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1. Introduction

Dissociation in Argumentative Discussions. A Pragma-Dialectical Perspective, by Agnes van Rees from the University of Amsterdam was published in Springer's "Argumentation Library" series, whose editors are Frans H. van Eemeren (University of Amsterdam), Scott Jacobs (University of Arizona), Erik C. W. Krabbe (University of Groningen), and John Woods (University of Lethbridge). As the author states in the preface, the monograph is "the conclusion of ten years of research into dissociation", part of which was published in "journals, conference proceedings, anthologies" (p. v). The book consists of three parts organized in 11 chapters, preceded by an introduction, and followed by references and an index of authors.

The book interestingly follows van Rees' provisional project of studying dissociation which she had been sketching in one of her first talks on the concept at the Fourth OSSA Conference in 2001. To quote from this programmatic talk:

First, there is the conceptual problem that the difference between, in general, making a distinction and, particularly, dissociation is not always sharp (...). A first task would be conceptual clarification of the notion of dissociation, which would also deal with the relationship between dissociation and precization and between dissociation and definition.

Next there is the question in which ways dissociation becomes evident in argumentative discourse. This necessitates research into the various indicators that may signal the use of dissociation. Third, the question arises in which ways the technique can be used dialogically in the negotiations between protagonist and antagonist to bring about the solution of a conflict of opinion. This implies empirical study of the contexts in which dissociation is used in argumentative discourse. Fourth, one may ask what the dialectical and rhetorical consequences of the use of this technique are. This means that a functional analysis of the use of the technique must be undertaken. And, finally, one might want to know under which circumstances the technique is dialectically sound. This would imply a study of dissociation from a normative dialectic point of view. (van Rees 2001)

The concept of dissociation was introduced to the field of argumentation theory by Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) in their *New Rhetoric* (from now on NR). Consequently, the monograph opens with an introduction (pp. xi-xv) which, starting from an example identified in ordinary discourse practice, reminds the reader of the definition of dissociation in the NR. Dissociation is an argumentative technique through which

“a notion that originally was considered by the audience as a conceptual unity is split up into two new notions, each of which contains only part of the original one, one notion containing the aspects of the original notion that belong to the realm of the merely apparent, the other one containing the aspects of the original notion that belong to the realm of the real.” (p. xi)

Details are also given on previous studies on dissociation by Grootendorst, Lynch, Schiappa, Stahl, Zarefsky, and an inventory is provided of various discursive settings in which dissociation has been identified by argumentation scholars: political debates, deliberations of ordinary people in everyday life, law (“a prime area for the use of dissociation”, p. xii), science, philosophy.

The author also points to the facts that dissociation “has been studied mainly from a rhetorical perspective” (p. xiii) and that the approaches to this technique have been consequently “monological”. This remark allows her to introduce the specific perspective adopted towards dissociation in this study,

i.e. “dialogual aspects of the use of dissociation”, “the use of dissociation in argumentative discussions”, and to the methodological approach used, in the framework of the “theoretical perspective of Pragma-Dialectics ... that studies argumentation as part of a critical discussion, in which discussants jointly try to solve a difference of opinion” (p. xiii).

Thus, most of the examples of dissociation discussed and analyzed throughout the book are taken “from all realms of public and private life”, coming “from such diverse sources as newspapers, television shows, websites, Parliamentary Reports, and ordinary circumstances” (p. xiv). This provision of examples, together with the analyses accompanying them, is one of the most important assets of the study, which can thus be seen as a sample of Discourse Analysis practice extending work on the same topic previously done by argumentation scholars interested in less ‘ordinary’ discursive contexts.

2. The book

The first part, ‘Dissociation’, deals with: 1. ‘The Concept of Dissociation’ (pp. 3-15); 2. ‘The Uses of Dissociation’ (pp. 17-30); 3. Indicators of Dissociation (pp. 31-44). The chapters are concerned with “what dissociation is, how it is used in various fields of discourse, and how the use of this argumentative technique in discourse can be identified.” (p. 45)

Chapter 1, on the concept of dissociation, is an extended revised version of section 2 (The notion of dissociation) of van Rees (2003). We find: A) a presentation of the concept as one may find it in NR, where dissociation is the other technique which, together with association, is used in all argumentative discourse instances; B) a parallel between dissociation and other concepts it is related to: semantic shift, euphemism, distinction, dichotomy, precization, definition; C) the main characteristics of dissociation, which distinguish it from the previously mentioned concepts.

