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For the Sake of Argument

Practical reasoning and credibility in commentary journalism

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## ABSTRACT

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This analysis explores the credibility of commentators by analysing the argumentation they present in support of their standpoints, views and opinions. The pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation and its concepts of fallacy and strategic manoeuvring are used to identify argumentation strategies and evaluate their quality in contributing to public debate. Credibility is explored through the concept of Aristotle's ethos, where the commentary is understood as a place for gathering. Giving ethos this primordial meaning allows focus on the commentary as a contribution to public life, making it a necessity that commentators express arguments and ideas. The normative analysis reveals that commentators – albeit exceptions do exist – mainly argue in ways that violate the ten rules placed by the pragma-dialectic theory as the ideal in discussions. Pundits often do little to provide readers with the ability to try their assertions and check the probability of their claims. Instead, ambiguous phrases, assertive language and faultily applied argumentation schemes hide explanations, reasoning and analysis. The definition of ethos as dwelling causes the occurrence of fallacies and lack of sound argumentation to influence the credibility of pundits negatively.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Aspiring to one day become a journalist excessively loaded with the indispensable quality that is credibility, nothing seemed more beneficial than dedicating my master project to getting to the bottom of this elusive concept. My fascination for the commentary and the pundit's expert status made the commentary seem like the most appropriate place to start. And even if the true quality of this thesis might not fully manifest until my credibility is tried in a future newsroom, it is of course my hope that it brings some theoretical value to others in the meantime.

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He seems very solid, not just because of his dialect. The entire man instils trust. But he is somewhat invisible, he could have been more forward.

-

She has simply lost her drive (“spruten”) and has become very invisible.

-

She is the governments most promising. A weighty state secretary in a light State Department.

-

She is weak, very weak. As invisible as a run-away salmon.

*Political commentators Arne Strand and Stein Kåre Kristiansen reflect on the government's performance in their political talk show Kristiansen & Strand on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2011. In these excerpts, they sum up the political year of Sigbjørn Johansen (Ap), Minister of Finance, Kristin Halvorsen (SV), Minister of Education, Rigmor Aasrud (Ap), Minister of Government Administration, Reform and Church Affairs, and Lisbeth Berg-Hansen (Ap), Minister of Fisheries and coastal affairs<sup>1</sup> [my translation]*

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<sup>1</sup> The excerpts are taken from an article available online: <http://politisk.tv2.no/nyheter/her-er-kristiansen-og-strands-karakterer-til-regjeringen/> [last viewed 12.12.2011]





## 1 INTRODUCTION

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Presenting their interpretations of reality as correct, true and of political importance, political pundits live and die by credibility. If evaluations, interpretations and forecasts are perceived to come no way close to reality, why should anyone bother listening? Today, political commentators comprise a relatively small elite group of journalists who enjoy elevated status and influence. Becoming more prevalent through the use of by line pictures and representing an increasing total share of journalistic output, commentators have become political celebrities of their publications and media outlets. This prioritisation has given pundits a redefined role as expert interpreters, predictors and judges (Allern 2010). According to critics, commentators now place emphasis on opinions and speculation based on subjective inclinations, causing a lack of sound argumentation and substantial analysis. At the heart of this prevailing pessimism around commentary journalism is the notion that the pundit's focus is his or her personal evaluations of politicians and the process of political events, rather than the core questions and substance of an issue – where their focus should be concentrated. This is often explained as a journalism of process (McNair 2000a) or cynicism (Capella and Jamieson 1997, Kock 2009). Today's pundits hold exclusive knowledge and tacit understanding of our society and its actors, and they give the audience what they are believed to want: a trustworthy and interesting personality, bringing insight on the issues that matter most. Credibility is therefore at the forefront of any pundit's message.

The manner in which trustworthiness is expressed can be regarded as the ethos of the commentator's discourse. In classical rhetoric, ethos is related to the credibility and character of the speaker. Simply put, it is an argument from authority, telling people to believe this person because he or she is the kind of person whose word you can trust. An extended ethos can also encompass collective acts, and commentary articles can be conceptualised as gathering places, rather than mere texts to be read (Hyde 2004, Halloran 1984). This notion of ethos places greater emphasis on the classical elements of the concept, pointing to the public life lived in the places of habituation and dwelling. Credibility can therefore have a dual meaning, comprising both the individual and the collective (Halloran 1984:62). Within this notion of the rhetorical ethos is a relationship to ethics, where ethical character becomes relevant to the effectiveness and quality of

the communicated message. Central in the ethical groundwork of journalism is its role in democratic society, where particular emphasis is placed on a journalist's contribution to public life. Today, political commentary has become the vanguard of political journalism (Allern 2001a:116). And just as debate about political choices and actions is the lifeblood of democracy, political commentary becomes central for the legitimacy of journalism. When ethos is understood as dwelling, the commentary article as a gathering place for sharing ideas is placed at the heart of the political pundit's ethos. Thus, criticism directed at the commentary genre and pundit for neglecting argumentation seems detrimental to the credibility of both. Because the communal ethos of journalism will always be the basis for what information newspaper readers will accept and believe, it appears fruitful to explore the connection between argumentation and ethos in the pundit column. To that end, the following question is explored:

*What characterises the argumentation and ethos in the commentary columns of Norwegian star commentators?*

The answer to this question is sought through an argumentation analysis that incorporates the perspective of rhetoric. A method is therefore built on the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation; a theory that especially in its more recent developments has acknowledged rhetorical aspects in a framework for evaluating argumentation. The pragma-dialectical approach unifies a normative ideal of discussions with an empirical description of argumentation as it develops in everyday discourse. This critical-normative approach allows a distinction between what is believed to be sound argumentation and the arguments worthy of criticism, which should be avoided. A similar normative function can be recognised within the tradition of new rhetoric and rhetorical criticism, where a speaker must be *given* the right to speak for rhetoric to fulfil its function in public society (Isager 2009:272).

According to the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, resolving a conflict of opinion is the goal to which interlocutors in a discussion must aspire. This consensus-ideal is the main point of departure for criticism directed at the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation, as it is said to be too preoccupied with reaching an agreement on issues of conflict. Sure enough, political commentary journalism is a type of

communication where the goal is not to solve conflicts. This apparent discrepancy between communication in practice and the pragma-dialectical ideal of the critical discussion could perhaps help explain why applications of the pragma-dialectical theory on argumentative discourse remains scarce – even though the theory has become central in the discipline of argumentation analysis. To be clear, the developers of pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation mention editorial content in newspapers as an example of discourse that is well fitted with the ideals of the critical discussion (Eemeren and Houtlosser [E&H]<sup>2</sup> 2009:ii). Nevertheless, trying the pragma-dialectical perspectives on journalistic output can hopefully have the added bonus of contributing to the discussion of how well the pragma-dialectical method is suited for evaluating the quality of rhetorical argumentation in practical communication. In this respect, I will argue that the critique against the theory seems to be largely based on misconceptions about its principles. Rather than being concerned with settling disputes, the pragma-dialectical model can be utilised as a heuristic tool to identify the elements that have a function in the public resolution process and those who do not.

This thesis employs a qualitative text analysis to explore the argumentation and ethos of the three Norwegian pundits Marie Simonsen in *Dagbladet*, Arne Strand in *Dagsavisen*, and Harald Stanghelle in *Aftenposten*. I will study a random sample of ten chronologically selected commentaries from each of the three. The endeavour is to catch the essence of everyday commenting without seeking any particular political scandal or case study – which is often done in explorations involving commentary journalism (Enli 2009, Wold 2010, Nedrestøl 2010). All three chosen commentary writers qualify as star commentators, as they function as journalistic celebrities, appearing in several media platforms aside from their own. At the outset, developments within commentary as a journalistic genre is explored further and the concept of credibility is defined more thoroughly.

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<sup>2</sup> Because Frans H. van Eemeren's works are so frequently referred to in this thesis, the references will be abbreviated. Eemeren's publications with Rob Grootendorst has the similar short reference of E&G.

## 2 COMMENTARY JOURNALISM

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### 2.1 The political star commentator

While traditional news is expected to be objective, neutral and freed from personal opinion, commentary journalism prescribes evaluations, reasoning and analysis based on the personal beliefs of the journalist. Serving a unique function in journalism (Enli 2009:121), commentary represents “a source of opinion-formation and opinion-articulation, agenda-setting and agenda-evaluation” (Nimmo and Combs 1992:8). The genre provides criticism through rational reasoning, contextualising communication and giving perspective (Knapskog 2009:289). Many times, commentators take on a role as spokespersons for their newspapers, becoming *star commentators* (Enli 2009:134). One sign of this is how commentary journalists operate in a plethora of media platforms. As they expand the number of areas they are able to organize, their status as journalists is perceived to be so high it functions as expertise in itself (Arnoldi 2005:52). To illustrate, commentator and political editor in the newspaper *Aftenposten*, Harald Stanghelle, is regularly appearing in television news and debate programs as a representative of his newspaper, commenting on a wide range of topics. Commentator Arne Strand in the newspaper *Dagsavisen* has also ventured into television, where he co-hosts a political talk show together with political editor of TV2, Stein Kåre Kristiansen. Airing Saturdays on TV2 *Nyhetskanalen* since the autumn of 2010, their program *Kristiansen og Strand* consists of in-studio interviews with politicians followed by the two pundits offering their interpretations and evaluations of the visitor’s performance. Commentator Marie Simonsen is also frequently invited to give opinions in media channels other than her own. She is also actively sharing views and opinions as political editor of *Dagbladet* on the microblogging service Twitter. Currently, Simonsen has 22 303 people following her close to 20 000 tweets.<sup>3</sup>

Another way the political celebrity of commentary journalists manifests is the emergence of what looks like a columnist transfer market, where the hiring of journalists as commentators is used as promotional devices (DA 21.5.2010) worthy of news coverage (e24.no 26.10.2011) - an honour which is rarely bestowed on traditional

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<sup>3</sup> This data were collected on January 28th. To compare, *Dagsavisen*’s commentator Arne Strand had at the time 12 528 followers on Twitter and only 450 tweets. Harald Stanghelle has a registered account on Twitter, but he has never tweeted.

news journalists. Presented as a key part of their newspapers' overall personality, commentators are often described as the aristocracy of journalism (Shrimpsley 2003:29). Although there is little evidence of the actual commercial value of pundits, they are associated with substantial amounts of authority. In the Nordic countries, commentary has also expanded its proportion of media content in the last decade (Djerf-Pierre and Weibull 2008). Nimmo and Combs characterise what they see as our modern day *punditocracy*:

A network news anchor reports news as fact: This, that, and the other thing is happening. For major events, however, the anchor turns to someone who gives a brief interpretation: This is happening because of X, Y and Z but not A, B, and C; it is happening now because D, E, and F preceded it, bringing about the event; we can expect G, H, and I to come from what is happening but not J, K, and L. "Take my word for it" (Nimmo and Combs 1992:1-2).

The expansion of commentary is most often explained in the context of the Internet. In an increasingly speedy information society, many emphasise the commentary genre's abilities to systematize, explain, and provide background. Additionally, punditry has become the core area of prioritisation for newspapers unable to compete in the 24-hour news cycle (Enli 2009:124, Iglund and Stølås 2008:25). When the traditional newspapers' role as gatekeeper is diminished and the ability to comment is democratised, the emergence of new media can also sharpen the necessity of credibility and trust in journalistic discourse. Now, newspaper pundits must legitimise both their authority when giving comment and their prerogative to require payment for it. But while the dependence on authority may pinnacle with the onset of new media technologies, a historical overview shows that the role of the pundit and the nature of their message have been greatly transformed.

### *2.1.1 The development of the commentary*

The commentary genre is often tied to the literary essay and the emerging political sphere of the 1600 and 1700th century (Sneve 2002:17, Silvester 1998:xi). As the political bourgeois public grew, organising debate, as well as advising, advocating and persuading about changes in society became central elements in journalism. It was however not until the end of the 1800th century that the commentary column really made its way into newspapers. Soon, the journalist had acquired a "new authority as interpreter of public life" (Schudson 1995:49), and the column was to entertain, inform and sell newspapers in an increasingly competitive market (McNair 2000b:62). In

Norwegian press, the analytical commentary developed in the period 1830-1870 (Roksvold 1997:49ff). The idea that the right decision would be carried forward by the best and most true argument became the foundation of the unbiased and qualified debate. Despite the genre's long history, today's commentary is most shaped by its development since the 1970- and 1980s (Neveu 2002:31). A shift occurred when practitioners of political journalism started claiming the authority and ability to comment instead of merely rallying ideological commitment among their readers. Journalism was no longer a proxy for political activity and commitment, and journalists were "neither partisan, nor clerks of the court, but political analysts" (Neveu 2002:31). Journalistic knowledge about the social world as well as technical skills became the necessary critical expertise, allowing commentary journalists to convince rational readers of their views. The de-politicisation of newspapers in the 1970s sparked a similar shift in legitimacy for interpretive journalists in Norway (Sneve 2002:39, Igland and Stølås 2008:36ff). The news of the party press had long been the most dominant feature of newspapers, and the exchange of views and opinions had not been a priority. The few political commentators that existed in newsrooms rested their strength on their ability to access the closed halls of politics, but commentary was clearly written on the premises of political power (Allern 2001a:90). As ideological ties started to lessen, journalists were again independent, and an upsurge in interpretive journalism followed. Coupled with a professionalisation of the media, their role as contributor in democracy and public life became the ground premise in a new ideology of journalism (Sneve 2002:32ff). With this, the role of the commentator changed, and the ideal of democracy was now used as a legitimacy to judge and make strong personal opinions (Sneve 2002:35). In all the Nordic countries, commentators have gone from conveying the professional expertise of other political experts to assume the role as expert themselves (Djerf-Pierre and Weibull 2008). Compared to their commenting colleagues decades ago, pundits are more visible in public debate and the pundit's new role is often that of a lead judge (Allern 2010).

The clearest illustration of the newfound confidence of journalists is the personalised and signed political commentary column, a sub-genre of political commentary journalism. With a prioritised and often regular placement in newspapers, commentaries are becoming more personal and opinionated (Sneve 2002:36-7). As a

result, Norwegian commentary articles are moving increasingly towards the American style columnist-ideal. No longer representing the standpoints of a larger authoritative group, commentaries are instead presentations of the personal ideologies of the journalist, as well as the inner ideology of journalism. The personal style of the pundit becomes a trademark for the columnist and a reason for audiences to keep returning. As recognisable style becomes similar to genre expectations, pundits create relationships between themselves and the audience. The commentator becomes the commentary, as Sneve (2002:53) puts it.

One of the main routes to columnar status today is political experience, and many political columnists are either former politicians or individuals with close involvement in political processes. Politics and commentary are in many ways a revolving door, as there are both examples of political activism advancing into journalism and commentary and of political commentators who leave journalism to aspire real political power.<sup>4</sup> In other instances, backgrounds entirely unrelated to journalism have qualified as a reason to comment, and the ability to call oneself an expert on a particular issue is instead valued (Tunstall 1996:177).<sup>5</sup> Journalists enjoying the elevated position of a pundit can also utilise practical skill and experience acquired through years of journalistic service. Here, the somewhat indefinable and lucid concepts of journalistic know how and expertise legitimises the commentator. The typical political journalist in Norway is in fact uneducated, according to Professor in Journalism studies, Sigurd Allern, who refers to them as “semi-studied rascals” (2001a). In these instances, the legitimacy of pundits is not anchored in political or academic expertise at all.<sup>6</sup> This self-authorisation helps to reinforce the media stage as influential (Esser and D’Angelo 2006). To the same effect, Nimmo and Combs explain the pundit column as:

...a stylised dramatisation not only of the subject or issue at hand, but also of the pundit’s rightful status to speak on it authoritatively” (Nimmo and Combs 1992:12).

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<sup>4</sup> In Norway, Arne Strand (*Dagsavisen*), Frank Rossavik (*Morgenbladet*) and Erling Rimehaug (*Vårt Land*) are examples of the former and Hans Kristian Amundsen (*Nordlys*) illustrates the latter.

<sup>5</sup> There are several examples of newspapers featuring experts on particular areas of interest as commentary writers. Professor in Economics, Karl Ove Moene, and Professors in Political Science, Janne Haaland Matlary and Hege Skjeie are for instance part of a rotating commentary column in the Saturday-edition of the Norwegian newspaper *Dagens Næringsliv*.

<sup>6</sup> Harald Stanghelle (*Aftenposten*), Marie Simonsen (*Dagbladet*), Magnus Takvam (*NRK*) and Stein Kåre Kristiansen (*TV2*) are all well-known pundits that have not acquired any education beyond compulsory primary and secondary school.



Largely able to narrate their personal stories, pundits are in a privileged position to secure an image of authority, credibility and competence.

## **2.2 Journalism and deliberative democracy**

In order to fulfil the role of pundit, newspaper readers must accept a commentator as an authority on political affairs (McNair 2011:71). Because pundits exercise a particular form of cultural power, this authority must be perceived as legitimate to be credible – both by its practitioners and the societies on which it is inflicted (Anderson 2008:250, Arnoldi 1999:38) and the political groups in which it operates (McNair 2010:71). The link between journalism and democracy is the most dominant of journalistic authorisations, and journalistic credibility is therefore dependent on the fulfilment of democratic ideals. Deliberative democracy is according to Gutmann and Thompson:

...a form of government in which free and equal citizens (and their representatives) justify decisions in a process in which they give one another reasons that are mutually acceptable and generally accessible, with the aim of reaching conclusions that are binding in the present on all citizens but open to challenge in the future (Gutmann and Thompson 2004:7).

Moreover, the reasoning required in a deliberative democracy must be morally compelling, rather than merely politically efficient. It should “appeal to principles that individuals who are trying to find fair terms of cooperation cannot reasonably reject” (Gutmann and Thompson 2004:3). Fitting to this ideal is Knapskog’s (2009:290) definition of the commentary as a genre for public reasoning in practical, ethical and political questions where the goal is to persuade somebody about, or raise doubt over, the reasonableness in a particular standpoint. Also concomitant is the view of the commentary as “a platform in public life” (Tunstall 1996:180), describing and evaluating a situation or issue and advising on how to better a problem (Sneve 2002:52). The genre’s potential for democratic debate is also related to newspapers’ necessary adaptations to the market. Commentary journalism is said to be especially successful in attracting readers with certain values, attitudes and preferences to a publication – resulting in what Holmes (2005) calls *community building*. To provoke, engage and encourage readers to respond through commentary will create interest and commitment, which results in a cultivated bond between reader and newspaper, increasing both revenues and debate.

