University of Windsor
Scholarship at UWindsor

OSSA Conference Archive

OSSA 8

Jun 3rd, 9:00 AM - Jun 6th, 5:00 PM

Culture Sensitive Arguments

Manfred Kraus
University of Tübingen

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholar.uwindsor.ca/ossaarchive

Part of the Philosophy Commons

Culture Sensitive Arguments

MANFRED KRAUS

Philologisches Seminar
University of Tübingen
Wilhelmstraße 36
72074 Tübingen
Germany
manfred.kraus@uni-tuebingen.de

ABSTRACT: Arguments which in their premises or warrants touch basic norms and values of a cultural community can be defined as culture sensitive. The paper will demonstrate how insensitivity to the cultural backgrounds of audiences may spoil an argument, and identify which kinds of arguments prove particularly open to cultural sensitivity. It will define the areas on which cultural communities may differ and determine how this bears on problems of globalization and political correctness.

KEYWORDS: acceptability, belief, common ground, culture, ethnocentrism, premise, relevance, religion, value, warrant.

1. INTRODUCTION

Any talk of 'argument cultures,' as in the guiding theme of this conference, almost inevitably evokes the title of Deborah Tannen's book *The Argument Culture* (1998; 1999). Tannen's claim is that in our Western societies we argue too much, even when we do not really disagree essentially. In opposition to the newly fashionable call for a 'new sophistic' that is eager to find and debate two antithetic sides in every issue, Tannen advocates a concept of society that would look for common ground rather than dissent and for 'truth' rather than debate.

A problem with Tannen's book, however, is that it addresses one single argument culture only, which may be described as the Western culture, and thus ignores the fact that in reality our global world consists of a variegated plurality of very different argument cultures. Since some fifty years ago Stephen Toulmin (1958) called attention to the field-dependence of arguments, and Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958) re-emphasized the significance of the audience in argumentation, it has been almost a commonplace that in practical arguments universal validity is an exception rather than the rule. It has, however, frequently been overlooked that one of the most pivotal parameters that determine the acceptance of arguments is the cultural background of the audience.

This paper will study a special type of arguments that can be described as culture sensitive. It will first demonstrate the importance of cultural environments to argumentation and define the areas on which cultural groups and communities may differ. Based on a number of significant examples, it will then demonstrate how insensitivity to

cultural diversity may spoil an argument, identify which types of arguments prove particularly open to cultural sensitivity, and finally determine how this bears on our contemporary world of globalization and political correctness.

2. ACCEPTABILITY, COMMON GROUND, BELIEF SYSTEMS, AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTS

The statement "This dish is dog meat!" may well be perceived as a recommendation by a Chinese, but will usually have a deterring effect on the average Westerner. Similarly, the announcement "This is roast pork!" will generally be taken as a warning not to taste by a standard Jewish or Muslim audience (as would equally apply to dog meat), but may be understood as an enticement not only by most Western individuals, but also by many Chinese. In the first of these cases, there is a difference of historically developed cultural attitudes that divides two communities, whereas in the second case it is religious dietary laws that account for heterogeneous responses. According to the linguistic theory of Anscombre and Ducrot (e.g. Anscombre and Ducrot 1988) and to discourse analysis based approaches (e.g. Amossy 2000 and 2005; Amossy and Sternberg 2002) both these utterances can be interpreted as arguments. In both cases, however, the arguments will only be efficiently supportive of the arguer's (persuasive or dissuasive) intentions if arguer and audience share a common cultural background or if, as a fallback requirement, the arguer is at the least cognizant of and attentive to the audience's cultural background. If the arguer does not observe this rule, the argument is likely to fail on various grounds and levels.

To avoid failure, any arguer will need to make sure that the premises he or she employs in arguing will be "adequate" and "up to standard, whatever that standard may be" (Goodwin 2005, p. 99). Various standards of adequacy may be proposed. Truth of premises may be a high value in itself, but universal truth will generally be hard to assess in practical arguing. Factual acceptance, on the other hand, may be too low a standard; it may be misguided and cannot be anticipated with any certainty by the arguer. So the standard on which most theorists agree is acceptability or what is reasonable to believe (e.g. Johnson and Blair 1977; Govier 1987; Pinto 1994).

Aristotle bases the plausibility of dialectical arguments on what he calls *endoxa*, i.e. generally accepted opinions, which according to a definition he gives in the *Topics* (1.1, 100b21-23) is "what is acceptable to everybody or to the majority or to the wise," as opposed to that which is true by necessity. This underlines the non-universal character of dialectical arguments that is also addressed in various approaches of modern argument analysis. Stephen Toulmin, for instance, has pointed to what he calls the "field-dependence of our standards" (1958, pp. 36-38). And Douglas Walton has argued that arguments and fallacies are 'contextual' in the sense that they are dependent on the background against which they appear, by which he primarily refers to the specific type of dialogue they are part of (1992, pp. 140-143).

