

Inconsistent Commitments and Commitment to Inconsistencies*

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It is no good to contradict oneself. For one thing, the perpetrator would flout the time-honored *principium contradictionis* (Law of Contradiction): "It is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation." (Aristotle, 1975, *Metaph.*, 1005b¹⁹). Aristotle assures us that "this is the most certain of all principles" and that to demand to have the law proved would show a "lack of education" (1006a⁵⁻⁷). On the other hand, if someone would be bold enough to challenge the principle, he can be refuted, if only he makes *some* statement. If not, we may sit back in comfort, for our opponent would be "really no better than a vegetable" (1006a¹⁵). From the discussion that follows, it is clear that, according to Aristotle, a meaningful use of language presupposes the Law of Contradiction to hold. Ultimately, if your opponent denies everything he asserts, and asserts everything he denies, further discussion makes no sense. "For he says neither 'yes' nor 'no', but 'yes and no'; and again he denies both of these and says 'neither yes nor no'..." (1008a³¹⁻³⁴). This opponent does not really make a statement (another plant, so it seems).

At this point one may ask whether serious opposition to the Law of Contradiction is at all feasible. Aristotle adds an argument from practice: everyone judges one course of action better than another. ("Otherwise, why does a man walk to Megara and not stay at home, when he thinks he ought to make the journey?" (1008b¹⁴⁻¹⁵)). Hence "all men form unqualified judgments, if not about all things, at least about what is better or worse."

(1008b²⁶⁻²⁸). Consequently, it seems a practical impossibility to deny the Law of Contradiction in the strong sense of taking a contrary position (every attribute belongs and does not belong to the same things).

How about a denial of the Law of Contradiction in the weaker sense of holding its contradictory (at least one attribute could at once belong and not belong to the same thing)? Let us skip a few centuries and have a look at another specimen of *horror contradictionis*. A serious opponent of the Law of Contradiction has to be deliberately inconsistent. Is this possible? The question is discussed in the first chapter of a well-known logic text:

Is consistency of beliefs a virtue?

To some extent this is a question in a vacuum. Nobody is *deliberately* inconsistent in his beliefs. It is simply impossible to believe, fully and without reservation, two things which you know are inconsistent with each other.

Exercise I A. You know that human beings normally have two legs. Try to convince yourself that they normally have five. (Allow yourself at least a minute.)

It seems we are obliged to believe only what we think is consistent, without having any real choice in the matter. In this way we are all logicians, simply because we are human. (Hodges, 1977:15)

We cannot get ourselves to hold inconsistent beliefs. But that is hardly surprising. For, probably, one is just not in a position to get oneself to believe anything, whether consistent or not. The more important point is whether Hodges is right in maintaining

that nobody will deliberately stick to his inconsistent beliefs, once they are pointed out as such. This view would imply that we cannot seriously deny the Law of Contradiction at all. For, since the inconsistency of P and $not-P$ is wholly explicit, there remains nothing to be pointed out, and no one can seriously believe both to be true. A further consequence would be that whosoever nevertheless asserts that both P and $not-P$ hold, cannot honestly believe what he says, nor can he believe that his audience believes he does. He is flouting a Conversational Maxim (*viz.*, Grice's First Maxim of Quality, 1975:46). Certainly, that is not to say that contradictory assertions (P and $not-P$) are pointless, but rather that they can be used only in indirect speech acts, if they are to make sense. "She loves me, no she loves me not" could express one's torment. "The cow exists and she doesn't exist" could be used to start a discussion on existence, or to show off sophistication.

