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The Appraisal of Conductions

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Abstract: I argue that conductions are a special type of inference indeed, but that this does not mean that we need to develop novel standards of inference goodness or specific argument schemes for properly assessing them. Following LNMA's theoretical framework, I provide a semantic account of conductions and explain the interesting pragmatic properties of a certain type of conductions (i.e., balance of considerations or pro-and-con argumentation) in terms of the rhetorical dimension of the speech-act of arguing.

Résumé: Je soutiens que les arguments conducteurs sont un type spécial d'inférence, mais que cela ne signifie pas que nous devons élaborer des nouvelles normes de bonne inférence ou de catégorie d'arguments pour les évaluer correctement. Suivant le cadre théorique de la représentation normative linguistique de l'argumentation, je fournis un compte rendu sémantique des arguments conducteurs et explique les propriétés pragmatiques intéressantes d'un certain type de ces arguments (c'est-à-dire l'équilibre des considérations ou les arguments pour et contre) en termes de dimension rhétorique de l'acte de parole d'argument.

1. Introduction

This paper is meant to address three questions: 1) a terminological question about the notion of conduction, 2) a logical question about the appraisal of conductive inferences, and 3) a pragmatic question about the role of a *distinctive type* of conductive argumentation. These three questions have been already addressed in the literature on conductions, and very different responses to each of them have been defended. The view that I argue for in this paper is that we should regard conductions as a special type of inference, even

though we do not need to develop novel standards of inference good-ness or specific argument schemes for assessing them. In fact, I aim to show that the pragmatic reconstruction of Toulmin's model of ar-gument that underlies the *linguistic normative model of argumenta-tion* (LNMA) suffices to appraise conductive inferences, whereas the particular features of the most characteristic type of conductive argumentation (i.e., the so called *pro-and-con* or *balance of consid-erations*) can be explained in terms of LNMA's account of the rhe-torical dimension of argumentation.

2. The notion of conduction

In *Challenge and Response: Justification in Ethics*, Carl Wellman proposed the term 'conductive' for naming a type of argument in which "*1*) a conclusion about some individual case *2*) is drawn non-conclusively *3*) from one or more premises about the same case *4*) without any appeal to other cases." (Wellman 1971, p. 52). Accord-ing to this definition, most everyday reasoning and arguing would be conductive: "although they expect sacher cake for tea, it's quite difficult to make; let's bake muffins instead", "she said she was com-ing, but it's rush hour; so, maybe she's just late", "this is a party, cheer up!"…

Wellman took conductive arguments to be typical of moral rea-soning and argumentation, and he pointed at the need of having spe-cific models for their analysis and appraisal. His goal in *Challenge and Response* was to provide an account of ethical justification, un-der the assumption that justifying is different from reasoning: the latter would be a process with only semantic conditions of correct-ness, whereas the former would also involve pragmatic conditions, determined by the procedural/communicative dimension of the ac-tivity of giving and asking for reasons. Thus, in Wellman's project, the notion of conduction was meant to capture the standard of infer-ence that, in his view, is characteristic of the type of justification that ethical statements require (Wellman 1971, p. 84). In other words, Wellman's original notion of conduction is the notion of a *type of inference*, on a par with others such as deductions and inductions. Specifically, Wellman said that conductions are a type of

"nondemonstrative nonformal inference to a particular conclusion" (Wellman 1971, p. 52).

It is easy to guess that the view that there is a type of inference that provides support for its conclusion in a nondemonstrative and nonformal way was perceived as support for the incipient endeavour of developing an *informal logical* approach to argument appraisal. In the late 1970s, Trudy Govier, for one, took Wellman's notion of conduction as one of the touchstones of her own informal logical project. She proposed a different definition of conductions, questioning both the view that conductions are only about particular cases, and the claim that they are typical of moral reasoning (Govier 1979, p. 12). Thus, in her latest paper on the topic, Govier characterized conductions as "arguments in which premises are put forward as separately and non-conclusively relevant to support a conclusion, against which negatively relevant considerations may also be acknowledged" (Govier 2011, p. 262).

Govier was not alone in paying attention to, and also questioning, Wellman's definition of conductions. Following her, Hitchcock (1981, 1994), Freeman (2011) and Blair (2011a), among others, have also resisted the first and the third features of conductions in Wellman's definition: why should conductions be only about individual cases? Importantly, however, as Blair noticed, if we drop these features from Wellman's definition, "then conductive reasoning or argument becomes any defeasible reasoning or argument that does not rely on analogy" (Blair 2011a, p. 3). And the problem is: does this make a sound category? What is special about being a non-analogical defeasible inference?

