

# THE ARGUMENTATIVE USES OF EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

This paper analyzes selected examples of uses of argumentation tactics that exploit emotive language, many of them criticized as deceptive and even fallacious by classical and recent sources, including current informal logic textbooks. The analysis is based on six argumentation schemes, and an account of the dialectical setting in which these schemes are used. The three conclusions are (1) that such uses of emotive language are often reasonable and necessary in argumentation based on values, (2) but that they are defeasible, and hence need to be seen as open to critical questioning (3) and that when they are used fallaciously, it is because they interfere with critical questioning or conceal the need for it. The analysis furnishes criteria for distinguishing between arguments based on the use of emotive words that are reasonable tools of persuasion, and those that are fallacious tactics used to conceal and distort information.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the logical boundaries of loaded words, euphemisms and persuasive definitions. The analysis of the argumentative uses of emotive words will be carried out based on argumentation schemes, dialectical concepts such as bias and burden of proof, and ethical principles such as values and value judgment. The object of our inquiry is emotive words, namely words which have an emotive value often exploited in order to advocate a point of view. There may be nothing wrong with using them to persuade an audience, but when emotive language is used to distort the image of reality it becomes deceptive and even fallacious. Determining the difference between reasonable and manipulative uses of emotive terms in arguments is a task that has often been taken up by logic textbooks, beginning with the ancient dialectical tradition.

On our view, a term is considered emotive if it leads the interlocutor to draw a value judgment on the fragment of reality the term is used to refer to. Emotive words therefore stimulate a classification of the kind good/bad on the grounds of values commonly shared by the community to which the interlocutors belong. Such terms can be used reasonably to support certain decisions or evaluations, and thus frame a discussion in a certain way; however, emotive language can sometimes be used in a tricky way, making it seem like no counter-arguments can be successful, or even required. The speaker, by using emotive words in certain ways, can make it seem like that is no need to accept, or even to consider, a contrary viewpoint, because doing so would stem from unacceptable values.

The starting point of our proposal is the concept of emotion. Emotive language is a particular dialectical and rhetorical strategy whose distinctive feature is the persuasion through emotions. First we need to have some starting points on what emotions are, and how it is possible to describe argumentatively what appears to be pure domain of psychology or individual feelings.

Our analysis is structured in four steps. First, we need to establish how emotive language can be a persuasive technique. For this purpose, we will offer a brief overview on

ancient dialectical theories, which described different argumentative uses of emotive words and inquired into the dialectical or rhetorical principles such uses were grounded on. At a second level, we will show in detail what the different strategies are and classify them according to some basic argumentative principles, namely the relation between a word and the shared knowledge, and the type of foundation on which a conclusion is based. After distinguishing between different types of uses and structures, the next step is to identify common reasoning patterns, starting from the concepts of emotion and value judgment. In particular, the different reasoning patterns underlying the rationality of emotions will be presented. Finally, this theoretical framework will be applied to fallacious uses of emotive words, and the different deceptive techniques grounded on emotive language will be compared, examined, and explained starting from basic principles such as presupposition and burden of proof.

## 2. THE ARGUMENTATIVE USE OF EMOTIVE WORDS IN THE TRADITION

The use of emotive and loaded language and the notion of persuasive definition were studied in ancient rhetoric under the heading of fallacious strategies of ellipsis or exaggeration, or under the category of “indignant language”. The use of definitions to advocate a cause was analyzed as a rhetorical tactic based on either proper or improper definitions. The analysis of such persuasive sophistical moves has also been pursued in contemporary theories. Emotive language is often classified as “question-begging epithets”, while the notion of persuasive definition and quasi-definition cover the complex field of the persuasive use of definition.

### 2.1 *The Aristotelian tradition*

In his *Rhetoric*, when describing the apparent enthymemes, or fallacious techniques, Aristotle treats a rhetorical strategy called *amplificatio* (see Calboli Montefusco, 2004), or ‘indignant language’ (*Rhetoric* II, 24, 3):

This [fallacious topic] occurs when the “one amplifies the action without showing that it was performed; for when the accused amplifies the charge, he causes to appear that he has not committed the action, or when the accuser goes into rage he makes it appear that the defendant has.

As Grimaldi (1988) and Calboli Montefusco (2004) put it, amplification cannot be classified as a topic, a pattern of reasoning supporting a conclusion in an enthymeme, but rather as a full argument, in which the conclusion is supported by implicit premises. We can analyze for instance the following example of amplification:

#### **Case 1**

Bob is a bloody criminal

The speaker attributes a classification to the subject ('to be a bloody criminal') taking for granted the backing of such classification (for instance, 'Bob killed John'), and the general evaluative assumption that such action is good or bad (for instance, 'to be a bloody criminal is bad'). The first assumption, namely the factual premise that the subject committed an illegal action, may be not conceded by the interlocutor; in this case, the speaker would (unduly) support a value judgment without providing evidence to back it. The classification is legitimate in the event the grounds on which it stands are accepted by the hearer; however, the use of emotive language or amplification is used to disguise the need to prove the claim. The phrasing of the claim to be proved in emotive language to make it appear more or less serious, gives a semblance of appearance that the accused has or has not committed the offence.

On the other hand, a fragment of reality can be classified under a verbal category based on false reasoning. Using an example by Aristotle, a person can be called 'high-minded' because «looking down on the society of the multitude he passed his time by himself on Mount Ida» (*Rhetoric* II, 24, 7). In this case, the attribute is predicated of the subject on the basis of fallacious reasoning from affirming the consequent; since high-minded people have this quality, the person having this quality is high-minded.

If we analyze and compare the rhetorical strategies mentioned above, we can notice that in the first case false or not shared commitments are attributed to the hearer, while in the second case an incorrect inference from property or definition leads to an unwarranted conclusion. In this case, the speaker takes for granted that an accident, or non-characteristic feature, is in fact a definition or 'essential' property of the attribute 'high-minded'. Thus, while 'a man characterized by elevate ideals or conduct' is 'highly-minded', this predicate is not necessarily attributed to a man 'looking down on the society of the multitude'.

This latter strategy is extremely relevant to the rhetorical line of argument from definition. Aristotle highlights the uses of definition and classification in the chapter of the *Rhetoric* dedicated to the *topoi* used to draw reasonable conclusion. The speakers, by «grasping at the essence of a thing, draw syllogistically conclusions about the subject they are discussing» (*Rhetoric* II, 23, 8). For instance, Aristotle gives the following examples (*Rhetoric* II, 23, 8):

## Case 2

And [another is] the reason Socrates gave for refusing to visit Archealus: for he said *hybris* was just as much an inability on the part of those benefited to return a favor as [it was the retaliation by] those harmed.

This strategy is based upon a definition that can be accepted by the other party, since it grasps the essence of the concept, which corresponds to the proper or common use of the term. By reasoning from an accepted, proper meaning of a term, a definition that is acceptable by the other party can be proposed as an argument to justify a classification of an event or object. The definition itself needs to be backed by evidence when the use of the word is controversial (*Rhetoric* II, 23, 8):

And another example is, as Iphicrates argued, that the best person is the most noble; for there was no noble quality in Hamodius and Aristogiton until they did something noble, while he himself was more like them than his opponent was: "At least, my deeds are not like those of Hamodius and Aristogiton than yours are".

From this account of Aristotelian rhetorical theory, we can appreciate why the use of a definition or of emotive language to construct an argument needs to be backed by evidence, whereas this need may be masked by strategic manipulations.

