The Dialogical Force of Implicit Premises: Presumptions in Enthymemes

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Abstract: The implicit dimension of enthymemes is investigated from a pragmatic perspective to show why a premise can be left unexpressed, and how it can be used strategically. The relationship between the implicit act of taking for granted and the pattern of presumptive reasoning is shown to be the cornerstone of *kairos* and the fallacy of straw man. By taking a proposition for granted, the speaker shifts the burden of proving its unacceptability onto the hearer. The resemblance (likeliness) of the tacit premise with what is commonly acceptable or has been actually stated can be used as a rhetorical strategy.

Résumé: La dimension implicite des enthymèmes est étudiée dans une perspective pragmatique afin de montrer pourquoi une prémisse peut être laissée inexprimée, et comment elle peut être utilisée de façon stratégique. La relation entre l'acte implicite de prendre pour acquis et le modèle de raisonnement présomptif se révèle être la pierre angulaire du *kairos* et du sophisme de l'homme de paille. En prenant une proposition pour acquis, l'orateur transfère le fardeau de prouver son caractère inacceptable à l'auditeur. La ressemblance de la prémisse tacite avec ce qui est généralement acceptable ou avec ce qui a été réellement dit peut être utilisée comme une stratégie rhétorique.

Keywords: burden of proof, commitment, implicit premise, interpretation, *kairos*, pragmatics, presumption, presupposition, rhetorical strategies, straw man

1. Introduction

In the logical and rhetorical tradition, enthymemes have often been described according to two criteria: their structure and the epistemic status of their premises. At the beginning of the *Topics*, Aristotle provides the definition of syllogism, that is, a *logos*

(a piece of reasoning or an argument) "in which, certain things being laid down, something other than these necessarily comes about through them" (*Topics* 100a 25-26). For Aristotle, rhetorical syllogisms are syllogisms having fewer premises than the ordinary ones (*Rhetoric* 1357a 16-17); they are characterized by an implicit dimension, by a premise that is left unexpressed (Sorensen 1988; Gough & Tindale 1985). From an epistemic perspective, enthymemes are grounded on premises that are not absolutely true, but only commonly accepted (Walker 1994: 47; Walton 2001: 106). Unlike dialectical *topoi*, rhetorical topics do not represent abstract relations between concepts (such as "what is said of the species is said of the genus as well"), but refer specifically to connections between specific states of affairs (for instance, the relationship between the existence of a specific animal and the existence of animals belonging to the genus thereof). For this reason, they proceed from what usually happens, from "the province of opinion" (De Quincey 1893: 146; McBurney 1994: 184).

These two characteristics of enthymemes are strictly connected to each other. As Braet (1999: 107) pointed out, the implicit dimension is not described by Aristotle as essential, but rather as a property that enthymemes often have because of their epistemic nature (Hamilton 1874: 389). On this view, the major premise of an enthymeme can be taken for granted because it is commonly considered as likely, which makes these instruments context-relevant and audience oriented (Tindale 1999: 112). However, this characteristic raises some crucial problems. What is the relationship between likeliness and the possibility of taking a proposition for granted? Why does a speaker decide to leave a premise unexpressed? In order to address these questions, we will move from an epistemic perspective to a pragmatic one. Enthymemes will be considered as moves in a dialogue, i.e. speech acts aimed at a pursuing a specific communicative goal, which in case of rhetorical syllogisms corresponds to persuading the interlocutors or the audience.

The purpose of this work is to show how the decision to leave a proposition unexpressed can be considered as kind of speech act resulting in specific dialogical effects. The act of taking a proposition for granted will be shown to transform the rhetorical syllogism into a powerful strategy aimed at modifying the burden of proof.

2. The implicit dimension of enthymemes: missing premises and presuppositions

From a pragmatic perspective, enthymemes can be considered as dialogical moves aimed at supporting a given conclusion, in which a premise is left unexpressed. Aristotle underscored this implicit dimension when he stated that the speaker does not need to mention any of the propositions making up a rhetorical argument if it is a familiar fact. In this case, he claims, the hearer will add it himself (*Rhetoric* 1357a 17-18; Burke 1985). In this account we can distinguish two different aspects of the same phenomenon. On the one hand, the speaker decides to leave some propositions unexpressed; on the other hand, the hearer reconstructs what is taken for granted and retrieves the meaning of the argument. The first issue to tackle is the analysis of the relation between the speaker and his tacit premises, and between the linguistic and the epistemic dimension of the propositions left unexpressed. Why and how is it possible to leave a component of a speech act implicit? Moreover, the possibility of leaving a proposition unexpressed leads to the problem of establishing the limits of this act, or rather non-act. Why is it not possible to take a false or an unacceptable premise for granted? When does the implicit premise of an enthymeme become fallacious and how is it possible to pinpoint and describe its fallacious nature?

Possible answers to these questions can be found by taking into account a particular type of enthymeme, the rhetorical syllogism in which the major premise is tacit, and analyzing it from a linguistic and pragmatic perspective.

2.1 Implicit premises as presuppositions

From a linguistic perspective, the relationship between premises and conclusion in an enthymeme can be represented by a so-called high-level predicate (Rigotti 1993; Rigotti 2005; Rigotti & Rocci 2001), which can we express with the connector 'therefore.' Karttunen (1973: 176) described the structure of such higher-level predicates, called connectives, whose linguistic arguments are discourse sequences.

Connectives link sequences and presuppose specific relations between them. We can consider for example the connector 'but.' As Lakoff pointed out (Lakoff 1971: 133), the sentence "John is tall, but he is no good at basketball" is composed of an

assertion ("John is tall, and he is *no good* at basketball") and a presupposition ("If someone is tall, then one would expect him to *be good* at basketball"). The effect of the connector is a contradiction (or rather a denial of expectation, see Ducrot 1978) between what is stated and what is presupposed. Similarly, the connective 'and' presupposes a common relevance or topic (Lakoff 1971: 128; Kempson 1975: 58), which can be a temporal sequence (it would be awkward to say "The Ranger rode off into the sunset and mounted his horse") or a causal relation (it would make little sense to claim "Pope John is dying and the cat is in the bath"). Subordinate connectives, such as 'therefore', specify explicitly the type of relationship between the sequences that needs to be reconstructed in coordination (Hobbs 1985). For instance, the predicate 'therefore' presupposes that the first sequence is a reason supporting the second one (see also Grice 1975: 44). In both cases of coordination and subordination, the high-level predicate imposes a set of specific coherence conditions, or pragmatic presuppositions (Vanderveken 2002: 47; Bach 2003: 163), on the text sequences (Grimes 1975: 162).

