About the Ways of Criticism

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Abstract. This paper attempts to systematically characterize critical reactions in argumentative discourse, such as 'objections', 'critical questions', 'rebuttals', 'refutations', 'counterarguments', and 'fallacy charges', in order to contribute to the dialogical approach to argumentation. We shall make use of four parameters to characterize distinct types of critical reaction. First, a critical reaction has a *focus*, for example on the standpoint, or on another part of an argument. Second, critical reactions appeal to some kind of *norm,* argumentative or other. Third, they each have a particular illocutionary *force*. Fourth, a critical reaction occurs a particular *level* of dialogue (the ground level or some meta-level). The concepts here developed shall be applied to discussions of critical reactions by Finocchiaro, Pollock and Snoeck Henkemans.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The notion of a critical reaction

The notions of criticism and of argument are very much related, both at a practical and at a theoretical level. In practice, a critical attitude is often manifested by 'being argumentative' in one's comments and appreciations, whereas arguments are associated with a critical stance sooner than with a constructive one. In daily parlance, both 'criticism' and 'argument' even share some negative connotations, such as meddlesomeness and quarrelsomeness. In the theory of argumentation, there are no such connotations, but the theoretical concepts of criticism and of argument are all the same closely related. Argumentation can be either critical (opposing someone else's point of view) or constructive (defending one's own point of view) or both. Moreover, some sort of critical stance is often seen as essential for all argumentation, including the constructive kind, since argumentation is conceived as an instrument to overcome doubt, and doubt seems to imply a critical stance. In pragma-dialectics, the normative model for argumentation proposed is that of a critical discussion in which standpoints are critically tested. Also at the intersection of argumentation studies and artificial intelligence, dialogue protocols and models for persuasion dialogue have been developed that start from the assumption that argumentation and criticism are closely interwoven [1, 2]. Thus criticism seems not only to lie at the origin of argument, but also to pervade the whole argumentative procedure.

But then, there is not just one kind of criticism. Merely expressing critical doubt is certainly different from expressing an opposite point of view, and expressing such a point of view is again different from arguing for that point of view. All three are different from raising specific objections against a point of view, or against an argument, or against parts of an argument, or against the arguer, or against the circumstances in which the argument has been presented. This paper purports to contribute to a systematic classification of these and other kinds of critical reaction and thus to contribute to the dialectical approach to argumentation. In this, others, such as Aristotle [3], Finocchiaro [4], Pollock [5], Govier [6] and Walton [7] have preceded us, and we have ourselves each attempted to contribute to this enterprise as well [8, 9].

In this paper, we deal with the term 'criticism' in the sense in which the term pertains to negative evaluations, rather than in a sense that also pertains to positive evaluations. Nevertheless, such criticism can itself be called *constructive* when making valuable contributions to a discussion. We aspire to discuss negative critical reactions in a wide sense, encompassing such criticisms as pertain to (expressions of) propositions, arguments, parts of arguments, and (the applications of) argument schemes, as well as to arguers and institutional circumstances, and relating to such issues as understandability, admissibility, validity, appropriateness, reasonableness, consistency, timeliness, or offensiveness. But we shall not discuss such aspects of critical reactions as fail to contribute to the contents of an argumentative exchange. Thus one could 'critically react' to an opponent by grabbing his shoulders and shaking him gently. Would this add content to the exchange? Of course, it might. If in some culture or in some special circumstances, this would be the way to express that one disagrees with the opponent's point of view, it would as such add some content and be among the critical reactions we intend to cover; however, the circumstance that the expression of disagreement is performed by grabbing and shaking, rather than by a speech act, will not be part of our concerns. And then, the grabbing and shaking may also fail to express anything that must be taken into account as a part of the argumentative exchange, and thus fail to be part of our concerns altogether. From now on, we shall use the term 'critical reaction' exclusively for those (aspects of) reactions that do contribute to an argumentative exchange (dialogue).

It should be mentioned that not all reactions in dialogue are critical. Reactions of agreement or acceptance, or requests to grant a concession would not count as such. The same holds for elucidations and explanations of earlier contributions, and indeed for arguments offered in response to criticism.[2] What is missing in

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[2] There are more moves that are not critical. Consider for example the move of calling into question in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, as specified by van Eemeren and Grootendorst [10]. Calling into question may sound as if it implies some criticism, but actually the move by which a party in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion *calls into question* the standpoint expressed by the interlocutor is merely aimed at expressing a neutral stance towards the standpoint and not directly at getting the other side to make repairs [10, p. 136]. Therefore, calling into question in the confrontation stage is not yet really critical. However, the move in the opening stage by which the antagonist *challenges* the protagonist to defend his standpoint [10, p. 137] and the move in the argumentation stage by which she *attacks* a standpoint of the protagonist in the sense of *posing a request for an argument* [10, p. 143-4], are clearly critical reactions, as we understand them.

these reactions is a negative evaluation of the move they react upon or at least a suggestion that such a negative evaluation may be forthcoming. One might stretch the concept of critical reaction to the extent that an elucidation of one's earlier contribution would count as criticism of a request for elucidation, and that arguments would count as criticisms of doubts or requests for arguments. One might also claim that acceptance of a statement is a criticism of that statement as being superfluous, since one agrees. Taking this line, all reactions in dialogue could be said to be critical in some sense. We shall not go that far, but exempt from the realm of critical reactions those reactions that merely comply with the requests (to accept, to elucidate or to argue) contained in the move one reacts upon. We do so because of the lack of obviousness of the negative evaluation content of such reactions, if any.[3]

