcar, this attitude manifests the moral respect for the other that consists in accepting him as he actually is:

The chief presupposition for the rise of genuine dialogue is that each should regard his partner as the very one he is. I become aware of him, aware that he is different, essentially different from myself, in the definite, unique way which is peculiar to him, and I accept whom I thus see, so that in full earnestness I can direct what I say to him as the person he is (Buber 1965: 79).

Still, the properties of “genuine dialogues” that take place in the inter-human sphere are definite enough for Buber to insist in drawing a sharp demarcation between the realms of the “inter-human” and the “social”. The former consists in essentially personal relationships and the latter in a set of shared experiences, perhaps most of which – I would add – have to do with instrumental relations. The existence of socially shared experiences, however, “does not mean that between one member and another of the group there exists any kind of personal relation” (Buber 1965: 72). The inter-human is a “separate category of our existence, even a separate dimension... extremely important not only for our thinking, but also for our living” (*ibid.*). Therefore, it is a mistake – which he admits having made when he first introduced the term “das Zwischenmenschliche” – to indiscriminately “ascribe what takes place between men to the social realm, thereby blurring a basically important line of division between two essentially different areas of human life” (*ibid.*).

Leibniz, in contrast to Buber, and in accordance with his own principle of continuity, establishes a common ground for the moral and the instrumental uses of the Golden Rule, which may help us to further understand the nature and role of the moral attitude I have suggested to be a constitutive component of communication, argumentation, and dialectics. In a short but important text, significantly titled *The Other's Place*, he argues that this metaphor, which turns our attention to our fellow humans, captures not only an essential aspect of morality, but also conceptualizes a fundamental cognitive tool of our theoretical and practical activity in other fields.

⁵ Part of these requirements may originate in the influence of his work on mysticism on his conception of dialogue. See Mendes-Flohr (1989).

The paper begins with the blunt, surprising statement that “The *other’s place* is the true point of view both in politics and in morals” (Leibniz 2006: 164). Since the Golden Rule is well known as a basic principle of Christian morality⁶, in the remaining paragraphs Leibniz is concerned with explaining, justifying, and applying its counterparts in politics and other domains. The moral tenor of this extension of scope of the “other’s place principle”, sometimes discussed in terms of juridical considerations, remains present throughout the argument.

The first example is politics, where putting oneself in the place of the other is presented as a mental device capable of revealing the “designs our neighbor may harbor against us” (*ibid.*), just as in morals it reveals our duty towards our neighbor. By pretending, for instance, to be counselor or State minister of an enemy or suspect prince⁷, Leibniz testifies, he himself often managed to “guess with utmost precision what is concocted elsewhere” (*ibid.*). Even though the knowledge it affords is not certain, this intelligence tactics is morally justified and can be used in self-protective measures, Leibniz argues, provided the harm caused by these measures is less than the harm that would be caused otherwise.

The grounds for resorting to this mental device, says Leibniz, is that “the place of the other is an appropriate place, both in morals and in politics, to make us discover thoughts that would otherwise not occur to us” (Leibniz 2006: 165). Among these, Leibniz mentions the thoughts that “everything we would consider unjust, if we were in the other’s place, must seem to us suspect of injustice” and that “everything we would not desire if we were in that place must make us hold on and examine it more maturely” (*ibid.*). Thus, the other’s place principle, though eventually yielding moral attitudes, seems to be basically an epistemological principle, which allows us to overcome our epistemic limitations by resorting to other perspectives or points of view (see Dascal 2000). Its application results not necessarily in abandoning one’s beliefs or even in modifying them, but in leading us to reflect more carefully about their justification and their consequences and thus moderating one’s natural impetuosity to act on the basis of first impressions or thoughts.

Leibniz’s analysis thus grants the other’s place principle a surprisingly broad and innovative meaning, combining epistemological and prudential considerations, which ultimately fit its moral origin as well its juridical overtones:

Thus, the sense of the principle is: do not do or refuse with ease what you would not like to be done or refused to you⁸. Think more maturely about it, after having put yourself in the other’s place, as that will provide you with the appropriate considerations for better knowing the consequences of your acts (*ibid.*).

⁶ Matth. 7,12 “So, whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them, for this is the law of the prophets”; Luc. 6, 31 “And, as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them”.

⁷ He actually occupied these positions in the Hanover court.

⁸ It is worth noticing that the key expression in this sentence is “with ease” (*aisément*).

Although not directly mentioned by Leibniz in “The Other’s Place” as one of the domains of application of the principle, it is evident that communication fits the bill. From the point of view of pragmatics, for instance, the quoted recommendations and their corollaries are invaluable guidelines for using the pragmatic maxims of the “logic of conversation”. The place of the other principle offers a set of concrete suggestions for implementing the two basic duties of communication, namely making the efforts necessary for being, *qua* speaker, understood by the other and, *qua* addressee, for understanding the other⁹. Given the general asymmetry and the dynamic character of any conversation, these are far from trivial tasks. The interlocutors must make sure that they are relating, at each stage of the conversation, to the same “conversational demand” (cf. Dascal 2003: 37-41), that various kinds of potential misunderstandings are prevented and actually avoided, that directly as well as indirectly conveyed meanings – be it through the so-called “implicatures” or otherwise – are understandable to the other and correctly interpreted by her, and so on. The ongoing mental visualization as well as the actual perception of “the other’s place” is an essential tool for performing these tasks. That this is the case is demonstrated by the fact that conversation is punctuated by linguistic and paralinguistic signs through which, throughout the conversation, the interlocutors indicate to each other “where” they are, “wherefrom” they come and “towards” what they move. Without such constant monitoring of the place of the other the conversational machine would hardly work.

That the other’s place is not static is of course a consequence of, among other things, the fact that one of the main purposes of conversation and other forms of communication is to provoke changes in the other’s place, be they mental changes, behavioral changes, or both. From this point of view, the communicator acts as a causal agent *vis-à-vis* the addressee, rather than merely as an observer of her “place”, and the relation thus established between the former and the latter is primarily instrumental, an “I/It” rather than an “I/Thou” relation. If in this relation, however, one keeps as the focus of attention the other’s place, a place that is occupied by a specific particular person who is a wholesome wholeness, rather than by a fragment thereof, as pointed out by Stani and stressed by Buber, the instrumentality of the relation neither excludes nor overrides the moral attitude necessarily involved in a true communicative exchange. In other words, the ever present importance of the place of the other is the unmistakable reminder – for interlocutors as well as for analysts – of the dialogical character of a communicative interaction.

The moral attitude I have been describing up to this point is hardly acknowledged as part and parcel of true communicative interaction because in every such interaction the moral and the instrumental relations between the communication partners are inextricably intertwined, rather than neatly separated. These relations are, in fact, in a dialectical interplay: the cooperation inherent to a non-coercive instrumental interaction cannot be in place without the moral acknowledgment of the other’s place and rights; but such an acknowl-

⁹ On the use of the term “duty” regarding the task of understanding, see Dascal 2003 (Chapter 4).

edgment cannot, in its turn, rule out the very possibility of that cooperation and its effective implementation.

In an attempt to disentangle these two components of “genuine dialogue”, Martin Buber distinguishes, in a passage already partially quoted in this paper, between accepting the other as *the person* he is and accepting *the ideas* or positions that person holds. The former, he believes, is a condition for the latter, but not *vice-versa*: whereas disagreement at the level of ideas can give rise to controversy without thereby suppressing the moral recognition of the other as a potential partner of dialogue, no controversy is possible without such recognition.

Perhaps from time to time I must offer strict opposition to his view about the subject of our conversation. But I accept this person, the personal bearer of a conviction, and his definite being out of which his conviction has grown – even though I must try to show, bit by bit, the wrongness of this very conviction. I affirm the person I struggle with: I struggle with him as his partner, I confirm him as creature and as creation, I confirm him who is opposed to me as him who is over against me. It is true that it now depends on the other whether genuine dialogue, mutuality in speech arises between us. But if I thus give to the other who confronts me his legitimate standing as a man with whom I am ready to enter into dialogue, then I may trust him and suppose him to be also ready to deal with me as his partner (Buber 1965: 79-80).

This quote introduces us directly into the topic announced in the title of this paper. In fact, it defines one of the levels of what I am calling “dialectic of tolerance”. This is the level in which dialectic confrontation can be tolerant because the condition of mutuality is satisfied. That is to say, the partners’ reciprocal acceptance as persons is sufficiently solid to permit large divergences in their opinions and free discussion of these divergences without harm to their basic mutual respect.

Consider now a situation in which there is no mutual personal acceptance between opponents A and B. In this case, the mutuality condition is not satisfied and therefore genuine dialogue cannot evolve between A and B. In particular, there is no room for a sharp dialectic confrontation on issues that are significant for both, for such dialectical clashes would risk to eradicate whatever traces of mutual personal acceptance might still exist between the opponents. Were such confrontation to arise, far from being tolerant, in all likelihood it would belong to the type of polemical exchanges I have dubbed “dispute”, in which all that matters is victory over the adversary (see Dascal 1998a).

Notice that, having denied the possibility of a tolerant dialectic in situations of mutual non-acceptance, Buber does not further consider what should be done in such cases. In the end of the above quoted passage he considers the case in which one of the contenders, by accepting the other as an opponent, demonstrates thereby his personal acceptance toward him. This, Buber presumes, allows him to trust the adversary will reciprocate his gesture, thus reducing this asymmetric situation to the symmetric case of mutual acceptance. But the same logic or psychology should lead to the presumption that if one side demonstrates non-

acceptance toward the other (e.g., by refusing to discuss or negotiate with him), the other will reciprocate with non-acceptance too, and the situation would then be reduced to non-mutuality, i.e., to the impossibility of tolerant dialectics.

Ultimately, therefore, Buber's framework offers only two alternatives. That is, it sets up a classical dichotomy that permits tolerant dialectics only at one of its poles, the one in which both sides fulfill the condition of fully accepting the opponent as a person. Obviously, the existence of this single possibility of tolerant debate, which can materialize only under very stringent conditions, implies that this option is not a real alternative to violence in the large number of conflicts in which the contenders do not recognize the moral legitimacy of each other *qua* persons, viz. *qua* dialogue partners.

Does this mean that in such cases we should condone war and admit the "dialectic of force and victory", entirely subservient to the sheer instrumentality of exercising power to achieve one's aims, as the only way of handling such conflicts? The prospect of a positive answer to this question mandates further reflection about the framework that yields it. More generally, it mandates inquiring whether the scope and varieties of tolerant debate can be extended beyond the limits set up for it by the dichotomy underlying Buber's well-intentioned analysis, as well as other, less well-intentioned dichotomies that also justify war in desired cases, thus leading to a similar conclusion. Such an endeavor amounts to no less than developing a more comprehensive and subtle "dialectic of tolerance". This is a task which cannot be undertaken in the present context. Nevertheless, I will briefly present some lines of argumentation along which a more optimistic – yet not naïve – picture can be sketched, defended, and further elaborated.

The first point concerns the nature of the key concepts in the issues under discussion, e.g., acceptance, moral attitude, person, tolerance. We have been using these concepts as if they have a generally accepted standard definition that can be spelled out in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. This is not the case. These, and other central concepts in the discussed issues, comport a significant margin of flexibility, which we must not only be aware of in order to avoid falling prey to it, but also for being able to take advantage of it for making progress in the solution of the problems we are trying to solve. Their flexibility (which some would see as vagueness) is due to the fact that, denoting complex, multi-faceted phenomena or entities, their characterization comprises a set of heterogeneous properties. Sometimes this causes ambiguity, and can be overcome by dividing the concept into two or more related (or unrelated) different concepts, as in the pair "accepting someone as a person" and "accepting someone's opinions".

When no clearly identifiable ambiguity is discerned, another way of characterizing the concept's meaning without forcing upon it an arbitrary definition is to view it as a "cluster concept". By this I mean singling out a set of properties or parameters that are "semantically relevant" for describing the concept¹⁰. These properties are semantically relevant for the concept because they apply to most of the entities or phenomena denoted by the concept (i.e.,

¹⁰ The term "semantically relevant" in the sense here used was introduced by Achinstein (1968).

comprised in its extension), but no subset of them applies to all the extension, hence none of them is strictly necessary for identifying something as falling under the concept. Furthermore, the semantically relevant properties may have different centrality or importance in the application of the concept, depending on the context, purpose, domain, and user of the concept. Therefore, the cluster they form has a flexible structure, which may account not only for its different uses but also for its historical evolution.

The concept of “accepting someone as a person”, for example, includes in its cluster, among others, properties such as “welcoming his marriage with my daughter”, “leaving part of my heritage to him”, “respecting his political views”, “defending his rights”, as well as “perceiving his wholeness as a person determined by the spirit”, “perceiving his uniqueness which stamps his every utterance, action, and attitude”, “being aware that he is essentially different from myself”, and “a man with whom I am ready to enter into dialogue”. Clearly for someone concerned with the welfare of his family the first property in the list would carry more weight than the others, for the purposes of explaining the importance of dialogue in interpersonal relations, the last one would be privileged, and in a discussion of the role of spirituality in human life, the fifth. These choices reflect not only the subjective perspectives of the concept’s users, but also the multiple ways in which the objective phenomena it covers can be structured. Conceived as a cluster, therefore, a complex concept’s composition can be better represented and understood than by reducing it to a standard definition, which suggests a monolithic homogeneity.

A debate, a polemical exchange, a violent conflict are agonistic confrontations that necessarily involve, as a whole, some sort of opposition between the contenders. They usually comprise different stages or cycles, which may contain their appropriate modalities of opposition. My second point addresses the interpretation and status of the oppositions underlying conflicts or debates and different phases thereof.

On Buber’s analysis, as we observed, the stage of “genuine dialogue” can only be reached if at a prior stage the contenders accept each other as persons. The latter, therefore, has a more basic status than the former, for it conditions the former’s very possibility. Furthermore, according to Buber at that prior stage there are in fact only two mutually exclusive alternatives: either mutual acceptance or mutual non-acceptance. This is a classical dichotomy, which permits advancing to the second stage only in case a determinate pole of the dichotomy materializes. This means a severe limitation of the number of paths towards a possible solution of the conflict. Clearly, it is the result of an interpretation of the opposition between the contenders at the first, basic level, as a logical contradiction. To be sure, from a logical point of view such an interpretation simplifies the problem. Yet, it renders the prospects of solving and of not solving it equally probable. If instead of a dichotomy, a larger number of options were available, additional paths (e.g., selective partial mutual acceptance) for reaching the second stage, and thereby broadening the possibilities of solution, might be opened. This suggests that the strategy of dichotomization of an issue, although useful for the simplification and sharpness it provides, should be replaced by the strategy of

de-dichotomization when the target is not to simplify but to resolve a problem or at least to reduce the brutality of a conflict, especially when it is a complex one¹¹.

The next point is a simple reminder. It aims to call the attention of the reader to the fact that human conflicts are as old as humankind and have been a constant challenge for humans to cope with. This led to the evolution and accumulation through history, in many cultures, of a large and diversified body of wisdom concerning the management and resolution of conflicts of all kinds. This wisdom comprises an enlightening repertoire of variations on our theme, which are useful to this day. It includes practical recommendations as well as theoretical analyses and principles that together constitute a family of related “arts” – from the art of warfare to the art of avoiding and terminating warfare, through the arts of debating, of arguing, of conducting a controversy, of being always right, of persuading, of seducing, of cunning, of criticizing, of deliberating, of converting, of negotiating, of mediating, etc.¹². This ancient and ever growing treasury contains much material relevant for the theme of this paper in general, and particularly for the development of a dialectic of tolerance.

The fourth and final point I want to mention is essential for justifying the belief that developing a dialectic of tolerance capable to help resolving apparently unsolvable conflicts is not an ungrounded, utopian dream. Recent advances in the study of rationality and its evolution have, slowly but steadily, led to models of cognition and action other than the traditional logic-based paragon of rationality. Of particular significance for the venture this paper urges us to engage in is the progressive recognition of the role of “soft rationality” in our thought and lives. By this expression, I mean roughly forms of rational reasoning and behavior that, though not relying on the capacity to make inferences with deductive or quasi-deductive certainty and act upon their conclusions, are not condemned, for this reason, to be demoted to the realm of the irrational. “Soft rationality” refers in fact to the immense domain of the “reasonable”, which covers the vast areas, most of which are still unexplored, lying between the small peaks of certainty and the abysses of irrationality¹³.

It is clear to me that the notion that emerges from the combination of the concepts “tolerance” and “dialectic” cannot but be one of the districts of reasonableness¹⁴, where, like in its neighboring districts, order and peace are achieved and maintained thanks to the kind of agreement and moral acceptance based on the exercise of soft, rather than to the impositions of rigid rationality. Nowhere the need of acknowledging this truth and of further developing the dialectic of tolerance needed to implement it is more evident than in those

¹¹ On these two pragmatic strategies, their uses and their consequences, see Dascal (2008b).

¹² As a small sample of the literature representing or referring to classical examples of some of these arts, see Berti (1987), Corns (1987), Fumaroli (1994), Gracián (2000), Graham (1989), Hettema and van der Kooij (2004), Leibniz (2006), Lloyd (1992, 1999), Schopenhauer (1942), Stump (1989), Sun Tzu (1972).

¹³ For further details on my conception of “soft rationality”, a concept I consider fundamental not only for the proper understanding of Leibniz’s rationalism, see, for example Dascal (2001 and 2008a).

¹⁴ Unlike Rawls (1993) and Thiebaut (1999), who argue that reasonableness is *the* form of rationality that should predominate in the *public sphere*, I defend a broader scope for reasonableness, which includes also the inter-

inhospitable places in the world which its prolonged absence may render place-of-the-other-free, mutual-acceptance-free, genuine-dialogue-free, reasonableness-free, and perhaps ultimately life-free.

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human, i.e., the domain of inter-personal relations, which – as we have seen – Buber rightly distinguishes from the public or social domain. It is in this domain that “genuine dialogue” is possible, provided the interlocutors satisfy the condition of mutual acceptance. If they do, they are in a sufficiently open relationship *vis-à-vis* each other that, contrary to what happens according to Rawls and Thiebaut in the public sphere, they can tolerate rather deep divergences in their philosophical or cultural presuppositions for they accept each other *as the persons they are*. This means that the exclusion of their differences in philosophical and/or cultural background from their public arguments, as proposed by Rawls as a means to avoid the breakdown of public debate, is not needed in the case of the inter-human domain, which is not endangered by the discovery of differences that are assumed anyhow to exist at this level. Once expanded to the inter-human, reasonableness is the rationality that governs “genuine debate”, as I would put it, which thus becomes ruled by a dialectic of tolerance that does not require the imposition of arbitrary restrictions upon its argumentative moves.

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TALKING THE TALK, WALKING THE WALK: CANDIDATE PROFILES IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN INTERVIEWS

CORNELIA ILIE

Introduction

The study of language as communication implies and leads necessarily to the examination of language use in various social, cultural and political settings. Particular linguistic practices are shaped by and help to shape social, historical and cultural conventions, which become apparent in intertextual and metadiscursive patterns, as well as in collocations and co-selections of lexis and grammar. Acts of dialogic communication are forms of discursive socialisation and indicate, among other things, the interlocutors' status, role, position, identity and power relations. Due to the complexity and interdependence of these specific elements, there is a close and often overlapping relationship between the dialogue in the private sphere and the dialogue in the public sphere. As was shown in Ilie (2001), the talk show, as a sub-genre of media discourse, exhibits dialogue features belonging both to the private sphere (conversational dialogue) and to the public sphere (institutional dialogue). Nevertheless, it is hardly possible to draw a line between conversational and institutional aspects of talk shows since «conversational talk often acquires certain institutional characteristics, while conversely, institutional talk may exhibit a more conversational character» (Ilie 2001: 219).

A closer examination of various instantiations of *dialogue in the public sphere* can reveal three main subtypes: *dialogue within institutions* (e.g. broadcasted debates between participants at professional conferences, between MPs in parliament, between experts in a particular field, a.s.o.), *dialogue between institutions* (e.g. broadcasted monitored debates between representatives of various societal institutions: health care organisations, education establishments, trade unions, political parties, a.s.o.) and *dialogue between citizens and institutions* (e.g. broadcasted debate programmes in which citizens are questioning institutional representatives and debating current issues). In many instances the dialogue in the public sphere takes the form of a *media interview* which is monitored by a media representative – a reporter/journalist who both designs and conducts the dialogic interaction. The media interview has become a prototypical form of media dialogue performed for the benefit of the public at large. By virtue of its own nature, the media interview is a very complex form of interview in that it enables interviewers, on the one hand, and interviewees, on the other, to gain access to the public arena and to promote their respective agendas. At the same time, both interviewer and interviewee are fully aware that they are conducting a dialogue for the sake of an overhearing and/or overlooking audience. This is why the inter-

viewer and the interviewee can be seen to pursue double agendas: on the one hand, the institutionally oriented agenda aimed at carrying out the pre-established institutional goals, and on the other, the audience-oriented agenda aimed at adjusting to and meeting audience expectations.

In media interviews, the interviewer establishes and follows a particular institutional agenda by asking carefully targeted questions, most of which are meant to solicit information and/or opinion, while some others require simply the interviewee's confirmation or acknowledgement of information regarding particular events, pieces of information, statements, etc. While striving after a neutrality stance and an objective role, the interviewer exhibits nevertheless to a certain extent the bias of choosing a line of questioning that may reveal certain assumptions, prefigure a positive/negative attitude towards certain standpoints or suggest preference for certain answers. Moreover, the interviewer acts in a double capacity: as media representative with a particular institutional agenda to follow, and as a representative of the public at large with another, more open, agenda to follow.

In terms of discourse structure and form, the *media interview* lies at the interface between institutional and non-institutional (conversational) forms of talk. Like other forms of public dialogue, media interviews display a 'public-colloquial' language use and behaviour, bridging the gap between institution-specific linguistic features and conversational speech patterns. At the same time, it is important to note that "institutional discourse represents a continuum including a range of varieties, some of which are more, some less institutionalised" (Ilie 2001: 218). Thus, the news interview can be regarded as a more strongly institutionalised discourse type than the talk show, because it appears to be more constrained by institutional role-distribution and predictable turn pre-allocation and less prone to spontaneous interventions. Unlike the talk-show host, who, alongside his/her role as a moderator, is often expected to play the roles of entertainer, moraliser, adviser, therapist, arbiter and interlocutor, thereby revealing, deliberately or non-deliberately, certain sides of his/her personality, preferences, etc., the news interviewer is supposed to assume a more neutral institutional role, i.e. to be detached and objective, and to avoid voicing his/her personal opinions and preferences.

Aim and method

Both media dialogue and political dialogue have acquired increasing importance in many areas of postmodern society. As a result, both types of dialogue can be seen to attract large audiences and to involve a continuously increasing number of people. At the same time, both types of dialogue are undergoing a process of convergence, in that political dialogue is becoming increasingly mediatised, whereas media dialogue is increasingly concerned with politics and the mediatisation process is being shaped accordingly. An important percentage of media interviews are political interviews. As a result of growing media openness and public scrutiny, the study of various types of political interviews has registered an unprece-

dented development during the last two-three decades. However, a number of issues related to the correlation between the interview as social interaction/event and the interview as mediated dialogue have been under-researched.

A particular subcategory of political interviews which has been less researched is the *election campaign interview*. This is a rather complex form of interview since it displays features of at least two types of interviews: political interviews and job interviews. In an election campaign interview the interviewer and the interviewee have to perform more than one role. Thus, the interviewer can be seen as a talk monitor, as an investigator, as a questioner, as an interlocutor. The interviewee, i.e. the political candidate, can be seen to act as a respondent, as an interlocutor, as a job seeker. For the purposes of the present study I have chosen to examine interviews with the two Democratic presidential candidates in the 2008 American presidential election campaign, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

The analytical approach uses the tools of pragma-rhetoric (Ilie 2006, Ilie forthcoming) by focusing on multifunctional communicative acts and on multi-voiced rhetorical acts of information elicitation and argumentative persuasion. Dialogic practices in the media have become increasingly complex and this is why their analysis requires trans-disciplinary perspectives. Pragmatics and rhetoric are two complementary perspectives that are integrated in one analytical framework in order to examine the emergence and the co-construction of ongoing interpersonal communication and behaviour.

The interview tradition – a brief survey

Nowadays most of us take for granted the use of the interview as a form of media interaction meant to provide the intended audience with news and information of public and private interest. However, it is important to bear in mind that the interview tradition, which has become the staple form of media discourse, represents a development of the 20th century. For example, the interview was almost entirely absent from the cinematic tradition before the 1930s and its technique and structure have changed significantly over time. On reporting on the emergence of the new interview technique, the BBC documentary-maker Swallow (1956) signalled a significant fact: the professional expert was replaced by the enquiring reporter, a man whose initial knowledge is no greater than that of the viewer on whose behalf he conducts the enquiry. The reporter asks the questions that a sensible layman would ask.

This renewed role cast of the interviewer has gradually resulted in a blurred boundary between the public and the private sphere with regard to the scope and focus of the interviewing process. Thus, most interviewees, including high profile ones, are nowadays also faced with questions concerning rather personal details with respect to their private lives, hobbies, leisure, etc. Due to the growing tendency towards more individualised interest/enquiry, the media interview is often regarded as a particular kind of social encounter (Corner 1991).

One of the most common definitions of news interviews was provided by Heritage (1985: 112):

The news interview is a functionally specialized form of social interaction produced for an overhearing audience and restricted by institutionalized conventions.

Definitions like these are meant to outline the basic nature and function of interviews, but do not provide further insights into the various aspects of the interviewing process. As was noted by Heritage and Roth, “in most Western societies, interviewers are specifically not authorized to argue with, debate, or criticize the interviewee’s point of view, nor, conversely, to agree with, support, or defend it” (1995:1). According to the authors, interviewers have well-defined goal-oriented interactional and institutional tasks in keeping with the principle of neutrality. In a more recent study, however, Heritage (2002) admits that, in spite of the interviewer’s generally postulated neutrality, news interview questions are unavoidably ‘slanted’ in various ways. It is, after all, the interviewer who has control over the question-asking process and the liberty to reiterate or rephrase certain questions in order to elicit a particular answer. The power balance between interviewer and interviewee depends a lot on the extent to which the interviewer exerts his/her institutional power to decide on the structure, content, and focus of the line of questioning, on the one hand, and the extent to which the interviewee has the opportunity to share with the interviewer the task of shaping the interview.

Taking into account the eventful evolution and radical changes undergone by the media on the eve of the 21st century, Heritage’s definition raises today new questions: How much restricted is the news interview today? To what extent have the institutionalised conventions being kept in place and to what extent have they changed? Have new conventions been adopted? What about the roles of the interviewer and the interviewee?

It was David Silverman who introduced the notion of “the interview society” (1993) and characterised the interview as a widespread social and professional form of dialogue and information-eliciting interaction. A number of scholars have explored the institutional features of media interviews, such as questioning-answering patterns (Harris 1991, Bull 1994, Ilie 1999), evasive interviewee responses (Harris 1991), turn-taking mechanisms (Heritage 1985, Blum-Kulka 1983, Greatbatch 1988), topical organisation and interview roles (Greatbatch 1986, Corner 1991), footing and interviewer neutrality (Clayman 1992) and interruptions (Beattie *et alii* 1982, Ilie 2005).

Some of the central goals of the interview have partly changed over time. Initially, the purpose of the interview was to provide information, official and less official, about institutions, institutional activities and institutional actors, to the public at large. The end-goal was to help form public opinion and set the political agenda.

Gradually, the interviewer started scrutinising, on behalf of the wider public, the efficiency of institutional actors and the way in which institutional activities are being carried out. This double role of the interviewer, i.e. as media representative and as spokesperson of

the general public, is not unproblematic, since it raises a crucial question: whose interests does the interviewer pursue, those of the media company that hired him/her or those of the general public?

During the post-modern period the interview has increasingly become a double-edged communication tool used to handle information circulating to and from the citizens, to form and reflect public opinion and to set the public and political agenda jointly with representatives of the public. However, due to growing openness and public scrutiny it has reached the point where its allegedly major purpose is not only to attract and raise the citizens' curiosity and interest, but to actually involve the citizens and to motivate them to use their influence and contribute actively to setting the political agenda.

Dialogue frameworks in political interviews

A political interview aims at investigating political matters having to do with the daily work of politicians in general, and of Government and Administration representatives in particular. In analytical terms, the notion 'political interview' has been referred to as a type of speech event (Hymes 1972) or an activity type (Levinson 1979). A political interview involves interactional moves, which assign pre-established roles to interviewer and interviewee, and commit the interviewer and the interviewee to particular rights and obligations in relation to institutional conventions, on the one hand, and to the intended audience, on the other. The dialogue in a political interview presupposes a certain shared knowledge between interviewer and interviewee, and between them and the wider overhearing audience. It is the interviewer's role to mediate the exchange of knowledge and information according to his/her assessment of the audience's presumed wishes and needs. An important task of the interviewer is to elicit relevant factual information and to try to correlate it with specifically elicited personal information regarding the interviewed politician.

Like other types of media interviews, the political interview is a hybrid subgenre of mediated dialogue in that it displays features of both a social encounter dialogue and a mediated probing dialogue. The former type of dialogue allows for free turn-taking and spontaneous role shift (as in casual conversation), whereas the latter is expected to follow normative institutional rules for verbal interaction and behaviour in the public sphere. Through a convergence of these two types of dialogue, the political interview is an instantiation of a semi-institutionalised dialogue at the interface of rule-based answer-eliciting questioning dialogue and casual conversational dialogue. In spite of the occasional conversational touch, the political interview has gradually become one of the most important ways in which the political debate is conducted and "a crucial testing ground for politicians" (Harris, 1991: 77). Chilton views political interviews "as a sub-genre of the institution 'political discourse'" (2004: 72) since the participants are aware of particular social structures and of the discourse practices associated with or constituting those structures. The view taken here is that the institutional practice of political interviewing is a socio-historically and

politically based rhetorical process in that the ensuing dialogue gets articulated through deliberate linguistic choices, interpersonal behaviour patterns and purposeful audience targeting.

An important subcategory of political interviews is the *election campaign interview*, which is specifically aimed at scrutinising and challenging political candidates, at unveiling their status and power relations, at exposing their strengths and weaknesses, at inducing them to publicly spell out their political commitments. In doing that, election campaign interviews enable interviewees to gain access to the public arena and to promote their own political agendas in order to reach and persuade a large number of electors. Ideally, election campaign interviews are meant to provide citizens with the opportunity to receive continuously updated information about the election candidates, details about their past political activities, current initiatives and future visions.

A less explored aspect about election campaign interviews concerns the ways in which they act as institutional platforms providing political candidates with the opportunity to market themselves by showing why they deserve to be elected to the political position they are competing for. This aspect has considerable significance if we regard the election campaign interview as a hybrid interview which exhibits features of both a *political interview* and a *job interview*. Accordingly, in the election campaign interview the interviewed candidates display double roles: the role as public persons actively involved in political campaigning and high-level decision-making, on the one hand, and the role as job seekers competing for one of the top ranking jobs in a country's political hierarchy. It is not surprising, therefore, that election campaign interviews should attract greater interest than other political interviews. This is particularly noticeable in a country like the United States, where presidential election campaigns tend to attract as much interest abroad as at home.

Interviews with the 2008 American Democratic presidential candidates

The present study focuses on interviews with the two democratic presidential candidates – Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama – in the 2008 American presidential election, which has been regarded as a historic political event both inside and outside the United States. For a number of reasons, the race for the White House in the 2008 campaign was by far harsher and more spectacular between the two Democratic candidates than between the Democratic and the Republican candidates. Hillary Clinton, the former First Lady, has been in the public eye on the national level for a period of sixteen years. This may explain why, fairly or unfairly, most people have formed an opinion about her. Unlike Hillary, Barack Obama, the former Senator from Illinois, with seven years in the Illinois State Senate and one term in the US Senate, was a Washington outsider, starting from scratch. His popularity, unlike Clinton's, has had more to do with what he is and wants to do, rather than what he has done or not done.

Initially, the central issues of the 2008 American presidential election were full employment, health care, environmental challenge, quality of life. By struggling to get control over the discourse, each of the two presidential candidates were keen on imposing their own socio-political agenda and their own perceptions of the events. In order to have comparable data, a basic criterion for the corpus selection has been to choose interviews with the two candidates carried out by the same interviewer and/or interviewing institution. By taking into account the central issues of the 2008 election campaign, I decided to examine a set of two interviews conducted with Clinton and Obama separately. These interviews focus on energy issues and were carried out by the same interviewer, Amanda Griscom Little, on behalf of 'Grist', a non-profit environmental organisation based in Seattle, and «Outside» magazine.

