Practical reasoning in argumentative polylogues

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RESUMEN

Este artículo examina las relaciones entre el esquema argumentativo correspondiente al razonamiento práctico y la argumentación colectiva entendida como "polílogo argumentativo". Estudiamos primero la premisa causal del razonamiento ("Hagamos X, *porque X dará como resultado Y*, e Y es deseable") que típicamente se interpreta en el sentido de que X es el medio necesario o bien suficiente de alcanzar Y. Aquí se opta por una tercera interpretación: X sería un medio "conducente", ni necesario, ni suficiente, pero aún así recomendable. Después se examina la noción de "el mejor medio". Suponiendo que las distintas partes que argumentan van a defender medios alternativos, tendremos una deliberación colectiva en la que se debaten diversas propuestas. La deliberación colectiva puede entenderse como un caso particular de "polílogo argumentativo" en el que se examinan críticamente posibles propuestas de acción diversas y opuestas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Argumentación, deliberación, polílogo, razonamiento práctico.

ABSTRACT

In this paper I investigate the relationship between the argument scheme of practical reasoning and multi-party argumentation defined here as an argumentative polylogue. I first focus on the causal premise ("Let us do X, *because X leads to Y*, and Y is desirable") typically taken to signify X as either a necessary or a sufficient means to reach Y. I investigate a third option – a "conducive" means, which is neither necessary nor sufficient, but still worth taking. Second, I consider the notion of "the best means". Assuming that alternative means/options are advocated by different parties to argumentation, we end up with a multi-party deliberation where different contrary alternatives are debated. Multi-party deliberation can on the basis of this be understood as a special case of argumentative polylogue in which proposals for various contrary courses of action are critically examined.

KEYWORDS: Argumentation, deliberation, polylogue, practical reasoning.

1. INTRODUCTION

Faced with the problem of what to do, we can simply decide that we should "do the right thing", as in Spike Lee's famous 1989 film *Do the right thing*. But this is a decision vague enough to produce nothing but an unmistakably ironic effect. In philosophy, the decision on what the right course of action should be is typically treated as the conclusion of *practical reasoning* – a form of reasoning that starts from the goals a reasoner has and ends with choosing "the right" means to achieve these goals. More precisely, it is in the case of *instrumental* practical reasoning, where the decision of what to do amounts to deciding which means to take, given the reasoner's goal.

In this paper, I will take the perspective of argumentation theory to investigate this central concern of human decision-making: How to arrive at *the best means* to reach our goals? To this end, I will first present the basic scheme of practical reasoning (PR) as examined by philosophers, notably Broome and Searle. I will then move to an externalist, argumentative account of PR, which offers a more complex scheme of what can be called instead *practical argumentation* (PA), typically associated with the argumentative activity of *deliberation*. I will argue for the latter approach, noticing though that it requires a more complex model of argumentation than a simple dyadic dialogue advocated in dialectical models. I will sketch the basics of such a model – what I call an *argumentative polylogue*.
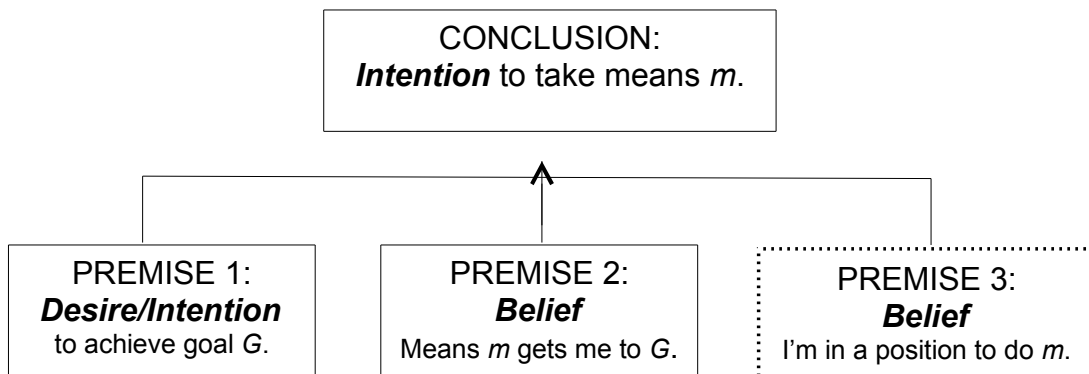
2. BASIC SCHEME OF PRACTICAL REASONING

John Broome has recently proposed an account of practical reasoning that can be seen as fairly representative in philosophy (Broome, 2002, 2013; see also Audi, 2006; Bratman, 1999/1987; Hitchcock, 2002; Searle, 2001; Walton, 2006, 2007). Naturally, various important details differ and are hotly debated in practical philosophy, but the basic scheme remains rather constant. According to Broome, "[f]ully spelt out and made explicit, correct [practical] reasoning" can be exemplified in the following way:

> 'I shall visit Venice.   [*Intention* to achieve an end; in other accounts: *Desire*]
> My buying a ticket to Venice is *a means implied by* my visiting Venice.   [*Belief*]
> My buying a ticket is up to me.   [*Belief*]
> So I shall buy a ticket.'   [*Intention* to act in a particular way on the basis of reasoning]

> (Broome, 2013, p. 260; emphasis and explanation of propositional attitudes added)

Thus, the basic scheme of PR can be laid out as follows:

Figure 1: The basic scheme of practical reasoning

In the schematic representation in Figure 1, I put premise 3 in a dashed box, as it represents one of the *additional* assumptions needed for the reasoning to work.[1] Nonetheless, the model renders quite well what the instrumental PR is about.

