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ARGUING FOR LOVE

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1. *Introduction*

'Dialogic argumentation theory – research trends – our claim and methodology'

The rise of interest in the importance of emotion in argumentation over the last decade, has certainly thrown into question the once widespread myth that argumentation is in its essence rational. Within Argumentation Theory, the importance of emotion in argument is highly acknowledged (Walton 1992, 1996, 2000; Plantin 1998; Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2003). More generally, if we look at communication processes, the importance and role of emotive dimensions in discourse practice (Lupton 1998) and more specifically in dialogue (Weigand 1998, 2003) is also claimed.

Whereof a first claim (emotion vs. rationality) can be identified within contemporary research trends on argumentation fostering emotions in spite of the classical prejudice against them (cf. Sapir 1921 as acknowledged in Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000).

Following Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (2000) overview, within the foundations of modern linguistics a classical prejudice against emotions can be identified, cf. Sapir's line (1921). According to Sapir, emotional expressions are of no interest from the point of view of linguistics ("d'aucune intéret au point de vue de la science linguistique") because they are shared by men and animals ("partagées par l'homme avec les animaux"), instinctive and individual and therefore not communicable (2000: 34). This position is largely supported at the time, although some exceptions can be found, such as within Saussure's structuralism, as in the case of Charles Bally, for the importance given to expressive language in so far as it conduits affectional thoughts. According to Bally, natural language is expression of life, life is characterized by emotions and emotions are therefore crucial in language. Consequently, emotions are to be accounted for in linguistics, whose goal is to reveal the natural nature of language, which is at the service of life, not aimed to build syllogisms, round periods, or to bend to the low of alexandrine. Another exception with respect to the general prejudice against emotions is represented by the Prague's functionalists, see Jakobson's expressive function and the idea of gradualism of expressive phenomena. They agree on the distinction between affection vs. emotion and on the tripartition between ideational, volitive and emotional elements. What changes is the importance given to each of these aspects (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000: 35-37). There are those who like Jakobson affirm the supremacy of the cognitive element, those who like Ullmann (1952) refuse to put the different func-

tions of language into hierarchy, and those, the minority, who give a central importance to the affective phenomenon (Van Ginneken 1907; Bally 1935 [1913] and Bréal 1976 [1897]).

Things begin to change in what Kerbrat-Orecchioni refers to as the "medium period": from the 50s, a certain empowerment of stylistics can be identified, together with the distinction between "intellectual meaning" ("sens intellectuel") and "affective meaning" ("sens affective", 2000: 40), the "connotation" and the roots for evaluation. As far as the study on emotional language is concerned, this intermediate period is characterized by developments within the domains of semiotics (see "les passions" of Parret 1986, and the linguistic acts theory). What is referred to as the "contemporary period" is instead characterized by an interactive perspective focussed less on the expression of emotions than on their communication. Excluding the realms of figures and tropes and of the paraverbal semiotic units (elements vocal and prosodic and gestual), research on emotions is nowadays divided into "lexical approaches" (cf. "grammar of feelings", and Ortony's perspective in Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000: 45), "morpho-syntaxical approaches" (cf. Communicative Grammar, cf. Leech and Swartik 1976), "expressive syntax" (cf. diminutive suffixes with affective value, cf. Wierzbicka in Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000: 46), exclamations, and so on and so forth; then we have "pragmatic approaches" (cf. Searle 1979) and finally "interactional approaches" (cf. notion of empathy and the principle of "reciprocity of perspectives", the notion of "involvement", "conflict", and its opposite: the notion of "conversational pleasure" ["bonheur conversationnel", 2000: 51]). This last trend of linguistics on emotions is the one where we collocate our case study here, and it can be furthermore subdivided into cultural variation research, cf. Wierzbicka, and the new interactive rhetoric and the question of politeness, cf. Goffman and Brown and Levinson (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2000: 51-53).

In this respect, claims are also there now against the classical "strong presumption of the essential [...] rationality of human behaviour" and Grice's (1975) Co-operative Principle (Daneš 2003: 10).

More specifically, contemporary researchers on argumentation divide into those who strongly promote the "essential, if not unexceptional rationality of human behaviour" (Daneš 2000: 10), as it is highly represented by Grice's Co-operative principle and the conversational maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manners), and those who, starting from empirical research, claim that "it is no longer feasible to base one's theory of communication [and as a consequence one's description of argumentation] upon unexamined principles of instrumental rationality" (Daneš 2000: 10, also in reference to Marcelo Dascal's work).