## 2.2 The dialectical Latin tradition

In the early Latin tradition we find an analogous account of the manipulative use of words. In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cornificius distinguishes between the use of emotive words and the construction of false definitions to attribute a word to a subject. In this work, the treatment of definition is placed into the second stage of the ideal subdivision of an argumentative discussion, namely the definitive *stasis* (issue). This dialogical level is concerned with the classification of the fragment of reality relevant to the standpoints. On the other hand, the emotive words are discussed in the *stasis* of qualification, in which the facts, already classified, are assessed, qualified and compared with other deeds.

In the *status* (or issue) of qualification, if applied to legal discussions, the prosecution's purpose is to cause indignation with a view to lead the judge to condemn the defendant. The defense aims at showing that it was not the plaintiff's fault, or that the plaintiff had no intention of acting in such a way, or that he did not want such a consequence to occur<sup>1</sup>. While the accusation depicts the alleged fact as discreditable by means of indignant language, the defense presents that same fact as not discreditable, usually by looking at the circumstances in which it occurred and to the intentions of the defendant (Ciceronis *De Inventione*, II, 33). The most common strategies available to the prosecution are the use of indignant language, the exaggeration of the offenses, and the qualification of facts that are still matter of dispute. In these dialogical situations the emotive use of language based on argument from values plays a crucial role, as analyzed in section 3. A clear example of the argumentative function of indignant language can be found in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (II, 49):

By means of the seventh commonplace we show it is a foul crime, cruel, sacrilegious, and tyrannical; such a crime as the outraging of women, or one of those crimes that incite wars and life-and-death struggles with enemies of the state.

Here indignant language is used to move the affections of the hearers and support the judgment. This move can be used to rebut an appeal *ad misericordiam*, by exaggerating the offences (*De Inventione*, II, 36):

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<sup>1</sup> Compare also to Cicero's *On Invention*: «And the offence of which he is now accused must be extenuated and made to appear as trifling as possible; and it must be shown to be discreditable, or at all events inexpedient, to punish such a man as he is». (Cicero, *De Inventione*, II, 35).

But the adversary will exaggerate the offences; he will say that nothing was done ignorantly, but that everything was the result of deliberate wickedness and cruelty. He will show that the accused person has been pitiless, arrogant, and (if he possibly can) at all times disaffected, and that he cannot by any possibility be rendered friendly.

These strategies can be associated with fallacious moves. Cicero observes that sometimes terms can be redefined by using dubious or unacceptable definitions, slanting the meaning of the term itself by adding emotional charge. Moreover, on his view, indignant terms can be also used to describe a situation which is still in dispute, and whose characteristics are not shared by the interlocutors. In this case, the pre-requisite for the attribution of a predicate, that is the agreement on the fundamental features presupposed by the predicate, fails and the move appears as unreasonable. For instance we can consider the following case (Ciceronis *De Inventione*, I, 49):

That is self-evident, about which there is no dispute at all. As if any one while accusing Orestes were to make it quite plain that his mother had been put to death by him. That is a disputable definition, when the very thing which we are amplifying is a matter in dispute. As if any one, while accusing Ulysses, were to dwell on this point particularly, that it is a scandalous thing that the bravest of men, Ajax, should have been slain by a most inactive man.

Here indignant qualifications, such as 'to kill', are attributed to facts, such as the death of Oreste's mother by her son, not accepted by the other party. The speaker takes for granted facts that the interlocutor has not considered to be true.

Cicero distinguishes the strategy of classifying an event or thing by taking for granted facts which have not been agreed upon by the parties from the strategy of redefining the predicate. The speaker can redefine a term such as in the following case (*De Inventione*, I, 49):

### Case 3

That man cannot be wise who neglects money. But Socrates neglected money; therefore he was not wise.

In this example, the definition of 'to be not wise' has been modified, using a system of values (money) that can be objected to by the interlocutor. The definition, left without any qualification, can be considered as unacceptable by many, and therefore its use would be controversial.

In his treatise, Cicero highlights another definitional strategy, not based upon the modification of the characteristics an entity is required to have to be classified in a certain way (the description of the concept), but on a qualification of the subject (*De Inventione*, I, 49):

### Case 4

He is seditious who is a bad and useless citizen.

A similar case can be also found in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (II, 41):

**Case 5**

An informer, in short, is worthy of death; for he is a wicked and dangerous citizen.

The purpose of such definitions is not to clarify the meaning of a word, or to describe it, as they apply to a great variety of faults; instead, the goal of such definitions is to highlight the negative features of the *definiendum*, emphasizing their negative evaluation. For instance, in both cases the offense is amplified by listing derogatory qualifications.

Definitions can be fallaciously used not simply to emphasize, but to change the value judgment on the *definiendum*. As in case 3 above, the definition cannot be accepted, since it conflicts with the common evaluation of the *definiendum*. Unlike case 3, this type of definitional strategy is not aimed at modifying the attribution of the defined predicate, but the value judgment on it, such as in the following case (*De Inventione*, I, 49):

**Case 6**

Wisdom is knowledge how to acquire money.

**Case 7**

Folly is a desire of inordinate glory.

While case 4 represents the redefinition of a word, in which the original positive evaluation of the *definiendum* is completely altered, in case 5 a word referring to a concept which cannot be considered neutral from an evaluative point of view is redefined in such fashion that it looks positive.

The existence of such strategies of redefinition shows how definition was considered in the Latin tradition as an instrument for altering the classification or the evaluation of things or events. Definitions were thought of as argumentative instruments. The existence of several different definitions of the same concept was reconciled within the dialectical theory using a dialogical approach to definition. According to Cicero, in order to rebut a classification the interlocutor needs to undercut the definitional grounds on which it stands (Ciceronis *De Inventione*, II, 32):

In the next place, it will be well to introduce a definition of necessity, or of accident, or of ignorance, and to add instances to that definition, in which ignorance, or accident, or necessity appear to have operated; and to distinguish between such instances and the allegations put forward by the accused person; (that is to say, to show that there is no resemblance between them;) because this was a lighter or an easier matter, or one which did not admit of any one's being ignorant respecting it, or one which gave no room for accident or necessity. After that it must be shown that it might have been avoided; and, that the accused person might have prevented it if he had done this thing, or that thing; or that he might have guarded against being forced to act in such a manner. And it is desirable to prove by definitions that this conduct of his ought not to be called imprudence, or accident, or necessity; but indolence, indifference, or fatuity.

The existence and use of different definitions does not mean that definitions are all equal. According to Cicero, in order to undermine a classification the interlocutor needs to support a conflicting definition, backing it through examples of classifications which are commonly accepted. Definitions can therefore be the grounds of conflicts of classification of reality, and become standpoints when a classification is not accepted.

On Cicero's and Cornificius view, definitions were therefore conceived as argumentative instruments for altering the evaluation of facts or things; however, they were not considered as arbitrary descriptions of concepts. In the *De Inventione* a dialectical approach to definition is envisaged: on this perspective, conflicts of definition need to be resolved through argumentation, and the best definition can be identified as the definition which has been more strongly supported by arguments.

### 2.3 The rhetorical Latin tradition

As seen above, the dialectical approach to emotive "loaded terms" was focused on their use in the dialogical stages of definition and qualification, on their dialectical effects and the possible dialectical resolution of classification conflicts.

Quintilian discusses the loaded terms from a more rhetorical point of view, describing the different strategies used to amplify an accusation. In the *Institutio Oratoria* the use, the effects and the different strategies of what is called 'amplification' are described. 'Amplification' is the emotional emphasis on a fragment of reality, and shows the close connection between classification and qualification. By changing the classification of a fact, or using a different word to refer to it, its evaluation can be also be altered, such as in the case below (*Institutio Oratoria*, VIII, 4, 1):

#### Case 8

For example, we may say that a man who was beaten was murdered, or that a dishonest fellow is a robber, or, on the other hand, we may say that one who struck another merely touched him, and that one who wounded another merely hurt him.

