HOW TO RESPOND TO A FALLACY?

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Abstract: *This paper aims to resolve the following question: how should a reasonable arguer respond to a fallacy? To answer it, I take a dialectical approach to fallacies and consider their dialectical and rhetorical effects. Then, I review the current literature on the proper answer to fallacies to conclude that, under certain circumstances, all the answers provided in the literature can be helpful for the parties. Later, I attempt to provide some heuristic guidance to understand which response to a fallacy is better under which circumstance. To do that, I introduce two criteria for evaluating dialogues: the level of adversariality and the relevance of the epistemic goal. I will conclude that these criteria can help us understand which is the adequate response to fallacies and could also be important for addressing other problems in argumentation theory.*

Resumen: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo resolver la siguiente pregunta: ¿cómo debe responder un argumentador razonable a una falacia? Para responderla, adopto un enfoque dialéctico de las falacias y considero sus efectos dialécticos y retóricos. Luego, reviso la literatura actual sobre la respuesta adecuada a las falacias para concluir que, bajo ciertas circunstancias, todas las respuestas proporcionadas en la literatura pueden ser útiles para las partes. Enseguida, intento brindar alguna guía heurística para comprender qué respuesta a una falacia es mejor bajo qué circunstancias. Para ello, introduzco dos criterios para evaluar los diálogos: el nivel de confrontación y la relevancia del objetivo epistémico. Concluiré que estos criterios pueden ayudarnos a comprender cuál es la respuesta adecuada a las falacias y también podrían ser importantes para abordar otros problemas en la teoría de la argumentación.*

Keywords: *fallacies, disagreement, counter-fallacies, meta-dialogues, strategic manoeuvring, adversariality, epistemic goals, heuristics.*

1. Introduction

When we argue reasonably, we expect the counterpart to act in the same way. But that is not always the case. Our reasonable and well-thought arguments might provoke lies, threats, scorn, or violence. What can we do in that case? An old solution is suggested in The Bible: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself" (Proverbs, 24:6, The New King James Version). According to the biblical principle, the fact that our counterpart argues unreasonably should not encourage us to act in the same way.

One of the standard ways a counterpart can act unreasonably is by using fallacies. Should we apply the same principle in that case and retort in kind? There is no simple answer to this question. If the counterpart uses fallacies, but we refuse to, maybe we are giving them an unfair advantage[1], or by abandoning the argumentation process, we are giving away something important. But if we answer unreasonably, we are just decreasing the level of reasonableness, so the difference of opinion will not be reasonably *resolved*. Therefore, either we forgo realizing our individual aim to convince the interlocutor with good reasons, or we forgo realizing the shared goal to resolve the disagreement. This paper aims to tackle this dilemma by addressing the following question: how should a reasonable arguer respond to a fallacy?

This topic has already been considered in the literature. Some claim that we need to point out the fact that a fallacy has been committed (Krabbe, 2003); others argue that we need to "manoeuvre strategically" (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2007) or suggest that we need to respond with a *counter-fallacy* (Jacobs, 2000).

The purpose of this paper is not to provide just another additional answer to the same question or to argue that the answers provided before are wrong. On the contrary, I will argue that all these answers (and others I present) can be reasonable and useful for fulfilling the parties' goals in different circumstances. But what is lacking in the literature is some rationale or heuristic principle to decide which response to fallacies is adequate in a given circumstance. I pretend to provide such heuristic guidance in this paper, using two criteria.

The layout of this paper is the following: In section 2, I start by introducing a dialectical concept of "fallacy" and the dialectical and rhetorical effects of fallacies. In section 3, I present five answers to the problem found in the literature. Section 4 introduces the two criteria that, I propose, serve as heuristic guidance for responding to fallacies. In section 5, I illustrate, with examples, how the two criteria work. Finally, in section 6, I give some concluding remarks.

2. What is a Fallacy, and What are its Effects?

This paper takes a dialectical approach to fallacies (in line with Jacobs, 2006; Van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004; Walton, 1995; Woods, 2004, among others). According to that approach, a fallacy is a sort of misstep in a dialogue. A party presents an argument that is

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1 See Van Laar and Krabbe (2016) for the concept of "fairness" in argumentation.

evaluated as faulty from a normative and dialectical perspective since it hinders the chances of realizing the shared goal of a given dialogue. In other words, fallacies occur in a dialectical situation where one of the parties does not fulfil the normative standards of that situation.

But even if faulty, when a party produces a fallacy, she puts her interlocutor (that, henceforth, I will call "the opponent") in a difficult position. This difficulty happens because of two plausible effects of fallacies that I will explain now: a dialectical effect and a rhetorical effect.

2.1 The Dialectical Effect of Fallacies.

The dialectical effect implies that the opponent will have the *burden of proof to show that a fallacy has been committed*, and such a burden could be, sometimes, hard to discharge. I will call that effect the *burden of the fallacy,* and to understand its effects, we need to compare it with the standard *burden of proof* produced by argumentation schemes.

According to Walton (1998), arguers present their arguments using *argumentation schemes*, which create a *presumption* favouring the conclusion or, in other words, they generate "presumptive reasoning" (1995, p. 133). If I say, "tomorrow it's going to rain because the weatherman said so", I'm using an argument scheme called *"appeal to an expert opinion"*. If properly used (see Walton, 1997), it will create a *presumption* favouring the conclusion "tomorrow it's going to rain". Then, it is not *necessarily true* that it will rain (weather forecasters sometimes make mistakes). Still, it is *presumed* that it will rain, so in the absence of any contrary evidence, I better bring my umbrella to the park. However, suppose the addressee refuses to accept the conclusion (she believes it's not going to rain). In that case, she will need to advance some appropriate counterevidence, because a mere questioning attitude no longer suffices.

According to Walton, a fallacy is "an argumentation technique used wrongly" (1995 p. 235). Therefore, a party uses what seems like a proper argumentation scheme but without satisfying all its requirements. Since the argument seems like a proper argumentation scheme, people could get confused and think it has produced a presumption favouring its conclusion (Walton, 2010). So now we have an apparent presumption of something being the case. Suppose the opponent realizes that the counterpart produced a fallacy. In that case, she will have the *burden of the fallacy:* she needs to prove that a fallacy has been committed, and if she doesn't, the apparent presumption created by the fallacy remains.

