Emotional Backing and the Feeling of Deep Disagreement

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Abstract: I discuss Toulmin's (1964) concept of backing with respect to the emotional mode of arguing by examining an example from Fogelin (1985), where emotional backing justifies a warrant concerning when we should judge that a person is being pig-headed. While Fogelin's treatment is consistent with contemporary emotion science, I show that it needs to be supplemented by therapeutic techniques by comparing an analysis of an emotional argument from Gilbert (1997). The introduction of psychotherapy into argumentation theory raises the question of the extent to which ordinary arguers can use such techniques. Psychotherapeutic techniques can be used in an intractable quarrel; is it fruitful to use them in the context of a deep disagreement?

Résumé: J'emploie un mode émotif d'argumentation pour discuter du concept de Toulmin (1964) sur l'appui apporté à la loi de passage des prémisses à leur conclusion. J'examine un exemple de Fogelin (1985) où un appui émotif justifie une telle loi qui traite des conditions qui nous permettent de juger qu'un personne est entêtée. Bien que son évaluation de ce type d'argument soit cohérent avec les science contemporaines des émotions, elle a besoin d'être renforcée par des approches thérapeutiques. Je démontre ceci en la comparant à une analyse d'un argument émotif de Gilbert (1997). L'introduction de la psychothérapie dans la théorie d'argumentation fait soulever deux questions: Jusqu'à quel point est-ce que les gens ordinaires peuvent employer ces techniques dans leurs arguments? Est-ce que de telles techniques sont fructueuses dans le contexte de désaccord profond?

Keywords: : emotion, Fogelin, deep disagreement

1. Introduction

Fogelin's Wittgensteinian claim in "The Logic of Deep Disagreements" (1985, p. 5) is that deep disagreements cannot be rationally resolved because the conditions for argument do not exist. To explain this he first describes a disagreement that is not deep because the essential condition for argument is met: there is a shared background of beliefs and preferences (*ibid.*). His suburban vignette is quoted in full.

> *A* is asked why he is taking a particular road and he responds, "I want to pick up the fish last." We can imagine this being a conclusive reply. On the other hand, it might be met with the rejoinder, "No, go to the Grand Union last; I don't want the ice cream to melt." This too might be conclusive. But things

> could also become complicated. *A* might point out that the traffic that way is horrible this time of day, and it would be better to wait a bit to let it clear out. And he might be crushed by the reply "Today is Saturday." People being what they are, we can even imagine this discussion becoming quite heated. (p. 3)

Now while Fogelin does not come out and say that A is being pig-headed, we can easily understand the example to fit his analysis of a charge of pig-headedness six paragraphs later.

> Suppose, for example, that I accuse someone of being pig-headed. This is not a generous thing to say, but it is not a free floating insult either. To call someone pig-headed is to make quite a specific charge: he continues to cling to a position despite the fact that compelling reasons have been brought against it. But compelling to whom? We are saying that they ought to be compelling for *him*, or else it wouldn't be right to call him pig-headed. He knows that they are true and in other, less interested, contexts would recognize their force. (p. 4, emphasis in original)

So, if the disagreement about fish and ice cream is revised in order to reveal pig-headed behaviour, we end up with a picture of the emotions involved. (Since Fogelin identifies *A* as male, and the setting to be a suburban one, I will let Alex stand for *A*, and assume he is driving with his partner, *B*, whom I will call Bev). Bev asks Alex why he is taking a certain road and he says, "I want to pick up the fish last." His partner tells him to take another road because she does not want melted ice cream. Alex disagrees, citing horrible traffic as his reason. Bev responds by saying it is Saturday, and Alex is crushed. It is reasonable to think that the idea of being crushed in this context refers to the feeling of embarrassment. If Alex is feeling embarrassed then he was invested in the argument. Next, Alex angrily denies that Bev is right while Bev accuses him of being pig-headed.