Amplification can be used to modify or emphasize the value judgment on the object of predication. A person can be «not a simple fornicator, but a violator of all chastity», «not a mere assassin, but "a most cruel executioner of our countrymen and allies» (*Institutio Oratoria*, VIII, 4, 2). This technique can be extremely useful when the facts have been already established, and the discussion is focussed on how it can be qualified or judged. An offence can be amplified or attenuated and thereby judged as a more or less serious crime than it would have been. Such strategy, in the *stasis* model, would be at the qualification level.

At the definitional level, amplification can be used to support a particular classification. The emphasis of some features is in this case used to undermine a previous classification, and back a different categorization of a fact. For instance we can consider the case below (*Institutio Oratoria*, VIII, 4, 1):

### Case 9

If a widow lives freely, if being by nature bold she throws restraint to the winds, makes wealth an excuse for luxury, and shows strong passions for playing the harlot, would this be a reason for my regarding a man who was somewhat free in his method of saluting her to be an adulterer?

In this case, the amplification of the widow's immodesty through the predicate 'harlot' becomes a ground to rebut the accusation that her lover was an adulterer, but in fact a simple 'client'.

The rhetorical approach to emotive words is grounded on a particular account of definition. The classification, or naming, of a fragment of reality, always stems from a particular definition of the word used. On Quintilian's view, definitions are instruments to serve a particular purpose, and therefore needs to be chosen accordingly to one's communicative goal (*Institutio Oratoria*, VII, 3, 21):

On the other hand, we shall ensure the right definition, of we first make up our minds what it is precisely that we desire to effect: for, this done, we shall be able to suit our words to serve our purpose.

A definition, on this perspective, is an extremely effective instrument for a speaker to achieve his goal in a discussion or to prevent the other party from achieving his own. The definition of a commonly shared concept can be broadened or narrowed for the predicate to apply to a certain reality. For instance we can consider the following case (*Institutio Oratoria*, VII, 3, 21-22):

A man who has stolen private money for a temple is accused of sacrilege. [...] It is therefore debated whether the act constitutes sacrilege. The accuser employs this term on the ground that the money was stolen from a temple: the accused denies that the act is sacrilege, on the ground that the money stolen was private property, but admits that it is theft. The prosecutor will therefore give the following definitions, "It is sacrilege to steal anything from a sacred place." The accused will reply with another definition, "It is sacrilege to steal something sacred."

The first definition broadens the concept of sacrilege to anything in a sacred place, conflicting with the common view. Even though definitions can be chosen to defend a viewpoint, this does not mean that they are arbitrary. Quintilian shows how the possibility of defining a concept in different ways does not mean that the definition thus obtained is acceptable or valid. A definition need to be assessed and compared to what is commonly known, and can be overthrown by showing that it is simply false, or too broad. Definitions are therefore standpoints which need to be supported by arguments from etymology, or characteristics of the definition, such as peculiarity (or convertibility). A good definition, in this latter case, needs to be shown to be convertible with the concept defined and to distinguish it from all the other concepts (Quintiliani *Institutio Oratoria*, VII, 3, 25).

### 2.4 A dialogical approach to value-laden words



In the Latin tradition the use of loaded words, or words having an argumentative power as a result of value judgment implicitly conveyed, was inquired into in both dialectical and rhetorical works. Words were shown to carry out significant dialogical effects, such as steering the emotions and judgment of the interlocutor by amplifying or diminishing the seriousness of an action. The use of words, however, was not considered free or arbitrary. The use of a 'loaded word', or rather a 'value laden word' could be challenged and rebutted. The problem of determining whether or not a word could be used was analyzed through the relations between words and definitions. The determination of the correct use of a word was shifted on the assessment of its definition. Rhetorical effectiveness (Van Eemeren & Houtlosser, 2002; 2006) was reconciled with the dialectical standard of reasonableness using a dialogical approach to definition. The controversial use of a word needs to be supported by definitional arguments when challenged, whose force hinged on their acceptability for the majority of speakers. Conflicts of words were therefore resolved resorting by conflicts of definitions. Dialogues on definitions were thought of as argumentative dialogues, in which the strongest definition was taken to be the definition best supported by arguments grounded on what is commonly accepted, namely the common knowledge.

### 3. THE USES OF EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

Using these ancient theories it is possible to identify many argument strategies concerning emotive language and the related fallacies that are nowadays studied under the labels of 'loaded words', 'question-begging epithets', and 'persuasive definitions'. An extremely interesting mapping of the most frequent manipulative strategies grounded upon the use of emotions is the article by George Orwell (1946) "Politics and the English Language". Orwell highlights different types of fallacious moves in which words are used to prevent the reader from understanding the fragment of reality they refer to: they become masks, instead of signs.

The first strategy is the use of metaphors or euphemisms to conceal particular concepts. Euphemisms and metaphors can refer to many different concepts. For instance, 'pacification' may refer to different types of processes aimed at resolving conflicts, including ones leading to war. A precise representation of their meaning cannot be often provided, and therefore an exact evaluation of their referent may be impossible. A second strategy is the use of indeterminate words, such as 'Fascist', 'Communist', or 'der Wille des Volks' (the will of people) (see also Rigotti, 2005). The first two words are commonly negatively evaluated; however, their meaning, when they are used to classify present state of affairs or decisions, is unclear and undetermined. The will of people, on the contrary, is usually associated with a positive state of affairs; however, what actually is the will of people in a given situation is indeterminate, and often extremely hard to ascertain. The positive evaluation the speakers usually associated with such a concept is often directed towards an unknown referent. The third and subtlest strategy is the exploitation of definitions for categorizing reality. This technique is grounded on the fallacy of ambiguity: the speaker introduces an ambiguity by introducing a new, not shared definition of a concept. Such ambiguity is then used to direct the emotions usually associated to the old

definition towards the new referent of the word. For instance, dictatorships often redefine the concept of democracy to classify their regime as 'democratic'. The new definition often clashes with the commonly shared understanding of what a democracy is, but the word, carrying a positive evaluation, can be attributed to a form of government that is usually condemned. All these techniques show how emotive language can be used to cover up reality and lead the hearers or readers to evaluate a situation they do not fully know. However, important differences need to be drawn between the different uses of emotive language, in order to understand how emotions are exploited in argumentation.

### *3.1 Strategies of emotive language*

Emotional language, in an argumentative perspective, is the use of language arousing certain emotions to lead the interlocutor to a certain conclusion. Euphemisms, for instance, are used to soften a harsh reality, but this function is not generally worrisome from an argumentative point of view. Euphemisms in such cases assume a precise conventional meaning: for instance, if a person has 'passed away', nobody would think that he is not dead (see Groarke & Tindale, 2004). However, euphemisms can also be used to hide some aspects of reality, leading the interlocutor to draw a conclusion based on only a partial representation of the situation. This hiding often happens through the use of loaded words, namely words presupposing facts not accepted or shared by the interlocutors to support a value judgment. For instance, we can consider the following cases (Manicas & Kruger, 1968: 326):

#### **Case 10**

a) You cannot let this man go free because your sister or your wife may be his **next victim**.

b) Now, let's consider some disadvantages of the **immoral** policy of legalized gambling.

In the first case, the speaker assumes that the man already killed a person; while in the second sentence legalized gambling is presupposed as something against morality. Such assumptions do not need to be supported by arguments, as already taken for granted.