But the problem is that proving a fallacy has been committed is not easy. Contrary to the textbook examples, real-life fallacies tend to be hard to spot and, even if spotted, hard to debunk. And the counterpart can always present arguments on why the argument is not fallacious after all (a metadialogue doesn't always lead to an agreement, as I will show). Therefore, an argumentation scheme generates a presumption favouring its conclusion, creating a burden of proof for the counterpart who doesn't want to accept it. In contrast, a fallacy produces an apparent presumption creating a burden of the fallacy for the counterpart who doesn't want to accept the fallacy. And the burden of the fallacy is challenging to discharge because it entails a burden of proof: it includes the obligation to prove that a

fallacy has been committed (see Walton, 1995, p. 238). Moreover, charging the counterpart with using fallacies is a severe accusation and might further escalate the disagreement (Paglieri, 2009), thus making resolution more unlikely.

2.2 The Rhetorical Effect of Fallacies.

Even if a party can adequately discharge the burden of fallacy, another effect of fallacies needs attention: its rhetorical effect. Consider the following example:

> Example 1: Margaret Thatcher
> On November 22, 1990, in one of her last speeches at the House of Commons as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher (M.T.) discussed with the representative Simon Hughes (S.H.) the matter of inequality in the following terms:
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> 1. S.H.: "There is no doubt that the Prime Minister, in many ways, has achieved substantial success. There is one statistic, however, that I understand is not challenged, and that is that, during her 11 years as Prime Minister, the gap between the richest 10 per cent and the poorest 10 per cent in this country has widened substantially (…). Surely she accepts that that is not a record that she or any Prime Minister can be proud of.
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> 2. M.T.: "People on all levels of income are better off than they were in 1979. The hon. Gentleman is saying that he would rather that the poor were poorer, provided that the rich were less rich. That way, one will never create the wealth for better social services, as we have."

The transcript of the speech[2] does not capture the heat of the moment. Thatcher's supporters were exultant at the reply from the Prime Minister, shouting approval at her words, while Hughes looked uncomfortable, expressing with his face: "that is not what I said!". But if that is not what Hughes said (or implied), Thatcher produced a *straw man fallacy*. However, for Hughes, the damage was done, and there wasn't too much he could do to win the crowd, even if he had an opportunity to reply and claim that he never said that.

Following Jacobs (2000), we can say that arguments produce rhetorical effects on people. Maybe Thatcher used a fallacy, but at the same time, she communicated other messages: that she is tough and relentless, that she cares about poor people, that the left-wingers are inherently socialists, that her party is the only one capable of developing social services, and so on. Even if, afterwards, a rational judge decides Thatcher committed a fallacy, the message has been conveyed, and the damage is done.

The rhetorical effects of fallacies are, then, the messages that the production of the fallacies conveys. They don't have to do with the dialectical effect but with all other effects that have a strategic significance for the parties. Then, if a party produces a very sloppy fallacy,

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2 Available at https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199091/cmhansrd/1990-11-22/Debate-3.html

the message might be that she is not a good or serious arguer. But if the fallacy is well crafted, with a good chance of deceiving the audience, it might produce an "imbalance" in the rhetorical situation (Jacobs, 2000).

Considering a fallacy's dialectical and rhetorical effects, we can see why the opponent might be in a problematic situation. If she ignores the occurrence of the fallacy, then she is not contesting the presumption in favour of the conclusion, and the conclusion, apparently, holds. If she ends the discussion, she gives up on resolution, but maybe resolving the issue was important. If she points out the occurrence of a fallacy, she might succeed at discharging the burden of the fallacy, but the rhetorical effects can't be taken back. If she responds with another fallacy, she might compensate for the rhetorical effects but simultaneously escalate the disagreement and make the dialogue more unreasonable. What to do, then? Let's take a look at five solutions found in the literature.

3. One Question, Five Answers

In this section, I intend to present the central answers to how to respond to a fallacy. To do that, I will begin by introducing the following example:

> Example 2: Immigration
> Anna and Jake are senators from opposite parties arguing about illegal immigration on a T.V. show. They have the subsequent dialogue:
> 1. Anna: "For me, the solution is simple. If people are living and working in our country without the proper documentation, they are not supposed to be here. All we can do is deport them."
> 2. Jake: "Well, it is not so simple; illegal immigrants are a very important part of our economy, and we can't afford to lose them. Besides, many of them have been here for decades; they don't have anywhere to go. The only solution is to regularize their situation if they meet some conditions."
> 3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants; you just want the advantages of cheap workers."

The argument presented in turn (3) is an *ad hominem attack*. That is, the "kind of argumentation that argues against somebody's argument by attacking the person who put forward the argument" (Walton, 1995 p. 37). More specifically, it is a *circumstantial* type of ad hominem because, rather than referring to the character of Jake, Anna is referring to Jake's circumstances.

But is an *ad hominem attack* always fallacious? Not necessarily. Ultimately, the problem has to do with the *relevance* of the argument. In some cases, the circumstances of a person making an assertion are relevant, while others are not.

Regarding argument (3), to tell if this is a fallacious move, we need to understand the circumstances of the dialogue, especially the parties' goals. Suppose the parties aim to resolve the

difference of opinion on the merits. In that case, their main aim is to test the tenability of the advanced standpoints in a dialogue called "critical discussion" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004). In this case, the standpoint advanced by Jake in turn (2) can be reconstructed as "we should regularize illegal immigrants". He backs his standpoint with two independent premises: "immigrants are good for our economy" and "they don't have anywhere to go now". By those standards, move (3) is fallacious because personal circumstances of Jake, even if they are authentic, are irrelevant to the tenability of the standpoint advanced.

But it could be the case that the parties do not want to resolve the disagreement or have other goals in mind: in politics, that happens often. Maybe Anna only wants to be seen as *tough* towards her constituents. In that case, it could be argued that the move wasn't fallacious since the dialogue appears to be eristic (Walton & Krabbe, 1995).

But for the sake of argument, let's assume this is not the case. Both parties sincerely want to find a solution or pretend to find a resolution for the problem of immigration. Therefore, they want to answer the question: "what should be done about illegal immigration?" If that is the case, then (3) is an irrelevant argument and, thus, a fallacy. But what can Jake do next? Let's see.

3.1 Ignore the Fallacy

When the proponent advances a fallacy, an option is always to ignore it. In the example above, Jake can keep arguing and give reasons why the Government should regularize the situation of illegal immigrants without responding to the personal attack received by Anna.

In that case, *example 2* would look like this:

3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants; you just want the advantages of cheap workers."
4. Jake: "At this point, we have a humanitarian duty towards the people living within our borders, illegal or not; we need to regularize their situation."

