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ABSTRACT: In recent discussions concerning the definition of argument, it has been maintained that the word 'argument' exhibits the process-product ambiguity, or (as in Goddu forthcoming) an act/object ambiguity. Drawing on literature on lexical ambiguity we argue that 'argument' is not ambiguous. The term 'argument' refers to an object, not to a speech act. We also examine some of the important implications of our argument by considering the question: what sort of abstract objects are arguments?

KEYWORDS: argument, definition, act/object ambiguity, speech act, abstract object, realism

1. INTRODUCTION

According to David Hitchcock, "an argument is a claim-reason complex consisting of an act of concluding (which may be of any of the five main types in Searle's taxonomy of speech acts) and one or more acts of premissing (each of which is an assertive)." (Hitchcock 2007: 6). In the more technical formulation of the definition, an argument is a set of the form $\{<c, \cdot:, P>\}$ or $\{<P, :\cdot, c>\}$, where, P is the set of assertives which constitutes the premises of the argument, the conclusion c is a speech act of any type, $\cdot:$ is a premiss indicator, and $:\cdot$ is a conclusion indicator. A similar definition of 'argument' is due to Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 19-35, 39-46). For them an argument is a constellation of speech acts: "The constellation of statements S1, S2, (..., Sn) consists of assertives in which propositions are expressed... Advancing the constellation of statements S1, S2, (..., Sn) counts as an attempt by S to justify [or to refute] O to L's satisfaction." (1984: 43), where O is an opinion, S is the speaker, and L the listener.

Goddu (2009) criticizes Hitchcock's definition of 'argument', not for being materially inadequate (i.e. failing to capture the concept of argument), but for not fulfilling the outcomes that Hitchcock himself thinks a definition of argument should fulfil. In reply to Goddu's comments, Hitchcock writes that a premise-conclusion complex is not a type of discourse, but rather an abstract object:

> Arguments in the sense of premise-conclusion complexes are better construed as abstract objects than as acts. Although arguing for a position by giving supporting reasons is an act, its content can be the content of other acts, such as collaborative inquiry or deliberation (i.e. co-construction), explanation of one's reasons for holding a position, and solo reasoning. Since premise-conclusion complexes have properties of theoretical interest apart from their embedding in a communicative or mental act, we should define what it is to be such a complex independently of any such embedding. (Hitchcock 2009)

Although Hitchcock abandons the definition of 'argument' as a complex speech act, many other authors continue to think that there is a place for a definition of 'argument' as a speech act. James Freeman, for instance, writes: "As is well known, and as Wenzel (1979) has pointed out in particular, we may distinguish argument as process from argument as product." (Freeman 2009: 1) Ralph Johnson writes:

> The distinction between product and process seems to me fairly secure. It has a longstanding history here and in other disciplines. In logic, for instance, the term 'inference' is understood as ambiguous as between the process of drawing an inference and the inference that results from that process. (Johnson 2009: 3)[1]

The belief common to many philosophers is that 'argument' is ambiguous, displaying a process/product ambiguity: the word has two literal meanings, one for the process of arguing, and another for the product of that process, which is an abstract object. Goddu (forthcoming) offers a criticism of this claim, arguing that the abstract object that we name 'argument' is not the product of a speech act. So, he believes that we should rather talk of an act/object ambiguity, rather than of a process/product one. He does not question the claim that 'argument' has a sense that refers to an act, and another that refers to an abstract object (the content of the act, perhaps). The existence of these two senses, he thinks, "warrants holding that the word "argument" is subject to an act/object ambiguity, but is not enough to warrant holding that the word is subject to a process/product ambiguity." (Goddu forthcoming: 8)

Our purpose in this paper is twofold. First, while we agree with Goddu that 'argument' does not have a process/product ambiguity, we claim that it is also not subject to the act/object ambiguity. In particular, we argue that it does not have a sense that refers to a kind of speech act. The upshot of this argument is to maintain that a definition of argument as a certain kind of speech act is not acceptable, because it does not capture a meaning that 'argument' has at all. So, in this sense, we take the argumentation up where Goddu left it, and make a further step in criticizing the established view. Second, having made the case that 'argument' does not refer to a speech act, we propose that it refers to an abstract object. We develop a conception of arguments as abstract objects that can be created by human intellectual activity and respond to major objections against this view.

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[1] Also van Eemeren, Grootendorst, and Snoeck Henkemans write: "Argumentation relates both to the process of putting forward argumentation and to its "product," and the term *argumentation* covers the two of them." (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans 2002: xii) For more references to similar claims see Goddu (forthcoming)

2. THE ACT/OBJECT AMBIGUITY

It is a classical claim in philosophy that some words display the so-called 'act/object' ambiguity. Paul Grice in 'Meaning' (1957) writes that, "'utterance' … has a convenient act/object ambiguity." Terms like 'belief', 'thought', 'perception' also have been said to be ambiguous in the same way, having one meaning that refers to an act of perceiv*ing*, think*ing*, utter*ing* something, and a different meaning which refers to the object, or content, of that act: that which is utter*ed*, that which is perceiv*ed* etc (see MacFarlane 2007). For this reason Sellars (see Sellars 1956) called it the 'ing/ed' ambiguity. Alan Reeves observes that the ambiguity is a common feature of words that end in 'ment' and 'ing' (see Reeves 1975: 235). Other words that have been claimed to be ambiguous in this way are 'statement', 'singing', 'weaving' (Reeves 1975), 'building', 'shot', 'writing', 'inference', 'statement', 'thought' (Bach 1998), 'assertion', 'judgment', 'representation', 'action', 'endorsement', 'imagination', 'description', 'classification' (Brandom 2011).

The word 'argument' ends in 'ment' and belongs to the same semantic category as some of the words mentioned above. This suggests that it is also ambiguous, having one sense that refers to a speech act of arguing, and another sense that refers to the content of that act, which is probably an abstract object. In order to answer the question about whether this alleged ambiguity of 'argument' is real, we appeal to a number of tests for ambiguity that have been developed in the literature on ambiguity. Not all tests are easily applicable, but some of them offer some reasonable prima facie evidence for an answer to our question.

What does it mean to say that a word is ambiguous? Here is one answer: "An expression is ambiguous iff the expression has more than one meaning." (Gillon 1990: 394). In Bach (1998) we find a similar definition of ambiguity. We are concerned here with *lexical* ambiguity, that is, ambiguity of simple expressions, which have more than one literal meaning. The term 'literal meaning' is used in different ways in the literature on ambiguity, and in semantics in general. Roughly speaking, it makes reference to the meaning of words in the lexicon, and whose knowledge is therefore *a priori*.[2] These are theoretical claims, and so the precise sense in which they are to be understood depends on the particular theory of lexical semantics that one considers.

Although it may seem that we can intuitively determine whether a word is ambiguous or not just by applying the definition, this is not so. As several authors point out, claims of ambiguity are theoretical.[3] They are not a direct expression of intuitive judgements about whether a word is subject to an ambiguity or not. Different kinds of semantic intuitions competent users have, as well as observations about use of expressions, are part of the data that lexical semantics, together with the theory of predication and a theory of non-literal use of expressions (pragmatics) have to explain. But the relation between data and theory is not straightforward. For instance, when an expression is systematically used in two different ways, one possible explanation of this variation is that the expression has two meanings that are homophonic, i.e. associated to the same linguistic form. But there are other possible explanations that have to be ruled out before concluding that a word is

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[2]   We sometimes use simply 'meaning' or 'sense'.

[3]   For example, Reeves writes: "So long as we think of judgments of ambiguity… as intuitive… we shall be unable to adjudicate disputes over what is ambiguous… They are not to be thought of as we think of perceptual judgments. A word does not look ambiguous as a surface looks red" (Reeves 1975: 233).

ambiguous.[4] In general, to say that a word has various *uses* is not yet to say that it is ambiguous. 'Argument' is sometimes used to refer to a kind of acts, and sometimes to reefer to a kind of abstract objects. This observation about the plurality of uses of 'argument' parallels Donnellan's observation about the plurality of uses of 'the': definite descriptions in subject position can be used referentially or attributively (see Donnellan 1966). As Donnellan points out (see section VII of Donnellan 1966), a plurality of uses needs not be explained by postulating various independent literal meanings, that is, ambiguity. In some cases the best explanation could be pragmatic. As tests of ambiguity (some of which are mentioned below) show, the word 'bank' is ambiguous, i.e. a case of *homophony*. There is no other plausible explanation. But the word 'chicken' is not ambiguous, with a sense referring to chicken meat and another referring to a kind of animal, although we use it to mean the former in the context of a restaurant, and we may use it to mean the latter during a visit at grandma's house in the countryside. Most plausibly, the explanation here is pragmatic. Given that the variety of uses is not limited in principle, the correct explanation for some uses must be pragmatic.