Because of their role in democracy, commentators are often reminded about the importance of having a factual basis. The “fibre that makes the thing more than a dribble of opinion”, writes Marr (2004:370), viewing facts as the essence of political commentary. In a research interview with ten leading British columnists, all respondents acknowledged the importance of disseminating facts in commentary (Duff 2008:8). Dominic Lawson of *The Independent* explained he was “in the business of changing people’s minds, and intelligent people need facts” (Duff 2008:8). However, distributing facts is not the main role of the commentator. The ideals of engaging people in politics, helping create debate, sparking controversy where necessary, and providing discursive commentary and a personal view are ideals that columnists themselves emphasise (Duff 2008:8-9, Iglund and Stølås 2008:48). Knapskog (2009:289) denies that the separation between fact and opinion should be the sole perspective when discussing the commentary. This overshadows both the subjective element in all fact reporting as well as the factually based, analytical and argumentative in all solid commentary journalism, he argues. Although the commentary involves opinions, evaluation and judgements, it is also more or less well based on facts with the onset of analytical reasoning and logical arguments (Knapskog 2009:288).

The discussion on what forms the commentary as genre is parallel to the classical debate of the 1920s on the relationship between expertise and democracy<sup>7</sup>. Journalist Walter Lippmann’s elitist view of democracy entailed that the task of journalists was to provide information close to a picture of the world on which citizens could act. Lippmann felt it impossible for journalists to acquire a qualified opinion about public issues, and he was critical about the idea of the enlightened citizen. Instead, the task of reaching competent views had to be left to rational and unprejudiced experts and specialists – and journalists were not among them. In his response to Lippmann, John Dewey argued that the public themselves had to be given the ability to assess the knowledge presented by experts. Echoing Dewey’s critique, historian Christopher Lasch more recently held that “What democracy requires is public debate, not information” (1995:44). In his view, the proper attention of the audience gained through debate is a prerequisite for seeking and processing information. Providing an endless stream of information would be worthless if not arguments had focused our attention and enabled us to seek the information that

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<sup>7</sup> Eide (2009:28ff) gives a brief account of the debate on deliberative democracy in the context of journalism.

is relevant. Nimmo and Combs (1992:172) share this belief in participatory democracy and claim Lippmann is guilty of favouring epistemic paternalism. When dispensing information, journalists are actually controllers of communication and “interpose their judgment rather than allow the audience [through debate] to exercise theirs” (Nimmo and Combs 1992:172). Forcing their own judgements on audiences rather than allowing them to reason is essentially the same thing as withholding information for the audiences own good – like the doctor withholds aspects of a diagnosis to prevent needless anxiety. Not detailing the evidence for their interpretations simplifies their message, reducing the audiences to be voyeurs of knowledge and acceptant of the “myth that knowledge resides in the special few: a political class “unlike us”” (Nimmo and Combs 1992:171). Viewed as a journalistic elite that has gotten too powerful, Nimmo and Combs claim commentary journalists comprise a fifth estate and a knowledge industry that has grown into a political force. Although British columnists are said to enjoy less of an elevated status than their American counterparts, British sociologist Brian McNair (2000b:80) emphasise how upmarket print columnists can wield excessive power. Norwegian studies of commentary journalism have similarly identified how pundits can influence political events and public opinion (Allern 2001a:214ff). One of the most recent examples in Norway is the controversy around former government Minister Manuela Ramin Osmundsen, who was criticised for withholding information and lying to the Prime Minister about a possible conflict of interest. The resignation of the Labour party Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion came after a debate that was partly dominated by pundits and their commentary columns (Enli 2009).

### *2.2.1 A sophistic triumph*

Nimmo and Combs (1992:12ff) is explicit in their critique of pundits, and criticise commentary journalists for depending merely on the plausibility of their messages. Moreover, this persuasiveness is said to reside in style, not content:

To the degree that readers of columns have come to expect columns to adhere to standardised formats and rituals, whether one is persuaded by a columnist’s point of view may well depend not on what was written, but how. In this sense the column is a triumph of sophistic technique and style over what Socrates might have deemed substance and reason (Nimmo and Combs 1992:12).

Sophists were a group of philosophers in ancient Athens known for furthering extreme relativism. Emphasising how something was said rather than what was being

communicated, they underlined persuasion rather than convincing. Sophists taught people to acquire the rhetorical skills necessary to be persuasive in politics, earning them the negative connotations often attributed to their name today: being manipulating word twisters and immoral seducers. Transferred to pundits, Nimmo and Combs claim commentary journalists are too concerned with persuasion through stylistic patterns and impressing the audience through claims of authority, and less troubled with offering knowledge and substance in support. Alterman (1999) goes even further in his critique and claims the argumentation of a pundit is not important because of its logic or persuasiveness, but because of the celebrity status of the speaker. Achieving a media personality is believed to be the main goal of the commentator, leaving little focus on thoughtful analysis. Nimmo and Combs reflect the same criticism, saying punditry has become a form of entertainment:

...both shaping and adjusting to popular expectations regarding how to keep up with and understand “what’s happening” (Nimmo and Combs 1992:41).

Normative perspectives have been the focus of analysis of the commentary genre before. In Norway, Wold (2010) researched Nimmo and Comb’s charges against the pundits in a perspective of cynicism and found the focus on the perceptions of politicians to overshadow explanations about policy. This results in arguments where fact checking becomes impossible. Commentary journalism and political journalism have also shown to be strategy and conflict oriented, causing portrayals of politics that are unfavourable to democracy (Nedrestøl 2010, Vatnøy 2010). Keeping the democratic ideal of journalism at the forefront of the analysis, my endeavour is nevertheless to turn the tables around and explore more explicitly what effects mass media rhetoric have on the credibility of the commentary journalist, and eventually journalism as a whole.

## 3 DEFINING CREDIBILITY

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### 3.1 From classical rhetoric to modern argumentation theory

The concept of argumentation was first developed in Greek Antiquity, which is also the birthplace of rhetoric. Living in times of rising democracy, any person was now entitled to letting their opinion be heard, and the best-fitted citizens were entrusted with the highest offices (Conley 1990:4). Public discussions of different options aimed at reaching consensus became the traditional way of making decisions. Anybody entering the Agora did so because of the public good and discourse was therefore evaluated on the basis of both rationality and efficiency (Mral 2006:223). Teaching rhetorical techniques of argumentation, sophists offered tutorials on how the art of argumentation was best executed. Both dialectic and rhetoric were shaped from the strong influence of this group. However, as the tradition of philosophy grew, speech came to be motivated by finding the truth in matters. Rhetoric had always been a practical subject directed at what is appropriate in different situations, and the two disciplines became separated. While dialectic explored both sides of an argument, rhetoric was to do the same but end up advocating the one side believed best. The discipline of dialectic always seeks objective and universal certainties, while rhetoric is situational and places arguments side by side to make standpoints as believable as possible. Plato's critique of both sophists and rhetoric has also contributed to furthering the divide between rhetoric and the more pure philosophy – an all-embracing split that has been central in the theoretical discussions on rhetoric up to this day (Rosengren 1998).

Aristotle's view reflected an empirical pragmatism more similar to sophists than the idealism of Plato, and he devoted many of his writings to closing the divide between rhetoric and philosophy. "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic", he wrote (Rhetoric 1354a1). Still acknowledging the distinctive differences between the two branches of knowledge, Aristotle nevertheless also illustrated their mutual area of effort: the argument. The substance of rhetorical persuasion was the enthymeme. This is conventionally viewed as an incomplete syllogism, where a missing premise has to be made explicit to make the argument deductively valid (Sandvik 1995). Tindale (1999:10) however views the incomplete syllogism-definition as drawing attention away from Aristotle's emphasis on it as an "argument from plausibility or sign" (Walton

2005:14). The goal of the syllogism is to achieve absolute truth, where if the premises of the argument are true, so is necessarily the conclusion. The enthymeme is only true “for the most part” (Tindale 1999:10). Aristotle connected the enthymeme with a specific audience who was interested in arguments that were less rationally compelling than scientific argumentation (Tindale 1990:12). Because the rhetorical enthymeme is concerned with persuasion, leaving out a premise serves to activate autonomous audiences. To view the enthymeme as the traditional incomplete syllogism leads to a definition of rhetoric as a discipline tied to a specific domain of issues. Again, the distinction between that which can be demonstrated and that which can be otherwise is of key importance. In contrast, defining enthymemes as syllogisms from probability lead attention to the persuasive nature of rhetoric and the enthymeme.

It is Aristotle’s work on the enthymeme that has forever tied the concept of argument to his definition and theory of rhetoric. He defined rhetoric as “the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject matter” (Rhetoric 1355b26-27). Following, it should be possible to lessen the distinctions between rhetoric and dialectic. Rhetoric is not merely an empirical art of measuring persuasive effect, in contrast to more normative perspectives (Leff 2000:244ff). Garver (1994:35) emphasises the difference between using the art of rhetoric correctly and achieving a specific outcome, and he establishes in Aristotle a corresponding distinction between what can be done *in* the act of arguing and what can be done *by* it. This distinction can also be reflected in the way Aristotle saw rhetorical skill as being most persuasive when it detects bad argumentation (Rhetoric 1355a11). Modern argumentation theories have continued to seek closure of the great divide between rhetoric and dialectic. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s work in *Traité de l’argumentation* from 1958 have been pioneering in this respect, as it lay the foundations for the tradition known as new rhetoric. Again viewed in light of Aristotle’s writings on dialectics, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca introduced a more rational approach to rhetoric characterised by the belief in democracy (Roer and Klueff 2006:17). They placed emphasis on debate and the belief that the best argument will win in public society. In new rhetoric, Aristotle’s thoughts on rhetoric and dialectic are assembled as a coherent theory on argumentation directed at a specific audience (Roer and Klueff 2006:17).

### 3.1.1 *Pragma-dialectical argumentation theory*

Developed by the Dutch scholars Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst, the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation is a continuation of this bridging of dialectic and rhetoric in the study of arguments. Established as a reaction both to the normative argumentation analysis dominated by philosophy and modern logicians confined to the formal validity of arguments, the theory is concerned with argumentation as it actually develops in everyday discourse. Therefore, the normative and descriptive aspects of the argument are sought connected. In the earlier and more classical works on pragma-dialectics, focus is on how argumentation is a social and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint (E&G 1992:13). The context of any argument is therefore always the ideal of the critical discussion, where parties are thought to be willing to compromise and be rational. However, in real-life contexts, people are not always solely oriented towards a dialectical ideal of being rational. In the late 1990's, an extension to pragma-dialectics was therefore added, and the theory came to emphasise the importance of contextual and rhetorical variables when evaluating arguments. Together with Peter Houtlosser, Eemeren recognised how the parties involved in a dispute is not only interested in solving the difference of opinion but also in solving it "in their favour" (E&H 2002:134). Moreover, argumentative speech may be designed to achieve an effect of persuasion (E&H 2002:135). Adding the concept of *strategic manoeuvring* bolstered the rhetorical element of the pragma-dialectical theory.

Still, it is far from unproblematic to combine the insights of rhetoric and dialectic. The historical and ideological development of the two traditions have been subject to a sharp distinction, which is also at the root of much of the criticism directed at the pragma-dialectical theory<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, if "defined in a liberal way the two approaches can, in fact, be seen as complementary", write Eemeren and Houtlosser (2009:4). In pragma-dialectics, dialectic is defined pragmatically as a method for dealing with critical exchanges to move from opinion to more secure standpoints, while rhetoric is defined as the theoretical study of various kinds of persuasion techniques that can be efficient in argumentation (E&H 2009:4). Reasonableness and persuasion are not in principle

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<sup>8</sup> Criticism directed at the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation is explored in section 4.1.2, page 33.

contradictory, and more often than not, rhetorically strong argumentation will be in accordance with dialectical norms (O'Keefe 2009). Because the parties involved in a dispute will want to realise the dialectical objectives to the best advantage of the position they have adopted, every dialectical objective has its rhetorical analogue (E&H 2009:5). The rhetorical goal of persuasion is therefore thought to be dependent on and in parallel with dialectic goals.

For argumentation to be persuasive, Aristotle introduced three forms of evidence in his *Rhetoric*: logos, ethos and pathos. These are the non-professional means of persuasion, *atechnoi*, and describe persuasion that is available for the speaker to find. Ethos creates a context for the message, and if the speaker is perceived as credible, ethos functions as a rational reason for decision-making. Listeners will insert the implicit premise most to the arguer's advantage if they trust the speaker (Garver 1994:192). Logos refers to the arguments that speak to the receiver's reason. Pathos is directed at the feelings of the receiver and creates a basis for them. The professional evidence, *entechnoi*, exists independently of the speaker and are ready to be applied, such as testimonies and documents.

### **3.2 Defining ethos**

Persuasion is the aim of the commentary, writes Sneve and describes ethos as "evidence that supports the authority of the speaker" (2002:55). Closely linked to the speaker's reliability and integrity, ethos is believed to strengthen the persuasiveness of the message if receivers of a communication perceive the sender as a honourable and credible person. In his philosophic treatment of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Eugene Garver reiterates Aristotle as follows:

[There is persuasion] through character [ethos] whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence [axiopiston]; for we believe [pisteuomen] fair-minded people to a greater extent and more quickly [than we do others] on all subjects in general and completely [pantelos] so in cases where there is not exact knowledge [akribes] but room for doubt... character is almost, so to speak, the controlling factor in persuasion (Garver 1994:146)

From his emphasis on the speech itself evolves a focus on argument; what ultimately connects the act of persuasion and the state of being persuaded. Placing deliberation at the heart of rhetoric, Garver goes on to emphasise the close relation between the



argument and ethos: "Arguments will persuade to the extent that it makes us believe and trust the speaker" (Garver 1994:194). Aligning ethos with trust, Garver claims that if ethos disappears, an audience can still agree with the speaker but never trust him or her and be persuaded (Garver 1994:190). Aristotle saw ethos as a principled character that instructs the moral consciousness and actions of others, and therefore ethos emerges from the choices we make (Smith 2004). Ethos can therefore never be the direct object of deliberation and action, and it only arises in how we argue. Thought and character – logos and ethos – is intrinsically interrelated. For that reason, rhetoric can never be a skill that is easy to fake or possible to sell (Garver 1994:151). The complex and crucial relationship between logos and ethos is illustrated by Aristotle's discussion on ends and means. According to the philosopher, sophists failed to provide arguments because they ignored the importance of character in their sole focus on external ends (Garver 1994:184). Cleverness is not enough to acquire ethos, because ethos also involves decisions to be made. Choice is absent in the disputation of sophists, and therefore so is ethos.

Aristotle spoke of fallacies in both his work on dialectics and his studies on rhetoric. In *Topics*, his treatise on the former, he discussed the correct moves an arguer can make to refute the thesis of the opponent, and he distinguished them from incorrect moves, considered to be fallacious. In *De Sophisticis Elenchi*, Aristotle told how sophists refuted their opponents falsely – explaining why fallacies so often are termed sophisms. "Let us now discuss sophistic refutations," said Aristotle, and defined them as "what appear to be refutations but are really fallacies instead" (Sigrell 1999:99). Important in this respect – and illustrative of the essential place of ethos in rhetoric – is that Aristotle viewed fallacies as a character flaw, not just a logical mistake. He accused the sophists for neglecting the enthymeme in their argumentation and termed the fallacies used in sophistic discourse *apparent* enthymemes, as opposed to *real* enthymemes (Garver 1994:183). In his discussion on the fallacy *secundum quid*, which he saw as most central in sophistic discourse, Aristotle explained:

...to make things appear inevitable when they are not, to make judgements seem unnecessary by making the facts seem fully determinative. That is how logos drives out ethos (Garver 1994:183).

Because it makes character obsolete, arguing on the basis of reason alone is a failure of ethos, and it is therefore unsuccessful in persuading listeners. The complexity of the

relation of ethos and logos is again evident, as the problem of being “too rational”, “too logical” and “too strong” in rhetorical argumentation arises (Garver 1994:178-9). An argument that is excessively dependent on logos will fail to persuade because the speaker is eliminated from the decision process. The object of rhetoric is judgement, and therefore pathos and ethos have to be involved. Extreme devotion to argumentation is a concentration on the internal deliberative end of rhetoric and an omission of the external end of persuasion. Constructing the right relation and balance between these two is at the forefront of Aristotle’s rhetoric. Because reasoning persuades as evidence of character, making discourse ethical is necessary for constructing credible arguments. Therefore, rhetoric has two aspects – each of them possible to associate with logos and ethos. It is a rational discourse that proves opposites, just as dialectics, as well as being an intellectual virtue of art (Garver 1994:188). At this juncture, the similarities between Garver’s interpretation of Aristotle’s rhetoric and the concept of strategic manoeuvring seem apparent. Acknowledging the element of dialectic in the persuasive ethos is concurrent with the balance between rationality and persuasion central in pragma-dialectics.

Aristotle’s focus on the spoken word seems to fail to explain why different people who communicate something similar can have varying persuasive force. How the audience knows the speaker is also an important context for the communicated message and ethos. As Aristotle listed “good birth, good fortune, fame, honour, [and] money” as attributes admired by audiences, prior reputation is also an acknowledged element in Aristotle’s ethos (Smith 2004:6). Moreover, he warned that audiences would not welcome a human that beforehand had been exposed to suspicion (Hastrup 1991:249). Thus, there seems to always be an important dynamic between the perception of a speech being held and the ethical characteristics we have ascribed to the speaker at an earlier point. Commentary writers in Norway are also a relatively small group, where some appear repeatedly in a wide number of media arenas. It therefore seems natural that commentators are not solely being evaluated on the basis of their isolated performances alone. Impressions audiences already have of speakers are therefore important in a modern understanding of credibility. Ethos is a process and a combination of credibility, prestige and personal proof (McCroskey 1978:67).