1.2 The approach in this paper

Rather than straightforwardly heading towards a general classification of types of critical reaction – based upon a division of genera into species – we shall attempt to characterize critical reactions in terms of four parameters or factors (Section 2): the *focus* of a critical reaction (Section 2.1), the *norm* appealed to in a critical reaction (Section 2.2), the illocutionary *force* of a critical reaction (Section 2.3), and the *level* at which a critical reaction is put forward (Section 2.4). Each parameter can take several values, which are characteristic features of critical reactions of certain types.

Thus, the parameter of *focus* allows a critical reaction to be characterized by its focus on (a part of) a move or contribution of a particular kind by the interlocutor; for instance, on the conclusion of an (elementary) argument, or on one of its premises, or on its connection premise. In fact any contribution or part of a contribution in an argumentative exchange can be at the focus of some critical reaction; critical reactions themselves not excluded.

The parameter of *norm* allows a critical reaction to be characterized by a norm appealed to in the criticism, for instance a rule of critical discussion that the critic claims to have been violated. But violation of norms is not the only ground for criticism, nor is a charge of norm violation the only way norms are appealed to in critical reactions. The norm may also be appealed to merely because the criticism puts one's interlocutor under some kind of obligation, as for instance when a critic expresses critical doubt vis-à-vis a standpoint taken by his opponent.

The parameter of *force* allows a critical reaction to be characterized by the illocutionary force of the speech act used. Thus, critical reactions may come forth as directives, for instance as recommendations, requests, challenges, or commands, but also

as assertives, for instance as accusations, and of course as arguments.

The parameter of *level* allows a critical reaction to be characterized by the level at which it is put forward. A critical reaction can aim at eliciting a response from the proponent that contributes directly to the construction of the proponent's case, and thus constitute a ground level move. Alternatively, a critical reaction can belong to a dialogue about the ground level dialogue and thus aim at influencing the course of the latter dialogue, and only in that indirect manner contribute to the construction of the proponent's argumentation, thus constituting a meta-level move.

By examining these parameters, we attempt to contribute to a systematic conceptual analysis of the various ways of criticism. An inventory of the distinct kinds of critical reactions is important, for example when trying to understand an argumentative discourse. But also when developing models or protocols for reasonable persuasion dialogue we are in need of a theoretically motivated classification of critical reactions. After having expounded and illustrated in Section 2 the main features of our system of characterizing critical reactions, based upon Van Laar [9], we shall perform a first test of the system by applying it, in Section 3, to three contemporary approaches to critical reactions.

2. FOUR PARAMETERS

As explained above, we expect that each fully developed and articulated critical reaction can be characterized in terms of four parameters or factors: focus, norm, force, and level. In the case of a particular critical reaction, each parameter will take on a specific value (or, equivalently, each factor will be specified by a specific feature of the critical reaction). We shall deal with these parameters in turn.

2.1 Focus

Each critical reaction has a *focus*, which functions as a precondition for a critical reaction of a particular type [cf. 12]. This may be a focus on a move of a particular type, or on a special part of a move, or on a sequence or combination of moves, put forward by the interlocutor, possibly reconstructed by the critic. Because one can take a critical stance towards any kind of contribution, each type of speech act in an argumentative exchange can be at the focus of a critical reaction. What is more, an argumentative move can be seen as having four aspects: it expresses a particular *proposition*, by employing a particular *locution* put forward with a particular illocutionary force, by a particular *person*, within a particular *situation*. So, the focus of a critical reaction, besides being aimed at a particular kind of speech act, can be *propositional*, *locutional*, *personal* or *situational* in character. We shall first list the most prominent kinds of focus and then discuss the aspects.

First, a critical reaction can focus on (parts of) an elementary argument as reconstructed by the critic. An elementary argument is an illative core of a (possibly more complex) argument, having just one justificatory step. It contains a standpoint (or conclusion) and a set of premises (reasons) containing exactly one connection premise [cf. 13, p. 128]. The connection premise is a conditional statement, having the conjunction of the other premises as its

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[3] Our notion of 'critical reaction' is both wider and narrower than what Van Eemeren et al defined as the speech act of criticism, the essential condition of which is: 'The speaker, S, says or does something that counts as a negative evaluation of the actions or attributes of the target, T' [11, p. 109]. Unlike a critical reaction, as we understand that term, this speech act of criticism need not be a reaction to a dialogue move. Moreover, this speech act seems to exclude requests for arguments or clarifications, which do not by themselves count as a negative evaluation but merely allude to the possibility that such a negative evaluation may result.

antecedent and the standpoint as its consequent, which – within an argumentative context – expresses the commitment to accept the standpoint as soon as one has accepted the reasons in the antecedent. Often, the connection premise remains implicit, and in such cases the procedure for making it explicit is straightforward.[4]

One of the parts of an elementary argument a critical reaction can focus on is the standpoint advanced by the protagonist. This may happen before the elementary argument has been advanced – and in fact elicit the argument. Such a critical reaction may be focused on an expression of an opinion by the interlocutor, whether this expression has been marked as a standpoint or not (if not, the criticism will turn the expression of opinion into a standpoint). Of course, critical reactions can also focus on other parts of an elementary argument, or on a combination of parts. Where critical reactions on individual parts of an elementary argument are concerned, a threefold distinction can be upheld: such a critical reaction focuses on a standpoint or on a reason in support of a standpoint (turning that reason itself into a substandpoint), or on a connection premise (on the three ways hypothesis, cf. [7]).