Focussing on dialogic argumentation, a similar argument has been also formulated by Weigand, claiming that "[h]uman beings are not only rationally and conventionally acting human beings: [...] amongst the principles guiding action games there are the Principles of Emotion" (1998: 39). For the first claim we have above identified within contemporary research trends on (dialogic) argumentation (emotion vs. rationality, *claim 1*), it can be implemented and specified into a second correlated claim that is: emotion vs. rationality and essential co-operation (rationality ~ co-operation, *claim 2*).

Following this short discussion, a chasm could be drawn for visualizing the variation in the definition of dialogic argumentation along the decades and according to different perspectives, ranging from rational to (vs.) emotional and from co-operative to (vs.) non (forcedly) co-operative, as follows:
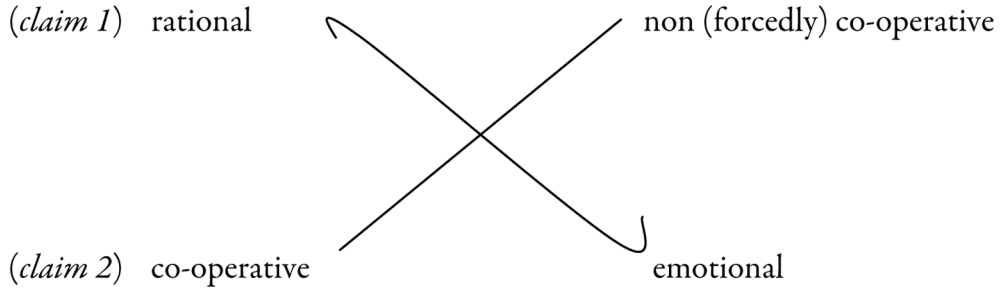
(*claim 1*)   rational   non (forcedly) co-operative

(*claim 2*)   co-operative   emotional

Figure I

As it might be evident from the chasm, what appeared to be rigid theoretical positions are in fact instances of variation within a continuum. And in fact, as Walton (2000) points out, emotional thinking is no longer considered as the opposite of rational thinking, as well as, we would say, non (forcedly) co-operative behaviour does not exclude the possibility of a co-operative behaviour.

In light of the chasm, we claim that the issue has to be reformulated, as it cannot be addressed productively without considering the specific variation characterising the singular case, or action game, at issue. In fact, following Weigand (1998: 37):

> We do not communicate with single speech acts [...] Actions are always actions of human beings, i.e. they are not independent from the acting person. As such they include not only speech acts but also practical actions, not only linguistic but also visual and cognitive means like inferences. The minimal unit therefore has to comprise the complex whole of the acting of human beings who use all their abilities together in order to come [or not, we would say] to an understanding. This whole can only be the dialogic action game with human beings at the centre, which in its minimal form is based on a two-part sequence of action and reaction. [...] The unit of the action game rests on two major principles: the Action Principle and the Dialogic Principle. [...] The AP means that we communicate because we have specific communicative purposes that can all be derived from the general purpose to coming [or not, we would say] to an understanding. Action consists in pursuing purposes by specific means. Communicative action consists in pursuing communicative, i.e. dialogic purposes by communicative means.

In other words, shifting from theory to practice, in order to come to an understanding of the specific argumentative dialogue case at issue, or "dialogic action game" (as described in

Weigand, with the human being at the centre, which in its minimal form is based on a two-part sequence of action and reaction and reflecting both the Action Principle, and the Dialogic Principle), the question has to be reformulated.

More specifically, we claim that dialogic argumentation cannot be defined as essentially co-operative or not, but the chasm between rational vs. emotional and co-operative vs. non co-operative argumentation has to be reconsidered in light of criteria such as genre and context of the communicative setting (*our claim*)[1].

Having exposed our theoretical position, the question raises as to 'Where to look at' in order to better cast light on it. For we take the most representative, and yet the most unexpected case for argumentative dialogue and emotion: if there is a communicative space which is typically emotive, albeit not normally meant to be argumentative, that is 'lovers'[2] discourse', which we shall observe in the American Comedy of Love.

