

**Critical Discourse Moments
and Critical Discourse Analysis:
Towards a Methodology**

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James M. Skelly
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Critical Discourse Moments and Critical Discourse Analysis: Towards a Methodology

1. Aims and Definitions

1.1.

One aim of this paper is to begin to face the problem of how to relate an ethical, political, and critical perspective to the rational-technical means of analysis and description that have been developed by modern linguists. There are those who would say that such a relation is inherently impossible, but it is not the aim of the present paper to pursue the particular philosophical issues involved in such an objection, though it is not intended to imply that they are insignificant. Rather, positive proposals and applications will be exposed for evaluation. What is in fact proposed is a "critical discourse analysis." The following initial points may be made about this project. (i) It is important to distinguish between language capacity and language use. The distinction is crucial because it permits us to avoid the position according to which "language" is a prison house from which we cannot escape. To be sure, there are probably biological limitations on the form of human languages; it is by no means clear that such limitations are of any social, political, or ethical significance. A particular language or variety or register of a particular language may have socially, politically, and ethically significant aspects (primarily vocabulary), but these are not intrinsically inescapable. That is to say, there is nothing about the human language capacity to prevent escape or change, and everything about it to permit it. The prison house of language metaphor is not one that makes sense in the present approach, in which the central concern is not with language capacity and its putative limitations but with language conceived as an institution (or collection of interrelated institutions) produced, reproduced and maintained by and as practice. (ii) It is relevant to link the present approach with the general framework developed by Habermas. In Habermas' terms it is assumed here that critical discourse analysis has as its "knowledge constitutive interest" (a) the understanding of meaning and (b) emancipation and control. In other words, it is in part hermeneutical and in part critical theory. More specifically, Habermas' concept of "validity claims" are taken to be directly relevant. In a speech community any utterance carries the implicit claim that it is intelligible according to the conventions of some linguistic system mutually assumed by speaker and hearer to be operative; any utterance carries the implicit claim that its assertions are truthful by some mutually assumed standard of truthfulness for the context; and any utterance carries the implicit claim that the speaker has the right to perform the speech act, fulfill the speaker role, and impose the hearer role entailed by that utterance. It is these implicit *claims* that make it rational to speak of criticising "language." In short, language is conceived as a form of *action* rather than as a neutral and natural tool about which we can do nothing except

divagate upon its labyrinthine entrapments. Moreover, this view entails that language users, whether individuals or institutions, can be held responsible and accountable. (iii) This approach may be related further to the concept of ideological discourse. Broadly in line with J.B. Thompson (1984). "Ideology" is here taken to be not merely a relatively static belief system (it is that as well), but as a *communicative action type*. This is a type of communication having the characteristics of Habermas' "distorted communication," but often institutionalised. Thompson's concept of ideology involves "modes of operation" that can be put approximately in correspondence with Habermas' validity claims. Thus one modus operandi of ideological discourse involves reification — verbal strategies that lay claim to truthfulness by representing states of affairs as natural, inevitable, and immovable. A second modus operandi of ideological discourse is dissimulation — verbal strategies which seek to maintain the claim to intelligibility while misrepresenting or underrepresenting states of affairs. The third is the legitimizing operation — verbal strategies in their interactive social aspect which maintain the utterer's claim to authority in the representation of states of affairs and which simultaneously maintain relations of power through the characteristics of the verbal interaction. This last factor is the crucial one, since it relates the concept of ideology directly to concepts of power and domination, and to the counter-concepts of freedom and justice. There is thus a chain of linkage from linguistic practices to ethical categories which furnishes a rational ground for the critique of such practices.

1.2

The second (and principal) question that this paper seeks to pursue is the following. Given that any utterance is a highly complex event in which wording, phrasing, and text-organisation fulfill multiple and simultaneous functions, what details is it possible to pin down in a text in such a way that it is rational to make claims about and critiques of ideological or distorted communication? The paragraphs that follow are a description of a variety of linguistic options that arise in such types of communication. There is, however, an important preliminary question, namely: in what kind of circumstances is ideologically distorted communication typically going to arise? A preliminary answer to this question is: in moments of discourse crisis. We shall refer to these as *critical discourse moments* (CDMs). Suffice it here to make two points that would have to enter into a full theorisation of this notion. (i) There may be crisis that has to be verbally managed in the cognitive aspects of discourse. Propositions (e.g., declarations as to policy) that an utterer has committed her or himself to in some sense may be contradicted by an interlocutor, or, more seriously, such propositions may have to be contradicted by their original utterer. In both such types the critical contradiction may be an inferred or inferable contradiction with a belief system. There may also be crisis that has to be managed in the interpersonal aspect of discourse, and these types of crisis may or may not arise from or cause crises of the kind just mentioned. The management of

interpersonal crises in discourse will typically be required if there is some disparity of power and/or status and/or intimacy between interlocutors. In general terms, verbal strategies are available from the formal resources of languages for the construction of solidarity and distance. These phenomena are relatively well known to linguistic pragmatics in the form of politeness strategies, but in a sequel to the present paper the ideological extension of such strategies is investigated.

(ii) The role of CDMs in critical discourse analysis may be circular. What is meant by this is that the critical analysis of discourse, that is, a critical attention to wording, phrasing, etc., may reveal or indicate a critical contradiction of a material nature in the circumstances of the interlocutor; and, equally, awareness of such contradictions might lead the critical discourse analysis to look for the verbal strategies that can be typically deployed to manage them. Ultimately, detailed critical analysis of discourse can provide only the basis of an awareness of possible cases of distortion and domination which can then be confronted only by engaging in a meta-discourse with all interlocutors on the basis of the validity claims discussed above.