Environmental and energy issues featured prominently at the beginning of the election campaign. So it is not surprising that this is the topic of both 'Grist' interviews: *An interview with Hillary Clinton about her presidential platform on energy and the environment* (9th August, 2007), and *An interview with Barack Obama about his presidential platform on energy and the environment* (30th July, 2007). What makes the two interviews very appropriate for a comparative study is the fact that most questions are identical or very similar. So both candidates are expected to provide answers to the same or similar questions. Let us consider the answers given to the very first question in (1) below:

(1)

'Grist' interview with Hillary Clinton

Q: What makes you the strongest green candidate? What sets your energy and environmental platform apart?

A: *I believe my proposals for energy and environmental priorities are really well thought-out and comprehensive. You know, I have been focusing on these issues for years. Obviously, I have been a child advocate for most of my adult life, and as first lady I focused on the environmental effects on children's health. I have served, since I arrived in the Senate, on the Environment and Public Works Committee, and I am proud of the work that I've done to stand up against the Bush administration's many efforts to weaken environmental laws.* (added italics)

'Grist' interview with Barack Obama

Q: Why should voters consider you the strongest candidate on environmental issues? What sets your green platform apart from the rest?

A: To begin with, *people can look at my track record, I am proud of the fact that one of the first endorsements I received in the race for the U.S. Senate was from the League of Conservation Voters. I've since cast tough votes on behalf of the environment. For example, I voted against the "Clear Skies" bill that George Bush was promoting, despite the fact that the administration had heated up support for the bill in southern Illinois, which you know is a*

coal area of the country. *So I think people can feel confident that I don't just talk the talk, I also walk the walk.* (added italics)

The answers to the first question are symptomatic for each of the two candidates. They reveal that neither candidate has been a particularly strong champion of environmental issues. Clinton refers in general terms to her political proposals and to her focus on energy environmental priorities. A more concrete element is her having served on the Environment and Public Works Committee. Obama's environmental track record is, understandably, much less impressive: he mentions having cast votes on behalf of the environment and having received one of the first endorsements in the race for the U.S. Senate from the League of Conservation Voters. A more concrete element that he mentions is having voted against Bush's "Clear Skies" bill. However, although neither candidate has a very strong environmental profile, both candidates are rhetorically skilful and know how to maximise their respective strengths and to turn weaknesses into strengths. Clinton deliberately refers to her long White House experience: «*as first lady* I focused on the environmental effects on children's health». Obama is banking on his popularity among the grassroots as a successful newcomer to the scene of the American presidential candidacy: «*people* can look at my track record», «*people* can feel confident that I don't just talk the talk, I also walk the walk». Since he has not managed to accomplish too many things in the field of energy and environment, Obama is trying to turn this disadvantage into an advantage, namely the fact that he is still an average American who has not distanced himself from ordinary people.

More deep-going insights into the two candidates' views on environmental issues emerge in their answers to the second question, illustrated in example (2) below:

(2)

'Grist' interview with Hillary Clinton

Q: In the Senate, you have supported the goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050. Is this a centerpiece of your platform?

A: It is. *I joined* with Sens. [Barbara] Boxer and [Bernie] Sanders because *I thought* that their bill was the most forward-leaning in terms of what needs to be done to deal with the threat of global warming, and *I'm very proud to support their legislation.*

And obviously *I have my own proposals. I want to create a Strategic Energy Fund* that would be funded by taking money away from the oil companies, by giving them the choice to invest in renewable energy or pay into the fund. *We would take away their tax subsidies* as well, and *we would use this fund to create a clean-energy industry and millions of jobs in America.* (added italics)

'Grist' interview with Barack Obama

Q: How central will energy and the environment be to your campaign?

A: I consider energy to be one of the three most important issues that we're facing domestically. And the opportunities for significant change exist

partly because *awareness of the threat of climate change has grown rapidly over the last several years. Al Gore deserves a lot of credit for that, as do activists in the environmental community and outlets like Grist. People recognize the magnitude of the climate problem.*

Not only is there environmental concern, but you're also seeing *people who are recognizing that our dependence on fossil fuels from the Middle East is distorting our foreign policies, and that we can't sustain economically continuing dependence on a resource that is going to get more and more expensive over time. As all those things converge, we have to move boldly on energy legislation, and that's what I'll do as the next president.*
(added italics)

As in example (1), the standpoints expressed in Clinton's and Obama's answers in example (2) are quite similar. In answering the interviewer's questions, they both put forward sound ideas and valuable proposals concerning the future energy legislation. However, the ways in which they position themselves as political frontrunners on energy issues differ considerably. As an experienced politician with a substantial track record, Clinton speaks in the 1st person singular about her past and present actions, as well as about her future intentions: «*I joined*», «*I thought*», «*I have my own proposals*», «*I want to create a Strategic Energy Fund*». However, when referring to future legislative measures, she switches from the 1st person singular pronoun to the 1st person plural pronoun so as to show her commitment to working in a team: «*We would take away their tax subsidies*», «*we would use this fund to create a clean-energy industry and millions of jobs in America*». Moreover, in the last sentence of her answer she explicitly shows a strong sense of responsibility as a politician concerned not only with investments in renewable energy but also with people's job situations: «*to create a clean-energy industry and millions of jobs in America*».

Although Obama is self-assured as a politician, he avoids using the 1st person singular pronoun, which may be explained both factually and tactically. First, he is aware that his is not a very long political career and therefore his past achievements are not so numerous, so he should tone down foregrounding himself; second, he is fully aware that he owes his quickly growing popularity to the people who are supporting him, be they close collaborators or ordinary citizens. He is therefore wise first to give credit to senior politicians like Al Gore («*Al Gore deserves a lot of credit*»), and to community activists who are acknowledged for leading the way on environmental issues («*as do activists in the environmental community and outlets like 'Grist'*»). But Obama's most powerful rhetorical strategy consists in paying tribute to the common sense of ordinary people, by showing appreciation for ordinary people's awareness about the serious environmental challenges: «*People recognize the magnitude of the climate problem*»; «*you're also seeing people who are recognizing that our dependence on fossil fuels from the Middle East is distorting our foreign policies*». As a corollary, towards the end of this answer Obama uses the 1st person plural pronoun to include all those actively involved in shaping the new energy legislation: «*we have to move boldly on energy legislation*». Only in the very last sentence does Obama

speak in the 1st person singular when he hypothetically refers to himself as the next president: «that's what I'll do *as the next president*».

It is significant to note that although the two presidential candidates do share a lot of farsighted commitments and envisage similar measures for a future environmental legislation, they address these issues in different ways and from different perspectives. Clinton has a lot to show with regard to her past activities and initiatives as an experienced politician and as a White House insider. This is why it is but natural for her to self-refer in the 1st person singular. Having a more limited experience as a professional politician and executive leader, Obama maximises instead his close connections with the grassroots, enhancing his image as a politician who is used to speaking with and to listen to the citizens. To use a musical metaphor, whereas Clinton is emphasising her qualities as a gifted soloist, Obama is enhancing his profile as an orchestra conductor. They obviously appeal to and grasp the attention of different categories of voters: Clinton appeals to a more senior and homogeneous audience, whereas Obama appeals to a younger, more heterogeneous audience.

By complying with their role constraints as respondents, the two interviewees legitimise the interviewer's prerogative to elicit, test and probe their views, beliefs and actions on behalf of the wider audience of voters. At the same time, each interviewee is also aware that his/her suitability for the presidency is being evaluated by both interviewer and American voters in comparison with the counter-candidate's qualifications. While they express similar views and their answers contain comparable messages, their rhetorical strategies differ significantly. As a result, they are perceived differently by voters.

Before proceeding further I find it relevant to take a closer look at the comments addressed to Obama by the interviewer before asking the following question:

(3)

Q: *You've consistently emphasized consensus and putting aside partisan battles.*

Many argue that, when it comes to climate change, the maximum of what's politically possible falls short of the minimum we need to do to solve the problem. In other words, *consensus* won't get us where we need to go. *Will you fight the political battles needed to move the consensus on this issue, even if that means aggravating partisan rifts?*

A: *Consensus doesn't mean 100 percent consensus -- there is undoubtedly going to be resistance from certain parts of the energy sector, and there may be ideological resistance within the Republican Party, and we are going to have to attend to the regional differences in terms of how people get energy. But I believe that we can put together a strong majority to move forward, as long as we are thoughtful about the potential losers in any big piece of energy legislation.*

The interviewer's question in example (3) touches upon a recurrent feature in Obama's rhetoric in general, namely his propensity to seek consensus rather than confrontation in dealing with major political issues. This tendency becomes apparent both in his speeches and in his public declarations. In this particular question, the interviewer addresses explicitly the

difficulty of reaching consensus across the political spectrum in connection with measures related to climate change. In asking the question, the interviewer's purpose is to challenge Obama's commitment to consensus-orientation so as to trigger a direct reaction from him. Obama avoids giving a straightforward answer. However, in order to uphold his rhetorical ethos (especially his credibility), he needs to re-adjust his rhetorical logos: and he does this by concentrating on word semantics. So, rather than backing from his alleged commitment to consensus, he argues for a complete relativisation of the notion of consensus, which thereby loses its original meaning: "*Consensus doesn't mean 100 percent consensus*". His statement obviously begs the question: what does then consensus actually mean? By revising the consensus principle in a most radical way, Obama reduces it to a mere version of majority-based compromise solution: "there is undoubtedly going to be resistance from certain parts of the energy sector, and there may be ideological resistance within the Republican Party [...] But I believe that we can put together a strong majority to move forward." While conceding the expected resistance from parts of the energy sector and the Republican Party, Obama's main concern is about "how *people* get energy", which is consistent with the priority that people's needs have on his agenda, as illustrated above in examples (1) and (2).

Let us consider now the answers in example (4), where the question addressed to Obama is a follow-up to the interviewer's question in example (3):

(4)

'Grist' interview with Hillary Clinton

Q: What role will coal play in your plan?

A: *I think we have got to take a hard look at clean coal. I have advocated carbon sequestration, I have advocated power plants looking for ways to use coal more cleanly and efficiently. I doubt very much that using coal in liquid form for transportation could ever pass the environmental test, but I am willing to do the research to prove one way or another.*

The political pressure [to use coal] will remain intense, and *I think* you have got to admit that coal – of which *we* have a great and abundant supply in America – is not going away. *So how do we best manage* the possibility of using clean coal, but having very strict environmental standards?

It is not going to do *us* any good if *we* substitute one dirty energy source for another.

'Grist' interview with Barack Obama

Q: Do you believe that we can achieve *political consensus* on this goal of 80 percent reductions [of carbon emissions] by 2050?

A: *I think with presidential leadership we can meet this goal, and it will be one of my top priorities.* But it is going to require a thoughtful approach that accounts for the possibility that electricity prices will go up, and that low-income people may need to be compensated. *We'll have to deal with the fact* that many of our power plants are coal burning, and *consider what investments we're willing to make in coal sequestration.* *If we make sure* that the

burdens and benefits of a strong environmental policy are evenly spread across the economy, *then people will want to see us take on this problem in an aggressive way.*

In example (4) above it is enlightening to see how the issue of «carbon sequestration» is tackled rhetorically by Hillary Clinton and by Barack Obama, respectively. To the interviewer's question «What role will coal play in your plan?», Clinton provides a straightforward and informative answer: «*I have advocated carbon sequestration*». This message is reinforced in her immediately following statements: «*I have advocated power plants looking for ways to use coal more cleanly and efficiently*». In Obama's answer, the issue of «carbon sequestration» is not a top priority and it also involves complications: «We'll have to deal with the fact that many of our power plants are coal burning, and *consider what investments we're willing to make in coal sequestration*». While Clinton can report that she has already advocated carbon sequestration, Obama is still cautious about committing himself to investing in carbon sequestration. His main concern is striking the right balance between the burdens and the benefits «of a strong environmental policy», to make it possible to receive the endorsement of the «*people*»: «If we make sure that the burdens and benefits of a strong environmental policy are evenly spread across the economy, then people will want to see us take on this problem in an aggressive way». Obama shows that he is reluctant to take measures before they are understood and accepted by ordinary people.

As in her preceding answers to the interviewer's questions, Clinton assumes confidently the responsibility of leading the way and taking tough measures on environmental issues. So she is comfortable using the 1st person singular pronoun to refer to herself as the agent of verbs of action («I have advocated», «I am willing to do the research») or verbs of thinking («I think»), whose consequences are likely to affect people's present and future daily lives. Clinton displays a strong conviction and a determination to motivate people. To emphasise the big dilemma «of using clean coal, but having very strict environmental standards» she resorts to a rhetorical question: «So how do *we* best manage the possibility of using clean coal, but having very strict environmental standards?» Compared to a statement, a rhetorical question has the illocutionary force of emphatically displaying the utterer's strong conviction, while at the same time involving the hearer(s) in the ongoing reasoning process. In this particular instance, Clinton uses the 1st person plural pronoun «we» because she wants her audience to get mentally involved and to become aware of the difficult decisions that a political leader, like the president, is normally faced with.

The same dilemma that is conveyed by Clinton in a rhetorical question is presented by Obama as a logical problem by means of a conditional inference: «If *we* make sure that the burdens and benefits of a strong environmental policy are evenly spread across the economy, then *people* will want to see *us* take on this problem in an aggressive way». Both of them use the 1st person plural pronoun «we» to refer to the decision-makers: «*We*'ll have to deal with the fact», «*what investments we're willing to make*», «*if we make sure*». But, as in the answers he gave to the questions in examples (1), (2) and (3), Obama refers to *people* as directly involved agents: «*people* will want to see *us* take on this problem». Unlike

Clinton, Obama avoids using the 1st person singular pronoun, except for the occasional, downplayed introductory «I»: «*I think with presidential leadership we can meet this goal*». In Obama's rhetorical argumentation, «people» functions not only as an 'ad populum' argument (appealing to popular sentiment and relying on people's support), but also as an 'ad verecundiam' argument (appealing to the authority of expert opinion). It is precisely the combined use of such arguments in a Grassroots campaign that contributed to Obama's electoral success. He referred less to himself and more to his audience – the public at large –, which shows that he knows how to truly engage with and connect with people.

The dichotomy of change (represented by Obama) versus experience (represented by Clinton) was a common theme in the presidential campaign, with Hillary Clinton positioning herself as the candidate with experience and Obama enacting the role of the candidate set on bringing change to Washington. The pragma-rhetorical analysis of the interviews with Clinton and Obama carried out in this paper provides comparative insights into the linguistic framing characteristic of each of the two presidential candidates.

Conclusions

For the present study I chose to examine a set of interviews carried out with the two Democratic presidential candidates – Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama – during the 2008 American presidential election campaign. It was a historic campaign in many respects. The two democratic presidential candidates were running a very tight race and thereby a very demanding campaign. From several viewpoints they instantiate difference in similarity, and similarity in difference: two highly eligible presidential candidates who were repeatedly being evaluated by the media in terms of campaigning and voting results, as well as discourse and activity performance.

The election campaign interview can be seen to exhibit features of both a political interview and a job interview. Accordingly, in the election campaign interview the interviewed candidates display double roles: the role as public persons actively involved in political campaigning and high-level decision-making, on the one hand, and the role as job seekers competing for the top ranking job in their country's political hierarchy.

The analysis has focused on the answers provided by the two candidates to identical or similar questions posed by the same interviewer. The comparability of questions has contributed to a systematic and consistent examination of the similarities and differences between Clinton and Obama in terms of topic framing, leadership role, personal achievements, future visions. While at first sight the two candidates appear to display similar and compatible standpoints and attitudes, their language use reveals differences in the focus and strength of their commitments, their political priorities, their relations with the voters, and their rapport with the interviewer. Although Clinton and Obama expressed very similar views on several crucial issues for the 2008 election campaign, they were per-

ceived as embodying two separate political symbols: old vs. new, senior (political veteran) vs. junior (political newcomer).

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LOCUS A CAUSA FINALI

EDDO RIGOTTI

1. *The purposes of the paper*

This paper pertains to a research project¹ which aims at focusing on the constitution of arguments by taking into account, beside the debate on this theme developed by contemporary argumentation theorists, the important contribution given by the Topical tradition. My first objective here is to bring to light the role played by semantic analysis of inferential rules in an adequate approach to argument schemes.

In this regard, I start by considering a relevant methodological suggestion offered by van Eemeren and Grootendorst in their article “The fallacy from composition and division” (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1999) that is largely devoted to the whole-parts argument scheme. Here, a deep semantic analysis of the whole-parts relation, which specifies the categories of properties that are transferable or non-transferable from the whole to the parts and vice-versa, allows to define the proper interpretation in which the concerned argument scheme is valid. A strict connection between the argument schemes and the semantic-ontological level of discourse emerges.

Interestingly, the Topics tradition, especially in its Medieval phase, shows to have acquired a clear awareness of this connection. In fact, in the debate about locus, a relevant distinction emerged between *locus maxima*, then simply named *maxima*, a notion very close to the current notion of argumentative principle, and *locus differentia maximae*, later named *locus*, understood as the semantic-ontological relation (*habitudo*), like causality, alternatively, analogy, implication etc., linking the class of states of affairs to which the standpoint belongs to another class of state of affairs in the same or in another possible world. It emerges that one locus may produce one or more maxims; in other words, the same ontological relation creates different implications (inferential rules). However, no systematic semantic-ontological analysis is proposed by the Topics tradition for loci; in other words the mechanism through which each locus “generates” the maxims that are related to it was not brought to light by the Topics tradition.

In this paper, I will sketch such an analysis for the *locus a causa finali*, developing an ontology of action from which various maxims may be derived. I will try to specify the con-

¹ The present investigation focuses on a theoretical aspect within a larger research devoted to argumentation in context, around which the Doctoral School ARGUPOLIS (*Argumentation Practices in Context*), funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (Grant: PDMP 1 - 12309), is conceived.

ditions of semantic applicability for one of the maxims that are generated by this locus: “if the goal is good, the means are too”, or, to quote a proverb, “The end justifies the means”.

The validity of maxims is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the constitution of arguments; the Aristotelian notion of *endoxon*, which was substantially neglected by the Medieval scholars², proves to identify an essential component (bound to the context and its culture) of the constituency of arguments, which conditions their soundness and effectiveness. The reintegration of this notion in the analysis of arguments is all the more required for the study of how argumentation works in the different contexts of its application (Rigotti 2006).

2. A relevant methodological suggestion

In their paper, “The fallacies of composition and division”, Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst have analyzed in depth the whole-parts argument scheme. Their analysis shows that not all properties (predicates) can be transferred from the parts to the whole and vice-versa. The transferability of predicates depends on their semantic nature: structure-dependent properties are not transferable and, among the structure-independent properties, only the absolute – non-relative – properties³ can be transferred.

In fact, all structure-dependent properties characterize the whole from various points of view in its wholeness: for its form (*round* or *rectangular*) or for its “functional” qualities (*edible*, *poisonous*, *expansive*, *tasty*, *strong*, *coherent*).

As regards the relative structure-independent properties like *heavy*, *light*, *fat*, *big*, their non-transferability depends on the fact that they involve the whole not focusing on its structure, but implicitly comparing it with other entities considered under the same point of view; thus their scope involves the concerned reality in its wholeness: a big heap of light things (say of hay) may be intolerably heavy.

I reproduce, in order to sum up the analysis made by van Eemeren and Grootendorst, the scheme they offer in the paper mentioned above.

Transferable (+) and nontransferable (-) properties	structure-independent properties (2a)	structure-dependent properties (2b)
Absolute properties (1a)	red, white, blue, glass, iron, wooden (+)	round, rectangular, edible, poisonous (-)
Relative properties (1b)	heavy, small, light, big, fat, slim (-)	good, expansive, strong, poor (-)

² The Medieval Topics tradition refers to Aristotle through Boethius, who exclusively focused on the dialectical component of arguments.

³ Structure-dependency presupposes a distinction between structured and unstructured wholes. Hamblin (1970) introduces an analogous distinction between physical and functional collections. Peter of Spain (*Summulae Logicales* 5.7;5.14-5.23; in particular 5.14-5.18) analogously distinguishes between *totum universale* and *totum integrale*. Interesting remarks are put fore by Buridan (*Summulae de dialectica* 6.4.2 ss.).

Though I am concerned with another class of arguments, pertaining to the domain of finality, I have briefly recalled van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1999 for its methodological relevance: an in-depth semantic analysis enabled the authors to make explicit the conditions under which a certain argument scheme is validly or fallaciously applied.

They show that precise semantic conditions must be met in order to ensure the validity of this argument scheme. In fact, I am convinced that the fallacious or sound use of argument schemes is often not determined by their presumptive or probabilistic nature, but by an uncertain definition of their semantic applicability conditions.

In section 5, I shall try to specify the semantic conditions of validity for a particular argument scheme – or a particular maxim, if we follow the topical tradition to which I shall largely refer in this paper – that is generated by the locus from final cause: “if the goal is good, the means are too”. I shall try to show how an adequate representation of the ontology of action that is presupposed by the concerned locus from final cause can explain its fallacious interpretations and establish the limits of its applicability.

3. *The conceptual and theoretical framework of Topics*

In order to properly lay out the subject we want to face, it is certainly useful, and maybe also necessary, to recall in its essential features the conceptual and theoretical framework on which my discourse will be based.

I shall prevalingly refer to the doctrine of topics set out by Aristotle, elaborated by Cicero and systematized by Boethius, Abelard, Peter of Spain, Buridan and others. Topics was thought of by Aristotle as a method for finding out an appropriate argument in relation to any standpoint (*problema*)⁴.

This method works with rules named *topoi* (translated into Latin with *loci*). It is well known that there is not a universally accepted interpretation of this Aristotelian notion, for which, by the way, no satisfactory definition is given by Aristotle.

Braet (2005) offers an important contribution to a convincing interpretation of the Aristotelian perspective. Starting from the lacunose presentations of *loci* given by Aristotle in *Rhetoric* (2.23), Braet reconstructs an ideal systematic model of an Aristotelian locus bringing to light four components:

1. the name (e.g. *ek ton enantion* = from the contraries);
2. advice suggesting a fair procedure for establishing the concerned type of argument;
3. a topical principle that shows to be a rule establishing an inferential implication between general statements, like “if the cause exists, then the effect does”;
4. an actual example of argumentation applying this rule (Braet 2005: 69).

⁴ See Aristotele's *Topica*, Book I, Chapter 1.

In Braet's view the topical principle, "while occasionally quite abstract, always contains enough substantial thought-guiding terms" (Braet 2005: 79) and can be interpreted "as the generalized 'if-then' statement in a modern argumentation scheme".

This interpretation suggestively opens the way to an understanding of the rhetorical enthymemes "as combinations of a logical argumentation form (which can generally be reconstructed as *modus ponens*) and an argumentation scheme" (*ibidem*). This interpretation of Aristotle's conception of topics, which brings to light a certain contrast between the logical orientation of the doctrine of topics and the prevailing syllogistic – non propositional – orientation of Aristotle's logic, is interestingly aligned with the following developments of the topical tradition. In my opinion, it also shows the possibility of a fruitful dialogue between this tradition and the current theoretical approaches, which, under the label of "argument schemes", substantially focus on the same problematic domain of argumentation theory⁵.

We start by reconsidering a particular point of Braet's reconstruction of the Rhetoric version of topics, which he identifies as "the name" of *topos*.

Indeed, Aristotle seems to attribute to this component a mere function of label, even though it represents, as Braet remarks, the main component of the "if-part" of the "if-then"-structured topical principle (e.g. "if the cause exists"...). In the following tradition the role of this apparent label – as Braet foreshadows in a note (Braet 2005: 81 n. 15) of his paper – becomes decisively more substantial. An important signal is already given in Cicero's *Topica* which emphasizes this notion identifying it with the proper place of arguments – *sedes argumenti* – and, more importantly, with the source from which arguments are drawn: *unde argumenta ducuntur*. This emphasis on locus as the source and basis of an argumentative move is interestingly mirrored by the typical preposition *from* introducing any class of arguments (e.g. argument *from* expert opinion) throughout the tradition of argumentation studies until the current argumentation theory.

In the following topical tradition, Boethius, who critically synthesized the two interpretations of Aristotelian topics offered by Cicero and Themistius, designates this component as *topica differentia*, which is to be understood as the particular ontological domain to which certain inferential principles (named *maximae propositiones*) are bound.

A certain terminological complexity, which indeed causes some obscurity, is introduced by Boethius, who adopts the term "locus" both for the *maxima propositio* – later renamed *locus maxima* – and for the ontological domain on which the maxim depends – named *locus differentia maximae*. We shall use "loci" for *loci-differentiae* and "maxims" for *loci-maximae*.

Independently from this terminological complexity, a more substantial problem is represented by the nature of loci and their connection with maxims: Boethius remarks that

⁵ See Garssen 2001 for an informative review of the literature on argument schemes; for the comparison of different contemporary approaches to argument schemes with topics tradition see Rigotti & Greco Morasso (forthcoming).

the maxims outnumber the loci, because the specific differences constituting the types or classes of maxims are less numerous than maxims themselves⁶.

Peter of Spain tries to justify the definition of loci as differences of maxims:

Locus differentia maximae est id per quod una maxima differt ab altera, ut istae duae maximae: ‘omne totum est maius sua parte’, ‘de quocumque praedicatur definitio et definitum’, differunt tantum per terminos ex quibus constituuntur” (*Summulae Logicales* 5.07) [the locus – difference of maxims – is that for which a maxim differs from another; thus the following two maxims ‘every whole is bigger than anyone of its parts’ and ‘to whatever the definition holds, the defined holds too’ differ only for the terms they consist of].

In other words, loci are differences of maxims because they are implementations in different ontological domains of the same logical connections. The awareness that maxims are more numerous than loci is anyway implicitly acknowledged by all authors through the list of loci and maxims they offer. Indeed, between the set of maxims and the set of loci, an injective function is established: to each maxim corresponds exactly one locus, while to each locus may correspond one or more maxims. For instance, several maxims are bound to the *Locus a causa materiali* by the Topical tradition:

*If the material lacks, the thing is impossible;
If the material is there the thing can exist too;
If the thing is there the material is there or was there*⁷.

4. Loci as semantic-ontological relationships

The proper nature of loci emerges, gradually, through the Medieval tradition, where, at a certain moment, locus-difference is presented as one extreme of a relation (in Latin *habitus*), whose other extreme coincides with the standpoint itself.

For example, the locus from cause is *the extreme of a cause-to-effect relation whose other extreme – the effect – is the standpoint*. Peter of Spain wrote:

Locus a causa efficiente est habitudo ipsius ad suum effectum [The locus from efficient cause is the relation of the efficient cause to its effect]

In the locus from definition, the relation concerned ties together the definition (i.e. the defining phrase) and the defined object. In Peter of Spain’s words,

definitio est oratio quae est esse rei significans. Locus a definitione est habitudo definitionis ad definitum (5.10) [a definition is an utterance which is

⁶ See Boethius, *De differentiis topicis* 1186: “atque ideo pauciores deprehenduntur hi loci qui in differentiis positi sunt, quam propositiones ipsae quarum sunt differentiae”.

⁷ In the formulation of this maxim I take into account the distinction between permanent matters (coexisting with the thing, like iron vs. knife) and transient matters (disappearing at the arising of the thing, like flour vs. bread). Cf. in particular Peter of Spain, *Summulae logicales* 5.25 and Buridan, *Summulae de dialectica* 6.4.11.

meaning the mode of being of a thing. The locus from definition is the relation of the definition to the defined]

Analogously, we could define the Aristotelian “locus from all the more and all the less” as the relation between an entity for which a state of affairs, though being more likely to be the case, is not indeed the case (“even gods do not know everything”) and an entity for which this state of affairs is much more likely not to be the case: this relation entails, as one of its maxims, that it is surely false that this state of affairs is the case for this latter entity (“if even gods do not know everything, all the less will humans know everything”: *Rhetorica* 1397 b 16-17).

Let us consider some passages by Abelard and Buridan in which some relevant consequences of the interpretation of locus as extreme(s) of a *habitudinis* are brought to light. Abelard connects with the *habitudinis* the solidity of inference:

Est autem locus differentiae ea res in cuius habitudine ad aliam firmitas consecutionis consistit (*De dialectica*, 263) [locus difference is that thing on whose relation to another thing the solidity of the inference is based].

In his sharp commentary to Peter of Spain's *Summulae*, Buridan makes this connection even more explicit, identifying the locus with the terms of which the maxim consists:

Locus differentia maximae est termini ex quibus constituitur maxima et ex quorum habitudine ad invicem maxima habet notitiam et veritatem. Verbi gratia, cum haec propositio ‘quidquid vere affirmatur de specie, vere affirmatur de genere’ sit locus-maxima, isti termini ‘species’ et ‘genus’ sunt locus-differentia maximae; *ex habitudine enim speciei ad suum genus maxima habet veritatem et efficaciam* (*Summulae de dialectica* 6.2.2).

Starting from this fundamental comment by Buridan, I suggest the following updated interpretation of locus in its connection with maxims:

The locus is a specific relation connecting different states of affairs that generates one or more maxims, providing them with semantic transparency (notitia) and with a specific degree of analytical truth (veritas) and persuasiveness (efficacia).

The interpretation of loci as ontological relations (*habitudines*) generating argument schemes entails the task of deriving each argument scheme from the respective topical relation. In the mentioned authors this derivation shows to work as an implication of the ontology of the locus. For example, the species-to-genus relation entails that “if something is truly stated of an individual of a species, it is truly stated of an individual of the genus too” and this is so because any individual of a species is an individual of the corresponding genus too (e.g. “if a man runs, then it is true that an animal runs” or “if someone corrupted a policeman, he corrupted a public officer”). The same locus generates also other maxims, like “if the genus is truly negated of something, the species is too”, because the set of properties required for belonging to a genus are presupposed by belonging to all its species (“an angel

cannot be a human, as it is not an animal”; “he cannot be a ophthalmologist because he is not a doctor”).

All argument schemes, or maxims, related to a locus are validly applied only if the conceptual domain actually involved by the argument really exhibits the logical properties of the locus. Very often, as we saw at the beginning of this paper for the locus from the whole and its parts, a similar linguistic shape hides substantial differences.

Let us compare a sound application of the maxim “whatever is truly said of the genus is truly said of the species” (which is generated by the locus from genus to species), “Italian citizens may migrate in any European country because European citizens can migrate in all European countries”, with an unsound one, “In the last year European economy strongly reacted to the financial crisis; therefore, in the last year French economy strongly reacted to the financial crisis”. Indeed French economy is not a species, but a part of European economy, which is in turn a whole to which the structure-dependent property of having strongly reacted... is attributed: transferring this property to one of the parts represents a typical fallacy of division.

5. *The locus from final cause*

The locus from final cause belongs to the ontological area of action (see Figure 1), which may be defined in terms of its essential factors (ideally) as an event intentionally caused by a human subject who,

- being aware of the present situation
- and of a new possible comparatively more convenient state of affairs,
 - which is realizable through a causal chain available to her,
- is attracted by this new, possible, state of affairs and,
- taking the decision of applying the causal chain,
- activates it
- thus realizing her purpose.

Often, many different, not strictly constitutive factors become relevant: given the situated nature of decision making, different competitive desires and different costs of the causal chain may induce the agent to abandon or substantially change the purpose; the degree of adequacy of the causal chain may show to be insufficient and transform the action in an unhappy attempt; the possible positive or negative side effects, including the informative and relational implications of action, the possible presence in the causal chain of subservient instrumental actions and the quality of their ends and of their possible side effects turn the action into a complex and hardly manageable process, in which the human subject intensively “negotiates” the realization of its purposes with the surrounding context.