It can be useful to characterize a critical reaction on an elementary argument in more detail as being focused on a special type of reason belonging to a specific kind of argumentation. For instance, a reaction could focus on the 'normality premise,' belonging to defeasible arguments, which expresses that circumstances are not exceptional, or it could focus on the 'desirability premise,' belonging to the pragmatic argument scheme (which is a kind of practical reasoning), which expresses the desirability of a particular goal.

Second, a critical reaction can focus on a more complex argument, such as a basic argument that is built up from several elementary arguments [cf. 13, p. 129]. This happens when it is pointed out that there occurs a shift in the meaning of a particular term in the course of a chain of arguments, or when it is alleged that a chain of arguments is question begging due to circularity, or when it is shown that various parts of the complex argument are mutually inconsistent. The critic can also charge the arguer of having made mistakes in suppositional arguments: for instance, when the arguer has derived an absurdity after having introduced a supposition to be refuted, but then subsequently misidentifies the responsible premise (see Aristotle [15] in *Sophistical Refutations 5* on the fallacy of *non causa*, 167b21-36).

Third, the focus of a critical reaction can be on a kind of argumentative move that is different from the presentation of an argument. A challenge, to take an example, can be the focus of a critical reaction when it is alleged that the critic's challenge is inappropriate due to the critic's having conceded the proposition at issue at an earlier stage. In a similar vein, one can critically react towards requests for clarification, for example because any further clarification would be superfluous. In such cases, a request can be pictured as a delaying tactic. More in general, a critical reaction can be focused on any kind of critical reaction. But there are also other moves that can be critically reacted to, for instance proposals. When one party, defending a standpoint, proposes a premise that is to function as a shared point of departure, a possible critical reaction by the other party could be that accepting that premise as a starting point would come down to accepting the standpoint. The

critical reaction, in such a case, is aimed at preventing an arguer from begging the question.

Fourth, a critical reaction can focus at a combination of argumentative moves (which could all be different from moves needed for constructing an elementary or complex argument). For example, it could be pointed out that one's opponent refuses to concede a proposition that is immediately implied by a proposition granted earlier. In that case the criticism focuses on the combination of the present move of refusal and the earlier move of concession.

When focusing on such (parts or combinations of) moves of the interlocutor, the emphasis can be towards one or other of the four aspects of a move. Consider first *propositional critical reactions.* If such a reaction focuses directly on the content of a standpoint or of a reason, it can be called a *tenability criticism,* 'Why P?' [16, p. 161]; if it focuses on the content of a connection premise, it can be called a *connection criticism,* 'Why if P then Q?' [16, p. 160].

A *locutional critical reaction* focuses on the formulation of a standpoint, reason or connection premise, or of some other contribution. It may either be concerned with unclarity about the propositional content or with unclarity about the illocutionary force of the contribution. In the first case, it aims at getting the speaker to indicate into more detail what proposition he tries to express, 'What do you mean by P?'; or it aims at pressing him to adapt his formulation on some other ground, for example because the terminology is biased, or distasteful. A locutional criticism concerned with propositional content can also focus on a complex argument when pointing out a fallacy of equivocation, or when pointing out the lack of terminological coherence in the antagonist's set of commitments. In the second case, when the illocutionary force is unclear, a locutional criticism aims at getting clearer about the kind of speech act performed by the other side: is he offering an argument or an explanation? Is this multiple argumentation or coordinative argumentation? Is this a mere concession or a stronger, assertive kind of commitment? Or it can be told to the interlocutor that he has performed an inappropriate kind of speech act: he ought not himself have made a *concession* for he is the protagonist in a unmixed interchange who is not asked to make concessions to defend his standpoint, but to take advantage of concessions by the antagonist to do so.

A *personal critical reaction* 'attacks' the person who brought forward an argumentative contribution, for example by saying something like 'you're not in a position to argue in favor of (or: against) P in a credible way due to a general flaw in your character (or a specific bias, etc.)'.

A *situational critical reaction* can point out that the external circumstances are such that the other side's contribution is inappropriate: 'defending this very standpoint in the current societal circumstances enhances violence', or 'challenging P is impolite and therefore not allowed in this family' or 'You shouldn't argue about Burma; you have never been there.'