But let us leave these indirect speech acts aside. Is it really excluded that one seriously and literally asserts P and $not-P$? Inconsistency and contradiction are in vogue nowadays, even among formal logicians. Rescher and Brandom refer to the *Recent Period of Inconsistency Toleration* (1980:56). They distinguish four modes:

- (A) (Weak Inconsistency) To accept the prospect that for some genuinely possible world w : P true in w and $not-P$ true in w , for some P .
- (B) (Strong Inconsistency) To accept [etc.]: (P and $not-P$) true in w , for some P .
- (C) (Hyperinconsistency) To accept [etc.]: (P and $not-P$) true in w , for all P .
- (D) (Logical Chaos) To accept [etc.]: P true in w , for all P (and accordingly P true in w and $not-P$ true in w , for all P) (1980:24).¹

Of these modes of inconsistency toleration Rescher and Brandom champion only the first: *Weak Inconsistency*. Thus their tolerance appears to be quite restrained. They fulminate against the stronger modes in terms Aristotle would appreciate:

... surely nothing could (rationally) move us to accept an outright SELF-contradiction [*viz.*, (P and $not-P$)]... no cogent line of consideration could ever move us to accept such a contention... In uttering an outright self-contradiction we literally 'cannot say' what we have in mind to assert. (1980:24,25)

For a book aiming at the vindication of inconsistent (and incomplete) possible worlds this passage airs a remarkable degree of *horror contradictionis*. An unwarranted degree, so it seems, in view of the existence of more tolerant systems, like Minimal Logic. According to the semantics of Minimal Logic we can face *Strong Inconsistency*, *Hyperinconsistency* and *Logical Chaos* without any fear of our logic getting chaotic. Further more, Rescher and Brandom won't tolerate any inconsistencies on the metalevel: "Keep your own discussion consistent" (1980:139). Though we may be brought to accept that 'both P is true in w and that $not-P$ is true in w ', we still must reject statements of the form ' P is true in w but P is also not true in w '.

Granted that their toleration of inconsistency is limited, the example of Rescher and Brandom at least shows that some types of inconsistency are seriously discussed by contemporary logical semanticists, and that not all inconsistencies are equally out of place. Even toleration of Weak Inconsistency seems a long way from Aristotle (and from Hodges). Thus we confront a long tradition of *horror contradictionis* and recent steps towards inconsistency toleration in logical semantics, two trends that seem to conflict or to contradict each other.

The problem of inconsistency can, I think, most profitably be approached from the perspective of dialogue and argumentation. Leaving aside psychology (Can I get myself to believe P and $not-P$?) and ontology (Is there a possible world w such that both P and $not-P$ are true in w ?), we should foremost ask: *What should happen if (apparent) contradictions or inconsistencies arise in dialogue?* The question is normative: What should an ideally constructed system of rules for argumentation (an op-

timal system of dialectics) do about inconsistencies? What about a party in dialogue that contradicts itself? Should this situation be ruled out beforehand? Should this party be penalized? Or should it be allowed to get away with it in some cases?

Ultimately, such questions can be answered only in the context of a comprehensive Theory of Argumentation. One cannot definitively tackle one problem (inconsistency) in isolation from other problems (equivocation, evasion, irrelevance, filibustering, *ad hominem*, etc.). In an optimal system of dialectics everything hangs together.² From the perspective of one problem in isolation (here: inconsistency) one may, however, give a preview on how the rules of dialectic are to cope with certain situations, and that is as far as we shall get in this paper.

Stating that *P*, in dialogue, amounts to committing oneself to *P* (propositional commitment). The content of this commitment depends on the type of dialogue (persuasion dialogue, negotiation, inquiry,...), on the role of the speaker (opponent, proponent, questioner, defendant,...) and on connections with other utterances in the dialogue. In persuasion dialogue it may be that a statement of *P* commits one to offer arguments for *P* (if challenged), or it may be that one is merely committed to allow the other party to use *P* in an argument. Stating that *not-P* in the same dialogue leads to different commitments. Do these commitments conflict? Is commitment to both *P* and *not-P* to be compared to commitments to incompatible tasks (a quandary)? If so, who is to blame? The party thus committed, or the advocate of the dialectic system that allows this situation to occur?