This dialogue looks odd. Anna has raised concern over Jake's interests, so Jake seems to be dodging her argument by not engaging with it. Anna's fallacy has produced a *dialectical effect*: she has used a personal attack that seems to undermine Jake as a credible source because he is supposedly acting out of personal interest. If Jake doesn't discharge the burden of the fallacy, the presumption that he only acts out of personal interest holds. And there might also be rhetorical effects not taken into consideration. Additionally, ignoring fallacies sounds like a bad idea in the long run: it will give the parties and the onlookers the message that fallacies can be freely used without harmful consequences.

But ignoring a fallacy could also bring some strategic advantages. Not engaging in an alleged personal attack could be helpful to de-escalate the conflict. This strategy is sound, especially when the counterpart just wants to offend and is not committed to resolving the issue. Some annoying arguers, usually called "trolls" when they populate the internet, are an

excellent example of this. They can be described as arguers that show a lack of argumentative virtues and show "distance from the goals of arguments" (Cohen, 2017, p. 186). Therefore, the general rule for dealing with them is "don't feed the trolls", which, in this case, can be translated to: "ignore fallacious moves". Also, in some circumstances, ignoring the fallacy might counterbalance the rhetorical effect by conveying the message: "I will ignore this personal attack because I want to stress that my counterpart doesn't have good arguments". Finally, when fallacies are not straightforward, ignoring it could be an act of good faith: "I will interpret this argument as a sound, even if it isn't".

Summing up, ignoring a fallacy is a solution that doesn't discharge the dialectical burden of the fallacy but, in some cases, can counterbalance the rhetorical effects of fallacies.

3.2 End the Discussion

If you and I are playing chess, and you knowingly unlawfully move a piece, the game is over. You don't want to play this game seriously, so there's no point in going on. It could be argued that, with argumentation, it should happen the same. Grice's (1975) "principle of coope-ration" comes at hand. As Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2015) claim, If one of the parties is using fallacies, it could be assumed that she's not behaving cooperatively and, therefore, cooperation has gone by the board.

> In *example 2,* this solution would look like this:
> 3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants; you just want the advantages of cheap workers."
> 4. Jake: "That's offensive. This discussion is over!"

The advantage of this solution is that it rules out uncooperative counterparts. Sometimes, saying "this discussion is over" seems the best way to go. It could also promote argumen-tative virtues in the long run since it sends the following message: "I will not tolerate this kind of behaviour". In a future encounter, the uncooperative party might change her behaviour. Also, ending the discussion is an excellent way to avoid *feeding the trolls* (Cohen, 2017). Finally, it may discharge the burden of the fallacy by explicitly pointing out that something is wrong with the dialogue. If the fallacy is evident, that could be enough to discharge the burden.

Regarding the rhetorical effects, it might be helpful sometimes: the party that uses the strategy says, "I'm a serious arguer, but my counterpart is not". However, that will only happen when it is clear to the audience that a fallacy has been used and not when it isn't.

Nevertheless, as van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2007) observe, ending the discussion is not always beneficial for the parties. If the parties wish to resolve or settle a difference of opinion, ending the discussion is useless. Moreover, when we face practical disagreements (i.e. disagreements about what we should do), ending the discussion is impossible. We are

forced to resolve or, at least, settle the dialogue because abandoning it is a way of deciding in favour of the party that wants to keep the *status quo*.

A historical example would clarify this latter point: Before the U.S. Civil War, several publications defending slavery appeared. One of the arguments used by those publications was the following: "slavery had existed throughout history and is the natural state of mankind." (Ushistory.org, 2020). This argument seems like an *appeal to tradition* fallacy. This fallacy "occurs when the advocate maintains that we should follow a certain policy because we have 'always' done things that way" (Steinberg & Freeley, 2009, p. 201). But if this discussion were taking place when a decision had to be made about slavery, ending the discussion would imply maintaining the legal status of slavery: a victory only for the party using the fallacy. Therefore, in these cases, it makes sense to *do* something when a fallacy is presented, for ending the discussion is of no use.

Summarizing: ending the discussion has both advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage is to rule out uncooperative counterparts, and the main disadvantage is that it lets the disagreement unresolved, which is especially useless for practical disagreements. Finally, this strategy partially discharges the burden of the fallacy and can bring rhetorical benefits in some cases.

3.3 Use a Metadialogue

For Aristotle, if a party uses a fallacy, the counterpart should expose her fault. He claims in the "Sophistical Refutations" that "a proper solution is an exposure of false reasoning, showing on what kind of question the falsity depends" (Soph. Ref. 18). The way to do this is by pointing out that a fallacy has been committed, which is done through a *metadialogue.*

A metadialogue could be defined as "a dialogue about a dialogue" (Krabbe, 2003 p. 641). More than arguing about the propositions at issue, the parties argue about the dialogue: the rules that should be applied, how it has developed, etc. Then, when the counterpart uses a fallacy, a metadialogue can be started about the fallacy itself. The metadialogue would serve the purpose of examining the appropriateness of the argument. Then, at the metadialogical level, the parties will discuss if the argument was a fallacy and if the party making the fallacy accusation will carry the burden of the fallacy. If they agree it was, then the party who produced it must retract it, but the original argument can be considered valid if they agree that it wasn't. If they disagree, then the metadialogue will remain unresolved.

In *example 2*, the start of the metadialogue could look like this:

3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants; you just want the advantages of cheap workers."
4. Jake: "You are just making a personal attack without addressing the actual problem that we are discussing. Please stick to the original issue that's at stake."

By discussing whether the dialogue rules have been followed, Jake departs from the ground level of the argument to a higher level where the argument's legitimacy is addressed. This higher level is also a dialogue where the parties could persuade each other or fail at doing it. For instance, Anna's answer could accept the defeat and retract the fallacy:

    5A. Anna: "Ok, granted."

If Anna responds by arguing (5A), the metadialogue is over because she has retracted the argument presented at the turn (3), and the parties can keep arguing at the ground level.

    But she could also question the fallacy charge, saying:

    5B. Anna: "Can you explain to me why what I just said is irrelevant to the issue?"

Or even take the initiative and provide reasons why her argument was not a fallacy:

    5C. Anna: "It's not just a personal attack; I'm saying that your opinion is biased by your family situation. Without it, you would probably think like me."

If (5B) or (5C) are used, the metadialogue hasn't yet been resolved, so Jake needs to explain why his fallacy attack was justified. He carries the burden of the fallacy and needs to discharge it, or if he is unwilling or unable to, he should retract his "fallacy" charge (argument 4) and go back to the ground level.