2.2 Norm

Each critical reaction appeals to a particular kind of argumentative norm. One can relate to a norm in various ways. One merely *follows* a norm, without appealing to it, when one fulfills the obligations prescribed by the norm.; for example, if, when one is

supposed to provide an argument if asked to so, and is indeed asked to do so, one provides an argument. One merely *utilizes* a norm, again without appealing to it, when one makes use of a right provided by the norm. For example, one utilizes the norm according to which the parties can take turns, simply by performing one's move when the interlocutor has finished speaking. However, one *appeals* to a norm by putting forward a critical reaction (of a kind that is sanctioned by the norms) in order to put some pressure on the interlocutor to respond in a certain way. So, by challenging a standpoint, the critic is utilizing the freedom rule [10, p. 190] which allows him to challenge, but also, although implicitly, appealing to the obligation-to-defend rule [10, p. 191] in order to press the arguer to present an argument. One appeals to a norm, in the special sense of *emphasizing* it, in case the critic not only appeals to the norm, but is also rubbing it in, meaning that she is more or less clearly conveying the message that her critical reaction is pertinent because of the fact that this norm is operative. So, when the critic puts forward a challenge, and in addition stresses that the arguer is under the obligation to provide an argument, she is quite explicitly emphasizing a burden of proof rule. These two ways of appealing to norms (implicitly and explicitly by emphasizing the norms) are examined in some more detail in the next subsection about the force of a critical reaction. In the remainder of this subsection, however, we shall concentrate on the distinction between three *kinds* of norms, rather than on ways to refer or appeal to them.

First, there are the so-called *rules for critical discussion* (a normative model for persuasion dialogue). These rules mark the distinction between argumentatively reasonable and unreasonable dialogue moves (*fallacies*). A critic may charge an arguer with having violated one of these rules. Such a charge would amount to an appeal to the rule in the sense of emphasizing. Of course the charge may be ill-founded. When a critic appeals to a norm that she considers to be part of the constitution of genuine critical discussion but we do not, her critical reaction must be seen by us as an incorrect appeal to a rule for critical discussion.

Second, there are *norms of optimality,* which mark the distinction between argumentative moves that are really good and those that, though not fallacies, are unsatisfactory in some argumentative respect (*lapses* or *blunders*). For instance, if a proponent can choose between a stronger and a weaker argument, the stronger argument is to be preferred (cf. Krabbe [17] on the discussion rule 'Try to win'). Since lapses or blunders are usually 'advantageous' for one's interlocutor, the latter may leave them unnoticed. But she may also point out that the argument, though not fallacious, is flawed and therefore unconvincing. External observers of an argumentative discussion, however, often appeal to optimality norms to criticize the participants.

Third, there are the so-called *institutional norms*. Argumentative norms that are institutional can be seen as marking the distinction between dialogue moves that are appropriate within the institutional setting, and those which are inappropriate within the setting. In the latter case we may speak of *faults*. In contradistinction to the rules for critical discussion, these norms are not part of the general explication of argumentative reasonableness. However, they do apply in particular types of context, where the participants use argumentation for special purposes that supplement the goal of resolution of a difference of opinion. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser discuss these institutional settings as 'argumentative activities' [18, p. 76-7]. For example, when engaged in legal proceedings, additional rules apply to the argumentative moves put forward by the participants, for in order for the difference of opinion to be resolved in a manner that is not merely dialectically reasonable but also legally admissible, various additional constraints must have been taken into account. These additional constraints can be emphasized as norms in critical reactions. For example, in a legal context, one could think of a critic charging the other side with proposing a proposition as a shared starting point that has been obtained by legally inadmissible methods. We take the idea of an institution in a broad sense, including rather mundane activities such as having a colloquial conversation, or discussing current affairs, in addition to more formalized activities such as being engaged in a parliamentary discussion, a public debate or a debating contest. Norms to the effect that particular topics are, within certain circumstances, not up for debate, or to the effect that certain character traits or personal circumstances can disqualify a person as a serious participant can be regarded as special norms that characterize some (and not all) argumentative activities.

2.3 Force

A third parameter to be used for characterizing the ways of criticism is that of the illocutionary force of a critical reaction. Conspicuous here are reactions in the form of directives or assertives.

First, a critical reaction, whatever the norm appealed to and whatever the focus, can be put forward as a directive in the form of a request; either for argument or for clarification. Requests for argument (or: challenges) have a propositional focus, 'Why *P*?', whereas requests for clarification have a locutional focus, 'What do you mean by formulation *P*?' In both cases, the request aims at an extension of the argument as constructed at some stage of the dialogue. Requests utilize the rules for critical discussion, and appeal to them in an implicit manner. By filing a request for an argument or a clarification, the critic is capable of pressing the arguer to provide the requested argument or clarification on the basis of certain rules for critical discussion. The implicit, normative appeal of a request for an argument would, if made explicit, yield something like: 'in order for you to fulfill your burden of proof, as laid down in Rule 3 for critical discussion, or Commandmend 2 of the code of conduct [10, pp. 139 and 191], you must provide an argument as requested.' The urgency of a request for clarification becomes clear from a similar message, which could be made explicit to yield: 'in order for you to adequately express yourself, as required in Rule 15 for critical discussion or Commandment 10 of the code of conduct [10, pp. 157 and 195], you must provide a clarification as requested.' Normally, the reference to the applied rules remains fully implicit in such requests; however, the normative appeal can be made explicit along the lines indicated, in which case the norms are emphasized, rather than merely appealed to implicitly.