According to criteria of Genre (Swales 1990 and Giannetti 1990), we are then taking as our representative case a specific genre of dialogue, as lovers', within a specific genre of film (the American Comedy of Love), obviously considering film dialogues as a likely representation of real dialogues.

In order to provide quite an extensive account for the Context, we make reference to an integrated framework for analysis contemporarily accounting for the dimensions of dialogue, its participants, their relationship, their goals (action game with respect to the plot and characters' psychological developments).

This integrated framework, at least intentionally inspires our methodology, potentially implying various guidelines for dialogue analysis such as:

a) semantic analysis, which we refer to as '*word and beyond*' level, accounting for keywords and metaphors;[3]

b) pragmatic analysis ('*word and behind*' level), delving into features like assertiveness, implicitness, indirectness and ulterior levels of communication cf. Watzlawick (1967); transactional analysis is also referred to here, for the reference to notions such as 'stroke' (Berne 1964);

c) social interaction analysis ('*dialogue as interaction*'), with reference to various theoretical frameworks, as for instance Goffman's (1967), or the dialogic action game (Weigand 1998), as well as various categories for analysis, cf. proxemic patterns (Giannetti 1990) etc... In other words, here the point at issue is generally revolving around the following question: 'do the characters want to cooperate or not?';

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[1] In this regard, also cf. Ponterotto's definition of conversation (2003): "conversation is a fleeting encounter of multiple perspectives, a fast negotiation of competing goals, a rapid matching of complex positions. Conversation is after all a subtle meeting of minds" (2003: 297).

[2] By 'lovers' we refer here to quite an extensive category of emotionally charged players, who potentially or actually are in some sort of relationship.

[3] For the use of metaphor in film dialogue analysis see Ponterotto (2003, 2005).

d)   plot analysis, or <u>*structural level*</u> cf. film genre. More specifically, for the genre at issue here, which we refer to as "American Comedy of Love", we have identified as characteristic of the genre three stages, such as preconditions, development, solution;

e)   <u>*psychological perspective*</u>, questioning hidden or unconscious desires, identifiable in light of freudian lapses, metaphors, proxemic patterns, eye contact, body language, plot development, cf. semantic, pragmatic, social interaction and plot levels of analysis.

A complete account of the framework we have just outlined is beyond the scope of the present article, and yet we hope that the analysis which follows, albeit limited and not exhaustive, can provide some evidence of the potential of such an integrated methodological framework and possibly cast a bit of light on our main theoretical claim.

2. *Two dialogic cases: analysis and evidence*

We are now going to take two lovers' dialogues between the same characters and within the same film (*The Philadelphia Story*, George Cukor 1940) taken at two very different stages of the plot. As we have already suggested, in the chosen film genre (American Comedy of Love), three plot stages or steps can be identified as characterizing it such as:

1)   preconditions (characters' description, situation description): 'Love' is hidden, characters' desires are unconscious, and their declared goal is another, not Love;

2)   development (action, characters development, characters relations): 'Love' begins to emerge, confusion, difficulties, eventually also discrepancy between goals and desires;

3)   solution and end: 'Love' triumphs, difficulties are over, love and desire find a perfect coincidence, harmony.

Not by chance, the two dialogic cases have been taken respectively from the 'development' and the 'solution and end'. A brief synopsis will precede each case.

As for the first case, evidence of the analysis will be provided through a parallel prospect table (Table I), accounting both for the dialogues extracts (left side) and the analysis evidence (right side). Capital letters and arrows are also used, in the analysis column, referring to the characters' names initials, and their communicative relations. More specifically, straight arrows indicate any sort of relation, where the sense of the arrow refers to who is the sender and who is the receiver of the singular communicative act, when it is identifiable. Diagonal arrows stand for ulterior levels of communication, in correspondence with implicitness. The various moments of the dialogic case at issue have been indicated as 'rounds', which not by chance remind of a boxing match, as this seems to be the communication style of the two main characters here, dialogising one another as two adversaries in a ring.
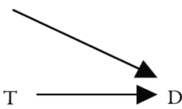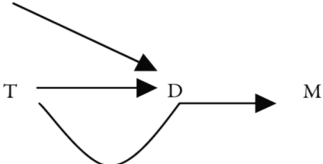
The scene is dominated by a triangle amongst three characters: Tracy, Dexter and Mike, who are related as follows (synopsis to the first dialogic case – plot stage: development).