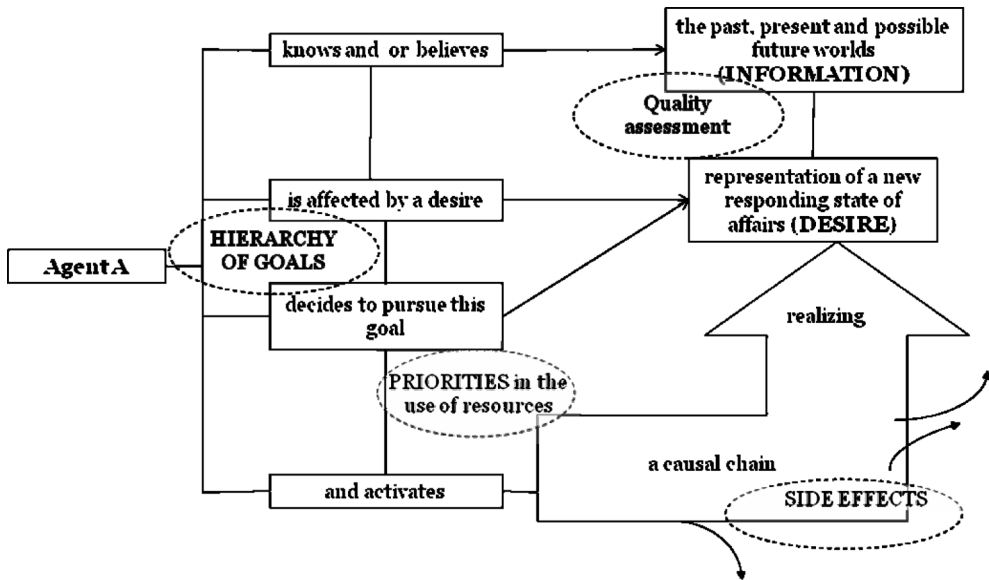


Figure 1: *The ontology of action* (revised and adapted from Rigotti 2003)

Within the ontology of action, our locus from the final cause focuses on the relation connecting the end (goal, purpose) of an action with the action itself. Several maxims are generated by this locus. For example, as the end is a constitutive component of any action, we can derive the maxim “if a behavior has no end, it is not an action”, which is very often employed in the juridical domain in establishing the degree of responsibility. The following two maxims could analogously be derived from the notion of action: “if the pursued end is impossible, the decision of achieving the action is irrational” and “if the pursued end is evidently harmful for the agent, the action is unreasonable”. Another maxim is close to the basic argument scheme of practical reasoning that has been investigated by Walton in particular in relation to the development of artificial intelligence systems⁸: “if an action is strictly required in order to reach a desired goal, this action should be undertaken”. More in general, the same logical principle, bound to the desirability of a certain action which is established in accordance with the desirability of its results, is identified by Garssen (1997: 21,

⁸ Walton’s account of practical reasoning focuses on the significant implication that this kind of reasoning may have for setting up artificial intelligent agents. Indeed, artificial intelligence appears to be at the basis of a renewed interest for practical (teleological) reasoning in philosophy (Walton 1990: 3). Walton identifies two basic argument schemes of practical reasoning (Walton 1990: 48 and 2007: 216): the *necessary condition* and the *sufficient condition* schemes. Such schemes allow identifying important elements of practical reasoning, such as the notion of goal, and intriguing problems deriving from the agent’s relation with reality (practicality and side effects). Moreover, the author points out that there are some problems to be elaborated in the form of critical questions (Walton 2007: 224), such as the presence of multiple goals (hierarchy of goals) or of conflicting goals and the evaluation of possible future implications of one’s action (effects and side effects).

q.td in van Eemeren, Houtlosser & Snoeck Henkemans 2007: 166) as a subtype of the causal argument scheme⁹. Garssen (2001: 92) names this logical principle “‘means-end argumentation’ or ‘pragmatic argumentation’”. Already Boethius, who indeed represents the beginner of the medieval tradition of topics, introduced the maxim “cuius finis bonus est, ipsum quoque bonum est” (*De differentiis topicis*, P.L. 64, 1189 D), “if the end is good, the thing is good too”. This maxim is confirmed by Abelard (*Dialectica* 416, 436) and by Peter of Spain (*Summulae logicales* 5.2.7), but is questioned by Buridan (*Summulae de dialectica* 6.4.13), who, assuming that no property can inhere to what does not exist (whatever does not exist can be neither good nor bad), excludes for the end the possibility of being good or bad as the end does not yet exist before the fulfillment of the action. In fact, in this approach, the understanding of action seems to be compromised, and, more relevantly, this approach does not consider that possible properties do inhere to possible things.

Now, I want to focus on a certain fuzziness and even a certain ambiguity that characterizes the statement of Boethius’s maxim. First of all, the second extreme of the concerned relation, being referred to by *ipsum*, is not explicitly identified. It could refer both to the action and to the means¹⁰. However, a specific maxim, which will be tackled later, is devoted to means in relation to their use (“cuius usus bonus est ipsum bonum est”): consequently, we start by focusing on the interpretation where *ipsum* means the action.

Moreover, and more relevantly, the term *end* and the analogous Latin term *finis* cover two distinct meanings – outcome and purpose – and, consequently, each of these meanings generates a different interpretation of the maxim. Two apparent maxims, which we might call *paramaxims*, emerge:

- (1) if the outcome is good, the action is too
- (2) if the purpose is good, the action is too

Unfortunately, the ambiguity of our traditional principle is far from being exhausted as it touches also the third remaining term our maxim consists of: the protheical notion of good. Indeed, the goodness of a chicken does not coincide with the goodness of a cook nor with the goodness of a gourmet nor... However, even though these meanings are different, their difference is not irreducible, since goodness is, in general, attributed to some entity or state of affairs insofar as it discharges a certain function in the due way (see Vendler 1963: 465). Consequently, we could think the polisemy of *good* is solved once we have identified the functions expected from the concerned entities or states of affairs. In paramaxim (1), the goodness of an outcome might be defined as the positive nature or the responding to due expectations of the state of affairs resulting from an action. Now, expectations may be iden-

⁹ Van Eemeren, Houtlosser & Snoeck Henkemans (2007: 174 and ff.) identifies a list of linguistic indicators for the pragmatic argument scheme.

¹⁰ In the example brought by Boethius “si beatum esse bonum est, et iustitia bona est, hic enim est iustitiae finis, ut si quis secundum iustitiam uiuat, ad beatitudinem perducatur”, happiness represents the end of justice which is a conduct (as type of life) through which happiness is reached.

tified within a particular perspective or absolutely. The perspective in turn may be more or less wide and refer to a subject (both individual and social) or to a purpose:

For me (or for Europe), it is now a good thing to devalue the Euro
For the recover of the European economy, it is now a good thing to devalue the Euro

The constituents introduced by *for*, which define the perspectives, should be referred to as *beneficiaries*. The absence of any beneficiary corresponds to the above mentioned notion of absolute expectation where each entity is *per se* conceived of as destined (created in order) to realize a peculiar perfection. In the Western Medieval tradition this type of expectation was identified in relation to a totality-governing order, created by God, possibly mediated by nature. The Greek verb *pephyka*, (translated into Latin through *natus sum*), which represents the perfect of *phyo* “to generate” – whence *physis* “nature” – was often used to expound this type of absolute expectation that is by nature inherent to any entity¹¹ and generates an ontology-based moral system. In the present day strongly differentiated culture, the moral judgment may refer to other totality-governing principles or simply mirror each person’s spontaneous sensibility.

All in all, it is not evident that paramaxim (1) does represent a proper maxim, as even bad actions may cause good outcomes. Let us consider the following, perhaps extravagant, example:

Action: X tries to kill Y by shooting her.
Outcome: X misses Y and hits a tire of her car, thus preventing her from reaching the airport and from leaving with a plane which then crashed.

Indeed, this paramaxim is, in general, an evident *non-sequitur* as it claims that, if two constituents of an event have opposite properties, the one does have the property of the other.

Of course, goodness is very differently attributed to the action in X’s and Y’s perspectives or in other more specified perspectives (like X’s juridical position or Y’s physical safety), but in spite of these differences the validity of our paramaxim is excluded: the evident goodness of the outcome does not entail the goodness of the action, neither absolutely (it is not good for anybody to kill other people) nor in Y’s perspective. Also another reading of paramaxim (1) that we find in the Shakespearian saying “All’s well that ends well” could hardly be accounted for as a proper maxim: it is rather a sort of advice suggesting, on the basis of

¹¹ In the world view largely adopted in Medieval culture, nature is conceived of as an order subservient to a Divine plan to which all beings are expected to conform; this expectation is often expounded by *natus sum*: “caecitas non dicitur nisi de his quae sunt nata videre” [blindness is not said but of things that are born to see] (cf. Sancti Thomae Aquinatis *De principiis naturae* II, 8). In Dante’s *Divine Comedy* (Inf. XXVI), Ulysses persuades his companions to follow him in the last adventure beyond Pillars of Hercules by arguing that they *had been made* in order to pursue virtue and knowledge: “Considerate la vostra semenza/ fatti non foste a viver come bruti/ ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza” [Consider how your souls were sown:/ you were not made to live like brutes or beasts,/ but to pursue virtue and knowledge].

a proper maxim, the irrelevance of bad actions or events if they do not “succeed” in producing the predictable bad outcomes. The proper maxim onto which this recommendation is based would be “if an event does not cause any relevant effect on me, it should be considered as irrelevant for me”, which relies on a largely accepted definition of relevance.

Paramaxim (2), namely “If the purpose is good, the action is too” is likely to be a fair interpretation of the proverb “The end justifies the means”, that is in itself ambiguous. In it, in relation to the purpose (understood as the state of affairs at which an action is aimed), goodness denotes a positive nature both as response to the actor’s expectations and absolutely. Now, like paramaxim (1), also paramaxim (2) is, in general, a *non-sequitur* as it claims that, if two constituents of an event have opposite properties, one has the property of the other. However, if considered in detail, this latter paramaxim might also have reasonable readings when the conditions of three particular scenarios are met:

- i. The quality of the possible side effects is considered: following this paramaxim, if an action is aimed at a good effect, it is said to be good even if some non-intended side effects of the causal chain are bad. In this very frequent situation the action may be taken for good in its wholeness if the negative side effects it brings about are, in themselves or compared with the good effects, tolerable or irrelevant. The maxim from the lesser evil is here properly invoked: “if the undesirable side effects are less harmful than the lack of the pursued effects, the action is justified”. Of course, in this case, the goodness of the whole action is intended and not the goodness of the side effects, which nevertheless retain their negativity.
- ii. The fulfillment of the action requires within its causal chain an instrumental action, i.e. a complex causal chain which is in itself an action: if the final purpose of the global action is good, but the provisional purpose of the instrumental action is bad, this principle, claiming that the provisional purpose of the instrumental action also “becomes” good, is evidently invalid. If there is no reasonable alternative, it might “recover” validity applying once again the maxim from the lesser evil, provided that we are able to show that the realization of the previous action is less harmful than the lack of the results of the final action.
- iii. The causal chain entails the adoption of instruments, resources or procedures that are in themselves morally indifferent or exempt from moral evaluation.

This is the only version of our principle (paramaxim) for which it represents a proper maxim.

It is noteworthy that, in this case, the maxim substantially coincides with the above mentioned traditional maxim “cuius usus bonus est ipsum bonum est”; e.g.: “if cutting is good the knife is too”. The last scenario we have considered represents the only interpretation for which the very popular proverb “The end justifies the means”¹² may function as a valid

¹² This proverb occurs in various European languages and cultures with little variations: in Italian, “Il fine giustifica i mezzi”; in Dutch, “Het doel heiligt de middelen”; in French, “Le but justifie les moyens”; in German, “Der

maxim (indeed, the other valid interpretations we have identified properly owe their validity to the maxim from the lesser evil). This maxim presupposes the existence of a class of morally neutral resources (tools, activities, procedures, abilities) having a mere instrumental nature, which are good or bad depending on the goodness or badness of their uses. Let us consider the two following examples:

X saves her friend Y from failure with her money, where money plays a clearly positive role;

X corrupts the judge with his money, where the role of money is clearly negative.

In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (1355b 5-8) introduces the notion of instrumental goods (including all goods, but virtue) that are *per se* neutral and may be considered as goods insofar they represent resources necessary to realize truly good ends. Rhetoric is included in this class integrating a small collection of other examples: strength, health, wealth and strategy. Interestingly Aristotle includes rhetoric, which largely coincides for him and the other ancient scholars with the argumentative discourse. In fact, the ancient theoreticians frequently focus on the ambivalence of rhetorical ability, noticing however that, though often being exploited to ignite conflicts and seditions and to perpetrate frauds, it is nevertheless necessary to create the healthy consent generating and preserving all human cultures and institutions (this remark is present in Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian). Especially Cicero engages in bringing to light an evidently positive balance between good and bad uses of communication and argumentation (see his introduction to the first book of *De inventione*¹³).

6. *Endoxa as complementary soundness conditions of arguments and as clues of cultural belonging*

Considering both the locus from totality (to which the whole-parts argument scheme refers) and the locus from the final cause, two significant considerations emerge:

1. In both cases traditional maxims show to contain ambiguities and, as their validity is restricted to very specific semantic values of the terms that make them up, accurate semantic analyses are needed to ensure their validity; in particular regarding the whole-parts argument scheme, only absolute structure-independent predicates are considered as transferable; regarding our maxim deriving from the locus from final cause (*The end justifies the means*), only an interpretation of *end*

Zweck heiligt die Mittel"; in Russian, "Cel' opravdyvaet sredstva" etc. In general it does not receive the argumentatively correct interpretation we have just brought to light, but an ironic, malicious, reading that recalls the paramaxim (2).

¹³ "Saepe et multum hoc mecum cogitavi, bonine an mali plus attulerit hominibus et civitatibus copia dicendi ac summum eloquentiae studium. Nam cum et nostrae rei publicae detrimenta considero et maximarum civitatum veteres animo calamitates colligo, non minimam video per disertissimos homines invectam partem incommodorum; cum autem res ab nostra memoria propter vetustatem remotas ex litterarum monumentis repetere instituo, multas urbes constitutas, plurima bella restincta, firmissimas societates, sanctissimas amicitias intellego cum animi ratione tum facilius eloquentia comparatas".

as “purpose” and of *means* as “morally neutral means” transforms the proverb in an authentic maxim.

2. Invalid principles sometimes seem to recover their validity, as different, valid, maxims are actually invoked. In a particular interpretation of our proverb, an action aiming at a good effect may be considered in its wholeness as good even if some side effects (non-intended effects) are bad, if these side effects are tolerable or irrelevant. Indeed the maxim from the lesser evil, generated by the locus from alternatives, is here properly invoked¹⁴.

In general, it should be emphasized that valid maxims (argument schemes) do not acquire or lose their validity intermittently, depending on their different applications: indeed their argumentative effectiveness, their applicability, is restricted to the scenarios that meet the semantic-ontological conditions required by their right interpretation. The maxim from totality should not be invoked if the properties concerned are structure-dependent; analogously, the maxim of the locus from final cause we considered cannot be applied if the means concerned are not properly neutral¹⁵. However, in such cases we are not legitimated to state that the considered maxim becomes invalid, but we have to take cognizance that, in the actual context, our valid maxim does not meet the required conditions, i.e. is not applied to the appropriate situation. In fact, the validity of the maxim does not guarantee the soundness of the argument; more precisely, the validity of the maxim is a necessary, not a sufficient condition of the soundness of an argument: another level of premises must be taken into account (Rigotti & Greco 2006; Rigotti 2006; Rigotti 2009). Interestingly, in the theoretical frame of pragma-dialectics, in the opening stage, beyond the procedural starting point, to which argument schemes (maxims) naturally belong, the notion of material starting point is also introduced (see van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002: 20)¹⁶.

At this point, the question about what other conditions, beyond the validity of the maxim, must be satisfied in order to have a sound argument might be translated as how material starting point should be defined and analysed or what components of an argumentative move are to be identified with the material starting point. In this connection I propose to reconsider the Aristotelian notion of *endoxon* as it is defined in the first Book of *Topics* (100b.21):

¹⁴ In the considered situation, invoking our maxim of the locus from final cause would represent either a bad interpretation of a maxim, violating rule 8 of critical discussion by the use of an invalid reasoning procedure, or the use of an inappropriate, but in itself valid argument scheme, violating rule 7 of critical discussion (cf. van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992: 160-161).

¹⁵ In both cases there would be an incorrect use of a valid argument scheme: rule 7 of critical discussion would be violated (cf. *ibidem*).

¹⁶ This subject is analyzed in greater detail in Rigotti & Greco Morasso (forthcoming).

Endoxa are opinions that are accepted by everyone or by the majority, or by the wise men (all of them or the majority, or by the most notable and illustrious of them).

An *endoxon* is thus an opinion that is accepted by the relevant audience or by the opinion leaders of the relevant audience. It seems that the tradition of topics indeed neglected this notion, merging it with the notion of maxim (originally, in Boethius, *propositio maxima*) often referred to by Aristotle with *topos*¹⁷. But it is hard to imagine that Aristotle attributed to all people or to the majority of them or to the wisest ones etc. the shared knowledge (or belief) of topical rules, even though these rules may become part of the acquired outfit of some of them. The cognitive status of the abstract, general inference rules discovered by argumentation theorists cannot be interpreted in terms of the prevalingly shared opinion. The ignorance of this fundamental component of Aristotelian topics is probably due to the fact that Aristotle did not explicitly give any example of what he understood by *endoxon*. Numerous *endoxa* can, however, be reconstructed if we consider the examples often given by the author when listing his *topoi*. Not coincidentally, in my opinion, Braet (see above), aiming to reconstruct an ideal model of an Aristotelian locus, lists as fourth component, beyond the name, the suggestion of a fair procedure for establishing the concerned type of argument and the topical principle involved, an actual example to which Aristotle often applies this principle (Braet 2005: 69).

In relation to one of the maxims of the locus from all the more and all the less “if something is not the case for an entity for which it should be more (plausibly) the case, it is evident that it is not the case for an entity for which it should be less (plausibly) the case”, Aristotle gives two interesting examples in *Rhetoric*:

1. “If not even the gods know everything, all the less do humans”;
2. “He who even beats his father may well (will all the more) beat his neighbors”.

In both examples the same maxim is at work, but it gets hold of a different *endoxon* (of a different shared opinion); this opinion can be brought to light by singling out the presuppositions – the premises – enabling us to activate the maxim. In (1) the gods are presupposed to know more than humans; in (2) it is presupposed that people are less likely to beat their father than their neighbors¹⁸.

However, in order to activate the maxim, another premise (recalling for its epistemic structure Toulmin’s notion of *datum*¹⁹) is required for satisfying the condition established

¹⁷ The lack of distinction between *topos* and maxim is particularly evident in Aristotle’s *Topica*, where he frequently, in his long undifferentiated list of *topoi*, starts referring to an ontological domain (for example, in *Topica* 114b.37 Aristotle lists and illustrates four different *topoi* of the *topos* from all the more and all the less) apparently presenting it as the *topos* in point, and then introduces, often naming them *topoi*, two or several inferential rules (maxims) entailed by this domain.

¹⁸ This *endoxon* is explicitly expounded by Aristotle (1397b 16-17).

in the *if*-part of the maxim: “something is not the case for an entity for which it should be more (plausibly) the case”. Indeed, both examples provide this further premise, which coincides in (1) with the fact that not even the gods know everything and in (2) with the fact that someone has been beating his father²⁰. In the first argument, a syllogistic procedure based on the conjunction of the *endoxon* and this second premise (see Rigotti 2006),

- the gods know more than humans
- the gods do not know everything

generates, through the third figure of syllogism (more specifically, the mode Darapti²¹), a provisional conclusion:

- some entities knowing more than humans do not know everything,

through which, satisfying the *if*-part of the maxim, we activate a *modus ponens* and derive the definitive conclusion:

- humans do not know everything.

Analogously, in the second argument, combining the *endoxon* with the second premise,

- people (all humans) are more likely to beat their neighbors than their father
- someone (some human) has been beating his father

we obtain, through the mode Datisi of the third figure, the provisional conclusion:

- someone has beaten a person that one might far less likely beat than one’s neighbors,

which is applied to the maxim to derive the final conclusion:

- he may well (all the more will he) beat his neighbors.

The two *endoxa* invoked by Aristotle to support so many arguments show different degrees of culture-dependence, which are worth to be focused on. Starting with the second argument, we indeed perceive in it a certain strangeness: it seems that at those times beating one’s neighbors was rather usual, even though we are comforted by the fact that people should only rarely beat their fathers. The present day reader perceives in this *endoxon* a certain cultural distance that can however be filled. On the other hand, the cultural distance of the *endoxon* presupposed by the first argument could neither be easily recovered by an audience of monotheistic believers (because of the polytheism it presupposes and because of the denial of divine omniscience it asserts), nor by an audience of non-believers as it presupposes the existence of the gods.

¹⁹ Toulmin (1958: 90): “We already have, therefore, one distinction to start with: between the claim or conclusion whose merits we are seeking to establish (C) and the facts we appeal to as a foundation for the claim – what I shall refer to as our data (D)”.

²⁰ The difference in the modal status of the two premises is mirrored by an analogous difference in the respective standpoints: in (1) the standpoint claims that humans cannot know everything; in (2) the standpoint claims that such a person *might* well beat his neighbours (cf. Rocci 2008).

²¹ See also Vanni Rovighi (1962: 88-92).

The presuppositional nature of *endoxa* make them unquestionable by definition within the concerned argumentative move, but it does not exclude that they are questioned in other argumentative moves either within the same culture or in an intercultural interaction²². The cases in which cultural presuppositions are discussed within the same culture are particularly interesting as they show the capacity of this culture of evolving by means of argumentation. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* gives a fitting example. Illustrating the locus "from the implications" (the fact that "if the implication is the same, the same must be said of the things from which this implication follows"; more explicitly: if an implication of a state of affairs justifies the attribution to it of a certain predicate, this attribution is justified also for the other states of affairs having the same implication) (*Rhetoric* 1399 b 5-9), he mentions a saying of Xenophanes remarking that "people who affirm that the gods are born are as ungodly as people who affirm that the gods die". Both statements, he comments, indeed entail that there is a time in which the gods do not exist. In this argumentation, a vision, that in another argumentation was presupposed as an *endoxon* (the Greek Olympus theogony), becomes a standpoint, that is not only questioned, but also refuted, thus showing a phase of evolution of the Greek culture of the time.

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²² See also Rocci 2006: 425 ff.

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MODALS AS LEXICAL INDICATORS OF ARGUMENTATION¹. A STUDY OF ITALIAN ECONOMIC-FINANCIAL NEWS

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will investigate the role of lexical expressions of modality as argumentative indicators². More precisely, I will argue that modal expressions are closely intertwined with the establishment of *argumentative discourse relations* between utterances in discourse, both at a pragmatic and at a logico-semantic level.

The paper constitutes an interim report of a broad ongoing research project investigating the relationship between *argumentation* and the semantic and pragmatic functioning of lexical and grammatical markers of modality in Italian.

The project chose to investigate this relationship within the genre of *economic-financial newspaper articles*, using a large corpus of Italian economic-financial news, consisting of roughly 4 million words collected from three specialized Italian dailies (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, *Italia Oggi* and *MF/Milano Finanza*)³. As it will become clear through the following sections, the choice of a corpus from such a specific discourse genre was far from coincidental or merely practical. Rather it was motivated by a series of quite unique semantic-discursive characteristics of this news genre that make it, at the same time, an ideal testbed for studying the relationship between modality and arguments and a promising socially relevant field of application for the findings of such an investigation.

Here I will limit my discussion to the two Italian modal verbs *potere* and *dovere*. I will devote special attention to the role of the latter as an argumentative indicator, looking at its uses both in the indicative and in the conditional mood.

The Italian modal verbs *potere* and *dovere* can contribute to signal *argumentative relations* in discourse, where the modalized proposition is understood as a *standpoint* or *conclusion* (I will consider these terms as equivalents thereafter) presented by the arguer to the

¹ The present investigation is carried out as part of a research project entitled *Modality in argumentation. A semantic-argumentative study of predictions in Italian economic-financial newspapers*. The project is supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation (Grant: 100012-120740/1).

² According to van Eemeren, Houtlosser & Snoeck-Henkemans (2007: 1) an argumentative indicator is "a sign that a particular argumentative move might be in progress, but it does not constitute a decisive pointer".

³ The qualitative analysis of the corpus examples on which the present paper rests was carried out on a sub-corpus 95 articles from the properly financial sections of the *Il Sole 24 Ore*, extracted from eight April 2006 issues of the daily (about 55.000 words).

addressee as *inferrable* – with a variable degree of certainty – from a set of *premises* that the addressee is invited to supply, recovering them from the preceding or following co-text, or constructing them on-line from the stock of opinion and knowledge, which is assumed to be part of the common ground of the arguer and the addressee. In section 3.1 I will briefly sketch a view argumentative discourse relations based on the notion of *connective predicate* from Congruity Theory (Rigotti 2005).

The role of modals as argumentative indicators has been most often recognized when modals acquire an epistemic reading, and especially for those modals where the epistemic reading is accompanied by an *inferential evidential*⁴ specification.

The epistemic-evidential readings that the verb *dovere* can undergo in certain tenses of the indicative mood – mostly in the present, the imperfect, and the remote past – exemplified by (1), represent the paradigmatic case:

(1) Ratan Tata, presidente del gruppo indiano Tata dal 1991, è noto per aver svecchiato l'impresa di famiglia e per l'affermazione 'Niente mi stimola di più di una sfida'. **Deve** essere stato questo che ha fatto scattare un feeling istintivo tra lo stesso Tata e Sergio Marchionne, a.d. del gruppo torinese, durante le trattative che hanno portato ad un accordo commerciale tra i due gruppi in India. (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, April 19, 2006)

'Ratan Tata, chairman of the Indian group Tata since 1991 is known for having renewed this family company and for having declared: "Nothing stimulates me more than a challenge". It **must** have been this that triggered an instinctive feeling between Tata and Sergio Marchionne, CEO of the Turin based group, during the negotiations that lead to a commercial agreement between the two groups in India.'

In (1) the role of the indicative epistemic *dovere* (henceforth *deve_E*) is not limited to expressing – in fact rather vaguely – a certain degree of confidence lower than that of a bare, non modalized, assertion. It also contributes to establishing an argumentative discourse relation between the two utterances. Note that if we eliminate the modal the level of discourse coherence is affected:

(2) Ratan Tata, presidente del gruppo indiano Tata dal 1991, è noto per aver svecchiato l'impresa di famiglia e per l'affermazione 'Niente mi stimola di più di una sfida'. È stato questo che ha fatto scattare un feeling istintivo tra lo stesso

⁴ The term *evidentiality* refers to "the grammatical encoding of the speaker's (type of) grounds for making a speech act" (Faller 2002: 2). Inferential evidentiality refers to grammatical morphemes marking that the information conveyed by the utterance is the result of reasoning from indirect evidence. The study of evidentiality as a *grammatical-typological* category had been traditionally limited to languages, such as Quechua and several other native American languages, where evidentials correspond to clearly obligatorily manifested morphological categories. However, with Chafe & Nichols (1986) and later Dendale & Tasmowski (1994) evidentiality as a *semantic category* has been increasingly investigated also in languages such as French, Italian or English where it is only intermittently or indirectly manifested by morphology, or relies solely on lexical strategies for its manifestation. For a recent discussion of grammatical and lexical evidentiality in Italian see Squartini (2008).

Tata e Sergio Marchionne, a.d. del gruppo torinese, durante le trattative che hanno portato ad un accordo commerciale tra i due gruppi in India. (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, April 19, 2006)

‘Ratan Tata, chairman of the Indian group Tata since 1991 is known for having renewed this family company and for having declared: “Nothing stimulates me more than a challenge”. It was this that triggered an instinctive feeling between Tata and Sergio Marchionne, CEO of the Turin based group, during the negotiations that lead to a commercial agreement between the two groups in India.’

In (2) it is no longer clear that the first utterance functions as a premise supporting an inferred conclusion in a partially manifested argument. In the original version (1), *deve_E* truly functions as an inferential evidential, signaling that the writer is inferring that the reason why Marchionne and Tata get well together *must* be that they both like challenges. This is a complicated abductive inference resting on a number of unstated premises, which notably include the belief that Mr. Marchionne likes challenges (which is, in Aristotelian terms, an *endoxon*⁵ with respect to the common ground of the Italian readers of *Il Sole 24 Ore*) and some major premise supporting the inference from similarity to getting together well, which is also easily recoverable as an *endoxon* in the cultural common ground: *Chi si somiglia si piglia* ‘Birds of a feather flock together’. In contrast, in the modified version in (2) the writer seems to be just *reporting* that the reason why Marchionne and Tata get well together is their common liking for challenges.

It seems, therefore, that a modal like *deve* can function as an indicator that the propositional content of the utterance is *inferred* by the communicator from evidence available in the context, and not independently known from direct experience or hearsay.

In the case of (1) the premises supporting the inferential operation signalled by the modal are identified in part anaphorically with the content of the preceding utterances in the text and in part with *endoxa* in the cultural common ground.

It is this kind of observations that have lead linguists (cf. Dendale 1994, Squartini 2004, Rocci 2005) to the conclusion that modals like *deve*, in their epistemic readings function as lexical markers of *inferential evidentiality*, much like the grammaticalized evidential morphemes and particles specifying the source of knowledge of the propositional content of the utterance, which are well known from the study of Amerindian languages (cf. Fallor 2002) and are indeed found in many languages of the world.

In the following sections of this paper I will show, through a qualitative analysis of a series of examples extracted from the corpus of Italian financial news, that beyond these rel-

⁵ The ancient rhetorical term *endoxon* (pl. *endoxa*) can be used to refer to values and beliefs shared in the communal common ground (Cf. Clark 1996) of some relevant cultural community, especially inasmuch they can be mobilized to serve as premises in an enthymematic argument. In the *Topics*, Aristotle gives an articulated definition of the *endoxa*: “[*endoxa* are those opinions] which commend themselves to all, or to the majority, or to the wise – that is or to all of the wise or to the majority or to the most famous and distinguished of them” (*Topics* I 100b 21-23).

atively well known *epistemic* and *evidential* readings, which I labeled *deve_E*, there are many other readings of the modal verb *dovere* in the indicative and in the conditional mood that can contribute to signaling argumentative relations in discourse.

Interestingly, compared with the case of *deve_E*, many of the uses that I examine here can be considered *epistemic* only very indirectly. Some of them give rise to an epistemic evaluation only as a highly context dependent implication on the basis of other kinds of modal meanings, such as, for instance, deontic meanings. Similarly, some of these uses can be considered to convey an *evidential* specification only as a contextual effect in discourse. Some of them do not function as evidential at all, and yet they are deeply intertwined with argumentation.

One of the reasons why these findings are worth reporting is that they can contribute to cast a new light on crucial questions concerning the role of modals in arguments that have arisen in argumentation theory since its inception.

2. Modality in argumentation theory

2.1 Three takes on the modals in Toulmin

The idea of a close connection between modal meanings and argumentation is not new in argumentation theory. It appears in Stephen Toulmin's (1958) foundational book *The Uses of Argument*, which deals with modals in three separate chapters: the first chapter (*Fields of arguments and modals*), the second (*Probability*) and the third, where he includes the modal qualifier as a component of what was to be known as the "Toulmin model". Rather than building on what precedes, each of the three chapters approaches the issue from a different angle.

In the first chapter, Toulmin suggests that modal terms should be understood in terms of their argumentative functions:

These terms – 'possible', 'necessary' and the like – are best understood, I shall argue, by examining the functions they have when we come to set out our arguments (Toulmin 1958: 18).

Toulmin argued for an exact parallelism between the semantics of modal words like *may*, *must*, *possible*, *cannot* and discourse moves corresponding to different phases of an argument: taking an hypothesis into consideration (*may*), excluding an hypothesis (*cannot*), and concluding (*must*). He claimed that the modals have an invariant force, to be understood in terms of argumentative moves, and variable "field dependent" *criteria*. This view can be illustrated by the following examples provided by Toulmin:

(3.a) Under the circumstances, there is only one decision open to us; the child *must* be returned to the custody of its parent.

(3.b) Considering the dimensions of the sun, moon and earth and their relative positions at the time concerned, we see that the moon *must* be completely obscured at the moment.

According to Toulmin, in both examples the modal *must* signals the speech act of drawing a conclusion. This invariant argumentative function is the *force* of the modal. On the other hand, the logical type both of the conclusion and of the premises varies according to what Toulmin calls the “field of argument”. In (3.a) the conclusion is a required course of action, in view of the circumstances of the case and some relevant legal and moral principles to which the author and the addressee abide, while in (3.b) the conclusion is a necessary astronomical fact, in view of other astronomical facts and of the relevant physical laws governing the movement and interactions of those celestial bodies. Toulmin develops this hypothesis through a detailed analysis of the uses of *cannot*, which can be reduced, according to Toulmin, to a common pattern (4.a) expressing an invariant force (ruling out an hypothesis) and a number of open variable slots that are filled differently according to the different fields to which the grounds for ruling out the hypothesis belong. Two of the possible fillings considered by Toulmin are exemplified by (4.b) and (4.c).

(4.a) ‘P being what it is, you must rule out anything involving Q: to do otherwise would be R and would invite S’

(4.b) “The seating capacity of the Town Hall being what it is, you can’t get ten thousand people into it –to attempt to do so would be vain”.

(4.c) “The by-laws being as they are, you can’t smoke in this compartment, Sir – to do so would be a contravention of them” (Toulmin, 1958: 24-29)

In Rocci (2008) I have discussed at length the merits of Toulmin’s analysis as well its shortcomings and the apories it encounters, tackling a number of specific aspects, including the seemingly bizarre choice of an obviously semantically composite unit (*cannot*) to illustrate a general point on the meaning of the modals.