Second, instead of merely requesting an argument or a further explication, a critic can reconstruct and negatively evaluate (a part of) a contribution by the other side, by making an assertion to the effect that there is a flaw of some kind in the interlocutor's contribution. Critical reactions such as these have been dealt with by Finocchiaro as 'active evaluations' [4, p. 339]. When pointing out a flaw, the critic is actively taking part in the discussion about the matters at issue in the criticized contribution by putting forward

a negative evaluation in which she appeals to one or more norms: the flaw needs repair. The critic can do so but nonetheless refrain from alleging that her interlocutor has been unreasonable on the ground of having violated some rule for critical discussion (a norm of the first kind) or inapt on the ground of having violated some institutional norm (a norm of the third kind). In that case the norm appealed to must be of the second kind or of yet some other kind. As will be shown in the next subsection, in such cases any further discussion about whether the evaluation is correct or not, can best be seen as taking place at the ground level of dialogue. In other cases, if the alleged flaw is taken to be a transgression of a norm of the first or third kind, the critical reaction can best be seen as initiating a meta-level dialogue [cf. Krabbe 19].

One prominent way of pointing out a flaw is to deny a proposition that has been expressed or employed by the interlocutor or to assert a proposition that implies the denial. Such denials come in two kinds, depending upon the messages conveyed to the other participant. If party A denies a proposition P that has been used by party B, saying 'not P', this denial can convey the relatively weak message that B will not be able to defend his standpoint that P vis-à-vis party A. This so-called *weak denial* is not itself a kind of standpoint that requires a defense when challenged. Instead, it expresses an expectation to the effect that, according to A's assessment, party B will not be capable of constructing a case for his main standpoint that will turn out to be convincing for A. If requested to *defend* 'not P', party A can justifiably answer 'It is not my opinion that P is not the case, and therefore I am not willing to present an argument in favour of 'not P'; instead I am evaluating negatively your strategic chances of finding an argument that will convince me.' A weak denial does, however, come with an obligation for the critic to be open about her considerations that brought her to this assessment: what makes her think that B lacks the means for persuading her? So, there is, instead of a burden of proof, a kind of burden of giving some explanation, be it that this burden will have to be rather limited considering that the critic herself may not have full access to the grounds of her assessment. In short, a weak denial will always be a purely critical move, rather than a constructive one. [5]

A second kind of denial is the *strong denial*. With a strong denial, 'not P,' party A conveys the message that A will be able to defend this denial against B's critical testing. Such a counterstandpoint does carry a burden of proof, when challenged. So, besides being critical, such a move is constructive, generating a mixed dispute.

If the focus of a weak or strong denial is on the propositional content of the connection premise, the critic is pointing out a justificatory flaw. Such flaws can also be pointed out in ways other than by denials, for example by presenting a counterexample. Methods, other than denials, for pointing out flaws can also be found in critical reactions in which it is alleged that a formulation used by the other side contains biased terms or harmful ambiguities. Or when the evidence is pictured as legally inadmissible, or when it is held that the interlocutor has exceeded the time limit.

Third, when raising a challenge or when pointing out a flaw, party A can choose to accompany this critical reaction by some of

the counter-considerations that party B must take into account when making further decisions as to whether and, if so, how to proceed in his attempts to persuade A of B's standpoint P. These counter-considerations function as A's *strategic advice* to B. We will provide a few examples. First, a challenge can be accompanied by a consideration that explains to B why A is critically disposed to P. The message to B then is that B must adapt his persuasive strategy in such a way that this motive for a critical stance will be defused. Second, a similar analysis can be provided when A gives an argument in favour of taking a neutral position towards P, rather than accepting P. Third, it has been stated above that weak denials should generally be accompanied by considerations that explain why party B will turn out to be unable to persuade A. But such considerations would of course be overruled if B were to defuse them in some way or other. Hence they provide strategic advice for B. Fourth, strong denials can be accompanied by argumentation. Such argumentation can fulfill two functions: a constructive persuasive function (persuading B of not-P), but we refrain from discussing this function since we are concerned with critical, rather than with constructive moves. In the present context it is more to the point to stress the other function, that of providing party B with considerations that must be refuted before party A will retract her critical doubt towards P.[6,]

2.4 Level

A fourth parameter is that of level. Although it is difficult to draw a borderline, the distinction we have in mind has to do with the directness with which a dialogue move contributes to the argumentation in favour of one of the standpoints adopted in the discussion. Quite direct contributions will be located at the ground level dialogue, while more indirect contributions – moves that are about the dialogue rather than about the issue at hand – are to be located at a meta-level dialogue or at dialogues even higher up in the hierarchy.

Clearly, a move in which a proponent puts forward an argument in favour of a challenged proposition contributes directly to the complex case he is constructing for his conclusion, and so this move is a ground level move. The same applies to the clarification of a part of the argument, for example by explaining what was meant by this or that expression. Requests for further arguments or for clarification of an argument will be seen as quite directly contributing to the argumentation in that the response aimed for is

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[5] This notion of a weak denial resembles what Rescher discusses as 'cautious denial' [20, p. 9], which expresses that P is not the case 'for all that you (the adversary) have shown' [p. 6].