A third strategy is altering the interlocutor's evaluation of the situation not by altering or hiding the facts, but acting on how a person may judge a state of affairs. For instance we can consider the following case (Manicas & Kruger, 2004: 85-86):

#### **Case 11**

When the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that homosexuals must be included under Alberta's human-rights legislation, a group calling itself Canada's Civilized Majority attacked the court's decision in a full-page advertisement in a national newspaper. The ad railed against 'the barbaric agenda of militant homosexuals' and accused the Supreme Court of imposing a 'bathhouse morality'.

The words used have an extremely unclear meaning, but which is commonly understood as negative, and are used to lead the interlocutor to the conclusion that 'who supported the law in favor of homosexuals is bad'.

Emotive language can be used in two basic fashions: words can be used to arouse emotions by presenting a state of affairs different from reality; or terms commonly associated with a negative or positive state of affairs can be employed to modify the evaluation of an already known situation. This distinction is crucial for understanding the relation between the meaning of a word and the emotions it generates.

### *3.2 Implicit strategies: Euphemism, loaded words, and emotional language*

Euphemisms and unclear names, as seen above, can be both used to conceal a serious negative event under a positive name, or rather, under a *signifiant* whose meaning does not refer to a precise fragment of reality. Lacking a precise reference, the contextual meaning of such names cannot be wholly understood, and therefore cannot lead the interlocutor to an evaluation of a situation that is left indeterminate (see Schiappa, 2003). Schiappa represents the structure of this persuasive technique, called argument *by* definition, as taking this form: X is Y. A fact X is classified as Y, where Y stands for a name conveying a determinate set of values, which may be positive or negative. The predication of such names attributes the values associated with them to the state of affairs X, without any apparent need of arguments. For example, the term 'quarantine' conveys positive values, because it represents a therapeutic intervention. However, when it was used to describe the sanctions against Cuba, it implicitly defended the initiative, attributing to an act of war the positive values associated with the concept of isolating a person suspected of carrying a contagious disease. An act of war is evaluated, as it were, a necessary and peaceful intervention.

This scheme also applies to two other strategies aimed at altering the evaluation of a state of affairs through the use of names: domestication, and the bureaucratization. The first strategy is used when ordinary language is used metaphorically to cover up threatening facts, such as when missiles are named 'Peacekeeper' or nuclear weapons 'nukes'. The dreadful concept, reduced to a familiar notion, is usually positively or neutrally evaluated. Bureaucratization is based on a different strategy of concealment, that is, mystification. Policies or events are made inaccessible to the public through the use of acronyms and scientific jargon. For instance, naming a neutron bomb a 'radiation enhancement weapon' prevents most of people from understanding the concept to which such name refers. If the interlocutors cannot understand the concept, they cannot evaluate it, and therefore cannot make any rational decisions about it.

The relation between the representation of a situation and value judgments is the ground of the above-mentioned strategies of ambiguity and obscurity, used to prevent an interlocutor from understanding of the fragment of reality to which the speaker refers, and deter him from any evaluation. However, emotions can be modified not only by concealing the referent, but also by amplifying some of its details to hide other features which may elicit unwanted judgments.

This process, called 'framing' (Schiappa, 2003: 152), consists in describing the same event in different ways, each emphasizing some details and ignoring others, and consequently eliciting extremely different emotive responses. For instance we can consider the following descriptions of the same state of affairs (Schiappa, 2003: 152):

### Case 12

- A tree is being cut down
- A cylindrical organic object is being rotated from a vertical to a horizontal position
- A tree is being murdered
- A mean old man is cutting down that nice shady tree

In this case, the facts are the same in each description. However, different judgments are encouraged by focussing on some details and excluding others. The fact that a tree is a living being is exaggerated in a description and ignored in another; its beauty is mentioned in the last sentence while left out the others. Names therefore can be used like magnifying glasses, which broaden some particulars leading us to evaluate a whole picture on the grounds of some of its details.

### *3.3 Explicit strategies: persuasive definitions*

Emotive or slanted language can be considered to be the most simple, as it just consists in the attribution of a name to a fragment of reality. However, it is also easier to counter: the interlocutor may simply provide a different description of the facts, or challenge either the facts or the definition the predication presupposes. Its strength lies in its passing undetected.

A stronger technique consists in supporting a classification with a definitional argument. A name can be redefined and then attributed on such grounds to state of affairs. In such a fashion the predication is motivated, and the interlocutor in order to rebut the classification, needs to undercut the definition it is grounded on. Redefinitions aimed at modifying the conditions of predication of a word (or its descriptive meaning) without altering the value judgment usually associated to it (or emotive meaning) were called by Stevenson (1944) persuasive definitions (see also Aberdein, 2000: 1). For instance, the positively evaluated concept of 'culture' can be redefined as 'originality', supporting the conclusion that an illiterate but creative person can be classified as 'cultured'.

The strength and legitimacy of such a strategy has been discussed for a long time (Robinson, 1950: 170; Schiappa, 2003; Govier, 2005). What emerges from this debate is the strict relation between definitions and the so-called 'theory', or the conception of the world underlying a definition (Burgess-Jackson, 1995). Different definitions reflect different perspectives on the same fragment of reality: for instance, the meaning of "rape" depends on shared knowledge about more fundamental concepts such as 'family', 'sex', or 'violence'. This connection between definition and theory has been interpreted in Schiappa (2004) using the concept of frame. On this view, defining means imposing a whole organization of beliefs and

values. It means choosing what counts as a referent of the *definiendum* on the basis of an underlying organization of beliefs. Death, for instance, may refer to different fragments of reality depending on whether one is adopting a medical or legal or moral perspective. Just as names frame reality, definitions frame the use of names, and establish what falls within the extension of a name. Therefore, definition is conceived as an argumentative act that is aimed at altering our valuation of reality; it is thought of as a persuasive move, because it prescribes what has to be considered relevant. On this view, the goal of the definer determines the theory he embraces in defining.

These approaches show how persuasive definitions are strictly connected with a common ground, or theory, which needs to be shared by the interlocutors. The possibility of redefining a term depends on their acceptability. The different definitions of 'death' or 'rape' are possible because they are grounded on different shared concepts of what life is, or what 'violence' is. On this perspective, the legitimacy of a redefinition depends on its vagueness, namely on the indeterminacy and acceptability of its fundamental semantic features constituting its meaning and semantic borders (see Aberdein, 2000).

### *3.4 Explicit and implicit strategies: quasi-definitions*

Emotive language can be used in another fashion, which combines explicit strategies with implicit moves. As seen above, the use of an emotive word needs to be supported by arguments when challenged; therefore the speaker may provide arguments to support his classification. One such argument is the persuasive definitions; another subtler strategy is the quasi-definition. Stevenson (1944) describes such technique as the modification of the emotive meaning of a word without altering its descriptive meaning. In other words, a name is used to classify a fragment of reality, but its evaluation is modified by an argument. A clear example is the following (Stevenson, 1944: 280, 281):

#### **Case 13**

- Blackguards are the most fascinating people.
- You don't say so? Exclaimed Sarudine, smiling.
- Of course they are. There's nothing so boring in all the worlds as your so-called honest man. ... With the programme of honesty and virtue everybody is long familiar; and so it contains nothing that is new. Such antiquated rubbish robs a man of all individuality, and his life is lived within the narrow, tedious limits of virtue... Yes, blackguards are the most sincere and interesting people imaginable, for they have no conception of the bounds of human baseness.