On the one hand, Toulmin’s analysis contains valuable insights: it anticipates later semantic analyses of the modals as context dependent relational predicates characterized by open slots that have to be filled in context, putting us on the right track by inviting us to look for the relationship between the different fillings of these slots and different kinds of propositions used to support a standpoint. On the other hand, his straight identification of the invariant meaning of the modals – the force – with an argumentative speech act is difficult to defend.

Let us consider the case of the English modal *must*. For Toulmin, *must* signals the act of presenting one particular conclusion as unequivocally the one to accept, having ruled out other hypotheses. What changes in the different interpretations of the modals are the grounds, or *criteria*, on which this act of drawing a conclusion is based, as illustrated in his well chosen examples presented as (3.a) and (3.b) above, where conclusions are drawn respectively on legal/moral and on physical grounds. According to this view, the Italian modal *deve* in example (5) below would have to be considered similar in kind to the *must* in (3.a) and signal an act of drawing a conclusion on a required course of action from legal grounds:

(5) Un aspirante fotografo **dovrà** effettuare 55 passaggi burocratici e bussare alla porta di una ventina di uffici [...]

'A would-be photographer will have to perform 55 bureaucratic passages and knock at the door of about twenty offices' (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, April 4, 2006).

But certainly this is not the case in example (5). In this text the journalist is indeed *asserting* that the unnamed '55 bureaucratic passages' are *necessarily entailed* by Italian laws and regulations. We cannot say, however, that he is supporting the standpoint that a certain course of action is legally required for photographers by presenting Italian laws and regulations as an argument for drawing this conclusion. If anything because the specific laws and regulations remain unanalyzed and textually inaccessible, just as the modalized proposition is utterly uninformative about the specifics of the entailed action.

We can say that the modals do indeed point to a variable set of "grounds" or "criteria", as Toulmin surmised, but the relation they establish between this implicit background and the underlying modalized proposition is not always an argumentative one. Consider, for instance, the following English example:

(6) If someone wants, for instance, to buy clothes, he must know where to buy them. He must go to different shops. *Maybe* he *must* negotiate with the sales-person (example retrieved through *Google*).

In (6) the modal *must* falls within the scope of another modal (*maybe*) and thus, to paraphrase Toulmin, we find it embedded as the *content* of an hypothesis worth considering. Clearly, *must* in (6) does not indicate an act of conclusion, nor any other kind of speech act.

The second chapter of Toulmin's book is devoted to defending an interpretation of the modal adverb *probably* and other probability idioms as speech-act markers of "guarded assertion" as more fitting to their actual use than the traditional statistical interpretation. In his analysis of *probably* Toulmin compares the adverb to illocutionary markers modifying the degree of commitment in a speech act, citing early speech-act theoretic work by Austin on the differences between saying *I shall do A* and *I promise I shall do A*, or between simply asserting a proposition *p* and saying *I know that p*.

According to Toulmin, a modal like *probably* can be similarly used to modify my commitment to a prediction – Toulmin takes the example of a meteorological forecast – limiting our answerability and shielding us from "some of the consequences of failure" (Toulmin 1958: 51). In other words, the basic meaning of *probably* is seen as a pragmatic function, which linguists would now call *hedging*⁶, which limits the responsibility of the speaker with respect to an assertive speech act.

Finally, in presenting what was to be known as the "Toulmin model" of argument structure (Chapter 3), Toulmin introduces the *modal qualifier* as a distinct category in the argument layout, separate from the claim, and meant to provide an "explicit reference to the degree of force which our data confer to our claim in virtue of our warrant" (Toulmin

⁶ On *hedging* as a semantic-pragmatic category, see Lakoff (1973). Toulmin himself uses the word *hedging*, but only non-terminologically to refer in a derogatory way to the abuse of the shield provided by *probably*.

1958: 101). This analysis can be seen in the light of the analysis of *probably* in the previous chapter: modal qualifiers modify the claim of the argument expressing its *force*, again at a pragmatic level.

There is a certain feeling of disconnect between the treatment of modality in the different chapters of *The Uses of Argument*, which betrays their different origin and time of composition. The first chapter, in particular, offers a view of modality which is different than the one proposed in the subsequent chapters. In the first chapter modal are – so-to-say⁷ – *illocutionary markers* signaling different relevant moves in argumentation (considering an hypothesis, ruling out an hypothesis, concluding), while later they become *illocutionary force modifiers* quantifying the strength of the act of concluding. Moreover, the emphasis on the *relational* meaning of the modal and on the different kinds of reasons that can saturate the “criteria” largely disappears in the subsequent chapters as the modal qualifier becomes closer to a one-place modifier of the force of conclusion.

2.2 Developments in argumentation theory

Given the important place that modality occupies in Toulmin’s book, it’s somewhat surprising that there has been comparatively little attention to the problem of modality by subsequent argumentation scholars. Among those who do discuss the role of modals in some detail, the contributions of James Freeman and Francisca Snoeck-Henkemans are certainly worth mentioning. These two authors provide emendations of roughly the same perceived shortcomings in Toulmin’s view, but do so in different ways.

Freeman’s (1991) account of modalities incorporates two Toulminian ideas: (1) that the modal should be treated as a distinct element in the “macrostructure” of arguments – as opposed to elements of the semantic microstructure of the propositions making up the argument – and (2) that the semantics of the modals is basically relational.

At the same time, Freeman rejects two other features of Toulmin’s account: that the modals’ force operates at the illocutionary level, and that it modifies directly the claim.

Focusing, in particular, on the analysis of probability expressions, Freeman argues that modals are always relative to an explicit or implicit body of background evidence so that they have the underlying relational form ‘*Given evidence E, probably p*’ rather than the form of an unary operator ‘*Probably p*’. He follows Black’s (1967) idea that the “absolute” reading of *probably* emerges from the identification of E with “the relevant features of the state of the world at the moment of utterance”. Freeman (1991: 123-124) identifies “absolute” probability with *epistemic probability* “probability given all the known relevant evidence”. This is the kind of probability that “involves” assertion. In their non-epistemic uses, probability expressions are akin to conditional structures and are not assertive.

According to this view, the pragmatic role of ‘*Probably p*’ as a way of hedging the assertion of ‘p’ is rather an “emotive meaning” – I would rather say *implicature* – emerging

⁷ Referred to Toulmin (1958) this terminology is obviously an anachronism.

from their “literal” relational meaning, when E is identified with all the known relevant evidence at the moment of utterance. What the literal meaning of the modal qualifier directly expresses is a description of “how weighty a case the premise or premises of an argument make for the conclusions they support” (Freeman 1991: 112). Consequently, Freeman argues, with respect to their role in arguments, modals are better treated as similar to *argumentative connectives* such as *therefore* or *because*, rather than to operators like negation, which take scope over a single proposition.

Francisca Snoeck-Henkemans (1997: 108-117) addresses linguistic expressions of modality as *indicators* in the task of argumentative reconstruction within the Pragma-Dialectic framework. In Pragma-Dialectics argumentative indicators are linguistic expressions, textual features or behavioral cues that “point to speech acts that are instrumental in the various stages of dispute resolution. Argumentative indicators may make it clear that argumentation has been advanced and how this argumentation is structured” (Houtlosser 2002: 169-170). More precisely, they point to a number of aspects of the argumentative discourse that are relevant for evaluating the soundness of the argument. As observed by Houtlosser (2002: 169), this information includes, at least⁸:

- a) What is the standpoint (conclusion) that is argued for, what is its precise content;
- b) What is the *force* of conviction with which the standpoint is presented;
- c) What statements are presented as arguments (or premises) supporting the standpoint;
- d) What is the nature of the inferential link that is established between the arguments/premises and the standpoint, that is what kind of *deductive rule* or *argumentation scheme* is applied;
- e) What implicit premises need to be supplied by the audience in order to saturate the requirements of the *argumentation scheme*.

For Snoeck-Henkemans (1997: 109) modal words “can be used to indicate the extent to which the speaker is prepared to commit himself to the truth or acceptability of the propositional content of his standpoint”. This expression of the degree of commitment “enables the analyst to determine what degree of justificatory or refutatory potential the argumentation should have, in order to lend sufficient support to the standpoint” (Snoeck-Henkemans 1997: 113)⁹.

⁸ Van Eemeren, Houtlosser & Snoeck Henkemans (2007) propose a more comprehensive list of relevant kinds of information, which follows systematically from the stages of the model of critical discussion. For the purposes of the present article it is not strictly necessary to consider this broader list.

⁹ In Houtlosser (2002) and van Eemeren, Houtlosser & Snoeck-Henkemans (2007) epistemic expressions modifying the force of the assertion are discussed in relation to the *confrontation stage* also as (indirect) indicators of the act itself of putting forth a standpoint in the confrontation. For instance, a weak assertive expression such as *I believe* can be used “to convey the speaker’s expectation that his assertive will not be immediately accepted by the interlocutor” (Houtlosser 2002: 174), at least, not without supporting arguments.

This equivalence between the expression of the “degree of certainty with which the standpoint is advanced” and the indication of the “degree of justificatory potential” can be established if we analyze the pragmatics of argumentation using the speech-act theoretic framework provided by Pragma-Dialectics. By advancing a standpoint an arguer commits himself to presenting adequate evidence in support of it in face of the expressed or implicit doubt of another party. By advancing a standpoint *with a certain degree of confidence*, the arguer *ipso facto* commits himself to providing evidence supporting the standpoint with a *matching degree of force or weight* (cf. Snoeck-Henkemans 1997: 112-113). In fact, this commitment to the proportionate matching of certainty and weight of evidence, can be considered part and parcel of the commitment to a critical discussion¹⁰.

Contrary to what is suggested in Toulmin’s first chapter, for Snoeck-Henkemans (1997: 109), only *epistemic modalities* are used to indicate degree of commitment to the truth or acceptability of a standpoint. Only these modalities are not “part of the proposition towards which the speaker has put forward a standpoint” (*ibid.*), while other kinds of modality, like deontic modality, are indeed *part of the proposition* and thus cannot play the role of *force* indicators.

In the following sections we will devote particular attention to non epistemic uses of the Italian modal *dovere* attested in the financial news corpus, including both deontic uses and what I will call “ontological causal” uses, examining their potential as argumentative indicators. The findings will confirm, on the one hand, that only truly epistemic uses can act as direct *force* indicators – an indication that does not exhaust, however, their meaning. On the other hand, it will turn out that non-epistemic modals do convey argumentatively relevant information but of a different kind.

3. *A basic framework for investigating the relationship between argumentation and modality*

Before proceeding with the analysis of the uses of the modals found in financial news articles, I need here to pick up some minimal theoretical baggage explaining what I mean by an argumentative discourse relation and presenting the general approach I follow in dealing with the semantics of the modals.

3.1 A stratified account of arguing

In this paper I will deal with argumentative discourse relations following the general approach proposed by Congruity Theory, which is presented in detail in Rigotti (2005) and

¹⁰ This is not made, however, entirely explicit in the rules and commandments for the critical discussion (cf. van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004). *Commandment 7*, in fact, only deals with one limit case of this matching, which concerns arguments presented as deductively conclusive, which need to be formally valid, without proposing an analogous matching justificatory force for lower levels of commitment.

in Rocci (2005). Argumentation, like other discourse relations, is represented as an abstract pragmatic predicate, also called *connective predicate*. A pragmatic predicate is an action predicate saying what the speaker does to the addressee with the utterance. Like ordinary predicates in Congruity Theory, pragmatic predicates are analysed in term of the presuppositions they impose on their argument frame and of the conditions (entailments) with which they update the common ground. Since pragmatic predicates not only represent but also realize social actions, their update conditions are *pragmatic effects*, involving the creation of commitments of the participants which become part of the common ground. A pragmatic predicate is thus a relational predicate which minimally takes as its arguments the speaker (Spk), the hearer (Hr) and an utterance (U_0):

P (Spk, Hr, U_0)

Since many pragmatic predicates, including *arguing*, are relational also in the sense that they are logically dependent from the content of another utterance, the argument frame of the pragmatic predicate can also include other anaphorically recovered utterances (U_{-n}) or inferred contextual propositions (X) as arguments – hence the term *connective predicate*:

C (Spk, Hr, X, U_{-n} , U_0)

An argumentative discourse relation can be thus represented as a connective predicate frame where a Spk presents a standpoint U_0 as supported by one or more co-textual arguments $U_{-1} \dots U_{-n}$, and unexpressed premises ($X_1 \dots X_n$). In this framework the felicity conditions imposed by Searlian illocutions (Searle 1969) – which typically involve the speaker and hearer – are reinterpreted either as presuppositions imposed by the connective predicate on n-uples of argument places including for instance the speaker (*Spk*), the hearer (*Hr*) and the utterance U_0 or as pragmatic effects of the predicate¹¹. *Rhetorical relations* defined, as in Mann & Thompson (1987), in terms of conditions on the utterances involved, conditions on their combination, and effects of the combination are even more straightforwardly rendered in terms of presuppositions and effects of the pragmatic predicate.

Often pragmatic predicates receive little or no linguistic manifestation, and hearers have to infer them, in order to make sense of an utterance or discourse. There are however a number of linguistic items whose business is to impose quite detailed constraints on the pragmatic predicates to be established; discourse connectives such as *therefore*, *but* or *in fact* are perhaps among the most obvious candidates to this role. One of the guiding hypotheses of the present work, which is shared by Freeman (1991) is that modals behave similarly to connectives and impose constraints on the interpretation of argumentative pragmatic predicates at different levels.

In an insightful review of current linguistic approaches to discourse relations conducted from the viewpoint of argumentation theory Snoeck-Henkemans (2001) criticizes

¹¹ Consider, for instance, the preparatory conditions of the assertion as formulated by Searle (1969). One of them states that ‘It is not obvious to the *Speaker* that the *Hearer* knows (does not need to be reminded of) *p*’. This type of condition is treated as a (relational) presupposition imposed by any ‘assertive’ connective predicate on the argument places characterized by the roles of the *Speaker*, the *Hearer* and the asserted proposition.

theories such as Mann & Thompson (1987) or Sweetser (1990) for positing that discourse relations hold *either* at the pragmatic/epistemic level *or* at the propositional level. According to Snoeck-Henkemans (2001: 237) these theories do not recognize that “every illocutionary relation is by definition based on a subject matter (or ‘propositional’) relation. This recognition, she argues, is particularly important if we want to account for argumentation which holds at the speech act level, but inevitably rests on relations such as *causality*, *concomitance*, and *comparison* holding between the propositional contents of the standpoint and of the arguments.

In fact, an account of inference in ordinary discourse cannot just rest on a notion of *logical form* – which remains hollow until it is associated to a semantic interpretation – or worse be content of conceiving epistemic relations as *alternative* to content-level relations, as Sweetser (1990) does, holding in a world of belief objects whose relationship with real world causality is simply “metaphorical”.

The idea is that when I infer a proposition q from a set of propositions (premises) $p_1 \dots p_n$ I do that thanks to some conceptual – semantico-ontological – relationship between q and these other propositions. The Ancient and Medieval rhetorical and dialectical tradition of the *Topics* called *topos* or *locus* a class of such content-level relationships. In the traditional view inferences in natural discourse are based on a variety of *loci* or *topoi* including relations such as *cause/effect*, *part/whole*, *genus/species*, as well as *means/ends* relations, *similarity* relations, and so on. Rigotti (forth. 2009) presents a detailed theory of argumentative *loci*, which, drawing on the *Topics* tradition, conceives a *locus* as a semantico-ontological relation¹² binding the propositional content of the standpoint to the propositional content of the premises¹³, in a way that warrants an implicative relation at the logical level. As we will see in the following sections, considering the specific *locus* supporting an argumentation will help us better understand the role of non-epistemic modals in arguments.

Congruity Theory (Rigotti 2005: 85-86) implements this stratified conception of the argumentative discourse relation by considering the propositional level relation of the *locus* as a presupposition of the pragmatic predicate. The inventory of *loci* includes ontological relations such as cause-effect, part-whole, genus-species, means-ends, etc.

The stratified structure of an argumentative discourse relation can be therefore represented as follow:

$$C(\text{Spk}, \text{Hr}, X, U_{-n}, U_0):$$

Presuppositions:

- $p_1 \dots p_n$ being the propositional contents of $U_{-1} \dots U_{-n}$ (and $X_1 \dots X_n$), $p_1 \dots p_n \in \text{CG}_{\text{Spk}, \text{Hr}}$ – that is belong to the common ground between Spk and Hr;

¹² Other authors that adopt a somewhat similar semantico-ontological take on argument schemes speak of “relations of conveyance” (Katzav & Reed 2004).

¹³ Note that Rigotti (forth. 2009) presents a much more detailed internal analysis of the functioning of a *locus* in the inferential structure of an argument than what is retained for the purposes of this paper.

- q being the propositional content of U_0 , $q \notin CG_{Spk,Hr}$; $\neg q \notin CG_{Spk,Hr}$
- There is some ontological-semantic relation $L(\{p_1 \dots p_n\}, q)$ warranting $\{p_1 \dots p_n\} \rightarrow q$

Pragmatic effects:

- With U_0 , Spk presents q as *reasonably acceptable* by Hr thanks to the premises $p_1 \dots p_n$ presented in $U_{-1} \dots U_{-n}$ (and $X_1 \dots X_n$).

A final remark needs to be made here on the relationship between pragmatic effects of the argumentative connective predicate as outlined above and the mental act of drawing an inference. Not every attempt to persuade the addressee counts as argumentation, arguments are appeals to reason, attempts at persuading of the standpoint *because* of the support offered by the premises. We can see arguing as trying to lead somebody to assent to a standpoint q , making it follow inferentially from arguments $p_1 \dots p_n$ he/she already accepts. A similar approach is proposed by Pinto (1996), who treats arguments as “invitations to inference” and emphasizes that the specific goal of argumentation is “to effect an *inference* in the person to whom it’s addressed” and not simply “to effect acceptance of its conclusion” (Pinto 1996: 168).

Looking at the relationship between argumentation and inference helps us also to understand the relationship between *argumentation* and *inferential evidentiality*. Argumentation proposes an *inference to the addressee*, while inferential evidentiality signals an *inference of the speaker* as the source of knowledge of the utterance. The two may well go together – such as in example (1) – but we can also have evidentiality without argumentation (when the private premises of the speaker are not made available to the hearer) and argumentation without evidentiality. Consider, for instance, the classic alibi example. Suppose I say to the investigators: *Wednesday I was in Milan giving a talk. I couldn’t possibly rob a bank in Lugano on that day*. Here I am certainly trying to get the hearer to infer my innocence, but we cannot say that I am signaling that the source of *my own knowledge* of not having robbed a bank in Lugano is inferential! This distinction is relevant for some of the uses of the modals I will examine here.

3.2 A relational analysis of the semantics of the modals

As a conceptual category, modality relates to the very basic human cognitive ability of thinking that *things might be otherwise*, that is thinking of *alternatives*: states of affairs other than what is the case. The logico-philosophical tradition developed the theoretical notion of *possible worlds* to deal with reasoning about alternatives¹⁴ (or different *possibilities*). Modality

¹⁴ David Lewis (1973) work on counterfactuals is one of the most influential in-depth discussions of possible worlds in modern philosophical logic. The book is also noteworthy for the impact it had on the linguistic semantic analysis of modality and conditional constructions. An accessible introduction to possible worlds is Gärdenfors (2003). This work is recommended for its focus on the broader philosophical significance of possible worlds rather than on the technical details of their implementation in modal logic.

concerns, in a more restricted sense, a class of semantic notions – which include *possibility*, *necessity* and *probability* – involving the quantification over alternatives of a certain kind¹⁵.

The following sections will show how it is possible to claim, on the one side, that the semantics of Italian modal verbs *potere* and *dovere* is similar in important ways to that of discourse connectives and, on the other side, advocate a semantics of the modals that does not make the inherently tied to different kinds of argumentative speech acts, as originally suggested by Toulmin for the English modal verbs and the adverb *probably*.

Two key elements of the semantic analysis proposed that contribute to make modal verbs similar to connectives are (a) that modal verbs are seen as *relational* predicates, and (b) that their semantic structure is seen as structurally *context-dependent* and involving a *procedural* component.

A rich and flexible analysis of Italian modal verbs as *relational* and *context dependent* can be worked out building on the Theory of Relative Modality, a theory which was first introduced in formal linguistic semantics in the late 1970s.

3.2.1 Modal meanings are relational

The fundamentals of the theory stem from seminal papers by German linguist Angelika Kratzer (1977, 1981, 1991)¹⁶. Kratzer showed that, in natural language, *necessity* is to be understood in terms of *logical consequence* of the modalized proposition from a presupposed *conversational background* of propositions belonging to a certain logico-ontological type, while natural language *possibility* is to be conceived in terms of logical compatibility with the conversational background.

In other words, modal meanings in the theory of Relative Modality are treated as relations of the form R (B, p) that have two arguments, corresponding respectively to the proposition p falling in the scope of the modality and to a set of propositions, called the conversational background (B) that is to be saturated in the context of utterance. Thus modal markers encode *invariant logical relations* but are context dependent for the saturation of the conversational backgrounds.

Medieval philosophers had already observed that modal words like *necessarily* are often used not in an absolute but in a relative way, to convey the necessity of an entailment (*necessitas consequentiae*) and they guarded against confusing it with *necessitas consequentis*, that is with the absolute necessity of the consequent.

The distinction between *necessitas consequentiae* (or *necessitas conditionata*) and *necessitas consequentis* (or *necessitas absoluta*) is discussed in several passages of the works of St.

¹⁵ “At the heart of the technical and the philosophical use of possible worlds is the simple idea that something is possible if it is so in at least one possible world and something is necessary if it is so in all possible worlds” (Girle 2003: 3).

¹⁶ Earlier, more informal, approaches to the semantics of the modals that have several points of similarity with Kratzer’s are Wertheimer (1972) and White (1975). For a fairly comprehensive and technical account of the current state of the art in the theory of Relative Modality see Kaufmann *et al.* (2006).

Thomas Aquinas. One well known instance is the passage of the *Summa contra gentiles* (lib. 1 cap. 67 n. 10) where Aquinas discusses whether God's foreknowledge entails that every action happens *necessarily*, and therefore excludes human freedom. Aquinas argues that there is a necessity of the consequence from God's foreknowledge of an action to the future happening of said action but this does not mean that the action becomes *absolutely* necessary. Aquinas uses perceptual evidence as an analogy: if I see that Socrates is sitting, then I must necessarily conclude that he is sitting, but my seeing does not make Socrates's sitting an *absolute* necessity:

sicut necessarium est Socratem sedere ex hoc quod sedere videtur. Hoc autem non necessarium est absolute, vel, ut a quibusdam dicitur, necessitate consequentis: sed sub conditione, vel necessitate consequentiae. Haec enim conditionalis est necessaria: si videtur sedere, sedet (*Summa contra gentiles* lib. 1 cap. 67 n. 10, in Busa 2005).

We can represent the two readings respectively as (7) and as (8):

(7) Necessitas consequentiae: $\Box(p \rightarrow q)$

(8) Necessitas consequentis: $p \rightarrow \Box q$

Let us consider the use of the English modal *must* in the following utterances:

(9.a) If Alfred is a bachelor, he *must* be unmarried.

(9.b) Alfred is a bachelor. He *must* be unmarried.

Superficially in (9.a) the modal is syntactically embedded in the consequent of the conditional, but its semantic interpretation does not correspond to the logical form of the *necessitas consequentis* shown in (8). In other words (9.a) does not mean that if Alfred happens to be a bachelor in the actual world then he will be unmarried no matter what the world turns out to be like (i.e. in all possible worlds). In fact, the interpretation of (9.a) corresponds to the logical form in (7) where the necessity operator takes scope over the conditional (*necessitas consequentiae*): 'no matter what the world turns out to be like, if Alfred is a bachelor he will be unmarried'. Interestingly, in (9.b), where instead of a syntactic conditional we have two syntactically autonomous discourse units, we obtain the same interpretation corresponding to the *necessitas consequentiae*. Here the restriction of the necessity operator by the antecedent proposition seems to be realized *anaphorically* in discourse by the *premise* presented in the preceding unit.

In the view espoused by the Relative Modality approach the restrictions on modality manifested by conditional syntax or recovered through anaphora in discourse can be seen as a partial manifestations of a more general contextual restriction which characterizes the semantics of the modals. Sometimes, the conversational background may be expressed, as Kratzer remarks, by adverbial prepositional phrases such as *in view of NP* – as in (10),

(10) In view of the laws of our country, you must pay taxes

which are quite similar to the phrases used by Toulmin to make explicit what he calls the “criteria” of the modal. But most of the times the hearer has to infer the conversational background of the modal from the context and the co-text of the utterance.

Necessity modals are taken to indicate that the argument proposition is *necessarily entailed* by (that is *logically follows* from) the *conversational background* (B) of the modal:

$$(11) \textit{Must/ Necessarily} (B, \varphi) \Leftrightarrow \Box (B \rightarrow \varphi)^{17}$$

Or, alternatively:

$$(12) [[\textit{must/ necessarily} (B, \varphi)]] \Leftrightarrow [[\varphi]] \text{ is a logical consequence of } B$$

Likewise, the basic structure of relative possibility can be defined by (13) or (14) :

$$(13) \textit{May/ Can/ Possibly} (B, \varphi) \Leftrightarrow \neg \Box (B \rightarrow \neg \varphi) \Leftrightarrow \Diamond (B \wedge \varphi)$$

$$(14) [[\textit{Can/May/Possibly} (B, \varphi)]] \Leftrightarrow [[\varphi]] \text{ is logically compatible with } B$$

A proposition is a possibility relative to a given conversational background B, if and only if the proposition is logically compatible with B – that is if $\{B \cup \varphi\}$ is a *consistent* set of propositions.

3.2.2 Context dependency and procedurality of modal meanings

The multifarious interpretations of the modals and their finer nuances can be expressed in terms of the different conversational backgrounds restricting the modal operator. The major distinctions traditionally recognized in the realm of modality can be seen as broad classes of conversational backgrounds. I adopt here a tripartite distinction between *ontological*, *deontic* and *epistemic* conversational backgrounds, which is inspired, in part, by Kronning (1996, 2001). Portner (forth. 2009: 140 ff.) proposes a partially overlapping tripartite classification.

- An *ontological* conversational background is composed of propositions that are *facts* of a certain kind. Kratzer (1981) calls these conversational backgrounds *realistic*¹⁸. These “facts” can range from the basic ontology of the universe, both

¹⁷ Actually, the formulas in (11) and (13) provide the semantics of the relative modal operators indirectly, by translating them in terms of an absolute modal quantifier (\Box and \Diamond respectively) and of a truth-conditional connective (\rightarrow and \wedge respectively), for which a standard semantics is assumed. The semantic clauses in (12) and (14), on the other hand, define the semantics of the modals equivalently, through the relations of *logical consequence*, and *logical compatibility*, for which a possible world semantics can be given as in Kratzer (1991, p.: 641): a proposition p is a logical consequence of a set of propositions A, if and only if p is true in all the worlds of the “universe” W in which all the propositions belonging to A are true; and analogously a proposition p is logically compatible with A, if and only if there is at least a world in W, where all the propositions of A *and* the proposition p are true.

¹⁸ For Kratzer (1981) a conversational background is realistic when there is no proposition in B which is false in the actual world w. That is: B is a set of facts in w. It may not be the set of *all* facts in B, but it does not con-

metaphysical and physical (*All humans must die*) to very specific sets circumstances, including both the external circumstances (*Even from city water sources, [...], the water must flow through miles of piping and can pick up dirt, chemicals, ...*) and the internal features of an agent (*John can lift 100 kg singlehandedly*). Interestingly, social reality can be treated much in the same way as physical reality and backgrounds including institutional facts or economic laws function largely in the same way as an ontological background. This class of conversational backgrounds corresponds only in part to what Kronning (2001) call *alethic* modalities. A closer match is represented by Lycan's (1994) notion of *restricted alethic modalities*.

- A *deontic* conversational background is composed of propositions corresponding to some sort of norm or ideal – states of affairs that are “good” with respect to some normative system or system of preferences. It can include values, laws and regulations, contracts, commitments as well as the simple desires, preferences and goals of an agent. This admittedly is a very extended sense of the term *deontic*. Portner (forth. 2009: 139) prefers to refer to this range with the term *priority modals*.
- Finally, an *epistemic* conversational background is composed by a set of beliefs of a subject. The proper term for this kind of background should be *doxastic*, as the term *epistemic* refers to knowledge rather than belief. I keep the term *epistemic* because its widespread use in linguistics. Often an epistemic background is interpreted deictically as referring to the belief set of the speaker at the moment of utterance. As observed by Papafragou (2000) epistemic uses of the modals involve the cognitive operation of *metarepresentation*, the speaker's own representation of the world is considered *qua* representation, and not simply as a set of facts.

These three broad categories can help defining the coordinates of range of interpretations that the modals acquire in context, but they are not to be considered as linguistically encoded distinct “meanings” of the modals. As we will see in the following pages, the contextual readings of the modals refer back to very specific sets of propositions as their backgrounds. These sets are often highly salient in the context and it is doubtful that the addressee must always pass through the quite abstract categories involved above in order to reconstruct them. Rather it seems appropriate to consider B as a sort of empty slot to be saturated in context (cf. Papafragou 2000: 43-47).

tain propositions that are not facts in *w*. So, when I say that *John can lift 100 kg singlehandedly* I select as B a very specific set of facts in *w*: the physique of John, abstracting from external circumstances. Note that realism is a formal property and corresponds to the property of *reflexivity* in possible world semantics and to the axiom $\Box\phi \rightarrow \phi$ in the syntactical characterization of a system of modal logic (cf. Kaufmann *et al.* 2006: 82-86). The fact that this axiom holds for ontological modalities plays an important role in determining their relationship with epistemic attitudes and with argumentation.

In the approach adopted here the linguistically encoded meaning of the modals is partly *procedural* or *instructional* in nature. Modals belong to a broader category of words and constructions “whose job is to characterize and index sometimes quite finely structured features of context and to bring those features formally into the interpretation process” (Charles Fillmore, preface to Kay 1997). These linguistic units behave like “a virtual instruction to the addressee to examine the common ground of the conversation (along with other interpretive content of the sentence) to fill in some partially specified part of the intended interpretation” (Kay 2003).

By treating the modals as context dependent allows us to account both for very specific interpretations of the modals, when the propositions that make up the conversational background are precisely identified, and for vague uses of the modals where the composition of the background remains underspecified. At the same time, this approach provides a framework for accounting for discourse relations associated with the use of modals, as one possible way of saturating the conversational background is identifying it anaphorically with propositions in the preceding co-text.

The linguistically encoded instruction associated with the different modal lexemes and constructions is not limited, however, to asking to the addressee to saturate B in context. The instructional component of a specific modal marker might include, for instance, restrictions on the types of admissible conversational backgrounds, default or preferential paths of saturation, and, in certain cases, additional semantic or pragmatic features conventionally associated with certain a given saturation of the background. In the following sections these additional instructional components will be examined for the modal construction formed by the combination of the modal verb *dovere* and the morpheme of the conditional mood.

3.3 Investigating the role of modality in arguments

With this double theoretical framework in place, consisting in the stratified account of argumentative discourse relations (§ 3.1) and of the relational and context dependent semantic analysis of the modals (§ 3.2), the central questions concerning the relationship between argumentation and modality can be formulated in a very straightforward manner, in terms of the approaches to modality and argumentation sketched above. These questions can be formulated in terms of a “mapping” between the two analyses, as shown diagrammatically in Figure 1, below:

- a) How do the logical relations expressed by modals relate to argumentative relations, considered at the 3 levels of the speech act of the arguer, of the inferential path proposed to the addressee, and of the *locus* relying premises and standpoint at the content level?
- b) To what extent, and under which conditions do modal conversational backgrounds map onto the set of premises supporting the standpoint?

c) When does the content of the modalized, preajcent, proposition count as an expressed standpoint?

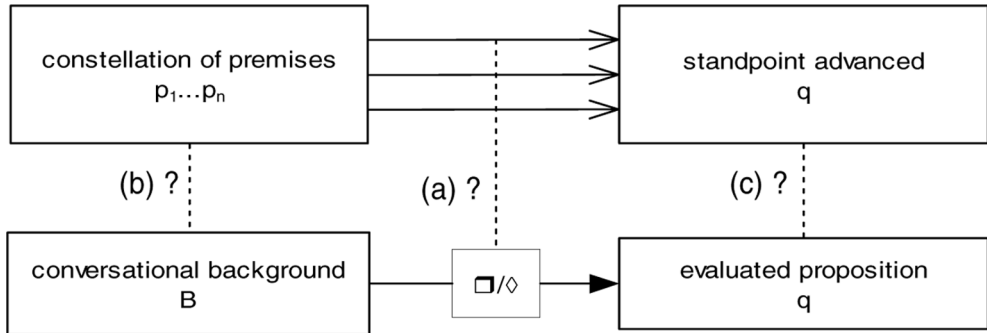


Figure 1: Mapping between the structure of argumentative discourse relations and the structure of modal meanings

With the help of this general framework, the second half of this paper will investigate the relationship between the semantics of the Italian modal verb *dovere* and the expression of argumentation in a corpus of Italian financial news articles.