Now, it is not hard to realize that crucial in this type of reasoning is the belief that some means is "the right means" to achieve the goal (Premise 2). In Broome's "paradigmatic" formulation, the right means is "a means implied by" the goal of the reasoner: "When I say that *a* is a means implied by *b*, I mean that, were *a* not so, because of that *b* would not be so" (2013, p. 160). This seems like a straightforward statement of a *necessary* condition: *a* is a *sine qua non* means to an end *b.* Indeed, in an earlier study, Broome's formulation was very clear:

> I am going to buy a boat.   (1a)
> and
> For me to buy a boat, *a necessary means* is to borrow money.   (1b)
> so
> I shall borrow money.   (1c)
>
> (Broome, 2002, p. 86, emphasis added)

This is also evident in the Kantian provenance of this type of reasoning, to which Broome explicitly refers:

> Who wills the end, wills (so far as reason has a decisive influence on his actions) also the *means which are indispensably necessary* and in his power.
> (Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 80-81; cited in Broome, 2013, p. 159; emphasis added)

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[1] As discussed, among others, by Aakhus (2006), Kauffeld (1998), Vega & Olmos (2007), and Walton (2007), there are more such assumptions involved in the scheme of practical reasoning and the related speech act of proposing a course of action (e.g., that means m will not occur as a matter of course) – it is therefore not immediately clear why this particular structure is "fully spelt out" according to Broome.

However, according to Broome, his condition (a means *implied by* the end) is weaker than Kant's "indispensably necessary" means. He illustrates that with the following example:

I intend to get milk.	[end]
I can buy it from a shop.	[means #1]
I can "find a cow in a field at night, and milk her."	[means #2]

(Broome, 2013, p. 160)

In such cases, while "you recognize more than one way to achieve your end" and therefore "you do not believe that buying milk from a shop is an indispensably necessary means of getting milk", all the same milking a cow at night "would be such a bad means you will give it no attention" (Broome, 2013, p. 160); simply, "you do not believe you have a real choice of means at all" (Broome, 2013, p. 262). Nevertheless, even if "Kant's formula does not apply to" such cases (Broome, 2013, p. 160), some form of necessity operates here. Let me tentatively distinguish between 3 levels of necessity in instrumental reasoning:

a) *conceptual (analytic) necessity* (or at least a priori synthetic) determined by the very meaning of the formulated end: "If I want to prepare a toast, then I need to find some bread." "If I want to climb the Eiffel Tower, then I need to go to Paris."

b) *de iure necessity* determined by some legal regulations, which may vary across countries/regions: "If I want to start a PhD, then I need to complete my MA degree." (But in some countries having a BA is enough.) "If I want to marry another woman, I need to divorce my current wife." (But in legal systems where polygamy is allowed, this does not apply.)

c) *practical necessity* determined by contextual factors: The milk case works well in highly developed urban communities, but in some remote agricultural communities, going to a shop would be a means so bad that *it* needed no attention vis-à-vis milking a cow.

What is common across these levels is that necessity – by definition – does not give you a choice; you should simply do what is necessary. Of course, the whole problem for a reasoner might be precisely to establish the nature of the means – is it really necessary or not? If so, necessity of which kind are we facing? Most likely, however, the means will not be necessary. Broome admits that even though reasoning from

necessary means is a case of "paradigmatic instrumental reasoning" (2013, p. 261):

> We rarely have the opportunity to engage in reasoning just like that. It is available only when we believe some particular means is necessary to an end of ours, and we rarely encounter a means that we believe to be strictly necessary. Normally we recognize several alternative ways of achieving each of our ends. How does practical reasoning work then? (2002, p. 97).[2]

Quite obviously, "when you believe you have a choice among alternative means to an end, you do not believe any particular of them is implied by the end" (2013, p. 170, 261).

Alternative means – that is, alternative conclusions of PR – are a disjunction of options {*m*, *n*, *o*,…, *z*} which represent the means to reach a goal *G*. (More precisely, since the means are often contrary and thus mutually exclusive, we can speak here of an exclusive disjunction.) The only necessity here is that of doing something (in all cases where the means will not bring itself about without my intervention). Therefore, "rationality requires you, if you intend the end and you believe the truth of the disjunction is up to you, to intend the disjunction" (Broome, 2013, p. 169). Besides that, and very importantly, "it seems intuitively that you must be required to choose what you believe is *the best of the alternative means*" (Broome, 2013, pp. 169-170; emphasis added).[3] Easier said than done, it seems – precisely because Broome is "not sure how to specify the notion of *best means.*" For this reason, he is "shelving this problem" (2013, p. 262).[4] Broome thus suggests the following formulation regarding the choice of the best means (2013, p. 262):

> "N believes at some time that *m* is the best means implied by *e.*"

One has to note, however, that facing a set of alternatives means precisely that no single alternative is implied by (necessary to reach) end *e* (see above). Broome, then, might have thought of something like:

> N believes at some time that *m* is the best means out of a *set* of alternatives (disjunction of means) *implied by e.*

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[2] For similar reasons, Searle flat-out rejects reasoning from necessary means as a general pattern of PR: "If you think about this pattern in terms of real life examples it seems quite out of the question as a general account of practical reason. In general there are lots of means, many of them ridiculous, to achieve any end; and in the rare case where there is only one means, it may be so absurd as to be out of the question altogether." (2001, pp. 244-245).

