

Don't say that!

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ABSTRACT: According to pragma-dialectical methodology, a party in an argumentative discussion can be assumed to manoeuvre strategically between dialectical and rhetorical objectives. One confrontational form of strategic manoeuvring occurs when a critic charges an arguer with advancing a standpoint that has socially harmful consequences. In special situations this form of manoeuvring can be dialectically sound, for example when the standpoint is advanced in a way that damages the dialectical process. The boundary between fallacious and dialectically sound applications of this form of manoeuvring is examined by looking for the manoeuvring's soundness conditions.

KEY WORDS: confrontation stage, dialectical profile, negative consequences, standpoint, strategic manoeuvring

1. INTRODUCTION¹

A party in an argumentative discussion typically tries to achieve two objectives. First, he aims at getting the best of the discussion. As a protagonist he aims at persuading his antagonist of the acceptability of his standpoint while as an antagonist he will try to convince the protagonist to withdraw from defending his standpoint. Second, a party aims at keeping up the pretence of using only reasonable means of persuasion, that is, he professes to put forward contributions that advance a discussion on the merits of the case. In the so-called *pragma-dialectical* approach to argumentative discourse, these two objectives have been labelled the *rhetorical* and the *dialectical objectives* (van Eemeren and Houtlosser, 1999, 2002, 2003). The balancing of these rhetorical and dialectical objectives is named *strategic manoeuvring*.

This paper deals with a form of strategic manoeuvring that has played a prominent role in Dutch public debates about integration and immigrations issues. The manoeuvring amounts to pointing out that advancing a particular standpoint has harmful consequences and that, for that reason, the standpoint must be retracted, or at least, not be discussed any further. For example, when the politician Fortuyn

asserted "The Islam is backward, ..., it is simply a backward culture", a journalist responded with "You are stirring up hatred against foreigners". This is a form of *confrontational* manoeuvring in that the apparent aims have to do with the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, that is, the stage where the parties confront each other with their initial positions.

Such manoeuvring can easily derail into a fallacious attempt to shut out the other party's standpoint from the discussion. However, it would be of no use to an arguer if it would not have at least the semblance of reasonableness. In my presentation I will search for applications of this way of confrontational manoeuvring that are reasonable in the dialectical sense of advancing the resolution of a difference of opinion. I will end up with two plausible candidates of such dialectically sound manoeuvring. However, the main thrust of my argument will be that such cases are exceptional: this way of manoeuvring derails very easily into a fallacious contribution that hinders or even block the resolution process. Before examining this form of manoeuvring, I will introduce the pragma-dialectical methodology of analysing argumentative discourse.

2. STRATEGIC MANOEUVRING

According to pragma-dialectical methodology, as developed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst in the 1980's and 1990's, argumentative discourse is reconstructed and evaluated from the perspective of a *critical discussion*. According to this ideally reasonable procedure, a discussion starts from a difference of opinion and is exclusively aimed at *resolving* this issue. The notion of dispute resolution is the central notion that is elaborated in the explication of a critical discussion. A difference of opinion is only to be called resolved if both parties have agreed on the issue, either in favour of the standpoint or in favour of the other side, after having publicly tested the tenability of the standpoint in the light of the critical questions and objections raised by the antagonist.

The normative model specifies that the parties, named the *protagonist* and the *antagonist*, need to go through four discussion stages. They start with putting their difference of opinion into words in the *confrontation stage*. Then, in the *opening stage*, they have the opportunity to agree on procedural and material starting points that can be used in the next stage. In this stage, the *argumentation stage*, the parties exchange arguments and criticisms. They conclude the discussion in the *concluding stage* by deciding whether the difference has been resolved, and if so, in whose favour. In an *ideally reasonable* discussion, no

moves occur that hinder or obstruct the final aim of resolving the difference of opinion. With a set of fifteen rules, van Eemeren and Grootendorst specify this procedure (2004).