These characteristics complement the *definition of dissociation*, according to which a) there are two speech acts inherent to dissociation (distinction and definition); b) a value hierarchy is established through dissociation; c) dissociation resolves an incompatibility or a contradiction. Without getting into the details of the presentation provided by van Rees, I find it necessary to

quote the definition she suggests at this point which is further refined and illustrated throughout the book with an impressive amount of examples:

[D]issociation is an argumentative technique in which, in order to resolve a contradiction or incompatibility, a unitary concept expressed by a single term is split up into two new concepts unequally valued, one subsumed under a new term, the other subsumed either under the original term, which is redefined to denote a concept, reduced in content, or under another new term with its own definition, the original term being given up altogether. (p. 9)

To illustrate the concept and its functioning, the author uses discourse fragments excerpted from everyday interactions or reported in the media, and also borrowed from other authors, then analyzing the latter in the perspective she adopts on dissociation. The wide variety of example sources characterizes the presentation and the analysis of the concept and its functioning throughout the whole study.

In chapter 2, on the uses of dissociation, the author mentions a number of discursive examples of dissociation mainly chosen from philosophical texts, law contexts, political argumentative situations, and the discourse of science. Van Rees achieves both a general overview of the most relevant pieces of literature on this topic, by recalling the various illustrations of the concept provided by other scholars, and a genuine look at the previously mentioned realms of social life, in order to confront the reader with other samples which add to the diverse practical occurrences of dissociation.

Not only does the author provide such illustrations borrowed from existing studies or identified by herself, she also discusses the practical, pragmatic gains of using this technique and its effects upon the audience or the addressee. As pointed out also in NR, “dissociation serves to reconstruct the conception of the world of the audience and to do so in particular directions, serving certain interests and promoting certain views.” (p. 29)

Chapter 3, on indicators of dissociation, is an expanded revised version of van Rees (2003/2005). This chapter points to another important characteristic of dissociation: the technique allows that

a statement containing a proposition in which the reduced version of the original concept occurs can ... be denied, while a statement containing a proposition in which the split-off concept occurs can ... be asserted (or the other way around), without running into a contradiction. (p. 31)

This feature of dissociation allows the analyst to identify the technique at work in discourse. Thus, the author discusses in turn the linguistic clues indicating: a) distinction and definition as speech acts constitutive of and functional in dissociation; b) the application of a value scale to the two terms of the dissociation; c) the contradiction or the paradox that dissociation aims to resolve. Of course, these linguistic clues can occur all at one time or in various combinations. One important aspect is underlined by the author, namely that both distinction and definition have to be connected in some way with the application of a value scale and must solve a contradiction. Otherwise they simply are a distinction or a definition without giving way to dissociation.

The second part of the monograph, “Dissociation as a Discussion Technique”, endeavours to “elucidate how dissociation can be employed in argumentative discussions for enhancing or diminishing the acceptability of standpoints.” (p. 45) This part is organized into five chapters: 4. The Model of Critical Discussion (pp. 47-54); 5. The Confrontation Stage (pp. 55-65); 6. The Opening Stage (pp. 67-75); 7. The Argumentation Stage (pp. 77-86); 8. The Concluding Stage (pp. 87-90).

In chapter 4, on the model of critical discussion, the reader is introduced to all the important elements required to understand the approach to argumentation proposed by pragma-dialecticians. The first section of this chapter is an excellent introduction to the tools of pragma-dialectics. In the second section of this chapter (pp. 47-51), dissociation is discussed in relationship with the suggested model and with the recently introduced new concept into this framework, that of strategic manoeuvring.

With reference to this concept, the author advances the idea that “dissociation can enhance both the dialectical reasonableness and the rhetorical effectiveness of the various moves in each stage.” (p. 52) This is a valuable assertion since dissociation has been usually seen in the literature from the rhetorical side and its advantages have been put in relationship with its re-

semblance to persuasive definition. With this approach, dissociation is seen as a device which “may add to dialectical reasonableness” on the grounds of its constitutive acts of distinction and definition.