The eldest daughter of a socially prominent family of Philadelphia, Tracy Lord, having divorced two years before from her first husband C. K. Dexter Heaven, is going to be married for the second time with the self made man George Kittredge.
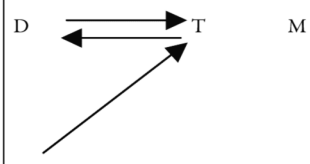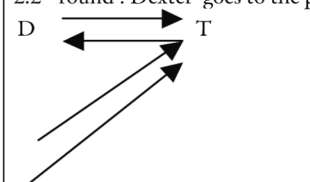
Her childhood sweetheart, sportsman and alcoholic recovering ex husband Dexter returns after an extended absence, accompanied by scandal sheet reporters Macauley "Mike" Connor and Elisabeth Imbrey, who he agreed to accompany 'in disguise' to Tracy's house to prevent Spy magazine to publish some embarrassing information on Tracy's father Seth.

Tracy, though at first has nothing but contempt for Mike, gradually comes to admire him, and the same does Mike, realizing that she is more than just a superficial society girl. After a walk Tracy and Mike are going to have a swim in the pool when Dexter arrives...

Table I – *First dialogic case and analysis*

13 scene dialogue between Tracy and Dexter (and Mike)	argumentation: non co-operativeness Interlocutors: adversaries Indirectness (x says st. to z, which is instead for y) & implicitness (I say something to mean st. else) vs. assertiveness
D-Hello. T-Hello. Fancy seeing you here. D-Orange juice? Certainly. T Don't tell me you've forsaken your beloved whiskey and whiskeys.	1° 'round' T vs. D Supposed to be the subject of the conversation: drinking But the argument is taken from Tracy to hit the adversary on another level T ⟶ D
D-No, I've just changed their color. I'm going for the pale pastel shades. They're more becoming to me. How about you, Mr. Connor? You drink, don't you?	How does Dexter answer to this? By hitting Mike[4] (indirectness: another character is taken as to hit Tracy, Mike, who functions as a metonymy for Tracy – structural analysis) T ⟶ D ⟶ M
- Alcohol, I mean. M- A little. D- A little? And you're a writer? Tsk, tsk, tsk. I thought all writers drank to excess and beat their wives. You know, at one time I think I secretly wanted to be a writer. [...]	

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[4] Having realized that Tracy feels st. for Mike, Dexter answers to Tracy's stroke by hitting Mike.

D-I never saw you looking better, Red. You're getting that fine, tawny look.	2° 'round' D ⟷ T M Supposed to be the subject: Tracy's look
T- Oh, we're going to talk about me, are we? Goody.	
D- It's astonishing what money can do for people, don't you agree, Mr. Connor?	Indirectness: taking also Mike as an addressee; metaphorical meaning: soft vs. harsh. Ulterior level of communication: I say something to mean something else; Starting talking about Tracy's good look, Dexter wants to complain about her harshness in spirit:
Not too much, you know. Just more than enough. Take Tracy, for example. There was never a blow that hasn't been softened for her. Never a blow that won't be softened. It's even changed her shape. -She was once a dumpy little thing. T- I'm not interested in myself now.	D ⟷ T M Tracy's answer is taken by Dexter to hit her again
D- Not interested in yourself? You're fascinated, Red. You're far and away your favorite person in the world. T- In case you don't know - D-Of course, Mr. Connor... she's a girl who's generous to a fault. T- To a fault, Mr. Connor. D- Except to other people's faults.	
For instance, **she never had any understanding... of my deep and gorgeous thirst.** T-That was your problem. D-Granted. But you took on that problem with me when you took me, Red. You were no helpmate there. You were a scold. [...]	Back to the first subject: drinking, metaphorically standing for something other than just thirst
T- Stop using those foul words. What are you trying to make me out as? D-What do you fancy yourself as? T-I don't know that I fancy myself- D- When I read you're gonna marry Kittredge I couldn't believe it.	2.2° 'round': Dexter 'goes to the point' D ⟷ T

That's why I'm here.
How could he even think of it?

T- Because he's everything you're not.

He's been poor, he's had to work, and he's had to fight for everything...

and I love him as I never even began to love you.