2.1. Critical Discourse Moments: Commitment and Consistency

The role of context in the management of international conflicts is often noted in the literature of international politics,¹ and a precise definition is generally taken for granted. Context is a notoriously vague notion; but it is central to the pragmatics of communicative exchange, and has, at least in part, been usefully formalized. A very broad definition will include non-linguistic features (posture, gesture, proximity, dress, setting, point in discourse, etc.) Lyons (1977:574) mentions the following: (i) Each interactant must know (a) their role (culture-specific: doctor, teacher, ambassador, civil servant, etc.) and (b) their status which is a consequence of (a), but which may also depend on sex or age. (ii) The interactants must know their position in space and time. (iii) They must be able to categorise the speech situation in terms of its degree of formality. (iv) They must know which medium (graphic, phonic, telephonic, etc.) is appropriate. (v) They need to know what subject matter suits the setting. (vi) Interactants must know how to make their utterance appropriate to the kind of activity engaged in (e.g., medical consultation, purchasing, negotiating, etc.). Although all such factors are undeniably relevant for our purposes, and in particular (i), we shall content ourselves with referring to them informally when the need arises.

It is possible to define context in a more technical and restricted fashion, which, however, is suggestive for the kind of international context envisaged by non-linguists treating communication in the field of political science (for instance, Franck and Weisband 1972). Gazdar (1979), for instance, treats context as consisting of a set of propositions which are consistent with one another. The purpose of defining context so narrowly is to investigate the notion of

¹ See for instance Franck and Weisband, *World Politics*

comprehension as such. Comprehension is presumed to be feasible only if each participant commits him or herself to certain propositions and remains significantly consistent. Each participant has a "commitment slate" (Hamblin 1971, Gazdar 1979, Downes 1984). The "commitment slate" includes the speaker's own commitments, and additionally the speaker's assessment of the hearer's commitment slate. The role of mutual belief here is evident.

Now this can clearly be transferred to the sphere of international dialogue: states produce utterances which are assigned to a "commitment slate," and are to varying degrees consistent and inconsistent with one another. The same is true of the "dialogue" between a state and its domestic population. Of course "commitments" may be denied, erased, cancelled.

There are two crucial aspects. First, commitment and the ways it can arise and be chalked up. Second, consistency and the temporal or other limits placed on consistency as a requirement. There are matters discussed with formal rigour by Gazdar (1979) and with sociolinguistic applications by Downes (1984). What is neglected is their investigation in relation to distorted communication and ideological discourse.

First, how does commitment arise? We approach this question in two stages. (i) Publicly binding commitments arise by the performance of certain conventional utterances under certain situational conditions. Paradigm examples of such illocutions range from offers, promises, vows, threats, to contractual obligations, treaty undertakings, and the establishing of policies. Typical utterances involve commissive verbs like "promise." Enabling situational conditions involve role and status, (e.g., priest, minister, ambassador). Medium is peculiarly important. Treaties and contracts have to be written up to be binding. In general it is probably the case that one can speak of a pragmatic *degree* of commitment that depends on a degree of contextual entropy: some contexts (viewed as sets of propositions) fade faster than others. Although graphically mediated utterances are culturally granted special significance, the implication of electronic recording, storage, and repetition of phonically mediated utterances could change this and doubtless already has a (so far incalculable) effect on public discourse and accountability. Setting is also essential to the felicitous performance of commissives — treaties cannot be signed, even by the rightly appointed personages, in a bar. And maybe "a walk in the woods" is the wrong setting for felicitous negotiative commissives: at least that may be an important part of the reason why the famous agreement of Nitze and Gromyko in 1984 was so easily disavowed.

The notion of commissive is taken from Searle's (1976) classification of speech acts. While a commissive is the closest to the everyday sense of commitment, all speech acts commit a speaker in one way or another. Searle adds *representatives* (asserting, concluding...), which commit one to the truth of the uttered proposition, *directives* (requesting, questioning...), *expressives* (thanking, welcoming...), and *declarations*, which bring about changes in institutionalised states of affairs (dismissing, naming, sentencing, declaring war, surrendering). They can also be related to

the Quality maxim (cf. Levinson 1983:101). Here we emphasize a feature Serle neglects — namely, the contextual accompaniments which legitimate the speech acts. Speech acts, and thus commitment, depend on social and political institutions.

(ii) The Quality and Quantity maxims commit speakers to knowing that an asserted proposition is true. Thus it is decidedly (cf. Gazdar 1979:46) peculiar to anyone to say, e.g., "This plant manufactures plutonium but that isn't true," or "This plant manufactures plutonium but I do not believe it," or "This plant manufactures plutonium, but I do not have sufficient evidence for saying so." In other words, a speaker uttering these assertions commits him or herself to belief in sufficient evidence. (Of course, it is possible to conceive contexts in which the last two of these three sentences might be uttered non-anomalously, but the point is that special interpretation is required, and if it is so required, the maxim of Quality will explain why.)

But the propositional content of an utterance is not the only proposition to which a speaker may get him or herself committed. We also have to consider inferences of various kinds, including the conversational implications discussed earlier. And we also need to account for the fact that such inferences can not only be withdrawn formally, but can be cancelled (this is known as the "defeasibility" of implicatures). The most rigorous model of what individual speakers are committed to assumes that context is a set of consistent propositions; the commitments of a speaker are the propositions and references that are consistent with propositions previously added to the context. What is added is "all the news that fits" (Gazdar 1979:131). Although Gazdar's account is a formal treatment of immediate intra-sentential commitments, it is suggestive for our own purposes.

In addition to the semantic entailments of a sentence, a speaker's commitment can arise through various types of communicative implication. Theorists frequently discuss: clausal implicature, scalar implicature, and presupposition. Propositions arising from any of these will be added to the commitment slate, provided they are not inconsistent with that slate. Now an utterance may contain contradictory implications, but if so this is resolved communicatively as follows. Inferences are added to the slate in a priority order: (1) entailments, (2) clausal implications, (3) scalar implicatures, (4) background knowledge and (5) presuppositions. If, for example, a scalar implicature contradicts a clausal implicature, then the former is cancelled. Furthermore, presuppositions may simply be cancelled by background mutual beliefs. Consider the following (derived from Levinson 1983:213):

Some of the police, [if not all of them,] beat up the demonstrators, [supposing that's what they were] before the troops moved in.