Let us have a closer look at the 'anatomy of commitment'.³ Every commitment has the following three aspects: (1) a subject, (2) a commitment bond, (3) an object (or content). The subject of a commitment is a person or a collective (union, institution, party, etc): the one who is bound by the commitment. The bond itself can be

characterized as ethical, legal, conventional, or by refinements of such terms. The important thing in characterizing a type of commitment bond, is the sanction: what will happen if I fail to live up to my commitment? The object of a commitment, finally, is characterized by the imperative telling the subject what to do in order to live up to his commitment. Here is an example: A student (Sarah) hands in a paper with her professor (Pamela) to be graded. In ordinary circumstances this act of Sarah's leads to a commitment, with Pamela as the subject and 'Grade Sarah's paper!' as the associated imperative. The bond can be characterized as based upon professional standards. If Pamela should fail to grade Sarah's paper, that would amount to her performing badly in her job. (That would be the sanction.)

The close connection between commitments and imperatives allows us to apply Hamblin's theory of imperatives, especially his 'Action-State-Semantics' (1987). Accordingly, let us identify the object of a commitment with the set of (partial) strategies one of which the subject should follow (or at least try to follow) in order to wholeheartedly satisfy the imperative associated with the commitment. Let us partition the objects of commitment according to the nature of the commitment bond (the sanction). Two objects of commitment of a subject go into the same *sanction-set* if and only if the commitments are enforced by the same sanction. The set of all of a subject's sanction sets may be called its *agenda* (at a certain moment of time).

The present theory of commitment in general applies to propositional commitment as well. Propositional commitments, however, are special in two ways. First, as to their content: the associated imperatives of propositional commitments tell the subject to perform, or refrain from, certain moves in dialogue (Defend *P*! Do not challenge *P*! Criticize *P*!). Second, these dialogical moves, or acts, all pertain to a proposition *P* (which may or may not have been uttered in the dialogue).

In persuasion dialogues we must distinguish (at least) two sanction sets. Delinquency as to commitment of the first set consists of breaches of the rules of the specific type of persuasion dialogue in which the commitment was incurred. Following a recent proposal I shall call such breaches: *fallacies*.⁴ Delinquency as to commitments of the second set consists of weak play in dialogue: unnecessary weak arguments and weak criticism. I shall refer to such acts as *weaknesses* or, if a strong term is needed, *blunders*. Thus we may compare committing a fallacy in dialogue with a 'move' in contravention of the rules of some game, like chess, and a blunder in dialogue with a permitted but poor move in the same game.

It is well known, both from moral philosophy and practical life, that commitments that seem to be consistent at first, may nevertheless by a conjunction of circumstances get one into serious trouble. For instance, suppose Pamela is bound to grade Sarah's paper, but also to help her aunt in case of an emergency. These commitments need by no means conflict. But suppose Pamela's aunt falls seriously ill all of a sudden, unfortunately on the very last night available for grading Sarah's paper. (Suppose the grading of the paper would at least take one night.) Under these circumstances Pamela's commitments clash. There is a *prima facie* conflict of duties. But perhaps Pamela is able to assign priority to one commitment over another. In that case she will be able to resolve the conflict and to act according to some partial strategy her preferred commitment provides. Otherwise, she is in a *quandary*.

The concept of a quandary is discussed extensively by Hamblin (1987, Ch.5: *The Consistency of a Set of Imperatives*). Especially interesting is Hamblin's description of four "kinds of quandary-freedom" a set of imperatives may possess (1987, 177-181). Translated to quandaries that arise from commitments in dialogues, we get the following list of degrees of

quandary-freedom a set of dialogue rules may guarantee (I have added 2a):

- (1) *Absolute Quandary-Freedom*: the rules of dialogue do not allow quandaries to arise under any circumstances. Of course one cannot *stipulate* quandary-freedom in the rules. The rules must be carefully formulated (and, if necessary, assigned priorities) in order to provide a legal (nonfallacious) act for each disputant in every possible situation (even if fallacies are essential for getting into that situation).
- (2) *Legislative Quandary-Freedom*:
 - a. *Personal*: As long as a party acts legally (does not commit any fallacy) this party will never be put in a quandary (even if the other party commits fallacies).
 - b. *Collective*: If all parties act legally (avoid fallacies), no quandaries will arise at all.
- (3) *Strategic Quandary-Freedom*: For each party there is at least one legal strategy that will keep this party out of quandaries.
- (4) *Minimal Quandary-Freedom*: It is possible for all parties to act legally and in such a way that no quandaries will arise at all.