But Aristotle's notion of *endoxa* introduces also a clearly audience-related element. Not objective probability (let alone truth) of facts, but subjective acceptability of notions to the audience is at the core of his theory. Arguing is thus a cooperative process that happens between arguer and audience. Accordingly, it is essential that the arguer make sure not only that an argument's premises are adequate, but particularly that their adequacy is also made conspicuous to the audience (Goodwin 2005, pp. 99 and 111). This cognitive process is

clearly enhanced by the extent of common understandings, concepts or ideas that are shared by both sides. The more common ground there exists between arguer and audience, the better the prospects for an utterance to be successful as a speech act and argument. This 'common ground' has been described as "shared knowledge" by Ralph Johnson and J. Anthony Blair (Johnson and Blair 2006, p. 77), as "mutual knowledge" or "mutually manifest cognitive environment" by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (Sperber 1982; Sperber and Wilson 1986), a term also adopted later by Christopher Tindale (1999, pp. 101-115), and as "the normative environment the arguers inhabit together" by Jean Goodwin (2005, p. 111). In the same sense, Michael Billig speaks of "common sense" (1991, p. 144) and "communal links, foremost among which are shared values or beliefs" (1996, p. 226), and Douglas Walton of "common knowledge" (2001, pp. 108-109).

Yet this common ground or environment that ensures successful transmission of arguments more often than not is not universal either. The shared values or beliefs Billig refers to arrange themselves into sets of beliefs or belief systems. The importance of such belief systems in understanding the communicative process of argumentation has been emphasized by various theorists of argumentation (see Gough 1985; Groarke and Tindale 2001; Rescher 2001). But whereas James Freeman, for instance, still advocates an epistemic foundation for common beliefs that would be based on the sense of a common moral conscience and the natural principle of human constitution (Freeman 2005), Jim Gough has argued against such "common sense foundationalism" and for a view in which systems of belief "are relative to different individuals in different groups in different contexts" and may thus be conflicting with each other (Gough 2007, p. 499).

One of the major backgrounds that account for diversity of belief systems clearly is the cultural environment each individual has been brought up in or is acculturated to. It is only in our globalized and multicultural postmodern world that this obvious fact has been appropriately acknowledged. This is also because in argumentation culturally founded presuppositions frequently remain implicit, in the sense of unstated premises. In this respect, Aristotle's *endoxa* have also been interpreted as "culturally shared values" (Rigotti and Rocci 2005, p. 128).

Whereas culture-specific belief systems do assist mutual understanding when employed *within* a cultural community (i.e. when shared by both arguer and audience), they are likely to create problems in the case of cross-cultural argumentation. In a cross-cultural argumentative dialogue substantial parts of the arguer's set of beliefs may not be shared by the audience, which may cause incomprehension or misapprehensions. One and the same argument that persuades within the context of one culture may flop, backfire, or devastatingly fail in another cultural context. Arguments can thus also be culture-specific, culture-determined, and therefore culture sensitive. Arguments that in their premises touch culture-specific beliefs, norms or values and are thus potentially open to such misunderstandings will therefore be called culture sensitive arguments. Furthermore, if an argument of that kind is put forward in blunt disrespect of the audience's cultural background, this will be called a culturally insensitive employment of that argument.

A notion of cultural sensitivity seems to be addressed by Johnson and Blair in *Logical Self-Defense*, when they define 'ethnocentrism' as "a tendency to see matters exclusively through the eyes of the group or class with which one identifies and/or is identified" and declare "most prominent among such groupings […] those by religion, culture, nation, gender, race, and ethnic background" (2006, p. 192). While, for Johnson and Blair, 'ethnocentric attachments' are perfectly legitimate, indeed inevitable, a problem

arises when these lead to an 'ethnocentric attitude,' i.e. "one that assumes (probably never explicitly) that our culture is somehow better than others' culture or else that what is true of our culture is also true of others' culture." (p. 192). In that case, 'ethnocentric attitude,' for Johnson and Blair, is one of the causes of fallacious reasoning (p. 192), by reason that it violates the standard of acceptability, one of the criteria a good argument must satisfy (p. 58).

Our own concept of cultural sensitivity, however, is meant to be slightly broader than Johnson's and Blair's 'ethnocentrism,' since it does not necessarily imply any element of cultural imperialism or intolerance. It will therefore also have to be questioned if any kind of failure of culture sensitive arguments must necessarily be described in terms of fallaciousness, as Blair and Johnson do (cf. the criticism by Marrero 2007). But in order to be able to properly assess this point, we must first clarify what we mean by cultural diversity.