[3] "Generally when you have a desire, intention, or goal you seek not just *any* means; nor do you search for the *only* means; you seek the *best* means (as Aristotle says you seek the 'best or easiest' means)." (Searle, 2001, p. 246). See Byron, 1998, 2004.

[4] He thus hasn't progressed much from a paper written a decade before, which finishes with the idea that one should take "the best means": "I am sorry to say that is now the best I can do. I can point out what seems intuitively correct, but I have run out of arguments" in specifying what the best means are (Broome, 2002, p. 108).

By no means does this solve the problem. It is useful, though, to realize that the alternatives Broome discusses are *sufficient means* to reach end *e*: if you do *m* or *n* or *o*, you get to *e*. But is it really the case?

Let us go back to the Venice case. First, "buying a ticket" does not seem to be a *necessary* means, even practically speaking. Depending on circumstances, I can alternatively just drive my own car, hitch-hike, go to a carpooling website, call a friend who drives there every week with his truck, etc. Second, "buying a ticket" would typically also not count as a *sufficient* condition. Even having a ticket in my hands, I would additionally need to take some days off at work, or at least co-ordinate it with my colleagues / family / friends, book a hotel, or at least call an old auntie who has a flat there, prepare funds for the trip, etc. Buying a ticket is therefore, in a strict sense, neither a necessary nor sufficient action to take if visiting Venice is my goal. All the same, (in most ordinary circumstances) it strikes us as the presumably right means that will do the job, that is, will get me closer towards visiting Venice.

Another example of what seems to be reasonable reasoning to neither necessary nor sufficient means is given by Fairclough & Fairclough (2012, p. 64):

> I want to learn Italian.
> Therefore, I will enrol on an Italian language course.

What is the unexpressed premise here? Clearly, my enrolling on a language course is neither *necessary* (I can instead follow a CD course, read Petrarca, or find an Italian girlfriend) nor *sufficient* (I need much more than just to enrol) to learn Italian to a satisfactory level. Acknowledging this third option in our instrumental reasoning, I will speak of *conducive* means – they take us (satisfactorily far enough?) in the direction of the goal and are thus presumably reasonable. Such conducive means would typically have to be considered against a disjunction of contrary alternatives (because they are not necessary) and would need to be implemented in conjunction with other means (because they are not in themselves sufficient).

Finally, the question remains of how to choose between *the best means* – a problem that applies to both sufficient and conducive means (but, obviously, not to necessary means). To start with, it is worth noting that the very notion of "the best" implies that the set of alternative courses of action is larger than two (for two, one would rather say "this one's *better*" rather than "*the best* means"). To deal with such cases, I will move to the more complex argumentation account of practical reasoning.

R I A

3. EXTENDED STRUCTURE OF PRACTICAL ARGUMENTATION: THE DIALECTICAL TESTING OF MEANS IN DELIBERATION

Ever since Aristotle, it has been recognized that practical reasoning can be a chief part of either individual (as in *Nicomachean Ethics*) or collective (as in *Rhetoric*) deliberation. Moral philosophers are "naturally" inclined towards the former, political philosophers towards the latter account. A similar line can be drawn between philosophers of reasoning (incl. Broome) and philosophers of argumentation.[5] The former, as was made clear in the previous section, examine primarily reasoning of an individual agent dealing with an individual issue by acting on individual beliefs, desires and intentions (it's her trip to Venice, her boat to buy, and her milk to drink). This creates certain limitations that Hitchcock (2002) characterized as those of a "solipsistic, egoistic and unsocial" perspective. Referring to Pollock's account of PR where the basic scheme of Beliefs, Desires and Intentions is supplemented by a reasoning agent's *Likings*, Hitchcock describes it as solipsistic, since "there is no provision for verbal input from, or verbal output to, other autonomous rational agents, still less for back-and-forth discussion, whether argumentative or non-argumentative" (2002, p. 254). Further, "it is egoistic, in that the function of the entire system is to make the world more to the liking of that system itself" (2002, p. 254). As a result, "nothing […] permits rational criticism" (2002, p. 255) of an agent's hierarchy of desires and likings. Finally, the "model is unsocial, in that his [Pollock's] rational agent does not (and cannot) belong to any groups of autonomous rational agents with governance structures for making decisions about the actions of the group" (2002, p. 255). As Hitchcock concludes, "[a] comprehensive theory of good practical reasoning would have to remedy all three of these lacks" (2002, p. 255).

Such a theory would have to allow for collective agents (the social aspect) to confront collective issues on the basis of collective values and goals (the non-egoistic aspect) through verbal exchanges in which argument and criticism have place (the non-solipsistic aspect). As convincingly argued by Vega & Olmos (2007), such an argumentative theory of PR (or better: of deliberation in which practical arguments are traded and tested) involves a number of additional considerations to which an

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[5] A very clear formulation of the difference it involves is given by Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca: "[…] inward deliberation […] appears to be constructed on the model of deliberation with others. Hence, we must expect to find carried over to this inner deliberation most of the problems associated with the conditions necessary for discussion with others. […] Accordingly, from our point of view, it is by analyzing argumentation addressed to others that we can best understand self-deliberation, and not vice versa" (1969/1958, pp. 14, 41). Note that, according to Dascal, Aristotle himself might have been deliberately vague on this point, using the same term – deliberation – to both private and collective practical reason, thus highlighting "a deep analogy between his conceptions of the two domains" (2005, p. 52).