This argument is in a normal argumentative context because Bev makes an appeal to common ground (p. 4). So Bev knows, and knows that Alex knows, that if it were not for his anger at being embarrassed, he would agree with her about which road to take, since they share views on weekend traffic patterns. Thus the form of Bev's argument is this: "Alex, you are being pig-headed (claim), since by your own beliefs you should accept what I am saying about which road to take (data)." The warrant for this argument is: a person is being pig-headed when he resists an argument that should persuade him because it accords with his own beliefs. The backing for this warrant concerns the field of logic (because the concept of inconsistency is a factor) and the various sources of information from which we compile our understanding of emotion (see Gilbert 1997, pp. 90-91, for a brief outline of the latter). In commonsense terms we can understand what it means for someone to feel embarrassed and then get angry; and, depending on our goals, our analysis of this argument with respect to backing might stop at the mention of these fields. However, one of Fogelin's main claims is that an argument such as this between Alex and his partner can be resolved because there is common

ground. Before we pass over to deep disagreements, we should see what emotion science can add to the resolution of emotional arguments in normal argumentative contexts. For, since Fogelin's paper one major trend in argumentation theory has been the recognition of the regulative role of emotion. Contemporary emotion science can give us a perspective from which to think about our commonsense intuitions about emotion in argument. This is because empirical evidence exists about the consequences of reacting to a person's emotional communication in argument (see Gottman 1979; 1994; 1999; Gottman *et al.* 1997).

2. Emotion science

This is not the place for a full-dress treatment of emotion theory, but I want to discuss two ideas that are relevant: (1) feeling is not really distinct from thinking, (2) there is an important distinction between primary and secondary emotions. Although the scope of the first claim is wide, we will discuss it when we examine deep disagreements. Thus I turn my attention to the second claim, the distinction between primary and secondary emotions.

In a commonsense way we can understand Alex's pig-headed behaviour, for it is not uncommon for people to react with anger after they have been embarrassed. Scientists interested in emotion try to provide an empirically adequate theoretical understanding of such processes. Antonio Damasio's (1994; 1999) popular account of emotion would analyze Alex's behaviour by distinguishing between primary or universal emotions like happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust, and secondary or social emotions like jealousy, embarrassment, guilt, and pride. The significance of the distinction lies in the fact that primary emotions are hardwired: once we are aware of a certain type of stimulus our bodies automatically react in a pre-organized fashion. Secondary emotions are more difficult to explain, for although social processes shape these emotions more than primary ones, Damasio still claims that a significant aspect of secondary emotions is that they are "biologically preset, in part or mostly" (Damasio 1999, p. 342).

Now this distinction alone does not get us to our commonsense understanding of Alex's pig-headed behaviour, for anger is identified by Damasio as a primary emotion, and embarrassment as a secondary one. Thus we might think that the order in which the emotions are felt should be reversed: first anger is felt and then Alex's acquired reaction to it is embarrassment. While this order is certainly possible, for we can feel embarrassed for getting angry, we should not think that emotion science suggests so rigid and simple a model. The account is much more complex, and it would be beyond the scope of this paper to delve into that account. However, fortunately we can show a little more fully the relevance of the distinction between primary and secondary emotions for our commonsense view if we look to how psychotherapy and psychology have used emotion science.

In a previous paper (Friemann 2001) I suggested that it would be fruitful for argument theorists interested in reducing conflict to draw from Leslie Greenberg's

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) (see Greenberg and Johnson 1988; Greenberg *et al.* 1993; Greenberg 2002). The core idea we can take from EFT is how it uses the distinction between primary and secondary emotions. The key to the usefulness of EFT in terms of our commonsense understanding of Alex's emotions is that any emotion can be primary, secondary, or instrumental. According to Greenberg, "It is not the emotion itself that can be categorized as primary, secondary, or instrumental: All emotions, basic or complex, can be primary, secondary, or instrumental" (Greenberg 2002, p. 46). What puts an emotion into a specific category has to do with what emotion is experienced first.

> These primary feelings tell people who they really are and what they are most fundamentally feeling in any given moment. These can be basic emotions, such as anger or fear, or they can be complex emotions, such as jealousy or appreciation, as long as they are the person's first response (*ibid.*, p. 44).