The clausal implicatures are: (a) it is consistent with all the speaker knows that all the police beat up the demonstrators (arising from the *if* clause) (b) it is consistent with all the speaker knows that

the objects of the beating up were not demonstrators. These are added first, and they block the scalar implicature. The latter type of implicature arises from the existence in the language of "stronger" and "weaker" pairs of lexical items (e.g., *some-all*, *must-can*, *succeed in-try to*). If a speaker utters the weaker of the pair, she or he will implicate that they know the negation of the stronger to be the case. Thus "some police" implicate that the speaker knows "not all the police." But here that is overridden by the clausal implicature. As for presupposition, the definite description "the demonstrators" presupposes that there exists some people properly describable as "demonstrators": in our example this too is defeated by clausal implicature arising from the *supposing that* clause. The *before* clause presupposes "the troops moved in." Whether or not it is added to the contextual slate depends on background knowledge.

To this standard account some results need to be added. First, as we have already noted scalar implicature, like that arising from *some*, may implicate not that the speaker knows something else, but that he does not know, does not have enough evidence, or is neutral (cf. Leech 1983:86). The problem is that this "neutral vision" is not readily distinguishable from the other, especially if the hearer has no access to the situation referred to. Secondly, one can go beyond the problem of formal pragmatic theory and ask what is the communicative or rhetorical significance of this method of being "neutral." Why implicate one proposition and then cancel it? Third, as far as discourse, and especially public discourse is concerned, the absence of clausal implicature is often revealing, since it leaves scalar implicatures and presuppositions as the hearer's responsibility. After all, it is probably only certain situations (on-the-record briefings, statements to a court, etc.), where clausal implicatures may be *required*; moreover, as we have seen, a speaker may retreat from the *implicature* of using *some* by maintaining that it is logically *entailed* by *all*. Finally, in the absence of mutual belief as to situational references (and such absence will be typical of publicly mediated communications) both scalar implicature and presupposition, if not cancelled, will tend to be added to context, i.e., will create context.

It has been argued that for communication and comprehension to occur various types of contextual information are required in a complex of interacting processes (cf. Downes 1984:168ff.). These include: (i) "background knowledge" — a vague and largely uncharted area including the meanings perceived as inextricably bound up with the lexis and grammar of the language and thus often as "natural," organized sets of beliefs about or models of (cf. Johnson-Laird 1983) the physical and social universe; (ii) speaker's and hearer's mutual knowledge concerning (i); and (iii) the utterances of current and previous speech events. Mutual belief and commitment slate are crucial concepts to all three. In addition, it is important to mention methods of mapping the territory of "background knowledge."

2.2. Frames, Scripts and Ideological Discourse

Cognitive scientists in particular have studied varying methods of formulating background knowledge — the set of propositions (or according to Johnson-Laird non-propositional "models") of reality that communicators construct and/or take for granted. Clearly, some such concepts are required if we are to talk of relevance, consistency, mutual belief, etc.; and, indeed, if we are to be in a position to undertake a critical examination of communicational failures, distortions, and conflicts. The most influential theories have been those of Minsky (1975), and Schank and Abelson (1977), Abelson (1973) surveyed in Boden (1973), and Metzger (1980). The precise computational formulation is not here at issue. What concerns us is the notion of relatively stable sets of beliefs (propositions or "models") that have gone by several names ("frames," "scripts," "schemata"). Scripts and frames seem to be required for the comprehension of discourse at the most seemingly mundane level — cigarette lighting, going to restaurants and birthday parties, going on train journeys, entering a room or a house. For example, a *house* frame includes "slots" such as "upstairs," "downstairs," "front door," "back door," "kitchen," "bathroom," etc. (at least in certain specified cultures.) This explains the transition from indefinite to definite article in examples like the following: We came to a house and having knocked on *the* front door went round to *the* back. Frames are thus fixed information stored in memory: "I take a frame to be a static data structure about one stereotyped topic" (Charniak 1975:42). It has been suggested that they are accessed when new situations are encountered (Minsky 1975). Both these notions are suggestive if transferred to the kind of situation with which we are concerned in this book. How are frames established? What determines the choice of a frame where more than one might be chosen? What relationship might there be between old frames and situations that are wholly new? We shall make use of these notions in our account of metaphor.

Frames are part of our social reality; it is likely that they are constantly being reinforced, since not all members of a population can be guaranteed to (mutually) know the same frames. Brown and Yule's (1983:239) example is a pertinent one. In the British political system people require a "voting frame" for local government elections: this will include, *inter alia*, a place to vote at ("polling station"), and a person to register your vote ("clerk"). Hence one receives official postcards containing discourse using definite noun phrases that refer to entities on the frame:

When you go to *the* polling station, tell the clerk your name and address (quoted Brown and Yule 1983:239).

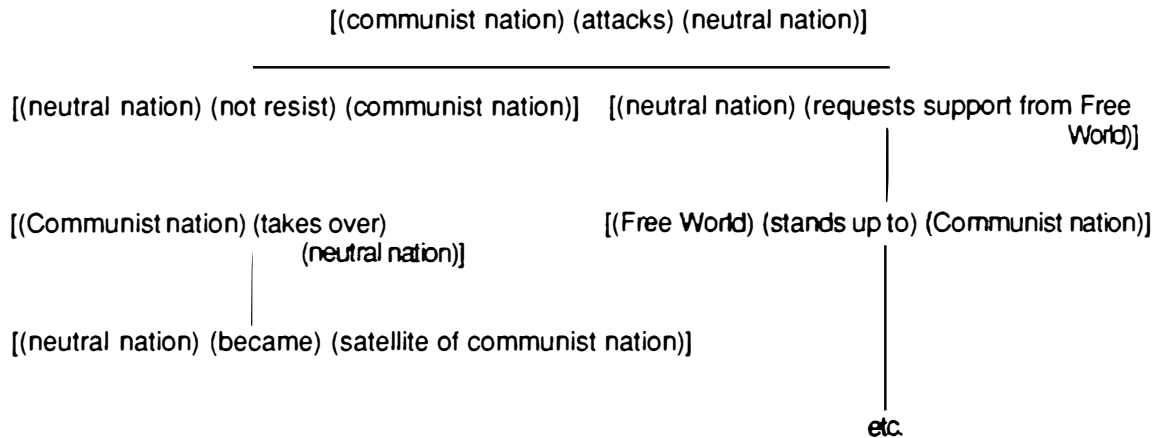
Now Brown and Yule raise as a theoretical problem the argument that if the frames exist that it should not logically be necessary to produce the discourse at all. However, seen on *the* terms of actual social processes, this problem evaporates and turns into an explanation of why frames are

needed. For the use of definite descriptions, for instance, can in fact lead people to infer the existence of a frame. This account would of itself not be sufficient: we need to bear in mind not only frequency, but also the authority of the utterance. In the case of poll reminders, these conditions at least are well illustrated.