Tracy reacts by under-evaluating and criticizing Dexter
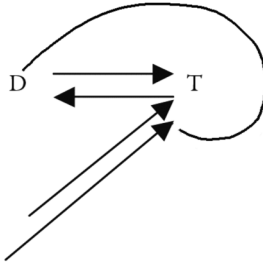

And then again by hitting him

D- Maybe so, but I doubt it.
It's just a swing from me...
but it's too violent a swing.
Kittredge is no great tower of strength.
[...]
But whatever he is, toots, you'll have to stick.

But Dexter answers by denying the accusation and not taking the stroke:
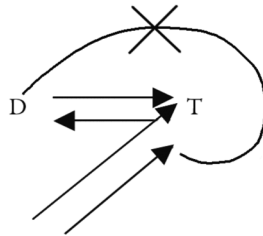

-He'll give you no out as I did.
-I won't require one.
I suppose you'd still be attractive to any man of spirit, though.
There's something engaging about it, this "'goddess'" business...
something more challenging to the male than the more obvious charms.
T-Really?
D-Really.
We're very vain, you know.
"'This citadel can and shall be taken, and I'm the boy to do it.'"

3° round: Dexter recurs to suasion, playing on Tracy's vanity (narcissistic trait – psychoanalytic view)

1   "you'd still be attractive"

2   Because of "this goddess business"

3   "Something more challenging..."

CLIMAX
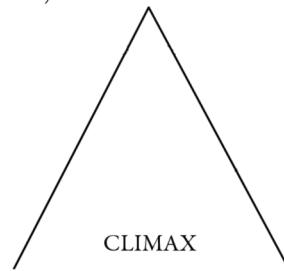
But again the compliments are taken to hit Tracy's attitude as a goddess citadel:

T- You seem quite **contemptuous** of me all of a sudden.
D- No, Red, not of you.
Never of you.
Red, you could be the finest woman on this earth.
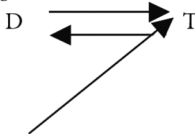
I'm contemptuous of something
inside you
you either can't help or won't try to.
Your so-called "'strength'"...
your prejudice against weakness,
your blank intolerance.
T-Is that all?
D-That's the gist of it.
**Because you'll never be a first-class
human being or a first-class
woman... until you've learned to
have regard for human frailty.**
It's a pity your own foot
can't slip a little sometime...
but your sense of inner divinity
wouldn't allow that.
This goddess must
and shall remain intact.
There are more of you
than people realize.
A special class of the American
female.
"'The Married Maidens.'"
T-So help me,
if you say another word-
D-I'm through, Red.
For the moment I've had my say.
[...]
D-I left you a wedding present. Sorry
I hadn't ribbon to tie it up with.
**[14 scene dialogue between Tracy
and Gorge on 'the True Love']**
G- Look what your friend
considers a wedding present.
T- Why, it's a model of the True
Love.
G- The what?
T- A boat he designed
and built, practically.
We sailed it down the coast of Maine
and back the summer we were
married.
My, she was yare!
G-"**Yare**"? What's that mean?   "Yare": Keyword for the social difference between Tracy and her future
T- It means, uh-   husband George, which is, following Dexter's words, "a difference in
Oh, what does it mean?   mind and spirit"
Easy to handle, quick to the helm.
Fast, bright.
Everything a boat should be...
until she develops dry rot.
Oh, George, to get away.
[...]

As Table I has hopefully highlighted, in the first case argumentation is managed according to non-co-operativeness, interlocutors are like adversaries and their communication tends to be indirect (x says st. to z, which is instead for y) and makes a large use of implicitness (I say something to mean st. else) in spite of assertiveness. In light of our analysis, along with the plot development this projection process will turn out to interest not only the way the characters communicate (indirectness, implicitness), but also the way they more generally relate to one another (Mike evidently functions as an instrumental character for Tracy to come back to Dexter). This is best represented by the model of the True Love, which appears at the end of the first dialogic case, functioning both as a premonitory sign with respect to the plot development and as a transitional object. In this sense, it is interesting to notice the way Tracy looks at the model of the True Love, which is a metonymy for Dexter, the transactional object through which the transition of the desire from hidden and unconscious to conscious and explicit will take place.

Shifting now to the second dialogic case, the scenario opens after the following happenings (synopsis to the second dialogic case – plot stage: solution).

Dexter gives Tracy as a wedding present a model of the True Love, the boat they used for their honeymoon. Tracy, confused by Dexter's and her father's words, gets very drunk at her engagement party and starts kissing Mike after a middle-of-the-night swing at home. The next morning, a very hungover Tracy does not seem to remember what happened the night before, but as Dinah and the others start to remind her, she becomes even more confused, when Dexter arrives...