In fact, the flourishing of informal logic and, specially, the discredit of formal logic as the hegemonic model for inference appraisal, made many theorists consider that there was nothing special about inferences that are neither deductive (that is, whose conclusions follow of necessity from the premises) nor inductive (in the sense of 'probabilistic'). This is why Blair pointed at the need of distinguishing conductive inferences from "other categories of inference discussed in the literature that share these two features, such as those called 'presumptive,' 'plausible,' 'prima facie,' 'pro tanto,' 'provisoed' or 'defeasible'" (Blair 2011b, p. 4).

Actually, Wellman had further developed his characterization of conductions by distinguishing three subtypes: 1) conductions in which a single relevant but non-conclusive reason is offered in support of a conclusion, 2) conductions in which several relevant considerations are jointly adduced for a conclusion, and 3) conductions in which both pro and counter-considerations are put forward to draw a conclusion.

After Wellman, other scholars have also considered that appealing to features other than the type of inferential support that the premises provide to the conclusion might be a sound strategy to differentiate conductions from other types of reasonings and arguments. Thus, for example, Hitchcock (2013) proposed that:

> What distinguishes conductive reasoning and argument from arguments from sign and arguments from complex properties to their simple constituents is that the conclusion of conductive reasoning or argument attributes a supervenient status to the subject of interest, on the basis of factors that the reasoner takes to count for or against its having that status. Thus, we can define conductive reasonings and arguments as those in which a supervenient status is attributed to a subject of interest on the basis of one or more features of that subject, with possible acknowledgement of features that count against the attribution. The subject may be a class rather than a first-order entity, and it may be an ordered *n*-tuple (pair, triple, etc.) rather than an individual. The supervenient status will typically be evaluative, prescriptive, interpretive or classificatory (Hitchcock 2013, p. 205).

Importantly, as Hitchcock himself underlined: "such reasoning can be deductively valid, in the broad sense that the meaning of its constituents rules out the possibility of true premises and a false conclusion" (Hitchcock 2013, p. 205). In other words, this strategy might leave out the condition that conductions are non-conclusive inferences, which, for Wellman and Govier was key. So, the question is, who is right? What is a conduction?

The word 'conduction' was introduced as a technical term, aimed at naming a theoretical distinction. The fact that we didn't have a previous, ordinary, notion of conduction (or in other words, a practice of naming "conductions" certain types of inferences) has resulted in the following quandary: if two proposed definitions of conduction differ from one another, how are we to settle which, if either,

is the right one? How should we understand, for example, the dispute on whether or not conductions are about specific cases, or whether or not they are non-conclusive? Unfortunately, we cannot appeal to the alleged extension of the term, because the term itself was born with the very theoretical distinction. Thus, we cannot consider particular examples of alleged conductions in order to define the notion of conduction because the very selection of examples would beg the question in favour of our preferred definition.

In fact, since there is no pre-existing notion of conduction that our definitions should honour, we cannot have a criterion to determine the *accuracy* of our definitions of conduction. All that we have is the set of actual inferences and the aim of distinguishing among them by setting the corresponding categories for one theoretical purpose or another. In these circumstances, it seems reasonable to adopt a pragmatic perspective in order to distinguish between better and worse definitions of conduction.

Now, by coining the term 'conduction', Wellman suggested the need of dealing with a phenomenon that, allegedly, traditional logic had overlooked despite its significance for the field—namely, a type of inference that is neither deductive, nor inductive.[1] Let me then adopt the following pragmatic criterion in order to distinguish between better and worse definitions of conductions: the "best" definition of conduction is the one that makes the notion more relevant for the field. For sure, being an inference about horses is being a type of inference, but setting this category doesn't seem very relevant from a logical perspective.

By contrast, I think that Wellman's first intuition—namely, that there is a type of inference that traditional models of inference goodness did overlook—is important enough for our field. For such a type of inference would show that inferential normativity is not a formal matter, and this has been the main intuition leading the development

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[1] By "deductive", I mean an inference whose conclusion is meant to follow necessarily from the premises. Sometimes "inductive" is used to name inferences whose conclusions aren't meant to follow necessarily from the premises—i.e., inferences that are not deductive. Obviously, this cannot be the meaning of "inductive" here, because in that sense, any inference would be either deductive or inductive. Here, "inductive" stands for "inference whose conclusion is meant to follow with a certain degree of probability".

of informal logic since Toulmin's work (Toulmin, 1958). Moreover, in defining conductions simply as inferences that are neither deductive nor inductive, the catalogue of types of inferences turns out to be (trivially) complete: necessarily, it would consist of just deductions, inductions and conductions. In the following sections, I aim to show, on the other hand, that the notion of conduction so understood is not a mere catchall, but the cornerstone of the project of providing a general normative theory of inference—that is, for logic ever since Aristotle.