"Scripts" is the term used by Schank and Abelson (1977) to deal analogously to the above examples with "event sequences," that is narratives. "Narratives" here may include event-sequences like going to a restaurant (finding a table, ordering, eating, paying, etc.), narratives in news reports (car, crash, injury, ambulance, hospital...). Despite the problems of constraining this theory, there is evidence of the psychological reality of scripts (cf. Brown and Yule 1983:245). The theory points out that people have expectations of what will come next in a discourse: this explains ease and speed of sentence processing. The term "schema" has been used to postulate and designate more abstract knowledge-structures, "ideological scaffolding," as they have been called (van Dijk 1981, Anderson 1977). A "schema" may according to some versions of the theory act deterministically to define experience: an example would be racial prejudice, or the ideological stereotypes and narratives of the cold war. Such schemata would vary between cultures, subcultures, gender, and ideological tendencies. It should be borne in mind that schemata (very similar in this respect to Minsky's frames) have been proposed for the conceptual structures of everyday discourse. Thus "face" would be associated with an obvious schema, and so would an action such as "give." If this is so, then complex words such as "deter" and "deterrent" will depend on complex schemata also (cf. Chilton 1985).

There is an important precedent for the incorporation of frame theory into the study of ideology: Abelson's (1973) "ideology machine." Abelson assumes conflict arises from, or at least is exacerbated by "the human penchant for interposing oversimplified symbol systems between themselves and the external world." Such systems, he believes, represent "ideological oversimplification" of motives and character. In psychological terms, Abelson accounts for such oversimplification by referring to research on cognitive limitations found amongst subjects faced with unfamiliar and competing "noisy" information, with consequent constraints on decision making.

Abelson's ideology machine is a computer simulation of a cold-water ideologue of the Barry Goldwater ilk. The basic vocabulary items contained in the program are assigned to a conceptual category. Nouns include: *communist nations, left-leaning neutrals, Free World Nations, liberal dupes, good Americans, etc.* Verbs include: *attack, subvert, take-over, support, etc.* "Generic events" are constructed from these blocks: e.g. (*communist nation*) (*attack*) (*neutral nation*). Such units can be chained together as "episodes," in a predefined way, that allows for multiply branching outcomes of the initial scenario. For instance:



The episodes can be intricate. Specific combinations are governed by a "master script," which will make certain event types inadmissible (inconceivable, unthinkable). For instance, communist nations never defend neutral ones, Free World nations never subvert neutral nations or attack them. The master script also models the "boundedness" that Abelson believes to be fundamental property of all ideological systems. It has, indeed, been part of nuclear discourse to talk of certain events as "unthinkable." Abelson's Cold Warrior simulation has "master values on its horizon ... beyond which the ship of thought may not sail": the absolute good of Free World victory over communism, and the absolute evil of communist world domination. No event sequence beyond these conceptual termini, which are themselves enshrined in the system beyond question, can be generated — that is imagined (or perhaps, less strongly, we might say "entertained" or given a hearing).

This is an unusual and interesting attempt to model rigid belief. There are, however, some limitations, if one measures the simulations against what one intuitively expects of an account of ideological discourse. First, the frame or script system is rigid in the extreme. True, it is entirely possible that such a model appropriately represents certain types of individual: some people may indeed behave like computer programs, and this is doubtless the case where individuals espouse belief systems. However, the model gives us no inkling as to how frames come to be established in the first place, nor (which is part of the same question) how they can be dispersed and adopted throughout the communication processes of a population. Second, the emphasis on conceptual components does not address the question of the incorporation of such components into the intricate web of natural language discourse. It is here, in the complexity of utterance meanings, that ideology is effected. The "classical Cold Warrior" is an ideal abstraction. In practice Cold War ideology does not have to sound like the output of Abelson's device — though its input may be something like it, and it may well be a function of critical discourse analysis to work towards the exposure of "master-scripts."

If the ideological masterscript cannot be exhibited in its conceptual nakedness, it may none the less be required as a presupposition for the coherent comprehension of discourse. At the same time, it is possible that it is inconsistent with other frames available to, and called up by either speaker or hearer or both. It is at this point that we come to consider, therefore, the place of inconsistency in the production of discourse.

2.3. Critical Discourse Moments: Inconsistency and Contradiction

2.3.1. General Remarks.

The theory of context found in formal pragmatics theory may be considered as a theory about ideal communication. In practice, the role of consistency is, one supposes, somewhat more complex. Not only is context created as the hearer, guided by the principle of relevance, seeks to construct meaning, but consistency can also be constructed as a part of that process. Now the notion of the creation of consistency takes us at once into the ethical sphere, and into the domain of political discourse and action that is our prime concern. Cultures presumably apply some norm of consistent behaviour (verbal and non-verbal) for individual members. Beyond the norm lies behaviour judged on a scale: "unreliable" (ethical judgement one end); "unreasonable," "irrational," "pathological" (psychological judgement at the other extreme). Similarly in the international community, norms of consistency, of the possible limits of policy change, prevail, with a general *expectation* of maximum consistency. Moreover, it is on the basis of consistent behaviour (verbal and other) that mutual belief as to commitment can be established. The importance of this point in international relations is formulated by Franck and Weisband (1972:143): "It takes consistency of strategic conduct over a period of time to develop a proscriptive norm [e.g., refraining from intervention in third-party states] of mutually reciprocal application and to make credible a state's commitment to it."