    This solution has some advantages for the opponent. First, instead of ignoring it or discharging it only halfway, the opponent intends to fully discharge the burden of the fallacy, which will boost her position if successful. Second, unlike *ending the discussion*, this solution promotes the resolution of the issue. Third, it promotes argumentative virtues: if dialogues were interrupted by metadialogues, then, in the long run, the parties would learn to argue reasonably. Also, sometimes fallacies are hard to recognize. So it could be helpful for the parties to have an open discussion regarding the quality of the argument presented.

    But there are some disadvantages as well. First, as van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2007) note, the parties might keep arguing at the metadialogical level without ever returning to the ground level. This situation might endanger the resolution of the ground-level issue. Second, as the example above shows, the burden of the fallacy might prove to be heavy so that the metadialogical argument could backfire (Cohen, 2005) on the opponent: that is, he could end up in a worse position after making the fallacy attack. Third, calling out a fallacy "is a serious indictment that calls for a strong and vigorous response in rebuttal" (Walton, 1995, p. 238), so the disagreement might escalate. Finally, even if successful, the metadialogue could discharge the burden of the fallacy, but the damage produced by the rhetorical effects of the fallacy might still be in place.

3.4 Re-rail the Discussion Using Strategic Manoeuvring

Strategic manoeuvring has been defined as "the continual efforts made in all moves that are carried out in argumentative discourse to keep the balance between *reasonableness* and *effectiveness*" [3] (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 40). Reasonableness, here, must be understood as "using reason in a way that is appropriate in view of the situation concerned" (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 29), and effectiveness has to be understood as being instrumental for the parties in "resolving the difference of opinion effectively in favour of their case" (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 39).

In other words, to manoeuvre strategically, the arguers need to balance two different aims: their *dialectical aim*, which requires them to be reasonable at all times, avoiding fallacies and using speech acts appropriate for every stage of the dialogue, and the *rhetorical aim,* which demands that they put their best efforts to persuade the counterpart that their standpoint is correct.

Strategic manoeuvring is an attempt at finding a balance: if the parties lean too much towards their rhetorical aim, dismissing the dialectical dimension, they will proceed unreasonably. And if, on the other hand, they only care about the dialectical aim, they might commit strategic blunders by not producing arguments which fulfil their rhetorical goals. In this light, fallacies can be conceived as "derailments of strategic manoeuvring" (van Eemeren, 2010, p. 200), where one of the parties leans towards effectiveness, thus acting unreasonably.

So, according to this approach, what can be done when a fallacy is committed? According to van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2007), when a fallacy is committed, the type of answer that the counterpart should give will depend on the relevance of the fallacy. A fallacy that is only intended as a joke or doesn't hinder the counterpart's position could be ignored. On the other hand, a fallacy that implies a fundamental rejection of rationality will ask for a termination of the dialogue.

But most fallacies stand in between: they are not strong enough to require the termination of the dialogue, but they are serious enough to give one of the parties an unfair advantage. For these authors, the best option for the counterpart is to ask for the re-railing of the fallacious move, using the tools of strategic manoeuvring. Accordingly, instead of asking for the full retraction of the allegedly fallacious argument (as in a metadialogue), the opponent should ask the fallacy-monger to "readjust one or more aspects of his manoeuvring – say, the verbal presentation of the move – in such a way that the derailment is made undone and the manoeuvring gets re-railed." (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2007, p. 250). Therefore, she will ask her counterpart to re-rail the discussion using diverse strategies depending on the fallacy committed (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2015, pp. 639–640). In the case of *ad hominem* attacks, the opponent should ask the fallacy-monger something along these lines:

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3 The use of italics is my addition.

(c) Reformulating the presentational device so that the denounced move is rephrased in such a way that it is no longer fallacious—as is, for instance, the case when an abusive *argumentum ad hominem* is rephrased as a legitimate personal attack or when an *argumentum ad baculum* is rephrased as a legitimate reference to the circumstances in which the discussion takes place. (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2015, p. 640)

Accordingly, if Jake wanted to use strategic manoeuvring in example 1, he could ask for a reformulation of the presentational device:

3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants; you just want the advantages of cheap workers."
4. Jake: "Sorry, I don't get it. Please clarify in which way that situation affects my main argument on illegal immigration."

The response asks the other party to rephrase the presentational device. That is, to present the argument as a nonfallacious one if possible. In this case, Anna could respond in two ways: by complying or not complying with Jake's request. If she complies, she should reformulate (3) in a nonfallacious way. A possible rephrasing could be the following:

3A. Anna: "I'm saying that your opinion is biased because of your family situation. Without it, you would probably think like me."

But, if she does not comply, she could say something like:

3B. Anna: "You heard what I said!"

If (3A) is presented, strategic manoeuvring succeeded. If the move is not fallacious anymore, then Jake needs to respond to it and has the burden of proof that his familiar situation didn't influence his standpoint. But if (3B) is presented, the strategic manoeuvring has failed, and the parties are back at the starting point.

The solution is very similar to a metadialogue, and they sometimes overlap. Both meta-dialogue and strategic manoeuvring focus on the *shape* of the dialogue and might fulfil a metadialogical function. However, there are some differences. First, the *vocabulary* of fallacies (which carries a specific burden) is not employed in strategic manoeuvring[4]. In principle (an assertion that would be interesting to test), this should help control the escalation of disagreement. Secondly, strategic manoeuvring tries to keep the argument at the *ground level*. In such a sense, it does not *interrupt* the main dialogue. Still, it tries to keep it

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4 Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

alive, avoiding one of the problems of metadialogues discussed above: that the parties might continue at the metadialogical level without ever returning to the ground level.

The advantage of this approach is that it is likely to lead to a much more natural dialogue than the kind of metadialogue we discussed above, so the relationship between the parties will probably not be stressed so much. In a way, this is closer to what we typically do when we encounter a fallacy. So, the counterpart might feel less offended or attacked than when facing a "fallacy!" charge. Secondly, it avoids the burden of the fallacy subtly. Third, it could help the parties resolve the issue, rather than terminating the discussion early or complicating it too much, as in a metadialogue.

The disadvantages of this strategy are two: first, as shown in the example, the fallacy-monger might refuse the opponent's suggestion, so the strategy would be ineffective. Second, this strategy might not fully compensate for the rhetorical effects of fallacies. Once a fallacy is out there, its effects may still put the situation in favour of the party using it. As we will see, this is especially problematic when argumentation is more adversarial than cooperative. Therefore, in some circumstances, the parties might want to *compensate for* the rhetorical effects of the fallacy through a counter-fallacy.