3. AREAS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

"Argumentation is a cultural phenomenon," says Danielle Endres (2007, p. 381), and she is right. But only since studies such as George Kennedy's examination of the rhetorical traditions of a variety of cultures (1988) and the increasing amount of research work done on argumentation in non-Western cultures (e.g. Garrett 1993; Carter 1996) made us aware of the fact that the Western Greco-Roman tradition of rhetoric and argumentation is not a culturally universal tradition (see Combs 2004), the study of differences in argument cultures and of cross-cultural or intercultural argumentation has become a thriving field of global research (see, e.g., Philipsen 1992 and 2002; Dolinina and Cecchetto 1998; Hermans and Kempen 1998; Liu 1999; Siegel 1999 and 2007; Benhabib 2002; Macfarlane 2004; Oman 2004; Hazen 2006 and 2007; Hazen and Fourcade 2007; Marrero 2007). Intercultural variations of form, function, content and evaluation of arguments are meanwhile being intensely studied.

While in earlier times cultural studies rather searched for universal commonalities between cultures, in recent years, based on empirical field research, this universal approach has been criticized and abandoned in favour of the opposite extreme of a 'relativizing particularism approach,' in which the focus has shifted to the differences between cultures (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus and Nisbett 1998; Hazen 2007, p. 7). Most important among current approaches is the so-called 'cultural dimensions approach,' which is "based on the assumption that a culture is best represented by the values and beliefs that a group of people hold in common" (Hazen 2007, p. 7). Within this general strand, three main approaches emerge. The earliest of these—still focused on universals—was developed in the early sixties by F.R. Kluckhohn and F.L. Strodtbeck (1961) in their anthropological study of Southwestern U.S. Native American communities. Another approach is that by S.H. Schwartz (1999), who extended Kluckhohn's and Strodtbeck's values approach to include ten 'individual' values and seven 'cultural' values that describe cultural similarities and differences. The third, most influential approach was developed by the Dutch scholar Geert Hofstede (1980, 1991, 2001, 2006), and later refined by H.C. Triandis (1988, 1993, 1995; Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai and Lucca 1988). There are substantial overlaps between all those approaches (for a comparative diagram see Hazen 2007, p. 9).

According to Hofstede, cultures can be differentiated on the basis of four value dimensions: 1) individualism vs. collectivism (the degree to which individuals are autonomous from or integrated into groups), 2) power distance (the degree to which people accept or do not accept unequal distribution of power, i.e. hierarchies), 3)

uncertainty avoidance (the amount of tolerance for or avoidance of uncertainty and ambiguity), and 4) masculinity vs. femininity (the degree to which gender roles are fixed and respected). In later updates, Hofstede added a fifth dimension, time orientation (the degree to which a society embraces, or does not embrace, long-term devotion to traditional, forward thinking values).

These fairly abstract and unduly generalizing categories (see the critique by McSweeney 2002) are certainly helpful for the analysis of culture sensitive arguments, but for our purposes they will need to be fleshed out by some material contents. In this respect a taxonomy developed by Barry Tomalin and Susan Stempleski is useful. According to Tomalin and Stempleski, cultures are defined by three interrelated elements: 1) ideas (values, beliefs, institutions); 2) products (e.g. customs, habits, food, dress, lifestyle); 3) behaviours (e.g. folklore, music, art, literature) (Tomalin and Stempleski 1993, p. 7).

Integrating both concepts, cultural diversity may be said to manifest itself in any one or a combination of the following elements: First and foremost, there will be values, norms, codes, and institutions. These may be either of religious provenance (including e.g. religious values, beliefs, dogmas, commandments, or taboos, but also religious views of gender roles etc.), or associated with political ideas (e.g. freedom, democracy, legal systems, civil rights vs. hierarchic thinking, to be gauged on the power distance and individualism/collectivism criteria), or of a general philosophical and ethical character (e.g. human rights, ethical codes, rules of conduct and etiquette). All of these are generally long-term oriented values.

A second tier is represented by the elements that form the collective memory of a cultural group, such as the narratives of a society's myths and history, but also outstanding cultural achievements such as products of literature and art (including their characters and standard iconography), styles of architecture etc.

A third tier is formed by the standards that regulate everyday social life and interaction, such as language, customs, habits, routines, codes of honour, sense of shame, sense of humour, eating and drinking habits, fashion and general lifestyle. With this group would also belong what is called popular culture. Some of the elements of this third group may be rather short-term oriented.

If an argument touches any one or a combination of these elements in its premises, it will qualify as culture sensitive. In such arguments, close attention to cultural differences and individual argument cultures will be imperative for persuasiveness. But since the areas in which cultural communities may differ from one another are multiple, intersections and differences in cross-cultural argumentative dialogues also come in various quantitative grades. Danny Marrero distinguishes three grades of cultural difference in argumentative dialogues: slight, moderate and radical (Marrero 2007, pp. 4-6). In dialogues with slight cultural difference, the arguers belong to different groups with minor cultural variations, but still have a clearly defined common ground (p. 4). In a dialogue with moderate cultural difference there is an intersection of the sets of cultural beliefs, but only certain items are shared between the arguers, so that there is only limited common ground (p. 5). In an argumentative dialogue with radical cultural difference, however, there is no common ground at all. "Each arguer has a cultural-specific system of beliefs, values and presuppositions" (p. 5). The smaller the common ground, the more a culture sensitive argument is prone to fail.