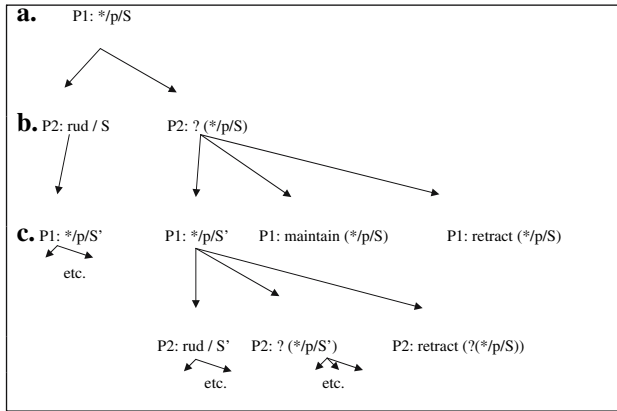
With the particulars of this critical procedure, the analyst has a clear stance from which to reconstruct those components from the discourse that are relevant, positively or negatively, to the resolution process. For instance, it is easy to imagine circumstances where a complaint can be justifiably reconstructed as a standpoint or as a critical question. After having reconstructed all the dialectically relevant elements of a discourse, the discourse can be evaluated by determining to what extent the argumentative elements in the discourse do in fact advance resolution of the difference of opinion. Argumentative contributions that are only construable as violating a rule for critical discussion are called *fallacious*.

Van Eemeren and Houtlosser have proposed to enrich this standard pragma-dialectical methodology by integrating rhetorical insights (1999, 2002, 2003). In their view, the reconstruction and evaluation of a discourse is helped by understanding the discourse, not only from the assumption that the parties are resolving their issues, but, in addition, also understanding the contributions as directed towards winning the assent of the party addressed. An arguer or critic can best be taken as trying to achieve two things at the same time: first, persuading the other party, second, resolving the difference of opinion. Such *strategic manoeuvring*, or balancing between dialectical and rhetorical objectives, is, in short, directed towards resolving the issue in one's own favour.

The dialectical and rhetorical objectives can be specified for each of the four stages of the critical discussion procedure. I will only be concerned with the first, the confrontation stage. The notion of the confrontation stage can be made more precise with the help of a dialectical profile (van Eemeren et al., 2005, cf. the discussion on dialogue profiles in Walton, 1999; Krabbe, 2002 and van Laar, 2003).

In the confrontation stage of a critical discussion, the parties are trying to find out whether there is a difference of opinion with respect to some issue, and if so, how this difference is to be put into words in a way that enables its resolution in the subsequent stages. The result is either a non-mixed difference, where one party has advanced a standpoint and where the other party has expressed critical doubt with respect to that standpoint, or a mixed dispute, where both parties have expressed opposite standpoints (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004, p. 60). I will restrict myself to the most elementary kind of dispute where only one party has advanced a standpoint.

In the account of Houtlosser (2001, p. 31), a standpoint is a formulated attitude, either positive or negative, with respect to an expressed



P1; P2	Party 1; party 2
*/p/S	a particular (i.e. positive or negative) attitude towards proposition p in formulation S ²
? (*p/S)	expressing doubt about either the tenability of this attitude towards the proposition as conveyed by S
maintain	move by which the confrontation stage is closed (enabling the start of the next, opening stage)
retract	move by which a position is retracted (this move ends the confrontation, but does not enable the start of the next stage)
rud	request or that he wants for a usage declarative
S'	a reformulation of S, such that S' is equally precise as or more precise ³ than S

proposition, that is then called the *opinion*. Adopting an attitude towards a proposition is not to be understood psychologically. Instead, it refers to the public commitment to either defend the proposition against criticism, in the case of a positive attitude, or to refute the proposition, in the case of a negative one. So, a standpoint has three components: the proposition, the attitude towards the proposition and the formulation of this attitude towards this proposition. The first two determine the heart and soul of the standpoint, the third is its more contingent mode of presentation.

Two out of the fifteen rules for critical discussion are operative in the confrontation stage (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004). According to the freedom rule for critical discussion, a party in the confrontation stage has the unconditional right to advance any standpoint and to adopt any critical position (p. 136). Rule 15 governs all the four stages of a critical discussion and states that a party has the right to request for usage declaratives, such as a definition, a clarifying remark or a disambiguating reformulation, that a party is obligated to

provide the appropriate clarifications when requested to do so, and that he has the unconditional right to provide usage declaratives, even when there is no such request.

A dialectical profile is a visual, tree-like representation of the possible ways an impeccable argumentative confrontation can develop. The nodes represent the kinds of moves that are allowed for the parties. A branching of arrows in n directions represents the obligation for the next party to make a choice of exactly one of these n choices. As the dialectical obligations are stated at an abstract level, the writer or speaker in a real discourse needs to instantiate these slots in the profile in order to follow the dialectical rules.