[6] In Rescher [20] two notions occur that resemble such counter-considerations, namely 'provisoed denial' [pp. 6, 9] and 'weak distinction' [p.12]. In a provisoed denial of P the opponent expresses something of the form: 'Q is the case for all that you've shown and Q constitutes *prima facie* evidence for not P'. Not P is a weak denial and we may interpret Q as a part of the explanation why the opponent thinks P is not (yet) to be accepted. The advice is to defuse Q as a counter consideration to P. A weak distinction is a way for the opponent to focus on the connection premise of an argument 'Q so P'. A weak distinction is expressed by something of the form: 'For all you've shown, both Q and R, while Q and R taken together provide *prima facie* evidence for not-P'. Again, 'not-P' is a weak denial and we may interpret R to be a part of the explanation why the connection between Q and P does not apply in the current circumstances. The advice is to defuse R as a counter consideration to the connection between Q and P.

an argument or a clarification. So, these moves are considered to be ground level moves as well.

However, if a party's move deals with the strategy adopted by himself or by the other side, the contribution can be seen as dealing with the standpoints at issue, but only indirectly so. The primary topic is a strategy that has been, can be or should be adopted. So, what we have called weak denials are to be seen as initiating a meta-level dialogue. Similarly, moves offering strategic advice are meta-level moves.

When a party asserts that the other side has transgressed a rule for critical discussion or an applicable institutional norm of some kind, the moves must be seen as being primarily about the legitimacy or appropriateness of part of the preceding dialogue, and thus as initiating and contributing to a meta-level dialogue. So, when the critic puts forward a negative evaluation by charging her interlocutor with having breached a norm, strongly emphasizing the norm, her evaluation will also count as a request for some kind of repair, as is generally the case with pointing out flaws. But in addition, the interlocutor is accused of having put forward a move that hinders or even blocks either the resolution-goal of their discussion (a fallacy) or one of the goals inherent in the institutional activity (a fault). All such charges take place at a meta-level of dialogue.

Charges of faults in the present sense occur for instance when party A points out to party B that defending a certain proposition will have unacceptable social consequences (the charge may of course be unjustified). One may think of the self-fulfilling prophecy that ensues when a prime minister too much stresses its country's economical troubles, or of cases where it is said that our adversaries will profit if anyone would take a critical stance towards a standpoint. Also personal attacks can be seen as charges that the interlocutor has violated an institutional norm, in that case a norm to the effect that for instance the arguer's financial involvement, lack of expertise or insincerity is inappropriate for the kind of discussion at hand. Those personal attacks that are dialectically illegitimate constitute *ad hominem* fallacies.

3. APPROACHES TO CRITICAL REACTIONS

3.1 Finocchiaro on Active Involvement

In Chapter 15 of his *Galileo and the Art of Reasoning,* Finocchiaro discusses fallacies and the understanding and evaluation of reasoning or arguments. Unfavorable (negative) evaluation – which according to Finocchiaro is often more interesting than favorable (positive) evaluation – is called 'criticism' [4, p. 332]. On the basis of his study of Galileo's critiques of various Aristotelian arguments (in the *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*) Finocchiaro concludes 'that it is both possible and effective to evaluate arguments 'actively' in the sense that the inferential interrelationships among the propositions involved are tested by reasoning on the level of, and largely in terms of, the object argument and by checking whether what follows from asserted premises is the conclusions drawn in the object argument or other propositions.' [4, p. 339]. In dialogical terms: the opponent may join the proponent as an arguer as they discuss the ins and outs of an argument put forward by the proponent, and this may be done on what we called the ground level of dialogue.

The focus of the criticisms Finocchiaro discusses is always the argument itself, and more specifically the connection premise, which is the premise that specifies 'the inferential interrelationships' between the other premises and the conclusion. The criticisms can take various shapes – spelled out in Chapter 17 [4] as pointing to different kinds of 'invalidity', which later were described as six types of fallaciousness [21] – but, to put it bluntly, they all claim that the conclusion does not follow from the premises [21, p. 267]. The differences lie in the arguments offered to substantiate that claim. Here the main categories are formal, explanatory, presuppositional, positive, semantical, and persuasive fallaciousness, which each correspond to a particular way of arguing by the critic.[7]

The dialectical norm appealed to in these criticisms is evidently that the arguments offered by a proponent should be improved until they are such that that the conclusion follows from the premises.[8] Finocchiaro [21] does not explain what 'following from' means. In our view 'following from' need not be understood in the sense of deductive validity: rather it is a contextual notion referring to there being in a specific context no further objections to an inference step [cf. 4, p. 422-3]. Thus, with respect to the parameter of force, we may notice that the criticisms (when used in dialogue) contain not only a claim and arguments, but also a request to the proponent to improve his argument taking into account the counter-considerations brought forward.

As to the level, we saw that these criticisms could take place at the ground level, but it is not of course excluded that the participants take more distance from the object argument and get involved in a meta-dialogue about ways of arguing. Finocchiaro's use of the term 'fallaciousness' may even suggest this, since a discussion about fallacies typically takes place at a meta-level. However, Finocchiaro is quite explicit about preferring the weaker term 'fallaciousness' to the term 'fallacy' [21, p. 266-7]. So 'fallaciousness' need not refer exclusively to a situation where someone is charged with a fallacy (infringement of a rule for critical discussion) and a shift to a meta-dialogue takes place.

3.2 Pollock on rebutting defeaters and undercutting defeaters

We will provide another test of the worth of our four parameters by trying to characterize two notions that Pollock employs [5], and that have proven useful in the area of argument and computation. These two notions, to wit 'rebutting defeater' and 'undercutting defeater', can be seen as specific kinds of critical reactions. In order to show that to be the case, by applying the four parameters, we first need to transform these notions from Pollock's epistemic perspective to our dialectical perspective.