### 3.2.1 *Ethos as a place of dwelling*

The view of ethos as an inseparable element in argumentation is complemented with an expanded and more holistic understanding of ethos in this analysis. In the book *The ethos of rhetoric* (2004), edited by Michael J. Hyde, several rhetorical theorists give ethos a more primeval meaning than the traditional interpretation of the concept as “character”, “credibility” and “ethics” alone. Instead, ethos is explained as the way discourse is used to create dwelling places where people can reflect and collectively understand an issue of interest (Hyde 2004). Rhetorically good speech is consequently a discourse that does not divert deliberation, which seems fitting in an analysis of commentators’ organising of political issues. Building on the works of the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, ethos as dwelling is characterised as the project of understanding the world and thus the quality of personhood (Kenny 2004:34f). Heidegger explained dwelling as the *telos* of humanity, where we dwell rhetorically, being “architectonic”, as Richard McKeon terms it:

Rhetoric provides the devices by which to determine the characteristics and problems of our times and to form the art by which to guide actions for the solution of our problems and the improvement of our circumstances (McKeon 1971 in Hyde 2004:xxi).

Ethos is neither an ability in the speaker nor a quality of the audience, and it only enters when we take it upon ourselves in the things we do (Kenny 2004:35). This enables us to distinguish between genuine dispositions and the ones that are not. Heidegger accordingly defines inauthentic speech as idle talk; to speak badly is “to speak in a manner that diverts or subverts the possibilities for genuine engagement in the world” (in Kenny 2004:36). The enhancement of public opinion happens when the rhetor modifies the lives of audiences by making it clear what he or she has reason to believe is true, just and virtuous. Following Heidegger, rhetorical study defines the boundary between “the idle talk that floods the public sphere” and the rhetorical resources that “make possible being, as the ongoing dwelling of humanity” (Kenny 2004:36). Heidegger also broadened ethos to include the emotional elements of pathos. He saw the placing of audiences in a right frame of mind as necessities for persuasiveness (Hyde 2004:xviii). According to Heidegger, the rhetorical enthymeme draws on pathos because truth is not sufficient without the emotional process of “taking something to heart”(Hyde 2004:xvii). Lindhardt (1999) similarly follows the rather lenient separation between realisation and

feeling from the Antiquity, and he insists that truth is not merely a function of the object, but also of the human subject. Realisation is thus shaped by feeling and emotion, but while the stable emotions in ethos are calmly persuasive, the intense emotions of pathos are ordering (Lindhardt 1999:88). Although pathos is central in the commentary's aim for persuasion, its parallel motive of debate and deliberation suggests the ordering means of pathos should be somewhat cautioned.

### 3.2.2 *Deliberation from choice*

Because understanding virtue and the virtues of your culture is essential to ethos, it is not enough for a speaker to merely be good (Smith 2004:5). The importance of choice in enabling people to reach their potential is also reflected in Aristotle's three components of ethos: Virtue (*arête*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and good will (*eunoia*). In addition, the more modern ethos-dimension of authenticity (Johansen 2002) is also included as an element in this analysis. Although the different dimensions of ethos are separated for analytical purposes, a speaker can never possess one of them fully without possessing the others (Garver 1994:114). Nevertheless, because ethos is a variable process that is constantly changing, it is possible for a speaker to remain persuasive even though some dimensions of ethos are stronger or weaker than others.

#### 3.2.2.1 ARÊTE

According to Aristotle, *arête* is the ability to do and continue what is good (Fafner 1991:53). Translated into virtue, *arête* can be understood as flexible targets established by the audience. Thus, ethos can be seen as dwelling in the audience, as well as within the self. The relation of *arête* to the word *ariston* meaning "nobility" and "aristocracy" suggests that ethical appeal is a type of cultural appeal (Kinneavy and Warshauer 1994:174-5). The morally virtuous rhetor of good moral character has to not only know and discover these virtues but also choose to behave accordingly. When discussing *arête*, Aristotle describes virtues and their corresponding vices. Speakers should show themselves as truthful and their opponents as false (Hastrup 1991:252). In the commentary, a pundit may emphasise the positive qualities of himself or herself, while at the same time questioning the person with a contrasting view.

### 3.2.2.2 EUNOIA

According to Aristotle, having *arete* is not sufficient if the rhetor lacks *eunoia*. A speaker creates *eunoia* through his practical knowledge of the emotions, and it is generated if a speaker is successful in instilling audiences with a sense of emotion (Garver 1994:110). Aristotle also explained *eunoia* as being obliging towards those who need it, not because of the possibility of reward or personal achievement but for the sake of the receiver. Without good will, a speaker could refrain from sharing the best advice, wrote Aristotle (Hastrup 1991:113). To show *eunoia*, the speaker should identify with the audience's aspirations, act in their interest and show similar values. Sharing common ideas allows the speaker to befriend the audience, thereby strengthening identification. According to Aristotle, a telling characteristic about the audience was their type of government (Hastrup 1991:67), which again reflects the importance of culture. Because democracy is such a defining part of society, *eunoia* again underlines how pundits should emphasise their responsibilities to contribute to public debate.

### 3.2.2.3 PHRONESIS

Having *eunoia* enables both the speaker and the deliberators in the audience to make sound ethical decisions and to have *phronesis* (Garver 1994:111). Without *eunoia*, *phronesis* is therefore impossible. The intellectual virtue of *phronesis* has traditionally been interpreted as good sense, practical wisdom, expertise and intelligence. It enables us to evaluate how appropriate a certain act is. According to Smith, practical wisdom is

...a capacity for discerning in the sphere of action the intermediate point where right conduct lies in any given situation (Smith 2004:11).

Showing practical knowledge is thus highly dependent on knowledge about the audience as well as the situation at hand. As noted above, a virtuous act only reflects virtuous character if it shows deliberate choice. Practical wisdom is this deliberation that enables choice. Thus, the notion of *phronesis* combines virtue and knowledge. A speaker's moral disposition gives direction to practical thinking and an underlying *arête* orients judgement towards goodness (Schuchman 1979:48). Because of the connection between *phronesis* and virtue, mere cleverness is incapable of persuading, according to Aristotle. A rhetor should be subtle when displaying *phronesis* to avoid sounding condescending (Kinneavy and Warshauer 1994:178). Aristotle similarly warns about not letting it be

seen when you introduce yourself as being of a certain favourable character (Hastrup 1991:245).

#### 3.2.2.4 AUTHENTICITY

Acknowledging the importance of being truthful in modern day rhetoric, Anders Johansen (2002) adds another ethos-dimension to the traditional understanding of Aristotle's ethos. When exploring the ethos of politicians, Johansen notes that "to speak of the truth was nothing against being true" (Johansen 2002:80). To be perceived as oneself, as a whole human being with flaws and errors is inevitably an important part of modern ethos. To be anti-rhetorical thus becomes the way of communicating personal authenticity. Kjeldsen (2006a:121ff) similarly emphasises the psychological motives essential in modern day communication. To utilise reflections and experiences to reveal how concrete situations may affect emotions make the utterance seem more real and open for identification. In commentaries, it might therefore serve as more persuasive to adhere to the modern intimacy-oriented and personal rhetoric by using examples from everyday life to illustrate the importance of an issue. Commentators should therefore be self-critical when they turn out to be wrong in their forecasts and analysis. However, acknowledging the public element in ethos deems any discourse where personality is valued over character as insufficient. In the words of Halloran (1984:63) this is an ethos that is inherently denying the importance of ethos itself. Any evaluation based on strictly personal reasoning falls under such a category, as this is an argument grounded in what someone feels in his or her heart. Although it might be authentic, the personal argument neglects choice.

Ethos dwells persuasively when it emerges through choices that reflect these four dimensions, reaching the potential of our dwelling place. To emphasise choice means commentary writers are believed to have a great deal of freedom in choosing topic, way of argumentation and style when constructing their gathering places. Nevertheless, the particular context of every situation presents commentators with conditions they have to acknowledge and adapt to. In modern rhetoric, the term *rhetorical situation* refers to the situations where rhetoric is created, utilised and required.

### 3.3 Rhetorical communication and rhetorical situations

Lloyd F. Bitzer first used the term rhetorical situation in his article with the same name in 1968. According to him, every rhetorical discourse is a response to a rhetorical situation, which present a problem or necessity that the discourse is supposed to alleviate. The presence of a rhetorical situation thus becomes a precondition for rhetorical discourse, which is characterised as pragmatic. Rhetorical communication is legitimised by its will to change situations and the world to the better - to solve its exigencies (Bitzer 1968:4). Bitzer held that no situation is rhetorical without an audience “capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change” (Bitzer 1968:8). The character of our rhetorical response to the exigencies in the situation is also dependent on the “persons, events, objects, and relations that [...] *constrain* decision and action needed to modify the exigence” (Bitzer 1968:8 [my italics]). Critics have nuanced Bitzer’s rhetorical situation because they view his theories as being too deterministic. Where Bitzer views rhetoric as situational, others view the situations to be rhetorical (Vatz 2000). Vatz therefore denies Bitzer’s view that situations more or less demand a rhetorical act, and he explains how it is the rhetorical speech that creates or at least define the problem; rhetoric controls the answer to the situation, not vice versa. Rhetoric is thus the result of a creative action, not a chore (Vatz 2000:161). This view is in line with the Greek notion of *kairos*, emphasising the possibilities of any situation (Kjeldsen 2006a:78). Applied to modern communication, it seems reasonable to view the rhetorical situation and rhetorical speech as mutually influencing each other.

While the rhetorical situation enables the analysis to be placed in its right context, the process of identifying and evaluating the argumentation in the commentary columns is done through the framework of the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation and its notion of the critical discussion. The principles of fallacies and strategic manoeuvring are especially central.

## 4 PRAGMA-DIALECTICS

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### 4.1 The ideal of the critical discussion

The argument in pragma-dialectical theory is thought to be geared towards resolving a difference of opinion by providing justification for – or refutation of – the standpoint being discussed. The acceptability of arguments is therefore not derived from any external source of authority or necessity, but it is dependent on the argument's suitability for resolving conflicts of opinion (E&G 1988). If we do not solve these conflicts "we become intellectually isolated and can ultimately even end up in a state of spiritual and mental inertia" (E&G 1984:1). In order to evaluate how the argumentation presented is beneficial to this conflict resolution, its quality must be measured against criteria appropriate for the particular discourse. A model of the critical discussion is therefore developed, where principles accounted for in a set of rules constitute an ideal standard. Arguments considered as infringements on any of the ten rules are thereby threats to the resolution of the difference of opinion. Incorrect discussion moves where one or several rules are violated are called fallacies, and such arguments are unwelcome in rational discussions.

#### 4.1.1 Fallacies

After having grappled with the question of whether rhetoric could be a vehicle for both good and evil since the sophists, dialectic again gained momentum at the cost of rhetoric in medieval times. The 16th century French philosopher Petrus Ramus is the most well known proponent of dividing language and style from argumentation. His writings on fallacies are one of the main reasons why they up to this day have been intrinsically tied to logic and defined as invalid arguments. Because few fallacies actually take the shape of invalid arguments, and because arguments possible to categorise as fallacies are sometimes in fact not erroneous, the concept of fallacies have in later times been redefined (Eemeren 2009, Walton 1992). The English word fallacy connotes systematic and underlying errors in an argument, and it can sometimes seem like an exaggeration to claim that arguments common in everyday conversations are fallacious. Walton (1992:235) instead views fallacies as weak or presumptuous arguments, but the fault is often not severe enough to refute the entire argument and deem it invalid. Because



fallacies appear to be correct, Walton emphasises their rhetorical nature. He defines them as arguments that generally appear to be reasonable attempts at persuasion of a speech partner or audience, but that in reality are not (Walton 2007:21). Walton's works have clear theoretical similarities with pragma-dialectics, which also acknowledges how fallacies also serve to be persuasive in discussions. Because the persuasiveness of fallacies contradicts the principles of the ideal critical discussion, it was their "treacherous character" (Eemeren 2009:65) that sparked the expansion of pragma-dialectic theory into rhetoric. Traditionally, little concern has been shown as to why fallacious arguments so often go unnoticed, and strategic manoeuvring became an attempt to explain why. Adhering to reasonableness is not the sole aim of a participant in a discussion, and to achieve the outcome that from their view is the best result is equally important (Eemeren 2009:65). Even when rhetorical strategies are unreasonable, they can therefore still be persuasive. Nevertheless, effective persuasion must always be disciplined by dialectic rationality (E&H 2000:297). Argumentative discourse should never escape the ideal of the critical discussion, and irrational persuasive arguments are therefore unacceptable. Fallacies serve to mislead audiences, and there is little doubt of their normative dimension. However, although Walton (1992:240) fallacies "sophistical tactics", he denies that the referral to sophists necessitates any deliberate intent to deceive from the arguer that resorts to fallacies.

The demarcation between a reasonable argument and a fallacy is determined by upholding the correct balance between the dialectical and the rhetorical. Eemeren (2009:65) acknowledges that the two objectives are not always in perfect balance, but arguments are only fallacious when the arguer's commitment to being reasonable is overruled by the aim of persuasion. When this relationship is inverted, Eemeren and Houtlosser say strategic manoeuvring has been *derailed*. As they put it:

All derailment of strategic maneuvering (sic) are fallacious, and all fallacies can be regarded as derailments of strategic maneuvering" (E&H 2002:142).

Understood like this, it is clear why fallacies can appear so persuasive. The value of the concept of strategic manoeuvring is reliant on making distinctions between what is reasonable rhetorical strategy and when the same manoeuvres cross the line and become fallacious derailments. "Fallacy judgments are in the end contextual judgments that depend on the specific circumstances", write Eemeren and Houtlosser (2009:14).

Walton (1992:241) similarly emphasises a close study of the context of dialogue and the commitments of both parties. Argumentative discourse in a commentary article is in no way institutionalised or subject to formal rules. Because commentators have wide latitude to choose arguments and subjects, appeal to different audiences and invoke the presumptions they chose, it might be problematic to mark the precise boundary between strategic manoeuvring and derailment. Zarefsky (2009) documented the same difficulties in the context of political discourse. It therefore seems unavoidable that the concept of fallacy must be understood leniently when applied to journalistic discourse compared to other contexts of argumentation. Nevertheless, pragma-dialectics is generous in their definition of what constitutes as an argument, and their theory of argumentation is applicable beyond the fully made explicit and formally acceptable argument:

Argument is seen as a kind of interaction that arises in the context of other interactional business, when something said, implied, or otherwise conveyed makes plain that there is a difference of opinion between two parties. This description is necessarily abstract, since argumentation can take any form from a single, written text by an author addressing an unknown audience to a heated back-and-forth debate between two people talking face to face (Emmeren et al. 1997:218).

Other reasons for why the pragma-dialectical framework is suitable when analysing practical argumentation are explained through an exploration of the critique directed at the theory.

#### *4.1.2 Criticising the pragma-dialectical theory*

The pragma-dialectical ideal of conflict-solution has often been taken to mean conformity and consensus. Some critics therefore assume a rhetorical position and criticise this ideal of consensus for being a dialectical aim that should only be applied to issues able to be resolved as true or false (Kock 2008). Utilising another definition of rhetoric, they claim rhetoric is inherently directed at considering actions rather than proclaiming propositions. Therefore, its substance can never be consensual and only the subject of persuasion. The decisive point is again the definition of rhetoric, as its domain is said to be ostensibly regulated by other rules than the dialectical. Emmeren (2009:57) instead includes all subjects as possible objects of rational discussions. No standpoints should be immune to criticism or justification, and argumentative discussions play a crucial part in every joint decision-making in the public sphere. Although Kock acknowledges the pragma-dialectic's attempts to include rhetorical devices in their

concept of strategic manoeuvring, he still argues it is contradictory to believe that participants in a debate can be legitimately committed to winning a debate while at the same time being committed to consensus (Kock 2007:239). The underlying condition for combining rhetoric in this analysis is including a strong belief in rationality within the definition of rhetoric. Because it is irrational for an arguer to continue proposing a standpoint for the sake of persuasion after being convinced through argumentation about its faults, this should be avoided. The pragma-dialectical aim of convincing a rational judge or reasonable critic is thus an approach to consensus that can also be related to the goal of rhetorical persuasion. Speakers are never exclusively committed to getting things their way. Furthermore, the orientation of pragma-dialectics toward dispute resolution is not equal to entertaining the philosophical ideal of aiming for consensus; "It is merely instrumental in the endeavor [sic] of critically testing the acceptability of a standpoint" (E&H 2000:294). Therefore, to perform arguments to resolve a conflict of opinion is not identical with settling a dispute, and the difference of opinion is not brought to an end (Eemeren et al. 1996:280). This is in line with rhetorical theories that establish the criteria for successful communication to be preventing conflict and chaos and creating commonality and consensus (Kjeldsen 2009:88).

A rhetorical situation can be understood as a form of problem solution, where argumentation is directed at changing something through the coupling of thought and action. Although the commentary column is rhetorical in its effort to persuade, it is nevertheless not explicitly concerned with solving problems or directing the actions of its readers. However, the commentary genre's pertinent role in a democracy does suggest that commentators are committed to the dialectical aims of a discussion, making commentaries a relevant subject for a pragma-dialectical analysis. Pragma-dialectic theory is clear on the connections between democracy and argumentation and places the critical discussion as a prerequisite if participation in debates are to enhance the quality of democracy (E&H 2002:3). Newspaper readers utilise the commentary column when seeking evaluations and judgements on which to base their opinions and decisions, and they read different opinions, thoughts and evaluations to balance them against each other. Understood like this, the commentary is indirectly continuously striving for resolving problems, arguing to foster agreement and increased consensus on issues of conflict. Although some areas and ideological struggles are irreconcilable,

arguers in a democratic society are always seeking reasoning through argumentation provided by a constant persuasion as people further what they believe is right. The journalistic values of democracy and debate should therefore highlight why the commentary's discourse can be a legitimate object of a rhetorical argumentation analysis. To view fallacies as persuasive argumentation that on closer inspection is not sound could mean that violations of the discussion rules will only derail discourse or hinder the solution of a conflict of opinion when audiences notice the argument is fallacious. Following, we must acknowledge that a principle of reasonableness also operates within the audience, allowing them to be critical readers of the commentaries. Placing emphasis on the democratic ideal of commentaries also entails that it is necessary for a pundit to be perceived as reasonable.