3.5 Use a Counter-fallacy

Maybe, if we get hit, hitting back is the only way to regain balance. When the counterpart uses a fallacy, this approach could imply responding with another: a counter-fallacy. For Jacobs (2000, 2006), this is the right move when it makes a "contribution to the dialogue" (2000 p. 286).

Jacobs's approach is in the general framework of *Normative Pragmatics*. This theory seeks to bring together dialectics and rhetoric by focusing its attention on "the communicative properties of argumentative messages" and "on analysis and assessment of the functional properties of argumentation as an activity." (2000, p. 262). Jacobs thinks that strategic concerns are always part of argumentation, so there is no such thing as an argument that lacks rhetorical strategy. Then, the most relevant part of an argumentative exchange is the rhetorically conveyed message. Therefore, there is a rhetorical level above the logical and dialogical level, from which analyzing arguments is much more complex than simply evaluating the fulfilment of certain dialectical norms (Jacobs, 2006).

For that reason, Jacobs is sensitive to the possibility that, when someone presents an argument that could be evaluated as a fallacy, the underlying strategic message of that argument could, nevertheless, be a reasonable contribution to the dialogue. Some situations allow for the use of arguments that could be considered fallacies, and one of those situations is the response to a fallacy. This thought's rationale is that the counterpart already conveys a message through a fallacy. That message has produced an imbalance in his favour (the rhetorical effect), so, along with other rhetorical strategies, another fallacy is one of the ways to balance the situation. Therefore, it is legitimate to introduce a fallacy to "call and counterbalance the biases and defects in the argumentation of the counterpart" (2000, p. 278). An

apparently fallacious move could be considered legitimate as long as it plays a constructive role in the debate. In other words:

> Many of the rhetorical figures and tropes that have been traditionally viewed as dangerously volatile threats to reasoned deliberation can be seen as having constructive contributions to make in the right circumstances. They respond to the demand to find ways to place people in more open, critical, resolution-oriented frames of mind and to make the conditions for argumentation conducive to reasoned deliberation. (Jacobs, 2000, p. 281).

So, for Jacobs, using fallacies can be constructive and help the parties resolve the issue. But what are *the right circumstances?* He doesn't clarify it. In fact, he never uses the term "counter-fallacy", a denomination introduced by van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2007).

Therefore, while thinking Jacobs is correct, I believe his proposal is too general. Thus, I want to present two possible uses of a counter-fallacy to contribute to a dialogue. The first one is using a counter-fallacy with a metadialogical function; the second is using a counter-fallacy as a *sanction.*

A counter-fallacy with a metadialogical function is an argumentative move that, through a seemingly fallacious move, serves the purpose of pointing out the fact that a fallacy has been committed. For instance, consider the following example:

3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants; you just want the advantages of cheap workers."
4. Jake: "Here we go again with personal attacks. You don't really have arguments, your only move is to offend others, what a shame!"

While (4) could be considered a fallacy (*ad hominem*[5]) for some normative approaches like Pragma-Dialectics, it could also be considered a contribution to the dialogue. By pointing out that Anna usually makes personal attacks, Jake is bringing attention to the shape of the dialogue. In such a sense, the move is similar to a metadialogue and more contentious than strategic manoeuvring. In that way, it could re-balance a discussion that, otherwise, would be rhetorically inclined in favour of Anna.

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[5] It could be argued that this is not a fallacy, because the context allows it, but the fact that the context allows it is precisely Jacobs's point. The problem is that, in order to designate something a "fallacy" I need to do it from a normative standard that considers such a move as a wrong one. Therefore, I think that Jacobs text's is ambiguous at this point because the world "fallacy" that designates an erroneous move, is only erroneous from the standpoint of the dialectical theories that he criticizes, but not from normative pragmatics. However, for the sake of clarity, I will keep using the term "counter-fallacy" for these kinds of moves.

The second use of a counter-fallacy as a contribution to the dialogue is to use it as a *sanction* against a party that is being unfair. A fair argumentative strategy implies being "balanced, transparent, and tolerant" (van Laar & Krabbe, 2016 p. 331), so by committing fallacies, one of the parties might act unfairly towards the other. A counter-fallacy could function as a sanction to make the counterpart abandon or at least limit the subsequent use of fallacies. Consider the following example:

    3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants, you just want the advantages of cheap workers."

    4. Jake: "Anna, if you keep making those kinds of attacks, I will stop discussing with you."

In this case, (4) could be seen as an *ad baculum* attack, a way of exerting pressure without referring to the argument. However, if we consider (3) to be unfair, then (4) could be an excellent way to ask the counterpart to avoid using fallacies (van Laar & Krabbe, 2016).

However, the reasonable use of counter-fallacies must be distinguished from its unreasonable use. Consider the following example:

    3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants, you just want the advantages of cheap workers."

    4. Jake: "And you are just a fascist who wants to incarcerate foreigners!"

Unlike the examples presented before, (4) is not contributing to the discussion. A *tu quoque* fallacy brings a new line of argumentation (is Anna a fascist?) and further complicates things. Moreover, it escalates the conflict towards an eristic dialogue. Therefore, this use of counter-fallacies should be avoided because, as in a boxing match, even the winner will get hurt (van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2007).

The main advantages of legitimate counter-fallacies are the following: first, they are very natural; this is how people usually argue. Second, they can balance an unfair rhetorical situation because of the initial fallacy. Third, they can help the parties re-consider how they are conducting the dialogue and help them resolve their disagreement.

But counter, fallacies could also have disadvantages. First, we might stretch the norms of a reasonable dialogue too much. If we allow the use of fallacies, then do we still have norms for reasonably resolving our disagreements? Are these just exceptions? Another problem with counter-fallacies is that they can stimulate the escalation of the conflict. In other words, "It's clear that threats provoke threats and reasonable considerations stimulate others to offer themselves some reasonable ideas" (van Laar & Krabbe, 2016). Therefore, the counter-fallacy could be answered with another one and so on. This might be problematic when facing a disagreement about the argument's quality: i.e. the fact that a fallacy has been committed. If the proponent doesn't believe her argument was fallacious, the counter-fallacy will appear as a direct attack.

However, I think that at least in the two cases mentioned (counter-fallacies with a metadialogical effect and counter-fallacies as a sanction), its use should be considered a reasonable move. And the main reason to say that is that they can counter the rhetorical effects of the fallacy.