Table II – *Second dialogic case*

26 scene dialogue between Tracy and Dexter	argumentation: co-operativeness Interlocutors: collaborative lovers (in the final scene they will become specular) Assertiveness
D-Doctor's orders, Red. T-What is it? D-Just the juice of a few flowers. It's a type of stinger. Removes the sting. T-Oh, Dext, don't say that. D-Why not, Red? T-Nothing will. Nothing ever can. I've done the most terrible thing to you. D-To me? I doubt that very much, dear. T-You don't know. D-Maybe I shouldn't, huh? T-But you must. You've got to. I couldn't stand it if you didn't. Dexter, what am I going to do? D-But why to me, darling? Why ask me? Why do I come into it anymore? Aren't you confusing me with a fellow named Kittredge or something? T-George! [...] D-Tell me, what did you think of my wedding present? l like my presents at least acknowledged, you know. T-It was beautiful. And sweet, Dext. D-Yes. She was quite a boat, the True Love, wasn't she? T-Was and is. My, she was yare!	

D-She was yare, all right.
T-I wasn't, was I?
D-Not very. You were good at the bright work, though.
T-I made her shine. Where is she now?
D-I'm gonna sell her to Rufe Watriss.
T-You're going to sell the True Love for money?
D-Sure.
T-To that fat old rum pot?
D-Oh, well, what does it matter? When you're through with a boat, you're through. Besides, it was only comfortable for two people. Unless you want her.
T-No. No, I don't want her.
D-I'm designing another one anyway...along more practical lines.
T-What will you call her?
D-I thought the True Love II. What do you think?
T-If you call any boat that, I promise I'll blow you and it out of the water. I'll tell you what you can call her.
D-What?
T-In fond remembrance of me...the Easy Virtue.
D-Shut up, Red. I can't have you thinking things like that about yourself.
T-What am I supposed to think when I--I don't know. I don't know anything anymore.
D-That sounds very hopeful, Red.
T-That sounds just fine.

Contrary to the first dialogic case, here the co-operation between the two characters is evident at semantic level (e.g. use of terms of endearment), pragmatic level (assertiveness, gestures, proxemic patterns), interactional level (turn-taking) and structural level (the conversation preludes to the solution, where Tracy and Dexter will find a new harmony). That is why no complex graphical schemas are needed to represent their communicative transactions (Table II does not account for a column for the analysis). Even the little shadow of disappointment arousing from the discussion on the name of the new boat is ultimately functional to set out the conditions for a deeper agreement between the two main characters, who will turn out to marry again in the end.

It is interesting to notice that the transactional object, the True Love's model, which functioned before as a metonymy for Dexter, functions again in the second part of this dialogue as to bring the desire to the surface (cf. the transactional object through which the transition of the desire from hidden and unconscious to conscious and explicit will take place) as to 'close the circle' and lead the plot to the solution.

3. *Conclusions*

Despite the limited scope of our analysis, we hope to have cast some light on some of our theoretical claims. To start with, provided that film dialogues are a likely representation of real dialogues, lovers' discourse can be analyzed in terms of argumentative dialogue. Secondly, and most relevantly, our main point should have here emerged in such as conflict vs. cooperation & rational vs. emotional instances are not intrinsic characteristics of argumentative dialogue, to be considered

as conversational maxims, but depend on a number of other factors affecting the characters of the dialogic action game such as their inner motives, their position within the plot and context. More specifically, the characters will be non-cooperative ('irrational') and they will perform non assertive communication (communication is played on ulterior levels: implicitness, indirectness), when they have internal conflicts (psychological dimension) and their motives do not to coincide (AP) – a case which is typically represented in a development stage within a comedy plot. They will be co-operative (rational) and they will perform assertive communication (pragmatic dimension, see Watzlawick) when their internal conflicts are solved out (psychological dimension) and their motives coincide (social interaction, AP) – a case which is typically represented toward the 'solution and end' within a comedy plot. If a framework for argumentation can be applied to love dialogue, the very nature of the genre at issue questions the reasonableness of a fixed alternative between rational and emotional argumentation as, following Weigand (2000: 16) "we are always different human beings interacting in the action game".

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