It seems desirable that the rules of a system of dialectics would guarantee a high degree of quandary-freedom, certainly 2b, but preferably 2a or 1. For fallacies run counter to the ends of dialogue (ends the rules should help us to achieve), and quandaries leave no option but to commit a fallacy. If a commitment to inconsistencies would lead to inconsistent commitments (i.e., a quandary), there is every reason to try to banish them.

Altogether, we now have reached three subquestions to the question about how to handle inconsistencies in dialogue:

- (1) Should we consider inconsistent statements by one and the same party to constitute a *fallacy*? (What rule of dialogue would be violated?)
- (2) Or should we rather consider them to constitute a *weakness* or *blunder*?
- (3) Do such statements lead to a *quandary*? (And would that be a reason to declare them *fallacious*?)

As to (1) it may be noted that, traditionally, inconsistency is seldom counted among the fallacies. Exceptions are Gautama in the *Nyaya sutra*,⁵ Mackie (1967:176,177) Johnson and Blair (1983:59-63), and Rescher (1987). But Rescher rejects the characterization of inconsistency as a fallacy. Mackie and Johnson and Blair do not discuss dialectical rules, and consequently cannot draw a dialectical distinction between 'blunder' and 'fallacy'. If their treatments were 'put in dialectical terms', inconsistency might, with these authors, come out as a blunder rather than a fallacy.⁶ Thus tradition seems to put 'inconsistency' apart from the subject of fallacy. This is not surprising, for one of the aims of dialectic is to unearth hidden inconsistencies. And how could this be done if inconsistencies couldn't be expressed within the dialogue? So we cannot expect the rules to proscribe all inconsistencies.

Suppose that, according to some system of dialectical rules, one's position is refuted as soon as it is developed to a point where both *P* and *not-P* are stated.⁷ We can add a rule to ban such *explicit* inconsistencies: if *P* was stated first (and not retracted) one would not be allowed to state *not-P* and vice versa. If we now add a rule to the effect that one's position is refuted as soon as each legal move would bring about a situation of explicit inconsistency, refutation will occur one step earlier in dialogue, but otherwise the new system will be equivalent to the old one. Thus we may continue for some time, banning some less explicit inconsistencies, such as *P* together with *Q* and *not (P or Q)*, etc. But somewhere we must stop. We cannot stipulate that as soon as one's position becomes inconsistent it is refuted. For in order to apply such a rule it must be obvious, or easily checked, whether a position is inconsistent. And that is simply not the case.⁸

Consider for instance, the well-known *Barber Pseudoparadox*:

- (B) In a certain village there lives a barber who shaves exactly those inhabitants of the village that do not shave themselves.

Does the barber shave himself? He/she does if and only if he/she doesn't. (B) is self-contradictory (It is not a paradox, since the village in question does not exist.) The inconsistency in such riddles is not "obvious", otherwise they would be no fun.

Perhaps one might say that in cases like (B) it is "easily checked" whether there is an inconsistency. So a viable dialectics could ban (B) and its cognates. If so, change the example to any desired degree of complexity. Frege's system in *Grundgesetze der Arithmetik* (1893,1903) was shown to be inconsistent by Russell (Russell's paradox). Certainly this was not "obvious", nor was Frege's system "easily checked" for consistency. For rich languages (predicate logic and beyond) consistency is an undecidable concept (i.e., no mechanical test can exist for it), and therefore totally unsuitable for figuring in the formulation of dialectical rules.

If there is to be a fallacy of inconsistency it must be limited to some restricted class of inconsistencies (e.g., fully explicit ones). One may, however, also opt for not having any fallacy of inconsistency at all. In that case positions containing both *P* and *not-P* are not ruled out in dialogue. Such positions would be merely refutable: they would lead to a loss of part of the argument, or to a forced retraction.⁹ But even that is not necessary. The example of Minimal Dialectics (the dialectics of Minimal Logic) shows that one may hold *P* and *not-P* without refutation (and without being forced to assert and deny every proposition, *pace* Aristotle).¹⁰ So even explicit inconsistencies need not be declared fallacious.