As Kent Bach points out, in cases in which a use of a word, such as the cognitive use of 'see' (as in 'I see your point.'), seems to derivate from another use of the word, such as the use of 'see' to refer to perceptual experiences, it could be argued that only the latter is a lexically encoded sense of 'see', while the former results from a pragmatic derivation. Bach notes that "[t]his argument is plausible to the extent that the phenomenon is systematic and general, rather than peculiar to particular words." (Bach 1998) Pragmatic phenomena are systematic and general, because they are explicable in terms of general rules of rationality that warrant certain patterns of inference, while ambiguities are rather accidental and specific to one particular language. The strategy against postulating ambiguity was named by Grice the Modified Occam's Razor: "senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity" (Grice 1989: 47-9).

Pragmatic explanations are of various kinds. One line of argument claims that literal meaning is actually very abstract, and so the content of an utterance is always underdetermined by literal meaning. Words do not have a meaning outside particular contexts of use. There is a determinate content associated with an utterance only when we consider a particular use in a particular context. François Recanati and Charles Ruhl, among others, defend this contextualist view of literal meaning.[5] Ruhl writes that most words have "only a single, highly abstract meaning… Typically monosemic words have the quality of being… *unspecified*... The important point is that *diversity is provided by context*." (Ruhl 1989: xi-xii) According to Recanati (see Recanati 2004: 24), in the restaurant example a pragmatic process of *specification* takes place, which takes as input the underdetermined literal meaning, and gives as output the contextually modulated, and in this case and more specific, non-literal meaning. Apart from pragmatic specification, another mechanism that explains the variety of uses of words is *metonymic inference*. One example of such an inference is that in which a word for instrument is used to refer to the agent that manipulates that instrument, as in 'answer the phone', where 'phone' is used to refer to the person using the phone.[6] The so-called act/object ambiguity could be a case of a metonymic

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4   Cruse writes: "We shall adopt a 'default' definition and characterise as lexical all ambiguities for which there is no convincing non-lexical explanation" (Cruse 1986: 66).

5   For criticisms see Fodor and Lepore (1998) and Asher (2007: 24).

6   See Ruhl (1989: 69). For a list of metonymic patters that Ruhl considers see Ruhl (1989: 286).

inference in which a word that names an object is used to make reference to a speech act associated to it. This seems to be the case in sentences such as 'I finished the book.'

3. THE USES OF 'ARGUMENT'

Concerning 'argument', dictionaries confirm the hypothesis that it has various uses[7]. Leaving aside the uses of 'argument' that are irrelevant to argumentation theory,[8] the relevant senses are (according to Merriam-Webster online dictionary): "2.*a*: a reason given in proof or rebuttal; *b*: discourse intended to persuade. 3.*a*: the act or process of arguing: see argumentation; *b*: a coherent series of statements leading from a premise to a conclusion."

It is *3b* that seems to capture the use of 'argument' to refer to a speech act, while *2a* seems to capture the object sense. *3a* captures the use of 'argument' to refer to an argumentative discussion, or a debate.[9] It is easy to find examples of 'argument' used to refer to an abstract object. Consider the sentences:

(1)   Many arguments were given against adopting the proposal.
(2)   Two arguments were presented in the morning session.

Sentence (1) is true only if at least two independent reasons were given against the proposal, and false in a situation in which the same consideration against the proposal was repeated over and over. In general, verbs such as 'express', 'accept', 'make', 'present', 'suggest', 'mention', 'talk about', 'propose', 'come up with', 'defend', 'think about', 'give' etc take as their object not a speech act but an informational content. To show this, it is sufficient to consider what is it that we count over in situations in which arguments are presented (or made, or suggested, or proposed etc) several times, by making several speech acts with the same content. It is only acceptable to answer the question 'How many arguments did the speaker make (suggest, present, propose etc)?' by counting the informational content, not the number of expositions made. So 'argument' does not make reference to a speech act here, but to the informational content.

It is more difficult to find examples of the use of 'argument' to refer to a speech act. Among the examples given in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, possible candidates of exemplifying this use are the following:

(3)   They were always getting into arguments about politics. (Merriam-Webster online)
(4)   They settled an argument that started in class. (Merriam-Webster online)

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[7]   In the line of the observations about ambiguity claims being theoretical, I take it that dictionaries offer information about various *uses* of words, and that they cannot be taken as containing the answer to questions of ambiguity.

[8]   Such as "an abstract or summary especially of a literary work" (Merriam-Webster online). There is also the sense of 'argument' in mathematics, where functions have arguments, and the sense of 'argument in linguistics, where it refers to the various positions that a noun phrase can occupy in a sentence. We will use the linguistic sense of 'argument' in this paper, which is not to be confused with the sense we are interested in discussing.

[9]   The debate sense of 'argument' is emphasized with more clarity in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (2003), which mentions as a second meaning "a discussion in which reasons are put forward in support of and against a proposition, proposal, or case; debate" as in 'The argument on birth control will never be concluded.'

One cannot get into an abstract object, and abstract objects do not start, so it seems that 'argument' in (3) and (4) is used to refer to an event. However, the event that it refers to is *not* that of expressing an argument, that is, not a speech act. The subject is plural in both sentences, but it is not this per se that excludes a speech act reading. The verbs used admit of singular subjects as well. However, the sentences can only be judged as true with respect to a situation in which the agent (or agents) is (are) engaging in a debate. The sentences are not true with respect to a situation in which there is no debate going on, just a collective speech act performed by the subjects. The same can be said about:

(5) She won the argument.

To win an argument is not to win a speech act of arguing, but a certain kind of dispute or debate. In all these examples, 'argument' is used to name a discussion in which arguments are used. We are not taking a stand here on whether 'argument' is really ambiguous between a debate meaning (as in 3, 4 and 5) and an object meaning (as in 1 and 2). But even if it is, this ambiguity does not look like an act/object ambiguity, because a debate is not an act, not even a complex act. It is rather to be equated with a series of speech acts performed by different agents, addressed to one another, and in which different reasons are invoked, both in favour and against a certain claim, questions are asked, objections are raised, clarifications are made, definitions are given etc. Some authors have already noticed this, such as Wenzel, who characterizes the process meaning of 'argument' as referring not to a kind of speech act, but "to the phenomena of one or more social actors addressing symbolic appeals to others in an effort to win adherence to theses." (Wenzel 1979: 84 quoted in Freeman 2009: 1) It may be thought that a debate is still an act in a general and loose sense of the term, because it is an activity that various participants perform. This claim does not affect our arguments in this paper. If indeed a debate is an act then 'argument' does instantiate the act/object ambiguity. However, our claim is only that 'argument' does not name a kind of speech act by which premises are put forward in support of a conclusion, as in the definitions due to Hitchcock and van Eemeren and Grootendorst that we mentioned in the beginning. We are only denying that 'argument' instantiates the speech act/abstract object ambiguity. This claim is independent of the claim that it instantiates the debate/abstract object ambiguity, and for that matter, of the claim that the latter ambiguity is also of the act/object type.

Sentences (3) and (4) exemplify the debate sense of 'argument', and so the Merriam-Webster dictionary fails to provide examples of the speech act use. However, 'argument' can be used to refer to a speech act by which arguments (in the object sense) are conveyed. Here are some examples:

(6) The argument began at 5pm.
(7) The argument lasted for five minutes
(8) That was such a long argument.
(9) The argument was interrupted by the fire alarm.

All these sentences have at least one reading, which is about a speech act or a series of speech acts in which an argument is put forward (but not only one reading, because the debate sense of 'argument' allows for a different event reading). So 'argument' is sometimes used to refer to a speech act. Is this use to be accounted for by postulating a literal

meaning of 'argument' as a name of a kind of speech act? In finding the answer to that question we appeal to some tests for ambiguity.

4. TESTS FOR AMBIGUITY

Here are three tests for ambiguity present in the literature to see whether the use of 'argument' to refer to an abstract object, and its use to refer to the speech act of expressing that object correspond to two different meanings of the word. One test mentioned by Cruse (1986: 58-9) is known as *the test of the superordinate sense*: if a word is ambiguous, then the meanings that it has do not arise out of pragmatic factors that modulate the way the word is interpreted, but are conventionally associated with the word. Here is Asher's presentation of this test:

> "If we can find an expression that expresses the same content as a particular word, but the defeasible inferences associated with the word disappear when we employ the other expression, then this is a strong indication that the inference is in some way conventionally associated with the word as part of the linguistic system." (Asher 2007: 22-3)

For example,

(10) Arthur washed and polished the car. (Cruse 1986: 58)
(11) John lubricated the car. (Cruse 1986: 58)

usually conveys the content that only the exterior was washed and polished, and that the engine, or some other internal part, is what is lubricated. If we replace the word with a synonym or paraphrase, such as 'automobile', the two readings are still available. So the different uses of 'car' in (10) and (11) are not different meanings of an ambiguous word. The explanation should rather be non-lexical, a case of pragmatic modulation, for instance. But now consider:

(12) Her husband is the manager of a local bank. (Cruse: 1986: 59)
(13) At this point, the bank was covered with brambles. (Cruse 1986: 59)

There is probably no expression that could replace 'bank' in both sentences such as to preserve their meaning. One candidate could be 'place', but replacing it in the two sentences, we cannot get the initial readings. So 'bank' is prima facie ambiguous, according to this test. The process that the context performs on the words is that of a *selection* of one of the literal meanings of the word. The context acts simply as a filter. But with the former pair of sentences the context does not merely select a meaning, but a productive process of enhancing, specifying, or in some other way *modulating* a pre-existent lexically encoded meaning takes place (see Cruse 1986: 50-2).