4. Modality and argumentation in financial news

There are certain striking socio-pragmatic features of the discourse genre of financial news that contribute to make it an ideal test bed for our investigation. It is worth devoting some space to illustrate them.

Finance has often made the headlines lately, and for all the wrong reasons. But even before the present crisis, the relatively few students of discourse that approached this sphere of human activity found much that goes far beyond the numbers: articles in financial newspapers are placed in a lush and tightly knit *genre system* (Bazerman 1994) of interrelated written and spoken financial discourse genres:

corporate annual reports, analysts' recommendations and notes, quarterly earnings announcements... ... and other price sensitive press releases analysts' and investors' conference calls,	shareholder meetings, Internet shareholder forums, letters to investors, other kinds of financial newsletters, open letters of activist shareholders, prospectuses produced by bidders in takeover attempts, ...
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Financial discourse, being oriented towards the decision making of investors, is, for the most part, overtly or covertly argumentative. Moreover, certain fundamental characteristics of the investment activity are reflected in the financial news genre in a way that places modality at the centre of its pragmatic and semantic functioning. It can be said that financial com-

munication is driven by the demand of information from investors who need to reduce the uncertainty surrounding investment opportunities – the uncertainty being due both to the intrinsic incompleteness of information concerning the occurrence of future events, and to private, undisclosed, information available only to “insiders”.

As a consequence, financial news – in contrast with other news genres – are as much about predicting the future and evaluating possible outcomes than about reporting past events. Indeed we can say that the investor is interested in learning what happened yesterday only inasmuch it can help him shape his vision of the future where the possibility of profit lies.

The economic-financial press displays a rich variety of predictive speech acts¹⁹. These obviously include *economic forecasting* proper (Coyle 2001) – that is the systematic, quantitative, model based extrapolations from the present situation and past events to future trends of the economy – but they are not limited to it. They also include particular forecasts concerning the stock market (and sometimes the value of individual stocks) apparently based on a variety of much less systematic and scientifically established techniques (including the various forms of *chartism* or *technical analysis*), as well as a large number of wholly unsystematic, largely qualitative, predictive statements inferring, the intentions and future behavior of companies or individual managers or investors from a variety of behavioral signs, or *signals* – as they are called in finance according to a loose use of the term introduced in economic theory (cf. Spence 2002) – from partial disclosures by corporations and rumors *Heard on the Street* – as the title of a regular feature in the *Wall Street Journal* testifies (cf. Pound & Zeckhauser 1990). In the newspapers the discussion of signals takes the form open-ended guesswork often contemplating alternative conditional scenarios.

The discourse community of the financial industry has created its own indigenous speech act label to deal with the pervasiveness of the reference to the future in financial discourse: the term *forward-looking statements* is routinely used by finance professionals to deal with all the above kinds of prediction and, additionally, to statements referring to the corporate plans, strategies and more or less generic *expectations*. One notable use of the meta-linguistic term *forward-looking statements*, which has attracted the attention of discourse analysts (McLaren-Hankin 2008), is represented by corporate press releases containing quarterly earnings announcements and other kinds of financially sensitive information. These texts are invariably appended by a legal disclaimer (Safe Harbour Statement) liberating the issuers from most of the commitments incurred in by performing the “forward-looking” speech-acts, as in the following example:

This press release contains statements that constitute forward-looking statements [...] Words such as “believes,” “anticipates,” “expects,” “intends” and “plans” and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking state-

¹⁹ Here I assume the speech-act theoretic definition of *prediction* provided by Searle and Vanderveken. Searle & Vanderveken (1985): “To predict is to assert with the propositional content condition that the propositional content is future with respect to the time of the utterance and the preparatory condition that the speaker has evidence in support of the proposition. Evidence is a special kind of reason.”

ments but are not the exclusive means of identifying such statements. [...] By their very nature, forward-looking statements involve inherent risks and uncertainties, both general and specific, and risks exist that predictions, forecasts, projections and other outcomes described or implied in forward-looking statements will not be achieved. [...] (Excerpt from Safe Harbour statement accompanying a *Credit Suisse* press release.)

The predictive statements as they appear in the texts of the press-releases are themselves accompanied by a variety of “hedging” devices, which act as “linguistic disclaimers”, as noted by McLaren-Hankin (2008). These hedges include a variety of modal expressions (*should, could, possibly, potentially, likely*) as well as propositional attitude predicates such as *to expect, to believe, to feel, to hope, to be optimistic about*.

One can wonder whether journalistic predictions have any actual value for investors and, more generally, whether financial news media have an effect on the financial markets (cf. Dyck and Zingales 2003) or are merely a sideshow with no relationship to financial markets. Given the social prominence of this predictive activity these questions are far from irrelevant, and, in fact, they are deeply intertwined with fundamental issues in financial theory. The efficient market hypothesis predicts that new information relevant economic events is quickly incorporated into stock price. This makes predictions read in newspapers hardly profitable for investors. But the simplest and most devastating criticism of the idea of (freely available) profitable prediction is perhaps the one delivered by Mc Closkey (1990: 3):

The customer wants the economist to be an expert forecaster, telling that simplest and most charming of economic stories: Once upon a time there was a newspaper reader who was poor; then she read a column by a wise economist, who for some reason was giving his valuable advice to her and two million other readers; and now as a result she is rich.

But do financial news have any effect on the markets? Here some insights come from the camp of “behavioral finance”. These researchers find that the “efficient market hypothesis” underestimates the role of collective investor psychology in producing what they call “market sentiment”. They observed that reactions to news are not limited to instant adjustments to new hard information emerging and that price movement, downward or upward, may continue in the absence of new information when the investors get carried away by enthusiasm or stampede in a panic. Market sentiment seems to be determined, at least in part, by spin put on by the media, which, in turn, tends to follow the spin promoted by companies, which seem to reward friendly journalists with private information. So, predictions found in financial news may still be relevant to financial markets in the end, not because of their (dubious) intrinsic value but because of the effect they can have on “market sentiment”.

As for the predictions appearing in the financial news proper, they also typically take the form of modalized utterances. Contrary to the received self-portrait of journalists as eschewing uncertainty in the pursuit of newsworthiness (cf. the saying *If it's only worth a might, it probably isn't a story* quoted in Coyle 2001) bare possibility and “conditional” possibility modals are the most frequent.

Explicit argumentation supporting acts of prediction²⁰, is also much more prominent than in other news genres. This supporting argumentation is largely attributed to expert sources (e.g. financial analysts) and sometimes accompanied by further indirect argumentation on the source's credibility. The (often reported) arguments on which the prediction is based can invoke different *loci*, but one can notice a certain prominence of *causal loci*, and in particular those *from cause to effect*. Predictions and causal relations are often expressed in *conditional* terms, relativized to plausible or merely possible scenarios (See Mc Closkey 1990 on conditional predictions in the discourse of economics). Consider, as a partial illustration of the features discussed above, the following English examples, taken from an article appearing in the *Wall Journal Europe* (WSJE) on September 14, 2006²¹:

(15.a) Firm's fortunes **may** rise as commodity prices fall (Headline)

(15.b) Major airlines around the globe continue to see strong passenger demand, so profit **could** climb **if** they are able to raise prices while their own costs drop as fuel prices fall. (From the body text)

The headline in (15.a) consists of a modalized conclusion supported by an argument based on a form of "economic causality", while the passage in (15.b) presents a more developed form of the same argument where the modalized conclusion introduced by *could* holds only within a conditional frame (*if they are able to raise prices*). Explicit attribution to sources (financial analysts, rating agencies, etc.) creates another kind of shifted discourse domain, which interacts with conditional structures and epistemic modals, as illustrated by (16):

(16) A reduction of that percentage to 30% **would likely** lead Standard & Poor's to raise the company's corporate credit rating to "stable" from "negative," **according to** primary credit analyst Mary Ellen Olson. (WSJE, February 13, 2007)

The above semantic features make this discourse genre an ideal – and largely unexploited – environment to explore the interaction between modals, evidentials and conditional structures and to evaluate the role of these structures as argumentative indicators. It is the latter issue, in particular, that I would like to explore here with respect to the Italian modal verb *dovere*.

5. Modal verbs and predictions in Italian financial news

As we have seen in the previous section, prediction statements appearing in economic financial news are regularly modalized; and the genre appears to be particularly rich in modal

²⁰ Merlini (1983) addresses predictions in economics papers from the viewpoints of Searlean Speech Act Theory. The analysis reveals an intimate connection between the nature of the illocutionary force of prediction and its role in argumentation. Merlini (1983) devotes particular attention to the *conditional* nature of predictions and the role of *epistemic modalities* in modifying the prediction along an epistemic gradient and an evidential-inferential one.

²¹ The whole article contains 12 modal expressions (modal auxiliaries and modal adverbs).

words. Some quantitative data can be suggestive. For instance, in our large sample of the financial sections of the *Il Sole 24 Ore* the frequency the conditional forms of the modals *dovrebbe* (0.05%) and *potrebbe* (0.08%) is *more than double* than the frequency in a comparable reference corpus of generalist newspaper articles (*dovrebbe*: 0.02% and *potrebbe* 0.03%). But a qualitative examination of some representative texts is perhaps more revealing of their tone. Consider the following extract from an article dealing with the possible financial consequences of the indecisive outcome of the 2006 Italian political election:

(17) *Forse* qualche hedge fund che si muove sui dati macroeconomici *potrebbe* decidere di mettersi “corto” (vendere, anche allo scoperto) sui titoli del debito italiano. ‘*Forse* – aggiunge Ragazzi – perché le finanze italiane sono peggiorate e il prossimo Governo *potrebbe* trovarsi un buco peggiore di quello che è stato prospettato’. L’*ipotesi* che i nostri titoli di Stato *possano* essere messi sotto pressione non è infatti esclusa da Mattia Nocera, a.d. di Belgrave Capital. Ma sulla Borsa non *dovrebbe* succedere nulla di strano: né per l’*incertezza* legata a una maggioranza risicata, né a causa di un Governo di centro sinistra.

‘*Semmai* la maggior apertura di Prodi all’Europa *potrebbe* in qualche modo favorire il processo di aggregazione tra le banche e anche difendere gli interessi italiani nel Continente’, sottolinea Nocera.

Maybe some hedge fund that moves on the basis of macroeconomic data might decide to “go short” (to practice shortselling) on Italian debt securities. “Maybe – Ragazzi adds – since the finances have worsened and the next government might find a hole worse than what has been foreseen.” The hypothesis that our government bonds might be put under pressure is not, in fact, excluded by Mattia Nocera, CEO of Belgrave Capital.

But, as far as the Stock Exchange is concerned, nothing strange should happen: nor because of the uncertainty due to its very narrow majority, nor because of a Center-Left government.

“If anything, the greater openness of Prodi towards Europe could, in some way, favour the process of consolidation among the banks and also defend Italian interests in the Continent” Nocera stresses.

The passage is notable not only because of the abundance of modal verbs and adverbs, but also for the presence of nouns such as *incertezza* “uncertainty” and *ipotesi* “hypothesis”, which denounce, so to say, the embedded modality of the subject matter this passage is about. Epistemic concepts such as *uncertainty* and modal notions in general (*risk, opportunity, expectation*) become discourse topics commented upon. The reflexive nature of finance has much to do with this discourse phenomenon: the beliefs of the market, including those that are apparently not anchored to hard information (“market sentiment”) *do shape* the financial realities in the markets. So, the question of what the market believes may appear at times just as important as the question of how things are “in reality”. The English example reproduced below from the *Wall Street Journal* is particularly telling in this respect:

(18) Such concerns have helped limit the dollar's losses against the euro, despite the Fed's recent moves – which once might have produced a dramatic fall in the dollar. The euro is “still essentially where we were at the start of December,” *says* Simon Derrick, the London-based chief currency strategist for the Bank of New York Mellon. “That I find absolutely remarkable.”

Mr. Derrick believes investors may be focused more on the risks to growth than on those posed by inflation. They “may well believe that the ECB is not being reactive enough and the euro is too highly valued,” he says. (“Rate-policy shift could sap Euro”, *WSJ Europe* February 1, 2008).

(18.a) BELIEVE (Derrick, MAY (FOCUS (Investors, RISK ('Economy does not grow'))))

(18.b) BELIEVE (Derrick, MAY (BELIEVE (Investors, 'The Euro is too highly valued')))

The triple or quadruple embedding of modalities and epistemic attitudes displayed in (18.a,b) is “absolutely remarkable”, especially if one considers that the also the deeply embedded predicate *to be valued* in (18.b) can be analyzed in terms of a modal structure involving the “*willingness to pay a certain sum for something*”.

6. *The predictive implications of future-oriented non-epistemic uses of Italian modal verbs*

The kind of modalities one finds in financial news is also shaped by the interaction between modality and future reference. As noted above, in financial decisions the *inherent uncertainty* of the future overlaps with the *uncertainty* due to incomplete knowledge²². According to a certain commonsense metaphysics we conceive of the future as not only epistemically uncertain, but also ontologically open, unsettled. Medieval philosophers (cf. Knuuttila 2008) reserved the term *real possibility* (*possibilitas realis*) for future possibilities, distinguishing them from the purely metaphysical, logical or epistemic possibilities – the latter, in particular, were possibilities only *a parte nostra* “from our viewpoint” (cf. Rocci 2005a, p. 79). With respect to the settled past no real possibilities are open: only epistemic possibilities remain open due to the incompleteness of our knowledge. This experiential asymmetry is reflected linguistically in the functioning of modal verbs. With respect to the ontologically settled past, where only epistemic possibilities are open: modal verbs show a very clear cut distinction between epistemic readings and non epistemic ones, and a second clear cut distinction within the non-epistemic area between factual and counterfactual readings. With the verb *potere* this threefold distinction is marked formally by the use of tenses:

²² Interestingly, the two sources of uncertainty in investment activities – the inherent uncertainty of future events and the incompleteness of the information on the current situation – correspond to a distinction which is well known by semanticists working on the interaction between time and modality: namely the distinction between the ontological “unsettledness” of future events and the epistemic / doxastic uncertainty which characterizes our mental representations of events, be they past, present or future (Cf. Kaufmann *et al.* 2006: 99-100).

- (19.a) *Può aver visto*. ‘She may have seen’ (epistemic uses only)
 (19.b) *Potrebbe aver visto* ‘She might have seen’ (epistemic uses only)
 (19.c) *Ha potuto vedere* ‘She was able to see / It was possible for her to see’
 (factual non epistemic uses only)
 (19.d) *Avrebbe potuto vedere* ‘She could have seen’ (counterfactual epistemic
 uses only)

In the area of the future, where epistemic uncertainty overlaps with ontological openness, the distinction between epistemic and non epistemic readings becomes much less clear cut. This is particularly evident in the area of possibility, where so-called cases of *merger* (Coates 1983, 1995) between ontological or deontic possibility and epistemic possibility abound:

- (20) Gli altri rischi che gravano sull'evoluzione del commercio internazionale sono di natura macroeconomica: prezzo del petrolio e rialzo dei tassi d'interesse *possono* influire sui consumi. (*Il Sole-24 Ore*, April 12, 2006).
 “The other risks that loom on the evolution of International trade are macroeconomic in nature: oil price and rising interest rates can influence consumer spending”.

In (20) *potere* selects an ontological conversational background of economic facts including *oil price* and *rising interest rates* and relates them with *consumer spending* in a temporally generic statement. The reading is close to the so-called “sporadic” reading of possibility modals (Kleiber 1983) and not directly an epistemic one. It expresses an inductive generalization over similar cases (*Lions can be dangerous* or *This lion can be dangerous (on occasion)*) and not an epistemic evaluation of a single case (*This lion may be dangerous (in the context of utterance)*). The epistemic evaluation that interest rates and oil price may well influence consumer spending in the immediate future is made available as a very strong implicature, based on Grice’s maxim of quantity (had the author known about present circumstances ruling out this general possibility she would have been more informative) and helped by the context provided by the immediately preceding clause.

The derivation of epistemic implications from a non epistemic modality with respect to a future event is possible also with the necessity modal *dovere*. Here, however, the term *merger* seems less appropriate as one can perceive a clear cut distinction between the non-epistemic meaning of the modal and the epistemic implicatures that arise from it in context. In the corpus one finds two different readings of *dovere* that are not based on an epistemic conversational background but give rise to the implicature that the future event in the subjacent proposition is predictable with a certain degree of confidence. I will first examine these readings when they arise in the indicative forms of *dovere* – in the present tense and, more often, in the future. In both cases one can find a closely related corresponding readings in the *conditional* mood. I will discuss the conditional versions separately in the following sections (§ 8 and § 9).

The first group of uses of *dovere* which gives rise to an epistemic implicature of prediction consists of occurrences where the modal selects different kinds of *deontic* conversational backgrounds. Consider examples (21), (22) and (23) below:

(21) Slovenske Elektrarne dispone di 7 mila MW fra centrali idroelettriche, a carbone e nucleari; in tutto si tratta di sei reattori dei quali due – Mochovce e Bohunice – sono stati al centro di molte denunce delle associazioni ambientaliste e *devono* essere spenti per motivi di sicurezza, nell'ambito degli accordi per l'ingresso della Slovacchia nella Ue.

'Slovenske Elektrarne disposes of 7 thousand MW from hydroelectric, coal and nuclear power plants; there are in all six reactors, two of which – Mochovce and Bohunice – have been at the center of many complaints of environmentalist associations and must be turned off because of security concerns, in the context of the agreements for the admission of Slovakia in the EU'
{'agreements for the admission of Slovakia in the EU'} ⇒ 'Mochovce and Bohunice reactors are turned off'

(22) Gli statunitensi posseggono il 15% di Lukoil, precisa il gestore, e in base agli accordi con i russi *devono* salire al 20% acquistando titoli sul mercato.

'The Americans hold 15% of Lukoil – the money manager elaborates – and according to the agreement with the Russians they are to climb up to 20% buying stocks on the market'
{'agreement with the Russians'} ⇒ 'Americans buy up to 20% of Lukoil'

(23) Il prossimo 20 aprile gli azionisti *dovranno* votare sul fatto che sussistano ancora o meno i requisiti di onorabilità richiesti al manager per presiedere una banca.

'On April 20 the shareholders are to vote on whether the manager still satisfies the requirements of honorability necessary to chair a bank'
{'the scheduling of an extraordinary shareholder meeting'} ⇒ 'Shareholders vote on honorability on April 20'

In (21) and (22) the deontic conversational background of the modal is easily identified with different legally binding agreements mentioned in the co-text (an international treaty and a contract, respectively). In (23) the deontic conversational background is not mentioned in the co-text but it seems to coincide simply with the decision by the board of scheduling a shareholder meeting. In the three examples the backgrounds contain an element of *scheduling*, which allows the reader to infer that the scheduled events will quite probably take place. Such a background does not warrant an attitude of absolute certainty: Slovakia might denounce the treaty with the EU, the Americans might pull out from the deal with the Russians by paying a penalty, the board of the Bank might just cancel the shareholder meeting. Interestingly, while the addressee may well assess the degree of certainty of the prediction on the basis of the nature of the deontic background involved, the writer, by using a deontic modality, does not commit himself directly to a given degree of epistemic certainty towards the prediction. Should the implicated prediction turn out to be false, the speaker could always claim that the deontic modality was correct.

Indicative *dovere* can give rise to an epistemic implication also when the modal selects an *ontological background* consisting of facts of a certain kind that necessitate causally the occurrence of a future event. In our discourse genre the causality involved is seldom purely

physical. Most of the times we have economic events that exert their causal power on other events in the economic realm. Examples (24) and (25) from the same article in my sample are clear instances of this phenomenon. When a proposition is presented as a necessary consequence of a factual background, the epistemic evaluation indirectly conveyed through the modal is one of *certainty*²³:

(24) Giovedì si è passata per la prima volta in quattro anni la soglia del 5% per i tassi a dieci anni. La conseguenza più immediata di questo aumento ricade sui tassi per i mutui immobiliari. Chi aveva contratto mutui a tassi variabili – e sono stati in molti – si trova alla scadenza del primo periodo e *dovrà* rinegoziare tassi di 200 o 300 punti superiori a quelli di un paio di anni fa. Questo significa che una famiglia media con un mutuo di 400mila dollari potrebbe trovarsi a dover pagare anche fino a mille dollari in più al mese.

‘On Tuesday the threshold of 5% for ten years interest rates was passed for the first time in four years. The most immediate consequence of this increase will fall on mortgage rates. Those who had subscribed adjustable-rate mortgages – and there are many – are at the end of the first period and will have to renegotiate rates of 200 or 300 points higher than a couple of years ago. This means that an average family with a loan of 400 thousand U.S. dollars could have to pay even up to a thousand dollars more a month.’

{‘Ten years interest rates have climbed over the 5% threshold’, ‘Those who had subscribed adjustable-rate mortgages are at the end of the first period’} ⇒ ‘They renegotiate rates of 200 or 300 points higher than a couple of years ago’

(25) Un aumento dei tassi a lunga inoltre potrebbe scoraggiare gli investimenti, l’unico vero supporto alla crescita rimasto nel contesto macroeconomico americano. Il mercato immobiliare che negli ultimi anni ha offerto performance stellari, si è già leggermente indebolito. Ma il cuore del problema è il pericolo di un indebolimento della domanda interna. Questo capiterà nel momento in cui il consumatore dovrà già destinare una parte crescente del suo reddito disponibile alla copertura degli aumenti del prezzo del greggio. Le stime per il costo della benzina nel corso dell’estate sono di circa il 20% superiori rispetto all’estate dell’anno scorso. L’auspicio è che l’aumento dell’occupazione compenserà le diminuzioni dei consumi.

‘A raise in long term interest rates, moreover, might discourage investments, the only true support to growth left in the American macro-economic context. The real estate market, which offered stellar performances during the last few years, is already slightly weakened. But the heart of the matter is the danger of a weakening of internal demand. This will happen when consumers *will have to* devote an increasing share of their available income to cover raising [crude] oil prices. The estimates for the cost of gasoline are about 20% higher

²³ This is a direct consequence of the axiom $\Box\phi \rightarrow\phi$, which applies to all *realistic* conversational backgrounds. See note n. 18 above.

compared to the summer of last year. The hope is that the increase in the rate of employment will compensate the decrease in consumption’.

{‘The estimates for the cost of gasoline are about 20% higher compared to the summer of last year.’} ⇒ ‘Americans devote an increasing share of their available income to buying fuel’

As shown in the analyses in both examples the factual conversational background causally necessitating the subjacent proposition is easily recoverable and identifiable with propositions in the preceding or following co-text. Even more clearly than in the case of the deontic readings above, the relation between the subjacent proposition *p* and the background *B* maps onto an actual discourse relation in the text. In the following section we will further explore the nature of this relation.

Examples like (24) and (25), with indicative *dovere* acquiring an ontological, circumstantial, reading, are not frequent in our sample. It is however important to discuss them because their conditional counterpart plays a prominent role in these texts.

To conclude our discussion it is important to say that in the sample there aren’t other future oriented uses of indicative *dovere* with epistemic implications apart from the two types discussed above. In particular, there isn’t anything resembling the epistemic-inferential reading of *dovere* and referring to future events. As I have shown elsewhere (Rocci 2005 a,b), the epistemic-inferential reading of indicative *dovere* and future reference of the modalized proposition are mutually exclusive.

The few instance of epistemic-inferential *dovere* in the indicative that are found in the sample refer firmly either to past events (26) or to present stative eventualities (27):

(26) Ritirata strategica prima di un nuovo attacco. Il management del Nasdaq *deve* aver trovato spunto nell’*Arte della Guerra* di Sun Tzu per la strategia di conquista del London Stock Exchange (Lse). A fine marzo la società, che gestisce la Borsa americana dei titoli ad alta tecnologia, ha ritirato l’offerta da 950 pence per azione sull’Lse senza tante spiegazioni. Ieri la notizia che il Nasdaq controlla una quota pari al 14,99% della società-mercato britannica. (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 12/4/2006).

‘A strategic retreat before a new attack. The management of the Nasdaq must have found inspiration in the *Art of War* by Sun Tzu for their strategy for conquering the London Stock Exchange (LSE). In late March, the company, which operates the American Stock Exchange of high-tech securities, has withdrawn its bid of 950 pence per share on LSA without much of an explanation. Yesterday the news that the Nasdaq owns a share of 14.99% in the UK market-company.’

(27) Bravo e capace, Massimo Faenza, lo *deve* essere senz’altro. In fondo, si deve a lui la profonda metamorfosi di Banca Italease. Ieri sonnacchiosa e negletta compagnia di leasing, oggi una delle stelle del listino con quel poderoso rialzo di oltre il 400% in soli dieci mesi di Borsa. (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 13/4/2006).

‘Talented and skilled, Massimo Faenza must be for sure. After all, the profound transformation of Banca Italease is due to him. Yesterday sleepy and neglected leasing company, today one of the stars of the list with that massive rise of more than 400% in just ten months in the stock market.’

7. *Non-epistemic uses of dovere and argumentative loci in Italian financial news*

The ontological uses of indicative *dovere* in (24) and (25) are particularly interesting because in these examples the causal relationship between the facts in the conversational background and the prejacent proposition is clearly matched by an argumentative relation. The reader is implicitly invited to assent to the predicted proposition because the event is inferable from co-textually and contextually available premises. The inferential relationship is parallel here to the causal one. We have here a causal *locus*, with an inference *from the cause to the effect*.

The examples (1), (26) and (27) with epistemic-inferential *deve* are also clearly argumentative, but they are very different. If we look at (1), (26) and (27) in the context of the article in which they appear we find that they have a peripheral role in their prediction centered argumentation. Examples such as (26) and (27) are attention catching *exordia* written in a lighthearted tone, where the journalist takes the liberty of drawing *subjective* non-predictive inferences on matters of marginal import, which do not lend themselves to future verification (who’s going to check whether Nasdaq’s managers took inspiration from Sun Tzu?). This impression of relatively high subjectivity is consistent with the analysis of epistemic-inferential *deve* as based on a form of “doxastic deixis”, where the conversational background is taken to refer to *a set of relevant beliefs of the speaker at the moment of utterance*²⁴, which I have defended elsewhere (Rocci 2005b).

A second consideration concern the kinds of *loci* that underlie the argumentative relations expressed by indicative epistemic-inferential *dovere*. In (26) the inference goes from a behavior to the philosophy that *must* (at least in the writer’s pretence) have inspired it, in (27) the inference goes from the quality of the results of the activity to the capability of the agent. These inferences belong too to the broad family of causal *loci*, but work *from the effect to the cause*. Inferences *from the effect to the cause* and the related *symptomatic* inferences

²⁴ Epistemic-inferential *dovere* is subjective if compared with the other uses of *dovere* in the indicative and in the conditional that lend themselves expressing argumentative links and (indirectly) epistemic probability. It should be noted that this is not in contradiction with analyses, such as the one proposed by Nuyts (2001 a,b), where the inferential readings of the modals are considered to have a greater degree of objectivity, or better *intersubjectivity* if compared with mental predicates constructions such as *I think / I believe*. In epistemic-inferential *dovere* the instructional part of the meaning of the modal invites us to examine the context and co-text to saturate the conversational background, which often leads to locating co-textual premises and establishing argumentative discourse relations. Nothing similar happens with the more conceptual mental predicates, which lack this instructional component and refer to the thoughts of the speaker as an unanalyzed whole.

seem to be particularly favored *loci* with epistemic-inferential *deve*, as observed also with similar modals in other languages (cf. French epistemic *devoir*, or English *must*). Only an extensive investigation could ascertain the extent of this preference. In the meantime, however, it is important to stress that this is just a preference. Epistemic *deve* is possible both with inferences from *effect to cause*, with inferences from *cause to effect*, as shown in (28 a-b):

(28.a) Giovanni ha lavorato molto. **Dev'**essere stanco.

'John worked a lot. He **must** be tired'

(28.b) Giovanni è stanco. **Deve** aver lavorato molto.

'John is tired. He **must** have worked a lot.'

It is also possible with inferences that involve no causality at all, such as those from a distinctive feature to a species or class:

(29) Bella la prima, ma non è una vipera, giusto? La vipera ha una testa triangolare, questo **dev'**essere un serpentello data la forma tondeggiante del musetto.

'Nice the first one, but it isn't a viper. The viper has a triangular head, this must be a grass snake because of the rounded shape of the nose.' (Forum post recovered through *Google*. The poster is commenting a photograph.)

The deontic uses considered such as those in (21), (22) and (23) can be also considered argumentative: the prediction that an action will occur is supported by the existence of agreements, commitments, plans or schedules involving the occurrence of such an action. Interestingly, since agreements, commitments, plans or schedules enter social reality as written or oral discourses this kind of modality has an affinity with reportive evidentiality. Predictions based on the authority of plans of action to which certain individual or corporate agents are committed, are *ipso facto* predictions based on the authority of the documents or discourses that realize these commitments. It is this kind of affinity, I believe, that led some researchers (cf. Squartini 2004) to postulate the existence of a reportive evidential reading of *dovere* both in the indicative and in the conditional, on the basis of similar examples. Here I maintain that indicative occurrences are fundamentally deontic in nature. Conditional occurrences, discussed below, present a more complex situation.

8. *The conditional form of dovere and the expression of argumentative discourse relations in financial news*

Several students of economic discourse have observed that most often the predictions that economists formulate are conditional ones (See, for instance, Merlini 1983, Mc Closkey 1990, Walsh 2006). It often happens, like in (30), that the proposition p is predicted to turn out to be true only if certain conditions or antecedents are met. Alternatively, the author might just envisage possibilities, that become relevant only in case certain possible scenarios are realized, as it happens in (31):

(30) E per quanto riguarda i rapporti con Finmeccanica? Niente paura. Il gruppo italiano, forte della sua sofisticata tecnologia, ha da sempre eccellenti relazioni e stretti contatti di lavoro sia con Alcatel, sia con Thales. Questo nuovo assetto nei satelliti non *dovrebbe* dunque cambiare il quadro generale degli accordi, sempre che naturalmente la quota e la posizione di Finmeccanica non vengano diluite o messe in secondo piano. Uno scenario, quest'ultimo, che il gruppo italiano non potrebbe certo accettare. (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 5/04/2006)

'What about the relationship with Finmeccanica? Nothing to fear. The Italian group, thanks to its sophisticated technology, has always had excellent relations and close working contacts with both Alcatel and with Thales. The new arrangement in satellites should not therefore change the broad framework of the agreement, provided, of course, that the share and the position of Finmeccanica will not be diluted or overshadowed. But this is a scenario that the Italian group could never accept.'

(31) Sul mercato, tuttavia, sono corse voci che hanno messo in chiaro come la riscossa di Citigroup possa far tremare anche mercati più maturi: in Francia potrebbero affiorare "avance" per Société Générale o Bnp Paribas. Simili offerte, qualora avvenissero, *potrebbero* essere difficili da respingere, dopo che gli Usa non hanno obiettato alla fusione nelle tlc della Lucent con la transalpina Alcatel. (*Il Sole 24 Ore* 5/4/2006).

'In the market, however, there are rumors circulating that have made it clear that the comeback of Citigroup can shake even the more mature markets: in France approaches could emerge to Societe Generale and BNP Paribas. Such offers, if they were to happen, could be difficult to reject, after the U.S. did not object to the merger of French Alcatel with Lucent in the telecom industry.'

In fact, financial news seem a privileged vantage point to observe the interaction of basic conditional constructions, modal lexicon and tense-mood morphology to give rise to complex conditional semantic structures, often spanning several sentences in discourse. A full discussion of the semantics of conditionals is well beyond the limits of this paper²⁵. I will limit myself to mentioning two semantic features of natural language conditional constructions that are relevant for understanding their interaction with modal verbs and with argumentative discourse relations.

A. *Conditionals have conversational backgrounds like modals.* In ordinary discourse the protasis of a conditional is actually added to a conversational background, which, in indicative conditionals, is often identified with normal, or expected conditions. An sentence like (32):

²⁵ That a purely extensional account of conditionals based on material implication (entailment) cannot explain how conditional construction work in natural language is rather uncontroversial, and most analysis of conditionals treat them as inherently modal, assigning them an analysis which is very close to the one proposed for necessity modals.