In a confrontation, the protagonist makes the first move by advancing his standpoint. The antagonist must respond, either by requesting for a clarification of the standpoint, or by expressing her critical doubt regarding the standpoint, or by withdrawing from the discussion. If the antagonist has requested for clarification, the protagonist is obligated to make his standpoint more precise. If the antagonist has raised critical doubt, the protagonist must either make it clear that he thinks his standpoint is in need of a clarifying reformulation, or that he maintains his standpoint in order to conclude the confrontation stage and to enter the next discussion stage, or that he wants to withdraw from the discussion by retracting his standpoint. (See van Laar and Mohammed, 2007 for a more complete treatment of dialectical profiles for the confrontation stage).

With the help of this specification of the confrontation stage, it is possible to specify the dialectical and rhetorical aims that can be at issue when parties pretend to contribute to the confrontation stage.

The main dialectical aim of following the confrontational procedure is to externalise a possible difference of opinion in a way that furthers its resolution. For instance, the formulation must not contain immunising expressions, nor must it convey the message that the standpoint is beyond criticism and in that sense *sacrosanct* (van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 2004, p. 166). In a real discourse the individual discussants are taken to be also concerned about aims that are rhetorical, rather than just dialectical. Given the specification of the confrontation stage, the rhetorical aim of a party that is directly relevant when he pretends to contribute to the confrontation stage, is either to make the confrontation stage result in a formulated difference of opinion that is favourable to his position, or to get the other party to withdraw from the discussion.⁴ Consider as a case in point an antagonist who tries to get the protagonist to choose a formulation that makes his position look harder to defend. In the light of such rhetorical objectives, the parties are considered to embody the roles of the protagonist and the antagonist. How will they give shape and content to

the abstract dialectical obligations, in other words, how can the slots in the profile be instantiated in an opportune manner?

There are several levels of complexity in the devices by which a party may try to bring closer his rhetorical aim, while at the same time keeping up the appearance of dialectical reasonableness. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (1999) distinguish between three aspects of strategic manoeuvring that classify such attempts: topical choice, audience adaptation and mode of presentation. In addition, the following three-fold distinction may bring more clarity on the different types of strategic manoeuvring we can expect when reconstructing an argumentative confrontation.

First, a party may come up with a contribution that can be reconstructed as an attempt to instantiate one single slot in the confrontational profile. For example, a discussant may simply advance a standpoint, or he may simply ask for a usage declarative.

Second, a party may make a contribution that can be reconstructed as a *sequence* of moves in the confrontational profile, in the same manner as complex argumentation is construable as an implicit discussion. For instance, a party may advance a standpoint and anticipate a possible request for a usage declarative by giving a disambiguating reformulation: "He is a Mussolini, I mean, he employs the same kind of populist rhetoric." This is a different kind of manoeuvring because if the protagonist wants to argue in a manner that is *optimally strategic*, the anticipated move must really be instrumental for the antagonist's attempt to win the discussion (Krabbe, 2001, cf. van Laar, 2007 for an application to the notion of one-sided argumentation). It would be illegitimate, for example, to anticipate superfluous and pointless requests for usage declaratives.

Third, a party may make a more indirect attempt to steer the course of the confrontation stage. He can perform speech acts that, although clearly relevant to the resolution process, cannot simply be reconstructed as moves or sequences of moves in the confrontation stage. Such manoeuvring can be dialectically reasonable or made to look that way by appealing to the conditions for critical discussion. A party can try to get the other party to replace a move or a sequence of moves by arguing that these moves obstruct the resolution process because they violate a rule for critical discussion (the following of which is considered a first order condition for conflict resolution, see van Eemeren and Grootendorst, 1992). Or he can try to get the other party to retract his position because a higher order condition for resolution is left unfulfilled. Such manoeuvring comments on how to discuss the issue in a fruitful way and can be reconstructed as a contribution to a procedural subdiscussion in the opening stage (cf. Krabbe, 2003 on metadialogue). Still, such manoeuvring can be aimed at influencing

the course of the confrontation stage. For example, the antagonist may argue that continuing the dialogue with the current formulation of the protagonist's standpoint is fruitless, and that the standpoint should be reformulated or even retracted for that reason. Confrontational manoeuvring by pointing out the alleged harmful consequences of advancing a standpoint can best be analysed as such an indirect form of manoeuvring that appeals to the appropriate conditions for dispute resolution.