3. Conductive inferences, conductive arguments, conductive reasoning and conductive argumentation

Within argumentation theory, arguments are commonly characterized as 'the product of argumentation'. However, if this characterization were offered as a definition of argument, it would be too vague to be adequate. If we agree that argumentation is a communicative activity, then we can think of its "product" in many different ways: as particular pieces of speech or text, as the meaning conveyed by them, as their effects on addressees, etc…

Within the framework of formal logic, an argument is usually defined as a set of propositions, one of which—the conclusion- follows from the others—the premises. But the problem with such a definition is: if the premises of an argument do not follow from the conclusion, isn't such a set of propositions just a set of propositions? Obviously, this problem affects not only the characterization of conductions, but also of inductions and deductions. For, as Fohr (1979, p. 5) had observed, the common usage of 'argument'—and the very business of appraising arguments—requires that there can be bad instances of it.

In facing the difficulties of defining deductions, inductions and conductions in terms of the support that the premises provide to the conclusion, Govier (1980) and Hitchcock (1980) suggested that these are not types of inferences but types of validity or types of standards of appraisal. Yet, this was not the moral that Fohr himself drew from his observation. Instead, his suggestion was to refrain from thinking of arguments as things that exist *in vacuo*, but as being person-related (Fohr 1979, p. 5).

In Bermejo-Luque (2011), I proposed a *linguistic normative model of argumentation* (LNMA) that, in a way, captures Fohr's intuition that the best option for avoiding such problems is to adopt a pragmatic linguistic perspective and to give up Platonism altogether. LNMA follows Bach and Harnish's (1979) *Speech-act Schema* in order to characterize the second order speech-act complex of arguing; that is, as a speech-act composed of a speech-act of adducing (the reason or set of reasons) and a speech-act of concluding (the conclusion or target-claim). The illocution of arguing, so understood, counts as an attempt at showing a target-claim to be correct. Correspondingly, in LNMA argumentation goodness is characterized as a matter of both semantic conditions determining the correctness of target-claims and pragmatic conditions determining how well an act of arguing plays as an act of showing. In this model, arguments are mere representations of the particular inferences that supervene on acts of arguing and also on *acts of reasoning* (i.e., particular inferential processes that are the mental counterparts of acts of arguing).

In contrast with acts of arguing and acts of reasoning, which are, so to speak, 'objects' of the world, arguments would be mere theoretical constructions, not abstract objects from a Platonic world. From this perspective, we would not "use" arguments, but "produce" arguments to represent the inferences that we make. As such representations, arguments can be obtained by displaying a variety of models, such as those of the different formal systems or informal argumentative schemas.[2] In thinking of conductions as a type of

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[2] Hitchcock dismisses this strategy: "But, as has been argued in the case of attempts to classify reasoning and argument as deductive or inductive, such appeals to the intentions or claims or beliefs of reasoners and arguers are vacuous in many cases and are unnecessary for argument appraisal (…). As one can confirm for oneself by immediate retrospection, reasoners who draw a conclusion for themselves from information at their disposal are typically unaware of whether they are drawing it conclusively or non-conclusively. Reasoners just draw their conclusions, and it is only after that inferential act, if at all, that they determine whether their conclusion follows conclusively or non-conclusively. As for arguers, they sometimes claim a qualitative degree of support for their conclusion by qualifying it with terms like 'must' or 'probably' or 'presumably' or 'may.' But they do so in a minority of cases. If we cannot discover an arguer's intentions in this respect, we must construe the argument as ambiguous and test it against both deductive

inference, we are assuming that conductive arguments are mere representations of conductive acts of reasoning or conductive acts of arguing, and also that conductive argumentation is argumentation that involves conductive acts of arguing. Let us then see what is a conductive act of arguing.

4.   The linguistic normative model of argumentation

As already pointed out, one of the goals of this paper is to provide a model for the analysis and appraisal of conductions. I will do so within LNMA. So, let me first summarize the main features of this theoretical framework.