(32) If you show up on time, you will find plenty of room to park near the hotel.

is usually uttered on an assumed and *vague* backdrop of *normal conditions*, and it is not meant as stating that the condition of showing up on time is sufficient for finding parking *no matter what else could happen in the world*, but only *under normal conditions*. Truly exceptional situations – like those where an old Russian space station has just crashed on the hotel parking lot destroying it – are not considered in evaluating the conditionals. Counterfactual conditionals pose more complex problems, but they also involve conversational backgrounds approximating normal conditions.

B. *Antecedents are epistemically evaluated*. According to the classic logical interpretation of conditionals, someone asserting a conditional of the form *if p then q* commits to the truth of the conditional but remains uncommitted with respect of the truth of the propositions *p* and *q*. The various natural language conditional construction differ, however, in that they typically convey an epistemic evaluation of the antecedent, which may be further enriched pragmatically in context. The epistemic evaluation of the antecedent provides a minor premise that allows the conditional construction to function as an argument from which a certain evaluation of the consequent can be derived. This happens, for instance, in the so-called “epistemic conditionals” studied by Sweetser (1990), where it is clear from the context that the antecedent is a fact, and the conditional functions as an argument supporting a certain conclusion:

(33) If he was a bad governor, he’ll be a worse president.

In the proper context a sentence like (33) can function as an argument:

Major premise: If he was a bad governor, he’ll be a worse president. (from the conditional)

Minor premise: He was a bad governor (from the epistemic evaluation of the antecedent)

Conclusion: He will be a worse president.

What is interesting for the present discussion is that conditionals can function as arguments also with weaker epistemic evaluations (for instance one of mere possibility) of the antecedent, giving rise to epistemically weak conclusions. This happens both in example (32) and (33). Where the reader can infer that the writer draws a conclusion to which he commits with a weak degree of certainty depending on the weak epistemic evaluation of the antecedent. Interestingly, while the use of tense-mood in the construction and various contextual cues can contribute to expressing the epistemic evaluation of the protasis, such an evaluation remains most of the times considerably vague.

Thus, from an argumentative point of view, antecedents in conditional structures often remain ambiguous between two different discursive roles: (A) the role of an epistemically

weak premise or (B) the role that Stephen Toulmin (1958) called of “rebuttal”, that is of specifying the limits of validity of a non demonstrative argument.

This ambiguous relationship between conditionality and argumentation plays an important role also in understanding the role of modal verbs in the conditional mood in argumentation. The conditional form of *dovere* (henceforth *dovrebbe*) – found in example (30) – is much more frequent than its indicative counterpart in financial news articles. Together with the even more frequent conditional form of *potere* (*potrebbe*), it greatly outnumbers the all the other lexical markers of modality in financial news articles, where it is regularly used to introduce predictions and it is interpreted as conveying an epistemic evaluation. By looking closely at a sample of the corpus one can recognize two rather distinct uses of *dovrebbe* where the modal conveys an epistemic evaluation of a prediction. In the following pages I will argue that these two uses are not directly related to indicative epistemic *dovere* but represent “conditional versions” of the two non-epistemic uses of future reference indicative *dovere* which we have examined in the preceding sections. Consider example (30) above, together with the example (34) below:

(34) Il dato relativo alla vendita di nuove case negli Usa a febbraio ha fatto registrare un vero e proprio crollo (–10,5%, a 1,08 milioni di unita), il calo più forte da nove anni. Aumenta anche il numero degli alloggi invenduti, un fatto che – se confermato in futuro – *dovrebbe* riflettersi in una riduzione dei prezzi degli immobili, con effetti di raffreddamento sulla crescita dell’inflazione. Questa statistica ha sostanzialmente ribaltato quella relativa alle case esistenti, che aveva messo in mostra una crescita del 5,2% a febbraio. (*Il Sole 24 Ore* 3/4/2006)

‘The sale figures new homes in the U.S. in February showed a real slump (–10.5% to 1.08 million units), the strongest decline in nine years. The number of unsold housing increases, a fact that – if confirmed in the future – should be reflected in reduced house prices, with cooling effect on the growth of inflation. This statistic has essentially reversed that relating to existing homes, which had exposed a growth of 5.2% in February.’

In (34) *dovrebbe* signals a consequence based on economic causality, and can be therefore interpreted as based on an ontological conversational background similar to the causal uses of *dovere* in the indicative examined in the previous section. Here, however, the causal necessity is conditional to the continuation of the slump – which would be, by the way, normal, or expected. In (30) *dovrebbe* signals again a causal consequence: Finmeccanica’s sophisticated technology, long standing excellent relations and close working contacts with Alcatel and Thales are enough to ensure that nothing substantial changes in the relationship between Finmeccanica and Thales when Thales increases its participation in Alcatel’s satellite business, *unless* Finmeccanica’s share in the same business is “diluted or overshadowed”. The latter possibility is explicitly considered exceptional in the following co-text.

In Rocci (2006a) I have defended the idea that the conditional of *dovere* is to be understood as a partially non-compositional construction, whose semantics – motivated by the modal semantics of the conditional mood²⁶ and by the semantics of *dovere* – involves a double conversational background consisting of the conjunction – in more precise set theoretic terms the “compatibility restricted union” – of a *modal base* (M) and a *conditional restriction* (R). The procedural component of the meaning of *dovrebbe* selects *deontic* or *ontologic* backgrounds for M and indicates that the conditional restriction is to be saturated by a set of *non-factual propositions*, which can be partially identified with a protasis or with other syntactic or discursive elements. The semantics of *dovrebbe* seems to contain also a further procedural element indicating a preference for identifying the restriction with a set of *normal conditions* in the absence of prominent sets of conditions recoverable from the co-text or context. The linguistic semantics of the *dovrebbe* construction can be summarized as follows:

dovrebbe (B, p):
 p is a logical consequence of B
 where
 B = { M ∪ ! R }

Procedural restrictions:

- Identify M with an *ontological* (facts) or *deontic* (norms) background
- Identify R with a set of salient *non-factual propositions*;
- By default, identify R with *normal conditions*.

According to this analysis, *dovrebbe* in examples such as (30) and (34) works indirectly as an indicator of an argumentative discourse relation by manifesting the underlying causal relation providing the *locus* for the argument. Moreover, it indirectly expresses *epistemic probability* thanks to the conditional restriction. Such a condition is *non factual*, but *normal* and then expected to hold true most of the times. Interestingly, we can find counterfactual uses of *dovrebbe* in the corpus, where the co-text makes it explicit that the real situation is *non normal*:

(35) Quanto inciderà l'esito delle elezioni politiche di domani e lunedì sul prossimo risiko bancario? In un sistema totalmente privatizzato come quello italiano (a differenza degli altri Paesi europei), in teoria la politica non *dovrebbe* avere alcuna influenza. La realtà, malgrado la crescente spinta del mercato, è ben diversa. Tanto che tutte le partite finanziarie di rilievo sono rimaste in sospenso, a partire dal dossier Intesa-Capitalia, proprio in attesa del voto. (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 8/4/2006)

‘How much will the outcome of tomorrow’s and Monday’s polls affect the incoming “banking Risiko”? In a completely privatized such as the Italian

²⁶ On the partially non-compositional semantics of the conditional see also Miecznikowski and Bazzanella (2007), who propose a semantic analysis which is largely compatible with the one presented in Rocci (2006a).

one (unlike other European countries), *in theory*, politics should not have any influence. Reality, despite the increasing pressure of the market, is very different. So much that all significant financial matches – starting with the Intesa-Capitalia affair – are on hold waiting for election results.’

Here the modality expresses a causal relation between the private property of a banking system and its independence from politics, R is identified with the prepositional phrase *in teoria* “in theory”. But the following co-text makes it clear that the reality in Italy does not obey to theory, so that the conditional restriction is interpreted as counterfactual. As a consequence *dovrebbe* does not convey anymore an implication of epistemic probability. Yet, it expresses polyphonically a possible argumentation that someone – not well acquainted with Italy’s strange realities – could put forth.

These causal argumentative uses of *dovrebbe* always appear to follow the direction of causation. Unlike epistemic *deve*, *dovrebbe* is extremely awkward in arguments based on inferences from the effect to the cause.

Consider the following examples:

(36.a) Giovanni ha lavorato molto. **Dev**’essere stanco.

‘John worked a lot. He **must** be tired’

(36.b) Giovanni è stanco. **Deve** aver lavorato molto.

‘John is tired. He **must** have worked a lot.’

(36.c) È tutto rosso in faccia. **Deve** essere fuori di sé.

‘He’s all red on his face. He **must** be out of his mind’

Epistemic *deve* can be used to manifest inferential relations both co-oriented with the direction of time-causation (inference from cause to effect), as in (36.a), and anti-oriented (inference from effect to cause) as in (36.b). It can also be employed to manifest inferences corresponding to temporal concomitance, like (36.c). As we have seen in (29) above, epistemic *deve* is also possible where temporality and causality are not at issue. Let us compare these sentences with their equivalents containing the conditional *dovrebbe* in (37):

(37.a) Giovanni ha lavorato molto. **Dovrebbe** essere stanco.

‘John worked a lot. He **should** be tired’

(37.b) Giovanni è stanco. ***Dovrebbe** aver lavorato molto.

‘John is tired. He **should** have worked a lot’

(37.c) È tutto rosso in faccia. ***Dovrebbe** essere fuori di sé.

‘He’s all red on his face. He **should** be out of his mind’

We find that *dovrebbe* cannot occur in temporally anti-oriented inferences from the effect to the cause (37.b), and is also clearly excluded in certain cases of concomitance like, for instance the symptomatic argument in (37.c).

The diverging behaviour of *deve* and *dovrebbe* with respect to argumentative discourse relations can find an explanation in the context of the hypothesis I have been progressively developing in the previous sections.

Epistemic *deve*, selecting a meta-representational epistemic-doxastic conversational background – corresponding to *a set of beliefs held by the speaker at the moment of utterance* – concerns the properly argumentative level, the *form* of argumentation, and can convey any kind of deduction (from cause to effect, from effect to cause, and many non-causal schemes): it is sensitive only to the *form* of the major premise that supports the deduction, and disregards its specific contents.

In the examples considered above *dovrebbe*, on the other hand, primarily conveys a *causal* relationship of a *natural* or *social* kind. As a further implicature, the assertion of this relationship may be taken as manifesting the major premise of an argument based on direct causality.

9. *The interaction between deontic modality and reportative evidentiality with dovrebbe*

Not all epistemic uses of *dovrebbe* found in financial news, however, seem to correspond to hypothetical causal arguments. Some uses of *dovrebbe* appear in contexts where reportative evidentiality would be expected.

In financial news the predictions and their supporting arguments are routinely attributed to expert sources – sometimes named, sometimes unnamed – giving rise to complex combinations of inferential and reportative evidentiality. Unnamed insider sources and simple *rumors* (Pound & Zeckhauser 1990) also feature prominently in financial news providing contexts where hearsay evidentiality would be relevant – see, for instance, example (31) above.

A first remark with respect to these reportative or hearsay contexts is that they often embed whole stretches of argumentation. Sometimes the whole reasoning is clearly attributed through (free) indirect speech to experts such as bankers, economists, financial analysts, while in other cases such as (30) the reasoning is not attributed but presented through polyphonic devices, such as the dialogue pretense (*sermocinatio*) in (30) – *What about...? Nothing to fear* – in an article where the main source of the news is identified at the beginning to the text with an anonymous insider (“secondo fonti vicine alla società” *according to sources close to the firm*). These phenomena of global reportative embedding or polyphony contribute to distinguish these argumentative uses of *dovrebbe* from the epistemic-inferential indicative *dovere*, which is used to point to a sort of “on-line” inference of the speaker. According to my analysis, ontological circumstantial *dovrebbe* tolerates well this embedding because it refers first of all to the underlying causal relation and not directly to an inferential operation of the subject. Sometimes, like in (38) the structure of the reasoning of the experts is only hinted at, so that the addressee cannot really follow the inferential path. In this case the modality remains causal and ontological, but the argumentation proposed to the addressee changes in nature: it becomes an argument from expert opinion (*argumentum ex auctoritate*).

(38) Al momento gli analisti non vedono catalizzatori di crescita: nel triennio 2006-2008 il mercato pubblicitario, secondo Zenith, *dovrebbe* crescere nel nostro Paese a un tasso medio annuo composto del 2,7% contro una media europea del 4,4 per cento. Con la stasi perdurante dell'economia italiana e con le Tv che si ritagliano una fetta (circa il 55%) crescente della torta pubblicitaria, gli analisti ritengono che le prospettive di sviluppo su media come le radio e Internet siano insufficienti e che gli editori della carta stampata debbano puntare di più sull'integrazione multimediale. In particolare sulle televisioni, il cui assetto potrebbe essere rimesso in discussione da un'eventuale riforma del governo di Centro-sinistra, qualora vincessero le elezioni. (*Il Sole 24 Ore* 3/4/2006)

'Currently, analysts see no catalysts for growth: in the 2006-2008 period the advertising market, according to Zenith, is expected to grow in our country at a compound annual average rate of 2.7% against a European average of 4.4 percent. With the continuing stagnation of the Italian economy and the TVs that carve out an increasing a slice (about 55%) of the advertising pie, analysts believe that the prospects of development on media such as radio and Internet services are insufficient and that the publishers of print media should focus more on multimedia integration. Particularly with respect to televisions, whose arrangement could be reshaped by a possible reform by the Center-Left coalition, should they win the election.'

When we move to the deontic uses of *dovrebbe* – which are typically based, like their indicative counterparts, on agreements, commitments, plans and schedules – the relationship between the modal and the reportative environment is not one of simple embedding, but rather of integration. Consider examples such as (39) and (40).

(39) Stando a quanto emerso ieri nella riunione del cda Bnl, Bnp *sarebbe* orientata a lanciare la prossima settimana l'Opa, che *dovrebbe* concludersi tra il 15 e il 20 maggio. Secondo indiscrezioni la banca di Parigi *avrebbe predispeso* tutto per annunciare già stasera l'ok della Consob e i dettagli dell'operazione, con le date di inizio e di conclusione. (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 13/4/2006)

'According to what transpired from yesterday's meeting of the board of BNL, BNP would be inclined to launch next week the takeover bid, to be completed between the 15th and 20th of May. According to rumors, the Paris bank prepared everything to announce this evening the OK of Consob and the details of the transaction, with the dates of commencement and conclusion.'

(40) La situazione appare comunque fluida, tanto più che il presidente di Euronext, Jean-François Theodore, non ha ancora preso alcuna decisione e "gioca" su questa suspense per tenere gli azionisti della Borsa e i concorrenti sulla corda. Ad ogni modo qualche dettaglio in più si *dovrebbe* avere già con il 23 di maggio, giorno in cui è stata convocata l'assemblea dei soci di Euronext e *dovrebbe* essere fatto il punto sulla vicenda. Soprattutto si *dovrebbe* sapere se la soluzione Deutsche Börse è quella valida o meno. (*Il Sole 24 Ore*, 13/4/2006)

‘The situation is still fluid, especially as the chairman of Euronext, Jean-François Theodore, has not yet taken any decision and “plays” on this suspense to keep the shareholders of the stock market and the competitors on their toes. Anyway, a few more details should already be available on May 23, when the shareholder meeting of Euronext is convened and the matter should be discussed. In particular, we should get to know if the Deutsche Börse solution is the valid one or not.’

These uses can be accounted for by considering them as a merger of the *dovrebbe* construction analysed above and of the reportative conditional construction. Basically, they inherit all the semantic features of the *dovrebbe* construction, saturate M with a deontic background of the scheduling or planning type, identify the non-factual conditional restriction R with “if what sources/ rumors say is true” and considering the truthfulness of what is said the (Gricean) *normal* condition of communication.

However, by looking at examples such as (39) – and, even more – (40) one has the impression that the deontic origin of these uses has been considerably “bleached” and that this *dovrebbe* is undergoing a process of grammaticalization, perhaps limited to the genre of financial news, where the modal verb is assuming purely the function of a futurity marker of the evidential conditional. This would compare with the fully grammaticalized use of subjunctive *dovere* as a pure futurity marker in the protasis of weak possibility conditionals:

(41) In precedenza era entrata in sciopero la miniera messicana La Caridad, la cui proprietà sta chiedendo al governo locale di dichiarare illegali i picchetti che impediscono l’ingresso ai lavoratori che potrebbero voler entrare, mentre la produzione di rame raffinato dovrebbe cominciare a essere ridotta da oggi se l’interruzione *dovesse* continuare.

‘Previously, La Caridad mine in Mexico had gone on strike. The owners are asking the Government to outlaw the blockade that prevents entry to workers who may wish to enter, while production of refined copper should begin to be reduced from today, should the disruption persist.’

10. *Conclusions*

It is now time to make a provisional inventory of the findings of this investigation of epistemic and non-epistemic modals as possible argumentative indicators.

Certain general findings appear *prima facie* to be safely extensible to a plethora of relational, context-dependent markers of modality that are found in several languages. Other argumentatively relevant results, however, concern specifically the interpretation of the Italian modal verb *dovere* and may or may not be extended to similar linguistic structures in other languages.

It has to be said, however, that both the general results and those specific to *dovere* seem to confirm the productivity of investigating the mapping between a relational and

context dependent semantic analysis of the modals and a layered account of the argumentative discourse relations considering the properly pragmatic level, the inferential processes attached to it and the content-level relations (*loci*) warranting the inferential step.

As far as the general results are concerned, it is useful to go back to the list of types of information needed for reconstruction, which I reproduced from Houtlosser (2002) in § 2.2.

We can conclude that epistemically interpreted context-dependent modals help us (a) to recognize the standpoints being advanced, (b) to make (to some extent) explicit the force of the commitment towards the standpoints, but also, at the same time, they prompt the anaphorical recovery of premises from the co-text or situational context (c).

This function of pointers to premises seems to be associated both to the context dependent nature of the modals, and to the *evidential* meaning they may acquire when interpreted epistemically: in this case they become signals of acts of inferences on the part of the speaker (§ 3.1).

Non-epistemic modals, on the other hand, refer to content level relations (such as for instance *causality*) and therefore can convey information on the *loci*, or argumentation schemes, being used (d). Being themselves context-dependent they too can act as pointers in the cotextual or contextual recovery of premises, even if they do not directly signal an act of inference of the speaker.

With respect to the case study of the argumentatively relevant uses of *dovere* in the corpus of Italian financial news my findings can be summarized as follows.

The epistemic use of indicative *dovere* (*deve_E*) behaves as an inferential evidential directly indicating an act of inference of the speaker and pointing to co-textual or contextual premises. *Deve_E*, referring deictically to the on-line inferential processes of the arguer conveys a relatively high level of subjectivity. It can introduce standpoints whose propositional content refers to past events or present eventualities, but it cannot be used to introduce predictive standpoints. While it appears to be compatible with a wide variety of *loci*, *deve_E* seems to manifest a preference for inferences *from the effect to the cause*, and for symptomatic arguments in general.

Future oriented *ontologic* and *deontic* uses of indicative *dovere* can introduce predictive standpoints *indirectly*. When they do that, they manifest arguments *from causes to effects* or, weaker ones, from the existence of an obligation to its probable fulfillment. Being indirect means of presenting a standpoint and of qualifying its epistemic probability, they present a low level of subjectivity and speaker involvement.

Finally, conditional mood *dovrebbe* presents conditional variants of *ontologic* and *deontic* uses of *dovere*, which are connected to the same *loci* of their indicative counterparts. The inference, however, is dependent from an additional explicit or implicit premise, corresponding to the conditional restriction. This premise is conventionally associated with a weak positive presumption, corresponding to what is *normally* the case, or what is to be expected as a default (that a trend continues, that a general tendency is verified, that a theory corresponds to fact, that agents fulfill their obligations/commitments/plans, that what is as-

served is true, etc.). These weakly plausible premises, however, aren't directly associated with an epistemic evaluation of the arguer, and on occasion they can be implicitly associated with the voice of a real or virtual antagonist in the discussion. Furthermore, certain deontic uses of *dovrebbe* have begun evolving towards a form of reportative evidentiality, bringing the issue of testimony and authority into the epistemic evaluation of the standpoint expressed.

Many of these conclusions are still tentative and would require to be substantiated by a broader corpus investigation, but the overall picture emerging from them looks promising, so that it casts a new light on Toulmin's original intuition of the centrality of modality in the structure of arguments.

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USING KEYWORDS TO ANALYZE CONFLICTS IN DOCTOR-PATIENT CONSULTATIONS*

SARAH BIGI

Introduction

The present paper tackles the challenge posed by conflicts emerging in doctor-patient consultations.

Communicative exchanges situated in the medical setting – consultations in particular – have been closely studied in the last thirty years from many points of view. One of the most important issues in the study of these communicative exchanges has been the asymmetry of roles between patients and doctors, which often causes misunderstandings, incomprehension, poor patient compliance and low satisfaction on both sides.

Such conflicts have often been studied from the point of view of the power relations generating them, more seldom looking at the communicative structure of the interaction itself and at its internal dynamics. The present paper focuses in particular on the argumentative structure of certain crucial parts of the consultation – namely the ones of patient education and counseling (Roter & Hall 2006) – in order to describe a heuristic strategy – keywords and key expressions – that can be used to understand the origin of the conflict¹.

The paper is structured as follows: the first paragraph presents a description of the communication context of doctor-patient consultations along the lines of the model of communication contexts proposed in Rigotti & Rocci (2006a). This is functional to the identification of the relevant factors influencing the communicative exchanges between doctors and patients during the consultation. The second paragraph focuses on the notion of conflict, describing the types of conflicts that can arise during a medical consultation. Building on the first two paragraphs, the third one discusses in which sense keywords and key expressions can be viewed as strategies of conflict detection and management. The fourth paragraph offers an example of analysis from a real life consultation. The last paragraph is devoted to some concluding remarks.

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¹ The concept of *conflict* in this context is not intended in the common sense of *argument*, but of difference of opinion, which is not disruptive *per se* but can become so if it is not properly managed (Greco-Morasso 2008).

1. *The communication context of doctor-patient consultations*

In order to better understand the strategies used in certain verbal interactions, it is most useful to view the interaction in its specific context.

The communication context of a medical consultation can be fruitfully described by following the model proposed in Rigotti & Rocci (2006a)². This model foresees two main components in any context of communication: an institutional and an interpersonal one.

As for the institutional component, any interaction needs to be observed in its *interaction field*, “the place of *social reality* where the interaction takes place” (Rigotti & Rocci 2006a: 172).

An interaction field is defined by the goal the participants in the interaction share: in the medical setting, the main shared goals are to understand what kind of illness affects the patient, to find a solution for it, and to involve the patient in the therapeutic process³. The shared goal is also what defines commitments and social roles of both subjects. In the case of the medical setting: it is in order to achieve the shared goals that subjects “play the roles” of patients, doctors or other personnel. A role carries with it commitments which may be more or less codified. In the case of doctors, the basic commitments are often explicitly stated in a deontological code whereas patients’ commitments are more implicit, the basic one being to cooperate with doctors, i.e. follow their lead. Whether this had better be a passive or active obedience is what is being discussed in the contemporary debate on doctor-patient relationship.

Within an interaction field, it is also relevant to identify the *interaction schemes*, which are more or less conventionalized “scripts” that need to be followed in order to interact in a specific field. These interaction schemes “select” the dialogue games relevant to the goal, they determine the speech acts chosen and their arrangement. The typical interaction schemes enacted during doctor-patient consultations are *problem-solving* and *decision making*, but also, among others, *advisory*, *negotiation*, *mediation*.

The description given so far of the communication context needs to be implemented by real subjects in order for it to generate actual roles and *communicative flows* connecting them. The literature on doctor-patient consultations has identified the main communicative flows present in this kind of interaction: question asking, information giving, suggest-

² On the relevance of this model for the description and analysis of interactions in the medical setting, see also Bigi (forthcoming).

³ “Solution” is intended here in a broad sense, including the cases of chronic illnesses for which no cure is possible and a doctor’s role is mainly to make the patient’s life bearable. In the words of one of the first advocates of “patient-centered medicine”: “In practical terms the doctor’s tasks are, first, to find out *how* and *what* the patient is or has been feeling and experiencing; then to formulate explanations (hypotheses) for the patient’s feelings and experiences (the “why” and the “what for”); to engage the patient’s participation in further clinical and laboratory studies to test such hypotheses; and, finally, to elicit the patient’s cooperation in activities aimed to alleviate distress and/or correct underlying derangements that may be contributing to distress or disability. The patient’s tasks and responsibilities complement those of the physician.” (Engel 1980: 536).

ing, giving opinion, showing solidarity (Roter & Hall 2006: 118). Once more it is the shared goal that contributes to the organization of the communicative flows in more or less institutionalized structures. The medical consultation has been shown to display certain recurrent phases, which are functional to the attainment of the shared goal. They are: the opening, the history, the physical examination, patient education and counseling, and the closing. The main purpose of the opening is the expression of the chief complaint and of the reason for the patient going to see the doctor. This phase is concluded when the doctor directs the patient toward the history segment. The physical examination phase is followed by the moment of patient education and counseling, in which explanation of the symptoms is given and suggestions for treatment are put forward. The closing has been shown to be the moment when patients tend to express more emotionally charged concerns, if they haven't been given time enough to express them during the opening. This phase appears to be revealing of the general quality of the interaction: if the physician has been responsive from the very beginning, no new concerns are brought up in the closing phase (Roter & Hall 2006: 113-116).

With regard to the interpersonal component of context, it is particularly relevant for doctor-patient consultations, as it can have a very strong influence on the attainment of the shared goal. Numerous studies claim that there exists a direct relation between the quality of the relationship between doctor and patient and patients' outcomes and satisfaction. The construction of a good relationship is also acknowledged among the aims of the medical consultation (Moja & Vegni 2000). The ways through which this good relationship should be constructed are often made to coincide with various communication skills, aimed at putting the patient at ease, making them feel cared for and listened to. In Rigotti & Rocci (2006a) this level of the interaction is described within the interpersonal dimension of the context and referred to as *solidarity*, which can be of two types. One type is the solidarity achieved within personal relations, the other is the one obtained in goal-oriented interactions, and which is functional to achieving the shared goal of the interagents. A feature that characterizes medical consultations is the intertwining of the two types of solidarity: actual trust between doctors and patients has been shown to deeply affect the quality of the goal-oriented level of their relationship.

One of the most effective ways of achieving both types of solidarity is the sharing of a *common ground*. Following Clark (1996), common ground corresponds to what is thought to be shared knowledge by two or more participants in a joint activity. This approach to common ground is embedded within a theory of joint activities and joint actions, in which one crucial point is the achievement of coordination among the expectations of the participants in the interaction. The participants assume the existence of a certain common ground between them on the grounds of certain shared bases; of course, if their assumptions are wrong and there is no actual common ground between them, coordination problems may arise. In other words, the expectations of the participants regarding the actions that will be taken by the others are not coordinated (Clark 1996: 62-81).

A medical consultation may well be considered a joint activity composed of single joint actions, which need to be coordinated in order to attain the final shared goal. Generally, there is one participant (the doctor) who is leading the interaction as for the phases it is composed of. The patient usually follows the doctor's lead regarding "what to do next" in terms of opening, history, physical examination, patient education and counselling, closing (Roter & Hall 2006: 112)⁴. In this sense, the medical consultation is a quite conventionalised joint activity.

Still, it is often the case that during a consultation there happen to be no shared bases, i.e. the participants have different assumptions on what is common ground between them. The patient may not be expecting the doctor to formulate a certain diagnosis or to suggest a certain kind of therapy; the patient may also be scared or worried by what the doctor tells him and imagine a scenario that is distant both from actual reality and from what the doctor had in mind. The doctor may expect the patient to know things he actually doesn't know (Levenstein *et al.* 1986).

If these situations occur, the consequences are most generally misunderstandings, poor compliance, low patient satisfaction, and, in the worst cases, the interruption of the relationship⁵.

2. Conflicts in doctor-patient consultations

As shown in Greco-Morasso (2008), conflicts can be of two types. Conflicts of the first type (C1) occur when the struggle between two or more human subjects is characterized by hostility and by the attempt to eliminate one's adversary. Conflicts of the second type instead (C2) are defined as propositional incompatibilities, i.e. as incompatibilities of positions or goals.

C2 conflicts are the ones that may arise within any interaction, due to the differences and asymmetries which lie at the origin of any communicative interaction. In doctor-patient consultations, conflicts of this kind may occur especially because of the relevant asymmetry characterizing the relationship between the two. This asymmetry can be of two types:

⁴ It is necessary to draw a distinction between *communicative flows* and *phases* of the consultation. Whereas the communicative flows depend on "what the speaker wants to do to the addressee with his/her utterances" according to the different roles of the participants in the interaction and consist in the verbal side of the joint actions which are building up to form the joint activity, the phases of the consultation correspond to the conventional steps taken together by doctor and patient in order to achieve the shared goal (which is not communicative in nature, but consists of an action). So phases include communicative flows, but not vice versa. Byrne & Long's (1976) famous classification used to distinguish six main phases: 1. relating to the patient; 2. discovering the reason for attendance; 3. conducting a verbal or physical examination or both; 4. consideration of the patient's condition; 5. detailing treatment or further investigation; 6. terminating.

⁵ With regard to the issue of knowledge and power asymmetry in the medical consultation as the cause of conflicts and misunderstandings, see among others: Todd (1989); Beisecker (1990); Beisecker & Beisecker (1993); Ainsworth-Vaugh (1998); Thesen (2005); Irwin & Richardson (2006) and the references therein cited.

of knowledge or of skills and competences. The most recent literature on doctor-patient consultations tends to consider this asymmetry both from the point of view of the doctor and of the patient. In other words, while the doctor is the expert in the medical field and has the skills to solve health problems, patients are considered to be experts “of themselves”, i.e. they are the only ones to know their own feelings, perceptions, fears regarding the illness (Stewart *et al.* 2003)⁶.

Within the consultation, conflicts tend to arise basically for two reasons: doctor and patient do not agree on the diagnosis, i.e. they do not share the same beliefs regarding a certain part of reality; doctor and patient do not agree on the therapy, i.e. they do not share the same opinion on the course of action to take. The assumption regarding doctor-patient consultations is that in any case the participants share at least the main goal, i.e. to agree on a solution to the patient’s health problem.

Table I shows the basic types of conflicts that can arise during doctor-patient consultations, related to the diagnosis or to the therapy.

Diagnosis-related conflicts (conflicting beliefs regarding a certain part of reality)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. incompatibility of beliefs (lay diagnosis: patients’ beliefs derive from non-expert ideas on the disease and may be incompatible with doctors’ beliefs); 2. difference of beliefs (alternative diagnosis: patients’ beliefs derive from their personal experience and may be integrated with doctors’ beliefs); 3. no coordination of expectations (patients do not accept the diagnosis).
Therapy-related conflicts (conflicting beliefs regarding the course of action to take)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. patients put forward an alternative therapy because of: a) distrust for certain treatments (health (il)literacy); b) personal history of negative side-effects (patient “expert of himself”); 2. non acceptance of therapy (non compliance).

Table I: *Basic types of conflicts in doctor-patient interactions*

In order for conflicts not to escalate and reach the point of jeopardizing the existence of the relationship itself, the participants are faced with the problem of coordinating their mutual expectations. Expectations reside in the common ground, i.e. they depend on the participants’ knowledge of reality, and are influenced by a subject’s interests and desires. In order to coordinate them and prevent them from clashing, there is the need for a coordination device able to operate at these different levels: interpersonal and institutional.

⁶ This reading of the situation solves the problem only partially as the challenges posed by asymmetry are set momentarily aside. The idea of an encounter between peers though may entail a risk, i.e. to overlook the fact that the asymmetry derives not only from doctors’ competences, but also from the social role “designed” for them by the institutional structure in which the encounter is set. From this point of view, the patient can hardly be considered the doctor’s peer, and in order to level this asymmetry the creation of a whole new institutional framework should be considered. An alternative way might be to reconsider the assumption that interpersonal or social asymmetry is intrinsically negative.

Also the phase of the consultation in which conflicts are more likely to emerge is important. Following the classification of phases within the consultation in Roter & Hall (2006), “patient education and counseling” is the moment when conflicts that are most difficult to manage generally arise. In fact, it is in this phase that doctors express their opinion both on diagnosis and therapy, and the moment when different expectations or gaps in the participants’ common ground are more likely to come to light.

It is important to keep in mind the essentially argumentative nature of this phase of the consultation: any strategy devised to cope with conflicts at this stage of the interaction will have to be attuned to the persuasive dynamics underlying the discourse.

3. *Keywords and key expressions as conflict indicators*

In what could be defined as the core description of keywords and key expressions, they are considered as *relevant* and *pivotal* words within texts, words that reveal certain ideas, values, ways of thinking, and that are emotionally *loaded* (Firth 1958; Williams 1985; Wierzbicka 1997; Bennet et al. 2005; Bigi 2006).