Consistency in the kind of expanded political pragmatics we are now envisaging thus has a double face — as we saw to be the case for the maxims of the CP discussed earlier. On the one hand it is presumed for comprehension as such; on the other, it is an ethical norm that may be infringed overtly or covertly. Indeed, it is plausible to consider it as a special case of Grice's Maxim of Relation: "be relevant." The concept of relevance itself has been the subject of much discussion (see Sperber and Wilson 1982, Leech 1983, Downes 1984). We shall not enter into the theoretical debate, but shall propose a submaxim of Relation:

make your discourse contribution consistent with your previous utterances.

Perhaps it will be necessary to specify some limit to the discourse span within which the requirement is in force (cf. Hamblin 1971). The submaxim of consistency would generate

implicatures, if infringed under suitable conditions, or a demand for "repair" — retraction, explanation, and so forth in consecutive stages of a conversation. This last point is important, since it will lead speakers to anticipate demands for repair. This in turn will lead to pre-emptive measures realized in linguistic manipulations on various levels. The requirement of consistency will govern the construction of discourse meanings in such a way as to minimise or obscure contradictions of various kinds. We have in mind, therefore, cases of inconsistency which neither give rise to implicature, nor are defeasible in the fashion formalized by Gazdar, nor are defeasible by any other contextual factors. What we have in mind are inconsistencies that can be said to exist at one level, but which are obscured at another. It is one of the aims of the present paper to examine ways in which this phenomenon occurs, taking the special case of discourse on power bloc nuclear politics: it is, of course, our belief that inconsistency and contradiction is particularly characteristic of this domain. In a later chapter we examine in particular the role of euphemistic and metaphoristic discourse.

Contradictions may arise in various ways. Lapse of memory is one. Change of mind or policy is another. Generally the latter requires to be declared; if it is not, and it is queried, declaration may have to be supplied by the speaker, together with reasons. Most interesting, however, contradiction will arise when the propositions of an utterance are inconsistent with the speaker's prior commitment slate in the same or some previous speech event. The speaker will have to compute the chances of the hearer remembering, and if the chances are rated high the speaker will have to explain or obscure or in some way achieve coherence. Contradiction will also arise if the hearer's beliefs about the state of the world do not coincide with those of the speaker: in which case the speaker may take similar measures, if she or he does not choose (or the medium does not allow for) overt argumentation. An important kind of contradiction arises when utterances imply meanings inconsistent with value frames either of the speaker himself or of the hearer, or both. In such cases we have the psychological phenomenon of denial. In all cases what is at issue is not merely the creation of context but the creation of context that can be perceived as coherent; it is precisely such strategies that are activated in the management of critical moments in discourse.

2.3.2. Specimen analysis

In the following informal analysis of a sample of official discourse on nuclear weapons, we shall use some of the ideas developed above as working tools. To understand what is going on in the process of meaning production we need to refer at least to the following:

- (a) the institutional speech setting and its participants;
- (b) the potential patterns of mutual belief and expectation;
- (c) the 'frames' that can be potentially evoked as a constituent of context; and
- (d) the syntactic and discursive management of inconsistencies.

Two days before the resumption on January 16, 1986, of the Nuclear and Space Weapons talks in Geneva, a "preview" was given at a National Press Club Briefing in Washington. This is an institutionalized setting which gives privileged platform to an official spokesman — in this case the director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Kenneth Adelman. The spokesperson reads a prepared text, though will answer questions from journalists. The journalists may or may not be critical (share the official's beliefs on certain matters), but will be relatively well informed, and attentive to detail. Moreover, this is a "soft" communicative megaphone to the international community — a diffusion point. In addition, hard copy of the prepared statement will reach other recipients (such as the present authors!). A variety of reception settings are thus spawned.

Clark and Marshall (1981:148) suggest that in order to make successful definite references speakers must be possessed of "a memory that is organised around diary entries and around communities in which knowledge is universally shared" (p. 58). People carry round models of their addresses, and switch data bases appropriately in order to operate in a shared discursive universe. One crucial way definite reference can be brought off is by accessing shared knowledge deriving from community membership. This idea is straightforward enough for one individual talking to one other individual by turns. But what of Mr. Adelman's situation and similar ones, if there is no certainty as to the knowledge base? This is an open question, but two points may be made. One is that very general community based frames of various kinds will be appealed to; and the other that context will be specified intra-textually. In Clark's and Marshall's terms "repair" of unsuccessful reference will be anticipated by specification in the text, which is a form of the creation of context. In view of these factors, one can expect such texts to be carefully constructed. The spokesperson himself, is, of course, largely a vehicle for the voice of a group (policy makers, state department, etc.), and represents an end point or rather transition point in a communicative process that has as a prior stage numerous verbal interactions in committees, lobbies, and so forth where verbal acts are inextricably interwoven with power and personality.

Adelman's statement touches on many topics and performs many acts of importance in international dialogue. For instance, it seeks to place the Soviet negotiators in the position of respondents in the turn-taking system of international proposals, offers, bids, etc.:

The ball is in their court. The Soviets owe us a complete response....

The *responsibility*, answerability of the Soviets is then established by various discursive means:

If we have been compelled to live with a competition in weapons in this century, it arises from the Soviet habit, even compulsion, of stirring the world's troubled waters.

Let us focus, however, on contradiction, that is on a CDM at the cognitive level of discourse organisation. Adelman can safely assume mutual belief as to the way the U.S. administration has conducted nuclear diplomacy up to 1984-5. What he, like his masters, cannot be so sure of is that there is mutual belief — consensus — as to the nature of the (so-called) Strategic Defence Initiative. The Soviet negotiators had demanded its abandonment, and there were its domestic critics also to consider. There was in fact, because of SDI policies, a degree of uncertainty, contradiction and dissensus in the international communicative setting on the central notion of deterrence, with its established doctrines of mutual assured destruction and flexible response. This, despite the spectacle of personal "conversation" between Reagan and Gorbachev in November 1985, and is a discursive crisis — a recurrent CDM.