4. WAYS IN WHICH CULTURE SENSITIVE ARGUMENTS MAY FAIL

Since the prospects for successful argumentation are not only dependent on the amount of common ground, but also on the individual selection of shared and non-shared items,

Marrero's purely quantitative taxonomy is insufficient and needs to be supplemented by a qualitative taxonomy of possible types of failures. There are several, and variably serious ways, in which culture sensitive arguments may fail if either brought forward or received in a culturally insensitive way.

4.1. Obscurity

An argument may for instance simply be incomprehensible to the audience, in the simplest of cases because of the wrong choice of language. If you argue with a person whose only language is English by presenting the most cogent of arguments in Chinese or Arabic language, communication will fail, and so will the argument. To avoid this failure, the arguer would have to respect the addressed person's native language which is part of his or her cultural imprint.

But linguistic communication happens on various levels. Even if translated into the audience's native language, an argument may be incomprehensible, if it employs figurative language that is not part of the audience's idiom. "Don't waste your time, since you're on the wrong steamer," or "You're on the woodway" would probably mean nothing at all to an English-speaking person, since the underlying German metaphors would correctly translate as "you're barking up the wrong tree."

4.2. Irrelevance

In the preceding examples the arguments failed on the basic communication level. But even if the message is successfully carried over, an argument may appear completely irrelevant to the claim in the eyes of a culturally different audience.

For instance, the local First Nation community of the Anangu have always argued that Mount Uluṟu (Ayers Rock) in the central Australian outback must not be climbed, because the climb crosses an important dreaming track. This argument, however, was bluntly ignored by the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke in 1985, when access for tourists to climb Uluṟu was made a condition before the title to the area could be handed back to the traditional owners. And it has been ignored by hundreds of tourists every day ever since. Evidently, neither the Prime Minister nor the tourists think that the protection of dreaming tracks is in any way relevant to the prohibition of climbing Uluṟu. And this is because aboriginal religion and culture, according to which Uluṟu is a sacred place inhabited by ancestral 'beings,' do not matter to them.

A similar case is reported by Danielle Endres with respect to the project of a nuclear waste site on Yucca Mountain in Nevada. In their protests against the project, representatives of local First Nations (Shoshone and Paiute) mainly argued that Yucca Mountain was a serpent lying asleep that would get angry when awakened (Endres 2007, p. 383). But, for similar reasons as in the case of Uluṟu, their arguments fell on deaf ears with politicians and engineers. Prospects would have been much better, had they based their arguments on the higher-than-average seismic activity in that area.

4.3. Insufficiency

In a similar way, an argument that would be taken as sufficient support for a claim in one cultural community, may appear not really sufficient to members of a different community. "You must not pollute this planet, since it is God's creation" might be considered a perfectly sufficient argument by a devout Christian, but for instance in a public political discussion in a more secular environment, even if the argument is not considered irrelevant, one might be well advised to adduce further arguments. Of course, in this case, a culture sensitive argument will only prove a failure if it is brought forward as the only argument.

4.4. Argument strength

Cultural diversity will also affect the strength of arguments. For instance: "You should work more than assessed in your contract, since this is for the best of your company" will be a strong argument in collectivism-oriented cultures such as in most Asian societies, but a weak argument in highly individualist societies such as most Western ones.

4.5. Backfiring

If an audience, by virtue of divergent cultural presuppositions, decodes an argument in a sense completely different from or even opposite to the one intended by the arguer, this effect may be described as backfiring. In these cases, by ignorance of the audience's cultural presuppositions, the arguer will have completely spoiled his or her argument. Instead of raising the credibility of its conclusion, the argument will actually have decreased it (see Cohen 2005, pp. 58-59). The examples on various kinds of food quoted earlier may aptly illustrate this. A special subtype of this kind of failure is what Cohen (2005, p. 60) calls the Failed Satirist, who ironically argues for the contrary of his or her true intentions ("Vote for Bush, since he is a God-fearing man!"), but the argument is accepted at face value by the audience.

4.6. Embarrassment and insult

In the worst case, culture sensitive arguments may even backfire by unwillingly offending or insulting an audience's feelings. In his memoirs, the former French president Charles de Gaulle defended French colonial policy in Guinea by arguing that France had done many good things to that country, as was amply demonstrated by the perfect French spoken by its president Sekou Touré (Kienpointner 1996, pp. 49-50). De Gaulle's argument presupposed that the enforced francophonization of the colonial population was a positive value. But to African anti-colonialists, to whom the argument was addressed, this will have appeared as an expression of cultural imperialism. Similarly, when president George Bush sr., in a commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, referred to the United States as "the best country in the world," this may have been perceived as patriotic by a U.S. audience, but any non-U.S. audience might have felt offended (Johnson and Blair 2006, p. 193). The same applies to the presupposition of American exceptionalism that frequently entered the wartime speeches

of U.S. president Gorge W. Bush as an unexpressed premise (Zarefsky 2007), which sent the message: "It is right for us to do what is not right to do for others." Bush could not understand why this presupposition was not appreciated by many European nations.