LNMA follows Toulmin's intuition that modal qualifiers are key to the semantic appraisal of argumentation—that is, the appraisal of argumentation's semantic conditions, which determine the correctness of a target-claim. Yet, in contrast with Toulmin's model of argument (1958, chapter 3), LNMA's model of argument incorporates two types of modals: *ontological* and *epistemic*.
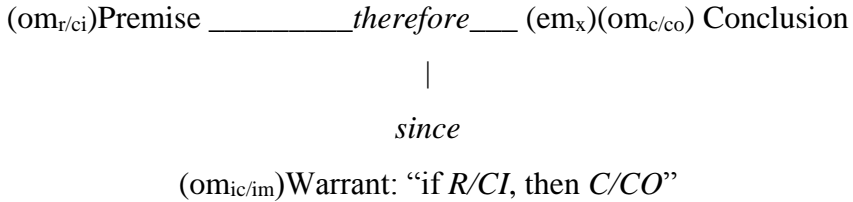
In everyday discourse, we can make explicit the variety of ways in which we can put forward a certain semantic content *p* in a first-order constative speech-act by saying, for example "*p* is *true*," "*p* is (more or less) *probable*," "*p* is (more or less) *acceptable*," "*p* is (more or less) *verisimilar*," "*p* is *plausible*," "*p* is *necessary*," "*p* is *possible*," etc. These *ontological modals* are terms that make explicit the type and degree of pragmatic force of the constatives comprising an act of arguing. They are ontological because they are meant to express the value of our propositions as representations of the actual state of the world. When we put forward a propositional content with the appropriate pragmatic force given the actual state of the world, we make first-order constatives that are semantically *correct*—like the correct assertions "(it is true that) snow is white", "(it is

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and inductive (and conductive) standards." (Hitchcock 2013, p. 200) Contrastingly, within LNMA's theoretical framework, whether we are conscious of it or not, we always put forward conclusions with a certain degree of epistemic force, because this force is what turns a mere act of claiming that A into an act of concluding that A: this force is essential to any speech-act of concluding as a specific type of constative speech-act. Thus, interpreting a speaker as having drawn a conclusion requires being in a position to determine the specific epistemic modal that she is supposed to be using for so concluding.

necessary that) a bachelor is an unmarried man", "(it is possible that) there is life in other planets", etc. Contrastingly, the modal that expresses the pragmatic force with which we draw a conclusion is an *epistemic modal*. This modal is meant to communicate what we take to be our credentials for concluding, i.e. the type and degree of support that our reasons are supposed to confer on our target-claims because of our inference-claims. For example, in saying that a claim holds truly, necessarily, possibly, plausibly, (more or less) probably, etc. (i.e. in saying things such as "certainly p," "necessarily p," "it might be the case that p," "plausibly p," "(more or less) probably p," etc.), we are expressing something about the status of this claim as knowledge, about the confidence that we may place on it. Thus, any second-order speech-act of concluding involves, either explicitly or implicitly, not only the ontological modal of the first-order constative that it is built on, but also the epistemic modal that indicates the force with which this first-order claim is *concluded*.

As representations of the inferences that supervene on acts of arguing and acts of reasoning, arguments in LNMA consist of the following elements: *premises* (corresponding either to the speech-act of adducing a reason, R, or to the cognitive input in the act of reasoning, CI), *conclusion* (corresponding either to the speech-act of concluding a target-claim, C, or to the cognitive output in the act of reasoning, CO), *warrant* (corresponding either to the inference-claim in the act of arguing, IC, or to its counterpart in the act of reasoning; i.e., the *inference-motivation*, IM) and the representations of the *epistemic* and *ontological modals*, *em* and *om*, of each of the speech-acts making up the act of arguing (corresponding to the type and degree of constative pragmatic force with which the speaker, either implicitly or explicitly, puts forward the propositional content of each constative) or of the judgments and beliefs constituting the act of reasoning (corresponding to the type and degree of assent to each propositional content constituting the act of reasoning). Thus, an ascription of both epistemic and ontological modals (ultimately, the ascription made by the arguer or the reasoner—which, in case she doesn't make them explicit, is something that we'll have to infer from the context) is part of the layout of arguments, and the semantic appraisal of an act of arguing or reasoning results in the process of determining the right ascription of modals to each represented claim

or judgement/belief (i.e., the process of ascertaining whether or not the ascription made by the arguer or the reasoner is correct after all). This model of argument can then be outlined as follows:

$(om_{r/ci})$Premise _____*therefore*___ $(em_x)(om_{c/co})$ Conclusion

|

since

$(om_{ic/im})$Warrant: "if *R/CI*, then *C/CO*"

(The contents of the antecedent and the consequent of the warrant correspond to the whole first-order constatives R and C of the act of arguing, i.e., to their propositional contents in conjunction with their (implicit or explicit) ontological modals, or to the whole cognitive input and output, CI and CO of the act of reasoning, i.e., to their propositional contents and their corresponding type and degree of assent).