What about 'argument'? The following sentences have the abstract object reading, the written text reading, and the speech act reading, respectively:

(14) The argument had two premises. (abstract object)
(15) The argument is on page 100. (written words that contain the argument)
(16) The argument was in English. (speech act)

Can we find a paraphrase such that replacing all the above occurrences of the word 'argument' the two sentences can be used to mean the same as before the replacement? One candidate seems to be 'the defence of the claim':

(14a.) The defence of the claim had two premises.
(15a) The defence of the claim is at page 100.
(16a) The defence of the claim was in English.

The initial readings of (14), (15) and (16) are recoverable, which means that 'argument' fails to be ambiguous in the intended way, according to this test.

A second test we will use is *the test of contradiction* (Gillon 1990: 407, Asher 2007: 64), or *the alternate truth value judgment test* (Gillon 2004: 161). Like the above, it only provides prima facie evidence for ambiguity. If a sentence is ambiguous then, "[f]or a given state of affairs, the sentence can be both truly affirmed and truly denied" (Gillon 1990: 407).[10] According to this test, the following sentences are ambiguous:

(17)   Ferrell has a drink each night before going to bed. (Gillon 1990: 407)
(18)   Chunka hit a man with a stick. (Gillon 1990: 407)

(17) can be truly said of Ferrell if he has a glass of milk before going to bed, but it can also be judged as false because he does not have an alcoholic drink. And (18) is judged true if Chunka used a stick to hit a man, but also as being false, because Chunka did not hit a man that was carrying a stick. The test does not determine which is the source of ambiguity, whether it is lexical, as it seems to be in (17), or structural, as it seems to be in (18). Now consider:

(19)   John and Bill had an interesting argument.

According to this test, sentence (19) is ambiguous. It is true with respect to a situation in which John and Bill had an interesting argumentative discussion; but it is judged false with respect to the same situation, because they are not the authors of some interesting argument, which they jointly created or put forward. But this does not show that 'argument' has the speech act/abstract object ambiguity, only that it has the debate/abstract object ambiguity. It is not clear that 'argument' can refer to a speech act in (19). Unless a different sentence containing 'argument' is found, for which the respective judgements are possible, 'argument' fails to be speech act/abstract object ambiguous according to this test.

The last test we will use is *the zeugma test*, sometimes also referred to as the antagonism test (Cruse 1986: 61-2), the copredication test (Asher 2007: 65), the conjunction reduction test (Bach 1998), or as the predicate coordination test (Gillon 2004: 176). Cruse explains the test: "independent senses of a lexical form are antagonistic to one another; that is to say, they cannot be brought into play simultaneously without oddness. Contexts which do activate more than one sense at a time give rise to a variety of oddness labelled zeugma" (Cruse 1986: 61). One version of the test is known as the test of pronominaliza-

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[10]   Reeves offers a criticism of the test. One of its flaws is that indexical expressions, such as 'he', or 'that car' are also deemed ambiguous by this test. However, this flaw does not concern us here, because 'argument' does not seem to be an indexical word anyway.

tion or ellipsis (Asher 2007: 64). It makes use of anaphoric expressions such as 'he', 'she', 'it'. Here is one formulation of the test: "Let *a* be an expression and *b* be an endophoric [that is, anaphoric] expression such that the denotation of the endophoric expression is identical with the denotation of its antecedent. Let *d*( ) and *e*( ) be grammatically congruent expression frames into which *a* and *b* can, respectively, be grammatically substituted. Let *d*(*a*) *e*(*b*) be a grammatical sentence or a grammatical sequence of sentences where *a* is the antecedent of *b*. If *d*(*a*) *e*(*b*) is judged unacceptable, then *a* is prima facie ambiguous" (Gillon 2004: 181). Another version of the test does not use anaphoric expressions, but focuses on sentences of the form (*d and e*) (*a*). The noun *a* is used as argument of two verb phrases, which take as argument entities of different types. If the sentence that results is judged unacceptable, then *a* is prima facie ambiguous. Consider:

(20)   # The newspaper fell off the table and fired the editor. (Gillon 2004: 177)
(21)   # Conrad Black established and carried the newspaper. (Gillon 2004: 177)
(22)   ? Dogs can become pregnant at 12 months, but mature later than bitches. (Cruse 1986: 64)
(23)   # The tailor pressed one suit in his shop and one in the municipal court. (Bach 1998)
(24)   # The bank specializes in IPOs. It is steep and muddy and thus slippery. (Asher 2007: 64)
(25)   Lunch was delicious but took forever. (Asher 2007: 65)
(26)   The book has a purple cover and is the most intelligible introduction to category theory. (Asher 2007: 16)

As example (21) shows, "[t]he subject position is not the only position with respect to which conjoined verbs may impose conflicting selection restrictions." (Gillon 2004: 177) The explanation of the oddness, or zeugma, has to do with the fact that verbs impose on their arguments thematic roles, meaning that they require that the arguments be concrete or abstract, animate or inanimate etc (see Gillon 2004: 168). When these restrictions on arguments are not respected the result is oddness or absurdity, as in Chomsky's (1957) famous 'Colorless green ideas sleep furiously'. The sentence is grammatically correct but nonsensical due to category mistakes. Examples (20) to (24) are infelicitous. Verbs like 'fell off' and 'fired' can both take 'newspaper' as argument, but the same occurrence of 'newspaper' cannot be the argument of both verbs in the same sentence. This is explicable if 'newspaper' has two meanings. In (25) and (26) we also have two verb phrases that take as arguments different kinds of entities, but the sentences are felicitous. So a different kind of explanation is available here, such as modulation of the meaning of 'lunch' and 'book', respectively.

It does not seem possible to obtain zeugma with 'argument':

(27)   His argument was valid, but was so loud that the dog ran away.

The predicate 'loud' selects for an event of the speech act kind, while 'valid' selects for the abstract informational object. Still there is no oddness in predicating both of 'argument' in the same sentence. So, 'argument' is more like 'lunch' and 'book', in that it fails this test for ambiguity.

5. EVIDENCE AGAINST A SPEECH ACT SENSE

The above tests give prima facie evidence that 'argument' is not ambiguous between a speech act meaning, an abstract object meaning, and a written text meaning (see example (15)). One of these meanings is literal, the others are the result of modulation, or some similar phenomenon. But which one is literal? Does the literal meaning of 'argument' name a kind of speech acts, a kind of texts, or a kind of abstract objects? Nicholas Asher proposes a test that is meant to help us decide whether a use of a word is to be accounted for by postulating a corresponding literal meaning or not. Asher observes that, when hearing the sentence 'Nicholas enjoyed a cigarette', speakers immediately get the reading that Nicholas enjoyed smoking a cigarette. Does 'cigarette' have the meaning of *smoking a cigarette*? He writes: "Let's suppose that 'cigarette' always has associated with it a possible event reading. It should then be possible to access that appropriate event reading with other predicates that take events." (Asher 2007: 23) However, with (29) hearers do not easily get the event reading in (28). This suggests that the explanation of the event reading of (28) has to do with the combination of 'cigarette' and 'enjoy'.[11]

    (28)   Nicholas's smoking of that cigarette will begin in 2 minutes
    (29)   ?? Nicholas's cigarette will begin in 2 minutes.

When applying the above test to 'argument', the speech act reading is available with the verbs used in (6) to (9), but it is not available with other verbs:

    (30)   Where did the argument take place?
    (31)   The argument was very loud.

(30) is not a request for information about where the speech containing the argument took place. Rather it is about where the debate took place. And (31) is not heard as meaning that the voice of the arguer was very loud when he gave the argument, but rather that the dispute was very loud. So, according to this test, 'argument' does not have a lexically encoded speech act meaning, given that the speech act reading is not available in all cases in which 'argument' is combined with a verb that takes events as arguments.

        Further evidence against 'argument' being speech act/abstract object ambiguous is that 'argument' can be used to refer to a great variety of acts and events, apart from speech acts. In different contexts each of the following sentences can be used to convey contents about a variety of events concerning arguments:

    (32)   The argument was difficult.
    (33)   The argument took about an hour.
    (34)   I enjoyed the argument most.

Sentence (32) may be used to convey that the speech act of expressing the argument was, in some sense, difficult, or that understanding the argument was difficult, or memorizing

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[11]   Asher argues that it is not the noun 'cigarette' that is ambiguous, nor is it a pragmatic modulation on the meaning of 'cigarette'. Rather it is a matter of predication: the verb 'enjoy' selects the event associated with cigarettes, but other verbs do not.

it, or translating it, or evaluating it, or reading it, or spelling it etc. The same observation can be made for (33) and (34): there is always an implicit mention of a certain kind of act. Moreover, it is not the case that the speech act is somehow the default reading, or even a more natural reading. It depends on the context whether the act referred to is a speech act or some other kind of act.