The reasons for this were not merely the credibility, or technical feasibility of SDI, but the question of its consistency or inconsistency with established deterrence discourse, with its legitimisation in scripts and frames of various types. On the one hand, SDI was officially declared to provide for the end of deterrence (and its discourse); on the other it had to be presented as continuous with it, to avoid destabilisation. If it could be presented as continuous with deterrence doctrine, moreover, it would weaken the Soviet case that there was a major "break." That it is continuous with deterrence, indeed integral with deterrence, was (Spring 1986) the official doctrine.

The contradictions were a publicly known part of public discourse from late 1984. The Thatcher government's initial public criticism of SDI was patched up, but through 1985 the American and European media carried dissenting discourses. The *Wall Street Journal* (2 January 1985) published criticisms in the authoritative voice of Hans Bethe, undersigned by other eminent scientists. The two policy research panels appointed by President Reagan in 1983 came out with reservations, and one indicated that SDI would not render deterrence theory obsolete as the president claimed, but should be incorporated into it. Moreover, the *New York Times* in a leading article early in the year pointed out four contradictory kinds of discourse. It is clear that the contradictions arose from the need of the US administration to address different audiences — sectoral interests within the US, and European governments. This was the nature of the CDM. The president's aides were left defending the view that SDI was the only moral defence in a nuclear age in the major public media arenas. They were left legitimizing SDI through discursive deployments. These, and other discourses provide the background to the text discussed below.

This text, (part of which is reproduced below) represents one way in which the discursive crisis was managed during this period. The method used is as follows. First, all propositions that are stated explicitly are listed. Second, all propositions are listed that are "In addition" gives the passage separate and possibly subordinate status relative to surrounding text; this bracketing, as it were, is completed by the "still...", which returns us to the themes projected as foreground. We

now consider the way propositions are assumed in or added to the context. It will be noted that we have to take into consideration not only propositions contained in earlier parts of the text, but as it were those in the air as a result of recent utterances believed (mutually or otherwise) to be known about.

In addition to expressing our concerns about regional conflicts and about human rights, the president took the opportunity at the summit to set forth in detail his vision of a future free from the shadow of nuclear apocalypse. Since the dawn of the nuclear age, we have taken two paths to deal with the nuclear problem — deterrence through offensive strength and arms control through negotiations. Despite our unilateral efforts to maintain deterrence and attempts to negotiate a stable nuclear balance at lower levels, the Soviets' have shown a lack of restraint in both offensive and defensive programs and a generally unconstructive approach to arms negotiations. These Soviet actions, if not countered or corrected, will undermine deterrence.

While still — like his predecessors — pursuing the two paths of deterrence and arms control, President Reagan has added a third path. This president is the first to create hope, through SDI, of a future in which our security rests not upon the threat of nuclear retaliation but rather on the ability to defend against potential attack. If our research yields positive results, it offers the possibility of reversing the dangerous military trend by moving to a more stable basis for deterrence and providing new and compelling incentives to the Soviet Union to negotiate deep cuts in nuclear arsenals. If a new strategy based on effective defences proves feasible, then our security, for the first time in the nuclear era, would not be held hostage to the threat of nuclear devastation, Soviet rationality, or the uncertain outcome of arms control talks.

If successful, we would hope that the Soviets would travel with us from a world dominated by weapons of mass destruction to a world secured by the technologies of defence. Even in the short run, SDI holds out the promise of improving deterrence by removing the capacity of the Soviets to benefit militarily from a first strike — something that we have long tried to do through arms control, and so far failed.

Still, a legitimate question remains: what is the purpose of this kind of summit exchange? What good does it do to have President ...

What follows is a list in order of occurrence of the propositions (Pk) that seem to be expressed in this text in one way or another.

- P1 : we have concerns about regional conflicts
- P2 : we have concerns about human rights
[presupposition triggered by *in addition to*]
- P3 : there was an opportunity to, etc.
[presupposition by definite article or definite reference in shared frame: summits have opportunity slots]
- P4 : the president has a vision of a future free from the shadow
- P5 : The president set forth his vision of a future free from the shadow, etc.
- P6 : there exists a shadow of nuclear apocalypse

[presupposition by definite article of definite reference to shared frame including metaphors]

- P7 : there exists a nuclear age
[presupposition; shared frame on human history]
- P8 : the nuclear age had a dawn
[presupposition; shared frame metaphor, and definite reference to "beginning" slot for epochal frames]
- P9 : We have taken two paths
- P10 : there have been and still are no more and no fewer than two paths
[possible implicature by tense and assertion of "two paths;" "paths" initiates a metaphorical frame; the potential implicature is cancelled by entailments of P27 below]
- P11 : there is a nuclear problem
[presupposition by definite article, or definite reference to shared knowledge base; the latter is suggested by the quote marks]
- P12 : we have made efforts to maintain deterrence
[presupposition from "despite our"]
- P13 : we have not succeeded [in maintaining deterrence]
[scalar implicature by assertion of weaker of pair equivalent to *try — succeed*]
- P14 : we but not the Soviets have made efforts
[inference from "unilateral" together with background shared knowledge]
- P15 : deterrence exists and has existed up to speaking time
[presupposition from *maintain*]
- P16 : we have made attempts to negotiate, etc.
[presupposition from "despite our"]
- P17 : we have not succeeded in negotiating, etc.
[scalar implicature of P12]
- P18 : there is no stable balance at lower levels
[presupposition from *negotiate* — a change of state verb here]
- P19 : (a) the Soviets have shown a lack of restraint, etc.
(b) the Soviets have shown a generally unconstructive approach, etc.
- P20 : P11 (a) and (b) will undermine deterrence
- P21 : Soviet actions are not being countered or corrected
[implicature from negative denying positive proposition]
- P22 : it is possible the Soviet actions will be countered, etc.
[implicature from conditional]
- P23 : someone is not countering but may counter
[someone from agentless passive]
- P24 : We must counter the Soviet actions
[inference derived from frame involving: nuclear problem, deterrence as solution, therefore maintain deterrence]