4 How Should We Respond to a Fallacy, Then?

I've reviewed five different answers to fallacies, but how do you make sense of them? In other words, how should we respond to a fallacy when it is presented? The circumstances of the dialogue will imply that, sometimes, it is best to ignore a fallacy, sometimes it would be better to end the dialogue, and on other occasions, we should manoeuvre strategically or use a metadialogue. To make a well-considered choice, some principled guidelines would come in handy. The criteria I want to develop depends on two factors: the level of *adversariality* and the *relevance of the epistemic goal*.

4.1 Fallacies and Adversariality

Adversariality has become a *trendy topic* among argumentation scholars during the last few years (Casey, 2020). The main question about adversariality is whether arguing is an adversarial enterprise or a cooperative one. In other words, does argumentation resemble more war or a brainstorming session? (Cohen, 1995).

This question is relevant to the topic of this paper. If argumentation resembles a war where parties want to defeat each other, it makes sense for them to use fallacies. And if they realize that the counterpart is using fallacies, it makes sense not to forgive them or let them get away with it. But suppose argumentation is a cooperative enterprise that resembles a brainstorming session. In that case, it doesn't make sense to use fallacies, and if one of the parties (maybe inadvertently) uses them, it could make sense to forgive the misstep. So, what is argumentation about? Competition or collaboration?

I will use Govier's (1999) framework to answer this question. According to her, argumentation is always adversarial in some way. The fact that a party is defending P while her counterpart is doubting it implies that they compete on who's right about P. She calls that principle "minimal adversariality", and it implies that "people occupy roles that set them against one another, as adversaries or opponents." (1999, p. 242).

But besides minimal, there is another kind of adversariality that she calls "ancillary" and could be defined as "lack of respect, rudeness, lack of empathy, name-calling, animosity, hostility, failure to listen and attend carefully, misinterpretation, inefficiency, dogmatism, intolerance, irritability, quarrelsomeness, and so forth" (1999, p. 245). This kind of adversariality appears as a personal opposition rather than a mere opposition concerning a subject. I consider these two types of adversariality as a sort of continuum. It is not that the parties are minimally or ancillary adversarial; they could also be adversarial at some intermediate level. Also, a dialogue that starts closer to one of the poles can approach the other under certain

conditions. To simplify things, I will say that one of the poles is "cooperation" and the other is "adversariality". Cooperative parties are inclined toward finding a solution to a disagreement, while adversarial parties are more inclined to get an advantage by any necessary means.

When a party uses a fallacy, the apparent level of cooperation or adversariality should indicate the proper response. I say "apparent" because that's what the opponent can know; they can't know the exact level of cooperation, but only what it seems. So it might be that their judgement was wrong in the end, which could lead to mistakes regarding the proper response to a fallacy. We should expect that the party using a fallacy in more cooperative dialogues would be more willing to retract or revise her fallacy than in a more adversarial one. For instance, in the section above, we saw that one of the possible answers to a fallacy is to use a metadialogue. If a metadialogue is used, the fallacy-monger can either retract their argument or insist that their contribution was not fallacious. A more cooperative party should be more willing to retract her fallacy than an adversarial party. So, while using a metadialogue seems like a good idea for cooperative dialogues, it is not so much for adversarial ones.

4.2 Fallacies and Epistemic Goals

Jacobs (2003) claims that argumentation serves two main functions: a cognitive or epistemic function and a social one. This distinction is also helpful in answering the central question of this paper. The cognitive or epistemic function implies an individual effort for *belief* management (that is, it helps us answer the question: "what should *I* believe?"[6]). Therefore, according to this goal, the parties aim to reach epistemically correct conclusions as close as possible to what they consider *the case regarding an issue*. The social function implies a quest for *disagreement* management (that is, it helps us answer the question: "what should *we* do about it"). Accordingly, the parties aim to resolve or settle disagreements and maintain a good relationship.

When parties argue, sometimes they mostly want to arrive at an epistemically "correct" answer, even if that implies sacrificing an agreement or their relationship. At the same time, sometimes, they are not so worried about their epistemic goal, so they want to leave the matter behind, even if that implies arriving at what they consider an epistemically incorrect answer.

For example, suppose Laura and Emma get lost while hiking in the woods and disagree over the way home. In that case, they must arrive at an epistemically correct answer (imagine it's getting dark and they are not carrying a tent). If Laura is entirely sure about which one is the right path, she should try to persuade Emma by every possible means. If that doesn't work, she should

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6 While it could appear confusing, the term "epistemic" may include normative disagreements or disagreements about values. That is, the "epistemic goal" implies that one of the parties might claim that "something is the case" but that "something" could be "abortion is a crime" or "tax heavens should be banned". Therefore, by "cognitive" or "epistemic" I do not mean (and I think neither Jacobs does) that a party claims to know, in a strong sense, that something is the case, only to believe that something is or should be the case. Therefore, this cognitive attitude regarding an issue is what matters. Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out this problem.

be willing to look for other kinds of settlement rather than saying: "Ok, Emma, whatever you say, we will take your path". In other words, Laura should put *truth* over *agreement.*

On the other hand, if Gina and John disagree on which restaurant to pick for tonight's dinner, then it should be more important for them to agree on *any* restaurant than to go to *the best* restaurant in town. Therefore, it makes sense for John to say something like: "Ok, Gina, we will go to the restaurant you picked, even considering that I don't like it". In other words, John should put agreement over truth.

This is relevant when facing fallacious partners. If the opponent is mainly worried about epistemic goals, she should react to a fallacy in an epistemically proper way. Since fallacies are unable to justify a correct conclusion, the proper response should be to ask for the retraction of the fallacy (even risking an escalation of the conflict) or to use a counter-fallacy if there's no other choice. But suppose the opponent doesn't care about the epistemic goal. In that case, she should be willing to forgive the use of a fallacy, even assuming that it will be epistemically wrong, or end the dialogue, even assuming that the issue will remain unresolved.