The overall effect is that it enables “the speaker to execute the various dialectical moves in the successive stages of a critical discussion with optimal clarity and precision, making the statements in which it occurs optimally well-defined and well-delineated.” (p. 52) Van Rees also discusses the rhetorical effectiveness of this technique which she sees as a result of: a) the possibility dissociation offers to the speaker to “present a particular state of affairs in a certain light” (p. 52); b) the freedom it provides the speaker with to perform it “in such a way as to rule out any further argument.” (p. 53)

Chapter 5, on the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, looks at dissociation in the three successive dialectical moves characteristic of this stage. Van Rees conceives of dissociation as being used in bringing forward a standpoint in order “to delineate a particular standpoint against the background of other possible standpoints.” (p. 55) With respect to rhetorical gain, since dissociation delineates the standpoint more clearly, it also makes it easier to defend and harder to attack.

The technique can be used by the antagonist in bringing forward criticism against a standpoint in order to also become the protagonist of the opposing standpoint and – if this is the case – of a new particular standpoint, with the rhetorical effect that the initial standpoint is negated, set aside, and “replaced by a standpoint that is more to the liking of the antagonist-turned-protagonist” (p. 58), with the new standpoint toning down the initial standpoint. This makes dissociation “particularly fit for use in situations in which the speaker wants to counter down the accusations against himself or his associates.” (p. 59) In the third dialectical move of the confrontation stage, the protagonist may use dissociation in order to maintain or withdraw the initial standpoint. The protagonist may maintain the initial standpoint by using dissociation since it allows a presentation of the original standpoint in a particular interpretation. Consequently, the standpoint may be maintained in this interpretation, but withdrawn in another one.

Rhetorically, dissociation allows the protagonist to “grant a concession on an interpretation of his standpoint that is presented as marginal, while taking a firm position on an interpretation that suits him better and that is pretended as crucial.” (p. 61) Dissociation contributes to the dialectical

move of withdrawing a standpoint by enabling the protagonist “to give a particular interpretation of his standpoint (which is presented as crucial) in which, this time, he withdraws it, while retaining it in another, irrelevant, interpretation.” (p. 62)

According to van Rees, the difference of opinion disappears, with the rhetorical result that this allows the protagonist to back out from his commitment to the initial standpoint by making it “look like this is not the case and he is not acting inconsistently, at all.” (p. 63) In other words, the protagonist may, by using dissociation, withdraw his standpoint by pretending that “in the crucial aspects of the matter, he agreed with the opponent from the beginning.” (p. 63)

This potential of dissociation makes it, in the author’s opinion, “highly suitable” for “resolving inconsistencies” (p. 63) and, more generally, with any dialectical move of the confrontation, “an excellent means for manipulating the ‘disagreement space’ (Jackson, 1992) in which the discussion will be conducted.” (p. 65) I would add, in Goffmanian terms, that this allows the protagonist to withdraw the initial standpoint by maintaining positive face, by not having face affected by inconsistent behaviour, and by escaping a possible accusation of inconsistency.

Chapter 6 is on dissociation in the opening stage – in which “discussants jointly establish the material starting points for the discussion” (p. 67). Two dialectical moves in this stage are proposing, and attacking starting points. Dissociation can be used similarly in both these moves in two ways: by introducing a dissociated term in a proposition proposed as a starting point or in one proposed as a criticism of a starting point or by introducing the dissociation itself as the very starting point or the attack at the starting point by means of a dissociative definition and/or distinction. Van Rees shows that the contribution of dissociation to these two dialectical moves is that it allows –respectively– the protagonist to delineate a particular starting point “against the background of other possible starting points” (p. 68) and the antagonist to reject the starting point initially proposed.

Another dialectical result to be valued by the antagonist is also discussed: the rejection –through dissociation– of a starting point is implicitly equivalent to the advancement of another starting point that can be used in a multiple difference of opinion when the antagonist becomes protagonist of a standpoint opposite to the initial one. In all of these four cases, the

rhetorical gains are, for the protagonist, that a starting point can be chosen which serves best the argumentative intention while ruling out other possibly embarrassing starting points, and, for the antagonist, that the starting point of the protagonist is “replaced by one that suits the antagonist better, toning down the original one” (p. 73) while dismissing the protagonist’s proposal for a starting point and at the same time establishing a starting point more convenient for defending the opposite standpoint.

To the two previously mentioned dialectical moves adds a third one, consisting in reacting to criticism brought forward against starting points. This reaction can be to the effect of maintaining the starting point or of withdrawing it and, in van Rees’ opinion, the dialectical contribution and the rhetorical gain are similar to those which are the case in the corresponding confrontational move. In all these situations, the speaker uses dissociation to get rid of the starting points suggested or proposed by the opponent.