#### **4.2 Methodical clarifications**

Although the theory of pragma-dialectics provides a comprehensive framework for both descriptive and normative analysis of argumentation, there are challenges connected to the process of identifying and evaluating argumentation. One of the important features of pragma-dialectics is that it allows analysis of argumentation as it occurs, even when it is not fully articulated or expressed. Reconstructing argumentation is a process inherently dominated by subjective interpretation. This process relies solely on the researcher as an individual language user and on the linguistic culture of the commentator. Problems may therefore arise if intentions or arguments are distorted by wrongful interpretation. Tove Thagaard (2009:11) underlines the necessity of interpretation in qualitative research because the goal is always to achieve an understanding of social phenomena. Methodological challenges are for that reason always tied to how the researcher analyse these phenomena. Thagaard emphasises precision and exemplification of the processes that lead to results as an essential counterbalance to the subjectivity of the qualitative analysis. To secure research credibility (Thagaard 2009:189), the categorisation and analysis of fallacies was repeated towards the end of the research period. Both approach and interpretation is also sought to be as transparent as possible. To lessen the risk of misinterpretation because of the translation of Norwegian into English, quotes are included in brackets whenever exact wording and phrases are thought to have significance for the meaning of the argument. Context is always emphasised, both in interpretation of arguments and

translation. Although the motive of this analysis is based on a desire to develop a general picture of credibility and argumentation in commentary journalism, the sample is too diminutive and the qualitative analyses too dependent on subjective interpretations to allow generalizable conclusions. My observations can nevertheless serve as a basis for a debate on the pitfalls in commentary journalism and the challenges pundits are faced with. Moreover, as the focus of the analysis is the credibility of commentators, this necessarily prescribes a more in-depth exhaustive analysis.

To ensure current interest, I chose ten subsequent commentary articles from each of the three pundits, starting January 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. Exceptions from this chronology are a few texts that deviate greatly in length, because similar formats and amounts of argumentation are thought to allow better comparison between the pundits whenever this is desirable. All commentaries are downloaded from the archive service Retriever. No regional or local newspapers are included in the analysis, although especially regional newspapers have been shown to include a prominent share of interpretive content (Allern 2001b). However, as the main focus of the analysis is star commentators, the national reach of *Dagbladet*, *Aftenposten* and *Dagsavisen* seem more appropriate. The star status of the three selected commentators illustrates how pundits can sometimes become products available for branding. When exploring argumentation and credibility, it is also fruitful that the sample represents some sort of typicality and standard in what is believed to be good commentary practice. Norway's second largest newspaper, *VG*, is not included in the sample because they have several commentators that frequently participate in public debate, making it more difficult to distinguish one pundit that represents the newspaper as a brand for readers. Dailies can be especially appropriate when exploring credibility in commentary journalism, as argumentation is allowed more room in written discourse compared to the physical constraints of television broadcasting.

## 5 ANALYSIS

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### 5.1 The rhetorical situation

When evaluating a commentator's discourse in the context of genre, this cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of genre criteria. The situational conditions of rhetoric must also be taken into account. Bitzer held that exigencies, audience and several constraints comprised a rhetorical situation. Because communication is always directed at a receiver, a speaker representing the values and attitudes of the audience is viewed as credible. The news agenda, the political landscape, and the constraints of their newspapers are also part of the rhetorical situation for commentators. Therefore, to fully understand the context of the commentaries and their argumentation, an exploration of the different political issues and what they could represent is necessary. Because of the wide time frame of the ten commentaries, it is difficult to give an in depth exploration of the news agenda. Some tendencies in the political landscape can nevertheless be drawn. Excerpts from commentaries are included on the different issues to allow a minute illustration of the nature of commentary in Norwegian press, as well as demonstrate what elements other commentators called attention to in the same issues. Lastly, a description of the commentators' background and newspaper is included.

#### *5.1.1 The political situation 2010/2011*

The beginning of 2011 was a period characterised by growing scepticism towards the government in Norway. This was a continuation of several difficulties from the year before, when the coalition of the Labour party (Ap), the Socialist left party (SV) and the Centre party (Sp) had been challenged by several controversies. In the summer of 2010, news first broke about the government's plan to erect transmission towers through Hardanger in order to secure energy supplies to the city of Bergen. Environmental organisations and local inhabitants of Hardanger protested and suggested the transmission lines go under sea level instead. *Dagbladet*-commentator Jon Olav Egeland illustrates the massive political support against the decision:

In the fight over towers in Hardanger Jens Stoltenberg has yet again showed he lacks political musicality when conflicts are about values and symbolism (DB 10.8.2010).

The government was eventually forced to explore the option of cables under sea in particular areas, although the towers already commenced was continued. Commentator in *Dagsavisen*, Arne Strand, commented the turnaround as follows:

Minister of Oil and Energy Terje Riis-Johansen was no pretty sight at the press conference yesterday. Most of all he looked like a skinned political chicken ready for grilling. [...] It is no doubt that it is Jens Stoltenberg and Kristin Halvorsen that have undressed him. [...] What the government decided yesterday, they could have decided July 2nd (DA 11.8.2010).

The results of the exploration of the alternatives were presented at the start of February 2011. A second difficulty for the government was the debate over local hospitals. The 2005 government platform of the red-green coalition explicitly states that no local hospitals are to be closed down in the current period. However, the Parliament's current plan for reform in the health sector involves closing down birthing units and emergency services in the northern, central and western parts of Norway. In December 2010 the building of a hospital in the city of Molde in Western Norway was postponed, causing demonstrations and protests outside the parliament. VG-commentator Frithjof Jacobsen commented on the uprising:

What does not work, neither in Western-Norway nor any other place, is to treat people like morons. The parties that do will be punished hard. And this is deserved [...] If they believe that condescending arguments and hesitating excuses hold up when faced with torchlight processions and angry westerners on home turf, they should spend their summer holiday in Norway the next ten years. Without broadband and iPad. Time should be spent talking to people (VG 18.12.2010).

A third political controversy was sparked by the arrest of Russian-born paperless asylum-seeker Madina Salamova in January 2011. Speaking Norwegian fluently, obtaining a master's degree at a Norwegian university and being merited "Norwegian of the year" for her contribution to illegal aliens, the planned deportation of Maria Amelie (pseudonym) caused much attention and debate. At one time, opinion polls showed that 60,6 percent of the Norwegian population said Amelie should be able to stay in Norway (VG 15.1.2011). Within the government, this view was particularly supported by SV, who criticised its coalition partner Ap for not overturning the Immigration Appeals Board's (UNE) decision to deny Amelie asylum and residency on humanitarian grounds. Ap's decision to condone the arrest was heavily criticised, here by VG's commentator and editor Elisabeth Skarsbø Moen on her VG-blog:

The issue shows the madness in the entire system of UNE, where the goal is to leave the decisions to a neutral bureaucracy so politicians would not have to relate to peoples' movements and to, in fact, human beings (14.1.2011).

Later, the public opinion made a dramatic shift in the Amelie-case, and 48 and 49 percent of those asked in polls now opposed Amelie staying in Norway (VG 22.1.2011, DB 31.1.2011). In the meantime, the government parties had opened for a solution for Amelie. Still demanding her eviction from Norway, the Justice department agreed to soften the rules for work immigration, allowing violators of the immigration law to be given new entry permits without the customary quarantine period. In the aftermath, the media was heavily criticised for being one-sided and based solely on emotion in their coverage of the Amelie-issue (Dagsavisen.no 2.2.2011). The three aforementioned political controversies for the government came on top of disclosures in 2010 of several named cabinet ministers wrongfully accepting gifts in connection with political assignments and coalition partner Sp illegally receiving party funds from two publicly owned energy companies.

Another much debated topic in January 2011 was the on-going discussion over the future of welfare. This reached a pinnacle in Norway in the early months of 2011 when the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) focused on this issue in their yearly convention held at the opera house in Oslo. The problems with a rapidly aging population, rising numbers of immigrants and welfare beneficiaries had been common to all western economies. Struggling to recover from the 2008 financial crisis, many European countries were forced to cut back on social security to cease public spending and rising deficits. *Klassekampen's* commentator Mimir Kristjansson noted:

The point about renewal of welfare is, naturally, that spending needs to be cut. But because support for welfare is so vast, it is political suicide for a politician to take this word in their mouth. The result is a debate dominated by new speech, with the words restructuring, renewal and sustainability most frequently used (7.1.2011).

A related welfare debate was sparked when the Conservative party (H) claimed it was a better guarantor for the welfare state than the Labour party. In Norway, Ap has commonly been tied to the expansion of the welfare state, especially because of the party's coherent government control from 1945-1965. Integration and immigration became an issue in the news after Ap presented their report on integration, "Diversity and possibility", in February. Here, the prohibition against the marriage of cousins gained particular attention.



### 5.1.2 *The commentators and their newspapers*

Although the first months of 2011 presented commentators with the same exigencies, the commentary article as a rhetorical response is dependent on particular constraints and a diversity of readers that are individual to each of them. The newspapers' style of writing and profile could be included as one of the rhetorical constraints inflicting the commentary as an end product. The profile of a newspaper is an established element that newspaper commentators may have little possibility to change. In this analysis, it is therefore regarded as part of the situational constraints. Nevertheless, a newspaper's profile or line is not a wholly deterministic element, and commentators are thought to have some flexibility in the way they argue. In fact, some pundits are instructed to disagree with the newspaper's broad editorial stance for the sake of debate and sales revenue (McNair 2010:72). To place the pragma-dialectical analysis of argumentation in its right context, the background and newspapers of the three chosen star commentators must be taken in account.

#### 5.1.2.1 MARIE SIMONSEN AND DAGBLADET

Marie Simonsen (b. 1.6.1962) is an interesting exception in an otherwise male-dominated commentary scene in Norway<sup>9</sup>. Simonsen is also younger than many of her male counterparts, and she headed the commentary department in *VG* as early as age 35. Marie Simonsen has previously worked for the newspapers *Dagens Næringsliv*, *VG* and *Dagbladet*. She has no journalistic education and only briefly studied law, literature and political science. Although she has no familiar political background, she has marked herself a feminist and an opponent of the State Church and monarchy. In an evaluation of Norwegian commentators in 2009, Simonsen was referred to as a supporter of the current red-green coalition government (morgenbladet.no 11.9.2009). An information centre on gender research awarded her commentary column in 2008, and in 2011 she received the Editor's Union's "Opinionative of the year". "The winner has strong opinions on many things, and has amused, provoked and awoken many readers", wrote the jury (journalisten.no 10.3.2011). Simonsen comments on a wide range of issues when acting as star commentator for *Dagbladet*. Her all-rounder status and informal

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<sup>9</sup> Female commentators do of course exist. Elisabeth Skarbø Moen (*VG*), Hanne Skartveit (*VG*) and Hege Ulstein (*Dagsavisen*) are but a few examples.

educational background could suggest Simonsen has reached her role as columnist because of her journalistic style and abilities to comment.

*Dagbladet* is one of Norway's largest national newspapers and tabloids. Although it has traditionally been tied to the Left Party, *Dagbladet* is today regarded as an independent, culturally radical and liberal newspaper. People often refer to it lovingly as schizophrenic, as it holds both serious political and cultural coverage and more sensationalised consumer and entertainment journalism (Klaussen 1986:28). Its multifaceted profile should make for a heterogeneous readership, appealing to different segments of the population. In 2002, *Dagbladet* launched their slogan "Strong opinions", which reflects a prioritisation of commentaries and interpretive journalism. In an account of the history of *Dagbladet*, Martin Eide (1993) characterises the style of the newspaper as uncompromising. Distinguished by a blending of genres, the subjective journalism of the paper can sometimes be similar to slander, Eide writes:

The ideology of *Dagbladet* and much of its practice can clearly be ascribed to the goal of raising debate and temperature. Its journalism is not only supposed to measure temperature, it is supposed to drive it up. The newspaper is not a thermometer. It should add fire to the flame to uphold the glow in public discussion (Eide 1993:477 [my translation]).

Although Eide's account is based on the newspaper throughout history, it is likely to also have some resonance in the newspaper's style today.

In my sample, Marie Simonsen is the only pundit to comment on what in 2011 became known as the Adecco-scandal. In February, *NRK* revealed violations of the Working Environment Act at the privately run *Ammerudlunden* nursing home in Oslo. Employees had been working illegal overtime and many slept in the basement of the nursing home between shifts. Sparking a debate on privatisation, the Adecco-case came shortly after *Dagbladet* had written several articles on similar poor working conditions in the sanitation sector. For Simonsen to address the Adecco-case could serve to underscore *Dagbladet's* ability to forestall the importance of the issue of social dumping. Simonsen is also the only commentator to comment on the Conservative party's nominations to Oslo City Council, where politician Julie Voldberg was bypassed in favour of the less well-known Øyvind Sundelin. All three newspapers in the sample included stories on the issue after news broke that the chief secretary of the Conservative party had sent a text message to a Voldberg-supporter, expressing warnings against her nomination.

Knowing Simonsen's feminist-background, for her to be the only commentator to comment on the Voldberg-controversy is perhaps not unnatural. Simonsen is also the only pundit to include EU's data retention directory (DRD) as a topic of one of her commentaries. Enabling the storage of all traffic data for e-mail, telephones and Internet for six months up to two years, the directory was voted on in the Norwegian Parliament, Stortinget, in April 2011. As governing parties SV and Sp refused to accept it, the Labour party was forced to turn to the opposition for support. Another topic Simonsen is alone to comment on is the publishing of the Conservative party's leader Erna Solberg's book. She is the commentator who writes commentaries least frequently, as her ten commentaries stretch over a period of 93 days. All topics in Simonsen's columns were issues of current interest being covered in other news media at the time.

#### 5.1.2.2 ARNE STRAND AND DAGSAVISEN

Norwegian ex-politician and journalist Arne Strand (b. 17.3.1944) acquired a Master's Degree in political science before starting his journalistic career in the Norwegian newspapers *Vårt Land*, *Arbeiderbladet* (now known as *Dagsavisen*) and broadcaster *NRK*. Strand then ventured into politics, where he started in the Labour Party's student organisation before serving as political advisor for Ap and Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland from 1987-1989. In 1989, he returned to journalism and *NRK*, before becoming political editor in *Arbeiderbladet* in 1990. Strand has had the job of chief editor in this paper on three different occasions. In 2009, he was awarded "Opinionative of the year" by the Norwegian Editors' Union. When receiving it, Strand emphasised the expansion of the commentary genre because commentators "dare to have stronger opinions" (DA 12.3.2009). "A completely necessary prerequisite for a serious and high-quality political journalism" Strand continued. Provided readers are aware of his educational background, Strand's Master degree in political science suggests he has useful theoretical knowledge in addition to his journalistic experience. His ties with the Labour party are well known, and the subscription newspaper *Dagsavisen* has traditionally been the leading newspaper in the labour movement in Norway. Becoming formally independent from the Labour party in 1991, the paper is now owned by the foundation Dagsavisen. However, a preamble still states that the values of the newspaper are based on the "labour movement's ideas on freedom, democracy and equality" (Journalisten 12.12.2011). The old political ties to Ap are also clearly reflected

in the paper's leading article and commentaries (Barstad 2003:125, Breivik 2009:53). Allern (2001:307) explains how a newspaper's traditions, political attitudes and values can be kept "in the walls" of an editorial newsroom, even though their days as party organ are over.

Arne Strand stands out in the sample as the only commentator to write exclusively about the Labour party or the current government coalition. He is the only pundit in the sample to write about Ap's national committee meeting – topic in two of his commentaries. Strand is also the only pundit to include three commentary articles on the issue of oil exploration in Lofoten and Vesterålen in Northern Norway. In January 2011, a new management plan for the Barents Sea was up for revision, and the government had to make a decision on whether or not to allow oil production in these vulnerable coastal areas. The decision was controversial because opponents of oil exploration warned that issuing a consequence report was merely a costly first step on the way to full oil production. This was the standpoint of government party SV, who campaigned against any oil production in Northern Norway. The Labour party was more positive towards a consequence report, and the party is also positive towards oil production in some areas of the region. Strand is by far the commentator writing commentaries most frequently, and his ten commentaries stretches from the start of January to the 26th of February, a total of 57 days.

#### 5.1.2.3 HARALD STANGHELLE AND AFTENPOSTEN

Harald Stanghelle (b. 13.1.1956) is a Norwegian journalist with a background from the newspapers *Vaksdals-Nytt*, *Dagbladet*, *Aftenposten* and *Arbeiderbladet*. From 1995 through to 2000 he was chief editor in *Dagbladet* before becoming political editor in *Aftenposten* in 2007. Harald Stanghelle has worked as a fisherman, conscripted soldier and press officer in the UN force in Libanon. He has no known political background or clear political sympathies. In 2001, Stanghelle's commentaries from the court room was awarded "The Great Journalist prize". "This type of journalism is controversial and is rightly much discussed", the pundit replied about the commentary genre (Sneve 2002:31). Stanghelle's profile seems more public than personal, and little is known about his background. His ethos may therefore be tied more to his journalistic virtues

and to his employer *Aftenposten*, because audiences have few other impressions to go by.

The Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* has traditionally been tied to the Conservative party. Some of this conservatism – although subtle – can still be detected in the paper’s leaders and commentaries today (Barstad 2003:125). Declared to be an independent and conservative newspaper, *Aftenposten* is committed to the ideal of “securing freedom of expression, individual freedom and supporting our social and cultural common responsibilities” (AP 14.1.2012). Media researcher Jo Bech-Karlsen has said the newspaper is a “liberal newspaper at the political centre, very dialogue and consensus oriented” (DB 14.1 2010). He elaborated:

The newspaper’s commentators are concerned with not pushing issues to extremes and instead seek dialogue at any price. The goal is not to provoke unnecessarily. Harald Stanghelle, who maybe is their most influential commentator, is so dialogue oriented that he is almost parodied for not having standpoints [...] As long as the commentators are knowledgeable, this is equally interesting as the extreme tabloids (DB 14.1.2010).

*Aftenposten* is the country’s largest newspaper, and despite its national reach, the paper is based and concentrated around the Norwegian capitol and Eastern Norway. *Dagsavisen* has the same regional focus and is an important competitor for subscribers in these areas.