5. ARGUMENT FORMS OPEN TO CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

One question remains to be answered: Are there particular argument forms that are especially open to cultural sensitivity?

5.1. Standard form arguments

If we take the famous pattern developed by Stephen Toulmin as a model for the standard structure of an argument, in which a claim is supported by a given set of data and the step from data to the claim or conclusion is authorised by a (frequently implicit) warrant (Toulmin 1958, pp. 98-99), it is evident from the above examples that culture-specific presuppositions mostly occupy the position of authorising warrants. Since these warrants in most cases remain unexpressed, they have to be supplied by the audience from their own sets of cultural beliefs, which is exactly why, in cross-cultural dialogue, misinterpretations are likely to occur.

 For instance, the argument: "This person may not apply for the advertised job as a cab driver, since she is a woman" will instantly be interpreted as a rude act of sexual discrimination in a Western cultural context, since the unexpressed warrant will be assumed to be "Women aren't good drivers," one of the standard prejudices of a male white society. Yet in the legal context of Saudi Arabia, the same argument would be perfectly reasonable, since in that country law prohibits a woman to drive a car (although there are recent rumours that the ban is going to be lifted in the near future).

 If this sounds too exotic, here is the Western counterpart: I was recently put off with the following argument by the head of my department: "You are not eligible for the hiring committee, since you are a man." This was not meant to be an act of sexual discrimination either. The solution is that my department is committed to an equal opportunity policy, so male and female faculty must be equally represented on all official boards and committees. It so happened that there was one more man on the committee than there were women, so the last remaining seat could only go to a woman.

 It is thus evident that arguments may be made culture sensitive by virtue of their (implicit) culture sensitive warrants. But data or minor premises, too, may become culture sensitive. In that case everything depends on how the data are described, on the employment of particular cultural keywords or catchwords (Williams 1975; Wierzbicka 1992 and 1997; Rigotti and Rocci 2005). For instance, during the Cold War both East and West agreed on the fact that democracy was a positive value; yet both sides described their own forms of government as democracies and therefore as superior. Similarly, during the war in Iraq, 'freedom' was used as such a keyword in U.S. pro-war rhetoric (Burnette and Kraemer 2007, pp. 194-195; on freedom as a cultural keyword, see Wierzbicka 1997, pp. 129-138). "The premise that supports the use of these terms is the assumption that if one is against the war one must be against freedom and democracy." (Burnette and Kraemer 2007, p. 198). But, in reality, freedom is universally seen as a positive value, which in other cultural contexts may however be defined differently, e.g.

as freedom from Western paternalism. On the other hand, describing the war in Iraq as a crusade will provoke very different connotations on either side. And if waterboarding is illegal crucially depends on whether or not it is described as torture.

5.2. Arguments from examples

Besides arguments of this standard form, a number of other argument forms are also eligible for cultural sensitivity. In arguments from examples, for instance, the examples are usually taken from a cultural group's collective memory, i.e. from myth, history or literature. For their persuasiveness, it is therefore (often wrongly) presupposed that the audience possess the respective knowledge. For example, "Don't be so greedy; remember what happened to King Midas!" presupposes acquaintance with Greek myth; "Don't use violence! Do as Gandhi did!" requires some knowledge of Indian history.

5.3. Arguments from authority

The argument from authority or expert evidence (ad verecundiam) is also strongly dependent on cultural backgrounds. On the one hand, it is very effective in communities with high power distance such as Asian societies, but much less so in communities with low power distance such as the Western societies. For this reason, Jeremy Bentham even called it the "Chinese argument" (Hamblin 1986, p. 166). But an authority that is acknowledged in one cultural group, need also not necessarily be so in another (Hornikx 2007; Shaffer 2007; Walton 1997; Dien 1999; Goodwin 2005, 106-108). When Dr. Laura Schlessinger, an observant orthodox Jew, on her radio show sometime in 2000 declared homosexuality an abomination, based on Leviticus 18:22, she used an argument from authority (Scripture) that was not universally accepted. It provoked a number of counter-arguments, the most famous of which is a *Letter to Dr. Laura* that circulated widely on various websites on the internet. By ironically quoting further Biblical commandments, mainly from Exodus and Leviticus, which no-one would take seriously nowadays (such as selling one's daughter into slavery or possessing members of neighbouring nations as slaves), the author (probably a certain J. Kent Ashcroft) intended to ridicule Dr. Laura's argument and to demonstrate, that the Bible could not be used as a reasonable authority in that context. The letter in its turn provoked a number of counter-statements on internet blogs, some of which in a kind of ad hominem argument denied the author the right to argue from this position, since he did not honestly share the respective value system himself. This shows that not only Dr. Laura's initial statement, but also the ironic open letter were interpreted as culture sensitive.