Let φ represent the idiomatic function that, for each ontological modal of a conditional, assigns the epistemic modal needed to draw a conclusion having this conditional as its warrant—or, in other words, the term that is used in a certain language for expressing either the pragmatic force of any speech-act of concluding having a conditional so qualified as its inference-claim or the type and degree of assent to the cognitive output having a conditional so qualified as its inference-motivation.

$$\varphi(om_i) = em_i$$

In this account, an argument is valid (i.e., the inference is good, whatever its type) iff $em_i = em_x$ and om_i is correct—that is, if it is the ontological modal that actually corresponds to the inference-claim as a constative or to the inference-motivation as a belief or judgement, given the actual state of the world. In other words, an argument is valid if and only if the epistemic modal that the speaker (or reasoner) has used for concluding or coming to believe the cognitive output is the epistemic modal that φ assigns to the ontological

modal of the speaker's implicit inference-claim or inference-motivation, and this ontological modal is appropriate for this inference claim or inference motivation given the actual state of the world.

5. Deductions, inductions and conductions in LNMA

In LNMA, deductive arguments are arguments representing acts of arguing or acts of reasoning whose inference-claims/inference-motivations are meant to be necessary truths (like "if this is red, then it is coloured"). We know that an inference-claim or inference-motivation is meant to be necessary because the conclusion was drawn with such epistemic pragmatic force. In case this conditional is a necessary truth indeed, the argument will be valid, and the arguer will be entitled to *epistemically* qualify the conclusion with a "necessarily". For example, pieces of argumentation such as "She is in the garden or in the living-room, and she is not in the garden; so, *necessarily* she is in the living-room" or "This may be red; so, necessarily, it may be coloured" are deductive and valid because their corresponding inference-claims are the necessary truths "if (it is true that) she is in the garden or in the living-room, and (it is true that) she is not in the garden, then (it is true that) she is in the living-room" and "If (it is possible that) this is red, then (it is possible that) it is coloured". Likewise, valid probabilistic arguments will be those representing acts of arguing, or acts of reasoning whose inference-claims/inference-motivations are meant to be (more or less) probable, so that they entitle us to epistemically qualify their conclusions with a "(more or less) probably/likely". For example, "Our currency is losing value; so, very probably, the inflation rate will rise" has as its inference-claim "if (it is true that) our currency is losing value, then (it is true that) the inflation rate will rise", which is very probable indeed (thus making the argumentation inductively valid).

Importantly, in LNMA, validity is not co-extensive with deductiveness: "deductive," "inductive," "conductive" are names for inferences, in the sense of forms of inferring, and any of them may be wrong. That is, an inference may be invalid and still be, for example, a deductive inference, because in LNMA, being an inference is a pragmatic property instead of a syntactic or semantic one.

In turn, argumentation like "You ought to help him for he has been very kind to you" (Wellman 1971, p. 55) or "You ought to take your son to the movie because you promised to do so, it is a good movie, and you have nothing better to do this afternoon" (Wellman 1971, p. 56)", would be represented by means of arguments whose warrants are conditionals that are plausible or just plainly true, such as "if (it is true that) he has been very kind to you, then (it is true that) you ought to help him" and "if (it is true that) you promised taking your soon to the movie, it is a good movie, and you have nothing better to do this afternoon, then (it is plausible that) you ought to take your son to the movie."

Now, if we adopt the suggested definition of conductions in section 3, deductions, inductions and conductions would constitute the full catalogue of types of inferential support. And if we adopt LNMA's model of argument to assess inferences, we can characterize deductive arguments as those having as their warrants conditionals qualified as necessary truths. In turn, inductive (probabilistic) arguments would be arguments having as their warrants conditionals qualified as (more or less) probable, and finally, conductive arguments would be arguments whose warrants are conditionals qualified by ontological modals other than "necessary" or "probable".

This account of conductions enables us to characterize another interesting feature of this type of inference, namely, that it may exhibit different degrees of strength—just as (probabilistic) inductions do. For example, a piece of argumentation like "although there is a traffic jam in Sunset Boulevard, we won't be late because we are going to take a short-cut by River Side that avoids Sunset" would be stronger than "although there is a traffic jam in Sunset Boulevard, we won't be late because we are going to take a short-cut after crossing Sunset Boulevard." Why? Because, provided that there is a traffic jam in Sunset Boulevard, the conditional "if we take a short-cut by River Side that avoids Sunset, then we won't be late" is more plausible than "if we take a short-cut after crossing Sunset, then we won't be late".