There can be several high-level relations: explanation, narration, contrast, etc. (see Hobbs 1985; Lascarides & Asher 1993). Enthymemes are characterized by a specific type of relation, called "motivation or support." For instance, consider the following reasoning based on a definitional major premise, taken from a recent discussion between President Obama and the U.S. Congress concerning the classification of air strikes as 'hostilities' (*Obama Administration letter to Congress justifying Libya engagement*, June 15th, 2011, p. 25):

Case 1

> (A) Our operations do not involve the presence of U.S. ground troops. (B) (*therefore*) Our operations are not 'hostilities.'

In this case, a higher level predicate connecting the discourse moves needs to be reconstructed. It expresses a relation of motivation (Rigotti & Rocci 2006) and can be linguistically represented as the connective 'therefore'. In order to reconstruct the structure of the dialogical move (supporting a potentially controversial conclusion by means of a reason) it is necessary to retrieve the "motivational" link between the two sequences (Burke 1985). The relation of motivation needs to support the attribution of a predicate (to be *hostilities*) in (*B*) to the same

subject of the previous sequence (*A*). The attribution of a predicate on the basis of its qualities can be usually presumed to be a classification, which requires that the quality mentioned in the first sentence represents a definitional principle for the attribution of the quality in the second sentence (Kempson 1975: 109-110). Therefore, the characteristic of U.S. operations, i.e. "not involving the presence of ground troops," shall be taken to be a definitional principle, of 'to be hostilities.' The presupposition of 'therefore' in this specific case can be reconstructed by specifying the abstract relation of the high-level predicate. This process can be summarized as follows:

1. Meaning of '**therefore**'	*A* is a *reason* for *B*
2. Specifying the meaning of **B**	*B* expresses a *classification* of the subject '*our operations*' as not '*hostilities.*'
3. Specifying the **connector** (from 1 and 2)	*A* is reason for supporting a classification of '*operations*' as not '*hostilities.*'
4. Specifying the **relation**	A reason for supporting a classification is presumed to be *a definitional principle* of the property attributed.
5. Specifying the **connector** (from 3 and 4)	*A* expresses a definitional principle of 'to be hostilities.'
6. Specifying the **meaning of A**	The quality of '*involving the presence of troops*' is *denied* of the subject '*our operations.*'
7. Specifying the **connector** (from 5 and 6)	'Involving the presence of troops' expresses a definitional principle of 'to be hostilities.'

Figure 1: Reconstructing the missing premise

This analysis represents the most reasonable reconstruction of a presupposed proposition, where "reasonableness" shall be taken to refer to a linguistic (pragmatic) behavior that complies with the accepted hierarchy of linguistic (or rather pragmatic) presumptions (Macagno 2011; 2012). In other words, the hearer follows the commonly accepted presumption (such as the one mentioned at line 4 of figure 1 above) and performs all the steps of reasoning correctly. The reasonableness and the correctness of the reconstruction need to be distinguished from its strategic and potentially manipulative uses. As a matter of fact, the addressee of the move can decide not to comply with the accepted presumptions, or to retrieve the tacit proposition based on an incorrect (fallacious, contradictory) pattern of reasoning. We

will analyze this choice in section 5, when we will consider the cases in which the reconstruction of the tacit premise becomes a strategic and potentially fallacious instrument.

Considering the relationship between the speaker and the presupposed content, the presuppositional nature of the implicit premise raises the problem of defining its characteristics and its boundaries. In order to address this issue, we need to investigate the pragmatic dimension of presupposition.

2.2 The speech act of taking for granted

Stalnaker defined the concept of presupposing a proposition as "to take its truth for granted, and to assume that others involved in the context do the same" (Stalnaker 1970: 279). He underscored how the act of taking a proposition for granted shall be considered as a propositional attitude, which can be interpreted as an action of a kind (Stalnaker 2002: 701). On his view, presuppositions are *made* by the speakers (Stalnaker 1970: 279), in the sense that presupposing a proposition amounts to a form of decision made by the speaker to treat some information as *common ground* among the participants, or rather as belonging to the Universe of Discourse (Kempson 1975: 17). However, enthymemes can be based on major premises that are known to be false or not accepted or considered acceptable by the hearer. How can a speaker believe or assume that a proposition is shared by the addressee, especially when it is known to be unacceptable or unaccepted?

Taking for granted that a proposition can be described as the performance of an implicit speech act, in which the speaker subordinates the felicity of his move to the listener's acceptance of some conditions. This idea was advanced by Ducrot, who described presupposition as the set of conditions that need to be fulfilled in order to satisfy the pretension of carrying out an effect on the listener (Ducrot 1966). On this view, if the presuppositions of a move fail because the interlocutor rejects them, the move itself will be infelicitous and void (Ducrot 1972). Such conditions limit the field of the possible moves of the interlocutor. For instance, if the addressee accepts the assertion that "I have met Pierre this morning", he also implicitly agrees to a conversational situation in which the topic is *Pierre*, and a "Universe of Discourse" where Pierre exists (or is known). On the contrary, if the hearer refuses the presupposition, he terminates the dialogue game, just like a chess player can accept or

refuse the possibilities opened up by the move of his opponent, and thereby continue or terminate the game (Ducrot 1968: 87).

This account of presuppositions as a kind of speech act can explain how and why the speaker can treat a proposition as part of the common ground even if it is not. Such an act does not depend on what the interlocutors actually share, or on what the speaker believes (Burton-Roberts 1989: 26). A proposition that is known or believed not to be shared can be still presupposed, in the sense that it can be advanced as a condition or ground for the continuation of the dialogue. However, the structure of the dialogue move should be distinguished from its possibility, i.e. from the limits that separate an acceptable act of presupposition from a mischievous or fallacious one.