- P25 : the president is pursuing two paths ...
there have been and still are no more and no fewer than two paths
[scalar implicature contradicted at P27]
- P26 : President Reagan has added a third path
- P27 : there were previously two paths but this has now changed
[entailment of *added a third*; since entailments are added first to the commitment slate,
the contradictory implicatures of P25 and P10 are now cancelled]
- P28 : the president is the first to create hope of a future, etc.
- P29 : there exists a threat of nuclear retaliation
[presupposition of *the*]
- P30 : there exists an ability to defend
[but this is cancelled by clausal implicature from embedding as complement of *hope* as
opposed, e.g., to *know*]
- P31 : our security rests not on ... but on ...
[cancelled as complement of *hope*, as above]
- P32 : it is possible that our research reverse the dangerous military trend
- P33 : it is possible that our research not reverse, etc.
[scalar implicature from assertion of *possible* vs. *certain*]
- P34 : there exists a dangerous military trend, etc.
[presupposition from definite article; or definite reference to shared belief]
- P35 : (a) our research moves to a more stable basis for deterrence
(b) our research provides new incentives, etc.
[presupposition but cancelled by embedding as complement after "possible," at P33]
- P36 : (a) it is possible that our research yield positive results
(b) it is possible that our research not yield positive results
[implicatures of conditional clause]
- P37 : (a) it is possible that our research offer, etc.
(b) it is possible that our research not offer, etc.
[implicature of conditional clause; P33 and P34 are thus doubly hedged]
- P38 : (a) it is possible a new strategy, etc., prove feasible.
(b) it is possible a new strategy not prove feasible.
[implicature from condition *if* clause]
- P39 : (a) it is possible our security would not be held hostage, etc.
(b) it is possible our security would be held hostage, etc.
[implicature from conditional clause]
- P40 : there exists a nuclear era
[presupposition from *the*; or definite reference to frame; also a deictic component relating
to time now]
- P41 : (a) our security is held hostage to the threat of nuclear devastation
(b) our security is held hostage to Soviet rationality

[the negative implicates the corresponding positive preposition, together with modal *would*]

- P42 : there is a threat of nuclear devastation
[presupposition of *the*; consistent with P38 (b) and P39 (b)]
- P43 : there exists Soviet irrationality
[this seems implicated by "hostage to Soviet rationality" in a way we cannot go into here]
- P44 : arms control talks have uncertain outcomes
[presupposition of *the*; but also a definite reference to claim of unpredictability of talks made at the beginning of the text]

If this account seems complex, it is because the conceptual structure of the text supports a web of meanings. The point of the exercise is: (a) to make non-salient and entailed propositions explicit and inspectable, (b) to enable the analyst to locate contradictions (CDMs) internal to the text and make these inspectable also, and (c) to suggest the ways in which such a text might actually be processed by its listeners. It is worth drawing out a few general conclusions which an analysis of this type can give rise to.

First, definite references (*the* and proper names) are revealing. They have a dual aspect — they can be seen as references to entities in shared belief bases, if such exist; or they can potentially create such bases via presupposition if they do not.

Secondly, some of these bases can be seen as frames involving relatively stable conceptual structures, and often metaphorical dimensions. This is the case for "summit," but less obviously (though more importantly) for "the nuclear age," the components of which are taken for granted. They include mutual belief in a historical epoch ("the nuclear age") with a beginning ("dawn"). The metaphor "dawn" carries its own potential implicatures, though they are not actuated here: dawn is the coming of light (good), the ousting of darkness; it is a natural phenomenon for which humans have no responsibility. Dawn, of course, gives way to high noon, to dusk and sunset. It is not clear that SDI is that dusk, though that interpretation is there for a hearer to draw out. The nature and functioning of metaphors is a topic that is examined more closely elsewhere.

Third, the invocation of this frame serves to establish consistency and continuity with known and established frames of deterrence and arms control in which the blameworthiness of the Soviet Union is taken for granted.