3. POINTING OUT THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF ADVANCING A STANDPOINT

This form of confrontational manoeuvring is itself an argument. In recent Dutch public debates about immigration and integration issues, this kind of argumentation has played an important part, and it was employed by several of the parties engaged in the debate. The general pattern of reasoning goes:

Don't say that, because advancing this standpoint has the negative consequences C_1, \dots, C_n .

According to a premise that is left implicit, advancing this standpoint (at this point in time) is less desirable than avoiding its consequences C_1, \dots, C_n . This is a special application of the pragmatic argumentation scheme (Garssen, 2001, p. 92), where an incentive or evaluative standpoint is argued for either on the grounds of the positive consequences of the recommended act or on the ground of the negative consequences of the denounced act. It is special in that the incentive standpoint concerns the dialectical act of advancing a standpoint.

This manoeuvring is not to be confused with the *ad consequentiam* fallacy, where a *factual* standpoint is argued for by pointing out the negative *causal* consequences of adopting the *denial* of the standpoint, or by giving a negative *evaluation* of a *logical* consequence of it (Garssen, 2006). In our form of strategic manoeuvring the standpoint is not factual but, by definition, incentive or evaluative.

Pim Fortuyn is the Dutch politician who was murdered in May 2002 in order to stop his assumed damaging influence on society. One of his most controversial statements was done in an interview in February that year. The journalist's contribution in the following exchange can be analysed as an example of this form of strategic manoeuvring:

Fortuyn: The Islam is backward, ..., it is simply a backward culture.
 Journalist: You are stirring up hatred against foreigners. (My translation.
 Poorthuis and Wansink; 2002, p. 13)

Example 1

How to evaluate this response? The aim of dispute resolution seems to be at odds with posing any restrictions on the choice of a point of view. Still, stirring up hatred seems to be at odds with the dialectical ideal of critical discussion. From now on, I will search for applications of this way of manoeuvring that are dialectically sound. In order to find such reasonable cases, I will need to make some distinctions and put aside the variants that are dialectically illegitimate.

As we have seen, a standpoint is made up of a proposition, an attitude and a formulation. There is an additional aspect when we consider *the act* of advancing a standpoint: the circumstances in which the standpoint is put forward. When someone expresses a standpoint within a certain context of utterance, a critic can have four kinds of concerns about negative consequences. The negative consequences can be effectuated, simply by giving presence (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969, p. 116) to that *proposition*, or by making it clear that the protagonist adopts that very *attitude* towards the proposition, or by conveying the proposition with those *linguistic means*, or by doing any of these things *in these particular circumstances*.

Consequently, this form of strategic manoeuvring admits of four main variants. I will illustrate them by giving four imaginable kinds of responses to a position that has been adopted by the Dutch columnist Jan Blokker, who wrote that Fortuyn was “the Mussolini of the Twenty-first century” (Blokker, 2002, p. 4), a position that was soon after advocated by the chair of the right-winged liberal party, Eindhoven (Spong and Hammerstein, 2003, p. 26).⁵

(1) The antagonist may attempt to get the protagonist to stop talking about a particular proposition. In addition he may try to get him to talk about a (slightly) different proposition, and express an attitude towards that one. For instance, if the antagonist fears the consequences of talking about the analogy between the Dutch politician and Mussolini, he may try to steer the protagonist to express his views on the politician at issue with a different standpoint, with a different analogy for instance.

Arguer: He is a Mussolini

Critic: Don't make such comparisons. It will spoil the debate.

Example 2

(2) If the protagonist has expressed an attitude towards a particular proposition, the antagonist may attempt to get him to adopt a different attitude to the same proposition.

Arguer: He is a Mussolini

Critic: You shouldn't say that. *Your* supporters are going to hate *him* while *his* supporters are going to hate *you*. He is *not* a Mussolini.

Example 3

In the first two variants, the antagonist tries to get the protagonist to withdraw from the current confrontation stage, and possible to get him to start a new one. The third and fourth variants are aimed at changes within the confrontation stage or at continuing the confrontation stage at a different time.