2.3 The limits of presupposing

According to Ducrot, presuppositions need to be accepted in order for the dialogue to be possible. However, at the same time presuppositions need to be part of the common ground of the interlocutor. How is it then possible to presuppose information not shared, or not known to be shared? On Lewis' perspective (Von Fintel 2008), in this case the hearer "accommodates" (or reconstructs) the presupposed and not shared propositions in order to avoid communicative failure, *within certain limits* (Lewis 1979: 340). The problem is to identify the "certain limits" that restrict the possibility of reconstructing a presupposition.

According to Stalnaker (1998: 8), the relationship between speaker's and hearer's knowledge in the process of accommodation can be considered as a presumption of the speaker that the presupposed information is *available* to his or her audience. For instance, we modified the argument in Case 1 above so that we can analyze the acceptability and reasonableness of the following variants:

A. Our intervention cannot be considered as hostilities. We have not used weapons or the military.
B. Our intervention is not a *çatışma*[1]. We have not intervened.
C. Our intervention cannot be considered as hostilities. It is fast and well done.
D. Our intervention cannot be considered as hostilities. It does not involve the cooking of potatoes.

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[1] *Çatışma* is the Turkish word for war (we presume that not all our readers are from Turkey or speak Turkish).

E. Our intervention cannot be considered as hostilities. Ground troops have not intervened.

The first crucial issue that these examples point out is the possibility of accommodating a presupposition. In (A) the interlocutor can accommodate the missing premise and accept it. In (B), the tacit premise cannot be evaluated as the hearer cannot accommodate some pieces of information. In (A), the speaker grounds the presupposition of his major premise on the fact that people (and congressmen) usually know that "use of weapons and the military is a definition of hostilities." Case (B) is radically different. The hearer (in an ordinary context, where people cannot speak Turkish) *cannot* reconstruct and accept the presupposition. As an essential requirement, it fails clearly for two reasons. The speaker cannot presume that the interlocutor knows the meaning of a Turkish word ('çatışma') and, therefore, that he can retrieve the tacit premise ("çatışma means intervention") from his background information. The speaker can reconstruct the tacit premise, but he cannot understand its meaning and cannot evaluate it. The purpose of the enthymeme, transferring the acceptability of the premises onto the conclusion, fails completely, as an unknown proposition cannot be evaluated.

Another crucial dimension is the acceptability of a presupposition, namely the case in which the interlocutor can reconstruct and evaluate the presupposed premise, but he does not or cannot accept it. In (C) and (D) the hearer can understand the nature of the proposition taken for granted (a definitional statement) and connect it with his or her background knowledge. However, in (C) the hearer cannot accept that the property of "being nice and well done" is a definition of an action (hostilities). In (D), the presupposition can be reconstructed and its nature as a definitional statement accepted. However, no English speaker can accept that 'cooking of potatoes' is a definition of 'hostilities.' The *possibility* of presupposing (corresponding to the possibility of our speaker's evaluating it) needs to be distinguished from the *acceptability* (or rather the evaluation) of a proposition taken for granted.

The last aspect of presupposition that emerges from these cases is its *effectiveness*. The speaker can take for granted a proposition that the hearer does not share. However, this does not mean that the interlocutor accepts it (Hopper 1981). For this reason, the speaker can be effective when he presupposes a premise that only *resembles* the commonly accepted one. In the presupposed implicit premise of (E), a sufficient condition (in-

tervention of ground troops) is treated as a necessary one. We distinguish between four different cases of presupposition of implicit premises:

(i) The premise can be reconstructed, evaluated and accepted as a background assumption (case A);
(ii) The presupposition cannot be evaluated, as it cannot be related with the common ground (case B);
(iii) The presupposition can be evaluated but its function (the relation between antecedent and consequent) cannot be accepted (case C);
(iv) The presupposition can be evaluated but its content cannot be accepted (case D and E).

These possibilities allow us to outline the possible felicity conditions of the implicit speech act of presupposing, building on Austin's and Searle and Vanderveken's accounts of speech act conditions (Austin 1962: 14-15; Searle & Vanderveken 1985: 13-19; Holdgraves 2008: 13):

Essential Condition	Speaker (*S*) sets the presupposed proposition (*pp*) as a condition of the felicity of his speech act (*SA*); if Hearer (*H*) does not accept *pp*, *SA* will be void.
Propositional Condition	*pp* is a proposition that can be reconstructed and evaluated by *H*.
Preparatory Condition	*S* can presume that *H* can evaluate and accept *pp*.
Sincerity Condition	*S* believes that *pp*; *S* believes that *H* can evaluate and know or accept *pp*.

Figure 2: Conditions of the act of presupposing

This speech act has a direction of fit from World (of the Hearer) to Words (of the Speaker), and its goal is to set the propositions that the hearer needs to accept for the dialogue to continue. The possibility of evaluating the presupposition is indicated as a propositional condition: *H* needs to be able to draw *pp* from the linguistic and pragmatic elements provided. The acceptability of the presupposition is governed by both the preparatory and the sincerity condition. The sincerity condition expresses the conditions that the tradition on pragmatic presupposition considered as essential, while the preparatory condition, framed as a presumption, is aimed at bridging the gap between

the speaker's and hearer's mind from an epistemic and argumentative perspective.

3. Tacit premises and presumptive reasoning

The crucial characteristic of the act of presupposing mentioned above is the possibility of presuming that the hearer shares the proposition to be taken for granted (see for this notion Strawson 1971: 58-59; Kempson 1975: 166-167). This condition represents the grounds of the *reasonableness* of this move. By investigating the structure of presumptive reasoning it is possible to understand the relationship between a presumed proposition and its epistemic status, and the dialogical effects of leaving a premise unexpressed.