5.4. Arguments from popular opinion

Accordingly, also the appeal to popular opinion (*argumentum ad populum*) is a highly culture sensitive argument (Goodwin 2005, p. 108-109). "Everybody thinks that English should be spoken everywhere in the world" may perhaps be true for the U.S., but other nations my see this differently.

5.5. Ad hominem arguments

Lastly, also ad hominem arguments (if they are serious arguments at all), particularly in their abusive variant, are clearly open to cultural sensitivity. As a corollary to the fact that culturally insensitive employment may make any argument appear abusive (see above 4.6.), there will be substantial disagreement among different cultures as to what qualifies as a personal insult. For instance, calling someone a follower of Christ may be an expression of appreciation in a Christian context, but a bad insult in a strictly Muslim society. Moreover, insults directed at a man's female relatives will be much more provocative in non-individualistic cultures, where family reputation is paramount, than in individualistic cultures. It is also said that among Nigerians it is a powerful insult to call someone "my son," since this indicates a major disparity in dignity. And in the Netherlands it is regarded as a biting insult to call somebody "sick with cancer" etc. Because of these big intercultural differences in abusive language it may even happen that the insulted person does not even understand the insult as such, which, however, might in turn be interpreted by the hapless offender as a deliberate neglect of his or her own cultural traditions.

6. GLOBALIZATION AND POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

The range of arguments that qualify as culture sensitive is thus much broader than is generally assumed. On the other hand, in our globalized world various different argument cultures, that were originally geographically separated, today frequently live together in the same areas in closer contact than ever before. There may even coexist various (intellectually, socially or otherwise distinct) argument cultures within one society. This situation of globalization makes cross-cultural argumentative dialogue a permanent and ubiquitous task. In our postmodern societies, however, audiences become more and more complex, and consist of multiple cultural layers that are inextricably interlaced. The development is thus from contrastive via cross-cultural to multicultural argumentation.

But since the rules of political correctness demand that no single cultural community must be neglected or offended in arguing, this task becomes almost an impossible one. If we accept the requirement that an arguer should pay respect to the cultural background of the audience, but also that the audience may be of a culturally highly diversified nature, and that respect of this cultural diversity is a positive value that should be culturally shared (Marrero 2007, p. 4), the process of arguing might run the risk of being ultimately paralyzed. For the time being, there will be no way out of a situation, in which occasional cultural insensitivities will remain part of our argument culture.

7. CONCLUSION

The result of our study has been that while successful arguing presupposes a certain amount of common ground shared between arguer and audience, in arguments that are culture sensitive this harmony may be disturbed if there is a significant incongruence in the cultural environments of arguer and audience. The arguments may then fail on various levels. Since the range of arguments affected by cultural sensitivity proves to be fairly broad, this problem cannot be marginalized. On the other hand, although culture

sensitive arguments may fall short of any of Johnson's and Blair's criteria for a good argument (acceptability, relevance, sufficiency) (2006, p. 58), it would nonetheless be an overstatement to regard them as plainly fallacious. Since the arguments themselves are basically sound and the risk of failure only emerges in certain cases with respect to particular audiences, we should not speak of fallacies, but rather of infelicitous failures.

Link to commentary

REFERENCES

Amossy, R. (2000). *L'argumentation dans le discours. Discours politique, littérature d'idées, fiction*. Paris: Nathan.

Amossy, R. (2005). The argumentative dimension of discourse. In: F.H. van Eemeren and P. Houtlosser (Eds.), *Argumentation in Practice* (pp. 87-98, Ch. 6), Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Amossy, R. and M. Sternberg (2002). Doxa and discourse. How common knowledge works. *Poetics Today* 23, 369-394.

Anscombre, J.C. and O. Ducrot (1988). *L'argumentation dans la langue*. Liège-Bruxelles: Mardaga.

Benhabib, S. (2002). *The Claims of Culture: Equality and diversity in the global era*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Billig, M. (1991). *Ideology and Opinions: Studies in rhetorical psychology*. London: sage Publications.

Billig, M. (1996). *Arguing and Thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology*. New ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burnette, A.E. and W.L. Kraemer (2007). The argumentative framework of imperial righteousness: The war discourse of George W. Bush. In: F.H. van Eemeren, J.A. Blair, C.A. Willard and B. Garssen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 193-199), Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Carter, R.E. (1996). The background to argument in the Far East. In: D.P. Berrill (Ed.), *Perspectives on Written Argument* (pp. 205-220), Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Cohen, D. H. (2005). Arguments that backfire. In: D. Hitchcock and D. Farr (Eds.), *The Uses of Argument: Proceedings of a conference at McMaster University, 18-21 May 2005* (pp. 58-65), Hamilton, ON: Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation.

Combs, S.C. (2004). Challenging Greco-Roman argumentation trajectories: Argument norms and cultural traditions. *Argumentation and Advocacy* 41, 55-57..