Given this understanding of the difference between primary and secondary emotions, we can say that Alex saw he was losing the argument and embarrassment was his primary response; this was quickly covered up by a secondary response of anger. Greenberg's interest in the surface/depth dynamic here lies in the fact that people often do not notice that their primary emotional response to situations are covered up by secondary ones. In Alex's case we might think that Alex is well aware that his anger is masking his embarrassment, however in more complex situations it is by no means so easy to see this (see *ibid.*, pp. 46-49). Therapists use different techniques to try to bring people to an awareness of their core emotions, and some of these techniques can be used by ordinary arguers in their attempt to recognize primary emotion in their interlocutors.

3. Liisa and Cynthia

At a basic level we can see how an awareness of primary and secondary emotions can be used by an interlocutor in order to understand what is really going on in an argument. I will show this by reconstructing an example from Gilbert so that it *appears* to be a case of pig-headedness. The important point is that it is *not* a case of pig-headedness, and that we might miss that fact if we do not pay attention to a secondary emotion covering up a primary one. In "What's In a Name" (Gilbert 1997, pp. 126-127) Liisa and Cynthia are arguing about changing the name of a club newsletter. Their entire exchange along with Gilbert's comments in italics are reproduced here.

> 1. Cynthia: Liisa, why do you think changing the name from *The Weaver's Club Newsletter* to *Woven Words Magazine* is a bad idea?
>
> [*Cynthia begins by trying to determine Liisa's position and goals.*]
>
> 2. Liisa: Because the old name has a certain tradition. There are connections to it, and I don't like throwing out the old for no good reason.

3. Cynthia: I can sympathize with that, but we are a new club, aren't we?

4. Liisa: Yes, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't keep some connection to the past.

[*Liisa is sticking to her position and her motive.*]

5. Cynthia: But since the name of the club is totally different, shouldn't the magazine reflect that? I mean we aren't called The Weaver's Club anymore, so maybe the old name on the magazine should change?

6. Liisa: [with some heat]: And why call it a magazine? What's wrong with "newsletter"? Why change everything?

[*Cynthia is nonplussed by this turn. Liisa seems to be overreacting, which may mean that there is something going on at a deeper level or in a different mode.*]

7. Cynthia: Why does calling it a magazine change anything? It just sounds classier, don't you think?

[*More information about Liisa's position is needed.*]

8. Liisa: It sounds harder, that's what. I edited a newsletter for two years, and now everyone wants me to edit a magazine! That's a lot bigger job.

[*Now Cynthia begins to see Liisa's problem. The name change represents more to Liisa than just a new title.*]

9. Cynthia: I see. So calling it a magazine makes it feel like a lot more responsibility?

10. Liisa: Magazines are big and glossy. I can't do something like that. What do I know about it?

[*Now, having gotten further down into what is at the root of Liisa's position, they might be able to find some way through the argument.*]

Clearly this argument has to be modified if it is going to parallel the argument between Alex and Bev. In order for Liisa to be confronted by Cynthia, Liisa must have made her opposition to the proposed name change known somehow. Thus, in turn (1), Liisa's goal is to offer a response to Cynthia and hope she would not be pressed about it. That is, she does not want her real feelings known. Cynthia's sense that there is inconsistency between Liisa's beliefs has to be increased, so that it is clear to Cynthia that Liisa should agree with her if it were not for her emotion getting in the way. So we can imagine that Cynthia judges Liisa to be inconsistent on the basis of what she has already heard Liisa say about this issue. Thus, suppose Liisa had said to others that the change to "Woven Words" was acceptable to her, thinking that the "Newsletter" part would be kept. And we must further suppose that the reason Liisa gives for her assent has something to do with the fact that a change in the club should be reflected in the name. And so Cynthia's

questions in turn (1), (3) and (5) reflect her belief that Liisa is being inconsistent. But of course, Liisa cannot in fact really be inconsistent (and be aware of this), if Cynthia's judgment that she is being pig-headed is false.