Alternatively, we can adopt Hitchcock's view (1980), and distinguish only two types of arguments: deductive (where the conclusion cannot be false if the premises are true) and inductive (where the conclusion can be false even if the premises are true); that would

make of conductions a type of induction. Finally, LNMA allows us to just drop this terminology and build a full typology of inferential support by considering the range of ontological modals that can be used to qualify an inference-claim/inference-motivation. If we do so, we shall distinguish between inferences having as their warrants conditionals that are meant to be necessary or probabilistically true, plausible, possible, true, or even a presumption, etc.[3] Which catalogue of inferences is better is a practical question that exceeds the goals of this paper.

6. The semantic appraisal of conductions in LNMA

As already pointed out, Wellman developed his characterization of conductions by distinguishing three subtypes: 1) conductions in which a single relevant but non-conclusive reason is offered in support of a conclusion, 2) conductions in which several relevant considerations are jointly adduced for a conclusion, and 3) conductions in which both pro and counter-considerations are put forward to draw a conclusion.

In view of the elusiveness of characterizing conductions in general, argumentation theorists have traditionally focused on the last, more characteristic subtype of Wellman's typology, also dubbed "balance-of-considerations arguments" or "pro and con arguments". Actually, as Freeman (2011, p. 127) has pointed out, "since the third pattern clearly includes the second, and the second the first, we [can] take it as paradigm for the class of conductive arguments." For this reason, any account that is able to properly deal with the analysis and appraisal of this third type of conductions should be a good model for the evaluation of conductions in general.

Now, in order to provide this account within LNMA's framework, we have to provide a speech-act account of 'pro' and 'con' considerations. As pointed out in section 3, according to LNMA, conductions are types of inferences, and conductive argumentation is argumentation that involves this type of inference. But, of course, any piece of argumentation may involve more than one inference.

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[3] See Bermejo-Luque (2016) for an account of presumptive inferences in LNMA, and also Bermejo-Luque (2012) for a similar account of both deductive and non-deductive analogical inferences.

Particularly, as regards "pro and con" argumentation, our claim is that pro-considerations are speech-acts of adducing that belong to acts of arguing, whereas con-considerations are a different type of speech-act that is external to the complex speech-act of arguing. Let us see why.

Wellman's examples suggest that counter-considerations are claims introduced by means of expressions like 'although', 'even though', 'in spite of', etc. Scholars such as Walton (2011) or van Laar (2014) have dealt with the appraisal of conductions by casting counter-considerations as moves in a dialogue. Yet, as Govier (2011) has pointed out:

> The "dialogue" construction may lapse into adversariality if we construe the pros as *against* the cons, and one dialogue participant as arguing *against* the other. Something has been added in this interpretation, namely the element of adversariality suggested by 'against.' And something has been lost, namely the incorporation of both positively and negatively relevant factors into a single view. It is this element of balance, of fairness, of recognition that there are alternate views on behalf of which reasonable points can be made, that has for many been an especially important and intriguing aspect of pro and con conductive arguments (Govier 2011, p. 269).

As Adler (2013) reminded us, within the Gricean pragmatic tradition, terms like 'although', 'even though', 'in spite of', etc. result in *conventional implicatures*. As Bach (1999, p. 31) puts it, by means of conventional implicatures, speakers would conventionally implicate propositions whose truth-values do not affect the truth-value of the entire utterance, so that their eventual falsity would be compatible with the truth of the entire utterance. On this view, the truth-conditions of A and B would be the same.

A) Although your lawn needs cutting, you ought to take your son to the movies

B) Your lawn needs cutting and you ought to take your son to the movies

In "The myth of conventional implicature", Bach (1999, p. 18) suggested that terms such as 'although' are *utterance modifiers*, that is expressions that serve to make second-order speech-acts. Bach

does not develop further this notion, but he dubbed speech-acts introduced by means of expressions such as 'although' *concessives*. If we follow Bach's proposal and LNMA's account of the speech-act of arguing, we will have that an utterance of "although your lawn needs cutting, you ought to take your son to the movies because the picture is ideal for children and will be gone by tomorrow" consists of two speech-acts: the concessive speech-act of uttering "your lawn needs cutting", and the argumentative speech-act of uttering "you ought to take your son to the movies since the picture is ideal for children and will be gone by tomorrow".

As we have seen, in LNMA, the semantic appraisal of an act of arguing requires determining which is the proposition adduced, which is the proposition concluded, and what is the constative force of the corresponding speech-acts. The following argument would represent the above speech-act of arguing.