Harald Stanghelle is the pundit most inclined to comment on topics that are not on the national news agenda. In my sample, he writes two commentaries about Arne Treholt, a former Labour party politician and diplomat convicted of high treason and espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union and Iraq during the Cold War. After being sentenced to twenty years in prison, the Norwegian government pardoned Treholt in 1992. In September 2010, the book *The forgery* reopened debate on the issue, as it brought claims that central evidence in the case against Treholt was forged. The book led the Norwegian Criminal Cases Review Commission to evaluate Treholt’s case once more to decide if his court case and sentence from 1985 was to be reopened. As media attention died down after the book was published, Stanghelle still focused on the case up until the Norwegian

Criminal Cases Review Commission made the decision.<sup>10</sup> A second issue commented on by Stanghelle, which was given little focus by the national news media, was a local issue from the Norwegian municipality of Tønsberg. The second leader of the Progression party (Frp), Per Arne Olsen, was in January 2011 freed from corruption charges made against him after he jumped the queue when buying an apartment. The sale was made after Olsen as mayor of Tønsberg had allowed the expansion of the apartment complex, causing the local newspaper *Tønsbergs Blad* to bring the story forth. Stanghelle is also the only commentator to include foreign events in a commentary, as he writes about the uprising in the Middle East in January 2011. He also includes one commentary on the controversy that followed after an Ap-politician expressed disapproval of a person with Downs Syndrome being brought to meet politicians prior to the Parliament debates. The girl, Marte Goksøyr, was brought by the opposition parties to protest the proposal of offering ultrasounds to women in the twelfth week of pregnancy. The Labour party, initiator of the suggestion, criticised Goksøyr's presence as a circus stunt. Stanghelle is also the only pundit to write a commentary on SV's national committee held in March. The commentator writes ten commentaries in 85 days, which is approximately the same as Marie Simonsen.

The context in which the three commentators write their commentaries is distinctly different, as their backgrounds are versatile and their newspapers' profiles unique. This is an essential backdrop when exploring how 1) star commentators validate their standpoints and opinions with argumentation and 2) create ethos.

## **5.2 Fallacious argumentation**

To explore whether the three commentators reflect the necessary conditions of solving a conflict of opinion, their argumentation is evaluated in reference to the ten rules of a critical discussion in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation. The ten rules is here reiterated and numbered on the basis of an account by Sigrell (1999:105-121):

- 1) No party must hinder the other in furthering a standpoint or cast doubt over one.

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<sup>10</sup> In the recent year, Stanghelle has played a role as prioritised star commentator on the Treholt-issue. Covering Treholt's arrest in 1984 for *Arbeiderbladet*, Stanghelle has since then been following the case as both journalist and commentator. In 2011, Stanghelle also published a book on the issue.

- 2) A party that furthers a standpoint must defend it, if asked to do so by the other party.
- 3) A party's attack on a standpoint must be related to the standpoint itself that the other has furthered.
- 4) A party may defend the standpoint only by furthering argumentation that supports the standpoint.
- 5) A party cannot mistakenly present something as a premise left out by the other party or deny a premise he himself has left out.
- 6) A party cannot wrongly present a premise as an accepted starting point or deny a premise that represents an accepted standpoint.
- 7) A party cannot regard a standpoint as completely defended if the defence is not made using an argumentation scheme that is correctly implied.
- 8) A party can only use arguments that are logically valid or that can be made valid by making one or more premises explicit.
- 9) An unsuccessful defence of a standpoint must result in retraction by the party who furthered the standpoint. If one party has made a successful defence of a standpoint, the other must retract its doubts about the standpoint.
- 10) A party may not use unclear or ambiguous formulations and he or she must interpret the opposing party as accurately and precise as possible.

Because the boundaries for when arguments qualify as fallacies can sometimes seem indefinite and arbitrary, a systematic overview of fallacies has little quantitative value in itself. However, an overview of the fallacies found in the commentaries allows a comparison between the pundits and makes it easier to map the tendencies and strategies in the pundits' argumentation. The rule violations made by the pundits can be summarised in the following overview:

Table 1: Rule violations (fallacies) made by the commentators

Rule	Marie Simonsen	Arne Strand	Harald Stanghelle	Total:
1	24	5	1	30
2	18	31	6	55
3	7	2	-	9
4	19	19	1	39
5	3	-	-	3
6	10	13	-	23
7	15	33	7	55
8	5	4	-	9
9	2	2	-	4
10	15	34	9	58
Total:	118	143	24	285

The table shows that the pragma-dialectical discussion rule 10 is the rule most frequently broken by the three commentators in the sample. The rule requires all parties in a discussion to avoid using ambiguous and indistinct language in order to ensure that the discussion is as clear as possible (Eemeren et al. 1996:285ff). Here, Arne Strand singles out by presenting a total of 34 arguments that are considered to breach discussion rule 10. In Marie Simonsen's sample, violations happen about half again as many times, and with Harald Stanghelle, the number is even smaller. The dispersion is about the same between Strand, Simonsen and Stanghelle with the second and third most commonly made fallacies, which is a tie between rule 2 and 7. Rule 2 requires parties to defend their standpoint and rule 7 obliges all arguers to use valid and correct argumentation schemes when arguing for their standpoints. The fourth most common fallacies made by the commentators are violations against discussion rule 4 about relating arguments in defence of a standpoint to the actual content of the standpoint. The aim of this rule is to ensure that arguments are to the point and relevant. Simonsen and Strand are overrepresented in this category, while Stanghelle again separates from the two by only presenting one argument thought to be violations of rule 4. Rule 1 requires all parties in a discussion to not hinder others in doubting a standpoint or present standpoints of their own. This is the fifth most violated discussion rule, where



Marie Simonsen represents the large majority. The sixth most common discussion rule violation comes in relation to rule 6, which allows no arguer to present premises that are not accepted by the participants in a discussion or deny premises that are agreed on. Only Strand and Simonsen violate this rule when they argue using presuppositions that are not viewed as accepted starting points. *Straw man* and illogical arguments are the seventh most common fallacies made in the commentators' argumentation. The former are arguments that violate rule 3, which is again aimed at ensuring that argumentation is to the point when arguers question the argumentation of the opponent. Here, Marie Simonsen is by far the main offender. Illogical arguments violate rule 8, which requires all parties to argue with logically valid arguments. Arne Strand and Marie Simonsen is at a tie with this type of fallacy.

Rule 5 and 9 seems to largely be upheld in the argumentation of the three pundits in the sample. Examples of violations of these rules are therefore only briefly explained, whereas the fallacies presented more frequently are described in more detail. Discussion rule 5 states that no party can faultily ascribe the other party with an implicit premise or deny a premise that has been left implicit. One example from the commentaries could be this argument from Marie Simonsen: "it is naïve to think that gender does not play a role [in why Julie Voldberg was not nominated for City Council]" (DB 3.4). Here, Simonsen ascribes a fictitious premise to those who oppose her standpoint; they are simply too blind to face the truth, and if they be a little more realistic, they would realise that she was right. This is of course a premise that those who see gender as irrelevant in this issue would perhaps not agree to. Discussion rule 9 states that an unsuccessful defence of a standpoint must lead the party who presented it to retract it. In the case of a successful defence, the party who did not initially believe the standpoint must agree that the disbelief was illegitimate. The emphasis on rationality in pragma-dialectics is evident in this rule. To believe that a standpoint is right because an opponent has not been successful in defending theirs is one of the fallacies connected to this rule, called *argumentum ad ignorantiam*. The *false dichotomy* presented here by Arne Strand is one example:

Last election term, SV made a difference in the government. Building day care facilities and Kristin Halvorsen's leading of the Finance Department are examples of this. SV is drowning. That is unliveable for both SV and the government (DA 18.1).

Strand argues that SV could break from the government coalition over the Amelie-issue by contrasting the Amelie-issue against the party's accomplishments last year. This gives the audience a false, or at the very least doubtful, impression that governing is about either making reforms and steering through crisis or having to let the coalition dissolve. On closer inspection, it seems obvious that SV's successful last year could just as easily serve as a reason for voters to be especially patient with the party when it encounters controversy – which is the exact opposite of Strand's point. Moreover, Strand's argument has similarities with another fallacy called *ignoratio elenchi*, or irrelevant argumentation. To point to the discrepancy between this year and the former has inherently little relevance to explain his standpoint that SV is drowning, and the argument can therefore also be viewed as a violation of discussion rule 4. This illustrates that many of the rule violations and subsequent fallacies are related and similar. To allow as much systematisation and overview as possible, fallacies are here presented in connection with the rule the argument can be said to violate. The abovementioned examples from Simonsen and Strand are also a reminder and illustration of the apparent difficulty in deeming arguments that are common in everyday discourse as fallacies without argumentative value. Surely, several weak arguments placed together can still have some argumentative function. To constantly evaluate how well a pundit's standpoint is supported through measuring the relative value of each argument is nevertheless too complicated for the scope of this presentation. It is thus timely to repeat the definition of fallacies as weak arguments, in contrast to being invalid. The object of the fallacy-analysis is not so much to determine the fallaciousness in the arguments of the three pundits but to identify how they argue and explore the differences in their argumentation. Aristotle's explanation of fallacies as arguments that lack character emphasises the intrinsic relationship between fallacies and the credibility of argumentation. Indications about the overall argumentative quality in the commentaries are thus explicitly tied to determining what ethos the pundits constitute. There is considerable discrepancy in the frequency in which fallacious arguments occur between the three commentators. They all peak with different rule violations, which is explored later in their different strategies of argumentation. In the following, examples of arguments that violate each of the discussion rules are explained in more detail, starting with those most frequent. These can reveal important tendencies in the pundits' argumentation

### 5.2.1 Ambiguous arguments

The most commonly made fallacy in the commentaries is the *ambiguity-fallacy*. This fallacy arises when precision levels in the pundits' argumentation are so low it is difficult for an audience to contest or rebut the claims that are furthered. Explanations, concretisation and examples are often completely lacking when the pundits give their characterisations, opinions and evaluations. To illustrate, in her commentary about the Conservative party's leader Erna Solberg's new book, Marie Simonsen argues that it is "critical towards the younger and squarer politician who earned the nickname Jern-Erna" (DB 23.2). Simonsen then refers to someone suggesting the name Soft Mama as Solberg's most fitting hypothetical porn star stage name and replies: "She might like this name less than Iron-Erna, but softer and broader are fitting characterisations" (DB 23.2). No arguments are ever given to support her depiction of the Conservative-leader or explain what the characterisations actually entail. Instead, her descriptions seem empty and solely related to Simonsen's personal perceptions of Solberg's personality. This is also illustrated by the following example from Harald Stanghelle – taken from a pool of many similar excerpts:<sup>11</sup>

Kristin Halvorsen is furthermore **not particularly credible** when she in NRK yesterday blatantly claimed, "it is not true that the case [Maria Amelie] stings in SV". **Oh, really?** (AP 17.1).

This excerpt highlights the first way ambiguity occurs in the commentaries, where uncertainty about which criteria the audience should apply to the statements can cause misinterpretations (E&G 1992:198). What does it mean when a politician is "not particularly credible"? As the basis of the evaluations is left entirely absent, newspaper readers have little possibility of evaluating the acceptability of Stanghelle's claim. Another example of ambiguity violating rule 10 could be when Arne Strand explains how SV's Kristin Halvorsen saved the government coalition from "becoming unglued" over the Amelie-issue:

Kristin Halvorsen has a remarkable ability to **turn the negative into positive, see light where others only see darkness.** These are the qualities a good leader should have (DA 22.1).

Strand does not provide sound argumentation and analysis to explain how Kristin Halvorsen's leadership skills were enough to prevent the government from dissolving –

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<sup>11</sup> Whenever particular phrasing and language is especially central to the fallacy in question, this is highlighted with a background color.

which was the outcome Strand predicted in his column on January 18<sup>th</sup>, four days earlier. Again, it is difficult to prove a quality of seeing light instead of darkness, much less define what it actually entails. Similarly, the audience could equally question what “solid analyses” and a “presentation, on which there was nothing to object to” (DA 18.2) actually mean when Strand uses these characteristics as the only basis to predict that the newly appointed chiefs of the Central bank and Statistical bureau will be successful. The criteria that Strand places in his evaluations are unknown to all others, and readers are therefore left to trust and accept whatever definitions the pundit presents without any possibility for evaluating his claims.

*Ambiguity fallacies* violate critical discussions because they give no clear implications of what defence opponents or audiences should require of the standpoint (E&G 1992:199ff). Ambiguity therefore results in fallacious arguments when the meaning of a claim is so vague it is unclear what is needed to defend it. Warning readers against being fooled by the Conservative party moving toward the centre of politics, Simonsen argues, “The Conservative party are experts in irreversible changes in society” (DB 23.2). The commentator gives no examples or evidence to concretise her claim. When left unsupported, the audience might be unsure of what the commentator actually proposes, and it is equally difficult for them to counter her argument. Thus, Simonsen seemingly escapes the burden of proof by presenting a standpoint ambiguously. Nevertheless, the audience could just as easily require it for the argument to be made probable. “Errors in the system occur when the system has no respect for its employees” (DB 26.2), writes Simonsen after the Adecco-case surfaced. The commentator uses vague phrasing and words that have little concrete value: who or what is the system, how is the lack of respect visible, and what is the basis of the commentator’s claim? Whenever pundits present their standpoints as vague, audiences are implicitly expected not to question them. To do so would mean casting serious doubt over the commentator’s expertise and integrity. Readers either accept the standpoint or they must abandon all trust in the commentator entirely. Because of the readers’ natural wish to be oriented on political issues in society, readers might be naturally encouraged to accept them. Because of the difficulties in predicting outcomes or presenting interpretations of constantly changing political situations, ambiguous language could be a natural consequence and necessary strategy to safeguard against unforeseen future outcomes. To illustrate, none of the

aforementioned examples that look like *ambiguity-fallacies* could ever be refuted or proven otherwise; the phrasing is simply too indistinguishable and imprecise.

Ambiguous and indistinctive language is reoccurring in the all three commentator's argumentation. However, Harald Stanghelle is both using ambiguities less frequently and in a different manner than Simonsen and Strand. Whenever his standpoints are vague and unspecified, they illustrate a third way ambiguity could serve to avoid argumentation. This particular variant is termed *platitudes* by Anderson and Furberg (1984:181ff). Here, the content of the argument is bordering the redundant, and the proposition is regarded to be so obvious it is almost empty of content. When Stanghelle explains how "There is security in things that are well directed, like it often is insecurity in the surprising" (AP 21.2), it seems to have little argumentative value. Moreover, arguing that the tendency of veteran policy becoming an important issue "is both a new and an old phenomenon" (AP 4.1), the standpoint seems so undeniable and straightforward it is almost obsolete to demand a defence. When Stanghelle states the obvious in this manner, readers could suspect him to include these remarks not as arguments or standpoints but as cleverly formulated phrases presented for their ornamentation value. In addition, Stanghelle simultaneously reassures us that our concurrent views of the world are correct. Nevertheless, Stanghelle's argumentation clearly shows that he prefers to rely more on consensual points of view rather than any specific opinions. Presenting his standpoint "There will not come a political and public carbon copy of yesterday's Arabic world", this is again difficult to oppose, as the word "carbon copy" ("blåkopi") means exact replica or duplication. Thus, Stanghelle's argumentation borders the tautological, with claims that necessarily have to be true.

A fourth type of violation of discussion rule 10 happens when there exists ambiguity around what or whom the commentator is actually talking about, or what is actually said about it (E&G 1992:198f). "First and foremost, it is sheer idiocy" (DB 26.2), Simonsen writes in one of her commentaries, leaving it uncertain as to what this idiocy is actually referring; that married elderly couples are placed in different nursing homes or a son's letter to *Aftenposten* complaining about his parents separation? When claiming that Julie Voldberg (H) was victim of power politics when she was not nominated to Oslo City Council, Simonsen supports her claim with the argument:

A male politician would never have been compared to Paradise-Petter [figure from reality-TV]. But Heidi Nordby Lunde [...] defended on Twitter that Voldberg was presented as having made a career on big boobs (DB 3.3).

Simonsen again illustrates how ambiguity prevents debate when audiences do not understand what is actually being said. By not including or explaining the reference to Twitter, the commentator stands in danger of excluding those readers who have not followed the controversy on Voldberg. Instead, she asks them to take her statements as sufficient proof. Readers might however find it difficult to believe that Lunde would condone and defend the fact that women make careers on their breasts. It becomes difficult to understand what Simonsen means, and readers could be very interested in an explanation.

The requirement to use clear language is a potential collision point between the requirements of the commentary genre and the ideal of the critical discussion. As commentators are praised for their personal style and creative pens, they are required to use metaphoric language and creative metonyms. Using a conventional metaphor or factual argument might not be equally successful as an image. "It is illustrated that we are not to think, but act on the insecure instinct of suspicion (AP 17.1) writes Harald Stanghelle after Maria Amelie's arrest. What is actually meant is somewhat unclear: was it sentiments of racism and prejudice in the police that caused Amelie to be arrested, is intolerance dominating our entire society, and are we as a result never fair when evaluating applications for asylum in this country? The audience might like to know Stanghelle's reason for implying that evaluations of applications for asylum are based on suspicion. Using indistinct phrasing however relieves Stanghelle from giving defence of his standpoint; when audiences do not know what is meant, how can they ask the commentator for proof? This metaphor is also a presentational device, where the audience is invited to reflect on the connection between it and reality. These examples of ambiguity from the commentaries thus highlight the sometimes difficult balance in pragma-dialectics between persuasion and reason, as persuasive allegories, allusions and metaphors run the risk of not being understood because of their inherent ambiguity. Because creative language is also a virtue in journalism, it seems difficult to regard some of the ambiguous phrasing as fallacies – notwithstanding those remarks that prevent readers from participating when lack of clarity obscures the sharing of ideas and experiences. In these instances, the overall lack of argumentation in the commentaries

also contributes in leaving ambiguous language without argumentative value, causing it to be fallacious.

### 5.2.2 Asserting opinions as fact

The second most frequent fallacy made by commentators occurs when they assert their views as non-controversial truth-like declarations. Audiences are required to accept standpoints without argumentation, because the pundit's word is sufficient validation. Leaving opinions, judgements and evaluations without validation is a type of reasoning that violates discussion rule 2. This rule requires any party that furthers a standpoint to prove that it is acceptable. Only standpoints where there is no consensus demand defence and qualify as fallacies of *evading the burden of proof*. Commentators first *evade the burden of proof* when their standpoints and arguments are presented as so obvious that readers are wrong to cast doubt over its acceptability. "It is **announced and approved** a long time ago" that oil drilling in Lofoten and Vesterålen is the issue that can blow the government" (DA 29.1), Strand argues and presents his standpoint as fact. "The eagerness to prohibit is **of course** most visible when it comes to immigration" (DB 12.2), Marie Simonsen similarly writes, presenting her view as sacrosanct in need of no further discussion. Readers might be inclined to protest against both of Strand and Simonsen's claims, but as no arguments are given, the discussion is prematurely brought to a halt. By presenting their standpoints as evident, commentators avoid having to defend their standpoints with arguments: "Of course" (DA 12.2) Erna Solberg is wrong to claim ownership in the welfare state, and "no matter what", the Labour party's policy on immigration is "correct" (DA 12.2). Suggesting audience members who fail to accept the immediate self-explanatory standpoint are in some way less abled and completely in the wrong, assertions like these could be viewed as fallacies. Commentators also guarantee the correctness of their standpoints by giving audiences their explicit personal guarantees. "I am positive" that the new leaders of the statistical bureau and the central bank "will assert themselves with splendour" (DA 18.2) writes Arne Strand, leaving audiences to accept his standpoint based on the authorisation "because *he* said so". "I am certain" (DA 19.2) Strand again assures readers before declaring that the Centre party will not leave the government over the controversy of oil drilling in Northern Norway.