Here the speaker does not redefine the concept of blackguard; he changes how it is evaluated, by implicitly redefining the values at the basis of the value judgments. 'Virtue' and 'infidelity' are implicitly redefined as 'baseness' and 'originality'.

From this overview of the different uses of emotive language, it emerges that emotions are strictly related to what they represent, and that they are dialectical instruments which need to be supported by arguments if challenged. However, it is not clear how emotions, value judgments and classification of reality are connected, and how they can be dialectical and persuasive instruments.

#### 4. THE ARGUMENTATIVE STRUCTURE OF EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

The argumentative use of emotive language is the use of words arousing emotions to pursue a specific argumentative goal, namely to lead the interlocutor to commit himself to a specific proposition or action. However, the aspect that needs explanation is the relation between emotions, words, and decisions. How can words elicit an emotive response? How is it possible to affect someone's emotions by hiding or emphasizing particulars? How can emotions lead to decisions?

A possible answer to these questions can be grounded on an analysis of what emotions are. Quintilian noticed that words can depict 'vivid representations' of a situation (Cigada, 2006: 113), which the agent evaluates (*Institutio Oratoria*, VI, 29-31):

But how are we to generate these emotions in ourselves, since emotion is not in our own power? I will try to explain as best I may. There are certain experiences which the Greeks call *φαντασίαι*, and the Romans visions, whereby things absent are presented to our imagination with such extreme vividness that they seem actually to be before our very eyes. It is the man who is really sensitive to such impressions who will have the greatest power over the emotions. Some writers describe the possessor of this power of **vivid imagination, whereby things, words and actions are presented in the most realistic manner**, by the Greek word *εμφαντασίωτος*; and it is a power which all may readily acquire if they will. [...] I am complaining that a man has been murdered. Shall I not bring before my eyes all the circumstances which it is reasonable to imagine must have occurred in such a connexion? Shall I not see the assassin burst suddenly from his hiding-place, the victim tremble, cry for help, beg for mercy, or turn to run? Shall I not see the fatal blow delivered and the stricken body fall? Will not the blood, the deathly pallor, the groan of agony, the death-rattle, be indelibly impressed upon my mind?

Words can call up a past or possible situation related to the interlocutor's experiences represented in his memories (Quintiliani *Institutio Oratoria*, VI, 2, 34). A possible answer to the question of what an emotion is can be found inquiring into the relation between representations and desires.

On Aristotle's view (*Rhetoric*, II), emotions are interpreted as the union between a person's values, or reasons to act or choose, and memories of scenes (compare Solomon, 2003 for a modern cognitive approach). For instance, anger presupposes an offense and a desire of action; fear presupposes the desire of avoiding a situation which is not desirable. Emotions, on this view, are forms of evaluations of a situation, and such evaluations stem from a system of desires (Solomon, 2003: 20). Emotions, therefore, are judgments of a situation based on the agent's values, and leading to a decision (Solomon, 2003: 7-8):

[...] emotions are interestingly similar to beliefs. We can now explain this similarity by claiming that emotions are judgments – normative and often moral judgments. “I am angry at John for taking (“stealing” begs the question) my car” entails that I believe that John has somehow wronged me [...]. The moral judgment entailed by anger is not a judgment about my anger [...]. My anger is that judgment. If I do not believe that I have somehow been wronged, I cannot be angry (though I might be upset or sad). Similarly, if I cannot praise my lover, I cannot be in love (though I might want her or need her, which, traditional wisdom aside, is entirely different). If I do not find my situation awkward, I cannot be ashamed or embarrassed. If I do not judge that I have suffered a loss, I cannot be sad or jealous. [...] emotions in general do appear to require this feature: to have an emotion is to hold a normative judgment about one's situation.

Desires and values are the foundations of emotions; desires and values, in turn, are the outcomes of previous experiences or the culture of a community. Negative or positive consequences of past actions establish the criteria for evaluating future similar situations, while other not yet experienced state of affairs can be judged on the basis of others' actions. For this reason, values depend in part on culture (Solomon, 2003: 87):

An emotion is a system of concepts, beliefs, attitudes, and desires, virtually all of which are context-bound, historically developed, and culture-specific.

This connection between decisions, judgment, values and emotions can be represented as a complex pattern of reasoning. The first step is to establish a goal, which is what is good or what appears to be good (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1113a15). A state of affairs is therefore classified as desirable or objectionable, and the decision to act is made to bring about the desired situation.

In modern argumentation theories, the link between values and actions has been represented by argument from values (Atkinson, Bench-Capon & McBurney, 2005: 2-3):

### **Scheme for Value-based Practical Reasoning**

1. In the current circumstances R
2. we should perform action A
3. to achieve New Circumstances S
4. which will realize some goal G

5. which will promote some value V.

To illustrate this scheme, Bench-Capon (2003, 2003a) presented the example of Hal and Carla. Diabetic Hal needs insulin to survive, but cannot get any in time to save his life except by taking some from Carla's house without her permission. The argument from positive value for preserving life is weighed against the argument from negative value of not respecting someone's property.

If we analyze the pattern of reasoning underlying the example above, we can notice that different reasoning steps underlie the argument from values. First, an event or an action needs to be classified as desirable or not desirable; second, the desirability of a state of affairs needs to be connected to a specific action. To show the complexity of reasoning from values, we can consider an everyday example.

#### **Case 14**

Bob is a traitor. He betrayed his friends' trust.

This sort of argument is similar to many that can be found in everyday reasoning. Bob is classified as a traitor on the basis of a semantic argument. Traitors are commonly understood as people 'who betray another's trust or are false to an obligation or duty', which is a shared definition of the term. This type of reasoning is also related to argument from definition (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008: 319):

#### **Scheme for Argument from Definition to Verbal Classification**

MAJOR PREMISE: I (an agent) have a goal G.

MINOR PREMISE: Carrying out this action A is a means to realize G.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, I ought (practically speaking) to carry out this action A.

The concept of definition is highly controversial, as there may be several definitions for the same *definiendum*, and, as seen above, definitions are thought of by many as matter of choice. On our view, definitions can be conceived as matter of shared knowledge, or language use. Definitions are *endoxa*, or propositions accepted by the majority. The meaning of words, on this perspective, is simply what people commonly consider the fundamental semantic characteristics of a word. There might be, for instance, different definitions for the words 'traitor'; however, if we call a person a traitor because he performs badly at school, our classification would be hardly acceptable for a reasonable hearer. Therefore, the existence of different definitions simply means that some definitions are more accepted than others by the native speakers of a language in a given culture. Definitions are propositions which do not need to be true; they, however, cannot be arbitrary, as they need to be shared and supported by arguments when challenged.