3.1 Implicit premises and presumption

Implicit premises can be conceived as the conclusion of presumptive reasoning. The speaker cannot know the other's mind, what the interlocutor knows. He can only advance a tentative and defeasible conclusion based on a form of reasoning in lack of evidence. The speaker draws specific conclusions on what the interlocutor may know based on general principles concerning common knowledge, such as "Speakers belonging to a specific speech community usually know the meaning of the most important words of the language used therein." According to Rescher, presumptions are forms of reasoning in lack of evidence (Rescher 1977: 1). They cannot prove a conclusion, and are used when it is *not possible* to demonstrate a conclusion. This type of reasoning is rebuttable and defeasible, as it supports a conclusion until contrary evidence is produced. However, its inherent defeasibility has a fundamental effect on the dialogical setting: it has the effect of shifting the burden of producing evidence, or supporting a standpoint, onto the other party.

    Presumptions work to move the dialogue further when knowledge is lacking by shifting the burden of proof onto the other party, who can reject the controversial proposition only by providing contrary arguments or positive facts leading to a contrary conclusion. If not rebutted, the proposition can be considered as tentatively proved, and move the dialogue further. Rescher represented the structure of this type of inference as follows (Rescher 2006: 33):

Premise 1:	P (the proposition representing the presumption) obtains whenever the condition C obtains unless and until the standard default proviso D (to the effect that countervailing evidence is at hand) obtains.
Premise 2:	Condition C obtains (Fact).
Premise 3:	Proviso D does not obtain (Exception).
Conclusion:	P obtains.

Figure 3: Presumptive reasoning

The *Rule* of presumption links the acceptability of a proposition *P* (for instance, a man is dead) to a condition *C* (the man has not been heard from in five years) until a specific default proviso *D* obtains (for instance, he is found to be alive). If a man has not been heard from in five years and no evidence of his being alive has been advanced, he is to be considered as dead.

This type of reasoning can be applied to the analysis of the implicit premise in enthymemes. Presumptive reasoning can be used to highlight the conditions in which the speaker can reasonably take a premise for granted and the possible contradiction resulting from presupposing an unshared or unaccepted proposition. For instance, we analyze Case 1 above and assess the reasonableness of its implicit premise reconstructing the presumptive reasoning on which it is based (see Figure 4, below).

Accepted meaning	Hostilities: "overt act of warfare."
RULE :	*The audience should know (be committed to) the shared meaning of "hostilities"* (P) whenever *such a word is used with its commonly accepted meaning* (C) (unless *the interlocutor does not master the language, belongs to a different culture or community, etc.*) (D)
FACT	**The commonly accepted definition of 'hostilities' is "overt act of warfare."** (C)
EXCEPTION	It is not the case that the audience does not know the language or belongs to a different community of speaker (or culture). (non-D)
CONCLUSION (presupposition)	**The audience should know that the definition of 'hostilities' is "presence of land troops and sustained fighting."** (P)

Figure 4: Presumptive reasoning and presuppositions

In this case, the presupposed proposition is in conflict with the premise on which it is drawn (the Fact), and therefore cannot follow from it. The reconstruction of the presumptive meaning shows a clear contradiction, which makes the whole act of presupposing unreasonable (Macagno 2011).

However, as mentioned above, the possibility and the reasonableness of presupposing need to be distinguished from its effectiveness. In this case, Obama took for granted a definition *similar* to the commonly accepted one. Moreover, he used it before the Congress, relying on the lack of an official definition of this word. As a matter of fact, 'hostilities' was not defined in the relevant act, in this case the War Powers Resolution Act. As a consequence, the effect was extremely powerful. Obama chose to take the major premise of his reasoning for granted, as he could not prove that "hostilities means *presence of land troops and sustained fighting*." However, he also knew that, in lack of an explicit definition, the contrary could be hardly proved. The Congress could not accept the implicit premise, but at the same time they could not prove the contrary. The force of Obama's rhetorical syllogism did not lie in its probative weight (the major premise was unacceptable), but in its implicit dimension (the major premise was *presupposed*). The force of his argument rested in the dialogical effect of burden-shifting of the tacit premise. The presumptive reasoning underlying his move shifted the burden of proof.

3.2 The effects of presuming

The analysis of speaker's presuppositions as the outcome of the speaker's presumptive reasoning can help understand the effects of presupposition. From a dialectical point of view, a presupposition carries the effects of a presumption: the hearer becomes committed to it, unless he challenges and rejects it (Walton 1999: 380; Hickey 1993: 108). The hearer needs to fulfill the burden of rebutting the epistemic presumption, which can be easily done by providing information about his own knowledge. Such positive evidence often is much stronger than the defaultive presumptive reasoning; however, the force of presupposing lies in a different effect of this act. As Kauffeld noticed, ordinary presumptions result in a specific burden placed on the interlocutor, the "risk of resentment, criticism, reprobation, loss of esteem" in the event that he or she does not accept a presumptive conclusion (Kauffeld 1998: 264). For instance, the risk of

negative judgment is often associated with presumptions of knowledge or interest. By underscoring that a premise is shared by everybody, or the "true" or the "good" citizen, it is possible to enhance the burden of rejection. Ideally, the interlocutor would need to show not only that the premise is wrong, but that actually it is not shared, facing an implicit threat of being classified as an ignorant, or an "untrue" citizen (Macagno 2012).

Politicians often use this appeal to the common ground by emphasizing the concept of 'we-ness,' which underscores the fact that they are voicing an opinion commonly shared in the country. For instance, consider the following excerpt from Clinton's speech in favor of the Bosnia intervention in 2008[2] (emphasis added):

Case 2

> And all around the world, more people than ever before live in freedom, more people than ever before are treated with dignity, more people than ever before can hope to build a better life. That is what America's leadership is all about. *We know* that these are the blessings of freedom, and America has always been freedom's greatest champion.

Clinton stresses how the relationship between the improving conditions of people on earth and the American wars is known by his fellow countrymen. Potentially controversial premises (the actual role of U.S. wars on the freedom and dignity of the population of the world; the relationship between wars and freedom, etc.) are presented as shared, and to be shared. Another clear example of this strategy is the following quotation from Mitt Romney's Wisconsin speech[3] (emphasis added):

Case 3

> You know, *we all know* that President Obama cannot run on his record. *We know* that he can't run on his broken promises. [..] We need someone who appeals to our dreams and our aspirations, not to our fears and our anxieties. We as Americans deserve to choose what kind of country we want and what kind of people we want to be.