individualistic theory is largely oblivious: the problem of other agents' individual beliefs, preferences and goals; of collective preferences and intentions; of information sharing, etc. Eventually:

> […] a successful deliberation might lead to an optimal and satisfactory result for the collectivity that is clearly sub-optimal or less than satisfactory for each of the participants – a result that would never be obtained if each participant would follow her own personal practical reason. Thus, once more, we see how such a 'reasonableness' cannot be reduced to a mere projection of the monologic and private rationality characteristic of the traditional practical syllogism.
> (Vega & Olmos, 2007, p. 5)

While acknowledging such complexities of collective practical argumentation, I will start from a simple, technical shift – namely, this of changing the "I*s*" in the scheme of PR to "We*s*". In this case, crucially, the conclusion of PR – "so *I* shall do *m*" – would be reformulated to "so let *us* do *m*".[6] This shifts the object of study away from *the propositional attitude of intention* to *the speech act of proposal*.[7] According to Aakhus, "[w]hen proposing, a speaker puts forward a future act that requires a joint performance by the speaker and hearer" (2006, p. 405) and, additionally, "the speaker frames the proposed actions as mutually beneficial" (2006, p. 404). In this way, proposing is a speech act through which the conclusion of practical argumentation is put forward for consideration in the argumentative activity of deliberation: "A proposer (P) puts forward the proposal in part to get agreement but also to test for doubts and objections […] that may in turn help P design a more acceptable proposal" (Aakhus, 2006, p. 406). Therefore, proposing belongs to this kind of illocutionary acts in which "speakers necessarily or typically incur probative burdens", that is, "a speaker cannot, other things being equal, responsibly dismiss an addressee's demands for proof" (Kauffeld, 1998, p. 247). What follows is that felicitous proposals concern actions which are: 1) communicated and open for discussion, thus surely not solipsistic; 2) mutually beneficial rather than purely egoistic; 3) jointly performed, and therefore social.
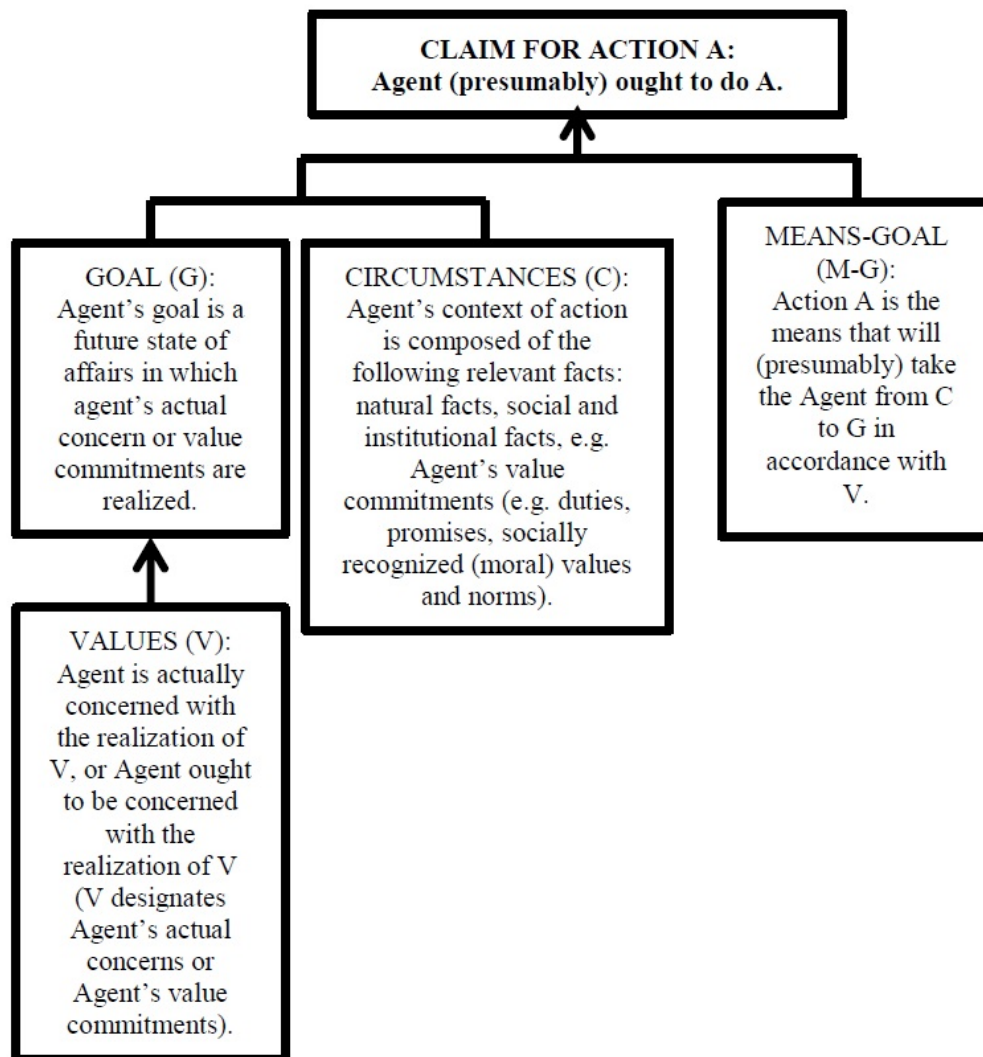
This pragmatic, and also dialectical (since it incorporates the critical testing of proposals through argumentation and counter-argumentation), approach seems to live up to all three of Hitchcock's requirements. It is also more consistent than the individualistic approach – after all, even in individual uses of reasoning-in-language, knowledge and values (next to the language itself) are shaped and (dis-)approved by

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[6] In Walton's formulation, the conclusion of PR in "multi-agent deliberation" is a "practical ought-statement": *We* ought to do it (2006, p. 204).