The tendency of evading the burden of proof is also evident in the way commentators often give no support at all to claims and instead leave the argument solely as an appeal to their vast authority as pundits. Their personal guarantee is implicitly legitimising the entire argument, and the accuracy and truthfulness of the commentators' analysis therefore ultimately rest on the commentators' credibility. When Marie Simonsen discusses the Amelie-issue, no arguments are given to make her following assertion probable – which is nevertheless presented with little reservation:

The solution should have come at day one, but instead they [Ap] chose open battle in all media channels. It will take time to heal the wounds created in the government (DB 22.1)

To suggest that there was a solution to Amelie's situation that is so obvious it need not even be made explicit could embarrass audiences, who may not know what this solution actually entails. (No arrest? An eviction? A speedier treatment of the case?). Moreover, as the demand for defence of a standpoint increases with the confidence and certitude that it is stated with (E&G 1992:199), the audience could easily expect the commentator to not find it difficult to present a successful argument.

Commentators also evade the burden of proof when arguments are related to the commentators' ideological positions in politics. "Siv Jensen's party has nothing to contribute" (DA 12.2) to business policy, Arne Strand boldly asserts without giving support. Freedom to choose is "the Conservative party's open sesame, a magical word disguising complex influences and irreversible changes" (DB 7.2), declares Marie Simonsen, repeating this unsupported claim about the Conservatives. Audiences might wish the commentators would provide arguments to reveal the actual truth-value of their assertions, especially as they look like typical political discourse that readers might recognise from debates. Again, those more unfamiliar with political argumentation might be excluded. "Today, the Conservative party must admit that without a substantial state ownership, we would hardly have Norwegian owned big businesses" (DA 12.2), claims Arne Strand. Instead of supporting his standpoint, he suggests that the Conservative party is now somehow admitting wrongs in the past. Using this non-redundant implicit premise also makes the argument similar to violations of rule 5. What is more, audiences could suspect a straw man argument, as Strand seems to suggest that the Conservative party wants no state ownership at all – a fictitious standpoint it is easier for him to rebut. Strand uses typical Labour party-rhetoric, but



audiences could be left wondering if the Conservative party really admit to this. By presenting them as unwillingly having to admit fault, he emphasises how reluctant testimony is the most convincing in arguments (Arnold and McCroskey 1967). Strand plays on the expectations of the audience and strengthens his own view while at the same time weakening the credibility of his opponent – who were proven wrong by Ap.

Resting on authority to make their statements probable, pundits seem to read a license to speculate, contemplate and give unsubstantiated opinions within their role as political commentators. This is especially prevalent in how predictions and forecasts are presented by commentators with the utmost confidence. Talk is not only of what *can* happen in the future, but often what *will* happen. Again, the commentators' authority is all the support that is given. "The oil and energy-minister will at least be staying until the government has made a new decision on monster masts" (DA 5.2) asserts Arne Strand. When left without any support to make his claim probable, the claim becomes a personal intuition or hunch impossible for audiences to evaluate. If readers do not apply expertise, authority and credibility to the claim, it becomes worthless. Similarly, when Marie Simonsen presents a prediction about what the Conservative party will vote on the issue of the Data Retention Directory, the assertion has little argumentative value:

She [Erna Solberg] **will not** waste a calorie on an issue that voters have little interest in [...] In short term thinking it could pay off to ease up on principles, but **this has** a sad tendency to catch up to you later (DB 9.2).

The statement serves to emphasise the commentator's authority by suggesting she has the insight and knowledge to make such predictions and forecasts – although she leaves them unsupported. Additionally, Simonsen presents the Conservative party as having no principles and backbone, which serves to discredit them as an opponent in the discussion. The prediction could therefore also be an example of the *argumentum ad hominem*-fallacy, as the argument is directed at the opponent rather than the standpoint. Arne Strand is by far the most eager to predict the outcome of political issues and situations, and his many predictions will be explored in the section devoted to Strand's strategies of argumentation.

In their discussion of the authority argument, Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992:139) accept that there exist authorities whose claims can only be legitimised by the fact that something was *said*. A referee assigning points and thereby changing reality is one of

their examples. To insinuate that pundits possess this institutional-like authority would perhaps sound ridiculous. Nevertheless, by presenting their authority as sufficient authorisation, commentators imply a similar importance on their own behalf. Pragmatically, dialectics emphasise how there exists no exceptions to the general rule that a speaker must defend a standpoint – no matter what degree of authority he or she employs. Overwhelming the audience with authority or placing themselves as guarantors to avoid giving argumentation is thus a fallacious argumentation move. When utilising their expertise as an authorisation for arguments, Arne Strand and Marie Simonsen inherently argue the fallacy *argumentum ad verecundiam*, the argument from authority. In argumentation theories, *ad verecundiam* is regarded to be a fallacy, and at the very best a weak argument. Whether or not something is asserted or supported with evidence also play an important role for ethos, argues rhetorician James McCroskey (1978:77). This is especially pertinent if audiences are not already in agreement with the claim that is made. Comparing ethos to a bank account, McCroskey argues that constant withdrawals from a source's ethos may lead to bankruptcy. Including evidence in support of claims avoids trading so heavily on ethos, and could instead result in ethos being strengthened (McCroskey 1978:77). It is however important to note how *Aftenposten's* Harald Stanghelle is dramatically different from his two commentary colleagues when it comes to making his standpoints and arguments probable to the public.

### 5.2.3 Faulty argumentation schemes

Fallacies related to discussion rule 7 arise equally often as do violations against discussion rule 2. Rule 7 states that a standpoint is regarded as defended only if the defence is made using an argumentation scheme that is correctly implied. Pragmatically, dialectical theory mentions three argumentation schemes universally acknowledged as sound: The symptomatic argumentation scheme (X is typical of Y), the instrumental argumentation scheme (Y is a result of X) and the analogous argumentation scheme (X can be compared to Y) (E&G 1992:160). These three schemes correspond to three types of arguments: Argument from authority, argument from consequence and argument from analogy. These arguments are all possible to misuse, resulting in several different fallacies.

### 5.2.3.1 LEANING ON THE AUTHORITY OF OTHERS

*Argumentum ad verecundiam* is a common violation of discussion rule 7 in the commentaries, where a faulty symptomatic argumentation scheme is presented as true because an authority confirms it. *Ad verecundiam* is a fallacy because the correctness of a standpoint is not dependent on whom or how many agrees to it. One of the reasons for excluding the authority argument from sound argumentation is that a discussion cannot lead to agreement when the use of authorities suppresses rational and reasoned argumentation. For every claim that is ever made there could be an equally credible spokesperson claiming the opposite. Thus, utilising authority in a discussion could only lead to a dispute being settled, not resolved (Sigrell 1999:113). When arguing against the data retention directory, Marie Simonsen bases one of her arguments entirely on the opinions of other authorities: “In their hearing Oslo public prosecutor’s office called DRD “a paradigm shift”. The Data Inspectorate says it will break through “the liberal wall” (DB 9.2). The opposing party in the discussion could just as easily point to authorities supporting an opposite view. In fact, Simonsen bases her commentary on arguing that PST – another authority – is wrong in their assessment of the issue. Leaving no support as to why some authorities should qualify as legitimate whereas others do not, Simonsen illustrates how furthering the views of others can bring the debate to a premature end or standstill.

The danger with arguments from authority is that the audience could be unduly influenced by the advice of a person who is not an expert after all. To avoid appeals to inflated respect for authority, commentators must ask themselves whether the authority is valid (Walton 1991:195). This depends on what qualifications the person holds and what areas the authority is used as expertise. Simonsen mentions editor in *Finansavisen* and commentator Trygve Hegnar as an authority who agrees with her claim that Julie Voldberg (H) was victim to power politics in the nominations to City Council:

Aside from the well-known feminist Trygve Hegnar, there was nobody who said that the chief secretary’s violation was an expression of a general hostility towards women (DB 3.4).

By presenting a person with the same job description as her as an authority that legitimises her standpoint, Simonsen both strengthens her claim as well as implies and underlines the authority she herself holds as pundit. Deciding whether Trygve Hegnar is a legitimate authority has too wide ramifications for this analysis for me to conclude.

Nevertheless, to use Hegnar in a show of hands-argument is a weak substantiation for a standpoint. Harald Stanghelle also refers to other journalists as authorities when he includes *Klassekampen's* Mimir Kristjansson as an authority that agrees with his standpoint that activist democracy must not be blindly trusted as a long-term guidance in politics. Stanghelle illustrates how authority arguments are again utilised to their full potential when the unexpected elements of their testimonies is emphasised. Stanghelle refers to Kristjansson who “as late as 2008 was the leader of Red Youth. An organisation that more than any other swears to activist democracy” (AP 3.2). When a supporter of activist democracy warns about its failures, the argument goes, surely no opposition could exist in this question. A similar discrepancy between the authority’s claim and the expectations of the audience is exploited for the sake of persuasiveness when Marie Simonsen argues that NHO is wrong to propose cuts in welfare:

Surprisingly enough, it was a representative from OECD who had to come in and calm the nerves. An organisation not exactly known for their inclinations towards social democratic sentimentality and embrace of the Nordic model, but Monika Queisser revealed she was a true friend of Norway (DB 7.1)

When a representative of an organisation furthering globalisation and market economy supports the Norwegian welfare state, the person is perceived as going against his or her own interest. Again, audiences are expected to reason that if the opponent agrees on this aspect, then it surely must be true. Simonsen nevertheless avoids mentioning the most dominating message and topic of Queisser’s speech – that there are several challenges in the Norwegian labour market.<sup>12</sup> She therefore fails to present all the factors of her opponent’s argument, leaving out the elements that would weaken her own. This hinders others in doubting her view, and the argument could also be a violation of discussion rule 1, in addition to being a *verecundiam*-argument that violates rule 7. Distorting her opponent’s standpoint could also be an example of a *straw man*.

In other instances, *verecundiam* arguments in the commentaries are based on vague authorities. Expertise and authority are here left unclear, making it a mistake to accord the argument with much weight (Walton 1991:180). “Reports in countries with DLD show that the directive is a threat towards press freedom” (DB 9.2), argues Simonsen,

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<sup>12</sup> Queisser’s speech at the conference is available online, allowing a rare opportunity to evaluate Simonsen’s arguments from what essentially was a secluded event for most readers. URL: <http://video.nho.no/video/1439> [Last viewed 5.10.2011]

but she remains vague about the nature of these “reports”. The argument could be seen as fallacious, because as Walton explains:

We may be so intimidated by the authority [...] that the mere phrase “according to experts” may inhibit reasonable dialogue or further questioning” (Walton 1991:180).

Including authorities instead of sound argumentation and analysis thus leaves audiences with little means to evaluate the acceptability of the claim for themselves, and the defence is weak.

#### 5.2.3.2 ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE

The number of people who believe something to be true is another important body of authority for an argument. When an argument is a faulty use of the symptomatic argumentation scheme in this manner, it constitutes a variant of the *ad verecundiam*-argument called *argumentum ad populum*. In this fallacy, the commentator avoids having to defend his standpoint because the majority is thought to support it. Though arguing on the basis of the majority is a psychologically powerful argument (Walton 2007:198), argumentation theories have viewed it as evidentiary weak and thus fallacious. As with the authority argument, suspicion against this line of reasoning is well known; just because everyone believes something does not make it right.

“What we “all” know to be true” (AP 21.2) writes Stanghelle to argue his standpoint that women who detect chromosome irregularities in ultrasounds in the twelfth week of pregnancy will end up having abortions. The commentator avoids having to defend his claim further by presenting it like there is full consensus. As there are opponents on this issue who say that the main goal with ultrasounds are saving more babies by detecting illness, Stanghelle’s claim about “all” is weak, and perhaps more of a strategy to neutralise critical questions more than a literal claim. The quotation marks also shows he acknowledges the exaggerated and non-literal function of his phrasing. However, to bolster his argument further, the commentator also includes an explicit face to the majority that agrees with his standpoint: ““It is hopeless when Ap pretends this is not true”, Dagsavisen’s Hege Ulstein precisely expresses it” (AP 21.2). Instead of providing arguments, Stanghelle concludes that everybody agrees with his premise and standpoint in the debate over ultrasounds – a claim reminiscent of the *ad populum*-fallacy.

In mass media rhetorical arguments, the support of public opinion is one of the most important factors in the success of an argument (Walton 2007:203). Using polls as journalistic argument is a documented development in political journalism (Beyer and Waldahl 2009). Allowing precision and quick factual information that is easily accessible and interpreted, opinion polls seems naturally important in the commentator's communication of expertise. However, the use of opinion polls requires an explanation of margins of error and other reservations for it to have true quality (Beyer and Waldahl 2009). Such reservations and specifics are largely absent in the argumentation in the commentaries, although polls serve as basis for arguments in all of the commentators' argumentation. Because of the similarities of polls to factual information and the natural weight that is attributed to the people in a democracy, readers are often told to accept conclusions based on opinion polls first hand. "The election inquiry has shown..." and "Opinion polls show... (DA 1.2) writes Strand, offering little caution when referring to polls as the basis of his argument. The people's support of Marie Simonsen's view could similarly make for a doubtful defence, as she not only reflects the weight that should be attributed to the people, but also suggests she knows what direction the people are going, what they think and feel, and how they perceive the government:

The strategy [of Ap and the government] seems to be that people after thinking about things will come to their senses and realise that the government is in the right. The reactions to Stoltenberg's technocratic rule does not only arise in the districts, but the uproar in Western Norway illustrates better than anything the distance that people in Groruddalen can also feel (DB 3.1).

No argumentation is given to make it plausible for readers that this is in fact what people think. Instead, Simonsen presents the people's agreement with her standpoint as enough validation for readers not to question her allegation that the government is arrogant. The argument is reminiscent of the *populum-fallacy*, although its clearly opinionated nature and lack of evidence also reflects *ad vereundiam*. Not only does everyone agree with the pundit's personal opinion, but her view of the government is also presented to be right because most people agree. Using the majority-argument becomes a strategy for the commentator to adapt her text to her audience. Although it is inherently impossible, Simonsen seemingly enters into the thinking of her mass audience and agrees with their wishes and opinions.

Asserting causality is another way opinion polls are used as arguments, which is similar to the fallacy of *argumentum ad populum*. There are several examples where the pundits

conclude that there is a causal relation between specific issues and the results of opinion polls. The fault in these arguments lays not only in their vague referrals to a majority but also in their conclusions about causality. Marie Simonsen and Arne Strand concludes:

The whole government is struggling, but Ap is leaking like a sieve. This tells us they are communicating poorly with voters (DB 22.1)

On both polls Ap is the largest party in the country. It apparently pays off for Ap that Jens Stoltenberg is hard and square on asylum policy (DA 1.2).

These arguments violate the instrumental argumentation scheme because two incidences are interpreted as cause and effect because they happen to be chronological in time, *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. Although there may be a connection between the two incidences appearing chronologically, there is however also a great possibility that other important elements are left out. The strong assertion about causality could therefore serve to cloud more complex connections and nuances. Using polls seem to replace the need for substantial arguments, and pundits do little to explain the dynamics that lie behind the numbers or their variations. When explaining why people have turned their backs on Amelie, Strand invokes an opinion poll to explain the shift in polls:

Most voters probably want her to go to blazes. For years opinion polls have told us that most people want a strict immigration and asylum policy (DA 1.2)

What was described as an uproar against Amelie's arrest that should be listened to (DA 18.1) have now become sentiments of xenophobia that Strand condemns. As no arguments are given to explain this sudden shift in the people's will, the use of polls instead simplifies reality. The *ad populum* argument is also similar to the fallacy *post ergo propter hoc*. It is important to note that Harald Stanghelle again makes an interesting exception when basing his argument on the people, and he refrains from making causal connections. Commenting on the connection between increased support for Ap and the Amelie-case, he uses polls from *Dagbladet* and *Klassekampen* with specific wording and results tied to this exact issue.

### 5.2.3.3 WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

Violations related to the instrumental argumentation scheme are the arguments from consequence that are either wrongly used or inappropriately applied. As illustrated by the examples above, the traditional *post hoc ergo propter hoc*-argument concludes that

one event causes another event simply because there is a correlation between the two events in time. Because the correlation can turn out to be a coincidence, the argument is viewed as a fallacy (Walton 1991:213). Marie Simonsen ascribes such causality to a situations when she comments on the DRD:

In the Conservative party several central members have been strongly critical, but lately they have moderated. This shows Erna has put her foot down (DB 9.2).

Because the audience knows little about the origins of this claim about internal Conservative party policy, the inference is left as the commentator's own personal claim. Similarly, when referring to the stories of poor working conditions in nursing homes, Simonsen concludes that "this tells us about a lack of respect for the jobs they do and about a health care system that closes its eyes for systematic law violations" (DB 26.2). Although the pundit's claims are inherently qualified guesses, to base them in actual events could give readers the perception that they are somehow more factual and correct. Nevertheless, as the causality has little grounds in reality, the arguments seem to be fallacious attempts to strengthen the pundit's authority.

The *slippery slope*-fallacy occurs when a proposal is criticised – without sufficient evidence – on the grounds that it will inevitably lead to a catastrophic end result (E&G 1992:23). Also called the domino effect-argument, it presumes that once you take the first step of accepting a proposal, there is an inevitable sequence of steps leading down a slippery slope. Simonsen argues along these lines when she cautions against cutting welfare: "This fall's protests on the issue of local hospitals is a mild breeze compared to the conflicts it will produce," (DB 7.1). Forewarning unimaginable but surely terrible consequences, the commentary writer exaggerates the possible negative consequences of what is yet a hypothetical viewpoint. The *slippery slope* argument is a fallacy if there is no distinction between what might develop and what will develop. Even so, to warn that something might happen is still a scare tactic to intimidate and silence the opposition and thereby close off the argument prematurely. There is similarly little reservation given when Simonsen explains the consequences of the data retention directory: "Once we break this boundary, the directive will inevitably become more extensive" (DB 9.2). Readers are warned that if they do not refuse to invoke the first step of this slippery slope – say no to the DRD – then the last horrible step will happen – and there will be no end to the violations against privacy. Harald Stanghelle utilises fear in this manner when



he argues against ultrasounds for women, as he warns about “the danger of a ”screening society“” (AP 21.2). If we do not decline ultrasounds, only the healthiest babies will be born and others end up discarded, goes the pundit’s argument. Allowing more ultrasounds is allegedly the first step in this development. In this case, the mere threat of this development is enough to not allow the proposal, but in reality no arguments are given to make it a probable outcome. Together with the *ad populum* argument mentioned above, this is the only argument given in support of the standpoint.