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[2] http://edition.cnn.com/US/9511/bosnia_speech/speech.html (Accessed on 7 February 2013).
[3] http://emptysuit.wordpress.com/2012/04/04/mitt-romney-wisconsin-primary-speech-transcript/ (Accessed on 7 February 2013).

> And the good news is, it's not too late to get America
> back on track. It's not too late to put our country back on-
> to a path of prosperity. Guess what? We have a leader
> who can do that. We have a leader who will give Ameri-
> cans that choice. We have a leader who will put our
> country back on the right track. Tonight, Wisconsinites
> have spoken. Republicans are unifying.

Romney presents Obama's unreliability (broken promises), ap-
peals to fear, and poor ability to run the country as a fact that
everybody knows. He increases the burden of disproving this
premise, which becomes the reason not to vote Obama and
therefore choose the alternative, specifically the speaker, Mitt
Romney.

Presuppositions, and in particular tacit enthymematic
premises, are acceptable and reasonable when they can be pre-
sumed to be shared or accepted.[4] However, they are effective
also when they only *resemble* the commonly accepted ones.
This characteristic of presupposition can explain one of the most
important dimensions of enthymemes, their context-dependency.

4. Enthymemes and *Kairos*: Tacit premises and their con-
text-dependency

The presumptions on which an enthymeme is based are not all at
the same level (Giuliani 1961: 66-67). Their credibility (or ra-
ther acceptability) varies according to their nature, and, more
importantly, according to the values of the interlocutors. Ac-
cording to Quintilian, there are different levels of credibility of a
premise (*Institutio Oratoria* V, 10, 16):

> With regard to credibility there are three degrees. First,
> the highest, based on what usually happens, as for in-
> stance the assumption that children are loved by their
> parents. Secondly, there is the highly probable, as for in-
> stance the assumption that a man in the enjoyment of
> good health will probably live till tomorrow. The third
> degree is found where there is nothing absolutely against

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[4] On this view, the distinction between assumption and presumption is drawn
at a linguistic level. The speaker can presume (and, therefore, presuppose) a
proposition that has been solely assumed to be true. In this case, he presumes
that his interlocutor is willing to accept it as an assumption. What is crucial is
that the speaker cannot presume (and, therefore, presuppose) that an unac-
ceptable proposition is shared or accepted by the hearer.

> an assumption, such as that a theft committed in a house
> was the work of one of the household.

On this view, some presumptions shall be, or usually are, preferred over others, and who challenges them carries the burden of proof (Giuliani 1961: 67). The hierarchy of presumptions depends on the hierarchy of values and opinions shared by a given community. For instance, ethical norms such as "If she is his mother, she loves her son" or "If he is an avaricious man, he neglects his oath" (Ciceronis *De Inventione* I, 29-30) represent the strongest presumptions. They carry not only a burden of proof, but also a burden of criticism (Kauffeld 1998: 264), as the party who rejects one of them risks being criticized for challenging shared values. For this reason, depending on the hierarchies of values of the audience (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1951), some premises will be more effective because they are more shared, more acceptable, and more difficult to rebut in a given community.

This relationship between presumptions, enthymemes, values, and audience brings to light the "situational" or rather contextual dimension of rhetoric (Bitzer 1968), which is essentially related to the notion of *kairos*, i.e. opportunity. Even though according to Vatz "rhetoric controls the situational response" (Vatz 1968), and therefore it "is a cause not an effect of meaning," *kairos* plays a crucial role in rhetorical discourse. Rhetorical discourse can be seen as the result of an activity of strategic invention, and not as the outcome of a process of discovery from reality. Therefore, rhetorical discourse can be considered as grounded on a sort of epistemological relativism, whose keystone is the concept of *kairos* (Untersteiner 1954). The contextual and individual dimension of the rhetorical discourse is also a crucial element of the Aristotelian approach to rhetoric, and in particular to its role in political and legal discussions (*Rhetoric* 1354b 3-8). The concept of *kairos*, which is complex and hard to define, is basically related to the specific opportunity at a given time (Kinneavy 2002: 67). It is strictly bound to the ability of finding or reconstructing a premise that is strategically necessary to achieve a specific outcome in a given context. It is the situational, contextual dimension of rhetoric, in the spatial and temporal meaning of the term.

Kairos represents an essential dimension of enthymeme, and one of the material elements distinguishing between dialectical and rhetorical argument. The relationship between the opportunity and the structure of the enthymeme is pointed out by

Aristotle when he analyzes the use and the choice of the maxims (*Rhetoric* 1394a 25-26): "In regard to the use of maxims, it will most readily be evident on what subjects, and on what occasions, and by whom it is appropriate that maxims should be employed in speeches." *Kairos* does not simply describe a tactic; it concerns the whole rhetorical strategy, as it refers to the selection of the persuasive premises. On the one hand, the rhetorical syllogism cannot be simply described as a syllogism grounded on common knowledge, or rather *endoxa* (propositions belonging to the common ground, i.e. accepted by the majority or the wise), otherwise there would be no difference between the dialectical and the rhetorical syllogism. On the other hand, the presence of an audience that characterizes rhetorical discourse does not only result in the emotional components of rhetoric. The crucial role that the audience plays in rhetoric is related to the very structure of the rhetorical syllogism and its persuasive power (*pithanòn*). According to Aristotle, the grounds of enthymemes are probabilities [*ex eikònta*] and signs. In particular, *eikòs* refers to what "is accustomed generally to take place, or which depends upon the opinion of men, or which contains some resemblance to these properties, whether it be false or true." (Ciceronis *De Inventione* I, 46). Enthymemes are grounded on what is *presumed* to usually occur, on what is *likely* to be true for a *specific* audience, and not on statistical probability (Viano 1955: 280-86).

In this rhetorical view, truth is regarded not as the end of the discourse, but as an instrument of persuasion. The perspective from which the elements of the discourse are analyzed changes radically with respect to dialectics. The discourse is not aimed at what is true or what is accepted, like in dialectics, but at what is persuasive. For this reason, truth is rhetorically important because of its persuasive force, as "things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites" (*Rhetoric* 1355a 21-22). An enthymeme can be also *apparently* true, as long as it is likely, i.e. persuasive. The rhetorical syllogism is bound to the audience, as the speaker needs to choose the premises that are likely to be true for the specific interlocutors in a given situation.