The first two features – relevance and the property of being pivotal – usually indicate words that occupy a central position within the lexical fields present in the text. The latter features – the property of being revealing and loaded – are suggestive of words carrying particular connotations.

In the context of the present paper, the notion of connotation can be understood as the property of triggering inferences linked to premises (values or ideas) that are relevant for the participants in the interaction⁷.

The idea of *relevant premises* refers to sets of information present in the common ground that are felt as *interesting* by the subjects involved in the communication. The dimension of interest involves both the personal common ground of the interagents (*interesting*, in the sense of something that has to do with one’s life and that can influence it), and the attainment of the shared goal that defines the joint activity in which the subjects are participants (*interesting*, in the sense of something that allows someone to attain the goal that led them into the interaction in the first place).

The ability to *trigger inferences* means that, by referring to relevant premises in the interagents’ common ground, keywords and key expressions evoke certain scenarios or frames, which can be considered as cognitive resources through which people interpret and organise reality (Fillmore 2006). They are also the structures through which the interagents’ deep-est premises are categorized (Greco-Morasso, forthcoming).

In this context, it is possible to understand keywords as words or expressions having the main property of triggering inferences from sets of information present in the common ground that 1. interest the subjects involved in the communication and 2. are relevant for

⁷ On connotation, see Rigotti & Rocci (2005).

the achievement of the shared goal that defines the joint activity in which the subjects are participants.

It is in this sense that they can become *conflict-indicators*: by their identification it is possible to outline the frame or scenario they evoke. When the outlined scenarios appear to be incompatible, then it will be easier to understand the origin of the conflict.

4. *An example from a real life consultation*

In this paragraph, the hypothesis outlined this far is tested on a consultation in the oncological setting⁸. The chosen medical consultation takes place in the oncologist's office, set within the structure of an Italian public hospital. The participants in the consultation are two women doctors, and a married couple. The patient is the husband and both he and his wife – who is accompanying him – are in their seventies.

The patient has come to see the doctor three months after undergoing a biopsy to ascertain the nature of a lump growing close to his lungs. What he needs to discuss with the doctors are the results of the new exams he has had, which were supposed to show more clearly the nature of the lump. Unfortunately it is still unclear whether the lump is a malignant tumor or not. However it has grown a little and the doctors argue in favour of doing more exams at once instead of waiting another three months.

The *shared goal* between the participants in the interaction is to understand precisely what the patient is affected by in order to suggest a proper treatment. Accordingly, the main *interaction scheme* is problem solving, which is argumentative in nature. A subordinate interaction scheme is decision making.

The analysis focuses on the part of the consultation in which the doctor argues for the necessity of having more exams done immediately.

The coordination problem the doctor is faced with is to obtain the patient's agreement on this course of action without scaring him and making it acceptable to him that the diagnosis is still not clear.

First of all, the relevant extract from the analyzed consultation is presented⁹:

⁸ This consultation was taken from the Archive of Videorecordings of Medical Consultations of the Università degli Studi in Milan.

⁹ M = doctor; P1 = husband (the patient); P2 = the wife. The conventions for the transcription follow Traverso (1999):

[interruption and overlapping;

= turns following one another with no interruption;

(.) pause of one second or less;

↑ rising intonation (questions);

/ slightly rising intonation (suspension);

↓ falling intonation (exclamations).

[...]

46 M: vediamo un attimo questa TAC perché lei avrà letto il referto: magari non ha capito perché
let's have a look at this CAT scan because you may have read the report. Maybe you didn't understand it because

47 c'erano delle parole un po' difficili (.) però: quello che si vede: sa che [dovevamo ricontrollare
there were some difficult terms. Anyway what can be seen... you know we had to check again

48 P2: [sì sì
yes, yes

49 M: quel chiamiamolo nodulino che c'era qui in mezzo nello spazio [tra i due polmoni
that, let's call it a little lump, that was here in the middle in between... between the lungs

50 P2: [sì quello me lo ricordo/
yes I do remember that

51 M: e dove non abbiám/ non si è mai capito bene: da che cosa è fatto quel nodulo tant'è che ha
and where we didn't... we never really understood what that lump was made of and that's why you

52 provato a fare anche la broncoscopia per prenderne un pezzo e [farlo analizzare
had to undergo bronchoscopy to take a sample from it and have it analyzed

53 P1: [sì sì
yes, yes

54 M: però quel campione lì tirato via non ha trovato cellule cattive non ha trovato cellule tumorali
but that sample didn't show any bad guys, didn't show any cancer cells

55 per cui anche d'accordo con i chirurghi toracici cioè quelli che tagliano s'era detto facciamo un
so in agreement with our thoracic surgeons, the people who operate, we said let's have

56 controllo della TAC a tre mesi [e vediamo/
a look at the CAT scan after three months and we'll see

57 P1, P2: [sì sì
yes, yes

58 M: visto anche il suo impegno con il cuore queste cose: se è indispensabile fare altri
considered your heart condition, these things... if it's really necessary to have other

59 accertamenti [o basta
exams or if it's enough

60 P1, P2: [sì sì
yes, yes

61 M: questa TAC fa vedere che è **un po' cresciuto** quel nodulo lì (.) non tantissimo: vuol dire che
*this CAT scan shows that lump **has grown a bit**. Not that much, which means*

62 prima misurava due centimetri e mezzo per un centimetro e mezzo (.) adesso è due centimetri e
it used to be 2.5 by 1.5 centimetres, now it's 2.5,

63 mezzo è sempre uguale per tre (.) cioè nell'altra dimensione è **un po' cresciuto** (.) questa è una
*the same, by 3... that it **has grown a bit** on one side... this is something*

64 cosa che tanto tanto tranquilli non ci lascia il fatto che **sia cresciuto un po'** [...] è questa pallina
*slightly bothering for us... the fact that it **has grown a little** [...] it's this little*

65 grigia qua vede↑
grey spot here see?

66 P1: sì
yes

- 67 M: questo nodulino qua più grigio rispetto a=
this little lump here a little darker than...
- 68 P1: =vicino a dov'è↑
and it is close to what?
- 69 M: è vicino: al [cuore
it's close to the heart
- 70 P1: [ah/
oh
- 71 M: non non così non è attaccato al cuore però come zona è qua in mezzo vicino a dove ci sono le
not, not that very close to the heart, but the area is the one close to the
- 72 arterie che vanno ai polmoni (.) che poi hanno fatto anche qua: l'ingrandimento
arteries going to the lungs. You see, they also made an enlargement here...
- 73 (*i medici parlano tra loro sottovoce*)
(doctors whisper something to each other)
- 74 M: stiamo [ragionando perché
we are thinking about it because...
- 75 P1, P2: [sì sì sì
yes yes
- 76 M: così come non abbiám capito l'altra volta che cos'era questo tessuto non è che adesso: sia
same as last time when we didn't understand what this tissue was, this time it still isn't
- 77 chiaro=
clear
- 78 P2: =non è chiaro ancora↑
it's not clear yet?
- 79 M: no (.) però quello che è più chiaro rispetto a prima è che è una cosa che è **cresciuta** e che
no, but it is clear that since last time this thing has grown and this
- 80 quindi ci motiva di più nel fare altri accertamenti (.) che **se fosse rimasto uguale** uno avrebbe
gives us more reasons to further examine it. If it had been the same we would
- 81 detto/ [va bè
have said... well...
- 82 P2: [sì
yes
- 83 M: lo ricontrolliamo tra sei mesi: niente/ siccome è **ulteriormente cresciuto** rispetto a novembre
we can check it in six months, ok. since it's grown since November,
- 84 **non cose catastrofiche** eh: per carità però: è **comunque un po' cresciuto** (.) per cui questo
nothing alarming, I mean... but anyway it has grown a little... so this
- 85 merita di fare qualche piccolo accertamentino in più (.)
deserves some little examination still

[...]

The argumentation stage (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004), in which arguments are put forward supporting or casting doubt on a standpoint, begins at line 61, when the doctor puts forward her first and strongest argument: the lump has grown a bit (*il nodulo è un po' cresciuto*). This argument is repeated at lines 63, 64, 79, 80, 83, 84.

The doctor's standpoint appears at lines 80 and 85: we have reasons to further analyze this lump (*ci motiva di più nel fare altri accertamenti; questo merita qualche altro accertamento in più*). Only once does the doctor express the second reason for having further exams: we still don't know what the lump is (*non è che adesso sia chiaro*) (lines 76-77).

The conflict the doctor needs to prevent is at the same time on the level of the interpersonal relation and related to the achievement of the shared goal. On the one hand, the fact of not being able to formulate a precise diagnosis could diminish the patient's trust in the doctor's abilities. The patient could begin to feel unsure, not trust the doctor anymore and perhaps not follow her therapeutic suggestions. What is more, the patient could start focusing on the uncertainty of the situation, which would be likely to induce him to think of the terrible implications of a cancer diagnosis. In such a context, an uncertain diagnosis is more likely to leave room for despair than for hope. On the other hand, it is necessary for the patient to agree with the doctor's suggestion to have further exams, thus he must somehow perceive the urgency of the situation.

In the previous paragraph keywords have been described as words or expressions having the main property of triggering inferences from sets of information present in the common ground that 1. interest the subjects involved in the communication and 2. are relevant for the achievement of the shared goal that defines the joint activity in which the subjects are participants.

The key expressions (in bold in the text) reword in different ways the fact that the lump has grown, at the same time mitigating this information by the use of adverbs (*ulteriormente*), adverbial phrases (*un po'*) and a diminutive (*accertamentino*) (Caffi 2007). According to the description given in the previous paragraph, the ones in bold can be considered as key expressions for the relevance of the inferences they trigger – or of the scenarios they evoke – both at the interpersonal and institutional level. The scenario evoked by the doctor is one in which an (unknown) object has unexpectedly grown. This image is implicitly linked to the following argument: tumors generally grow, this lump has grown, this could be a tumor. In order to prevent the patient from panicking (coordination at the institutional level: to achieve the shared goal the patient's cooperation is needed), the doctor's words merely evoke this reasoning focusing only on the concept of *unexpected growth*. For the same reason this concept is expressed with mitigated forms. The second, but more relevant, reason for doing more exams is that the nature of the lump is still unknown. Stressing this could impinge on the patient's perception of the doctor's authority, thus affecting the interpersonal level of the interaction. For this reason the doctor only briefly mentions the fact once and does not come back to it during the course of the whole consultation.

This strategy aims at coordinating the patient's expectations with the doctor's, by finding a balance between the need to tell the truth and the need to prevent the patient from panicking. Also, it is likely that the patient would have come to the doctor expecting to have a diagnosis and a therapy. This expectation needs to be adjusted to the fact that no certain diagnosis is possible yet.

The chosen keywords evoke a scenario in which something unknown is growing and this is referred to as a risk, thus the nature of the growing object must be ascertained. This scenario is likely to belong to the common ground of both doctor and patient, to interest both doctor and patient and to be relevant for the achievement of the shared goal of finding a solution for the patient's illness¹⁰.

It is not by accident that in this passage the keywords and key expressions coincide with the wording of the argument used to support the doctor's standpoint. This is due to the persuasive aim and argumentative structure of the passage. The way keywords and key expressions evoke scenarios or frames is closely linked to the kind of text they appear in. In a persuasive text, this will happen in accordance with the text's argumentative structure, which originates from the relations between a standpoint and the arguments used to support (or cast doubt on) it. The arguments are generated by corresponding argumentative *loci*, "templates" providing the general inferential structure of which each specific argument is an instantiation (Rigotti 2006). Each *locus* predefines certain possible inferential relations between standpoints and arguments. Thus each *locus* can be seen as representing reality in a certain way. In other words, *loci* can be considered too as frames, of an inferential kind. It is likely that keywords in a persuasive text, as is the passage analyzed in this paper, will coincide with the words evoking these frames, i.e. with the words referring to the *locus* the argument is generated by.

5. Concluding remarks

This paper addressed the issue of the analysis of conflicts in doctor-patient consultations by means of the identification of keywords and key expressions. This perspective seems to offer insights at various levels.

The description of the types of conflicts that can arise during doctor-patient interactions, merely drafted in the second paragraph, surely deserves further study. Indeed among the most problematic issues regarding doctor-patient interactions, noncompliance remains one of the most difficult to clarify. To interpret it as a latent conflict of beliefs opens up new possible lines of research that can be followed in order to understand this phenomenon. One of these lines is the one adopted in this paper, where keywords are used as conflict indicators pointing at implicit conceptual frames. The analysis proposed here is simply meant to exemplify this hypothesis; a larger research project is underway to test it on a much bigger number of consultations.

The use of keywords and key expressions is not a matter of lexical choice simply at a stylistic level: rather it has to do with the choice of particular lexical items that closely relate

¹⁰ It is also interesting to observe here that the use of keywords as coordinating devices in the argumentative phase of the consultation leads to an explicit agreement in the concluding phase, thus constituting an example of synergy between different coordination devices (Clark 1996).

to the institutional setting of the interaction, to the common ground between the participants, to their mutual commitments and expectations, and to the shared goal in the interaction. If considered in a cognitive perspective, a further line of research could inquire more deeply into the connections between keywords and semantic frames (Fillmore 2006); the same could be done from an argumentative perspective, verifying the possibility to consider keywords and key expressions as cases of strategic manoeuvring (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2006).

The description of the communication context along the lines of the model designed in Rigotti & Rocci (2006a) allows to account for features described in studies conducted within the medical sciences. Thus it appears to be a sufficiently flexible model, and one that could be fruitfully employed to integrate in a coherent framework the various features characterizing interactions in the medical setting.

Also the connection between keywords and argumentative *loci* deserves to be further pursued. Explaining its dynamics in more detail could benefit current research on keywords by providing an objective method for the identification of keywords at the textual level. Moreover, it could yield useful observations for the training of clinicians: which are the most adequate *loci* to use in relation to certain typical issues emerging during a consultation? is there any correlation between certain *loci* and the phases of consultations? which are the margins for non-institutionalized talk in doctor-patient interactions? can the use of keywords be turned into a tool that can be taught to clinicians during their training?

These questions also pave the way for issues of a completely different nature: should clinicians' training in communication only be focused on skills, or should communication skills be set within a broader perspective on doctor-patient relationship? This leads to the problem of asymmetry, briefly touched upon in this paper, but deserving to be discussed more thoroughly: is it possible (or necessary) to balance social asymmetry? is it possible to do so merely by exploiting certain abilities in verbal communication? Teaching clinicians to give patients the impression of being empathic with them, but not training them to consider their social role properly hides a very dangerous risk: that clinicians will learn the 'tricks' of empathic communication, but maintain the asymmetric attitude in their behavior. This is sure to jeopardize the construction of solidarity between doctors and patients, as the latter realize the lack of consistency between clinicians' words and their actions. Therefore, a further point on which communication sciences could integrate research on communication in the medical setting is the construction of *ethos* in discourse.

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LA RHÉTORIQUE DU DÉSINTÉRÊT DANS LE DISCOURS DE ROBESPIERRE

SARA CIGADA

«*Ils nous accusent de marcher à la dictature,
nous, qui n'avons ni armée, ni trésor, ni places, ni parti;
nous, qui sommes intraitables comme la vérité, inflexibles, uniformes,
j'ai presque dit insupportables, comme les principes*»
(M. de Robespierre, Discours, 28 octobre 1792)¹

Introduction

Dans les discours de Robespierre qui constituent le corpus «Liberté de la presse» (cf. Cigada *à par.*), nous retrouvons une vingtaine d'occurrences du lexème *intérêt* avec son dérivé *intéresser* et son composé *désintéressé*.

Le but de l'analyse de ces occurrences est de vérifier la sémantique de ce lexème dans le discours de l'Incorruptible, pour saisir dans son argumentation un élément significatif du point de vue de l'éthos.

Nous avons organisé nos remarques en suivant un parcours idéal qui utilise les extraits du corpus en diachronie, en soulignant tout d'abord (A) la dimension ontologique (on pourrait presque dire «métaphysique») de la notion d'«intérêt» dans le discours de Robespierre et le côté moral qu'elle acquiert par rapport à la liberté de la presse, dans l'argumentation sur les droits de l'homme. Ensuite (B), nous parcourons les passages où Robespierre construit et exploite la dialectique entre «l'intérêt général» et «l'intérêt particulier». A partir de cette opposition, il a été possible de décrire en (C) l'éthos que Robespierre affiche et son fondement discursif. Paradoxalement cet éthos ne se modifie pas dans sa substance au moment où, le contexte politique étant changé, Robespierre propose

¹ Pour citer le corpus, nous utilisons une triple numérotation. La première obéit aux conventions d'édition de ces volumes en indiquant les éditeurs des œuvres de Robespierre (Marc Bouloiseau *et al.*), l'année de parution du tome où le discours que l'on est en train de citer est publié – date récupérée parfois à partir de l'Introduction aux volumes – et la page de l'extrait. Suivant les normes adoptées, les références concernant l'ouvrage se trouvent à la fin de l'article. La deuxième numérotation, faisant référence au corpus «Liberté de la presse», renvoie aux discours de Robespierre (depuis 1 jusqu'à 7) et aux lignes à l'intérieur de chaque discours: la numérotation des lignes n'apparaissant pas dans l'édition de Bouloiseau, nous l'avons idéalement ajoutée et déjà utilisée dans d'autres travaux qui étudient ce corpus (cf. Cigada 1999 et Cigada *à par.*). Toutefois, nous avons cru nécessaire de marquer aussi la date de la prononciation des discours cités, comme élément pertinent de l'analyse que nous proposons. La citation en *ex-ergo*, tirée d'un discours de 1792, serait donc: 'Bouloiseau 1958: 59. 4/517-520. Discours prononcé le 28 octobre 1792'.

de limiter de manière très sévère (c'est-à-dire par la peine capitale) la liberté de la presse au cas où elle s'identifierait à un intérêt particulier contre l'intérêt général (D). Dans le discours d'un locuteur particulier (tel Robespierre), l'affichage d'un éthos désintéressé cause donc la survenue d'un paradoxe dans le discours.

A. *L'intérêt et la liberté de la presse dans le discours sur les droits de l'homme*

Nous signalons tout d'abord que, dans notre corpus, toute référence à l'«intérêt social» (ou «public») comporte des stratégies rhétoriques soulignant l'objectivité, la moralité et même la sacralité de cette dimension. Dans le premier extrait que nous allons proposer ci-dessous, par exemple, Robespierre argumente à l'encontre de la pénibilité de la calomnie, en tant qu'expression extrême de la liberté de la presse, même quand elle est dirigée contre des personnes publiques:

Mais une autre raison sans réplique semble achever de mettre cette vérité dans tout son jour. Rendre les citoyens responsables de ce qu'ils peuvent écrire contre les personnes publiques, ce seroit nécessairement supposer qu'il ne leur seroit pas permis de les blâmer, sans pouvoir appuyer leurs inculpations par des preuves juridiques. Or, qui ne voit pas combien une pareille supposition répugne à la nature même de la chose, et aux premiers principes de l'*intérêt social*? (Bouloiseau 1950: 329. 1/396-402. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

La nécessité de présenter les preuves appuyant des accusations serait contraire aux «premiers principes» de l'intérêt social, en ce que souvent un simple citoyen ne pourrait s'en emparer qu'en s'opposant aux puissants ou encore au système de la justice, corrompu la plupart du temps (la corruption n'est pas affirmée, elle demeure dans l'implicite, présumée). La référence aux «premiers principes de l'intérêt social» présuppose en outre *l'existence* d'un tel intérêt social et de ses «premiers principes», auxquels il n'est pas permis de se soustraire².

La mention de la «nature même de la chose» renvoie elle aussi à une structure objective de la réalité, comportant la distinction morale entre le bien (l'intérêt social), et le mal:

Obéir aux lois est le devoir de tout citoyen: publier librement ses pensées sur les vices ou sur la bonté des lois, est le droit de tout homme et l'*intérêt* de la société entière; c'est le plus digne et le plus salutaire usage que l'homme puisse faire de sa raison; c'est le plus saint des devoirs que puisse remplir, envers les autres hommes, celui qui est doué des talens nécessaires pour les éclairer (Bouloiseau 1950: 326. 1/247. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

² Nous n'avons repéré dans le corpus qu'une occurrence du verbe *intéresser* dans le sens courant de *concerner*: «Si vous êtes de mauvaise foi, je vous récusé; ce que je vais dire vous *intéresse*» (Bouloiseau 1958: 51. 4/264. Discours prononcé le 28 octobre 1792).

Remarquons en passant la distinction entre «les autres hommes» et «celui qui est doué des talents nécessaires pour les éclairer». La description du «plus saint des devoirs» pré-suppose en effet une toute petite rupture avec le principe d'égalité, en distinguant les citoyens «éclairés» de tous les autres.

L'intérêt de la société entière est aussi l'«intérêt des nations», qui a encore un fondement absolu dans le trinôme *raison-justice-nature*:

Les lois, que sont-elles? l'expression libre de la volonté générale, plus ou moins conforme aux droits et à l'*intérêt* des nations, selon le degré de conformité qu'elles ont aux lois éternelles de la raison, de la justice et de la nature (Bouloiseau 1950: 326. 1/252. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

«Les nations»: cette expression peut indiquer l'universalité de la Révolution (Robespierre en parle plus loin dans ce même discours, lignes 513 et suivantes, «Enfin faisons des lois, non pour un moment, mais pour les siècles; non pour nous, mais pour l'univers; montrons-nous dignes de fonder la liberté en nous attachant invariablement à ce grand principe, qu'elle ne peut exister là où elle ne peut s'exercer avec une étendue illimitée sur la conduite de ceux que le peuple a armés de son autorité»). Mais la mention des «lois éternelles» nous fait percevoir dans cette dernière occurrence un effet de sens différent, parce que les nations peuvent en principe faire une application «libre» (différente pour chacune d'entre elles) des mêmes lois éternelles³. Les lois des nations ne coïncident pas exactement avec les lois éternelles de la nature et de la raison, elles les reflètent plutôt, de manière plus ou moins fidèle.

La liberté est donc un principe de détachement séparant les applications (les lois des nations) du principe éternel (objectif, absolu), par l'action de l'homme «général»⁴.

Le principe d'intérêt général joue toutefois son rôle en tant que point de repère de la liberté humaine.

Dans l'extrait qui suit, Robespierre utilise le mot *intérêts* pour faire référence aux grands thèmes «objectifs» de la vie de l'homme individuel et de l'homme en société:

La liberté d'écrire peut s'exercer sur deux objets, les choses et les personnes. Le premier de ces objets renferme tout ce qui touche aux plus grands *intérêts* de l'homme et de la société, tels que la morale, la législation, la politique, la religion (Bouloiseau 1950: 322. 1/90. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

En conséquence, la loi et la morale ne sont pas le domaine où la liberté s'exerce de la manière la plus naturelle, mais, un peu paradoxalement, le domaine de la nécessité absolue, duquel la liberté de l'homme se détache par un choix plus ou moins conforme aux droits et aux intérêts.

³ En effet: «Le but et la mesure des peines est l'intérêt de la société» (Bouloiseau 1950: 328. 1/336. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791).

⁴ Cf. aussi Bouloiseau 1950: 328. 1/351: «... les écrits qui inculpent les personnes publiques, peuvent-ils être punis par les lois? C'est l'intérêt général qui doit la décider».

Parmi les droits de l'homme, le sujet dont il est question dans notre corpus est la liberté de la presse. Toute limitation imposée à la liberté d'expression constitue selon Robespierre un outrage à la liberté absolue, ce qui ne peut être accepté que par des ennemis, aristocrates et antirévolutionnaires. L'argumentation est donc typiquement totalitaire: Robespierre applique la dichotomie entre les bons et les autres. La liberté d'opinion est effectivement bannie parce que le fait de ne pas partager de manière totale toute position officielle constitue *ipso facto* une trahison (cf. Cigada 1998: 163 et Rigotti 2005).

B. *Intérêt général et intérêts particuliers*

C'est exactement ici que la dialectique entre intérêt général et intérêt particulier trouve sa collocation. A l'intérêt public s'oppose en effet un «intérêt» (au singulier), dans le sens négatif de «attention exclusive à son propre bien, qui s'oppose par définition à l'avantage des autres»:

C'est ainsi que toute entrave mise à la liberté de la presse est entre leurs mains un moyen de diriger l'opinion publique au gré de leur *intérêt* personnel, et de fonder leur empire sur l'ignorance et sur la dépravation générale (Bouloiseau 1950: 325. 1/203. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

Dans le passage que nous venons de lire, le jacobin argumente la liberté de la presse en accusant ses détracteurs de vouloir manipuler l'opinion publique. Dans un contexte semblable, nous retrouvons l'opposition explicite entre l'«intérêt particulier» et l'«intérêt public» (cf. extrait suivant). L'évaluation morale qui accompagne les deux positions opposées est tranchante, manifestée par les parallélismes entre l'«intérêt particulier» et l'esprit d'intrigue d'une part et, d'autre part, entre l'«intérêt public» et l'esprit général:

Il sera donc désormais impossible d'élever la voix en faveur de la liberté, s'il est permis à quelques individus de substituer l'*intérêt* particulier à l'*intérêt* public et l'esprit d'intrigue à l'esprit général (Bouloiseau 1953: 323. 2/3. Discours prononcé le 30 avril 1792)

Tout en étudiant la notion contemporaine d'intérêt, Marianne Doury décrit une telle attitude morale comme tout à fait typique de la tradition politique française qui, «inspirée de l'idéalisme républicain et empreinte de jacobinisme, établit comme une évidence partagée que l'intérêt général ne peut se construire qu'*en rupture* avec les intérêts particuliers» (Doury 2006: 57). On dirait presque que cette remarque de Doury trouve dans les discours de notre corpus son origine et sa fondation argumentative. C'est dans ces discours de Robespierre, en effet, que l'idéologie de Rousseau (mentionné par ailleurs dans le discours du 11 mai 1791), par exemple, est appliquée de manière systématique par l'opposition des intérêts à l'intérêt.

La valeur négative du terme est également bien perceptible dans le passage suivant, qui réaffirme l'identification négative entre autorité et intérêt particulier (cf. quantificateur de «*quelques* hommes»), considérés tous les deux comme entraves au progrès humain. Par ail-

leurs, on remarque l'identification positive entre «la marche de l'esprit humain» et la nature (et nous observons encore ce côtoïement bizarre de nécessité et de progrès spirituel, d'où l'impression inquiétante d'un déroulement obligatoire et obligeant, qui tend à l'anéantisement de tout ce qui s'y opposerait):

Avez-vous plus de confiance dans l'autorité, dans la vertu de quelques hommes, *intéressés* à arrêter la marche de l'esprit humain, que dans la nature même? (Bouloiseau 1950: 326. 1/226. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

Dans l'extrait qui suit, Robespierre emploie de nouveau le mot «intérêt» au pluriel dans son sens négatif, en le spécifiant par le complément «de la cour». Le parallélisme entre «leurs vues ambitieuses» et «les intérêts de la cour» souligne l'évaluation négative: dans le contexte du discours et de l'époque, l'ambition est un vice typique de l'intérêt particulier.

Tandis qu'il [Lafayette] mettoit tout en œuvre pour la [la Constitution] modifier, selon leurs vues ambitieuses et les *intérêts* de la cour, il s'attachoit à persuader que les amis de la liberté, dont le seul vœu étoit alors de la voir exécuter d'une manière loyale et populaire, n'avoient d'autre but que de la détruire (Bouloiseau 1958: 46. 4/101. Discours prononcé le 28 octobre 1792)

Les amis de la liberté, par contre, agissent d'une manière «loyale et populaire». En nous rattachant à ce que nous avons dit à propos de la liberté, nous remarquons que discursivement «les amis de la liberté» se trouvent en quelque sorte «du bon côté»: du côté du peuple, mais aussi du côté de la nature et de ses lois, du côté de la vertu et au tout premier plan de la justice, du côté finalement de l'homme et de la société. Les autres, ceux qui ne partagent pas les vues jacobines, «déchirent le sein de la république», dans l'image proposée dans l'extrait suivant:

Comment oserois-je dévoiler les desseins perfides de tous ces chefs de parti, qui s'apprentent à déchirer le sein de la république, qui tous se couvrent du voile du bien public et de l'*intérêt* du peuple, et qui ne cherchent qu'à l'asservir et le vendre⁵ au despotisme? (Bouloiseau 1950: 329. 1/381. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

Les «chefs de parti» se rendent coupables de la faute la plus grave: «perfide» est celui qui brise la *fides*, la confiance mutuelle qui constitue l'unité. Le «perfide» est censé être ami et trahit l'amitié. C'est pourquoi dans cet extrait, comme dans le passage suivant, les ennemis sont accusés de se donner les apparences de partisans de l'intérêt général pour mieux manipuler le peuple:

Chez un peuple où l'égoïsme a toujours régné, où ceux qui gouvernent, où la plupart des citoyens qui ont usurpé une espèce de considération ou de crédit,

⁵ Le verbe *vendre* utilisé à côté de la métaphore du *sein de la république* rappelle l'expression «prostitution nationale», dont *L'Humanité* qualifie en 1950 la proposition de Robert Schuman d'associer la production franco-allemande du charbon et de l'acier (cf. Cigada 2008: 55 et 105-106).

sont forcés de s'avouer intérieurement à eux-mêmes qu'ils ont besoin non seulement de l'indulgence, mais de la clémence publique, la liberté de la presse doit nécessairement inspirer une certaine terreur, et tout système qui tend à la gêner, trouve une foule de partisans qui ne manquent pas de le présenter sous les dehors spécieux du bon ordre et de l'*intérêt* public (Bouloiseau 1950: 331. 1/481. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

Le couple «bon ordre» et «intérêt public» représente ici le déguisement positif de tout système contraire à la liberté de la presse.

Remarquons d'ailleurs la métonymie «égoïsme» utilisée par Robespierre pour faire référence à la monarchie: elle établit de manière très directe l'identité entre l'intérêt particulier et ce vice, particulièrement odieux dans le contexte des valeurs républicaines.

Très expressif aussi, dans le passage qui suit, est le recours au parallélisme «enchaîné par la crainte, ou séduit par l'intérêt»: l'intérêt est présenté comme une passion, à l'instar de la crainte, tous les deux empêchant l'homme (le juge plus précisément) de bien appliquer la loi à cause d'un lien qui lui ôte la liberté de jugement (métaphore de l'enchaînement), ou bien qui le distrait de son devoir (métaphore de la séduction).

Eh! Devant quel tribunal voulez-vous que je lutte contre lui? Sera-ce devant le Préteur? Mais s'il est enchaîné par la crainte, ou séduit par l'*intérêt*? (Bouloiseau 1950: 329. 1/390. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

Par ailleurs, l'interprétation de la sémantique d'intérêt comme une des passions se trouve confirmée par le climax dans cet extrait:

Or, que deviendrait la liberté de la presse, si chacun ne pouvoit l'exercer qu'à peine de voir son repos et ses droits les plus sacrés livrés à tous les préjugés, à toutes les passions, à tous les *intérêts*?⁶ (Bouloiseau 1950: 324. 1/158. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

Préjugés, passions, intérêts s'opposent à l'exercice de la liberté. Le renvoi aux préjugés rappelle, en outre, que les passions s'opposent presque par définition à la raison.

Mais nous retrouvons aussi, dans le corpus, un usage d'*intérêt* différent de ceux que nous avons répertoriés jusqu'ici:

Chaque citoyen a sa part et son *intérêt* dans cette volonté générale; il peut donc, il doit même déployer tout ce qu'il a de lumières et d'énergie pour l'éclairer, pour la réformer, pour la perfectionner (Bouloiseau 1950: 326. 1/254. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

Ici, la volonté générale (qui coïncide en principe avec l'intérêt public) est morcelée en plusieurs volontés particulières qui peuvent, qui doivent même, participer activement à la vie publique. Ce passage appartient toutefois à un moment paradoxal de l'argumentation en

⁶ Remarquer la fréquence des questions rhétoriques employées par Robespierre, qu'il serait très pertinent d'étudier du point de vue fonctionnel.

faveur de la liberté de la presse. D'emblée, Robespierre affirme en effet que chaque citoyen a le devoir de faire tout ce qu'il peut, pour «déterminer» ses concitoyens à faire ce qu'il estime juste par rapport au bien de la société politique. En quelque sorte, c'est l'expression la plus explicite et violente que nous trouvons dans cette première partie du corpus, du droit que Robespierre réclame pour lui-même: le droit illimité à l'expression de son opinion mais aussi le droit de «faire tout ce qui est en lui, pour déterminer les autres membres de la cité à adopter les dispositions qui lui paroissent les plus conformes à l'avantage commun» (*ibidem*, lignes 260-262).