Given his interest in 'the construction of a person' who is capable of reasoning and reasoned action, Pollock chooses to focus on reasoning as the process by which beliefs are inferred from perceptual input and from previously held beliefs. An argument is considered as 'a record of the state transitions involved in the

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[7] We cannot here discuss these in detail, but these ways of arguing and their use by Galileo form the most intriguing part of Finocchiaro's paper [21].
[8] This is a dialectification of the simpler norm that in arguments the conclusion should follow from the premises.

agent's reasoning' [5, p. 39]. According to Pollock, most reasoning is defeasible insofar as it allows for rebutting defeaters or undercutting defeaters. Pollock defines a rebutting defeater thus: 'If <Γ,p> is a prima facie [= non deductive] reason [= elementary argument with premises Γ and conclusion p], <Δ,q> is a rebutting defeater for <Γ,p> iff <Δ,q> is a reason and q = "¬p"', where '¬φ' is the denial of 'φ' [5, p. 85]. His definition of undercutting defeater is: 'If <Γ,p> is a prima facie reason, <Δ,q> is an *undercutting defeater* for <Γ,p> iff <Δ,q> is a reason and q = "~(ΠΓ » p)"'. In this definition, '~(ΠΓ » p)' is the denial ('~φ' symbolizes the negation of φ) of a conditional proposition ('φ»ψ' stands for: φ would not be true unless ψ were true) with the conjunction of the premises of Γ (symbolized as 'ΠΓ') as its antecedent and p as its consequent, saying: 'It is not the case that ΠΓ wouldn't be true unless p were true' [5, p. 86]. Suppose one reasons from 'The table looks red to me' to 'the table is red.' Then an undercutting defeater that defeats this argument reasons from 'A red light illuminates this table' to 'It's not the case that the table wouldn't look red to me unless the table were red'.

Given that these two kinds of defeaters are defined at an abstract level, we surmise that they can best be seen as propositional or linguistic entities that can be, but need not have been, employed by a person with the aim of defeating, or criticizing, an argument. A dialectical way of reading the definition of a rebutting defeater would be: 'Where the proponent puts forward "*P* so *Q*" as an elementary argument, "*R* so *S*" is a *rebutting defeater* if and only if "*R* so *S*" is an elementary argument that can be put forward by the opponent, where *S* is the denial of *Q*'. Similarly, the idea of an undercutting defeater allows of the following interpretation: 'Where the proponent puts forward "*P* so *Q*" as an elementary argument, "*R* so *S*" is an *undercutting defeater* if and only if "*R* so *S*" is an elementary argument that can be put forward by the opponent, where S is the denial of the connection premise *P→Q*'. Note that in a dialectical context, the critic's use of a rebutting defeater against an arguer's argument '*P* so *Q*' normally conveys the message that the critic does not consider herself committed to both the proposition '*P*' and the proposition '*P→Q*', though she may not dispose of any defeaters for these propositions.

What would be a plausible way of characterizing these critical reactions in terms of the four parameters? Both kinds of defeaters can be seen as critical reactions having at least the force of assertives, and more specifically as argued strong denials by which a critic points out the flaw on the proponent's side of having used a proposition that happens to be false. In both kinds, the strong denial is accompanied by counter-argumentation, which, as we discussed, also functions as strategic advice by giving the considerations to be defused by the proponent. Further, both kinds of defeater are, when put to use, contributions to the ground level dialogue. What distinguishes the two defeaters is first of all that rebutting defeaters are focused on the propositional content of a (intermediate) conclusion or (sub-)standpoint put forward by the proponent, while undercutting defeaters are focused on the propositional content of a connection premise taken for granted by the proponent. As to norms it may be observed that a rebutting defeater and an undercutting defeater appeal to different norms for argumentative dialogue.

A rebutting defeater is a somewhat unspecific kind of critical reaction, in the sense that it implies a negative evaluation of the elementary argument presented by the interlocutor, but without specifying whether the connection premise or one of the other premises is taken to be unacceptable. As we have seen, the

strategic advice to the proponent is to defend his position in a way that meets the considerations of the critic by defusing, that is defeating, the defeater. According to Rule 7 for critical discussion [10, pp. 145-148], the protagonist has developed a successful defense only if his argumentation is ultimately based on propositions that may not be called into question in the discussion, something that can be settled by the parties in the opening stage. But this rule determines the meaning of 'successful defence', rather than stipulating a norm. The implicit norm, however, is clear: try to develop a successful defence (a norm of optimality, see Section 2.2). A rebutting defeater can be seen as appealing to this norm. An undercutting defeater appeals to rules for persuasion dialogue according to which the arguer must employ appropriate and correctly applied argument schemes [e.g. Commandment 8 in 10, p. 194] or accepted logical schemes [e.g. Commandment 7 in 10, p. 193].