(3) The antagonist may make an effort to get the protagonist to choose different means of presentation, for example to formulate his standpoint in a manner that is less offensive.

Arguer: He is a Mussolini

Critic: Don't be so brusque and offensive.

Example 4

(4) The antagonist may try to get the protagonist to wait for different circumstances to either give presence to this proposition, to express this attitude, or to use this formulation.

Arguer: He is a Mussolini

Critic: Given the heated political circumstances, this is a bad time for making such comparisons.

Example 5

These uses of this form of manoeuvring seem to be aimed at getting the protagonist to give a different formulation of his standpoint, or to wait for circumstances where such utterances are less harmful.

According to the first rule of the pragma-dialectical procedure for resolving differences of opinion, the parties in a critical discussion have the unconditional right to choose any attitude towards any proposition. We may presume that the first two variants of this form of manoeuvring violate the freedom rule for critical discussion and are fallacious. Because here the antagonist aims at shutting out the protagonist from giving presence to a proposition or from adopting a particular attitude towards it. In other words, the antagonist acts as if the protagonist has no other reasonable choice than to withdraw from the confrontation stage. From the perspective of our specification of the confrontation stage, that is incorrect.

There is, however, an exception to be made. The position itself must not obstruct the resolution process by expressing its own immunity from criticism or by attacking the antagonist personally. For instance, suppose the protagonist advances standpoints such as “whatever I say is beyond criticism” or “you, antagonist, are too stupid and too predisposed to have a discussion with”. Then he makes resolution of any difference of opinion regarding *this* standpoint as good as impossible. So, the expression of a positive attitude towards this proposition itself is fallacious and should not be advanced in a critical discussion. With this proviso, we can rule out the first two variants as fallacious.

Of course, committing a fallacy by trying to get the protagonist withdraw his standpoint can be a wise or morally good thing to do. If the consequence of advancing a standpoint is that someone’s life becomes threatened, you should try to get the protagonist to shut up, at least from a moral or prudential point of view. But such a consideration does not make the attempt *logically* or *dialectically* sound. If, on the other hand, this form of manoeuvring is used in order to get the protagonist to reformulate his position or to continue with the confrontation in different circumstances, this may, potentially, be helpful for resolving the issue, and in that light dialectically sound. So, we will continue our search for legitimate instances in the latter two variants only.

There is a further distinction to be made in the kind of consequences that the critic appeals to. The critic may present the consequences as being *dialectically relevant* or present them without such a claim. For instance, the critic may allege that advancing the standpoint, in these problematic circumstances, or presented in this controversial manner, will probably lead to the termination of the discussion, without the difference of opinion having been resolved. Crowds may become angry and violent, and the persons who were engaged in the debate may become too scared to vent their thoughts on the issue. Such events would slow down or even hamper an open discussion on the issue, and are in that sense possible consequences that are dialectically relevant.

If the antagonist points out such dialectically relevant consequences, then the antagonist can be taken to refer to the *conditions* for conflict resolution. Either he is pointing out that the *higher order* conditions will be left unfulfilled, or that a *rule* for critical discussion is violated by advancing the standpoint in such a way or in this context. In the latter case, our form of manoeuvring amounts to a kind of *fallacy criticism* (cf. Krabbe, 2002). For example, a critic may point out that by bringing forward this standpoint, the standpoint is declared sacrosanct, having the consequence that all opposition is discouraged. Or he may explain that the standpoint is formulated in an immunizing way,

having the effect that it cannot be really tested. Or that the opposition is silenced by alluding to biases in the opposition.

Still, the consequences alluded to by the antagonist do not need to have anything to do with the quality of the (public) discussion. For instance, a critic may point out that the prime minister's venturing a gloomy view of the economic prospects has itself a negative influence on the economy. Or, to take a standard *ad misericordiam* example, the antagonist may point out that the teachers view on the quality of an exam will result in his terminating his studies. A concern for the economy, or for someone's own well-being, can be a good political, moral or prudential reason for retracting a standpoint, but it is not a sound reason from the perspective of *resolving* an issue about the economy or the quality of an exam. When the indicated consequences are dialectically irrelevant, the manoeuvring cannot be dialectically sound. So, from now on, I will only consider the variants where the consequences have some dialectical relevance.