So, with (30) and (31) we have shown that the speech act reading is not always available. The defender of the ambiguity view has to account for this failure, and there seems to be no explanation on this view. On the other hand, other act readings are available in appropriate contexts, and it seems that there is no finite list of such readings. The list of act readings available for sentences (32) to (34) is impossible to specify a priori. Why then favour a *speech* act use as being encoded in the literal meaning of 'argument', and deny a literal meaning for the other uses? There are two options, it seems: either 'argument' has one sense for each kind of act that it can be used to refer to (acts of translation, of evaluation etc), and so it has an open ended list of literal meanings, which have to be acquired one by one by speakers; or it does not have a literal meaning for any of these uses in particular, and so not one for speech acts of expressing arguments. In the latter case, there is no speech act/object ambiguity, and the various act readings (i.e. uses of 'argument' to refer to various kinds of acts) are to be explained other than by postulating ambiguity. Only the latter option is plausible, because if the list is open-ended then one can never have knowledge of all the meanings that 'argument' has, and so one could never acquire linguistic competence with the word 'argument'. And even if the list were not open ended, but only very long, the ambiguity solution is still implausible, because a language user will surely get a new reading of (32), say about translating arguments, without the need to learn a new literal meaning of 'argument' (i.e. the alleged translating act sense of 'argument'). All that is needed is that it be clear in the context that it is a translation of arguments that the speaker is talking about when uttering (32).[12]

All these observations make it implausible that there is a separate and independent literal meaning of 'argument' that refers to the speech act of arguing, and suggest a contextual pragmatic explanation. It is probably the abstract object meaning of 'argument' that gets modulated in certain contexts so as to refer to an event of the kind of a speech act by which such an abstract object is put forward. The above argumentation can also be made for the use of 'argument' to refer to a written text,[13] as in (15) above. And this is to be expected given that writing a text is a communicative event, as a speech act is. Instead of consisting in the physical emission of sounds, an act of writing consists in the emission of certain marks on a paper or on a computer screen. The marks on the paper are not a token of which the argument is the type, as some might think. They are symbols that express the argument, as the sounds of a speech act does.

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[12] Moreover, the data from coercion against a speech act/abstract object ambiguity of 'argument' can be multiplied for other words that belong to the same category as argument, such as: 'explanation', 'example', 'description', 'story', 'claim', 'hypothesis', 'prediction' etc. Arguments belong to the same category as the referents of the above words.

[13] Van Eemeren et al. have claimed that their definition of 'argument' "does not only refer to the activity of advancing arguments but also to the shorter or longer text that results from it" (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Snoeck Henkemans 2002: xii).

6. DEFINITION OF 'ARGUMENT'

We have shown so far that 'argument' does not have a speech act meaning, or a written text meaning, but an abstract object meaning. Most probably, the speech act use and the written text use results from the abstract object meaning through a pragmatic process of contextual modulation. However, we are not committed to any view about how this process takes place, or about whether it is entirely pragmatic. We are only interested in the conclusion supported by the evidence presented that 'argument' does not name a kind of speech act. It follows that a definition such as the one in (Hitchcock 2007) or in (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984) does not correspond to a meaning of the word defined. If an argument is an abstract object, and not a speech act, there is no possible definition of 'argument' as a speech act.

It may be replied that although 'argument', as a word of natural language, does not have a speech act meaning, the *theoretical* word 'argument' may be defined as to mean a speech act. It may be interesting from a theoretical point of view to give a definition of the speech acts by which arguments are conveyed, and to offer a characterization of those acts. Indeed, just because the English word 'argument' is not ambiguous in the sense mentioned, it does not mean that there can be no interesting theoretical study of speech acts by which arguments are conveyed. A definition of 'argument' as speech act could be useful as part of that study. The theorist is free to choose both her object of study and the terminology she wants to use. However, it would be a bad theoretical move to use 'argument' ambiguously. We could simply have two theoretical terms, such as 'argument-o', to name a certain kind of abstract object, and 'argument-p', to name the speech act by which the former is conveyed. More importantly, the theorist should not confuse her stipulative definition of 'argument', corresponding to some interesting concept within the theory, with a characterization of the meaning of a natural language term. The theorist is free to define her terms as she likes, but she should not forget that her definitions are stipulative. And the disagreement in the literature on argumentation is surely not about some stipulative definitions. It is the meaning of the natural language word 'argument' that definitions offered in the literature try to capture, and not the meaning of a term within some theory or another. And it is about the former that the claim of an act/object ambiguity is being made. If the natural language word is not the name of a kind of speech act, then we should not feel tempted to define it as such.

7. PLATONISM ABOUT ARGUMENTS

In the remainder of the essay we develop an account of arguments as abstract objects that is compatible with our common talk and thought about arguments as things that can be produced and as things that can be known. Regarding arguments as abstract objects suggests a Platonism about arguments similar to Platonism about mathematical objects. Thus, we begin with an explanation of what Platonism about arguments involves. We contend that Platonism about arguments has difficulty addressing the problems of how we can produce and how we can know arguments. We propose some modifications to Platonism about arguments and call the resulting view realism about arguments. We provide an account of the identity conditions of argument that shows how arguments can be understood as temporal abstract objects that are productions of human intellectual activity that we can know. Therefore, we contend that since 'argument' does not have a speech

act meaning and that an account of arguments as abstract objects is available that can address the major criticisms that such a view encounters, there is a good basis to think that arguments are abstract objects.

Some of the views Goddu expresses in his criticisms of 'argument' being subject to a process-product ambiguity have similarities to versions of Platonism about abstract objects. In his essay on abstract objects Bob Hale (1987) considers his own account of abstract objects to be a form of Platonism on the grounds that it provides affirmative answers to the questions: "*Are there abstract objects?* If there are, *do at least some of them, enjoy a mind-independent existence?* and *what sort of knowledge do we have of them?*" (Hale 1987: 1).

While, as far as we aware, Goddu does not directly speak to these issues, given some of his claims in Goddu (forthcoming) there are reasons to think that Goddu would answer affirmatively to the first two questions. Firstly, given that Goddu endorses the notion that there is a sense of 'argument' that refers to an object, and given that it would be difficult to conceive of arguments-as-objects as being concrete objects, we are lead to conclude that—unless Goddu endorses a kind of error-theory about statements about arguments[14]—then Goddu holds that there are abstract objects that are the referent of statements in which 'argument' (in its object sense) figures in a singular expression. Furthermore, Goddu says of propositions, they are "abstract objects, either eternal or atemporal, and not the subject of production." (Goddu forthcoming) And, Goddu goes on to claim of arguments, in so far as they can be understood as an ordered set of propositions, that the "ordered set is itself an abstract object and exists independently of anyone thinking of it or creating it, the group is not produced by the act of arguing."[15] (Goddu forthcoming) Given these quotations Goddu does seem to endorse the idea that there are abstract objects and that some of them, at least, are atemporal and mind-independent.

In regards to the third of Hale's question there are a variety of different answers available to it compatible with Platonism. For instance, Traditional Platonists about mathematics such as Kurt Gödel famously claimed that while mathematical objects are mind-independent we nonetheless have a capacity to become aware of them. Gödel states "despite their remoteness from sense experience, we do have something like a perception ... of the objects of set theory, as is seen from the fact that the axioms force themselves on us as being true" (Gödel 1983: 483-4). And, more recently, Penelope Maddy (1980) has proposed a development of Gödel's view in which sets are objects to which we have perceptual access. Another answer to this question has been advanced by Hale (1987) and Wright (1983). They adopt a neo-Fregean view in which numbers are abstract objects, but can be known without positing some perception like faculty. Rather abstract objects (like numbers) can be known on the neo-Fregean account because the states of affairs that make statements about abstract objects true are states of affairs that an agent can have the right sort of interactions with to acquire knowledge of them.

Given the variety of different answers available to Hale's third question it is impossible to speculate about what Goddu would have to say about how we acquire knowledge of arguments in their abstract object sense. However, Goddu's paper raises,

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[14]   An error-theory about statements about arguments would hold (i) that statements about arguments are true or false but (ii) since no arguments exist any such statements are false.

[15]   Goddu does not claim that this is the right view of arguments. Rather his argumentative objective here is to show that a variety of conceptions of argument are incompatible with the idea that arguments are produced by acts of arguing.

even if indirectly, an important question for theorists of argument: "Is a version of Platonism about arguments viable?"

One problem that a Gödel-Maddy style Platonism, or as we will call it traditional Platonism, about arguments would face is how to reconcile the view that arguments are mind-independent and atemporal with a causal theory of knowledge.[16] A causal account of knowledge is one where if the proposition that "X knows S" is true, then "some causal relation [must] obtain between X and the referents of the names, predicates, and quantifiers of S" (Benacerraf 1983: 412). That some form of the causal theory is correct is evident when we consider how we challenge the claim "X knows that *p*." Presuming that *p* is true and that X has typical inferential abilities in order to establish that X cannot know *p* we are left to,

> arguing that X could not have come into possession of the relevant evidence or reasons for *p*: that X's four-dimensional space time worm does not make the necessary (causal) contact with the grounds of the truth of the proposition for X to be in possession of evidence adequate to support the inference. (Benacerraf 1983: 413)

It is not hard to see how reconciling such an account of knowledge is hard to square with traditional Platonism. If arguments are atemporal and mind-independent objects it is difficult to conceive how agents could come to have the appropriate causal interactions with such objects that would be necessary to facilitate knowledge on the causal account. Simply postulating a Gödel-Maddy style perceptual faculty does not do the trick on its own. It must be explained how this perception facilitates access to objects that are different from the spatiotemporal objects with which we have familiar sorts of causal interactions.