Dien, D.S.-F. (1999). Chinese authority-directed orientation and Japanese peer-group orientation: Questioning the notion of collectivism. *Review of General Psychology* 3, 372-385.

Dolinina, I. B. and V. Cecchetto (1998). Facework and rhetorical strategies in intercultural argumentative discourse. *Argumentation* 12, 167-181.

Endres, D. (2007). "Yucca Mountain will become unhappy and angry." Culture, metaphor, and argument. In: F.H. van Eemeren, J.A. Blair, C.A. Willard and B. Garssen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 381-387), Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Fiske, A.P., S. Kitayama, H.R. Markus and R.E. Nisbett (1998). The cultural matrix of social psychology. In: D. Gilbert, S. Fiske and G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology, 4th edition* (pp. 915-981), NY: McGraw Hill.

Freeman, J. (2005). *Acceptable Premises. An epistemic approach to an informal logic problem*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Garrett, M.M. (1993). Classical Chinese conceptions of argumentation and persuasion. *Argumentation and Advocacy* 29, 105-115.

Goodwin, J. (2005). Designing premises. In: F.H. van Eemeren and P. Houtlosser (Eds.), *Argumentation in Practice* (pp. 99-114, Ch. 7), Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Gough, J. (1985). The psychological parameters of argumentation. *Past and Present*, 10, 25-29.

Gough, J. (2007). Accepting premises and systems of belief. In: F.H. van Eemeren, J.A. Blair, C.A. Willard and B. Garssen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 497-503), Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Govier, T. (1987). The social epistemology of argument. In: Govier, *Problems in Argument Analysis and Argumentation* (pp. 271-291). Dordrecht: Foris Publications.

Groarke, L. and C. Tindale (2001). *Good Reasoning Matters. A Constructive Approach to Critical Thinking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hamblin, C. L. (1986). *Fallacies*. With a preface by J. Plecnik and J. Hoaglund and a current bibliography by M.F. Schmidt and H.V. Hansen. Newport News, VA: Vale Press.

Hazen, M.D. (1989). The role of argument, reasoning and logic in tacit, incomplete and indirect communication: The case of Japan. In: B.E. Gronbeck (Ed.), *Spheres of Argument* (pp. 497-503). Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association.

Hazen, M.D. (2006). Argument and culture: Seeing one while seeing the other. In: F.H. van Eemeren, M.D. Hazen, P. Houtlosser and D.C. Williams (Eds.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Argumentation: Views from the Venice argumentation conference* (pp.127-150). Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Hazen, M.D. (2007). Dissensus as value and practice in cultural argument: The tangled web of argument, con/dis-sensus, values and cultural variations. In: H.V. Hansen, C.W. Tindale, J.A. Blair, R.H. Johnson and D.M. Godden (Eds.), *Dissensus and the Search for Common Ground*, CD-ROM (pp. 1-43), Windsor, ON: OSSA.

Hazen, M.D. and S.S. Fourcade (2007). Argument and message contextuality: A preliminary study of argument forms and processes in different cultures. In: F.H. van Eemeren, J.A. Blair, C.A. Willard and B. Garssen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 591-598), Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Hermans, J.M. and H.J.G. Kempen (1998). Moving cultures: The perilous problems of cultural dichotomies in a globalizing society. *American Psychologist* 53, 1111-1120.

Hofstede, G. (1980). *Culture's Consequences: International differences in work related values*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and Organizations.* London: McGraw-Hill.

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations Across Nations*, 2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Hofstede, G. (2006). Dimensionalizing cultures: The Hofstede model in context. In: W.J. Lonner, D.L. Dinnel, S.A. Hayes and D.N. Sattler (Eds.), *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, Unit 2: Conceptual, methodological and ethical issues in psychology and culture*, Bellingham WA: Center for Cross-Cultural Research, Western Washington University. On-line at http://www.ac.wwu.edu/~culture/readings.htm.

Hornikx, J. (2007). Cultural differences in the persuasiveness of normatively strong and normatively weak expert evidence. In: F.H. van Eemeren, J.A. Blair, C.A. Willard and B. Garssen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 645-650), Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Johnson, R. and J.A. Blair (1977). *Logical Self-Defense*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Johnson, R. and J.A. Blair (2006). *Logical Self-Defense*. New York: International Debate Education Association.

Kennedy, G.A. (1988). *A Comparative Rhetoric. An historical and cross-cultural introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kienpointner, M. (1996). *Vernünftig argumentieren. Regeln und Techniken der Diskussion*. Reinbek: Rowohlt.

Kluckhohn, F.R. and F.L. Strodtbeck (1961). *Variations in Value Orientations*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.

Liu, Y. (1999). Justifying my position in your terms: Cross-cultural argumentation in a globalized world. *Argumentation* 13, 297-315.