The third distinction is a more subtle one and deals with whether the dialectically relevant consequences concern the current critical discussion, or some other possible discussion. Let's consider an example. According to an antagonist, advancing this standpoint stirs up hatred against some minority group and spoils the discussion between the supporters of the protagonist and the members of the minority group. Suppose, the antagonist does not belong to this minority group. Then, according to the antagonist, the protagonist does not spoil their own discussion, but another possible discussion between the protagonist with members of this minority group. It is possible, therefore, that the conditions for resolution are still fulfilled in the *current* discussion. Seen from the perspective of the current critical discussion, the antagonist tries to shut out the protagonist from defending his standpoint, even though his standpoint does not harm the resolution of their difference of opinion. That makes this variant illegitimate in this discussion, even though it might be legitimate in a related discussion, with different participants.

Suppose, on the contrary, that the consequences do involve the antagonist. Then he may justifiably claim that he has become too angry or too scared to continue this discussion in a fruitful way or that the protagonist has made it difficult to put the standpoint to a critical test. The force of the antagonist's manoeuvring then, is that the standpoint has led to a situation where a higher order condition for resolution is no longer fulfilled or where a discussion rule has been violated. So, from now on, we only consider standpoints that, according to the antagonist, has harmful dialectical consequences for their own critical discussion. (Of course, I am not defending that an arguer is allowed to, for example, insult anybody outside of the narrow

confines of one critical discussion. My position is just that from the perspective of dialectic, doing harm to other people than one's interlocutor is not in itself a *fallacy* in that discussion, how bad it may be in other respects or in other possible discussions).

The fourth and last distinction is about who is responsible for the possible dialectical damage. Given that advancing the standpoint has undesirable effects on the discussion, it is an open question who is to be held responsible for the effects. Of course, it might be the protagonist. He may insult his antagonist, making it psychologically hard to critically test the standpoint. Or he may immunise his standpoint, making it logically hard to test the standpoint. But, sometimes the antagonist can be held responsible. Even if the standpoint's formulation or the timing of its utterance makes it psychologically impossible for the antagonist to continue the discussion, we want in some cases to hold the antagonist responsible, for instance when we suppose him to be oversensitive and too easily upset. In such cases the criticism is misdirected. So, only when the protagonist is to be held responsible for the possible harm to the discussion, this form of strategic manoeuvring can be legitimate.

These distinctions lead to the following four soundness conditions for this form of confrontational manoeuvring in a particular discussion *D*.

1. the manoeuvring is not aimed at withholding the protagonist from giving presence to a specific proposition or from adopting a specific attitude towards it, unless the position states its own 'sanctity' or its immunity from criticism;
2. the manoeuvring only refers to harmful consequences that are dialectically relevant;
3. the harmful consequences pertain to discussion *D*, and not only to other discussions;
4. the protagonist can be held responsible for these consequences.

In addition there are two soundness conditions that concern the implicit and explicit premises:

5. that advancing the standpoint has the consequences C_1, \dots, C_n is not falsely presented as a common starting point;
6. that avoiding these consequences is preferable to advancing the standpoint, is not falsely presented as a common starting point.

Instantiations of this form of strategic manoeuvring that do not satisfy all six conditions are to be considered derailed and fallacious.

This list of soundness conditions is helpful when reconstructing the dialectical components of contributions where an arguer is charged with the consequences of his standpoint. Consider again example 1:

Fortuyn: The Islam is a backward culture.

Journalist: You are stirring up hatred against foreigners.

Example 1

The journalist's charge can be understood in such a way that the antagonist requests the protagonist to either formulate the same position in less controversial terms, or to wait for more congenial circumstances. It is quite plausible to attach at least some dialectical relevance to the bringing about of hatred, for in such circumstances we cannot expect a good discussion to unfold. However, this was a kind of reaction that came also from non-Islamic discussants.⁶ The legitimacy of the charge is partly dependent upon whether the standpoint contains an *ad hominem* attack on the antagonist, or whether it attacks only persons from outside the current discussion. The journalist's choice of words *foreigners* suggests that he does not charge Fortuyn with spoiling their current discussion, but the discussions that Fortuyn is engaged in with the people referred to as *foreigners*. So, from the perspective of resolving the difference of opinion between Fortuyn and the journalist, and in so far as the journalist gives voice to an antagonist that is not personally attacked by Fortuyn, this form of strategic manoeuvring is illegitimate, because it does not satisfy condition 3.