Another problem that a traditional Platonism about arguments faces is it strikes us as being incompatible with a certain natural way of thinking and talking about arguments. We often make statements such as "Searle developed the Chinese room argument" or "Gaunilo formulated a compelling counter-argument to Anselm's ontological argument." We have a strong intuition that there is a sense that through human intellectual activity it is possible for us to create and produce original arguments and we often talk and think as if this is the case. If traditional Platonism about arguments is true, however, then arguments would be mind-independent, non-saptiotemporal objects and this feature of them would be difficult to square with the idea that they are creations of the human mind.

One possible way of responding to these problems is to adopt a more minimalist version of Platonism. Notice that one of the criteria that Hale provides for being a Platonist is that one endorses the view that some abstract objects have mind-independent existence. This criterion specifically leaves open the possibility that some abstract arguments might be mind-dependent. In fact, Hale thinks it is a mistake to presume that understanding abstract objects as mind-dependent implies that they are mental entities. A story, for example, is an abstract object on Hale's account and in a real sense is a non-mental yet mind-dependent entity (Hale 1987: 2). Furthermore, Hale is also critical of drawing the abstract-concrete distinction between objects that are not spatiotemporal and objects that are. Hale states,

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[16]   This problem is reminiscent of Benacerraf's (1983) dilemma for the philosophy of mathematics. Benacerraf points out that any account of mathematical truth that parallels our account of empirical truth is difficult to square with a causal theory of mathematical knowledge.

> It is, on reflection, not clear that every kind of abstract object must be both non-spatial and atemporal. Consider for example, chess, or the English Language, or any word (in the type as distinct from the token sense). These may plausibly, and indeed have been, taken to be abstract objects. No doubt games and languages are non-spatial. The crucial question is are they atemporal? It seems not. Chess and English, unlike the natural numbers or sets, have their histories. They came to be at certain more or less definite times. (Hale 1987: 49)

Consider abstract objects for which it does not make sense to ask where they are, or when they came into existence. Included in this category are mathematical objects, such as the cosine function, or the Pythagorean Theorem. It makes no sense to ask "when did the cosine function come into existence?" Now consider the game of chess. Gideon Rosen (2001) writes: "Some philosophers take the view that chess is like a mathematical object in these respects. But that is certainly not the most natural view. The natural view is that chess was invented at a certain place and time."

Thus, Hale at least, holds a minimalist version of Platonism that is not put off by the idea that some abstract objects are mind-dependent and temporal objects that are generated by human intellectual creativity. In order to avoid confusion for the remainder of the essay we will call Hale's minimal version of Platonism about abstract objects *realism* and distinguish it from traditional Platonism.[17]

In what follows we propose a realist conception of arguments as abstract objects such that arguments are akin to games of chess, musical compositions, languages and other objects of that ilk and not to objects like numbers and other mathematical objects. We contend that the realist conception of argument is not subject to the same weaknesses as traditional Platonism. That is, we think that a realist account of argument is compatible with our talk and thought about arguments as human creations and as things that we can know.

8. REALISM ABOUT ABSTRACT OBJECTS

Our discussion of Platonism about arguments leads us to a more exact characterization of that position. A traditional Platonist about argument is committed to the following three claims; (I) Arguments are abstract objects, (II) arguments are mind-independent, non-spatiotemporal, objects and (III) arguments are known through a perception-like faculty. We saw two consequences of endorsing such a thesis about argument. First, there are problems for understanding how arguments can be produced or created by human beings. Second, there are problems raised for how Platonism about arguments could be squared with a causal account of our knowledge of arguments. In response to these problems we said that we will propose a modification to traditional Platonism about arguments that we are calling realism about arguments. Realism is only committed to (I) above and not to (II) and (III). Thus, in order to defend our alternative we need to make three arguments. Firstly, we need to defend (I) with a case for the claim that arguments are indeed a sort of abstract object. Secondly, we need to show that arguments are either spatial, or temporal,

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[17] Hale states that this species of Platonism "is often labelled 'realism'" (Hale 1987: 2). Hale adopts the Platonist label in order to avoid confusion with the sort of realism that is described by Michael Dummett in (Dummett, 1973, 1991). The subtleties involved in a comparison between semantic anti-realism and Platonism, however, is not of concern to us in this essay so we can take advantage of the established convention of calling a Hale-like version of Platonism realism.

or mind-dependent and can be known in a non-problematic way. That is to say, we need to show that realism denies (II) and does not need to endorse (III).

What grounds do we have to think that arguments are abstract objects? In the first 6 sections of this essay we provided an extended argument for the view that the term 'argument' does not mean a speech act and that it refers to an abstract object, but what positive reasons do we have to think that arguments—that is the object to which 'argument' refers—are abstract. One serious difficulty with making an argument that supports (I) is that there is no clear and established method of drawing a crisp distinction between the concrete and the abstract. One only has to peruse the variety of alternative accounts of how to draw that distinction explained in Rosen (2001) or in Hale (1987: 45-67) to see the difficulty in clearly specifying the abstract/concrete distinction. However, there is a general feature of abstract objects that we think it is possible to show that arguments posses. By showing that arguments posses this feature of abstract objects we think that there is a good basis to regard arguments as abstract.

Games, musical compositions, and languages all have their unique histories. They develop in time and became the game, score, or language we know today. It is also entirely possible that these objects could cease, and indeed some of them have ceased, to exist. Thus, on a traditional Platonist model of abstract objects, these entities are not properly classified as abstract. One reason to think that such entities are abstract is that they can be spatially separated even if they are not temporally separated. The game of chess is instantiated in many different regions of space even though the game itself has one history. In fact the odds are good that the game of chess is instantiated in several different locations. The same is the case with *Mozart's Requiem*. It is also theoretically conceivable, though admittedly highly implausible, that some alien species could have developed the English language independently of us. English would then be located on two different planets. The history of the language would have to accommodate the different time lines for its development on the two different planets, however, this would not mean that the English language would be temporally separated. (Presumably we would say that English began or came into existence on one of the two planets, then also emerged on the other at a latter time). This observation about how to distinguish some abstract objects from concrete objects is most clearly visible when considering the distinction between type-letter and token-letter. Hale points out that "*a* cannot be the same token-letter as *b* if *a* and *b* have distinct spatial locations at the same time, whereas *a* may perfectly well be the same type-letter as *b*, though differently located from it." (Hale 1987: 56-7) Hale goes on to say about this criterion for distinguishing abstract objects from concrete ones that,

> Here we have the markings of a general distinction which respects the large measure of truth residing in the thought that abstract objects are non-spatial and atemporal, but which does not, unlike that unrefined proposal, fall foul of the fact that some kinds of abstract object are not wholly 'outside' time.[18] (Hale 1987: 56-7)

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[18] In spite of this quotation Hale (1987: 57-63) is not satisfied with the simple version of the criterion for distinguishing the abstract from the concrete described here. Hale enhances this criterion in various ways to avoid the problem of classifying certain obviously concrete relations such as "being the father of" as abstract and to ensure that he can include objects such as sets and numbers that are both non-spatial and atemporal in the realm of the abstract. As far as we can tell these difficulties do not pose a problem for our purposes since all of the refinements Hale makes to this criterion involve the notion that objects that are spatially but not temporally separated are classified as abstract. Furthermore, on all of

There is a natural sense in which arguments fit into this category of objects. When referring to, for instance, *Anselm's ontological argument*, or *Searle's Chinese room argument*, or *my neighbour's peculiar argument on the immorality of neutering male dogs* we are referring to one argument that could be instantiated at spatially distinct locations. It is entirely plausible for believers today to offer the same argument that Anselm is famous for making sometime in the 11th century. We can even imagine that some arguments have ceased to exist. Aristotle is said to have produced dialogues like Plato, but unlike Plato all of Aristotle's dialogues have been lost. It is plausible that contained in those dialogues are arguments that have never been expressed elsewhere. Do these arguments still exist? It seems not. It is more natural to think of lost arguments like Aristotle's—and hopefully, sooner rather than later, my neighbour's—as no longer existing.

9. IDENTITY-CONDITIONS FOR ARGUMENT

In the last section we made a case for understanding arguments to be abstract objects like games, stories, songs, and languages that can be spatially yet not temporally separated. That arguments have this trait suggests that they can be instantiated at distinct locations and be the same argument. This is not implausible since the content of an argument is instantiated in spatially distinct places when that argument is expressed in different locations (e.g. the Chinese room argument is found on page 43 in the first edition and page 52 in the second edition). When Anselm expressed his famous argument the content was present for his audience to grasp and the content is present today for a different audience to grasp when someone expresses Anselm's argument today. Moreover, in Anselm's time, the argument was conveyed in Latin, while today it is probably more frequently expressed in non-classical languages. This raises a question about how we can confirm that two different instantiations of one argument are in fact the same argument. In other words, what are the identity conditions for argument?