The fallacy of *secundum quid* uses an argumentation scheme incorrectly by making generalisations based upon observations that are either insufficient or not representative (E&G 1992:214). One example from my sample is how the pundits make generalisations from observations that are thought to be instances of the general. Simonsen argues along these lines when defending her standpoint that Ap is compliant towards their voters:

This Christmas, Stoltenberg has given many interviews that have revealed he has a temper. He can for example get mad when disagreement occurs, because he feels it evident that he is right. It was said with some kind of irony, but it sounds heartfelt (DB 3.1).

Even if the Prime Minister’s temper should affect his work as a politician – which many would perhaps see as unlikely – it nevertheless seems obvious that this is not representative of all Ap-members. In addition to concluding on the basis of an insufficient example, Simonsen is also ascribing the feature of one part to the character of the whole. This is similar to the fallacy *composition*, which violates discussion rule 8, requiring all arguments to be logically valid. Another example of *secundum quid* is when Arne Strand argues “It is possible to get filthy rich in Norway. Kjell Inge Røkke, Stein Erik Hagen and Petter Stordalen are proof” (DA 12.2). Again, it seems far-fetched to conclude the correctness of his standpoint (“it is a myth that businesses are slowed by taxes, levies, paper work and fees”) on the basis of a few examples of people acquiring wealth. The argument could also be viewed as logically invalid: To present the reasoning “if a country has a successful business policy, individuals are able to get rich” excludes other important factors determining whether or not a society stimulates people to build businesses and acquire wealth. The combination of the different fallacies could therefore give the impression that his argument is sound, when it actually is not.

Arguments from analogy make comparisons between similar situations and conclude that they should or will be treated consistently (E&G 1992:97). One example of reasoning based on analogy is when Arne Strand explains why “The government will not let go of the coalition over the issue of Lofoten” (DA 29.1):

Kristin Halvorsen is the red-green coalitions’ mother. Jens Stoltenberg is its father, even if he arrived later in the birth process. You do not give up helping your child, especially when it is experiencing trouble (DA 29.1).

Instead of giving arguments as to why the coalition would stay on despite its differences over Lofoten – which he could be faced with if the outcome turned out different – Strand uses an analogy to defend it. Analogies can also be considered as presentational devices, and strategic manoeuvring designed to engage and persuade audiences. However, the baby-analogy is the only argument presented in defence of the standpoint – aside from a claim that voters have short memory (DA 29.1) – suggesting the comparison has some argumentative value. Also, Strand repeats the analogy on another occasions, leading audiences to believe it should be emphasised (DA 19.1). The analogous argumentation scheme is used incorrectly if other parties in the discussion do not accept their use (E&G 1992:161ff). In the government as a baby-argument it seems the premise of the argument is the same as what the analogy sets out to prove: if you are prone to believe the government will stay on, you are likely to accept the analogy of the government as the cherished infant of the coalition parties. The analogy could therefore also be an example of the fallacy *petitio principii*, or circular reasoning. This argument falsely presents something as a common starting point by advancing argumentation that amounts to the same thing as the standpoint (E&G 1992:214). In any case, as the analogy replaces sound arguments, and because not all would accept it, the argument is similar to the fallacy *wrongful comparison* or *false analogy*. Strand gives what might be perceived as a legitimate argument but what really is unacceptable reasoning.

#### 5.2.4 Irrelevant argumentation

Discussion rule 4 in pragma-dialectics requires all parties in a discussion to direct their defence of a standpoint towards the actual standpoint in question. Violations happen either by defending standpoints with something other than arguments directed at the standpoint – termed *non-argumentative means of persuasion* – or by using irrelevant argumentation – *ignoratio elenchi* (E&G 1992:205). Violations against this rule expose

arguers who make no serious attempts to persuade the opponent of the legitimacy of their standpoint (Sigrell 1999:109). The first variant of non-argumentative persuasion happens through the *ad verecundiam*-fallacy, where an arguer parades his or her personal qualities and thus avoids responsibility in defending the standpoint. In the commentaries, this happens when commentators instil a sense of confidence and authority on behalf of themselves, which ultimately trumps the need for argumentation. One example from the commentaries could be the tendency of pundits to imply a role of insiders. “Voldberg has constantly made statements that were not cleared in five exemplars,” (DB 3.3) argues Simonsen, suggesting that she not only knows about internal incidents in the Conservative party but also the discussions they cause. Because the nature of the claim is based on exclusiveness, audiences have no possibility to evaluate it. “Nobody asked the otherwise pragmatic Stoltenberg if this was a good case to be non-compromising in” (DB 22.1) Simonsen again asserts, as though she knows the inner happenings of the Labour party in the Amelie-issue. Access is however not only asserted within the inner circles of power, as the innermost workings of the politicians’ minds and their true personal thoughts are also retrievable for pundits:

Someone is not using their head, **thought** Kristin Halvorsen when she heard about the arrest of Maria Amelie (DB 22.1).

Luckily, Stoltenberg **is no fan** of the overriding-line, even if it looked like it in the Maria Amelie-case (DA 1.2).

Kristin Halvorsen said that SV and Ap still cooperate well, because **she realised** (“innså selv”) that the press would react to her speech, which was critical of the Labour party (DA 22.1).

Commentators also appeal explicitly to their own abilities as authorities and star commentators. Arne Strand emphasises how the Amelie-issue caused “the angriest reactions I have ever seen in the five years I have followed the red-green government” (DA 18.1). “I have followed SSB-chiefs and Central bank-chiefs in a number of years” (DA 18.2), the commentator similarly asserts before presenting his personal views on their performance. Marie Simonsen points out her qualities to make her argument on hijab more believable: “As a feminist, I too feel...” (DB 12.2). Such referrals to ethos might have a natural place in the rhetorical argumentation analysis, and it seems unconstructive to regard them as fallacious. However, as none of these ethos-appeals to authority, expertise and knowledge are matched by arguments or explanations, their value as persuasive argument is at best weak.

Another related method of persuasion is the *ad populum*-fallacy, which in relation to discussion rule 4 is characterised by appeals to mass enthusiasms or popular sentiments in order to win support for an argument. As with the majority-argument, the folksy appeal of a standpoint that resonates in the people is naturally coveted in democratic societies. However, because it sometimes becomes a substitute for argumentation, it is often the target of criticism. An example of the emotional *populum*-fallacy from the commentaries could be Arne Strand, who after emphasising how the people share his strong convictions in the Amelie-case, elaborates the emotional elements of the issue further by reciting an e-mail he received from Stein Ørnhøi, a retired SV-politician:

“Best Sir Editor Arne [...] Have you written anything on Maria Amelie? [...] I am sad. [...] I am depressed by the fact that we let the misjudgements of parents haunt their children. If they had sent the parents of Maria A. out, then there would be some meaning in it all. Can someone please handle the political problems before it is too late? Oh my, oh my.” (DA 18.1)

When reciting the pathos-loaded message in its entirety, Strand plays on the emotions of the audience. He strongly implies that his supporters possess the values of humanity and dignity, suggesting the moral high ground is on their side. The argument can also be seen as an authority-appeal, as Strand is not alone in arguing for Amelie to stay. In fact, as there is someone who argues even stronger, Strand seems less swayed by emotion and more balanced and reasonable in comparison. Reciting the e-mail clearly implies that Strand is a go-to-guy in questions of matter. Because of the apparent role of emotion in rhetoric, it is difficult to evaluate whether emotional appeals like Strand’s are fallacies. Wikström (2007:121) holds that an argument becomes an *ad populum*-fallacy if the core of the argument is how something feels. When commenting on the Amelie-issue, none of the pundits focused on the consequences of allowing popular support to decide the fate of individuals. The problems with always following pathos instead of logos is illustrated in the way Marie Simonsen later shows disdain against the public in her commentary on the data retention directory, arguing that PST and the Police “have no more credibility than civil society. Still, politicians kneel” (DB 9.2). Moreover, Simonsen encourages Erna Solberg to go against the wishes of “most voters” who “are little interested” in DRD and therefore accept the directive (DB 9.2). The apparent inconsistencies in how the legitimacy of the majority is understood on different issues accentuate the weaknesses of the *ad populum*-argument; it was right on the Amelie-issue and wrong on the DRD.

The fallacy *ignoratio elenchi* describes how irrelevant argumentation can be used as a strategy to relieve the need for defence of a standpoint that has been questioned by an opponent. In the Amelie-case, Arne Strand refutes a standpoint made by SV-leader Kristin Halvorsen and claims she is wrong to tell voters to vote SV if they are in favour of a more lenient asylum policy (DA 22.1). His counterargument is based on a personal evaluation of the 2009 elections, which he presents without reservation:

Last years election was not about asylum policy, but about the financial crisis and government alternatives. Ap's good election was not owed to most Ap-voters wanting a stricter asylum policy. They voted Ap because they thought Jens Stoltenberg was best fitted to lead the country (DA 22.1).

Kristin Halvorsen's standpoint suggests that parties who support a more lenient policy have received too little support. By claiming that voters support Ap not because of their asylum policy but because of Jens Stoltenberg, Strand's argument does nothing to prove Halvorsen's standpoint wrong. The argument brought forward is inherently irrelevant for the standpoint in question, resembling the *ignoratio elenchi*-fallacy. Another example of irrelevant argumentation reoccurring in the commentaries is another way they use authorities to support their standpoints. To illustrate, Arne Strand supports his position that the arrest of Maria Amelie was wrong by referring to the decision to release her from detention at Trandum: "Borgarting [Court of Appeal] grounded their decision [...] on how the case has been poorly handled" (DA 18.1). As the surroundings around the arrest of Amelie are inherently irrelevant for the discussion on whether she should be allowed to stay in Norway or not, the argument can also be said to be irrelevant. Moreover, by referring to an authority that readers respect, Strand strengthens the positive perceptions of his argument, giving the impression of bringing valid argumentation in defence of his standpoint, when, again, the authority-defence in reality is weak.

### 5.2.5 Attacking their opponents

Discussion rule 1 states that no party in a critical discussion are to be hindered in doubting or presenting a standpoint. *Argumentum ad hominem* is the most well known fallacy in relation to this rule. "Going after the man instead of the ball" or attacking the opponent personally is a common strategy of argumentation in political discourse. The basis of *ad hominem* arguments is to attack the credibility of the opponent and then use

this lowered credibility to suggest that the latter's arguments should be reduced in value (Walton 2007:169). An important assumption is thus that the parties in a discussion have a degree of personal credibility on which the plausibility of their arguments rests. The direct variant of the personal attack diminishes the expertise, intelligence, character or good faith of the opponent, often called the abusive *ad hominem*-argument (Walton 2007:111). One example from the commentaries could be when Marie Simonsen argues: "in Ap, loyalty is awarded more than anything else, which explains why the party in the recent years have looked increasingly rigid and sectarian" (DB 22.1). Instead of explaining why Labour party policy is bad, or making it explicit what this policy consists of, Simonsen explains that Ap's policy is bad due to their poor party culture. Thus, by making audiences assume Ap is too incompetent to hold an opinion, Simonsen avoids having to give arguments that relate to her standpoint that the case was poorly handled – or the real debate over paperless asylum seekers.

An indirect variant of the personal attack casts doubt over the motives of an opponent. This serves to make him or her appear suspicious by having ulterior interests. "Erna Solberg saw what she wanted to see" (DB 19.2), argues Marie Simonsen because Solberg praised *Ammerudlunden* nursing home after a visit in 2009. Implying that Solberg willingly ignored violations against employees for the purpose of political gain, Simonsen presents Solberg as a dishonest and unsympathetic politician. She thereby excludes her from the discussion on privatisation. Attaching remarks reminiscent of indirect personal attacks is rather common in the commentators' argumentation, illustrated by the following similar examples:

It is possible to start a business in Norway that is successful. NHO and the Conservative party are probably wrenching in agony (DA 9.2).

It is possible to get filthy rich in Norway [...] Shipowners are alone in not wanting to understand this (DA 12.2).

A related argument that can hinder the opponent in a discussion is the fallacy of *argumentum ad misericordiam*. This argument plays on the emotions of the other party, for instance by appealing to fear and pity, instead of focusing on argumentation. This is a common argument in mass media discourse (Walton 2007:161), where opponents can be kept from refuting a standpoint out of fear of being made responsible for the tragedy that is forewarned. "Bureaucracy can decide if she can come back to Norway – which has

become her country, like it is for you and me” (DA 18.1), argues Arne Strand about Maria Amelie, clearly appealing to the readers’ personal co-responsibility for the atrocities that may face her. To question Amelie’s arrest is in effect turning your back on one of your own, implies the commentator. Presenting his standpoint as morally superior, sacrosanct and difficult to oppose, the commentator is denying the opponent the possibility to question his. A similar appeal to emotion is made when Strand argues: “Taking human considerations is allowed” (DA 18.1) implying that his opponents – the people who think Amelie should leave – are not human, at least not as human as himself. Again, one could argue that such appeals to emotion are not fallacies. Human considerations is surely a natural argument in the debate on asylum policy. As the arguments were matched by little sound argumentation, it is however possible to see pathos as the main element, causing the argument to be more commanding than persuasive.

#### *5.2.6 Presupposing non-redundant information*

Discussion rule 6 requires all parties to only use premises that are accepted as a basis for argumentation. Thus, uncertain premises on which there is not consensus cannot be presented as obvious claims in need of no further discussion. One way that pundits can hide presuppositions is in their choice of language. An example of non-redundant implicit premises from the commentaries is this argument from Arne Strand: “Falling support in polls have mobilised the groups in Ap and LO who want oil drilling outside Northern Norway” (DA 19.2). Aside from assuming causality between polls and this alleged mobilisation, Strand implies that most people support oil exploration – when examples of the opposite can in fact frequently be found (KK 27.1). Because the information is presented as though it was self-explanatory, the audience is strongly encouraged to believe it is true (Sigrell 1999:11ff). Moreover, as the reader is necessarily involved in interpreting the implicit premise, the argument serves to be persuasive. However, by not making premises explicit, questioning them becomes more difficult and audiences are left to accept them uncritically. When commenting on prohibitions in immigration policy, Simonsen argues:

The hijab-debate has developed into an unprincipled obsession where equality is misused by people who otherwise see welfare benefits like paternity leave as a course infringement from the state (DB 12.2).

First, Simonsen implicitly states that the debate on hijab is not about equal rights for women. Second, she implies that being opposed to paternity leave is the equivalent of being against equality. Third, Simonsen suggests it is inconsistent to condone equality in one instance and deplore it in another, thereby implying that her opponents on this issue has no right to make this claim in any of the instances. Simonsen implies non-redundant information in another argument on equality and paternity leave:

...the Conservative party has not been actively driving [the welfare state] (...) An illustrating example is women's rights (...) Now they are opposing increased paternity leave (DB 7.2).

Implicitly declaring that to vote against increased paternity leave is both to hinder the welfare state and women's rights, Simonsen presents premises that not all would agree to as obvious. Those who do not might object to the premise and discard Simonsen's argument entirely. The commentator again uses an implicit premise to destroy confidence in the Conservative party through a personal attack, and presents the party as being against both equality and welfare. Similarly, she argues that cuts in welfare "will only be accepted if they [voters] are convinced that it is done to save the welfare state, not tax payers" (DB 7.2). Implying that the Conservative party proposes cuts in welfare so that people can pay less in taxes, Simonsen presupposes that the party's explicit worries about rising welfare costs are only a pretext, implying that they instead deceive voters. In another example of an argument with a non-redundant premise, Arne Strand asks:

How is it for example possible for Ap to be perceived to have a responsible oil and industry policy without opening for oil exploration in Lofoten? (DA 9.2).

Again, the implicit claim that to not explore Lofoten is close to the equivalent of an irresponsible oil policy is presented as a fact beyond doubt. Because it lies within the nature of commentary columns to express opinion, it is therefore important to note that it is not the expression of the view in itself that is problematic. However, to leave the opinion implicit means the pundit completely avoids giving argumentation in support of the standpoint. Instead, the implicitness tricks the reader into accepting it, suggesting the pundit's beliefs have value on their own.

Circle argumentation is another way of leaving premises implicit. As mentioned above, *petitio principii* happens when the premise of the argument is inherently the same as



what was proposed in the standpoint. One example could be when Arne Strand points to the ironic and “wondrous” fact that the “Justice Departement was informed in detail about how Maria was to be taken” without any “political bell” ringing (DA 22.1). Strand implies that the department was outrageously unknowing when they failed to realise how Amelie’s arrest was an obvious poor decision, which is inherently the same proposition argued by his standpoint – that the handling of the Amelie-issue was a poor and wrong decision.

### 5.2.7 *The Straw man*

As with the defence of standpoints, attacks against an opponent’s standpoint must be directed at the actual standpoint. Violations of rule 3 happen when the *straw man* is used to distort the attacked standpoint through simplification, exaggeration, generalisation and omissions of nuance (E&G 1992:128). One example of the *straw man* from the commentaries could be when Marie Simonsen caricatures her opponent’s standpoint on the issue of the data retention directory, leaving it much more easy for her to dismiss:

If the elected would open for massive data surveillance of the country’s citizens, we are all in danger. Paedophiles will operate freely. Terrorists will blow up bombs at Oslo central station. Rapes, organised crime, robberies, drugs. If we do not implement the DRD, nothing can stop them. Norway will become a free port for criminals. The PST-chief was so carried away by her own focus on threat she started to plead (DB 9.2).