4.3 Matrix of Dialogues

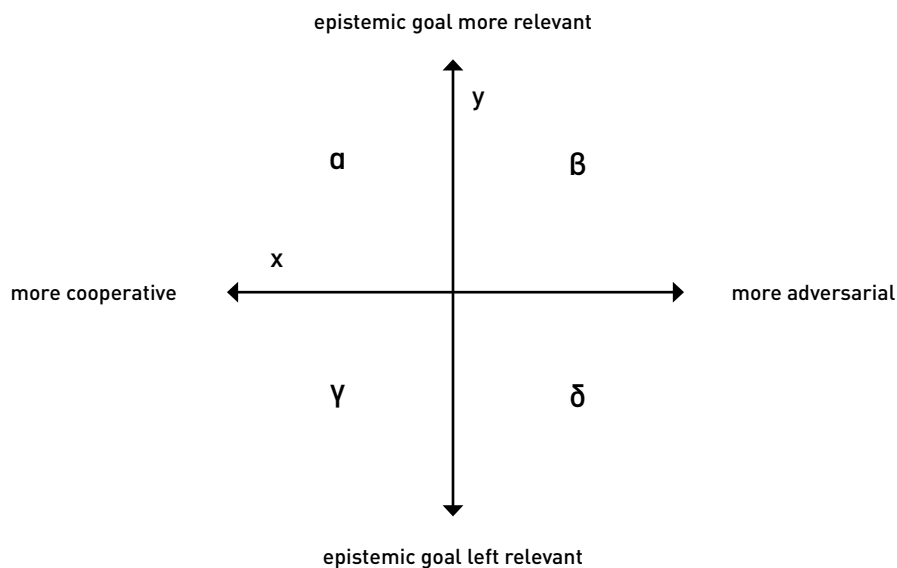The two criteria described above generate the following matrix:

Fig 2. Matrix of adversariality and goals of argumentation

The *x*-axis represents a continuum between more cooperative and more adversarial dialogues. On the extreme left, we will find dialogues with minimal adversariality, where the parties are respectful, comprehensive, and emphatic. On the extreme right, the parties are more adversarial, so they will try to win the argument by all means, including personal attacks, irony, aggressivity and lack of empathy. Finally, in the middle, we will find dialogues that are *in-between* adversariality and cooperation.

The *y*-axis represents the relevance the parties give to their epistemic goal. Therefore, on the upper side of the matrix, we will find dialogues in which the parties try to arrive at the proper conclusion given the arguments presented. Therefore, they are not flexible and will not forgive the use of a fallacy from their counterpart. On the lower side, we will find dialogues in which the parties are not so worried about their epistemic goals. Therefore, they will try to agree or end the discussion, even if that is not epistemically satisfying.

The four quadrants represent the possible combinations of these criteria. Therefore, in the "α" quadrant, we will find dialogues in which the parties are worried about their epistemic goal and cooperate. For example, we can find scientific or academic debates in this quadrant. In the "β" quadrant, the parties value their epistemic goal but have high adversariality towards each other. Ideologic, religious, or heated political disagreements can usually be found in this quadrant. The "γ" quadrant represents dialogues where the parties are cooperative but are not worried about their epistemic goal. Domestic bargainings are usually found in this quadrant. In the "δ" quadrant, we will find dialogues in which the parties are not so worried about their epistemic goal but are very adversarial towards each other. Domestic or personal quarrels can be found in this quadrant. Finally, in the middle of the matrix, we will find dialogues *between* both criteria. Political disagreements tend to be in the middle.

4.4 Five Answers, one matrix

The matrix can be the basis for developing a heuristic guide. The circumstances of a given dialogue can be many, and an adequate response should be adapted to them. However, the matrix can help the parties find an adequate answer when a fallacy is presented. Therefore, if (according to the opponent) a dialogue happens in the "α" quadrant, the most appropriate answer seems to be a metadialogue. If it happens in the "β" quadrant, it would be helpful to respond with a counter-fallacy. When it happens in the "γ" quadrant, the matrix suggests ignoring the fallacy. If it occurs in the "δ" quadrant, ending the dialogue seems like a proper answer. Finally, if the dialogue is close to the middle of the matrix, strategic manoeuvring appears like a rational choice.

A metadialogue is most useful in the "α" quadrant since the opponent is worried about the epistemic outcome of the argument, so she cannot ignore the fallacy. And since the relationship between the parties is cooperative enough, they don't have to worry about an escalation of the disagreement. Therefore, they are in a position where they can fully compensate for the dialectical effects of the fallacy. And since the dialogue is cooperative, the counterpart doesn't intend to produce relevant rhetorical effects (the fallacy was, probably, just a mistake).

A counter-fallacy seems like an excellent response to a fallacy that occurs in a dialogue in the "β" quadrant. A metadialogue is unadvised because, since the dialogue is adversarial, the counterpart will probably not accept that they committed a fallacy. Strategic manoeuvring might have the same problem. As for ignoring the fallacy or ending the dialogue, those solutions are useless because the opponent is worried about their epistemic goal. Therefore, it seems adequate

to use a counter-fallacy. If it works, she should be able to compensate for some of the rhetorical effects of the fallacy while ignoring its dialectical effects. The problem, of course, is that the disagreement might escalate, which is problematic when the parties value their epistemic goal. However, according to Jacobs (2006), it is a risk worth trying because it could help the parties better understand the situation. Besides, other solutions don't seem much better.

Ignoring the fallacy is a good idea for a dialogue in the "γ" quadrant. Since the epistemic goal is irrelevant to the opponent, it doesn't make sense to make a big deal about the fallacy. And since the parties are cooperative, there's no reason to use the occurrence of the fallacy as a way to score points. In this case, the dialectical effects of the fallacy are ignored, and the rhetorical effects are irrelevant.

If the dialogue is in the "δ" quadrant, it seems best to end the discussion. For the opponent, the epistemic goal is not so relevant. But since the disagreement is adversarial, they shouldn't allow the counterpart to get away with it, so it makes sense to end the discussion altogether. This will partially discharge the dialectical effect of the fallacy ("this is a fallacy, but I don't even have to explain why") while at the same time compensating for the rhetorical effects ("my counterpart isn't serious enough, it doesn't make sense to keep arguing").

Finally, if the dialogue is closer to the centre of the matrix, then strategic manoeuvring seems like a good idea. On the one hand, it does take the dialectical effect of the fallacy into account. Still, it doesn't make its discharge too explicit to avoid escalation of disagreement or a never-ending meta-argument. On the other hand, it also considers the rhetorical effects without the aggressivity of a counter-fallacy or the problems associated with ending the dialogue.

These are some ideas for developing motivated guidelines for arguers confronted with an interlocutor who committed a fallacy. I present these guidelines here, expecting that future research will allow us to refine further and qualify them.

5. Some Examples
In this section, I will present some examples of applying the matrix described in the previous section.

> Example 3: Antiviral drugs
> At an academic colloquium, Maria, a biologist, presents her research on antiviral drugs. During the Q&A section at the end, the following dialogue with her colleague Mike ensues:
> 3. Mike: "Thanks, that was an excellent presentation, professor. However, I have a minor observation. You say drug D does not produce the side effect E that other drugs produce, and you support that position by saying that no such effect has been found in a study that included only 30 persons. That reminds me of what I learned about the argumentum ad ignorantiam! Your experiments only prove that effect E is unlikely, not that it won't happen at all.