Macfarlane, J. (2004). Commentary: When cultures collide. In: C. Bell (Ed.), *Intercultural Dispute Resolution in Aboriginal Contexts* (pp. 94-103), Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Marrero, D. (2007). How to evaluate arguments in multicultural argumentative dialogues? In: H.V. Hansen, C.W. Tindale, J.A. Blair, R.H. Johnson and D.M. Godden (Eds.), *Dissensus and the Search for Common Ground*, CD-ROM (pp. 1-9), Windsor, ON: OSSA.

McSweeney, B. (2002). Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith—a failure of analysis, *Human Relations* 55, 89-119.

Oman, N. (2004). Paths to intercultural understanding: Feasting, shared horizons, and unforced consensus. In: C. Bell (Ed.), *Intercultural Dispute Resolution in Aboriginal Contexts* (pp. 70-93), Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Perelman, C. and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958). *Traité de l'argumentation. La nouvelle rhétorique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Philipsen, G. (1992). *Speaking Culturally. Explorations in social communication*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Philipsen, G. (2002). Cultural communication. In: W.B. Gudykunst and B. Mody (Eds.), *Handbook of International and Intercultural Communication*. 2nd ed. (pp. 51-67), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pinto, R.C. (1994). Logic, epistemology and argument appraisal. In: R.H. Johnson and J.A. Blair (Eds.), *New Essays in Informal Logic* (pp. 116-124), Windsor, ON: Informal Logic.

Rescher, N. (2001). *Philosophical Reasoning. A study in the methodology of philosophizing*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Rigotti, E. and A. Rocci (2005). From argument analysis to cultural keywords (and back again). In: F.H. van Eemeren and P. Houtlosser (Eds.), *Argumentation in Practice* (pp. 125-142, Ch. 9), Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Schwartz, S.H. (1999). A theory of cultural values and some implications for work. *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 48, 23-47.

Shaffer, M.J. (2007). The ad verecundiam fallacy and appeals to expert testimony. In: F.H. van Eemeren, J.A. Blair, C.A. Willard and B. Garssen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 1265-1269), Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Siegel, H. (1999). Argument quality and cultural difference. *Argumentation*, 13, 183-201.

Siegel, H. (2007). Multiculturalism and argumentative norms. On an argument of Stanley Fish, as seen through the eyes of Ralph Johnson and Tony Blair. In: H.V. Hansen and R.C. Pinto (Eds.), *Reason Reclaimed. Essays in honor of J. Anthony Blair and Ralph H. Johnson* (pp. 215-228, Ch. 15), Newport News, VA: Vale Press.

Sperber, D. (1982). Mutual knowledge and relevance in theories of comprehension. In: N.V. Smith (Ed.), Mutual Knowledge. (pp. 61-85). London: Academic Press.

Sperber, D. and D. Wilson (1986). *Relevance. Communication and cognition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tannen, D. (1998): *The Argument Culture: Moving from debate to dialogue***,** New York, NY: Random House.

Tannen, D. (1999): *The Argument Culture: Stopping America's war of words*, New York, NY: Ballantine Books.

Tindale, C.W. (1999). *Acts of Arguing. A Rhetorical model of argument*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Tomalin, B. and S. Stempleski (1993). *Cultural Awareness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Toulmin, S.E. (1958). *The Uses of Argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Triandis, H.C. (1988). Collectivism v. individualism: A reconceptualization of a basic concept in cross-cultural social psychology. In: G.K. Verma and C. Bagley (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural Studies of Personality, Attitudes and Cognition* (pp. 60-95), New York: St. Martin's Press.

Triandis, H.C. (1993). Collectivism and individualism as cultural syndromes. *Cross-Cultural Research* 27, 155-180.

Triandis, H.C. (1995). *Individualism and Collectivism.* Boulder, CO: Westview.

Triandis, H.C., R. Bontempo, M.J. Villareal, M. Asai and N. Lucca (1988). Individualism and collectivism: Cross-cultural perspectives on self-ingroup relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 54, 323-338.

Walton, D.N. (1992). Types of dialogue, dialectical shifts and fallacies. In: F.H. van Eemeren, R.Grootendorst, J.A. Blair and C.A. Willard (Eds.), *Argumentation Illuminated* (pp. 133-147), Amsterdam: Sic Sat.

Walton, D. (1997). *Appeal to Expert Opinion*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Walton, D. (1999). *Appeal to Popular Opinion*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Walton, D. (2001). Enthymemes, common knowledge, and plausible inference. *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34, 93-112.

Wierzbicka, A. (1992). *Semantics, Culture, and Cognition. Universal human concepts in culture-specific configurations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wierzbicka, A. (1997). *Understanding Cultures Through Their Key Words. English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, R. (1975). *Keywords. A vocabulary of culture and society*. London: Fontana.

Zarefsky, D. (2007). The U.S. and the world: The unexpressed premises of American exceptionalism. In: F.H. van Eemeren, J.A. Blair, C.A. Willard and B. Garssen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (pp. 1567-1571), Amsterdam: Sic Sat.