As a start to answering this question we will consider the identity conditions for argument proposed by Mark Vorobej (2006) and then propose some refinements to them. Vorobej (2006: 9) asks us to consider the following two passages that he claims "could express the same argument,"

(A)   5 is a square root of 25. Therefore, 25 is not a prime number.
(B)   25 is the square of 5. It follows that 25 is not a prime number.

Vorobej claims that,

> A necessary condition of two persons offering the same argument is that they infer the same conclusion from the same set of premises. A further necessary condition is that they employ the same inference. (That is, if two individuals argue that the same conclusion follows from the same set of premises, but if they disagree about *how* it follows, then they cannot be offering the same argument). Together these conditions are jointly sufficient. So the author of (A) offers the same argument as the author of (B) provided they agree upon how the proposition that 25 is not a prime number follows from the proposition that 25 is the square of 5. (Vorobej 2006: 9)

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the more developed formulations of the criterion that are discussed by Hale, arguments will turn out to be abstract objects.

Thus, we propose the following formulation to capture Vorobej's identity conditions for argument:

Argument A is identical to argument B iff:

    (1)   An agent offering argument (A) infers the same conclusion from the same premises as an agent offering argument (B).

    (2)   An agent offering argument (A) employs the same inference as an agent offering argument (B).

One thing to notice in about Vorobej's identity conditions is that there are two distinct sorts of conditions. There is a premise and conclusion identity condition and an inferential identity condition. We think that there are problems with both conditions. One problem that applies to both conditions is that an argument does not need to be *offered* by any agent in particular. Arguments can be mentally entertained without ever being offered in any discourse. Moreover, some arguments in a discourse might not be arguments that the agent ought to be understood as offering at all. In fact, the agent might fundamentally disagree with some argument and have no intention of offering the argument to an interlocutor with whom they are having a discussion. Nevertheless the agent may find communicative purpose in *mentioning* the argument. To a certain extent the difference between mentioning an argument and offering an argument is verbal, but we want to be clear that an agent can present an argument without thinking that the argument is one that anybody ought to accept. Thus, the identity conditions for argument ought not to be restricted to an agent offering an argument. A second problem is the reference to the arguments premises and conclusions in (1). We want to be clear that it is the propositions that compose the arguments that are the same in two identical arguments and, thus, we propose to replace reference to premises and conclusions with reference to propositions.

       Finally there is a problem with (2) itself. It is important that the inferential condition is not formulated in a way that is too narrow. In particular it will be important that the inferential condition does not exclude from the class of arguments bad arguments that have no inferential relation or even a relevance relation (e.g. the red herring fallacy). Since in bad arguments an inference may be intended even though none is, in fact, employed (2) is not sufficient to determine identity in these cases. Furthermore, once our identity conditions no longer talk of an agent employing an inference it will be important that the inferential condition is not formulated in a way that is too broad. Imagine a story in which there are a set of propositions identical to a set of propositions in some argument. Further imagine there is an inference between these propositions. In the case of the story, however, no inference is intended and, thus, there is no argument. It will be an important adequacy condition of any identity conditions for argument that they do not exclude bad arguments and including non-arguments.

       What we are after in (2) is some way of capturing an identical illative relation between two arguments. The illative relation is expressed in an argument by words such a 'since,' 'so,' and 'therefore.' However, it is important to note that this relation is not equivalent to some subset of words used in expressing an argument, but with the relation that those words express. Hitchcock writes that a simple argument is a sequence of three objects: "a speech act c of any type concerning some proposition, an *illative such as the*

word *"since"* (in its inferential sense), and a set P of one or more assertives." (Hitchcock 2007: 6 talics added) However, the illative relation cannot be one word because sometimes more than one word is used and in other cases no words are used; for those cases Hitchcock says: "Arguments with no explicit illative can be regarded as having one implicitly" (Hitchcock 2007: 6). So, according to Hitchcock, there are some implicit words in arguments with no explicit illatives. But, if no word was actually uttered, which illatives were implicated? There seems to be no principled way to choose one premise or conclusion indicator and not another. Why ought we to choose 'since' as opposed to 'given that?' Another difficulty is that it does not make sense to talk of words being conveyed implicitly but only of *contents* being conveyed implicitly. Words are used in communication to convey contents explicitly. If some words are missing, content can still be conveyed, but only implicitly. Another point against saying that the illative relation is a word is pointed out by Goddu. Goddu writes that Hitchcock's talk of implicit illatives

> seems *ad hoc* if the indicators or the illative use of the indicator is supposed to be part of the argument. A better account of the fact that there can be an argument, but no explicit indicator is that the presence or absence of the illation relation does not depend on the presence or absence of the indicator. (Goddu 2009: 4)

We will understand an illative relation as an *intended inference* relation. That is to say, the illative relation is the type of inference that an agent intends to be made from an argument's premises to an argument's conclusion. In less precise terms it is the way an agent intends a proposition to follow from some other propositions in an argument. This understanding of the illative-relation is due to the observation that a set of propositions S becomes an argument just when some subset of S is intended, by an agent, to be inferred in a certain way from another subset of S. Thus, we get the following identity conditions for illative relations: *For sets of propositions S and T, and for propositions p and q, the Illative relation I between S and p is identical to the illative-relation R between T and q if and only if an agent A intends that p be inferred from S in accordance with the same inference that an agent B intends q to be inferred from T in accordance with.*[19]

This identity condition for illative relations allows us to capture the intuition that two different arguments (say arguments with different premises or a different conclusion) in which the premises are intended to classically entail the conclusion according to the same inference scheme (say *modus ponens*) possess the same illative relation. We can also explain how two arguments with the same premises and conclusions are different arguments if the conclusion is intended to follow abductively in one argument and, say, inductively in another.

One thing to note about our characterization of the illative relation is that it does not require that an agent has an *intention-to-support* the conclusion with the premises. The reason we do not formulate the illative-relation in that way is similar to the reason why we abandoned reference to "*offering an argument*" in Vorobej's formulation of the identity conditions. An agent can explain or use some argument in a discussion or in try-

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[19] What makes one inference the same as another is an issue that we cannot get into here and that we will have to leave at an intuitive level of understanding. Suffice it to say that it ought to be possible for one person to intend that a conclusion follows in accordance with the same inference as another person intends a conclusion to follow in accordance with. There are many interesting complications here, however. For instance, is a dedicated classical monist using conjunctive detachment making the same inference as a strict intuitionist using a conjunctive detachment in their favoured systems of logical rules?

ing to make some decision without intending to support the conclusion. However, in such discussions or decisions the agent still intends that the conclusion be inferred from the premises in a certain way. The agent may simply mean to point out that a certain type of inference is possible from the premises to the conclusion for the purpose of later showing why the inference or the premises are flawed. However, even if an agent is mentioning an argument, say for the purpose of explaining it, the agent intends the conclusion to follow from the premises in accordance with a certain inference.

Given the previous considerations we get the following identity conditions for arguments,

Argument A is identical to argument B iff:

(1) The propositions that are part of argument A are the same as the propositions that are part of argument B.
(2) The illative relation(s) in argument A is (are) identical to the illativerelation(s) in argument B.
(3) The illative relation(s) in argument A are relations on the same proposition as the illative relation(s) in B are relations on.[20]

Earlier we had said that an important adequacy condition for the identity conditions for argument was that they are not too narrow, and do not excluded bad arguments, and are also not too wide, and do not include non-arguments such as stories. These conditions, as far as we can tell, satisfy this adequacy condition. In a bad argument an agent will intend a certain inference from the premises of the argument to the conclusion. Thus, if someone were to intend the exact same inference from the exact same premises to the exact same conclusion, then they would be making the same bad argument. Moreover, these conditions do not include stories since in a story no inference is intended.

Also note that these identity conditions for argument permit arguments to be spatially but not temporally separated. While Vorobej claims that arguments are partially abstract objects on the grounds that the propositions that compose arguments are abstract objects (Vorobej 2006: 8), in our effort to establish that arguments are abstract we are going to focus on the illative relation. We contend that this relation is created by an agent when the agent intends that a conclusion follows from a set of premises in a certain way. (Another agent gives the same argument when they intend that the same conclusion to follow from the same premises in accordance with the same inference.) Consider the set of propositions that make up the propositions of an argument. Until there is a specific sort of relation formed on that set by an agent intending that the conclusion be inferred in a certain way from the premises, then there is no argument. In fact, it is possible that that set might never have the right sort of relation formed on it for it to become an argument. Let's speculate that Anselm chose not to pursue a career in philosophy and theology and instead decided to enter the lucrative trade of metal crafts. Instead of thinking about the existence of God his mind would be occupied with matters less divine. In this speculation Anselm never intends an inference from the propositions he used as premises in the onto-

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[20] The bracketed plurals are intended to accommodate linked arguments that have more than one conclusion and more than one illative-relation.

logical argument to the conclusion "God exists." It would be a stretch to contend that in this alternate reality *Anselm's Ontological Argument* exists (especially if no one else conceived it). Therefore, we conclude that an argument's existence depends on an agent relating some set propositions S to another proposition *p* by intending that *p* be inferred from S in a particular way. And, since this intention to infer comes into existence at a certain time, arguments are temporal and are produced by human beings. *A fortiori*, given that arguments are formed by human cognitive activity, arguments are not mind-independent. In a very real sense their existence depends on the mental activity of the agents who formulate them. Finally, lest one be concerned that *Anselm's Ontological Argument* be a concrete object this very same argument, as mentioned earlier, can be instantiated today in a place spatially distant from the place Anselm first formulated it. All that is required is that some agent intends the conclusion of Anselm's argument to follow from the premises of Anselm's argument in just the way that Anselm intended it to follow. So, arguments can be spatially separated. We can conclude given the above considerations, and given the criterion of abstraction that understands objects that can be spatially but not temporally separated to be abstract objects, that arguments are temporal abstract objects that can be created by the human intellectual activity.