The classification of Bob as a traitor can be an argument in itself. 'Traitor' is an emotive word, and leads the interlocutor to draw a value judgment on Bob. In our culture and in an ordinary context, Bob would be normally considered to be bad, as trust is held to be a positive condition to defend. Value judgments such as 'good', 'bad', 'desirable', or 'despicable' can be defined (see for instance Vendler, 1963), but their meaning depends on culture and personality. Value judgments can be considered as words whose predication depends on a particular kind of major, or classification premises. Some of such premises are listed in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* as topics for the classification of an object or fact as goods or desirable (*Rhetoric* I, 7):

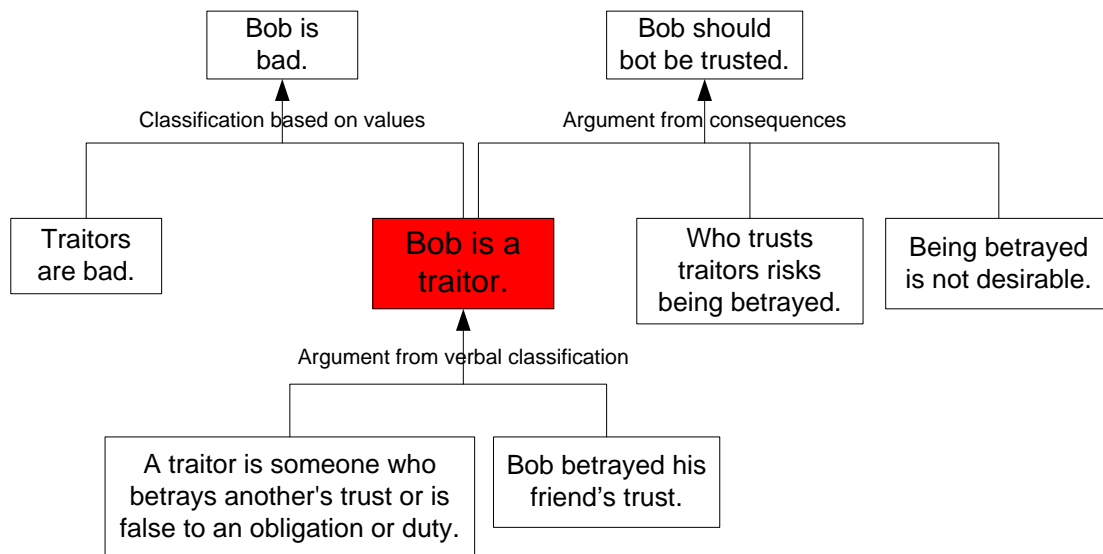
We may define a good thing as that which ought to be chosen for its own sake; or as that for the sake of which we choose something else; or as that which is sought after by all things, or by all things that have sensation or reason, or which will be sought after by any things that acquire reason; or as that which must be prescribed for a given individual by reason generally, or is prescribed for him by his individual reason, this being his individual good;

What 'is to be chosen for its own sake' can be established on the basis of a person's experiences or culture. Value judgments, therefore, are forms of classification based a particular kind of 'definitional' premises, namely values. On this view, moral judgments can be considered as the product of a classificatory reasoning process, in which the endoxical premise is drawn not from the shared knowledge of the language, but the shared values.

The third component of reasoning from values is the reasoning passage from moral judgment to action. Considering case 14 above, the classification of Bob as a traitor can be used as a premise for a further argumentative step. For instance, the conclusion that he is not a person to be trusted may be drawn. The problem is that this conclusion, in addition to the implicit premise used to derive it, may not be evident to the audience to the argument was directed, and therefore no consideration may be given to critically questioning the argument. The link between classification and action is mediated by the moral judgment, which establishes that the state of affairs or entity is desirable or not. The last passage can be described as follows: I have a goal; this action I am considering will help me to attain that goal; therefore I should carry out this action. This pattern, called practical reasoning, is represented by the following scheme (Walton, Reed & Macagno, 2008: 323).

### **Scheme for Instrumental Practical Reasoning**

For instance, if I have classified a particular product as 'good', I can conclude that I should buy it. However, in dealing with emotive language, the practical inferences which can be drawn follow a more complex pattern, which is the counterpart of practical reasoning. For instance, if I want to conclude from the fact that Bob is a traitor that he should not be trusted, I am deciding on the grounds of an evaluation of a possible consequence of an action. As trusting traitors can be dangerous, and as dangers are to be avoided, I will not trust him. Consider the argumentation example analyzed as shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1: The argumentative structure of an emotive word**

The complex scheme called argument from consequences in figure 1 presupposes a judgment and use of a practical reasoning (Walton, 1995: 155-156), based on the two forms of argumentation from consequences. One is a positive form of the argument while the other is a negative form. The example shown at the top right in figure 1 is an instance of argument from negative consequences.

#### **Scheme for Argument from Positive Consequences**

PREMISE: If A is brought about, good consequences will plausibly occur.

CONCLUSION: Therefore A should be brought about.

#### **Scheme for Argument from Negative Consequences**

PREMISE: If A is brought about, then bad consequences will occur.

CONCLUSION: Therefore A should not be brought about.

Figure 1 shows how argument from consequences can be combined with other argumentation schemes to build a complex argumentation structure in a given case. The steps of reasoning underlying the use of an emotive word can be therefore represented and illustrated by figure 1. In this figure, we can notice how different conclusions may be drawn from the predication of an emotive word based on different patterns of reasoning.

## 5. DISTORTING MORAL JUDGMENTS: A DIALECTICAL APPROACH TO EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

According to our analysis of the argumentative structure of emotive words, we have noticed that emotions, and therefore judgments and decisions, hinge on two factors: a representation of a situation, and a system of values and desires. In order to alter the interlocutor's judgments, the speaker can either modify the representation of the state of affairs, or influence the hearer's process of ethical classification influencing the hierarchy or the structure of his values. Both the processes can be either simple or complex. In the first case, no arguments are provided to back up the classification advanced, while in the second case the questionable use of an emotive word is supported by a premise.

### *5.1 Distorting the representations*

The first technique of distorting value judgments is to alter the representation of the situation, including details or elements which do not appear in the actual described state of affairs, or to omit some of the actual particulars while emphasizing others. In the first case, the strategy used can be referred to as 'loaded words', interpreting this term according to the meaning the adjective 'loaded' has in legal reasoning and debate. In law, 'loaded questions' indicate a question whose presuppositions are not accepted by the interlocutor, such as the question 'have you stopped using drugs?' This question has a potentially controversial presupposition, namely that the speaker used drugs before. When such a presupposition is not shared by the hearer, the question is considered to be 'loaded' with a hidden content. On our interpretation, 'loaded words' are terms carrying presuppositions not accepted by the interlocutor, such as in the following case (Morris Engel, 1990: 139):

#### **Case 15**

This criminal is charged with the most vicious crime known to humanity.

If we place this case in a legal context, and suppose that it is stated in a trial, and that the defendant never committed a crime in his life, we can notice that the predication of 'criminal' is highly controversial. The defendant is charged with a crime, but has not yet been condemned for it. The fact that he committed a crime cannot be accepted and taken for granted by the interlocutors, especially given the legal context; however it is presupposed by the speaker to be part of the common ground. In this case, considering the legal setting, the illegitimacy of the move is clear. The speaker alters the interlocutor's commitments, or propositions which he holds as acceptable. This use of loaded words, which is aimed at presupposing facts not shared, can be easily rebutted, especially when the refutation can be supported by the common opinion.

The strength and argumentative force of such a tactic lies in its being undetected. Loaded words, as defined here, are used to alter the hearer's commitments; unless challenged, such presuppositions will be considered as granted. Therefore, the hearer needs to challenge the speaker's assertion, spotting the undue assumption and refusing the move on the grounds that it contravenes the rules of the dialogue. Such a challenge is different from simply casting doubts or attacking a standpoint. The respondent does not attack a position, but the possibility of a dialogue move. Such an attack reverses the burden of proof onto the proponent, who needs to prove that the presupposition is acceptable. For this reason, loaded words are usually used, which are easier to defend in case that they are challenged. For instance, consider the dialogue below:

#### Case 16

**Reverend BARRY LYNN (Americans United):** I just think it's incredibly inappropriate when you've got the head of an agency or a department of government having a daily religious ritual that includes some people and of course, by definition...

**MATTHEWS:** OK, ritual--loaded term.

**Rev. LYNN:** Oh, sure. But it is--but it is a prayer session, a study section. It does include a prayer as well and I think that the proof...