If not a fallacy, would it be correct to describe inconsistency as a weakness or blunder? Certainly, sometimes it would be. Consider the following example:

Sue: That greasy spot you left on it just ruins my book!

Bill: How come! I didn't borrow your book at all! What's more, the spot was already there. You shouldn't shout at me: I returned it spotless.

Bill's argument to the effect that he has not been guilty of leaving a greasy spot on Sue's book contains obviously inconsistent statements. We may wonder whether Bill is serious, or whether he merely wants to poke fun at Sue (an indirect speech act). Assuming that Bill is serious, it is certainly a weak argument, and by presenting it Bill gets into a vulnerable position. On the other hand the argument isn't entirely worthless either, since any part of it could perhaps be substantiated, and would then suffice to establish Bill's claim of innocence. A stronger argument would leave the rest out, for sure.

Even though it may often be correct to frown upon an inconsistency as constituting a weakness (or even a blunder) in arguing, there are other situations where it would not be correct to describe it that way. For one thing, inconsistencies can be hidden. We saw already how they can be hidden by complexity. This was a reason not to count them among fallacies. However, a complex inconsistency could still be said to constitute at least a weakness, assuming that a better (consistent) way of arguing is available. It is another matter if one's position is inconsistent to start with. This should be called a weakness in one's position rather than in one's arguing. Thus being inconsistent was a weakness of Frege's system (position) in the *Grundgesetze*. Only if we view the whole system as an argument for logicism, may we say that Frege presented an unnecessary weak argument (assuming that better arguments are available). Since it is one of the ends of dialectic to unearth inconsistencies and other weaknesses in positions, it is no weakness in dialogue if an initial position is inconsistent. Perhaps this is even clearer so if part of an initial position is hidden, not by complexity, but by virtue of its not being articulated in the form of uttered statements. There may be propositional commitments on the dark-side of an agenda of which the subject itself is not fully aware (the so-called *dark-side of the commitment-store*, cf. Walton, 1984:

247ff.). Thus one may run into inconsistencies, without any deficiency in the dialectic process. The following example is Walton's:¹¹

George is a committed socialist but frustrated by the continual postal strikes, and he argues that the Post Office should be taken over by private enterprise. His friend Bob replies: "How can you say that, George? After all you are a socialist, and socialists do not think that state functions should be run by private enterprise."

As the discussion gets on, it may become clear to both Bob and George that certain socialist tenets to which George is deeply committed do indeed conflict with George's uttered position. These dark-side commitments of George may come to the light in the course of, and as a consequence of, the discussion. Finally George may have to withdraw his uttered proposal, or modify his commitment to socialism. Yet all the time George could be arguing according to optimal strategies, without any fallacies, weaknesses, or blunders.

We should now consider explicit inconsistencies once more. Above it was maintained that even a statement of an explicit inconsistency does not constitute a fallacy. Would it always constitute a blunder? We can't plead complexity, or dark-side commitment in this case. Yet the utterance of an explicit inconsistency could be entirely alright. First, it may be that no better moves are available (a party may be driven by the dialectic process to proceed from hidden inconsistencies to explicit ones). Second, such a position could be tenable in at least some systems of dialectic (e.g., Minimal Dialectics), as we remarked above. Third, an explicit contradiction (*P and not-P*) could be used as a provocative thesis, i.e., a thesis not reflecting the position of its proponent, but the proponent's point of view that its adversary should, given its position, accept this thesis.¹² A provocative thesis *P and not-P* is equivalent to a claim that the position of the other party is inconsistent. It is essential that such claims be admitted in

dialogues. Sometimes a particular dialectic constant (*absurdum, falsum*) is used for this purpose. Thus Russell, confronting Frege as the author of the *Grundgesetze*, may be called a proponent of the absurd.