[7] Notice, though, that Broome, somewhat inconsistently, also speaks of speech acts which the reasoner performs to herself: "the speech-act you perform is the act of expressing an attitude of yours" (Broome, 2013, p. 253). As we know from the Speech Act Theory, speech acts do much more than just express (propositional) attitudes, such as intentions and desires. Most importantly, they are communicative, rather than purely mental, acts which therefore always involve at least two parties: the Speaker and the Hearer.

the society. Scholars who favour this pragmatic and dialectical approach, also expanded the scheme of practical argumentation (PA). In a recent monograph on the uses of practical argumentation in political deliberation, Fairclough & Fairclough (2012), proposed the following layout of the structure of PA:

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
                    │     CLAIM FOR ACTION A:          │
                    │ Agent (presumably) ought to do A.│
                    └─────────────────────────────────┘
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GOAL (G):	CIRCUMSTANCES (C):	MEANS-GOAL (M-G):
Agent's goal is a future state of affairs in which agent's actual concern or value commitments are realized.	Agent's context of action is composed of the following relevant facts: natural facts, social and institutional facts, e.g. Agent's value commitments (e.g. duties, promises, socially recognized (moral) values and norms).	Action A is the means that will (presumably) take the Agent from C to G in accordance with V.

VALUES (V):
Agent is actually concerned with the realization of V, or Agent ought to be concerned with the realization of V (V designates Agent's actual concerns or Agent's value commitments).

Figure 2: The extended structure of practical argumentation
(Note that despite formulating the scheme in terms of an individual *Agent* here, Fairclough & Fairclough clearly deal with collective PA in public deliberation. This includes cases of one agent arguing what some other agents "ought to do" given the circumstances, goal and values.)

In the remainder of the paper, I will focus on just one element of this scheme: the means-goal premise. This premise is crucial, for it links the exigency to be addressed (the *circumstances*) and the state of affairs to be reached (the *goal*) following the accepted *values*, with the *action to be taken* (the conclusion). In instrumental reasoning *sensu stricte*, this is what much ado is about: the other three premises (circumstances,

goals and values) should be held constant. So let's have a look at this premise.

As noted above, the fact that some action takes us to the goal is not in itself a reason enough to do it: milking a cow out in a field at night is not a rationally-preferred way of getting a glass of milk.[8] Broome, discussing such cases, refers to *teleology*: "the theory that, when faced with a choice, you should choose whichever alternative is the best" (2002, p. 104; see Byron, 1998, 2004). Then again, "the best" remains an empty signifier. Of course, under some circumstances, one can relatively easily get at the best solution, for instance applying the *ceteris paribus* assumption. This is clear in the strategy of *optimizing (maximizing)*: for instance, trying to find the cheapest flight from point A to B with different airlines offering similar levels of comfort and journey time. Another strategy is that of *satisficing* (Byron, 2004): defining a threshold and accepting any means that is above (or below) the threshold as good enough:[9]

> A. Which ticket shall we buy to get from Madrid to Lisbon?
>
> B. Let's buy TAP Portugal, because it's the cheapest (129 EUR).   [optimizing]
>
> C. Let's buy Iberia, because it's the first option we came across that is
> below our 150 EUR limit (149 EUR) – it's not "best" but "good enough".   [satisficing]

In the case of optimizing, we can speak chiefly of the internal efficiency of a means to a goal (as in the instrumental reasoning *sensu stricte*) or about its external goodness (*m* might be, e.g., a virtuous thing to do) or, most likely, of some complicated combination of the two (Broome, 2002; Byron, 1998). Indeed, the set of criteria for deciding on "the best means" (or "optimal action-option" as McBurney et al., 2007, call it) might be quite large:

> When possible courses of action are proposed, they may be evaluated on a large
> number of attributes, including their direct or indirect costs and benefits, their
> opportunity costs, their consequences, their practical feasibility, their ethical, moral,
> or legal implications, their resourcing implications, their likelihood of realization or
> of success, their conformance with other goals or strategies, their timing, duration,
> or location, and so forth. (McBurney et al., 2007, p. 99)

To add to this, "conflicting evaluative criteria may be supported throughout a dialogue" by different participants (McBurney et al., 2007, p. 119).

Now, these are all certain *material* suggestions on how to select criteria for our choices, so that "the best" ("optimal") – or at least a satisfactory – conclusion can be

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[8] Searle gives a number of telling examples of means which can take me to the goal but are "ridiculous", including this one: "I want this subway to be less crowded and I believe that if I kill all the other passengers it will be less crowded. This does not commit me to desiring to kill the other passengers." (2001, pp. 243-244).