4. Maria: "Thanks for your comments, professor. Indeed, that is correct. It does not follow. We can only conclude that it is unlikely that drug D will produce the side effect E.".

In his intervention, Mike accuses Maria of using an ad ignorantiam fallacy. From the absence of evidence on the side effects of drug E, you cannot conclude that drug D does not produce such side effects. In move (1), Mike uses a metadialogue to call out the fallacy, saying that the conclusion doesn't follow the premises presented. Finally, in the move (2), Maria complies, accepting that she used a fallacy and retracting her conclusion.

This is an example of a dialogue in which there is cooperation rather than adversariality, and the parties care about their epistemic goals. Therefore, it is a dialogue that happens in the "α" quadrant, and a metadialogue seems like a good idea.

> Example 4: Comeback to Margaret Thatcher
> Let's go back to example 1, "Margaret Thatcher", and imagine that Simon Hughes had a chance to answer:
> 2. MT: "People on all levels of income are better off than they were in 1979. The hon. Gentleman is saying that he would rather that the poor were poorer, provided that the rich were less rich. That way, one will never create the wealth for better social services, as we have."
> 3. S.H.: "The Prime Minister is unable to discuss problems on their own terms. Instead of trying to argue, she usually prefers to distort and offend others. That way, we will never have a proper discussion to resolve the problems that people face each day."

As we saw before, move (2) is a straw man fallacy. But move (3) is a personal attack and, as such, a counter-fallacy.

This dialogue is adversarial as often (but not always) happens in politics. Also, the parties consider their epistemic goals relevant. Therefore, the dialogue is in the "β" quadrant, so, according to the previous section, a counter-fallacy is adequate and may even be helpful to bring Thatcher back to a more reasonable exchange on the issue at hand.

> Example 5: Dinner Plans
> Gina and John are planning to go to dinner together:
> 1. Gina: "We should go to Chez Martin."
> 2. John: "I'm not so sure; why should we?"
> 3. Gina: "Because it is the best restaurant in town."
> 4. John: "Why is it the best restaurant in town?"
> 5. Gina: "Because it is the best restaurant in town!"
> 6. John: "Ha, ha. Ok, let's go there."

Move (5) is a clear example of circular reasoning or *petitio principi*. Gina doesn't provide any reason to back her conclusion in argument (3) other than repeating the conclusion itself. However, John ignores the fallacy in argument (6), even taking it as a joke.

But John seems to have a good appreciation of the situation. The dialogue seems more collaborative than adversarial, and he's not worried about accepting a conclusion that doesn't follow the premises presented. Therefore, the dialogue is in the "γ" quadrant, and it makes sense to ignore the fallacy.

> Example 6: domestic quarrel
> Maria and Peter are a couple having a discussion:
> 1. Maria: "I think the way you treated my friend Rosa yesterday was inappropriate."
> 2. Peter: "I didn't treat her worse than the way you treat my friends, but you don't see me complaining."
> 3. Maria: "Sorry, but I'm not going to argue with you on those terms."

Move (2) is an ad hominem attack of the *tu quoque* variant. But Maria decides to abandon the discussion, which seems like a good idea. The dialogue was too adversarial, and she wasn't so worried about her epistemic goal to insist. Therefore, the dialogue is in the "δ" quadrant, and it makes sense to end the discussion.

> Example 2: Immigration
> Anna and Jake are senators from opposite parties arguing about illegal immigration at a T.V. show. They have the subsequent dialogue:
> 1. Anna: "For me, the solution is simple. If people are living and working in our country without the proper documentation, they are not supposed to be here. All we can do is deport them."
> 2. Jake: "Well, it is not so simple, illegal immigrants are a very important part of our economy, we can't afford to lose them. Besides, many of them have been here for decades, they don't have anywhere to go. The only solution is to regularize their situation if they meet some conditions."
> 3. Anna: "You only say so because your family owns a company that employs many illegal immigrants, you just want the advantages of cheap workers."
> 4. Jake: "Sorry, I don't get it. Please clarify in which way that situation affects my main argument on illegal immigration".
> 5. Anna: "I'm saying that your opinion is biased because of your family situation. Without it, you would probably think like me."

Our well-known example 2 seems like a case where strategic manoeuvring is a good idea. In move (3), María has produced an ad hominem fallacy that has been responded to in move

(4) by a move that asks Maria to reformulate the presentational device. Maria complies and reformulates her argument in a nonfallacious way in the move (5).

The dialogue was adversarial, but not so much (people don't always want to appear as too adversarial in front of the T.V.). And the epistemic goal matters to the parties, but since they are not deciding at that moment, it doesn't matter so much. Therefore, strategic manoeuvring is a good idea considering that the dialogue is close to the centre of the matrix.

6. Conclusion

Dialectical theories of argumentation are, more than anything, a normative endeavour. Therefore, they need to provide guidelines on how we *should* argue if we want to have a reasonable exchange. That being the case, distinguishing between good and flawed argumentation is of utmost importance. However, taking contextual specifics into account always complicates things because there are just too many things happening in a given dialogue to take everything into account. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a clear and distinct method to sort good from bad arguments: all we can strive for is to develop heuristic guidelines that are often accurate but never devoid of exceptions.

The above is based on my interpretation of dialectical theories of fallacies, such as the ones developed by Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004), Walton (1995), and Woods (2004). But while these theories go into great detail to formulate rules and guidelines to distinguish sound arguments from fallacies that should serve the proponent of an argument to argue reasonably, not enough effort has been given to clarifying the opponent's role when facing a fallacy. I've intended to cover that gap in this paper by providing such heuristic guidelines.

The meaning and scope of the two criteria provided could still be fine-tuned, but they provide enough support to cover the abovementioned gap. Ultimately, the goal of these principles (and, I think, of argumentation theory in general) is to shed light on the best way to overcome or resolve disagreements through exchanging reasons. The level of adversariality is essential to an assessment of the situation that the parties need to make when they intend to argue. It is a strategic concern that fits into rhetorical theories of argumentation. I claim that these kinds of concerns are always necessary because "rhetorical strategy is unavoidable in argumentative discourse" (Jacobs, 2006, p. 422). The second criterion, the relevance of the epistemic goal, arises from the fact that, while truth and knowledge are important drivers of argumentation processes, they are not the only ones. Argumentation and even reasoning, more generally, are ultimately tools for social interaction (Mercier & Sperber, 2011). Consequently, social concerns could frequently overrule epistemic ones, just as our ancestors presumably preferred sometimes to go along with the chief of the tribe, even knowing that he was making a wrong decision.

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