The relationship between the choice of the "opportune" premises and the force (or persuasive effect) of enthymemes emerges when the problem of the relative likeliness of an argument arises. One of the most famous examples of the importance of the *kairos* in rhetorical discourse can be found in the O.J.

Simpson trial, and in particular in the arguments in the defense attorney's closing statement (Bayor 2004: 928):

Case 4

> We owe a debt of gratitude to this lady that ultimately and finally came forward. And she tells us that this man over the time of these interviews uses the "N" word 42 times is what she says. And so-called Fuhrman tapes. And you of course had an opportunity to listen to this man and espouse this evil, this personification of evil. […] Talking about women. Doesn't like them any better than he likes African Americans. They don't go out and initiate contact with some six foot five inch Nigger who has been in prison pumping weights. This is how he sees this world. That is this man's cynical view of the world. This is this man who is out there protecting and serving. That is Mark Fuhrman.

This argument was used by the defense to show that the detective (Mr. Fuhrman) that found the fundamental pieces of evidence incriminating the defendant, Mr. Simpson, was actually lying and could have likely planted the evidence in order to harm an Afro-American. The argument could be reconstructed as follows: 1) Fuhrman stated that he never used racial epithets; 2) In the last 10 years, Fuhrman was found to have used privately racial epithets 42 times (in some interviews aimed at writing a novel and a screenplay). Therefore, 3a) he is not credible as a witness and 3b) he is a racist and hates Afro-American people. The argument is actually extremely weak, as using racial epithets is only a possible sign of racism (also considering the context of screenplay interviews), and the "N" words were used over 10 years. Similarly, his false testimony concerning the use of racial epithets is only a weak sign of his lack of credibility concerning matters related to his work. However, the implicit premises "Who uses racial epithets is a racist" and "Who lies about not being a racist (or using racial epithets) should not be credible" (or more simply, "Racist should not be trusted") had an extremely high impact on an jury composed primarily of black people (10 out of 12 jurors were Afro-American; see also Schiller & Willwerth 1997: 220). The choice of the tacit premises had an extremely powerful effect on the specific jury (Thagard 2003), noticeably increasing the weight of the probability that the defendant was not guilty (Dung & Thang 2010). The same evidence had a significantly different effect when pre-

sented in the civil trial before a mostly white jury. In this other context, characterized by an audience having different shared values, the strength of the presumptions used was different. The same tacit major premises were no longer opportune, and the argument lost most of its effectiveness.

Implicit premises are grounded on a presumptive mechanism that results in a powerful dialogical effect. By presupposing a premise, the speaker presumes that is shared, shifting the burden of proof onto the interlocutor, who needs to prove that the proposition left unexpressed is not acceptable or is false. This presumptive aspect of enthymemes can be used strategically, taking for granted not what is actually shared, but what only appears to be so. On this perspective, the likeliness of a premise plays a crucial role. The speaker can understand what his particular audience holds to be likely, and presuppose premises that are only apparently shared.

5. Manipulating the tacit premises: Strategies of presuming

In section 2, and in particular in subsection 2.1, we have mentioned that the phenomenon of presupposition has two dimensions, depending on its relation with the dialogical "actors." On the one hand, the speaker performs the act of presupposing, within the limits mentioned in 2.3, which results in the presumptive effects mentioned in section 3.2 above. On the other hand, however, this implicit proposition needs to be reconstructed by the hearer. The way he can retrieve this presupposed content can be the ground of a specific strategy, the likely distortion of implicit commitments, which is a particular type of the fallacy of straw man.

The strategic effect of distorting the interlocutor's implicit premises can be understood starting from the analysis of the effects and the dialogical risks of the straw man fallacy. This mischievous move consists in the speaker's attacking a manipulated version of the other's viewpoint or commitments. In this fashion, he can rebut more easily a position that he has simplified and weakened. However, by explicitly stating the interlocutor's manipulated commitments, the speaker risks being accused of breaching the rules of the discussion by distorting the other's ideas, incurring what Hamblin would call a "point of order" (Hamblin 1970: 283-284). This risk can be avoided by exploiting the presumptive and burden-shifting effects of presupposition.

From a pragmatic perspective, the straw man encompasses three different tactics that are based on the different pragmatic nature of the speaker's move and the hearer's commitments: (1) the *explicit* distortion of the interlocutor's explicit position; (2) the *implicit* manipulation of the addressee's *explicit* commitments; and (3) the *implicit* or *explicit* distortion of the interlocutor's *implicit* commitments. In the first case, as mentioned above the speaker exposes himself to the risk of being counterattacked. In the second case, the effect of the argument amounts to shifting the burden of interrupting the dialogue and rejecting the implicit premise onto the interlocutor. The most powerful and dangerous tactic is the third one, which is closely related with the concepts of premise reconstruction and likeliness of the tacit propositions.

The speaker can attack or take for granted the misrepresentation (and therefore misinterpretation) of interlocutor's commitments that can be *reconstructed* from his arguments or claims. This move can be extremely effective, as it consists in an implicit distorted, but at the same time likely, interpretation (or rather an uncharitable reconstruction) of a tacit position, and for this reason it is more difficult to detect and reconstruct. The hearer cannot rebut the tacit straw man by simply appealing to a statement that can be "on record," as the distorted position has never been explicitly put forward. In order to reject the move, the hearer needs to reconstruct his implicit position, and provide arguments to support his interpretation of his own view. He needs to show that the speaker's interpretation is not correct, or not acceptable, or in any case less likely than the one that the addressee is advocating. For this reason, the distortion of implicit commitments is characterized not only by the burden-shifting effect, but more importantly by the increase of the burden of rejecting the altered commitment. This strategy is extremely powerful and is greatly effective both in law and politics.