[9] Note that for some (e.g., Byron, 1998), all things considered, satisficing is a species of optimization, as it aims at finding the optimal balance between overall costs (effort, time, other resources) and benefits (satisfaction of preferences and values). It might be used as a local tactic in order to optimize at a global, strategic level.

reached in our PR. However, following critical rationalists, argumentation scholars argue that such criteria and conclusions are best critically tested through some argumentative *procedure*: "Rational decision making is not so much a matter of making the right decision, but one of making the decision right" (Miller, 1994, p. 43; quoted in Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012, p. 49). Typically, in the case of deciding on a course of action, one would speak of deliberation – an argumentative dialogue (or: activity) in which the proposals for action (the best means-candidates) are discussed and tested in a dialectical manner (Atkinson et al., 2013; van Eemeren, 2010, Ch. 5; Ihnen Jory, 2012; McBurney et al., 2007; Vega & Olmos, 2007; Walton, 1998, 2006). However, a difficulty arises in such procedures whenever more than two competing options (proposals, means) are debated. As argued in detail in Lewiński & Aakhus (2014), the dyadic testing collapses then for one reason or another. There are many interesting gaps and paradoxes in applying dyadic dialectical models to multi-party deliberation. To mention only one of them: In the case of three alternative courses of action (m, n, o), the dialectical testing through 3 dyadic debates – m vs. n, n vs. o, m vs. o – may easily return a result in which $m > n$, $n > o$, and $o > m$. This can happen when different dyads agree on different starting points (e.g., varying hierarchies of values / decision criteria) in their discussions, thus disrupting the transitivity of results. Because of such considerations, a model of multi-party argumentation (*polylogue*) is needed – in particular, a model of a multi-party deliberation. In the next section, I sketch the basic elements of this model.

4. MULTI-PARTY DELIBERATION AS AN ARGUMENTATIVE POLYLOGUE

Argumentative polylogue preserves the basic idea behind practical argumentation: that the best way to decide on "the best" course of action is to publicly test arguments for and against a given course of action in some sort of a critical argumentative discussion. All the same, contrary to simple dialectical models, it also acknowledges that the set of alternative means is a set of *contrary* options delineated by an open question: *What shall we do now?* What is to be judged are thus not simple yes/no contradictions, but rather more complex relative goodness of all the available options. A simple example of such deliberation was analysed in Lewiński & Aakhus (2014): a university committee needs to decide whom to award the annual best researcher prize. Two committee members support *Prof. α*, one *Prof. β*, and two remaining *Prof. γ*. Each of them claims that their candidate best meets the university's criteria on which all agree. The supporters of *Prof. α* thus argue against *Prof. β* and *Prof. γ* whose supporters, in turn,

also disagree with each other (the enemy of my enemy is not my friend). Practical argumentation here is thus not a dyadic but rather a "triangulated" affair, where each party has two distinct opponents to engage. This requires novel tools for both understanding and evaluating argumentative moves and strategies. I have suggested such tools can be found in a model of argumentative polylogues (Lewiński, 2014; Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014).

I understand polylogue as an ideal model of argumentation, including multi-party deliberation, where each party is a partisan of a given position. In the case of deliberation, what is at stake are conclusions of practical argumentation, that is, means / courses of action to be taken. A party to a polylogue is someone who supports a given means/proposal/position and objects to/doubts other positions.[10] This is not how everyone understands deliberation; on Walton's (and his followers') account, for example, deliberation starts from an open issue on which there are no established positions:

> A […] characteristic of deliberation dialogues is the absence of a fixed initial commitment by any participant on the basic question of the dialogue. […] A deliberation dialogue is not, at least not at its outset, an attempt by one participant to persuade any of the others to agree to an initially defined proposal. In this respect, deliberation dialogues differ from persuasion dialogues. (McBurney et al., 2007, pp. 97-98; see also Atkinson et al., 2013)

But this might be only a difference between the context of discovery and context of justification. At a certain point in deliberation, arguers typically do stand by their positions and are out to justify them – at least when they seriously perform their proposals.[11] We can of course treat as part of deliberation all the processes which take them there: facing the issue to be tackled, defining it properly, defining criteria for evaluating possible means to solve the issue, brainstorming to generate first candidate means, refining them, etc. (McBurney et al., 2007; Walton, 2006). All this are however only preliminaries to argumentatively testing – through justification and criticism – the relative strength (or: goodness) of each means. Deliberating parties who advocate their

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[10] As argued by Mercier & Sperber (2011), due to the overwhelming confirmation bias, arguers are very good at defending their own points and criticizing others'. Deliberation based on advocacy might be a good model under this assumption: why bother openly criticizing ourselves and defending the opposite (a basic virtue of critical thinking in an "open" deliberation), when others can do it better for us. Still, a certain disposition to be critical and change one's mind when confronted with "the force of the better argument" may be necessary – especially when new, innovative options are called for.

[11] Atkinson et al. (2013) carefully distinguish between persuasion over action and deliberation dialogues. These two dialogue types are both geared towards critically testing and deciding on the best course of future action but they differ in method. Crucially, following Atkinson et al., persuasion is a competition between individuals with consistent commitments, whereas deliberation is a collaborative search for the best collective solution that might depart from anyone's individual position. However, these distinctions remain hard to pin down; indeed, persuasion and deliberation seem to unavoidably collapse into one (see esp. Walton, 2006). Elsewhere (Lewiński, 2012), I discuss similar differences as assumptions of either a role-based or issue-based dialectics, advocating the role-based approach.

proposals can therefore be defined as bearers of distinct positions – expressed through proposals – along with the arguments supporting their positions: they are thus defined by what they hold and defend. In the course of argumentation, a party supports its position through arguments and starting points which ideally build a consistent *commitment set* (Hamblin, 1970; Walton & Krabbe, 1995). Eventually, a party can be defined as a defender of an individual *case*, that is, an ordered set comprising the party's position and its commitment set. Defined in this way, deliberation involving multiple proposals supported by different parties cannot be reduced to a two-sided argumentation between the pro-side and the contra-side.[12] The contra-side is not a dialectical agent with a consistent commitment set (opponents of a given proposal may oppose it for different, even inconsistent, reasons). Therefore, in place of a simple let's-do-*m* (because...), oh, let's-not (because...), deliberation requires a thorough and simultaneous critical assessment of relative merits of all proposals, which all claim to offer the best solution to the issue in question.