To this analysis it may be objected that if the source of error is a false belief of Cynthia's, then it is to the beliefs that we should turn and not the emotion. After all, if Cynthia believes something false about Liisa, we should expect this to come up in the discussion, especially since Cynthia is likely to press hard on the perceived inconsistency. At some point Liisa should say that she does not believe what Cynthia thinks she believes.

In response to this objection it can be said that it is just a fact that some arguments are more complex than others. In the argument over fish and ice cream, Bev can easily determine that Alex is being pig-headed because of the simplicity of the situation. Bev has a ready explanation for Alex's behaviour based on the sequence of emotions, and the fact that she can be pretty certain that he does not like bad fish, since if he did, she would have found out about it before. Alex was embarrassed and then he got angry; and this is perfectly understandable because people do not like to be embarrassed. It is obvious to both Alex and Bev that his anger is covering up his embarrassment. However, Liisa is trying to cover up her fear. And the interesting point is that either Liisa's behaviour before turn (8) did not manifest fear sufficient for Cynthia to consciously recognize it, or Cynthia just did not pay enough attention to the subtle expression of fear Liisa exhibited. In any case we have to attribute this motivation to Liisa in order to understand her behaviour. And we can think that before turn (8) Liisa is willing to tolerate having Cynthia think her inconsistent rather than reveal her fear. Before turn (8) Cynthia does not have as commonsense an explanation available to her to understand Liisa's anger, as Alex's partner has to understand Alex's anger. This is because Cynthia is unaware of Liisa's primary fear. Now here is the point: if Cynthia were to focus on the beliefs of Liisa, then she would judge her behaviour as pig-headed. This is because she had just given a reason, in turn (5), why the name should be changed that she thinks accords with Liisa's own beliefs. And now the only reason Liisa is holding out is because she feels her own inconsistency and subsequent embarrassment, which leads to anger. If Cynthia were to take this road she would likely have missed what Liisa's emotion was telling her about her beliefs.

Although this analysis shows the importance of the distinction between primary and secondary emotions for understanding what is going on in this kind of example, there is a serious question about how ordinary arguers can deal with the fact that one may not be aware of the primary emotion that is motivating behaviour (unlike in the case of Alex). Part of the answer will involve the kind of technique that Cynthia uses in the example. Cynthia demonstrates a basic tenet of Gilbert's *Coalescent Argumentation* (CA), which is to be mindful of the signals interlocutors give when they are thinking about things in a different mode, or on a deeper level. Cynthia uses the technique of position exploration, which takes interlocutors to be

experts on their own experience, by taking her cues entirely from Liisa's responses. Once a coalescent arguer suspects that a person may be thinking in a different mode, he or she can incorporate a technique of Rogerian empathy, such as empathic responding, into his or her responses. The importance of recognizing that a person is arguing in the emotional mode can be seen from the following quote from Greenberg *et al.*

> Emotion clearly affects cognition and does so in a complex and differentiated fashion that researchers have only recently begun to investigate. It is clear however that once an emotional state has been elicited—by whatever means chemical, physiological, or cognitive—the person's subsequent cognition is immediately affected. First, the organism's current goal is altered in response to the newly emerging affective state. Second, the person's train of thought is altered in a manner related to the ongoing affective state. (Greenberg, Rice and Elliott 1993, p. 52.)

Taking the Greenberg *et al.* quote to heart, Liisa's goal will change at turn (6). And it does; after hearing the dreaded word "magazine" twice in Cynthia's turn (5), she now shows a willingness to uncover the real issue. The information she gives to Cynthia in turns (8) and (10) reveal that she is no longer having the same conversation as she was before turn (6). In (8) and (10) Liisa is not giving reasons for why the name of the club's organ should stay the same; she is expressing her fear that she did not have the ability to handle the job.