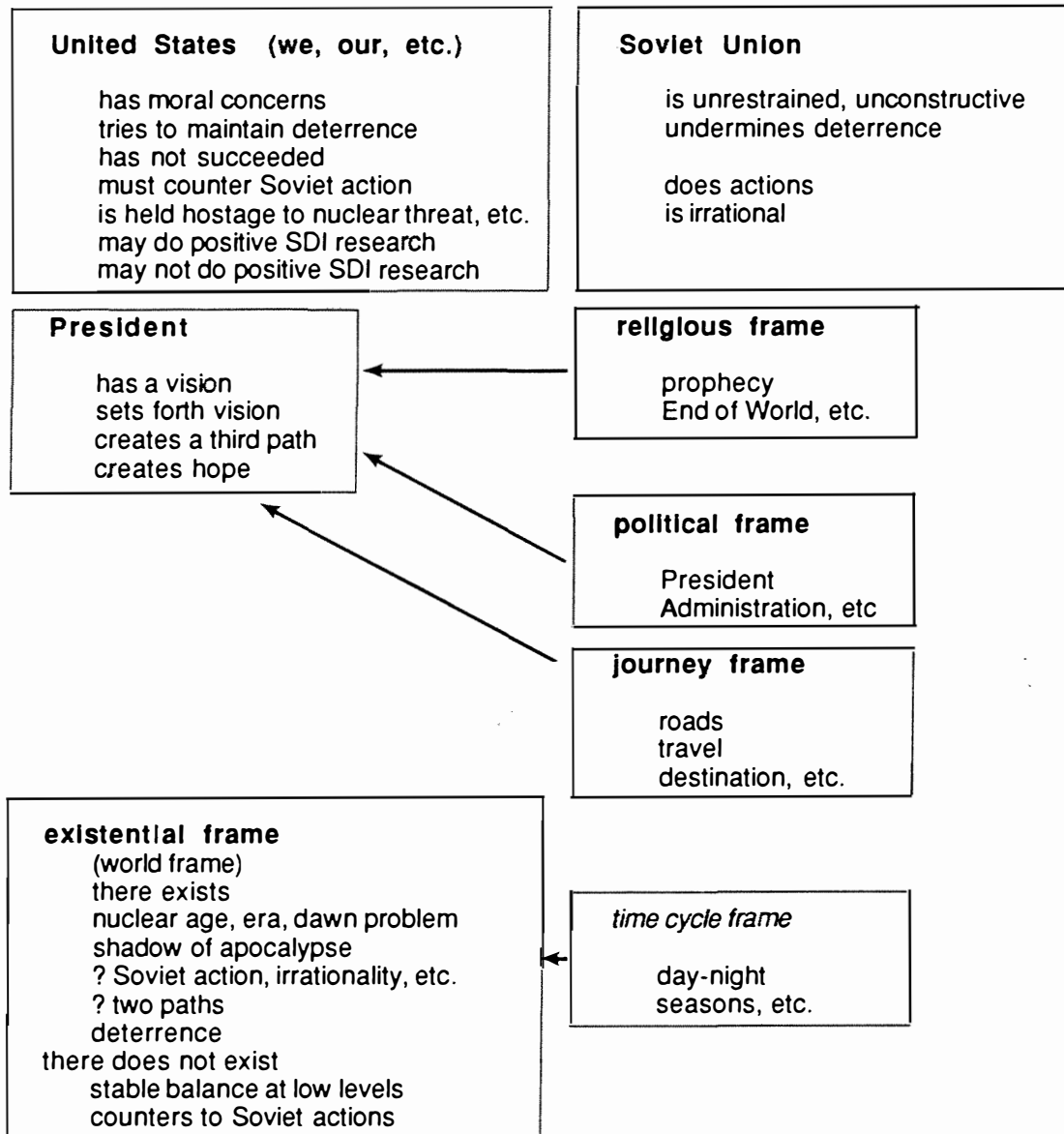
Fourth, the crucial contradiction (SDI versus deterrence) is handled by implicature and metaphor. The existence of two paths is first conceded and accepted, in association with the nuclear epoch frame. Central — almost literally so in this passage — is the term *added* which resolves contradictory propositions. This is not rational argument about strategy, it is strategic rhetoric. The path metaphor is in part a spatial metaphor for temporal duration (the path traces out the time from the nuclear dawn), and carries its own implications which may be transferred. Paths may be long, but they usually arrive at a destination, completion, end of things; to travel them

implies purpose, but not the attainment of a goal (cf. the "twin-track" metaphor). The conceptual advantage of presenting policies as paths are several. Note first that they are "paths to deal with 'the nuclear' problem." To take a path does not entail to reach the destination. (Further, "dealing" with a problem is not to seek or to find a solution.) There may be scalar implicature here: cf. *seek, find; go, arrive; try, succeed; path, goal*. More important, several paths may lead to the same end without interfering with one another; policies, on the other hand, may lead to the same end but, because they involve complex actions, contain irreconcilable elements. Hence, to simplify by speaking of paths reduces potential contradiction.

Finally, the introduction of conditionals and modals in the second paragraph is striking, and premits this official voice to hold contradictory propositions simultaneously in place. This is the precarious balance required, not only to reconcile the internal contradictions of the SDI policy but to hold the conflicting sets of beliefs of different audiences in abeyance.

The mere listing of propositions, however, is probably rather a crude guess at the way contexts are built up. It seems far more plausible to assume that some structuring is carried out when a person processes a discourse, just as it seems more plausible to think that the discourse producer her or himself stores such proposition in some structured fashion, rather than in the form of a complete list. It is by no means clear that one should assume that either the producer or the consumer has a mental representation of all the propositions. All I am suggesting is that the discourse makes them available for hearers, and attributable to the producer of the discourse.

There is a further step that one can take with this kind of analysis, one that is more in line with the theory of "mental models." According to this view of the processes whereby texts are processed and comprehended, listeners construct meaningful and self-consistent representations on the basis of the semantic cues provided by the text (cf. Johnson-Laird 1983). There is a logical way to proceed for heuristic purposes. The propositions can be unpacked into argument and predicate form. The propositions can then be sorted into sets. The sets can then be related by semantic or logical or other criteria deriving from background knowledge. The result is a kind of conceptual map in which overt and implied attributes of key actors and entities can be sorted, and in which the role of frames and metaphorical transfer can be made explicit. The following is an attempt to do this, glossing somewhat and summarising.



Whether or not a mental model anything like this sketch is actually built by people processing this text, the fact is that it seems to be supported by the text. It is available, justifiable, and more important, attributable to the producer of the discourse, to whom also can be attributed responsibility. Three final points are worth making. First, it is not clear whether some propositions should be seen as existential propositions, or predications of attributes to entities. The examples in question are significant: Soviet "actions," the "two paths" pursued by the president. Probably the answer to this query is that anyone expending effort in building a mental model will predicate having two paths (i.e., policies) of the president, and doing actions of the Soviet Union, but that processing at a "shallower" level may posit actions and paths as simply existent entities in the

world. If so the strategic advantages of the discourse presentation that gives rise to such processing are obvious.

Second, frames. Some, like the state of existent affairs in the world and deterrence seem taken for granted or given for granted. Others, like the religious frame, etc., on the right of the diagram, are involved in a metaphorical relationship with certain other sets of propositions. A political institutions frame will be triggered by the setting and other cues. Religious and other frames are triggered by linguistic cues ("vision," etc.), and can be thought of as "superimposed" on the political institutions frame.

Thirdly, notice that if there is indeed a coherent structure something like this available to the discourse producer, its relationship to the linear sequencing of the text is of some interest. That relationship is rather like the relationship between "story" (characters, relationships between characters, events, and relationships between events, *in abstracto*) and "plot" (staging, presentation in flashbacks, etc., pace, scene changes, etc.). It can be seen as a way of fragmenting an underlying ideological model, and as a method of dramatic incorporation into cultural life.

In this paper we have been oriented towards cognitive aspects of discourse — towards what people producing or consuming discourse know or may come to know.

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