Although there is no explicit mention of this, I consider that in all the moves characteristic of the opening stage, as illustrated by van Rees, dissociation works as one of the most representative strategic manoeuvres, by providing, most often by way of explicit definition and/or distinction speech acts, a new semantic and pragmatic setting for the ongoing argumentative discussion. In the examples she provides in this chapter, some of which are taken from formal, or rather institutional, contexts, dissociation works, as it were, like a ‘creator’ of new possible worlds, which do not belong to the belief universe of the audience before being produced discursively as such.

One of the most interesting chapters in the book, since it provides a completely new approach to the technique, chapter 7 deals with dissociation in the argumentation stage of the critical discussion, in which “the protagonist connects the starting points that have been established in the opening stage to the standpoint, by means of the application of an argument scheme”, while “the antagonist criticizes the application of this argument scheme by asking critical questions.” (p. 77) Since dissociation is not an argument scheme, as pointed out by other scholars (Grootendorst 1999), it can be used in this stage by the antagonist to attack the argument scheme by means of three sets of critical questions corresponding to the three types of argument schemes distinguished by pragma-dialecticians: symptomatic, based on analogy, and based on cause-effect relationship.

The protagonist can use dissociation only to respond to criticism against

the arguments put forward. Three elements can be attacked by the antagonist in the argumentation stage: the argument scheme itself in point of the type of relationship established between two terms, the first term of the relationship or the second term of the relationship.

Dissociation is used by the antagonist to attack the relationship between the two terms of the argument scheme; their relationship being declared by the antagonist to be apparent, not real, the argument itself becomes irrelevant. On the rhetorical side this results in a strong effect, the dissociation suggesting that the real characteristic, cause or analogue, although existent, has not been identified and revealed by the protagonist. Van Rees thus points to the idea that the antagonist may gain stronger grounds to benefit from the dissociation in order to also advance a new starting point consisting in the real cause, analogue or characteristic, which would allow him to also advance his own standpoint.

When used to attack the second term of the relationship, dissociation is considered to contribute to the dialectical move by providing an alternative interpretation of the second term and to achieve rhetorical gain by suggesting that the standpoint “only holds for a trivial aspect, but that it does not apply to the heart of the matter”. (p. 81) Moreover, van Rees suggests that the antagonist also has some other advantage: since the attacked argument has been proved irrelevant, another argument for supporting the opposite standpoint is not needed. And again, I should add, the antagonist’s positive face is maintained with no risk of accusation of inconsistency.

Third, van Rees discusses dissociation when used by the antagonist to attack the first term of the relationship by “pointing out that it is not what the argument states that supports the standpoint” (p. 83), but something else. The dialectical result is that an alternative interpretation of the first term is provided, opening “the way for the antagonist to point to an exception to the rule that is inherent in the relationship that the protagonist postulates”, while the rhetorical objective fulfilled is that “the antagonist can escape a conclusion that he would be committed to on the basis of his acceptance of the argument and of the argument scheme.” (p. 83)

Van Rees’ noteworthy conclusion is that, in all three cases, the antagonist is enabled to posit an alternative interpretation by means of which it is established that the argument is not relevant or sufficient, while eventually positing this alternative as an indirect/implicit defence of another standpoint.

Chapter 8, on the use of dissociation in the concluding stage of the critical discussion, points to the discussants' efforts in an argumentative exchange directed towards giving "a more precise meaning to the conclusion reached in the discussion, in such a way that the result of the discussion is most in accordance with their own point of view, and has the least unfavourable consequences for themselves." (pp. 89-90)

I interrupt this descriptive review at this particular point to question and discuss van Rees' perspective adopted in this chapter, namely that dissociation can occur in the concluding stage. We have seen, for instance, that there is no way for the protagonist to use dissociation in the argumentation stage other than to react to the antagonist's critiques and not on a free 'personal' initiative.