In this case, in the initial situation the hearer (Matthews) is committed to the fact that there are prayer sessions in the agency of government. The speaker (the Reverend), using the word 'ritual', commits the interlocutor to the fact that the prayer session is a religious ceremony. In this case, 'ritual' has a vague meaning, and the habits of the agency are unclear. The possibility of defending the use of such word is grounded on an unclear situation.

The counterpart of loaded words is the fallacious use of euphemisms. Euphemisms are commonly used to associate a positive evaluation to a situation by pointing out its positive characteristics. This strategy is legitimate in many contexts of dialogue: undesirable situations are described using words with a broader denotation commonly used to describe positive entities (Engel, 1990: 50):

#### Case 17

We call third class today tourist class. A travelling salesperson is now a field representative, a janitor is a custodian, and garbage collectors have become sanitation engineers.

In this case, in order to refer to an object commonly perceived as negative, a generic or new term is used. The use of the genus instead of the specific predicate does not prevent the audience from understanding what the word means or refers to, nor from evaluating it. Since people who do not collect garbage can also be classified as 'sanitation engineers' (a 'field representative' need not necessarily be a salesperson) the fragment of reality to which the more

generic categorization refers is wider. Consequently, it is subject to a possible different evaluation. The discrepancy between the name and the concept, obtained through new or more generic terms, is useful to prevent one from automatically associating an evaluation with a word.

However, sometimes this rhetorical move is used to omit some particulars of a complex situation, which would lead the interlocutor to assess it negatively. For instance, we can analyze the following examples from Orwell (1946):

### Case 18

1. Defenseless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification.
2. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called transfer of population or rectification of frontiers.
3. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called elimination of unreliable elements

Here euphemisms are used to conceal their reference instead of referring to it. In the first case, 'pacification' presupposes a situation of war or insurgency. Used to refer to 'defenceless villages', this predicate conceals the fact that the object of pacification was not at war, and that the procedure of pacification was unjustified violence. In the second case, 'transfer of population' could be hardly attributed to a situation in which the expropriated and expelled people have no guarantee of a place to live. In the third case, the concealment of reality is achieved by means of vague words, or rather, words whose definition is not clear or whose reference cannot be established. What can be classified as an 'unreliable element'? No criteria to establish the meaning of this expression are given. Moreover, the generic predicate 'elimination' includes the possibility of death and imprisonment in concentration camps. However, usually speakers rely upon the Gricean maxim of quantity to interpret the meaning of a sentence. One of the basic principles which lie at the foundation of the inferences drawn from a sentence meaning is that a speaker should be as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange (see Grice, 1989: 28). For instance, the utterance 'Paul ate some of the chocolates', implicates that Paul did not eat all the chocolates, as the ordinary presumption is that the speaker should have said so if he knew. The possible inference that can be drawn from the last example of case 18, therefore, would be that no killings or other forms of inhuman treatment is known to have occurred; otherwise, a more specific word would have been provided. Euphemisms, when used fallaciously, are forms of omissions. From a semantic point of view generic words include their species (animals include dogs; elimination includes killing), from a pragmatic point of view generic words create presumptions.

The risk of manipulation lies in the borderlines between generality and suppression or denial of evidence. The most complex concept to determine is the suppression of evidence. In an information-seeking dialogue such as a news report, the rules underlying classification of reality are different from persuasion dialogues such as commercials. In information-seeking

dialogues the speaker is presumed to provide all the known or ascertained or relevant information about the fact, while in commercials the presumption is instead that the only most positive information about a product is given.

The complex strategy corresponding to the use of loaded words is the persuasive definition. As seen above, persuasive definitions are redefinitions of emotive words; the uncommon or not shared use of a word is grounded on a redefinition. For instance, we can consider the case below (Barack Obama, Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Address Oslo, Norway December 10, 2009):

### **Case 19**

A just peace includes not only civil and political rights -- it must encompass economic security and opportunity. For true peace is not just freedom from fear, but freedom from want.

This redefinition of 'peace' is not argumentatively neutral. President Obama needs to justify the American decision to start a war showing that it was an action of peace. For this reason, he supports the otherwise unacceptable classification using a new definition. In this new conceptual ground, military action is an instrument of 'true peace'.

### *5.2 Altering the values*

Emotive words can be used to alter the assessment procedure in a different fashion from altering the perception of reality. Values can be used to lead the interlocutor to accept a certain evaluation of a state of affairs. For instance, consider the cases below:

### **Case 20**

- 1) Right-minded individuals vote for Bob!<sup>2</sup>
- 2) Richard, do you actually examine these claims, or do just accept your truths pre-packaged, and spit libel at everyone who doesn't?<sup>3</sup>

These textbook cases show how an emotive word is used to classify a class of people attributing a set of values to a fragment of reality. The emotive words used do not identify or specify an entity; they simply express a judgment. However, such judgment does not simply express a viewpoint, but already negatively evaluates the proponents of contrasting views. This tactic can be analyzed by means of the rules for a critical discussion (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992: 208-209). In a persuasion dialogue, the interlocutors must respect a set of principles governing a reasonable process of resolving a conflict of opinions. In particular, the parties must not prevent each other from advancing or casting doubt on each other's viewpoint

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.phhp.ufl.edu/~rbauer/critical%20thinking/crit\\_think\\_intro\\_II\\_8\\_04.pdf](http://www.phhp.ufl.edu/~rbauer/critical%20thinking/crit_think_intro_II_8_04.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gnxxp.com/MT2/archives/000367.html>

(rule 1); they must defend their own viewpoint by means of arguments (rule 2); and a party must withdraw a thesis if not successfully supported or if the contrary viewpoint is successfully defended (rule 3). A party can use emotive language not only to support his own viewpoint, but also to prevent the other party from advancing a contrary position without using any argumentation. In case 19 above, the speaker commits himself not only to the opinion that 'object (or fact) x is good\acceptable', but also to the proposition that 'Any contrary opinion is bad\ unacceptable'. This strategy is not inherently fallacious, but in the context of persuasion dialogue it often prevents the other party from advancing his own viewpoint (which violates rule 1 of persuasion dialogs). The speaker, in fact, by using emotive language can commit himself to refusing to accept any different perspectives. By means of this manoeuvring, he implies that he cannot accept any other conflicting opinions, and thereby refuses in this way to engage in a reasonable critical discussion.

Biased words are frequently used in politics. For instance, we can consider the following excerpts from President Obama's speeches (Newsweek August 3, 2009: 14):

#### **Case 21**

Now, what makes this moment different is that this time – for the first time – key stakeholders are aligning not against but in favor of reform.

We know the same special interests and their agents in Congress will make the same old arguments and use the same scare tactics that have stopped reform before because they profit from this relentless escalation in health-care costs.

Obama does not simply assert that someone is approving his viewpoint and others are disagreeing with him; he frames the situations presupposing the specific reason lying beneath the positions of his supporters and opponents. Using the word 'stakeholder' he takes for granted that the support given to his reform is a commitment towards the state, while opposing his view can only be explained in terms of personal interests conflicting with the public good. The use of such words acts to proleptically forestall potential opponents from advancing and defending their viewpoints.

The strategy of quasi-definition is more complex. Names are not simply used to suggest a desired conclusion. The conclusion is supported by a definitional argument. The evaluation of the *denotatum* of a word is altered using a description disguised as a definition of its meaning. In fact, far from explaining the meaning of the *definiendum*, quasi-definitions stipulate a new, unshared judgment on it presenting it as an accepted statement. Quasi-definitions are not ordinary definitions aimed at establishing or describing the meaning of a word. They are only advanced as such, and exploit the pragmatic effect of a proposition which is commonly understood as accepted. For instance we can analyse the following quasi-definition of 'terrorist'

used by Putin in 2004 to describe the Chechen militia and back his demand for international support<sup>4</sup>:

### Case 22

Terrorists are bandits who hide behind political, religious or nationalist slogans to try to resolve questions that have nothing to do with what they publicly state.