So, how should a polylogue work?

One can start thinking of a normative model of argumentative polylogues in terms of the existing dialectical models but extended to incorporate the clash of more than just two positions on an issue (Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014). Such a model can be constructed in a largely formal manner, as in Sylvan's (1985) *polylogue systems*, or informally, using the extant pragmatically-oriented dialectical approaches as a basic theoretical background. The pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion may be particularly useful in this endeavour as a well-defined normative account of everyday argumentation. It offers a useful heuristic of dividing argumentative discussions into four "dialectical stages": confrontation, opening, argumentation, and concluding (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, pp. 57ff.). The four stages can define the procedure for multi-party argumentation in general (Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014), but they can also be crafted to deliberation in particular. In the latter case, I would argue, one can use the Fairclough & Fairclough's (2012) scheme as the pattern of relevance for all argumentative moves in deliberation.

To start with, the confrontation and opening stages are intertwined, and possibly opening comes analytically first – a marked difference from the pragma-dialectical critical discussion, where confrontation is the first ideal step. Let us thus start from the opening and the steps needed there.

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[12] According to Walton, "[d]eliberation can also involve large groups of agents, and many proposals for action, but the argumentation on any given point reduces to two sides, the pro and the contra" (2006, p. 235, n. 4).

Opening:

1. What is at stake? What is the issue?

1a. Arrive at a satisfactory representation of *circumstances*: the issue to be tackled.

1b. Define the *goals*: future desired states of affairs.

1c. Define the *values* which justify the goals and, possibly, also shape the perspective on circumstances and constrain the choice of means.

1d. Decide on the basic principle of means selection: optimizing or satisficing.

1e. Decide on the contextually-relevant criteria for realizing the values and selecting the optimal or satisfactory means.

As claimed above, instrumental practical argumentation in a proper sense is one in which these premises are agreed in advance and are held constant. In reality, of course, this hardly ever happens, so the argumentation would develop in all these directions. (All these elements would be kicked back and forth between opening and argumentation.)

Confrontation:

Now, given the circumstances, goals, values, and criteria deliberators are in a position to ask:

2. What shall we do (with this issue)?

Or:

2'. What is the best means to take us from the current circumstances to the desired goals?

2a. Examine the nature of the issue:

2a$_1$. A *yes/no question*? (*Shall we take one more scotch or not?*)

2a$_2$. A *safe Wh-question*: the set of relevant alternatives is finite and known to the arguers (*Which drink from the list shall we take?)* (Note here: the entire set of alternatives – but no single option in itself – is "implied by the goal" in the sense defined by Broome, 2013.)

2a$_3$. A *risky Wh-question*: the set of relevant alternatives is open-ended (*What shall we drink tonight?*) (Here: even the set of alternative proposals is not implied by the goal.)

2b. Gather all the possible proposals: *Let us do m, n, o, ..., z.*

(Of course, 2b and $2a_2$-$2a_3$ are cross-determined).

2c. Determine the nature of proposals: What is the proposal implying?

> $2c_1$. Determine its illocutionary force:

1) Proponent committed to *m* as the course of action to take: "the proposer must openly commit herself to speak in defense of her resolution" (Kauffeld, 1998, p. 249; see also Aakhus, 2006)

2) Proponent committed to *m* as a serious consideration/option for deliberators: "inducement to tentative consideration" (Kauffeld, 1998, p. 250: "the speaker wants her addressee to consider and, ultimately, adopt some conclusion which bears on the addressee's interests but which strikes the addressee as contrary to the latter's preconceptions.")

3) Not committed to *m* – a mere, tentative "suggestion" (as in "brainstorming sessions": McBurney et al., 2007, p. 100, 116; Walton, 2006, pp. 216-217). Yet, according to Kauffeld (1998, pp. 247-248), such free-floating suggesting is markedly different from the speech act of proposing in deliberation.

Here, as noted above, I am dealing mostly with 1) – a situation of advocacy in deliberation. This might be viewed as a somewhat cynical view, but usually deliberations reach this stage (recall the context of discovery / justification distinction above). According to Aakhus, a proposal "[c]ounts as an attempt to enlist H[earer] in mutually bringing about [action] A." (2006, p. 406).[13] A proponent has thus an obligation to advocate the positions she proposes to take (Kauffeld, 1998) – that is to say, once the proposal (and not *merely* a suggestion) is made, advocacy is needed, similarly to what happens in what Walton & Krabbe (1995) call a persuasion dialogue. Overall, there seems to be a continuum: from pure brainstorming or "thinking aloud" without strong commitment and with strong cancelability (level 3), to proposing something as a serious consideration (level 2), to strongly defending one's proposal/choice, presumably made upon best prior consideration of an issue (level 1). It might be hard to say where deliberation (as opposed to persuasion or negotiation dialogues) starts and ends, especially when the level of commitment fluctuates over the course of discussion (diachronic variation) and across various participants (synchronic variation).