Turn (6) is the crucial one because the text indicates that Liisa speaks "with some heat." Gilbert's comments about Cynthia's reaction to Liisa here indicates the skill needed for Cynthia to say what she does in turn (7). Gilbert states, "Cynthia is nonplussed by this turn. Liisa seems to be overreacting, which may mean that there is something going on at a deeper level or in a different mode." The first step is that Cynthia is puzzled by Liisa's emotion. This alone could cause things to go bad. Gottman (1999) has signaled the importance of the phenomenon of emotional flooding, or diffuse physiological arousal (DPA). Since Gottman's discussion concerns arguments between couples, we can suppose Liisa and Cynthia are a couple in order to make a stronger parallel with Fogelin's example of Alex. Without this assumption the point still holds, given that DPA is not specific to couples. Gottman (*ibid.*, p. 74) says that DPA is "the body's general alarm mechanism." After describing what the body goes through in physiological terms when people are aroused, he draws the following moral.

> These are the processes that are catalyzed when we narrowly avert a car accident, for example. Perhaps it is surprising to learn that all these extreme physiological alterations also can *and do* happen during marital conflict. When this is the case—that is, when marital conflict gives rise to DPA—the psychological consequences are quite negative. In the short run couples experience a reduced ability to process information, for it is harder to attend to what the other is saying. Even in the best marriages it is hard to listen during DPA-laden circumstances. There is less access to new learning and

> greater access to habitual behaviors and cognitions. That is why fight/flight responses become more accessible and creative problem solving goes out the window. (Gottman *ibid., p.* 75, emphasis in the original.)

Now, the first thing to notice is that Cynthia does not get emotionally flooded. This may seem a paltry achievement, for it is not as if Liisa is yelling in Cynthia's face at turn (6). However, people can become emotionally flooded by relatively low levels of emotional communication. Gottman notes that there are important gender differences with respect to DPA: men are more likely than women to get flooded at lower levels of negative affective behaviour (*ibid.*, p. 84). To be sure, in this example both Liisa and Cynthia are women, so perhaps the achievement is less than it would have been if Liisa had been talking to a man. Still, the general point is important, for if one's interlocutor becomes emotionally flooded there is less chance he or she will take the next step that Cynthia does take, namely, to associate an overreaction with something going on at a deeper level. There is nothing automatic about this move. If Cynthia *were* flooded after hearing Liisa's turn (6), then her range of responses would likely be reduced to those more indicative of the fight or flight variety. This would mean some reciprocally negative behaviour, possibly the judgement that Liisa is being pig-headed, and a statement to that effect. However Cynthia does not do this, for she just asks two questions. Gilbert's gloss on this move is, "More information about Liisa's position is needed," but how were these two questions delivered? Of course, it is a hypothetical example so the question cannot be answered. But from Liisa's turn (8) we can see the effect these questions had on her. Turn (8) begins the acknowledgement of Liisa's fear. And it is pretty unlikely that Liisa would respond in this open way if she detected any negativity in Cynthia's tone. So we can suppose that Cynthia's questions were delivered with positive affect.

Considerations like these suggest that psychotherapeutic techniques may be necessary in order to understand an emotional argument, let alone to resolve it. This is what led me in a previous paper (Friemann 2002) to discuss a specific type of emotional argument between couples, which I called intractable quarrels (IQs). There are two important features of an IQ. The first feature is that a couple automatically react negatively to each other's emotional communication in patterned ways. The second feature is a consequence of the first: because of the automatic nature of these negative patterns of emotional communication, it is especially difficult for couples to break the pattern. In argumentation theory, a literature exists on marital arguments concerning these patterns (see Cahn 1990; 1994; Canary, Cupach, and Messman 1995; Weger Jr. 2002). However, to my knowledge no one has tried to link the intractability of these emotional patterns to Fogelin's notion of a deep disagreement (DD). The reason seems obvious: according to Fogelin DDs are about logic, not emotion. I now address this issue.

4. Deep disagreement

Fogelin contrasts an ordinary disagreement, such as one caused by someone being pig-headed, with a DD. Alex was being pig-headed because he shared common ground with his partner, and his feeling of embarrassment was quickly masked by anger, resulting in his rejection of his partner's argument. In the language of emotion science, Alex's secondary emotion covered up his primary emotional response. Now in a DD there is no common ground (Fogelin *ibid.,p.* 5). And, importantly, emotion does not get in the way.