Dans ce contexte Robespierre semble exprimer une distance entre l'intérêt public, qu'il nomme ici «l'avantage commun», et l'opinion subjective que chacun peut avoir de cet intérêt («les dispositions qui lui *paroissent* les plus conformes»), d'où l'espace ouvert à la violence comme moyen d'action. En effet Robespierre affirme que chacun a le devoir de «déterminer» les autres à adopter ces dispositions: comme nous venons de le lire dans le dernier extrait cité, chaque citoyen «doit déployer tout ce qu'il a de lumières et d'énergie» pour éclairer, réformer, perfectionner..., à partir de son opinion personnelle.

Certes, Robespierre est convaincu que l'ordre général ne sera pas compromis par le déploiement énergique des volontés particulières, parce que la lutte génère finalement, de manière nécessaire, l'ordre. L'erreur n'est jamais définitive, elle constitue plutôt un moment de passage, obligatoire (du fait de la liberté de s'exprimer), et toujours soutenable, comme il l'explique à foison dans le Discours du 11 mai 1791 (Boiloiseau 1950: 325 et *passim*). A partir des réflexions menées par Rigotti (cf. Rigotti 2008 dans ce volume) sur les *side effects*, nous observons que la para-maxime de justification des moyens par la justice de la finalité de l'action («La fin justifie les moyens») devient intrinsèquement manipulateur du fait que la finalité de l'action n'est pas en elle-même un paramètre suffisant pour évaluer la bonté d'une action.

C. *L'éthos de Robespierre*

Dans le corpus, la voix de Robespierre s'identifie en fait à la voix de la Révolution. Comme nous l'avons remarqué ailleurs (Cigada 2009 à par.), son éthos coïncide de manière systématique avec «la» partie qui n'est pas une partie quelconque, mais la seule partie exprimant véritablement la totalité, la société, l'intérêt public, le peuple. Quand il est obligé de présenter sa propre position, il s'exprime de la manière suivante:

Aristide banni par l'ostracisme, n'accusait pas cette jalousie ombrageuse qui l'envoyait à un glorieux exil. Il n'eût point voulu que le peuple Athénien fût privé du pouvoir de lui faire une injustice. Il savait que la même loi qui eût mis le magistrat vertueux à couvert d'une téméraire accusation, aurait protégé l'adroite tyrannie de la foule des magistrats corrompus. Ce ne sont pas ces hommes incorruptibles, qui n'ont d'autre passion que celle de faire le bonheur et la gloire de leur patrie, qui redoutent l'expression publique des sentimens de leurs concitoyens. Ils sentent bien qu'il n'est pas si facile de perdre leur estime,

lorsqu'on peut opposer à la calomnie une vie irréprochable et les preuves d'un zèle pur et *désintéressé*; s'ils éprouvent quelquefois une persécution passagère, elle est pour eux le sceau de leur gloire et le témoignage éclatant de leur vertu; ils se reposent, avec une douce confiance, sur le suffrage d'une conscience pure et sur la force de la vérité qui leur ramène bientôt ceux de leurs concitoyens (Bouloiseau 1950: 330. 1/416-430. Discours prononcé le 11 mai 1791)

«Hommes incorruptibles», les vrais amis de la Liberté servent la patrie par «une vie irréprochable» et par «un zèle pur et désintéressé»: en effet le désintéret représente, dans l'interdiscours de Robespierre, la seule garantie d'un éthos acceptable. Toute manifestation d'intéret, par contre, disqualifie irrémédiablement celui-ci.

D. *Les intérêts particuliers et la presse*

Toutefois, l'argumentation renvoie à bien d'autres implications en 1793, quand Robespierre peut disposer, parmi «tout ce qu'il a de lumières et d'énergie», du pouvoir. A ce moment, le principe selon lequel chaque citoyen a le devoir de défendre la Révolution l'amène à conclure qu'il est nécessaire de limiter la liberté de la presse, afin de garantir les droits de l'homme.

La conséquence la plus logique des prémisses évoquées par le texte, «chaque citoyen a sa part et son *intéret* dans cette volonté générale; il peut donc, il doit même déployer tout ce qu'il a de lumières et d'énergie pour l'éclairer, pour la réformer, pour la perfectionner», apparaît en effet au cours d'une intervention de Robespierre dans laquelle l'«intéret général» a évolué en se transformant en «intéret de la Révolution»:

Il faut même, pour l'*intéret* de ces droits [les droits de l'homme], prendre tous les moyens nécessaires pour le succès des Révolutions. Or, l'*intéret* de la Révolution peut exiger certaines mesures qui répriment une conspiration fondée sur la liberté de la presse (Bouloiseau 1958: 452. 6/6-7. Intervention prononcée le 19 avril 1793)

La faiblesse argumentative de ce passage est partiellement dissimulée par l'abondance des modalisateurs (*il faut, nécessairement, peut exiger*). Du point de vue des conclusions, en effet, Robespierre est en train de nier le droit à la liberté absolue de la presse qu'il a jusqu'ici soutenue de toutes ses forces. Paradoxalement, par contre, la *manière* d'agir doit présenter les mêmes traits vertueux qu'auparavant: immédiate, énergique, fondée sur la force de la vérité. «Cette confédération de tant d'écrivains perfides», «plus redoutable à la liberté que toutes les conspirations de la cour» (Bouloiseau 1958: 60. 4/564. Discours prononcé le 28 octobre 1792), devient dans le discours de Robespierre une des factions, c'est-à-dire un intéret particulier qui s'oppose à l'intéret général, à l'intéret de la Révolution. «Jusqu'à ce que cette faction soit écrasée, anéantie, nul homme ne pourra être impunément vertueux. Sortez de la léthargie où vous êtes. Ecrasons tous nos ennemis» (Bouloiseau 1958: 571. 7/11. Intervention prononcée le 16 juin 1793). «Que le Comité de salut public prenne les mesures

les plus sévères pour arrêter ces journalistes infidèles qui sont les plus dangereux ennemis de la liberté» (*Ibidem.* 7/17).

En guise de conclusion

L'éthos totalement positif du locuteur coïncide donc avec l'absence d'intérêt (désintéret absolu): il n'est pas du tout piégé par la passion, son attitude est exclusivement dictée par la raison. Tout en excluant le contenu effectif des arguments, c'est l'opposition formelle entre l'intérêt particulier et l'intérêt général qui garantit finalement la bonté de la position du locuteur.

Par ailleurs, nous remarquons que l'attitude de Robespierre se caractérise discursivement de manière très émotionnelle (cf. Cigada *à par.*). Il affirme même explicitement que son attitude est une attitude passionnée (comme nous l'avons vu tout à l'heure, les hommes incorruptibles «n'ont d'autre *passion* que celle de faire le bonheur et la gloire de leur patrie», c'est nous qui soulignons), ce qui semble, à nouveau, plutôt paradoxal: les passions s'opposent à la raison et l'intérêt est une passion pernicieuse.

Nous arrêtons ici notre analyse en signalant deux pistes à suivre, qui se complètent peut-être l'une l'autre. La première concerne la formation rhétorique des avocats de l'époque, qui n'exclut pas, bien au contraire, les stratégies émotives pour persuader l'auditoire (cf., par exemple, la partie de l'article de l'*Encyclopédie* consacrée aux passions, justement dans ce sens). La deuxième hypothèse serait plus théorique et consisterait à vérifier si, selon Robespierre, la position exprimant l'intérêt public est la seule autorisée à parler de manière passionnée tout en gardant son éthos – du fait qu'elle exprime la vérité –, tandis que les autres en seraient nécessairement corrompues.

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ARGUING FOR LOVE

FEDERICA FERRARI

1. *Introduction*

‘Dialogic argumentation theory – research trends – our claim and methodology’

The rise of interest in the importance of emotion in argumentation over the last decade, has certainly thrown into question the once widespread myth that argumentation is in its essence rational. Within Argumentation Theory, the importance of emotion in argument is highly acknowledged (Walton 1992, 1996, 2000; Plantin 1998; Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2003). More generally, if we look at communication processes, the importance and role of emotive dimensions in discourse practice (Lupton 1998) and more specifically in dialogue (Weigand 1998, 2003) is also claimed.

Whereof a first claim (emotion vs. rationality) can be identified within contemporary research trends on argumentation fostering emotions in spite of the classical prejudice against them (cf. Sapir 1921 as acknowledged in Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000).

Following Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s (2000) overview, within the foundations of modern linguistics a classical prejudice against emotions can be identified, cf. Sapir’s line (1921). According to Sapir, emotional expressions are of no interest from the point of view of linguistics (“d’aucune intérêt au point de vue de la science linguistique”) because they are shared by men and animals (“partagées par l’homme avec les animaux”), instinctive and individual and therefore not communicable (2000: 34). This position is largely supported at the time, although some exceptions can be found, such as within Saussure’s structuralism, as in the case of Charles Bally, for the importance given to expressive language in so far as it conduits affectional thoughts. According to Bally, natural language is expression of life, life is characterized by emotions and emotions are therefore crucial in language. Consequently, emotions are to be accounted for in linguistics, whose goal is to reveal the natural nature of language, which is at the service of life, not aimed to build syllogisms, round periods, or to bend to the law of alexandrine. Another exception with respect to the general prejudice against emotions is represented by the Prague’s functionalists, see Jakobson’s expressive function and the idea of gradualism of expressive phenomena. They agree on the distinction between affection vs. emotion and on the tripartition between ideational, volitive and emotional elements. What changes is the importance given to each of these aspects (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000: 35-37). There are those who like Jakobson affirm the supremacy of the cognitive element, those who like Ullmann (1952) refuse to put the different func-

tions of language into hierarchy, and those, the minority, who give a central importance to the affective phenomenon (Van Ginneken 1907; Bally 1935 [1913] and Bréal 1976 [1897]).

Things begin to change in what Kerbrat-Orecchioni refers to as the “medium period”: from the 50s, a certain empowerment of stylistics can be identified, together with the distinction between “intellectual meaning” (“sens intellectuel”) and “affective meaning” (“sens affective”, 2000: 40), the “connotation” and the roots for evaluation. As far as the study on emotional language is concerned, this intermediate period is characterized by developments within the domains of semiotics (see “les passions” of Parret 1986, and the linguistic acts theory). What is referred to as the “contemporary period” is instead characterized by an interactive perspective focussed less on the expression of emotions than on their communication. Excluding the realms of figures and tropes and of the paraverbal semiotic units (elements vocal and prosodic and gestual), research on emotions is nowadays divided into “lexical approaches” (cf. “grammar of feelings”, and Ortony’s perspective in Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000: 45), “morpho-syntactical approaches” (cf. Communicative Grammar, cf. Leech and Swartik 1976), “expressive syntax” (cf. diminutive suffixes with affective value, cf. Wierzbicka in Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000: 46), exclamations, and so on and so forth; then we have “pragmatic approaches” (cf. Searle 1979) and finally “interactional approaches” (cf. notion of empathy and the principle of “reciprocity of perspectives”, the notion of “involvement”, “conflict”, and its opposite: the notion of “conversational pleasure” [“bonheur conversationnel”, 2000: 51]). This last trend of linguistics on emotions is the one where we collocate our case study here, and it can be furthermore subdivided into cultural variation research, cf. Wierzbicka, and the new interactive rhetoric and the question of politeness, cf. Goffman and Brown and Levinson (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000: 51-53).

In this respect, claims are also there now against the classical “strong presumption of the essential [...] rationality of human behaviour” and Grice’s (1975) Co-operative Principle (Daneš 2003: 10).

More specifically, contemporary researchers on argumentation divide into those who strongly promote the “essential, if not unexceptional rationality of human behaviour” (Daneš 2000: 10), as it is highly represented by Grice’s Co-operative principle and the conversational maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manners), and those who, starting from empirical research, claim that “it is no longer feasible to base one’s theory of communication [and as a consequence one’s description of argumentation] upon unexamined principles of instrumental rationality” (Daneš 2000: 10, also in reference to Marcelo Dascal’s work).

Focussing on dialogic argumentation, a similar argument has been also formulated by Weigand, claiming that “[h]uman beings are not only rationally and conventionally acting human beings: [...] amongst the principles guiding action games there are the Principles of Emotion” (1998: 39). For the first claim we have above identified within contemporary research trends on (dialogic) argumentation (emotion vs. rationality, *claim 1*), it can be implemented and specified into a second correlated claim that is: emotion vs. rationality and essential co-operation (rationality ~ co-operation, *claim 2*).

Following this short discussion, a chiasm could be drawn for visualizing the variation in the definition of dialogic argumentation along the decades and according to different perspectives, ranging from rational to (vs.) emotional and from co-operative to (vs.) non (forcedly) co-operative, as follows:

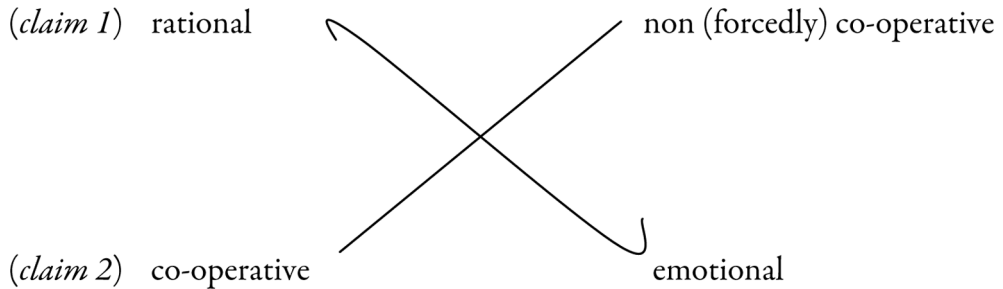


Figure I

As it might be evident from the chiasm, what appeared to be rigid theoretical positions are in fact instances of variation within a continuum. And in fact, as Walton (2000) points out, emotional thinking is no longer considered as the opposite of rational thinking, as well as, we would say, non (forcedly) co-operative behaviour does not exclude the possibility of a co-operative behaviour.

In light of the chiasm, we claim that the issue has to be reformulated, as it cannot be addressed productively without considering the specific variation characterising the singular case, or action game, at issue. In fact, following Weigand (1998: 37):

We do not communicate with single speech acts [...] Actions are always actions of human beings, i.e. they are not independent from the acting person. As such they include not only speech acts but also practical actions, not only linguistic but also visual and cognitive means like inferences. The minimal unit therefore has to comprise the complex whole of the acting of human beings who use all their abilities together in order to come [or not, we would say] to an understanding. This whole can only be the dialogic action game with human beings at the centre, which in its minimal form is based on a two-part sequence of action and reaction. [...] The unit of the action game rests on two major principles: the Action Principle and the Dialogic Principle. [...] The AP means that we communicate because we have specific communicative purposes that can all be derived from the general purpose to coming [or not, we would say] to an understanding. Action consists in pursuing purposes by specific means. Communicative action consists in pursuing communicative, i.e. dialogic purposes by communicative means.

In other words, shifting from theory to practice, in order to come to an understanding of the specific argumentative dialogue case at issue, or “dialogic action game” (as described in

Weigand, with the human being at the centre, which in its minimal form is based on a two-part sequence of action and reaction and reflecting both the Action Principle, and the Dialogic Principle), the question has to be reformulated.

More specifically, we claim that dialogic argumentation cannot be defined as essentially co-operative or not, but the chasm between rational vs. emotional and co-operative vs. non co-operative argumentation has to be reconsidered in light of criteria such as genre and context of the communicative setting (*our claim*)¹.

Having exposed our theoretical position, the question raises as to 'Where to look at' in order to better cast light on it. For we take the most representative, and yet the most unexpected case for argumentative dialogue and emotion: if there is a communicative space which is typically emotive, albeit not normally meant to be argumentative, that is 'lovers'² discourse', which we shall observe in the American Comedy of Love.

According to criteria of Genre (Swales 1990 and Giannetti 1990), we are then taking as our representative case a specific genre of dialogue, as lovers', within a specific genre of film (the American Comedy of Love), obviously considering film dialogues as a likely representation of real dialogues.

In order to provide quite an extensive account for the Context, we make reference to an integrated framework for analysis contemporarily accounting for the dimensions of dialogue, its participants, their relationship, their goals (action game with respect to the plot and characters' psychological developments).

This integrated framework, at least intentionally inspires our methodology, potentially implying various guidelines for dialogue analysis such as:

- a) semantic analysis, which we refer to as '*word and beyond*' level, accounting for keywords and metaphors;³
- b) pragmatic analysis ('*word and behind*' level), delving into features like assertiveness, implicitness, indirectness and ulterior levels of communication cf. Watzlawick (1967); transactional analysis is also referred to here, for the reference to notions such as 'stroke' (Berne 1964);
- c) social interaction analysis ('*dialogue as interaction*'), with reference to various theoretical frameworks, as for instance Goffman's (1967), or the dialogic action game (Weigand 1998), as well as various categories for analysis, cf. proxemic patterns (Giannetti 1990) etc... In other words, here the point at issue is generally revolving around the following question: 'do the characters want to cooperate or not?';

¹ In this regard, also cf. Ponterotto's definition of conversation (2003): "conversation is a fleeting encounter of multiple perspectives, a fast negotiation of competing goals, a rapid matching of complex positions. Conversation is after all a subtle meeting of minds" (2003: 297).

² By 'lovers' we refer here to quite an extensive category of emotionally charged players, who potentially or actually are in some sort of relationship.

³ For the use of metaphor in film dialogue analysis see Ponterotto (2003, 2005).

- d) plot analysis, or *structural level* cf. film genre. More specifically, for the genre at issue here, which we refer to as “American Comedy of Love”, we have identified as characteristic of the genre three stages, such as preconditions, development, solution;
- e) *psychological perspective*, questioning hidden or unconscious desires, identifiable in light of freudian lapses, metaphors, proxemic patterns, eye contact, body language, plot development, cf. semantic, pragmatic, social interaction and plot levels of analysis.

A complete account of the framework we have just outlined is beyond the scope of the present article, and yet we hope that the analysis which follows, albeit limited and not exhaustive, can provide some evidence of the potential of such an integrated methodological framework and possibly cast a bit of light on our main theoretical claim.

2. *Two dialogic cases: analysis and evidence*

We are now going to take two lovers’ dialogues between the same characters and within the same film (*The Philadelphia Story*, George Cukor 1940) taken at two very different stages of the plot. As we have already suggested, in the chosen film genre (American Comedy of Love), three plot stages or steps can be identified as characterizing it such as:

- 1) preconditions (characters’ description, situation description): ‘Love’ is hidden, characters’ desires are unconscious, and their declared goal is another, not Love;
- 2) development (action, characters development, characters relations): ‘Love’ begins to emerge, confusion, difficulties, eventually also discrepancy between goals and desires;
- 3) solution and end: ‘Love’ triumphs, difficulties are over, love and desire find a perfect coincidence, harmony.

Not by chance, the two dialogic cases have been taken respectively from the ‘development’ and the ‘solution and end’. A brief synopsis will precede each case.

As for the first case, evidence of the analysis will be provided through a parallel prospect table (Table I), accounting both for the dialogues extracts (left side) and the analysis evidence (right side). Capital letters and arrows are also used, in the analysis column, referring to the characters’ names initials, and their communicative relations. More specifically, straight arrows indicate any sort of relation, where the sense of the arrow refers to who is the sender and who is the receiver of the singular communicative act, when it is identifiable. Diagonal arrows stand for ulterior levels of communication, in correspondence with implicitness. The various moments of the dialogic case at issue have been indicated as ‘rounds’, which not by chance remind of a boxing match, as this seems to be the communication style of the two main characters here, dialogising one another as two adversaries in a ring.

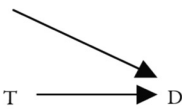
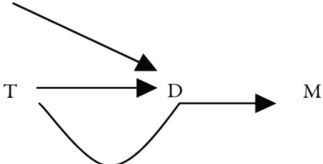
The scene is dominated by a triangle amongst three characters: Tracy, Dexter and Mike, who are related as follows (synopsis to the first dialogic case – plot stage: development).

The eldest daughter of a socially prominent family of Philadelphia, Tracy Lord, having divorced two years before from her first husband C. K. Dexter Heaven, is going to be married for the second time with the self made man George Kittredge.


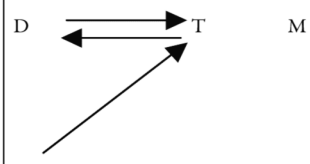
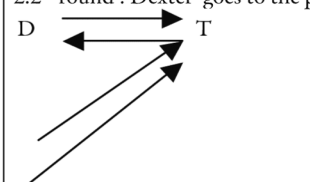
Her childhood sweetheart, sportsman and alcoholic recovering ex husband Dexter returns after an extended absence, accompanied by scandal sheet reporters Macauley “Mike” Connor and Elisabeth Imbrey, who he agreed to accompany ‘in disguise’ to Tracy’s house to prevent Spy magazine to publish some embarrassing information on Tracy’s father Seth.

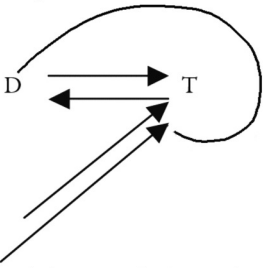
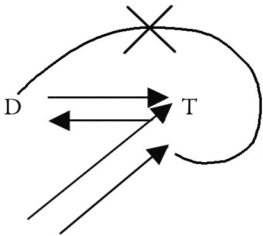
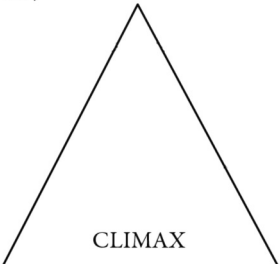
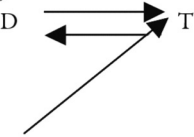
Tracy, though at first has nothing but contempt for Mike, gradually comes to admire him, and the same does Mike, realizing that she is more than just a superficial society girl. After a walk Tracy and Mike are going to have a swim in the pool when Dexter arrives...

Table I – First dialogic case and analysis

<p>13 scene dialogue between Tracy and Dexter (and Mike)</p>	<p>argumentation: non co-operativeness Interlocutors: adversaries Indirectness (x says st. to z, which is instead for y) & implicitness (I say something to mean st. else) vs. assertiveness</p>
<p>D-Hello. T-Hello. Fancy seeing you here. D-Orange juice? Certainly. T Don't tell me you've forsaken your beloved whiskey and whiskeys. D-No, I've just changed their color. I'm going for the pale pastel shades. They're more becoming to me. How about you, Mr. Connor? You drink, don't you? - Alcohol, I mean. M- A little. D- A little? And you're a writer? Tsk, tsk, tsk. I thought all writers drank to excess and beat their wives. You know, at one time I think I secretly wanted to be a writer. [...]</p>	<p>1° 'round' T vs. D</p> <p>Supposed to be the subject of the conversation: drinking But the argument is taken from Tracy to hit the adversary on another level</p>  <p>How does Dexter answer to this? By hitting Mike⁴ (indirectness: another character is taken as to hit Tracy, Mike, who functions as a metonymy for Tracy – structural analysis)</p> 

⁴ Having realized that Tracy feels st. for Mike, Dexter answers to Tracy's stroke by hitting Mike.

<p>D-I never saw you looking better, Red. You're getting that fine, tawny look.</p> <p>T- Oh, we're going to talk about me, are we? Goody.</p> <p>D- It's astonishing what money can do for people, don't you agree, Mr. Connor?</p> <p>Not too much, you know. Just more than enough. Take Tracy, for example. There was never a blow that hasn't been softened for her. Never a blow that won't be softened. It's even changed her shape. -She was once a dumpy little thing.</p> <p>T- I'm not interested in myself now.</p> <p>D- Not interested in yourself? You're fascinated, Red. You're far and away your favorite person in the world.</p> <p>T- In case you don't know - D-Of course, Mr. Connor... she's a girl who's generous to a fault.</p> <p>T- To a fault, Mr. Connor.</p> <p>D- Except to other people's faults. For instance, she never had any understanding... of my deep and gorgeous thirst.</p> <p>T-That was your problem. D-Granted. But you took on that problem with me when you took me, Red. You were no helpmate there. You were a scold. [...]</p> <p>T- Stop using those foul words. What are you trying to make me out as?</p> <p>D-What do you fancy yourself as?</p> <p>T-I don't know that I fancy myself-</p> <p>D- When I read you're gonna marry Kittredge I couldn't believe it.</p>	<p>2° 'round'</p>  <p>D → T M ←</p> <p>Supposed to be the subject: Tracy's look</p> <p>Indirectness: taking also Mike as an addressee; metaphorical meaning: soft vs. harsh. Ultior level of communication: I say something to mean something else; Starting talking about Tracy's good look, Dexter wants to complain about her harshness in spirit:</p>  <p>D → T M ← ↗</p> <p>Tracy's answer is taken by Dexter to hit her again</p> <p>Back to the first subject: drinking, metaphorically standing for something other than just thirst</p> <p>2.2° 'round': Dexter 'goes to the point'</p>  <p>D → T M ← ↗ ↗</p>
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<p>That's why I'm here. How could he even think of it?</p> <p>T- Because he's everything you're not.</p> <p>He's been poor, he's had to work, and he's had to fight for everything..</p> <p>and I love him as I never even began to love you.</p> <p>D- Maybe so, but I doubt it. It's just a swing from me... but it's too violent a swing. Kittredge is no great tower of strength. [...] But whatever he is, toots, you'll have to stick.</p> <p>-He'll give you no out as I did. -I won't require one. I suppose you'd still be attractive to any man of spirit, though. There's something engaging about it, this "goddess" business... something more challenging to the male than the more obvious charms. T-Really? D-Really. We're very vain, you know. "This citadel can and shall be taken, and I'm the boy to do it."</p> <p>T- You seem quite contemptuous of me all of a sudden. D- No, Red, not of you. Never of you. Red, you could be the finest woman on this earth.</p>	<p>Tracy reacts by under-evaluating and criticizing Dexter</p>  <p>And then again by hitting him But Dexter answers by denying the accusation and not taking the stroke:</p>  <p>3° round: Dexter recurs to suasion, playing on Tracy's vanity (narcissistic trait – psychoanalytic view)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 "you'd still be attractive" 2 Because of "this goddess business" 3 "Something more challenging..."  <p>But again the compliments are taken to hit Tracy's attitude as a goddess citadel:</p> 
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I'm contemptuous of something
inside you
you either can't help or won't try to.
Your so-called "strength"...
your prejudice against weakness,
your blank intolerance.
T-Is that all?
D-That's the gist of it.
**Because you'll never be a first-class
human being or a first-class
woman... until you've learned to
have regard for human frailty.**
It's a pity your own foot
can't slip a little sometime...
but your sense of inner divinity
wouldn't allow that.
This goddess must
and shall remain intact.
There are more of you
than people realize.
A special class of the American
female.
"The Married Maidens."
T-So help me,
if you say another word-
D-I'm through, Red.
For the moment I've had my say.
[...]
D-I left you a wedding present. Sorry
I hadn't ribbon to tie it up with.
**[14 scene dialogue between Tracy
and Gorge on 'the True Love']**
G- Look what your friend
considers a wedding present.
T- Why, it's a model of the True
Love.
G- The what?
T- A boat he designed
and built, practically.
We sailed it down the coast of Maine
and back the summer we were
married.
My, she was yare!
G-"Yare"? What's that mean?
T- It means, uh-
Oh, what does it mean?
Easy to handle, quick to the helm.
Fast, bright.
Everything a boat should be...
until she develops dry rot.
Oh, George, to get away.
[...]

"Yare": Keyword for the social difference between Tracy and her future husband George, which is, following Dexter's words, "a difference in mind and spirit"

As Table I has hopefully highlighted, in the first case argumentation is managed according to non-co-operativeness, interlocutors are like adversaries and their communication tends to be indirect (x says st. to z, which is instead for y) and makes a large use of implicitness (I say something to mean st. else) in spite of assertiveness. In light of our analysis, along with the plot development this projection process will turn out to interest not only the way the characters communicate (indirectness, implicitness), but also the way they more generally relate to one another (Mike evidently functions as an instrumental character for Tracy to come back to Dexter). This is best represented by the model of the True Love, which appears at the end of the first dialogic case, functioning both as a premonitory sign with respect to the plot development and as a transitional object. In this sense, it is interesting to notice the way Tracy looks at the model of the True Love, which is a metonymy for Dexter, the transactional object through which the transition of the desire from hidden and unconscious to conscious and explicit will take place.

Shifting now to the second dialogic case, the scenario opens after the following happenings (synopsis to the second dialogic case – plot stage: solution).

Dexter gives Tracy as a wedding present a model of the True Love, the boat they used for their honeymoon. Tracy, confused by Dexter's and her father's words, gets very drunk at her engagement party and starts kissing Mike after a middle-of-the-night swing at home. The next morning, a very hung-over Tracy does not seem to remember what happened the night before, but as Dinah and the others start to remind her, she becomes even more confused, when Dexter arrives...

Table II – *Second dialogic case*

26 scene dialogue between Tracy and Dexter	argumentation: co-operativeness Interlocutors: collaborative lovers (in the final scene they will become specular) Assertiveness
<p>D-Doctor's orders, Red. T-What is it? D-Just the juice of a few flowers. It's a type of stinger. Removes the sting. T-Oh, Dext, don't say that. D-Why not, Red? T-Nothing will. Nothing ever can. I've done the most terrible thing to you. D-To me? I doubt that very much, dear. T-You don't know. D-Maybe I shouldn't, huh? T-But you must. You've got to. I couldn't stand it if you didn't. Dexter, what am I going to do? D-But why to me, darling? Why ask me? Why do I come into it anymore? Aren't you confusing me with a fellow named Kittredge or something? T-George! [...] D-Tell me, what did you think of my wedding present? I like my presents at least acknowledged, you know. T-It was beautiful. And sweet, Dext. D-Yes. She was quite a boat, the True Love, wasn't she? T-Was and is. My, she was yare!</p>	

D-She was yare, all right.
 T-I wasn't, was I?
 D-Not very. You were good at the bright work, though.
 T-I made her shine. Where is she now?
 D-I'm gonna sell her to Rufe Watriss.
 T-You're going to sell the True Love for money?
 D-Sure.
 T-To that fat old rum pot?
 D-Oh, well, what does it matter? When you're through with a boat, you're through. Besides, it was only comfortable for two people. Unless you want her.
 T-No. No, I don't want her.
 D-I'm designing another one anyway...along more practical lines.
 T-What will you call her?
 D-I thought the True Love II. What do you think?
 T-If you call any boat that, I promise I'll blow you and it out of the water. I'll tell you what you can call her.
 D-What?
 T-In fond remembrance of me...the Easy Virtue.
 D-Shut up, Red. I can't have you thinking things like that about yourself.
 T-What am I supposed to think when I--I don't know. I don't know anything anymore.
 D-That sounds very hopeful, Red.
 T-That sounds just fine.

Contrary to the first dialogic case, here the co-operation between the two characters is evident at semantic level (e.g. use of terms of endearment), pragmatic level (assertiveness, gestures, proxemic patterns), interactional level (turn-taking) and structural level (the conversation preludes to the solution, where Tracy and Dexter will find a new harmony). That is why no complex graphical schemas are needed to represent their communicative transactions (Table II does not account for a column for the analysis). Even the little shadow of disappointment arousing from the discussion on the name of the new boat is ultimately functional to set out the conditions for a deeper agreement between the two main characters, who will turn out to marry again in the end.

It is interesting to notice that the transactional object, the True Love's model, which functioned before as a metonymy for Dexter, functions again in the second part of this dialogue as to bring the desire to the surface (cf. the transactional object through which the transition of the desire from hidden and unconscious to conscious and explicit will take place) as to 'close the circle' and lead the plot to the solution.

3. Conclusions

Despite the limited scope of our analysis, we hope to have cast some light on some of our theoretical claims. To start with, provided that film dialogues are a likely representation of real dialogues, lovers' discourse can be analyzed in terms of argumentative dialogue. Secondly, and most relevantly, our main point should have here emerged in such as conflict vs. cooperation & rational vs. emotional instances are not intrinsic characteristics of argumentative dialogue, to be considered

as conversational maxims, but depend on a number of other factors affecting the characters of the dialogic action game such as their inner motives, their position within the plot and context. More specifically, the characters will be non-cooperative ('irrational') and they will perform non assertive communication (communication is played on ulterior levels: implicitness, indirectness), when they have internal conflicts (psychological dimension) and their motives do not to coincide (AP) – a case which is typically represented in a development stage within a comedy plot. They will be co-operative (rational) and they will perform assertive communication (pragmatic dimension, see Watzlawick) when their internal conflicts are solved out (psychological dimension) and their motives coincide (social interaction, AP) – a case which is typically represented toward the 'solution and end' within a comedy plot. If a framework for argumentation can be applied to love dialogue, the very nature of the genre at issue questions the reasonableness of a fixed alternative between rational and emotional argumentation as, following Weigand (2000: 16) "we are always different human beings interacting in the action game".

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