A provocative thesis need not be absurd or self-contradictory. Even if it is not, it may contradict the position of its proponent. Take *Haddock's conclusion* as an example:

The two Johnsons doubt whether Captain Haddock did accurately calculate the ship's position. They show the captain some improved calculations of their own. Haddock: "You are right... I was wrong... Gentlemen, hats off!" [takes off cap, and stands in prayer for quite some time]. Johnson: "Hey, captain, what's that for?" Haddock: "That's to say, gentlemen, that, according to your calculations, we are now in St. Peter's Cathedral, Rome!" (paraphrasing Hergé, 1947)

Haddock's provocative thesis confronting the two Johnsons in their capacity of calculators, determines the ship's position as St. Peter's Cathedral, Rome. This is what the captain should defend, if challenged, starting from the other party's concessions, in this case the improved calculations made by the Johnsons. Obviously, Haddock himself does not hold the ship to be in that position.

Let us turn to quandaries. We want, on the one hand, the rules of a dialectical system to guarantee at least General Legislative Quandary-Freedom (with respect to commitments in the first sanction set). On the other hand, we want to admit explicit inconsistencies as legal positions in dialogue. The consequence is that the dialecticians should take care that situations in which a party is committed to both *P* and *not-P* do not lead to quandaries. If a party is to defend both *P* and *not-P* one would expect the rules to stipulate which defense takes preference. This can be done quite simply, e.g., by stipulating that one should defend first whatever statement is challenged first. In general: *if more than one defense obligation is allowed to be in force at the same time, these obligations should be ordered.*¹³

As long as a dialogue proceeds without fallacies, it seems impossible for quandaries with respect to the second sanction set to occur. As long as there are permitted moves, some of these must be optimal. If fallacies occur one has to appeal to higher order rules to regulate the situation. To avoid quandaries one could have a rule to the effect that a fallacy should be pointed out as soon as it is committed, and that the responsible party should in such a case withdraw its last move and substitute a legal one. Thus one would always have a legal move at his disposal (legal at the level of these higher order rules). By such means quandaries may be excluded from a dialogue: commitments to inconsistencies will not lead to inconsistent commitments. However, as we shall see, there is still a danger of quandary if a party is involved in several dialogues at the same time.

Sometimes inconsistent statements are so mutually isolated that they cannot interfere one with the other. For instance in systems of formal dialectic (Barth and Krabbe, 1982) a concession *P* in one chain or arguments does not interfere with another concession *not-P*, if the latter should take place in a different chain of arguments. (Such chains of arguments may occur, for instance, in a discussion with *not-P* or (*P* and *Q*) as a concession.) In such a case there is no fallacy, no blunder, no quandary. Perhaps one should say there is no real inconsistency. (And perhaps 'being in the same chain of arguments' could figure as a dialectical interpretation of Aristotle's 'in the same relation'.¹⁴)

Another case, where the isolation is less evident, is provided by the Preface Paradox (Following Makinson, 1964):

An author has completed a learned work containing propositions S_1 , through S_m . He adds a preface containing the statement (*P*): "In view of human fallibility and the complexity of the present work, there is no doubt that I must have erred somewhere. Consequently, not all assertions that follow can be correct, however much I tried to avoid error." Clearly *P* implies that S_1 , through S_m

cannot be all true (given that S_1 , through S_m are the assertions that follow¹⁵). Let S be the conjunction of S_1 , through S_m . Then P implies that *not-S*. The book *cum* preface is, therefore, inconsistent. What is the paradox? On the one hand the author displays a *reasonable* modesty. After all, there may be very good reasons to hold P . On the other hand the author's position is obviously inconsistent, and for that reason often deemed *unreasonable*.

The Preface Paradox is usually discussed from the point of view of reasonable belief or acceptance.¹⁶ From the point of view of dialogue all we can say is that the author's position is weak: He can be refuted. Yet, from this point of view, it is not unreasonable to be in a refutable position.¹⁷ However, it may also be possible to isolate P from S by claiming that here we have two different fields or areas of discussion (epistemology and whatever the book itself is about). P and S would then no longer interfere with each other, at least not without more ado.