Two examples of potentially sound applications are the following, even though I will still be unable to decide on its legitimacy:

Suppose the antagonist is a professed Muslim, that the protagonist advances the standpoint that the Islam is a backward culture and, more than that, that all Muslims are too backward to have a good, critical conversation with. The antagonist then raises the objection: "Don't say that. You ruin our discussion," giving the protagonist the opportunity to reformulate his position and getting the discussion back on track again.

Example 6

One central standpoint in Hirsi Ali's movie *Submission* is that the Islam oppresses women. Many Muslims objected that they consider the mode of presentation, by projecting Quran texts on naked bodies, insulting and humiliating.

Example 7

The critic's charge that the standpoint has harmful consequences seems to satisfy the conditions 1–5. However, it remains a controver-

sial issue whether it satisfies the last condition. These controversial standpoints and these modes of presenting them, have been defended by alluding to positive consequences, in particular to the positive dialectical consequence of enabling discussions on issues that were formerly considered taboo. (That was also the gist of Fortuyn's response to the charge of the journalist).

Now that we have seen how this form of strategic manoeuvring can be dialectically sound, we are in the position to state the apparent dialectical objective of this kind of manoeuvring. The antagonist puts forward such argumentation with the dialectical aim to arrive at a formulated difference of opinion that provides a proper, workable starting point for the argumentation and concluding stage of the critical discussion. The antagonist can do this directly by putting forward the moves that are needed to arrive at such a difference of opinion. But in this form of manoeuvring it is done indirectly by claiming to clear up an element that disturbs the resolution process, that is, the standpoint's formulation or its timing. The apparently intended result is either that the protagonist provides a reformulation based on a usage declarative, or continues the discussion at a different time, or, in the exceptional case, withdraws his position if it is inherently fallacious.

A party's core rhetorical objective in an argumentative confrontation is to make the confrontation result in a formulated difference of opinion that provides this party with the best chances of winning over the other party. For instance, the antagonist may expect that it will be easier to attack a new standpoint, or a new formulation, or the same standpoint within different circumstances. The manoeuvring may also serve rhetorical objectives that are less directly connected with the confrontation stage, for instance, when he expects that a withdrawal of the standpoint will damage the credibility of the protagonist, as perceived by the audience, and so will make it harder for him to defend standpoints successfully to that audience.

Having stated the apparent dialectical and rhetorical goals, we can specify what it means to manoeuvre strategically in this specific manner: by pointing out the harmful consequences of advancing the standpoint, the antagonist tries to influence the result of the confrontation stage in his own favour, while at the same time pretending to do so in a manner that serves the optimal unfolding of the confrontation stage.

4. CONCLUSION

This form of strategic manoeuvring easily derails, as we have seen in the discussion on the soundness conditions. Still, even derailed substantiations of this kind of criticism can be, depending on the circum-

stances, have the semblance of reasonableness, for at least three reasons. First, this kind of criticism is brought forward with the pretence of reasonableness. Second, there exist applications of this form of strategic manoeuvring that are dialectically legitimate. As the difference with illegitimate applications is subtle, someone may fail to detect the fault in a fallacious case. Third, this kind of manoeuvring takes place in circumstances where refraining from advancing the standpoint can be the most reasonable choice when seen from a moral or economic or political or personal perspective. If one fails to make the distinction between dialectical virtues and other ones, one may easily fail to see that the charge is dialectically unsound.

NOTES

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² In van Laar and Mohammed (2007) a negative attitude towards *p* is reconstructed as a positive attitude towards the denial of *p*.

³ That a linguistic expression is a more precise than a linguistic expression *b* means that all reasonable or common interpretations of *b* are reasonable or common interpretations of *a* but not vice versa; that *a* is as precise as *b* means that they share all reasonable or common interpretations (cf. Naess, 1966, p. 31).

⁴ When party 1 retracts from the discussion this is considered some kind of loss, even though the other party cannot be said to have won the discussion.

⁵ According to Fortuyn's lawyers, this statement is part of the cause of Fortuyn's death. After Fortuyn had been killed, some public figures, among which Eenhoorn, have later been charged with stirring up hatred against Fortuyn by two criminal lawyers. However, the Public Prosecutor refused to take legal actions against them.

⁶ For instance, from Wallage, *NRC Handelsblad*, December 19, 2003.

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