> *Premise* (representing the act of adducing, with its ontological modal): (it is true that) the picture is ideal for children and (it is true that) it will be gone by tomorrow

> *Conclusion* (representing the act of concluding, with its ontological and epistemic modals): (plausibly) (it is true that) you should take your son to the movies

> *Warrant* (representing the inference-claim, with its ontological modal): (it is plausible that) if it is true that the picture is ideal for children and it is true that it will be gone by tomorrow, then it is true that you should take your son to the movies

As we have seen, this argument will be valid iff it is plausible that if it is true that the picture is ideal for children and it is true that it will be gone by tomorrow, then it is true that you should take your son to the movies, and the target-claim will be semantically correct iff the argument is valid and its premises are semantically correct too—that is, if it is true that the picture is ideal for children and it is true that it will be gone by tomorrow.

Importantly, in order to determine the plausibility of this conditional, additional information, such as that your lawn needs cutting,

will of course be relevant—even if the arguer or the opponent had never pointed at it! Actually, further information may also be needed in order to determine the plausibility of the warrant, which is one of the main tasks to determine the semantic correctness of the inference in LNMA. At any rate, the need for actual information about the case is something that no assessment of the argumentation can escape.

Now, this kind of analysis might seem similar to the one that Freeman (2011) proposes in "Evaluating conductive arguments in light of the Toulmin model", since he also adopts Toulmin's model to appraise conductions, and because of that, he considers that the *ground adequacy* of this type of argument is, in the end, a matter of "the reliability of the properly and comprehensively framed warrant of the argument, framed with respect to conceded rebuttals, including unanticipated rebuttals, and counter-rebuttals" (Freeman 2011, p. 144). Yet, there are a few significant differences between Freeman's proposal and mine:

Firstly, for Freeman, warrants are general rules (or *covering generalizations*, as Hitchcock [1985] suggested), whereas in LNMA warrants are the specific conditional that has as its antecedent that which the speaker has adduced and as its consequent, that which the speaker has concluded. I have argued for this notion of warrants in Bermejo-Luque (2004, pp. 174-176).

Secondly, for Freeman, counter-considerations are part of the warrant that is meant to sanction the inference from the data to the conclusion, whereas in our LNMA account, counter-considerations remain as an independent part of the argumentation, for they would play no properly inferential role: they just constitute additional information that might help (or not) to *determine* the value of the conditional.

I think that these two differences speak in favour of LNMA's account. For, as Allen (2011) has pointed out, assessing conductions "requires judges to remain rooted in the particularities of the case at hand" (Allen 2011, p. 189), rather than relying on covering generalizations. Actually, the very idea that there might be covering generalizations available for each occasion in which a conductive inference would be in order, and that these rules vary as they include different counter considerations, seems counterintuitive.

As Freeman himself recognizes, "some may wonder whether we are being too prodigal in the number of warrants we admit." His own response to this criticism *bites the bullet*: "If one allow these many arguments, one should not cavil at allowing their inference rules" (Freeman 2011, p. 131). But, why should we allow such ontological implosion?

In our proposed account, counter-considerations are not part of the warrant because they are not part of what is adduced in support of the conclusion. Of course, the ontological value of the conditional depends on whether or not, overall, counter-considerations don't overwhelm pro-considerations, but this is something that the evaluator has to assess independently of the particular counter-considerations that the arguer has decided to make explicit. In contrast with Freeman's account, LNMA favours ontological parsimony not only by refusing the need of appealing to inference rules, but also by considering that the following arguments have the same warrant:

a) Although the meeting was scheduled in room 1.1, we'll have to go to the computer room because Wanda will attend by Skype

b) Although the meeting was scheduled in room 1.2, we'll have to go to the computer room because Wanda will attend by Skype

c) Although the meeting was scheduled in room 1.3, we'll have to go to the computer room because Wanda will attend by Skype

etc...

7. The rhetorical aspect of conductive argumentation

There is a third, more important difference between Freeman's account and mine, and it has to do with the fact that LNMA allows for an integrated account of the specific rhetorical properties of pro-and-con conductive argumentation.

As Xie (2017) has suggested, in this type of conduction, "counter-considerations are simply mentioned in a non-refutational way, in which no attempt is made to scrutinize them or to remove them." According to Xie, counter-considerations are merely rhetorical devices with no bearing on the logical strength of the argument.

As may be apparent by now, I partly agree with this view: as concessions, counter-considerations play no real inferential role. Yet, they point at clues for assessing the corresponding conditional.

On the other hand, Xie contends that the best way to deal with counter-considerations as rhetorical devices is by means of the pragma-dialectical notion of strategic maneuvering (van Eemeren 2010); and at this point, our views also differ. In Xie's account, the persuasive power of conductions has to do with the fact that when an arguer mentions the points that count against her own views, she somehow conveys to the audience an impression of honesty, objectivity and open-mindedness that contributes to boosting her own credibility.