Notice that we have now addressed the worry that an account of argument as abstract object could not fit with our talk of arguments as human intellectual creations or productions. On our account, arguments are created when an agent forms an intention to infer, in a certain way, a proposition from some other propositions. Thus, on our conception of argument as an abstract objects, there is no mystery in statements such as "Anselm developed the ontological argument", or "John created a very clever argument" and so on.

10. KNOWLEDGE OF ARGUMENTS

At this point we have discharged two of our argumentative obligations. We have shown (I), that arguments are abstract objects. We have also shown that it is not the case that (II). We have done this by showing that arguments are mind-dependent and temporal abstract objects. We have yet to demonstrate that there is not some mysterious perceptual faculty that is needed in order to have knowledge of arguments and thus, we have not explained why realism need not rely on (III). It is not possible to here formulate a developed theory of how we have knowledge of arguments. However, this is not needed for our purposes. What we do need to illustrate is that the states of affairs that make statements about arguments true have appropriate sorts of causal interactions with agents such that agents could know them. Hale claims that to poses knowledge of abstract objects,

> It will be enough if we can come to know the truth values of statements which ... involve reference to such objects. This will be consistent with any reasonable demand issuing from the causal conception of knowledge, provided that we are able to see the states of affairs in virtue of which such statements are true or false as situated within the 'causal swim' (as Wright puts it ...). (Hale 1987: 84)

Thus, if the states of affairs that make statements about arguments true are within the 'causal swim'—that is, if the state of affairs are situated in the everyday world of causal interactions that we are familiar with—then that will satisfy any demand that the causal theory of knowledge might make on argument. Thus, in order to satisfy the demands of

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the causal theory, we need to specify non-problematic states of affairs in virtue of which statements in which 'argument' figures as a singular expression are true or false. Given our identity-conditions for argument the sates of affairs that will make statements about arguments true or false involve facts about an agent's intentions. Intending a proposition be inferred from another propositions in a particular way is a common phenomenon that is caught up in the 'causal swim'. There are facts of the matter that are based on an agent's mental states that determine what an agent's intentions are. If Anselm intended the premises of his argument to provide inductive grounds for the conclusion "God exists," then what we have come to call *Anslem's Ontological Argument* would not actually be identical to the argument Anselm gave since in what we call *Anslem's Ontological Argument* we do not intend the conclusion to follow inductively from premises. Thus, states of affairs in virtue of which statements about arguments are true or false are not somehow outside the causal swim. We can have direct cognitive acquaintances with these states of affairs. It, therefore, seems reasonable to think that, given our identity conditions for argument, it is possible to satisfy the demands of a causal theory of knowledge.

11. CONCLUSION

Our paper has accomplished two distinct tasks. First, we made the case that 'argument' is not ambiguous between, on the one hand, a speech act meaning and, on the other hand, an object meaning. Rather we contended that 'argument' has an abstract object literal meaning. There are some natural objections that arise for this view. Since abstract objects are often thought of as mind-independent, non-spatiotemporal objects there are difficulties accounting for how we could create arguments, and there are difficulties accounting for how we come to know arguments. The second task we accomplished in this essay was to develop an account of arguments as abstract objects that addressed these difficulties. The account we developed understands arguments to be objects that can be spatially but not temporally separate and that are creations of human intellectual activity. We think that given (i) our positive account for why 'argument' refers to an abstract object, and given that (ii) we have developed an account of arguments as abstract objects that addresses the major concerns that such a view encounters, there is solid grounds to take seriously the idea that arguments are a sort of abstract object.

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Commentary On "ARGUMENTS AS ABSTRACT OBJECTS" by Paul Simard-Smith and Andrei Moldovan

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1. INTRODUCTION

In "Arguments as Abstract Objects" Paul Simard-Smith and Andrei Moldovan set themselves two main tasks: first to argue that the term 'argument' is not subject to a certain sort of ambiguity and second to present their own view of arguments as abstract objects. The two tasks are mostly independent of each other. One could reject their case for the claim that 'argument' is not ambiguous in the relevant way, but still accept their account of arguments as abstract objects. Alternatively one could accept their case for no ambiguity, but reject their account of arguments. In what follows I shall focus on their case for no ambiguity, though at the end of this paper I pose some challenges for their account of arguments.

2. AMBIGUITY

Before I get to their case, however, it is important to try to understand exactly what it is they are making a case for—what exactly is the ambiguity that they claim does not apply to the term 'argument'? I start quite generally and try to work my way down to their specific target.

Is 'argument' an ambiguous term in English? Yes. Consider:

(1)   Bob's and Sally's blistering argument made the kids scurry for cover.
(2)   When the argument for the squaring function is undefined, the result is undefined.
(3)   John Searle's Chinese Room argument against strong AI is the most famous argument in the philosophy of mind.

The word 'argument' in each sentence is used non-elliptically to refer to different kinds of entities. In general the contexts of use of these sentences are unrelated, just as the usual contexts of use are quite different for riverbanks and banking institutions.

But most, though certainly not all, argumentation theorists and writers of basic logic textbooks claim that while the use in (3) is within the domain of interest, the use in (1) is not. Presumably the use in (2), or the use of 'argument' in certain literary contexts, is specialized enough that mentioning (2) and then rejecting it is deemed more likely to confuse than illuminate.

Is 'argument', then, an ambiguous term within the domain of interest to argumentation theorists? Yes. And I suspect that Simard-Smith and Moldovan would agree. They admit that there is a debate sense of 'argument' such as in:

(4)   The argument ranged back and forth until the final vote.

and note that if "a debate is an act then 'argument' does instantiate the act/object ambiguity." Regardless of whether a debate is a complex act or not, it is certainly an activity, and so Simard-Smith and Moldovan admit at least to 'argument' being subject to an activity/object ambiguity.

But there is a more general activity sense of 'argument' that Simard-Smith and Moldovan do not mention. Consider:

(5)   He was right to resort to argument rather than intimidation.

Presumably, as a type of activity there are instances that fall under that type. Some of those instances might be debates or disputes, but the particular activity intimated by (5) need not be a dispute or debate—it might simply be an instance of arguing by a single person.

But then one might claim that just as the general performance activity has many particular instances that are themselves performances, the general argument activity has many particular instances that are themselves arguments. At the very least one can stipulate that, for the purposes of argumentation theory, one is going to refer to the particular instances of the activity of argument as arguments.

Again, Simard-Smith and Moldovan, I suspect, would not disagree—they write: "the theorist is free to define her terms as she likes" (p. 12). But they go on:

> "[T]he disagreement in the literature on argumentation is surely not about some stipulative definitions. It is the meaning of the natural language word 'argument' that definitions offered in the literature try to capture, and not the meaning of a term within some theory or another." (p. 12)

I am not at all sure that they are right that the disagreement is about the meaning of the natural language word 'argument'. After all, the motivation to generate theoretical precision might be the very confusions or inadequacies that appear to be a part of everyday discourse. Also the ultimate hope of the theoretician might be to generate a change of current usage.[1] Regardless, even if one of the parameters for judging theory adequacy is how close the use of theoretical terms matches the use of those terms in everyday discourse, there will quite likely be other parameters such as simplicity, consistency, etc. that can easily override deviations from common usage when considering the adequacy of the theory as a whole.

Regardless, at the very least the issue for Simard-Smith and Moldovan is not whether theoretical uses of the term 'argument' are ambiguous between an activity sense that also covers particular instances of that activity and an object sense, but rather whether the natural language or perhaps everyday or common usage of the term is ambiguous in some such way.

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[1]   For example, van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004), after giving a definition of "argumentation" that is in line with both other theorists' definition of 'argument' and their earlier definition cited by Simard-Smith and Moldovan (and which van Eemeren and Grootendorst claim maintains the "process-product" ambiguity), write:

"Although the definition is certainly in line with the way in which the word argumentation is used in ordinary usage, the meaning of the technical term argumentation is more precise, based on a conceptual analysis of the theoretical notion of argumentation. The definition given is stipulative in the sense that it introduces a specific, and to some extent new, convention of language use …"(p. 1).

Simard-Smith and Moldovan also grant that there are everyday uses of the term 'argument' that are about particular instances of the activity of arguing—specifically speech acts. What they deny is that this usage implies that the term 'argument' is ambiguous between a speech act sense and an object sense of the term 'argument'.