To illustrate this strategy we will analyze two cases taken from the legal context, in which the speaker reconstructs strategically the implicit premises on which the interlocutor's argument is based and takes them for granted in his enthymeme. In both cases the speaker distorts the tacit principles supporting the explicit conclusions, showing their weakness and rejecting them with an appropriate counter-argument. The first example is from the case of Cesare Battisti, an Italian terrorist sentenced to life in prison in Italy, who flew first to France and then to Brazil in order to receive protection and avoid imprisonment. The following discussion between two judges of the Supreme Federal Court of

Brazil, Mr. Eros Grau and Mr. Cezar Peluso, concerns the appeal issued by the Italian Government against the Minister of Justice, who offered protection to Battisti as a refugee. The subject matter of the controversy is the reason put forward by the Minister of Justice (in this case representing the Public Administration) on the right of asylum to Battisti. Mr. Grau holds that the Minister has the right to appear before the Court to explain his reasons and clarify his position. On the contrary, Mr. Peluso aims at avoiding any appearance of the Minister and grounding the decision on the brief of the Minister's lawyer[5]:

Case 5

> **Grau**: When there is a discussion before the court concerning the validity of a decision of the Public Administration […], the Administration shall be considered as a party.
> **Peluso**: [...] Why do you insist on claiming that the Minister of Justice has not expressed his reasons, or that his claims are not valid?
> **Grau**: Because what I have read is not enough for me.
> **Peluso**: Then, you should have told to the lawyer of the Minister of Justice to be clearer in writing his statement of defence.
> **Grau**: This claim of yours is a serious one.
> **Peluso**: Your excellence, you have said that you are not happy with the reasons put forward by the Minister of Justice!
> **Grau**: I have already said what I think. I will just vote.

Here Mr. Peluso reconstructs the implicit reasons underlying Mr. Grau's claim that the Minister has the right to be heard. According to Mr. Peluso, Mr. Grau wants the Minister heard because the reasons advanced in his brief are *not clear* enough. However, as shown in the opinion supporting his vote (Supremo Tribunal Federal, Ext 1085, Voto Eros Grau, at 5-8), Mr. Grau requested the hearing of the Minister because the Minister had the right of appearance, which in this case amounts to the *right to reject possible objections* to his reasons. Peluso, by reconstructing and distorting the reasoning supporting Grau's conclusion, can attack the reasonableness of his request. His move is grounded on the strategy of taking for granted potentially con-

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[5] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybTLVYQl2h0&feature=relmfu (Supremo Tribunal Federal - Canal Oficial) min. 4.30-5.35. (Accessed on 9 July 2012).

troversial enthymematic premises, which we represent as follows:

	GRAU's argument	PELUSO's interpretation of GRAU
IMPLICIT PREMISE	*The Administration has the right to reject possible objections to his reasons.*	*The statement of defence of the Administration is unclear.*
IMPLICIT MAJOR PREMISE	*Who has the right to reject possible objections shall be heard (shall be considered as a party).*	*Who advanced unclear reasons in his written briefs shall be heard (so that he can clarify his statements).*
EXPLICIT CONCLUSION	The Administration shall be considered as a party (it shall be heard).	The Administration shall be considered as a party (it shall be heard).

Figure 5: Distorting the implicit grounds of a claim

In this figure, it is clear how Peluso distorts Grau's implicit premise supporting his conclusion. Moreover, he increases the burden of attacking his straw man by taking for granted that his reconstruction is the accepted one ("why do you insist on claiming…").

The second example is taken from a statement delivered by Judge Scalia during the discussion on the constitutionality of the American health law (Affordable Care Act), requiring every citizen to purchase a mandate, or rather health insurance. In order to attack the health insurance mandate, Scalia used the following analogy[6]:

Case 6

> "Could you define the market—everybody has to buy food sooner or later, so you define the market as food, therefore, everybody is in the market; therefore, you can make people buy broccoli," Scalia said.

The argument can be paraphrased as follows[7]:

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[6] http://washington.cbslocal.com/2012/03/27/you-can-make-people-buy-broccoli-scalia-goes-after-health-care-law/ (Accessed on 9 July 2012).
[7] For the interepretation, see
http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-03-27/broccoli-bungling-defense-puts-health-care-at-risk-noah-feldman.html (Accessed on 9 July 2012).

	ADMINISTRATION	SCALIA's interpretation
IMPLICIT PREMISE	*Imposing the purchase of health insurance will result in everybody having it.*	*Health insurance is like broccoli (they are both a product on the market).*
IMPLICIT PREMISE	*The purpose of the law is to diminish the costs of health insurance.*	*The purpose of the law is to force people to buy a product.*
IMPLICIT MAJOR PREMISE	*If a regulation has positive effects on the population, it shall be approved.*	*Forcing the people to buy a specific product (broccoli) is unconstitutional.*
CONCLUSION	Health insurance shall be mandatory.	Requiring people to buy health insurance is unconstitutional.

Figure 6: Distorting the purpose of a proposal

Scalia used an analogy whose implicit premises misrepresent the interlocutor's position. Scalia presented the supporters of the Affordable Care Act as imposing the purchase of a product, not taking into consideration the essential differences between a commercial item and an essential need whose lack can affect the rights of others. Scalia implicitly distorts the purpose of the law, which was actually to extend health insurance to everybody, especially to the poor, reducing its costs.

The two aforementioned examples show the strategic importance of implicit premises and *kairos* in enthymemes. The implicit dimension of enthymemes can be used strategically to take for granted a misrepresentation of another's position. The two examples point out the crucial strategic role of implicitness in distorting the interlocutor's position. The speaker can reconstruct the tacit premise of the interlocutor's enthymeme to serve a specific goal, and take his (mis)reconstruction for granted to avoid the burden of proof. In both cases the speaker is extremely successful. In the first example the interlocutor does not even reply; in the second one, the rebuttal is extremely weak and ineffective.[8] These two examples underscore the crucial role of *kairos*. The speakers were successful because they could select premises that were *likely* to be the ones that grounded the interlocutor's argument. They provided implicit reconstructions that were plausible, or rather likely.