A final example of presumed isolation is the following:

A social worker in a regional hospital has to deal with patients from all walks of life. Two patients, both seriously ill, are totally upset by the prospect of death. It is urgent that the social worker should have a word of comfort for each of them. However, in view of their difference in outlook, this cannot be the same word. Discussing death with the first patient she stresses that one may look forward to eternal bliss hereafter. Involved in a dialogue with the second patient she points out that "as long as we are present death is not, and once death is, we are not."¹⁸

We may assume that both dialogues are free of fallacies and blunders. Since the two statements occur in distinct dialogues, our social worker feels sure they will not lead to a quandary. Unfortunately, the two patients meet shortly after in the hospital's conversation room. They get into a serious discussion on death and afterlife. The social worker happens to walk in and both parties claim her support. What should she do?

Notes

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¹ This quotation has been adapted so as to avoid the use of logical symbolism.

² For an example of the complicated kind of reasoning involved if several purposes or norms are to be implemented in one system see Barth and Krabbe (1982). Ch. III.

³ See D.N. Walton and E.C.W. Krabbe, *Commitment in Dialogue*, to be published. In the next few paragraphs, I summarize the contents of the first chapter of that book.

⁴ Barth and Martens, (1977), Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1987).

⁵ See Hamblin (1970: 180-181) and also "Clincher" [3]. p. 186. There seems to be no other mention in Hamblin's historical survey of 'contradictory' reason or inconsistency as a fallacy.

The 'contradictory' reason fallacy in the Nyaya sutra is presented in a text on controversies (a dialectical setting we may say), so it deserves more attention than I can give it here. From Hamblin's report I'm unable to decide whether 'contradictory' reason could not as easily be classified as a weakness or blunder.

⁶ Johnson and Blair are much concerned with substantiating charges of fallacy. But this seems characteristic more of assaults on weaknesses or blunders than of charges of fallacy (in our sense). In the case of a fallacy (in our sense) it would ordinarily suffice to point out the particular dialectical rule one's opponent has violated. Mackie explicitly admits that it would be a "fallacy to suppose that because your opponent has tried to have it both ways, he cannot have either way—that every part of an inconsistent position must be false." (1967:177). So part of an inconsistent argument may survive in further debate. This again is characteristic of weak arguments.

⁷ In Barth and Krabbe (1982) refutation is pushed

- even further back: to a situation of being in contrary dialogue attitudes, followed by a winning remark of the other party.
- ⁸ A similar point was made by J. Woods in a lecture (1987). Cf. the Woods-Mackenzie discussion in *Argumentation*, Woods (1988a, 1988b), Mackenzie (1988).
- ⁹ This is the case in most systems of formal dialectics, whenever the Opponent holds such a position. Cf. Note 7.
- ¹⁰ For Minimal Dialectics, see Barth and Krabbe (1982).
- ¹¹ See Note 3.
- ¹² Cf. Krabbe (1982).
- ¹³ Technically, other solutions are possible. Cf. Classical Dialectics in Barth and Krabbe (1982).
- ¹⁴ Cf. the quotation from Aristotle at the beginning of this paper.
- ¹⁵ It is argued by Keith Lehrer (1975) that P, S_1, \dots, S_m could be all true, because the book might have contained other statements than it actually does. (Lehrer doesn't frame the paradox in terms of a book, but that does not matter.) Lehrer is right if we assume that the phrase "all assertions that follow" in P refers descriptively to the assertions that follow (different ones in different possible worlds). Here, I have assumed this phrase to be no more than a shorthand for the list of propositions and hence to refer rigorously to them (in every possible world to the actual ones).
- ¹⁶ Makinson (1964), Lehrer (1975), Rescher and Brandom (1980).
- ¹⁷ Cf. Barth and Krabbe (1982: 71): "It is not irrational to lose a discussion... But it is... irrational not to admit that one has lost..."
- ¹⁸ Epicure. Letter to Menoeceus, *ap. Diog. X* 125.

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