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[13] There is often more than just one Hearer (Clark & Carlson, 1982; Levinson, 1988) where the simple dyadic framework for speech acts does not work so easily. In such cases, it would be about "enlisting" the entire collective. This rationally happens if one is able to defend her/his position as "the best".

In such cases, any clear-cut demarcating line would be arbitrary (cf. Atkinson et al., 2013; Walton, 2006). Therefore, I take a maximally dialectical interpretation of deliberation and understand it as a position-defending-and-attacking argumentative activity.

$2c_2$. Determine the proposal's propositional content (Broome, 2013, calls it a "marked content")

1) My position is that means *m* is *necessary* (and which type of necessity distinguished above).

If not, then:

2) My position is that means *m* is *sufficient and best*.

If not, then:

3) My position is that means *m* is *conducive and best*.[14]

Having made all this clear, deliberators can move to the third stage:

Argumentation:

At this stage, in strictly instrumental PA, the presuppositions of proposals advocating the necessary or best means (as expressed in the means-goal premise) are debated vis-à-vis the circumstances, goals, values, and contextual criteria defined at the opening stage. In the case of sufficient and conducive means, the presuppositions are precisely the components of the "bestness" of the advocated means; they constitute the sub-premises of the means-goal premise. A proponent of a given option should, depending on contextual constraints, be able to defend any of the qualities of the advocated option listed above (after McBurney et al., 2007, p. 99): direct or indirect costs and benefits, their opportunity costs, their consequences, their practical feasibility, etc. In dialectical approaches, such defense happens via intersubjective procedures of critically testing the premises / sub-arguments (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, pp. 145ff.). A dialectical approach, however, creates particular difficulties in a polylogue. How to build a *dialectical profile* (van Eemeren et al., 2008; Krabbe, 1999) of step-by-step dyadic testing when there might be many Opponents/Antagonists/Critics of the same position (each of them criticizing the argument for different, possibly contradictory, reasons)? More concretely, if informal argument schemes such as PR are reasonable when they satisfactorily address

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[14] I limit myself here to the strategy of optimizing, leaving aside the satisficing options.

relevant critical questions (Walton, 2006, 2007), then whose critical questions are they? Well, obviously "the critic's", but each party to a polylogue faces more than one critic, and they should not be conflated. In general, all kinds of intersubjective procedures require a more complex notion of intersubjectivity – for instance, divided into some global and local level. What is shared by two parties, is not necessarily shared by most, or all parties. Eventually, deciding which argument, or criticism, holds and is thus decisive in the current discussion is much more complex in a polylogue than it is in a dyadic exchange. This is obviously something still to be developed.

Concluding:

This brings us to the problems of concluding the discussion on the basis of the results of the argumentative procedures. In a dyadic discussion, this is a fairly straightforward business, since arguers can choose from but two options: that "the protagonist's standpoint is acceptable and the antagonist's doubt must be retracted, or that the standpoint of the protagonist must be retracted" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 2004, p. 61). In a polylogue, since there are by definition many protagonists of distinct positions and thus also many distinct antagonists, the choices may be plenty. One position can simply be better than any other, which allows for a clear conclusion (the Bingo! case). But some positions can be accepted by an equal amount of parties, which possibly leads to a standoff. Arguers may also decide to "sum up" all the conclusions of dyadic encounters – especially in the case where they decide to split their procedure into a sequence of dual pro-et-contra encounters: Shall we do *m*? Shall we do *n*? Shall we do *o*? Dialectically speaking, such local concluding stages seem the most viable option, but the final evaluation of the entire multi-party deliberation may face a number of problems (Lewiński, 2012; Lewiński & Aakhus, 2014). One of them is that more than one such sub-discussion ends with a *yes* resolution, while only one course of action can be taken. Another is that all options are objectionable for one reason or another, and the end result is nothing but a series of *no*s. Finally, there is the difficulty mentioned above: if dyads directly compare two proposals (Shall we do *m* or *n*? Etc.), each proposal can be once better and once worse, making it hard to decide on a single "best" option ($m > n > o > m$). Some novel methods of concluding complex polylogues are yet to be developed – especially if the ideal modelling aims at grasping some form of a reasonable "resolution", rather than mere "settling" of deliberations, for instance through voting or preference-aggregation.

5. CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by returning once more to Broome's study of practical reasoning, and in particular his examination of the means / actions to be taken. As discussed above, for him the paradigmatic but also, let us be blunt about it, a trivial case of PR is that where the means are necessary to reach our ends. This is where many investigations stop – but instead, they should only start there to match the complex reality of reasoning in decision-making:

> More commonly, you will not believe that the means is necessary to the end, but instead that it is the best means to the end. In those cases, your reasoning does not rest on logical validity; it requires some other principle of reasoning. This principle remains to be worked out. (Broome, 2002, p. 110)

In this contribution, I have taken up precisely the task of working out some principle of reasoning that adequately handles the cases of reasoning to the best means to the end. A procedural dialectical theory of practical argumentation is a good place to start. Such a theory would assume that the proposals of what the best means are should be submitted to an open argumentative discussion among all the parties concerned with the issue to be tackled. Current dialectical models of dialogues offer some well-justified building blocks of such procedures (critical questions, etc.). However, they do not easily accommodate the basic requirement of including more than just two (pro and con) parties to argumentative deliberations. While multi-party deliberations abound in reality, multi-party models of argumentation which would adequately analyze and evaluate argumentative exchanges in such deliberations are hard to find. I have proposed some basics of such a model of argumentative polylogues – the remaining gaps remain to be worked out in greater detail.

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