> But we get a very different sort of disagreement when it proceeds from a clash in underlying principles. Under these circumstances, the parties may be unbiased, free of prejudice, consistent, coherent, precise and rigorous, yet still disagree. And disagree profoundly, not just marginally (p. 5.).

By my lights Fogelin is trying to eliminate the emotional aspects here, so the picture one gets is a disagreement between, say, two academics who have known for years that their positions on some issue are incompatible, and thus there is no point in arguing over it.

Now recall that at the beginning of section 3, on emotion science, I said there are two main ideas from emotion theory that are relevant. I can now discuss the first one, which is that feeling is not really distinct from thinking.

Damasio's denial of the traditional philosophical dichotomy between reason and emotion stems from his reconciliation between more traditional cognitive science perspectives, and a Jamesian view of emotion. Damasio (1994, 128) wants to challenge a seemingly sensible view with respect to evolutionary brain development and function: the notion that the evolutionarily older and lower brain regions are responsible for basic bodily regulations like emotions, and that the newer and higher brain regions are responsible for reasoning and wisdom. The take-away message from his first book, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (1994), was that this view is wrong: emotion is necessary in order for rationality to operate properly (Damasio 1999, p. 42). He provides two stunning examples that lead to this conclusion: Phineas Gage (Domassio 1994, pp. 3-33) and David (Domassio 1999, pp. 43-47). Through Damasio's explication of these examples, a powerful case emerges against the traditional philosophical (and general western intellectual) prescription against contaminating reason with emotion.

Damasio challenges the Cartesian idea that reason and feeling are biologically distinct (Damasio 1994, p. 168). He states that it is part of commonsense to believe that the following two situations involve thinking and deciding that are automatic and rapid, and hence have to do with the body: blood sugar drops and we decide to eat; some object falls and we move away to avoid getting hit (pp. 166-167). He also thinks it is commonsense that the following third group of situations demand a kind of thinking and deciding that is fundamentally different from the kind needed for success in the first two situations: designing a building, solving a mathematical problem, composing a musical piece and writing a book

(p.167). In order to deal with the latter situations we ". . . rely on the supposedly clear process of deriving logical consequences from assumed premises, the business of making reliable inferences which, unencumbered by passion, allows us to choose the best possible option, leading to the best possible outcome . . ." (*ibid.*). Yet, for all the differences between the first two and the third group of situations, Damasio claims that ". . . there may well be a common thread running through all of them in the form of a shared neurobiological core" (p.168). Damasio's mention of this "shared neurobiological core" seems to suggest that thinking and feeling have at least some processes in common. If this is right, then he is taking a position on one of the most important debates in emotion theory, namely whether or not emotion is a natural kind. However, we do not need to go into that controversy to see that Damasio's position allows us to say that, at least theoretically, cognition should not be split off from emotion. Some researchers in cognitive science have taken the strong position that our theorizing about cognition should always be done with the body—and hence emotion—in mind (Varela, F. J., Thompson, E. and Rosch, E. 1991). Thus, according to the proponents of embodied cognition, we are always emotional, even if commonsense would not judge us to be so.

The point of all this is to is to suggest that at a certain level logic and emotion may be more similar than we typically think. But of course, at the molar level of critical thinking, such similarity may be of no practical importance. In a commonsense way it seems perfectly acceptable to grant Fogelin the idea that DDs can be practically devoid of emotion. At the same time however, it is not really emotion *per se* that is ruled out of a DD, just the emotions that arise through the dynamic of secondary emotions masking primary ones. For since the important point about a DD is the fact of no common ground, ideally there is no possibility of inconsistency. (I say ideally because as we saw in my revision of the Liisa and Cynthia example, a false belief about someone can cause one to perceive inconsistency in a person where there is none). And if there is no inconsistency, there is no embarrassment accompanying the feeling that one is losing the argument. Hence there is no anger caused by embarrassment either. But this does not mean that the academics cannot get angry at each other; it just means that they will not do so as a result of feeling embarrassed by the suspicion that they are being inconsistent.