In the same way, I find it difficult to cope with the idea of dissociation being *used* or *introduced* or *appealed to* (as an argumentative technique) – in the concluding stage for at least the following reasons: 1) There is no longer a difference of opinion in the concluding stage, so no longer an argumentative exchange proper. The dissociation cannot then be seen as a possible contribution to the dialectical moves characteristic of this stage since the positions of the discussants are already 'stabilized' and the discussion is concluded as such. There is no longer a protagonist and an antagonist, except retrospectively. 2) Dissociation always takes a discussion (back) to the opening stage, since this stage is meant for and thus allows a change in the starting points of the discussion (I think that if dissociation takes place at the confrontation stage or at the argumentation stage, the discussion is also taken to the opening stage).

This change is most often profound and has serious implications, since what has been considered correct or true until then – with respect to notional representation or content corresponding to some given linguistic expression – is said to be merely apparent, while reality is something else, to be revealed and released by the dissociation 'author'.

With respect to these two remarks, I am quoting a couple of statements in this very study that might themselves be considered as arguments in favour of my view: a) Dissociation "always entails a more or less fundamental restructuring of our conception of reality." (p. 4) If this is so, could this restructured conception of reality turn up when an argumentative discussion is concluded? No, since at this stage the discussants should share the same

commitments and belief universe: what holds for the former protagonist now holds for the former antagonist. Yes, since these speakers, while trying to give a more refined¹ interpretation of the standpoint might discover that a new difference of opinion is the case – affecting the starting points of the just now concluding discussion – which would bring them to a new confrontational position. b) Dissociation “is meant to resolve an incompatibility or contradiction”. (pp. 15, 31) Since the concluding stage of a particular discussion has been reached, the former discussants should be normally placed on equal and similar positions. If either of them makes use of a dissociation at this point, then this is because there is still some incompatibility or contradiction which, once identified, automatically leads them either to the roles of antagonistic discussants again and to the adoption of distinct opposite positions, which means that a (new) difference of opinion is the case, or to a (heuristic) collaboration to argue as a single body in favour of the need of a dissociation by implicitly or explicitly defending a (virtual) standpoint that something is the case only in appearance, while in reality something else is the case.

In my opinion, A) one may accept that dissociation takes place at the concluding stage provided it is assumed that this dissociation leads to a new discussion mainly rooted in the identification of some incompatibility. If so, then we are led to admit that such a dissociation is itself the ground for a new metalinguistic (side) discussion which will be carried on around the necessity and the grounds for modifying the given representational system. This would be a case similar to the one pointed to in the chapter on the confrontation stage and discussed in the chapter on the opening stage, namely

¹ Van Rees uses the word ‘precise’ in this context, which I am replacing by ‘refined’. Of course the word ‘precise’ can be used in relationship with the word ‘precision’. This is how we use it in everyday or ordinary communication. Yet, the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation – in some particular respects – draws also on Arne Naess’ philosophy. In Naess’ semantic theory, the term ‘precise’ is used in relation with the (semantic) notion of ‘precization’. Precization corresponds to the relative synonymy of two declarative sentences in the sense that the declarative sentence *b* is a *precization* of the declarative sentence *a* iff all reasonable interpretations [i.e. sentence meanings] of *b* are reasonable interpretations of *a* and there is at least one reasonable interpretation of *a* which is not a reasonable interpretation of *b*. Since this is not the meaning needed in the discussion on the use of dissociation – also on account of the distinction van Rees herself points to between dissociation and precization (see p. 13) – I consider that a proper ‘formulation’ to be used, in general, when speaking about dissociation, should be something like “dissociation helps a speaker provide a more *refined* presentation of the standpoint”.

of a “standpoint which, as a whole, *consists of* a proposal for dissociation” (note 2, p. 55), when a (new) starting point is proposed.

Moreover, should this be not exactly the case, B) then one may accept that a dissociation occurring in the discussion is at most recalled or reported in the concluding stage. In fact, one of van Rees’ examples of this type of dissociation is a reporting situation in which a third party (a journalist) advances a question on the meaning of the reported words; yet this speaker is not one of the former participants in the concluded discussion nor is his comment part of the initial communicative situation (pp. 88-89). Dissociation would then be only *recalled* and not occurring in the concluding stage.

The third and last part of the study, “The Strengths and Weaknesses of Dissociation” consists of three chapters: 9. The Dialectical Soundness of Dissociation (pp. 93-109); 10. The Persuasiveness of Dissociation (pp. 111-121); 11. An Extended Example (pp. 123-139).