> Presenting counter-considerations in such a delicate way would impose to the audience an assumption of some outweighing-relation between the reasons for the conclusion and the counter-considerations against it, and thereby leaves to them an impression that the arguer has had some good reason to believe the conclusion is certainly defensible against those counter-considerations. Then the audience would be oriented to recognize the counter-considerations as weaker, wrong or no longer viable, and to believe that their importance has already been eliminated somewhere else for some possible reasons, even though the arguer has provided nothing to actually account for these judgements. Consequently, the audience's own attitude towards the conclusion may be changed, and they might become more apt to accept it, especially when they don't really have a good grasp of the justificatory power in those counter-considerations (Xie 2017, p. 12-13).

But, do conductions necessarily involve an audience or addressee to be persuaded? Consider, for example, a person deliberating on whether or not to respond to an insult. She is trying to make up her mind, and she comes to reason that even though it'd be perfectly right to respond, she'd better keep silent, since everyone is slave of her own words and master of her own silence. Wouldn't it be a bit

forced to say of someone reasoning this way that she is trying to better achieve effectiveness in persuading… herself? I think that there is something very strange in explaining the particulars of her reasoning by appealing to the idea of strategic maneuvering. For, even if we agreed that any type of argumentation might be reconstructed as a critical discussion—including argumentation put forward for oneself—it is not evident that we can make sense of an argumentative move as a strategic maneuver in absence of a real opponent to be persuaded. Instead, when someone concedes to herself that it'd be perfectly right to respond and then says to herself that she'd better keep silent, since everyone is slave of her own words and master of her own silence, what she is considering is an outweighing-relation between having a right to do X vs. X being the best thing to do in the circumstances. Someone reasoning this way is not being strategic to herself; rather, she is drawing a conclusion from the pro-consideration in spite of the con-consideration.

According to the analysis proposed so far, in pro-and-con conductions, there is indeed an appeal to an outweighing-relation that is meant to restore the plausibility of the warrant. The goodness of a conduction of this type is a matter of whether or not there exists such an outweighing-relation after all, since, otherwise, the conditional having as its antecedent the pro-consideration and as its consequent the conclusion, will not be true or plausible. Taking Xie's example, in "Even though I didn't do well in the final exam, you should still consider letting me pass this course, because I really worked hard on this course for the whole semester, and did learn something in this course", the warrant is "if (it is true that) I really worked hard on this course for the whole semester and (it is true that) I did learn something in this course, then (it is true that) you should consider letting me pass this course". The plausibility of this conditional depends on whether or not, in the circumstances, the fact that the student worked hard and learnt something makes it plausible that the instructor should consider letting him pass. Is it the case? If it is, then the argument is valid. If it is not, then the argument is not.

Our speech-act account of pro-and-con conductions is in a position to explain the rhetorical impact of counter-considerations: in effect, by making a concession, the speaker may convey an image of reasonableness that might increase her persuasiveness. But this does

not mean that counter-considerations are mere strategic devices: by conceding a counter-consideration, the arguer may also be giving clues that point in the direction of showing that her inference-claim is not plausible. But, in the last resort, that will finally depend on whether or not there is indeed such an outweighing-relation between the pros and the cons.

8. Conclusions

My goals in this paper were: 1) to show that it makes sense to settle a category of inferences—namely, conductions—that are neither deductive nor inductive (probabilistic), 2) to explain what all types of conductions have in common and 3) to provide a model to appraise conductive inferences and conductive argumentation—also from a rhetorical perspective. I have argued that the pragmatic setting of LNMA makes it possible to characterize conductions as types of inferences indeed, not as types of standards of inference appraisal.

LNMA also provides a rationale to explain what is characteristic of all types of conductions and to further distinguish different types of inferences that are neither deductive nor inductive, like presumptive inferences and plausible inferences. In this respect, LNMA affords tidiness to our catalogue of types of inferences in terms of the variety of ontological modals that can be used to put forward a conditional in a constative speech-act. LNMA explains what does it mean to say that a reason is relevant to a conclusion in terms of the goodness of the corresponding inference-claim or inference-motivation. And, as pointed out, this account also explains why conductions may lend more or less support to their conclusions.

Finally, I have shown that LNMA's speech-act account of argumentation is in a position to deal not only with the semantic appraisal of conductions, but also with the characteristic rhetorical properties of a certain type of conductive argumentation, namely, that including counter-considerations or concessive speech-acts.

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