Instead of defining what terrorists are, Putin classifies them as 'bandits' who hide behind pretended ideals and conceal their true purposes. His definition is aimed at casting contempt at and poisoning the well of the alleged terrorists. Putin uses the tactic as a means of proleptically preventing an interlocutor from defending his actions as politically or nationally motivated.

## 6. EXPLICIT STRATEGIES OF EMOTIVE LANGUAGE: STIPULATION AND COMMON KNOWLEDGE

As seen above, loaded words and euphemisms are two possible implicit strategies grounded on emotive language. Our proposal advanced for the classification and study of emotive language proceeds from a fundamental assumption, namely that the speaker and the hearer share the same definition of the concept the emotive word refers to. In these cases, the definition is not at stake. The word is used as if its meaning were shared. What is controversial is the set of presupposition taken for granted by the speaker through the use of such words. When the goal of the speaker is to make a classification argumentatively stronger, or a value judgments more acceptable, he can introduce a new usage of a word by means of a definition, or change the evaluation of the concept the word refers to using a quasi-definition.

The two different kinds of definitions are explained in (Walton, 2001: 122-124), based on the same principle. Persuasive and quasi-definitions are both stipulative: their goal is not to explain the meaning of a word, but to support a thesis (Walton, 2005: 14). Lexical definitions have no argumentative power, since they are used to strive to make a concept clear, or resolve an ambiguity. Persuasive definitions, on the other hand, introduce a new meaning of the term that is used to support the definer's point of view. For this reason, Stevenson's persuasive and quasi definitions are both classified as persuasive in Walton's perspective. On our view, a term is persuasively defined when it is emotively connoted and its denotation (or the concept represented) is modified, or when emotive words are used in the definiens to alter the evaluation of the concept. In a persuasion dialogue, persuasive definitions are admissible, provided some dialectical constraints are respected. First, the proponent of a PD is committed to defend it and to use the term in the way his definition has prescribed (Walton, 2001: 130). Moreover, the definition should be put forward so as to not prevent the other party from attacking

<sup>4</sup>

*Putin rules out talks with militants*, Turkish Daily News, 17 settembre 2004, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/archives.php?id=37695> (URL consulted on 7 January 2008).



it. Finally, PD, as stipulative speech acts, must not be presented as lexical definitions with a view to avoid the burden of proof (Walton, 2005: 24-26).

The notion of stipulative definition, and thereby the PD, depends on the concepts of stipulation and definition. The starting point is to establish what is liable to being stipulated and what the conditions of stipulation are. Since a PD or a stipulative definition is a definition, it is useful to highlight what a definition is and the rules of definition most relevant to the strategy of PD.

The PD is first a definition (*Topics*, I, 5), that is, a logical-semantic relation between a term and a 'discourse' (*logos*). The definiens is characterized by being convertible with the definiendum and by showing its fundamental semantic characteristics. The definition, for this reason, cannot be broader or narrower than the subject defined. Moreover, the definiens must be less known than the definiendum (*Topics*, VI, 4), that is, more intelligible and prior. Among the many rules given in book VI for a correct definition, Aristotle individuates norms for the choice of the quality of the definiendum. His rule states that the subject of the definition must be chosen between the best things the term can be applied to (143a 9-12). Take the term 'marriage'. It can refer to different successful or unsuccessful marriages. However, if the definer chooses only unsuccessful marriages to define the term, the risk is to redefine by ignoring what is fundamental to the concept<sup>5</sup> by only stressing what makes a marriage bad.

On the other hand, the PD is stipulative. The problems concerning stipulation are related to the reason and function of the stipulation in a dialogue. Burgess-Jackson (1995) and Walton (2005) identify the limits of stipulation within the coherence in the use of the redefined word and the vagueness of the definiendum. We need to carefully interpret the requirement of vagueness in relation to the rules Aristotle identifies for definition. If the definition shows the fundamental semantic characteristics of a concept, whether the concept defined is known and shared to the interlocutor or if it is unknown and introduced by the speaker by means of definition. In the second case the definition is stipulated, but when the concept is known, the function of definition is to show a possible meaning of the term in order to avoid ambiguity. Among the different possible uses of a word (that is, the different possible concepts a term can refer to), a possible meaning is identified by means of definition. The main problem with stipulative definition is not that a term has different possible uses and one of them can be established as the relevant use in the conversation. Rather the main problem is whether it is legitimate to stipulate a meaning that is already known. There is a clear difference between stipulating that in this conversation the ambiguous term A, whose possible meanings are a', a'' and a''', refers to concept a', and stipulating that term A refers to concept k', a possible meaning of word K. In the second case, the goal of the definition is not to introduce a new concept, but to introduce ambiguity. Not only is it necessary for the PD to respect the dialogical rules relative to consistency and bias, but also the rules relative to obscurity and ambiguity need to be followed. This is the set of rules needed to evaluate the use of a PD.

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<sup>5</sup> For the connection between fundamental features of a concept and the notion of causation see *An. Post.* II, 2, 89, 3-10, and the comments of Gomez-Lobo (1981) and of J. L. Ackrill (1981).

Let us take as an example the following persuasive definitions (Walton, 2006: 248-249):

1. Tipping is a kind of oppression
2. Tipping is a gratuity given to an inferior person performing a menial task for a superior person
3. 'Football' means a sport in which modern-day gladiators brutalize one another while trying to move a ridiculously shaped 'ball' from one end of the playing field to another.

All these definitions are unacceptable. They do not introduce new word usages, they are not convertible with the concept defined, and they do not express the fundamental features of the definiendum known by the community of speakers.

The relation between stipulation and description can also be analyzed from a pragmatic point of view. Descriptive definitions are aimed at showing how a word is used, and what its commonly accepted meaning is. The type of speech act performed is an assertive, which according to Searle and Vanderveken (1985) presupposes a sincerity condition stating that «S believes that the proposition expressed in the assertive is true or correct». This condition, grounded on the notion of truth and falsity, presupposes in turn that such proposition can be compared with an existing state of affairs, which in the case of definitions turns out to be the commonly accepted meaning of the word. However, as seen above, persuasive and quasi-definitions do not describe a shared meaning, but stipulate a new one advancing it as commonly accepted (Viskil, 1994). Such redefinitions exploit the pragmatic ambiguity between declarations and directives, and disguise the speaker's attempt to get the hearer to accept the new definition under the pretense of its being commonly accepted.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Emotive language is one of the most powerful strategies used to elicit a value judgment on a situation. In this paper, we investigated (1) how emotions can lead the interlocutor to assess a situation or state of affairs, (2) what argumentative strategies are based on emotive language, and (3) what the sources of possible fallacies are. The argumentative effect of emotive language was described in the ancient tradition underlying by examining its impact on the interlocutor's decision-making process. In particular, the ancient rhetorical tradition explained the strict relation between representation and emotions. Our approach to emotive language proceeds from our analysis of how emotions are used in argumentation, showing how they represented by forms of judgment grounded on images of reality created by words. Emotive language is analyzed from a logical and dialectical perspective, focusing on the argumentation schemes underlying the use of emotive words in arguments and on their dialectical effects. The fallacies arising from this process have been analyzed according to their dialectical and logical features, and explained in terms of presupposition, common knowledge, and dialectical rules.

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