The effectiveness of the implicit straw man crucially depends on the likeliness of the distorted position. The speaker needs to choose the implicit premise in an opportune fashion: his misrepresentation needs to be credible, likely and, most importantly, acceptable by the audience. The relationship between

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[8] http://washington.cbslocal.com/2012/03/27/you-can-make-people-buy-broccoli-scalia-goes-after-health-care-law/ (Accessed on 9 July 2012).

effectiveness and opportunity becomes clear when things go wrong, namely when the strategy of implicit reconstruction and misrepresentation is unsuccessful. An extremely famous example is the notorious Berlusconi's reply to Martin Schulz before the European Parliament. In the discussion of 2 July 2003, the German delegate attacked the former Italian Prime Minister on several grounds: he criticized the racist statements of his political partner and member of the Italian delegation, Mr. Bossi, and the intelligence and the political abilities of Berlusconi's ministers. He pointed out the problem of conflict of interests in Italian politics and reminded the audience of Berlusconi's trials. Finally, he asked the Italian politician to apply the European directives in matter of criminal law. Schulz attacked Berlusconi from a purely political perspective, as his target was the clear incapacity and inadequacy of a public and political figure. Berlusconi replied as follows[9]:

Case 7

> Mister Schulz, I know that a producer in Italy is currently preparing a film on the Nazi concentration camps: I would propose you for the role of a kapo; you would be perfect!

The interpretation of the reasoning underlying this counter-attack was provided by Berlusconi himself, who later claimed to the press that Schulz attacked him personally and wickedly, and, therefore, the reply was on the same personal level.[10] Berlusconi interpreted an attack to his political and public dimension as a personal attack. He reinterpreted the implicit premises and the implicit conclusion of Schulz' criticism and used them as a justification for his offensive reply. We can represent the reasoning as follows:

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[9] http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/shotlist.cfm?ref=81521 (Accessed on 9 July 2012).
[10]

http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Politica/2003/07_Luglio/02/repliche.shtml (Accessed on 9 July 2012).

	SCHULZ	BERLUSCONI's Straw man
EXPLICIT PREMISE	The political and public behaviour of Berlusconi (and his delegation) is unacceptable [legal proceeding, racial statements…].	
IMPLICIT MAJOR PREMISE	*Whoever behaves in an unacceptable fashion from a political point of view is a bad representative of Italy and a bad politician.*	*Whoever behaves in an unacceptable fashion from a political point of view is a bad and wicked person.*
IMPLICIT/EXPLICIT CONCLUSION	*Berlusconi is a bad representative of Italy and a bad politician.*	Berlusconi is a bad and wicked man.

**Figure 7: Manipulating the subject matter
and the purpose of a move**

Berlusconi reconstructed the purpose of Schulz's state-
ments and misrepresented them as aimed at attacking him per-
sonally instead criticizing him from a public and political per-
spective. He distorted the very purpose of Schulz's attack, and
consequently he manipulated the implicit conclusion and the ex-
plicit premise of his enthymeme. Berlusconi took for granted
this misrepresentation in replying to him: he insulted him per-
sonally, putting the criticism of the German representative on
the same level of his vulgar joke. However, his reconstruction of
the implicit dimension of Schulz's move was completely unrea-
sonable and unlikely, and could not be anyhow accepted by the
audience.

This example is useful to show the crucial importance of
kairos and its relationship with ethics pointed out in the ancient
tradition. Berlusconi chose the implicit premises that "Schulz
resembles a Nazi," and that "Nazis (and those who are similar to
them) are bad." Both premises are totally inopportune in an in-
ternational and diplomatic context, especially from an ethical
perspective. For this reason, this move resulted in an interna-
tional scandal.[11]

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[11] Straw man can be combined with other strategies, such as auto-
victimization, which are based on more ethically opportune premises, and
lead to extremely successful outcomes. One of the clearest examples is Rom-
ney's straw man of Gingrich's attack: Romney distorts Gingrich's claim that
"Romney is the most anti-immigrant representative among us [the candi-
dates]" playing the part of the victim, stating that he cannot be racist and anti-
immigrant, considering that his father was born in Mexico.
(http://www.cfr.org/us-election-2012/republican-debate-transcript-
jacksonville-florida-january-2012/p27204. Accessed on 11 July 2012)

6. Conclusion

Enthymemes have been described by Aristotle as rhetorical in-struments, aimed at the persuasion of the audience. Why and how can the structure of the rhetorical syllogism be aimed at persuasion? A possible answer can be found in their pragmatic dimension, in reason why a premise can be "missing", or rather left unexpressed. By investigating the linguistic structure of an enthymeme, we have shown how tacit premises can be consid-ered as presuppositions of a higher level predicate, or rather "coherence relation" between the explicit premise and the con-clusion. Presuppositions are forms of implicit speech acts, char-acterized by specific conditions governing their possibility and reasonableness. In particular, the reasonableness of this act de-pends on the possibility of presuming the interlocutor's ac-ceptance (or knowledge) of the proposition that is left unex-pressed. On this view, presuppositions are linguistic phenomena that are crucially grounded on a pattern of presumptive reason-ing. The speaker presumes that a proposition is accepted by the interlocutor, and for this reason treats it as uncontroversial. This analysis of implicit premises accounts for two fundamental rhe-torical dimensions of enthymemes: their dialogical effects and their strategic uses.

From a dialogical perspective, the implicit move shifts the burden of proof onto the hearer, who needs to reject the move and provide evidence that the presupposed proposition is in fact not acceptable or shared. The presumptive dimension of enthy-memes is the cornerstone of *kairos*, which is the strategic aspect of rhetoric. The speaker can take a proposition for granted be-cause he presumes that it will be accepted *by his interlocutors*. Presumptions are different in strength, and depending on the community some propositions are considered more or less like-ly, more or less acceptable. For this reason, the effectiveness of an enthymeme is determined by the opportunity of its implicit premise, i.e., its appropriateness in a given context.

The dialogical effect of the presumptive and pragmatic dimension of the tacit premise and the effect of *kairos* emerge clearly in the fallacy of straw man. By performing this strategic move, the speaker distorts the interlocutor's viewpoint or his unstated commitments, and takes the modified position for granted. This implicit misrepresentation shifts the burden of proving the contrary onto the hearer, who needs to provide ar-guments in support of his own commitment. The effect of this strategy depends on the resemblance of the distorted premise

with the actual proposition, or with what is usually the case. In this sense, the representation of the interlocutor's (or third party's) words does not need to be true, but simply likely, similar to what usually happens or should be the case. In this sense enthymemes can be considered as strategies of presuming.

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