Researchers familiar with van Rees’ work on dissociation for almost ten years will certainly find these chapters most novel and rewarding since they round up the presentation of the topic. As well balanced as the first two parts of the monograph, this part concentrates on the possibilities of evaluating actual dissociations according to reasonableness standards and the pragma-dialectical rules for conducting a critical discussion. Subsequently, it deals with the effectiveness of dissociation.

Chapter 9, on the dialectical soundness of dissociation, discusses the requirements for dissociation to be sound and the problematic situations in which the technique may become unsound. In the first section on other approaches to dissociation the author mentions Schiappa’s (1985, 1993, 2003), in whose opinion dissociation is always unsound because it involves a real definition. After the presentation of several other approaches to the soundness of dissociation, van Rees discusses requirements for the dialectical soundness of dissociation from the pragma-dialectical perspective. She thus points to procedural and material requirements.

On the procedural side, dissociation stays sound if the change in starting points adduced by dissociation is put up for discussion by presenting this change as a standpoint and/or by bringing forward argumentation in favour of this change. Such conduct, in van Rees’ opinion, should usually result in performing the explicit speech acts of making a distinction and introducing a definition, which are considered usage declaratives, i.e. declarative speech

acts by means of which a new linguistic reality is created. For the concept of ‘usage declaratives’ see van Eeemeren & Grootendorst (1984). On the material side then, the change in the starting points should be accepted by the other discussant.

Chapter 10, on the persuasiveness of dissociation, discusses the occasions for the use of this technique, the responses to it, and the way in which audience acceptance of dissociation is obtained. Thus, van Rees identifies the following occasions for dissociation to occur: a) “the sense of unease that is a result of a clash between how things are defined and how one perceives or would wish things to be” (p. 112); b) “when a negative judgment or an outright accusation is directed against one” (p. 113) or some thing; c) the attempt to evade an accusation of inconsistency.

The negative responses to dissociation on the side of the audience are: a) rejecting the distinction; b) rejecting the value hierarchy a dissociation seeks to impose; c) rejecting the solution of the incompatibility proposed by dissociation on account of the audience’s feelings concerning failure of the technique to clarify problematic aspects.

It is odd that the author should have chosen to title the book sections according to the previously mentioned audience reactions as *Accepting the Distinction / the Value Hierarchy / the Solution*, while dealing in the respective sections with responses of rejection on the part of the audience. With respect to gaining audience acceptance for dissociation, dealt with in the following section, van Rees clearly identifies the main requirements making a dissociation acceptable and persuasive in front of an audience; thus a potentially (rhetorically) successful dissociation should: a) acknowledge the audience’s views; b) anticipate the need to argue for one’s standpoint and replace the problematic situation by an alternative interpretation; c) be introduced authoritatively; d) provide conceptual clarification – judged by van Rees as the most important requirement especially with a critical audience.

Chapter 11 is a presentation, an analysis and a discussion of longer discourse excerpts taken from various responses of President Clinton, given in court, on occasion of the Lewinsky case. I take this to be a prototypical situation for the use of dissociation, resulting in an excellent illustration of the – not very successful, as assessed by van Rees – use of the dissociative technique. The author presents the occasion at which a particular dissocia-

tion occurred in the President's replies, its possible dialectical and rhetorical effects, its lack of dialectical soundness, its relative persuasive effectiveness. She concludes that, in this particular case, the use of dissociation was characterized by various weaknesses although, with more attention paid, it could have been made into a stronger and more successful case. The analysis is illustrative of all the various perspectives taken on dissociation throughout the monograph and an exemplary model of discourse analysis directed towards the study of dissociation.

3. Evaluation

The book is a most pleasant and useful reading, well informed by the literature and innovative in terms of the view taken to the topic. In my opinion, it is the only systematic account of dissociation so far – as I have termed van Rees' approach to dissociation as it was being developed along the several articles she published before this monograph (Gata 2007). Moreover, it may be seen as an accurate application of the pragma-dialectical approach to the study of a particular concept of primary relevance to the field of argumentation. I fully agree with Schiappa (2009: 245) that the critical questions raised by van Rees are particularly valuable for any argumentation scholar. And I also agree with the idea that the monograph "succeeds in illustrating how the analytical potential of the tools developed within pragma-dialectics can be exploited for a systematic understanding of the workings of a particular argumentative technique." (Tseronis 2009) The abundance of examples sometimes discussed from different perspectives in various chapters of the book provides the researcher with a 'panoramic' view of this long neglected argumentative technique.

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