3.3 Snoeck Henkemans on complex argumentation in critical discussion

In order to explain how complex argumentation comes about and what functions the various kinds of elements of an argumentation fulfill, Snoeck Henkemans [22] discusses the critical reactions that can occur in a critical discussion (as well as the various ways of responding to these critical reactions). She points out that in the ideal model of a critical discussion, an antagonist can criticize an argument by indicating the lack of acceptability of 'the propositional content of the argumentation' [22, p. 408], or by pointing out that 'the argument does not provide sufficient support for the standpoint' [22, p. 408], or by making it clear that 'he regards the argument as irrelevant to the standpoint' [22, p. 409].

The force of a critical reaction by which the antagonist makes it clear that a premise is unacceptable can, when the reaction has been put forward in a questioning mode, be seen as that of a request for argumentation in defense of a premise of an elementary argument. But then, the antagonist may also offer a counter-argument to the effect that the premise is unacceptable. In that case the critical reaction can be seen as having the force of a strong denial and as being accompanied by argumentation in favor of that denial. Snoeck Henkemans makes it clear that these critical reactions can give rise to a subordinative (or: serial) argumentation on the protagonist's part. So, in both cases, the implicit strategic advice for the proponent is to provide such subordinative argumentation. Further (in both cases), the critical reaction takes place on the ground level of dialogue. As in the case of Pollock's rebutting defeaters, these two kinds of critical reaction appeal to a norm according to which the proponent must make a serious effort to succeed in the discussion.

Snoeck Henkemans distinguishes between two ways of indicating that, as far as the antagonist is concerned, the adduced reasons do not suffice to yield the conclusion. The antagonist may either call their sufficiency into question by asking for more reasons or by raising an objection against the argument's sufficiency. In the former case, the critical reaction can be characterized as being focused on the connection premise and as having the force of a request. In the latter case, the antagonist 'mentions a specific objection that can be seen as an argument in favor of his claim that the amount of support is insufficient' [22, p.

409]. In our terms, this critical reaction can be seen as having the assertive force of a strong denial of the connection premise and as being accompanied by an argument in favor of that denial. Snoeck Henkemans makes it clear that both situations prompt the protagonist to offer a coordinative (or: a kind of convergent) argumentation. In our view, the protagonist could also try to argue that the argumentation given is in fact sufficient, i.e., he could offer subordinative argumentation supporting the connection premise. To put these matters in our terms, the implicit strategic advice for the proponent is to provide either coordinative argumentation or subordinative argumentation. In the case of a request, the advice is to provide cumulative argumentation by adding new evidence, unless the protagonist sees an opportunity to convince the antagonist, by the use of subordinative argumentation, that the argumentation given is in fact sufficient. In case the critic has mentioned an objection, the advice is to provide complementary argumentation by adding a reason that defuses the objection [23, pp. 96-97]. In both cases, the critical reaction takes place on the ground level of dialogue. As in the case of undercutting defeaters, the norm appealed to is that the connection premise must correspond to an appropriate and correctly applied argumentation scheme [e.g. Commandment 8 in 10, p. 194] or accepted logical scheme [e.g. Commandment 7 in 10, p. 193].

Finally, the antagonist may indicate that 'the argument is irrelevant to the standpoint' [22, p. 409]. Such a critical reaction focuses, again, on the connection premise. Its force can be merely that of a request for further argumentation to support the relevance. However, the antagonist may also offer a counter-argument against the relevance of a premise or premise set. In that case, the critical reaction has the force of a strong denial and is accompanied by argumentation. Snoeck Henkemans makes it clear that charges of irrelevance occasion the protagonist to offer a new argument in favor of a premise (made explicit) that states the connection between the allegedly irrelevant premise (set) and the main standpoint; the result is subordinative argumentation. In our terms, the implicit strategic advice for the proponent is to provide such subordinative argumentation. In the special case where the antagonist has supported the objection of irrelevance by argument, this argument must be defused by the argument of the proponent. Whether or not it contains an argument, the critical reaction takes place on the ground level of dialogue. The norm appealed to is that the connection premise must correspond to an appropriate and correctly applied argument scheme [e.g. Commandment 8 in 10, p. 194] or accepted logical scheme [e.g. Commandment 7 in 10, p. 193]. A difference between attacking sufficiency and attacking relevance that Snoeck Henkemans alludes to is to be found in the strategic advices they offer. In the case of attacking the insufficiency, the strategic advice is (either to give up or) to repair an elementary argument by adding one or more premises, such that the result is an elementary argument that has an acceptable connection premise or, in our view, to provide a new elementary argument that supports the connection premise of the original argument. In the case of attacking irrelevance, the only options offered by the strategic advice are either to give up or to support the connection premise by argument.

4. CONCLUSION

As has become evident from our discussion of the four parameters and of the notions of criticism used by Finocchiaro, Pollock and Snoeck Henkemans, there exists an enormous variety of critical reactions. These must be taken into account within argumentation studies aimed at the development of norms for argumentation and of practical guidelines for those who wish to engage in argumentative activities, displaying rationality as well as persuasiveness. In order to proceed in these areas we think it to be important to compare notions of critical reactions as they exist within approaches such as formal dialectic, pragma-dialectic and computational approaches in a more or less systematic manner, so as to facilitate the development of a clear and useful inventory of critical reactions. In this paper we took some steps in that direction.

What became clear to us, is that criticisms often constitute subtle argumentative instruments that do not only carry negative messages for the interlocutor, but are often helpful in that they provide various kinds of strategic advice.

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