At this point one might be tempted to ask exactly what Simard-Smith and Moldovan count as the meaning of a term, since if one holds that meaning is at least in part determined by use and the term has separate uses one might reasonably hold that the term has multiple meanings. Alternatively, given that the term appears to refer to different sorts of objects given different uses, if one holds that meaning is at least in part determined by reference, then again the different uses with different references seem to dictate that the term has multiple meanings. But other than the following very opaque comment about literal meaning—"Roughly speaking, it makes reference to the meaning of words in the lexicon, and whose knowledge is therefore *a priori*" (p. 3)—they give us nothing about what meanings are so that we can understand what exactly they are claiming when they say certain distinct uses of 'argument' do not imply distinct meanings.

Even without an account of meaning, they argue that the speech act use and the propositional content use of 'argument' do not imply distinct meanings for the term 'argument.' Their argument is that even when 'argument' is used in these two different ways, it fails to pass several tests for ambiguity available in the literature. The success of their argument then depends on either the adequacy of the tests or the adequacy of their claim that 'argument' fails the test.

For example, Simard-Smith and Moldovan suggest that 'argument' fails the *test of the superordinate sense* because 'argument' in its abstract object sense and speech act sense can be replaced with 'defense of the claim' in various sentences without change in meaning. But one might argue that while lack of a candidate replacement expression is sufficient to establish ambiguity, the presence of such a candidate is not sufficient to establish lack of ambiguity. If the replacement expression, in this case 'defense of the claim' is also ambiguous in the same way, then 'failing' this test tells us nothing about whether the original term is or is not ambiguous. For example, suppose 'statement' and 'claim' are both ambiguous between the content and the act of expressing that content. Since claim and statement are interchangeable without loss of meaning in many sentences, this test would judge neither ambiguous even though, by supposition, both are.

The second test is the *contradiction test*—whether a sentence can be both truly affirmed or denied in a given context. Simard-Smith and Moldovan show that the debate sense of argument passes this test, and then claim, "unless a different sentence containing 'argument' is found, for which the respective judgments are possible, 'argument' fails to be speech act/abstract object ambiguous according to this test" (p. 8). Here then is one suggestion:

(6) The argument was difficult to understand.

This could be true because the speaker's accent was very thick, but false because the content was quite straightforward, or true because the content was quite complex, but false because the enunciation was quite clear. Of course surrounding context might make which reading is intended obvious. For example, precede (6) with:

(7) His accent was very thick

and you get the first true reading, even if the content is quite simple. Precede it with:

(8) *n*-dimensional skew symmetric tensor functions are quite esoteric

and you most likely get the second, even if the speaker's enunciation is crystal clear.

Finally the zeugma test relies on competing, but distinct lexical meanings generating oddness when clauses sensitive to just one of the competing meanings are conjoined in a single sentence. For example, Simard-Smith and Moldovan provide the following example:

(9) The newspaper fell off the table and fired the editor.

They go on to claim that "it does not seem possible to obtain zeugma with 'argument':

(10) His argument was valid, but was so loud that the dog ran away.

The predicate 'loud' selects for an event of the speech act kind, while 'valid' selects for the abstract informational object. Still there is no oddness in predicating both of 'argument' in the same sentence." (p. 9)

But does 'valid' only select for the abstract informational object? It may be true that the primary bearer of validity is the set of propositions. But it could also be true that the speech act is valid in virtue of having expressed a valid set, just as we can legitimately say without oddness that someone spoke truly, even if one speaks truly in virtue of uttering a sentence that expresses a true proposition. But then closely related uses of terms may share enough[2] of the selecting expressions such that failing to pass the zeugma test would not necessarily indicate a lack of ambiguity.

Simard-Smith and Moldovan take failing the tests as prima facie evidence that 'argument' is not ambiguous between a speech act meaning and an abstract object meaning. But they also go on to present further evidence against the existence of a speech act sense. First, they claim, using a test proposed by Nicholas Asher, that the speech act reading is not always available for appropriate verbs that take events as arguments. Their examples are:

(11) Where did the argument take place?
(12) The argument was very loud.

They claim (11) is not about "where the speech containing the argument took place" but rather "about where the debate took place." About (12) they claim it is "not heard as meaning that the voice of the arguer was very loud when he gave his argument, but rather that the dispute was very loud." (p. 10)

Simard-Smith and Moldovan certainly point to one possible reading of those sentences, but are the speech act readings really unavailable? Consider the following dialogue:

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[2] But not necessarily all—there is for example no current legitimate application of 'loud' to abstract propositions, even derivatively. Whether there are any expressions that select solely for abtract propositional content without having a derivative sense that applies to expressions of that content is presumably a question that needs answering before Simard-Smith and Moldovan can appeal successfully to the zeugma test.

      A: Charles went through with it—he argued that the mayor is a corrupt fool.
      B: Oh, no! Where did the argument take place?
      A: Right in the city square, on market day.
      B: Maybe no one heard him?
      A: Everyone heard him all right—the argument was very loud.

In this dialogue, (11) and (12) do ask about where the speech containing the argument took place and whether it was loud enough to be heard or not.

Second, Simard-Smith and Moldovan claim that "'argument' can be used to refer to a great variety of acts and events, apart from speech acts" and that "it seems that there is no finite list of such readings." They go on to claim that if each such reading encoded a literal meaning, then "one can never have knowledge of all the meanings that 'argument' has, and so one could never acquire linguistic competence with the word 'argument'" (pp. 10-11).

I am not convinced. Are there really a non-finite number of act types distinct from speech acts that count as arguments? If not, then we could acquire linguistic competence. But even if the number is infinite, that just means we could never be fully competent with the term. But why would lacking full linguistic competence be a problem, as long as we could competently use the distinct meanings we did know?

More generally, given that Simard-Smith's and Moldovan's tests and arguments are at least inconclusive, I am not convinced that 'argument' is not ambiguous between a speech act sense and an object sense, at least in the following way. 'Argument' clearly sometimes means the general activity of arguing. There are many particular instances of this activity. In many cases, the term 'argument' is used to pick out these particular instances—instances that include not only debates between individuals, but complex speech acts made by single individuals.[3] Perhaps this is not enough to show that 'argument' has a literal speech act meaning, but that just returns us to an earlier problem—Simard-Smith and Moldovan provide no clear notion of what literal meanings are or what it takes for a term to have multiple meanings.

3. ARGUMENTS AS ABSTRACT OBJECTS

If I were forced to pick a single ontological category for the term 'argument', say as part of full argumentation theory, I would pick abstract object. In this minimal sense then, Simard-Smith and Moldovan and I agree. But even so, for the argumentative purposes in the paper of mine that Simard-Smith and Moldovan use as a catalyst for their discussion here, I could remain agnostic about the actual nature of abstract objects—all that I require there is that whatever sorts of things arguments as objects are, they are not generally, or even mostly, the product of the activity of arguing.

Despite my agnosticism I do have some concerns for the particular account of arguments as abstract objects that Simard-Smith and Moldovan give. I conclude this pa-

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[3] The fact that we are talking about instances falling under a general type might explain Simard-Smith's and Moldovan's intuition that the acts and event readings of 'argument' is open-ended. We just cannot say in advance all the particular types of acts that might fall under the general activity of arguing. At the very least, argumentation theorists certainly do not agree about what types of acts fall under the general activity of arguing. For example, Michael Gilbert (2003) claims a judo flip can be an act of arguing and so an argument.

per with an articulation of some of those concerns in the form of four challenges. If Simard-Smith and Moldovan can meet these challenges, then their account of arguments should be stronger for it.

Challenge 1: The proposed minimal criterion for distinguishing abstract and concrete objects in terms of spatial separation is inadequate. Time travel scenarios to the local past are generally considered to be at least conceptually coherent. If I travel five years into the past, then I will be located in two different places at once, but am not thereby an abstract object.

Challenge 2: Are games, as abstract objects, really located in multiple places? Particular instances of a game of chess are located in different places, but those are different particular, concrete events. In addition to the particular concrete chess event that is present in a particular location is there also an abstract object present at that location? Of course, the same question holds for musical compositions or arguments.

Challenge 3: Simard-Smith and Moldovan seem to have two kinds of abstract objects in play—those that are atemporal and non-spatial such as mathematical objects and sets and those that are temporal and spatially multiply located such as games, musical compositions, and according to their proposal, arguments. But arguments contain propositions as constituents. What kind of abstract objects are they? Did the content of Anselm's argument come into existence because of Anselm or not? Can the content go out of existence? Certainly the content can stop being expressed, and in that sense, stop being instantiated, but is that the same as going out of existence? In order to keep their claims about a causal theory of knowledge applying to arguments intact they would need to say propositions are subject to human knowledge. Does that mean that propositions are temporal objects? Or if not, do Simard-Smith and Moldovan have an account of how we can know mathematical and propositional abstract objects? If so, then one of the primary motivations for treating arguments as temporal abstract objects disappears.

Challenge 4: What exactly is meant by saying that arguments are not temporally separated? Anselm intends a specific conclusion to be inferred from a specific set of premise propositions. But suppose this intention is never expressed on paper or recorded. I have the same intention over the same propositions 800 years later. Did the argument exist in the intervening 800 years or not?

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