This dynamic of primary emotion being covered up by secondary ones is important for resolving IQs. However, the tradition out of which my thinking about IQs derives (family systems therapy), assumes that the problems that arise in families and couple relationships are due to the dysfunctional communication patterns people get themselves into. In other words, problems are about the *process* of arguing and not about the *content* of the issues people argue over. Since Fogelin's notion of a DD is very much about content, there does not seem to be enough theoretical common ground to usefully connect the process oriented concept of an IQ with the content oriented idea of a DD.

However, that judgment may be premature. Given the fact that the argumentation literature on marital and relationship conflict is already much influenced by the work of Gottman, we would do well to look to see if there is anything there to bring content and process perspectives together. I suggest that this can be done by considering his notion of perpetual problems.

> I contend that the current emphasis in marital therapy on problem-solving is greatly misplaced. We have now studied the stability of marital interactions over a four-year period and discovered remarkable stability in these interaction patterns, particularly in affect. In looking at the videotapes of most of the cases, it was as if the couple had changed clothes and hairstyle, while continuing to talk about the same or analogous issues in precisely the same ways. One thing I had never looked at was the *content* of the interaction. In classifying the discussions of these couples' major areas of continuing disagreement, we found that 69% of the time they were talking about a "perpetual problem" that they had had in their marriage for many, many years. (Gottman 1999, p. 56; italics in the original)

In this quote we see Gottman move from an exclusively process perspective, which is about interaction patterns, to the recognition of the importance of a content perspective, which concerns the topics of arguments. Now Fogelin's examples of DDs are about difficult moral issues like abortion, and he does not specify who the interlocutors are, probably because it does not affect the incompatibility of the pro-choice and the pro-life positions. Perhaps Fogelin would accept the idea that certain topics in relationships, such as sex, money, and in-laws, are perpetual problems. For me, I can see little difference in terms of how deep a disagreement is, between two relative strangers on opposite sides of the abortion debate and two people in a relationship who want fundamentally different things out of, say, money. We can imagine there to be no common ground in both cases.

However, lest we assume too much by claiming that perpetual problems are DDs, let us say that the relationship aspect of a marriage makes enough of a difference here to separate the two notions. So what would follow if perpetual problems in marriage were the counterpart to DDs in non-marriage situations? We know that couples keep going back to perpetual problems in their marriage. And since these cannot be resolved, Gottman claims that we need to teach people to manage the conflict over these problems.

> In fact, even in the best marriages, while some minor fraction of marital problems does get solved, over time most marital problems do *not* get solved at all; instead, they become what we call "perpetual" issues. What turns out to be important is the *affect* that surrounds the way people talk about (but do not really solve) these perpetual marital problems. They either establish a "dialogue" with these problems, or they go into a state of gridlock. (Gottman 1999, p. 16)

Gottman suggests that people create a dialogue with their perpetual problems by using, among others, the kinds of therapeutic techniques discussed previously in

the example of Liisa and Cynthia. Such techniques are important for perpetual problems because couples do revisit them, which means emotion is bound to be involved. And all the issues that arise over the mismanagement of emotional communication—like dealing with emotional flooding—become relevant.

Finally, are therapeutic techniques relevant to DDs if we understand such disagreements in the context of non-intimate relationships? If we think about a DD as Fogelin describes it, then the example of the academics who understand that they hold incompatible positions seems to capture what he wants from the notion. Certainly it is possible that such academics agree to disagree and that neither expresses any negative emotion in the presence of the other. There is not much to say about this kind of sterile relationship if, *ex hypothesis*, it really is so sterile. However, such a relationship strikes me as atypical as far as human (non-intimate) relations go. If these hypothetical academics ever express negative emotion toward each other, then therapeutic techniques become relevant for managing the argument. Until there are feelings in a DD, the most we can say is that DDs exist. Yet it is not the mere existence but the correct management of DDs that is a problem.

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