By exaggerating PST’s standpoint that the DRD makes the fight against criminality easier, Simonsen presents the claim as so ludicrous it seems completely unreasonable. Because PST’s standpoint is never referred to explicitly, audiences are forced to accept the version Simonsen’s presents. The straw man is also similar to the personal attack, as the commentator diminishes the credibility of her opponent by presenting PST as being driven by irrational fears bordering the paranoid, in opposition to calm reason and intelligence. Arne Strand’s argument is also similar to the *straw man*, as he warns against “hotheads down in the party ranks [...] [who] demands more Ap-policy and overriding of SV and Sp” (DA 1.2). The commentator goes on to defend his attack of the alleged hotheads’ standpoint: “Open argument is on the contrary very unfortunate. Overriding a partner is a death line” (DA 1.2). Readers could suspect a straw man, because it seems obvious that no Ap-member actually thinks the party can override its partners on issues while at the same time preserving the coalition. But because the

actual claim he refutes remains unexplained, it could be more difficult to reveal his fallacy. Because his opponent's claim is now easier to falsify, Strand seems to think less argumentation is needed to defend his attack. By seemingly refuting an opponent, he gives the impression of being a man who has the right convictions, outlooks and opinions.

### 5.2.8 Illogical reasoning

Rule 8 in the pragma-dialectical theory requires all parties to only use arguments that are logically valid, or that can be made logically valid when premises are made explicit. Such arguments often violate the *modus ponens* or *modus tollens*, as the necessary conditions for a claim are confused with those sufficient. A classical example of a valid *modus ponens* is: "if p, then q, p, therefore q", while *modus tollens* is the same reasoning with negation. An example of a commentator making an illogical version of *modus tollens* could be when Marie Simonsen argues that the unrest in Western Norway over local hospitals is in fact not proof that these voters have turned their backs on the government:

At least, the analysis also presumes that Ap and the government are struggling more in Western Norway than in other places, and that this is caused by a couple of concrete cases that has enraged voters. This is not the case (DB 3.1).

Simonsen makes a logical error in her argument when inferring: "If opinion polls show that the government is struggling more in Western Norway, this is due to the issues of local hospitals and transmission towers. The government is not struggling more in Western Norway, therefore this is not due to the issues of local hospitals and transmission towers". Simonsen makes the formal fallacy *denying the antecedent* or inverse error when she excludes other reasons – completely unrelated to the issue of local hospitals – for why the government also could have lost support in the rest of the country. The same line of reasoning reoccurs a few sentences later when Simonsen argues: "The current government can hardly be accused of being hostile towards districts" (DB 3.1). In effect, Simonsen claims, "if voters receive support from the government to balance regional differences, then voters belonging to this particular region will resist the urge to protest when they feel the government is not doing enough for their region". The argument can again be seen as an illogical use of the *modus ponens*. The same "if-then" logic seems to be inferred faultily by Arne Strand, who argues after

the fact: “A tougher asylum policy has been a way to solve the Frp-code<sup>13</sup>” (DA 1.2). Reconstructed as a *modus ponens*, he essentially reasons: if Ap thinks a tougher asylum policy is one way of solving the Frp-code, they will bring on a tougher asylum policy. Ap brought a tougher asylum policy; hence they did this to solve the Frp-code.” In the two first instances, audiences might find it easier to conclude that other important elements of the issue is neglected, making the arguments invalid. In Strand’s example, it is however more likely that readers apply a more pragmatic intuitive notion of validity, which in the absence of other plausible explanations makes the arguments acceptable. Nevertheless, Strand’s argument does seem to undermine the importance of political ideology when parties decide on policy, as he implies that they are solely driven by a quest for voters, rather than political principle.

According to pragma-dialectics, all fallacies made by the commentators can be viewed as strategic manoeuvring that has derailed. However, the concept of fallacy excludes an analysis of strategic manoeuvring that lies within the boundaries of reason. An evaluation of how arguments breach the standards of a critical discussion could therefore bring an overtly negative focus on the commentators’ argumentation. To get a more balanced understanding of argumentation in the commentary, how pundits exploit the rhetorical opportunities of their dialectical situations must be explored more closely.

### **5.3 Ethos enhancing manoeuvres**

Pragma-dialectical theory identifies three branches of strategic manoeuvring an arguer can choose from, all corresponding with dialectical objectives (E&H 2000:298). The *topical potential* can be regarded as the set of available alternative moves relevant in the different stages of a discussion. Strategic manoeuvring aims to select the issues, starting points and lines of defence that will be most efficient in the discussion. This should restrict the discussion space in a way that best suits the speaker. Argumentation moves are also selected to fit *audience demand* in a way that complies with the readers’ preferences and good sense. Strategic manoeuvring aims to create empathy or communion with audiences. To ensure that all rhetorical moves have an effect on

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<sup>13</sup> ”The Frp-code” is a phrase coined by Ap’s party secretary, Martin Kolberg, in 2005. It was first used as a way to explain why many members of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions voted for the Progressive party instead of the Labour party, but it has later been used to describe how political parties can gain voters from the support base of Frp.

readers, *presentational devices* must be put to its best use, and phrasing and stylistic framing should be attuned to be discursively efficient. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) were first to insist on the argumentative value of presentational devices – what had traditionally been viewed as aesthetics and unnecessary embellishments. Their discussion is most concerned with the centrality of presence in argument. As an “essential factor to argumentation”, presence can “enhance the value of some of the elements of which one has actually been made conscious” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971:116-7). Arguments that lack presence lose this sense of centrality, and neutral language is therefore equally deserving of study. The “verbal magic” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca:117) of rhetorical figures is tied to the rhetorical concept of *elocutio*, which has traditionally been synonymous with style. The rhetorical style figure trope refers to phrases that break with the familiar. Meaning “turn”, Sigrell (1999:150) writes that tropes are more expressional ways of describing something which more fitting to the communicative intention. While tropes relate to word-level, figures function on sentence or textual level. They create a more striking language, both presenting the importance of the speech and moving the audience’s emotions (Kjeldsen 2006:196). Thus, the expressions and articulations of a speaker are considered essential to the development of ethos. Although separated for analytical purpose, the three elements of strategic manoeuvring usually occur together. For that reason, they can be utilised to map the rhetorical elements of strategic manoeuvring in the commentaries – and emphasis can be placed on the implications that these strategies have on ethos. Including strategic manoeuvring also allows a study of non-fallacious argumentation, and thus also *Aftenposten*’s Harald Stanghelle, who rarely resorts to fallacies. The explorations of the style of argumentation with the three pundits are constructed similarly: First, the style of each of the three pundit’s argumentation is explored through their use of fallacies and strategic manoeuvring. Second, the implications of this argumentation on the pundit’s ethos are discussed.

### 5.3.1 Marie Simonsen entertains

The fallacies identified in Marie Simonsen’s argumentation crystallise a clear pattern of her focusing on her opponents. The *Dagbladet*-commentator does not only make singular arguments that serve to diminish the credibility of others, but she often focuses the entire commentary around the antagonist’s standpoint and their persona. The use of negative

propositions become evident in a reconstructed overview of Simonsen’s standpoints:

Table 2: Overview of Marie Simonsen’s commentaries

Date	Title	Reconstructed standpoints
3.1	“Jens knows best”	It is not true that voters in Western Norway have turned their backs on the government. All voters have, because the Labour party is compliant.
7.1	“Divide and conquer”	It is not true when NHO warns about dangers of the welfare state. They manipulate and make prophecies of doom.
22.1	“The Devil’s advocate”	SV was wrong to say the Police were not using their heads, because it was Ap who did not. Stoltenberg was wrong to think the asylum institute was threatened, instead the entire government is. SV reacted too strongly, and Stoltenberg and Ap are arrogant, rigid and sectarian.
7.2	“Pulling a Swedish one” <sup>14</sup>	It is not truthful when H tries to claim ownership of the welfare state, because they only try to emulate the success of the Swedish Moderates. They are driven by self-interest.
9.2	“Fear and distrust”	We should not accept the DRD. PST is wrong when trying to scare us into saying yes.
12.2	“Prohibition times”	Jonas Gahr Støre and Ap are wrong to use prohibitions to reform their way out of arranged marriages.
19.2	“Adecco-league”	Erna Solberg and Frp were wrong to believe the situation at <i>Ammerudlunden</i> was ok. One should not be surprised about the negatives of privatisation in the health sector.
23.2	“The next chief”	Erna Solberg launches herself as candidate for Prime Minister with her new book.
26.2	“Dirty wings”	We should not be surprised about the Adecco-scandal. The low status of the profession causes poor conditions.
3.3	“Toads and boobies”	H’s Julie Voldberg was not elected into the Oslo City Council because of her gender, jealousy and party practice.

<sup>14</sup> The phrase “pulling a Spanish one” is an established Norwegian expression that has a somewhat negative connotation, referring to a solution out of a situation that is easy and practical. It is commonly used about convenient and sometimes illegal short cuts taken while driving.

### 5.3.1.1 DISCREDITING OTHERS

Simonsen's focus on the opponent becomes symptomatic of three particular fallacies that are reoccurring in her commentaries: the *straw man-fallacy* that violates discussion rule 3, the *ad hominem-fallacy* in violation of rule 1 and the use of *irrelevant humour* in violation of rule 4. After arguing how others have got it wrong, Simonsen often builds on this to later propose a positive proposition towards the end of her articles. To illustrate, after having presented all of the Norwegian voters as being critical to the Labour party, Simonsen sums up her critique of the party in one positive standpoint in her first commentary: "It is not about being right, but persuading others of this" (DB 3.1). In this case, the standpoint is highly consensual, reflecting the rights of voters – a value with which readers surely agree. But because Ap has been presented in an unflattering light, readers are perhaps more prone to believe the commentator over her opponents. Whatever her claim may be, readers are left with the impression that this pundit does not only know why and how others are wrong, she also knows what is right. This pattern of argumentation seems reoccurring in almost all of Simonsen's commentaries.

A typical example of a Simonsen-commentary in *Dagbladet* is her second commentary "Divide and conquer" (DB 7.1) about NHO and their warnings about the increased costs of the welfare state. This article is dominated by the fallacies *straw man* and *ad hominem*. Taken together, these argumentation moves serve to alleviate the need for sound argumentation. First, Simonsen exaggerates the standpoint of her opponent NHO to make it seem unlikely, unrealistic and even ludicrous:

Judgement Day is upon us. Birds are falling from the sky, fish are dying in the rivers and soon the country will be left empty by swarms of grasshoppers [...] swarms of elderly, immigrants and disabled can do similar damage to the state's crops if we are to believe the prophets of the new-old welfare debate. (DB 7.1)

The commentator invokes humour to ridicule NHO, comparing the organisation to conspiratorial doomsday prophets. In fact, the only reference to their actual message – the standpoint she is supposed to argue against – is "all I heard was that welfare is the root of all evil. Europe is in flames – and we must become more like Europe" (DB 7.1). By referring to NHO's standpoint imprecisely, simplistically and presenting it as ridiculous, readers are kept from making up their own mind about NHO's standpoint, as well as evaluating the commentator's success in refuting it. The audience might therefore suspect Simonsen of willingly misinterpreting the standpoint of her opponent

to make it sound so ridiculous that nobody would even consider believing it. When referring to an argument from NHO, the commentator again retorts to the exaggeration and simplification of a *straw man*:

A horror scenario is that today's one in five on welfare will by 2050 end up as one in three. This is a soviet like forecast that assumes the labour market is static and self-destructive and guaranteed to lead to economic ruin. Maybe the Norwegian business community lacks confidence? (DB 7.1)

Suggesting the organisation is a communist-like failure – a characteristic the audience might believe the pro market organisation may find extra humiliating – invokes ridicule. Humour might serve to disguise the fact that no arguments are provided to counter NHO's claim. Other personal attacks are also directed at the organisation, as they are suggested to purposely exaggerate the negative consequences of rising welfare costs: "The relief was noticeable when Norway was finally singled out as a welfare villain" (DB 7.1). Another personal attack is presented when Simonsen comments on the entertainment at the conference and the all girl band *Katzenjammer*: "some thought the hip rattle band was invited to give the organisation a young and female alibi" (DB 7.1). Suggesting NHO is an old and foggy men's club, Simonsen tries to diminish their overall credibility. The commentator invokes humour to make readers amused and impressed of how the pundit "hits the nail on the head" by playing on stereotypes. After diminishing the credibility of NHO and distorting their standpoint through the *straw man*, Simonsen claims at the end of her commentary: "the importance of a welfare system and the dependency that businesses have on it was not addressed" (DB 7.1). Suggesting that our ability to adjust diminishes without welfare, the commentator does nevertheless not support her claim with arguments. In addition to leaving her negative standpoint undefended by sound argumentation, no arguments are given to prove this positive standpoint. But because she has diminished the credibility of her opponent, less seems to be required of her defence. This is essentially the same strategy of reasoning as arguing that the commentator is right because her opponent was wrong, related to the fallacy *argumentum ad ignorantium*. The only thing really proven is that the opponent's defence of the standpoint was inadequate. The arguer takes the role of antagonist, but confuses it with the role of protagonist (E&G 1992:189), which is a common fallacy in everyday argumentation (Sigrell 1999:117). Having relied her argument on a distorted version of her opponent's standpoint and focusing the argumentation at her opponent's character, this *ignorantiam*-line of reasoning is thus, according to pragma-dialectics,

unsound. Proponents of negative standpoints are equally committed to defending their standpoint as exponents of positive affirmations (E&G 1992:15-6). The use of fallacies suggests Simonsen is unsuccessful in her contribution to resolving the conflict of opinion. Instead, the debate is derailed.

Another example of a typical argument from Simonsen's commentaries occurs when she invokes ridicule on behalf of Health Minister Anne Grethe Strøm-Erichsen. The Minister is included to personalise the commentator's criticism of the Labour party as arrogant and compliant, which is an easier proposition to defend than her standpoint that the entire party is:

When Minister of health Anne Grethe Strøm-Erichsen is paralysed when meeting people, this is because she has no words for what she is doing. What was so evident in cabinet meetings and made everybody around the table nod is suddenly incomprehensible and for some directly offensive (DB 3.1).

Seemingly undressing Strøm-Erichsen as an unsympathetic and less competent politician, Simonsen flatters the audience by placing their democratic rights front and centre. To emphasise that Strøm-Erichsen considered bad ideas as good is also an irony that is funny. The comical stupidity in her smug performance should make audiences laugh or shake their heads in disdain.

Humour is an important element in Simonsen's argumentation. Although pragma-dialectical theory takes little consideration of humour in argumentation, Pirie (2007:99) names *irrelevant humour* as a fallacy to be avoided in discussions. It occurs when witty comments are made to divert attention away from arguments. "While humour entertains and enlivens discussion, it also distracts" writes Pirie (2007:99). Because it does not necessarily help to win the argument, *irrelevant humour* can be deemed fallacious. A critical rhetorical analysis should therefore also be aware of the use of humour. Simonsen's remark in her commentary on the Amelie-issue could qualify as *irrelevant humour*, as she argues:

Even though the numerous advisors [in Ap] have the entire series of "The West Wing" on DVD, they do not always manage to get their messages across as smoothly (DB 22.1).

The humorous remark about the drama series the West Wing could serve to disguise or draw attention away from the fact that Simonsen's premise of the argument has not been made probable. The claim that the Labour party communicates poorly is only defended



by vague referrals to bad polls. Humorously presenting Ap's advisors as stupid enough to believe an American drama is the key to understanding politics, Simonsen also makes an *ad hominem*-fallacy, which might be more difficult to detect or seem less threatening because of the use of humour. "A confrontation which first and foremost engages Dagsnytt 18's listeners and provoke Martin Kolberg as an added bonus" (DB 7.2), Simonsen writes about the Conservative party's claim in the welfare state. Suggesting the party's standpoint is so improbable and irrelevant that nobody except Ap-veteran Martin Kolberg and the political geeks listening to the debate program *Dagsnytt 18* care, the commentator again invokes humorous ridicule. An argument with a non-redundant premise is presented under the disguise of humour. Another humorous remark is made in her commentary about Adecco: "You would think they are sponsored by Arcus [producer of alcohol]" (DB 19.2). Simonsen argues that supporters of privatisation in health care are more concerned with small details like allowing patients a glass of wine than addressing the problems of low wages and overtime. It is not uncomplicated to identify where the use of humour derails and qualifies as the fallacy *irrelevant humour*. Keeping with the essayistic heritage of the commentary, it seems legitimate to include some humorous digressions to amuse readers. Common in all of Simonsen's humorous remarks is however that they all serve to direct attention away from the issue at hand, and often also hide the fallaciousness of the argument.

#### 5.3.1.2 STYLE OF RIDICULE AND SATIRE

Also revealing a focus on the opponent is Simonsen's use of tropes and figures in her style of writing. These tropes and figures often indicate a will to amuse readers by mocking her opponents on the issues she comments on. Most dominating is Simonsen's use of irony and hyperboles, and she often employs an irony that scorns her opponents. As an example, Simonsen argues that "unless the strategy was to alienate as many voters as possible and cause split in the government" (DB 22.1), she finds it difficult to believe it when Ap says they were informed beforehand about Maria Amelie's arrest. Instead of selling their message efficiently, argues Simonsen "it seems they place their honour in not" (DB 22.1). As no political party willingly plan to alienate voters, the discrepancy between what is said and reality creates irony (Sigrell 1999:165). Readers may start to look for the actual meaning of her remark, thereby strengthening the persuasiveness of her argument. Again, the Labour party is presented as incompetent and without political

tact, which diminishes their credibility as reasonable opponents in a discussion. This highlights another function of irony utilised in Simonsen's argumentation, as it becomes a less confronting and antagonising way to present critique. The pundit also invokes ironic criticism towards Ap when she writes that their suggestion to prohibit marriages between cousins is an example of "the Norwegian national sport of banning things" (DB 12.2):

If a problem appears, prohibition is not far away. [...] Begging, pro boxing, buying sex, lawn mowing after five, drug use, stripping, and now recently Birkebeiner-skiers. Allergists want to forbid the burning of garden rubbish. Pollen is more difficult. Not to mention wolves (DB 12.2).

Listing references to issues readers know from recent debates, Simonsen establishes both communion and presence in her argumentation. The commentator refers to a common basis and brings these shared references into the foreground of our minds. As Simonsen also mentions examples of prohibitions she considers to be successful, it can however be difficult to understand the exact motive for including the ironic remark; is banning marriages between cousins the equivalent of silly prohibitions like the one on lawn mowing after five, or is it equally complex as the one against wolves? Conjuring different meanings, irony always stands in danger of being misunderstood (Kjeldsen 2006:203a). Because it is a form of implicit critique, irony also excludes members of the audience who disagrees with the interpretations or misunderstands them (Sigrell 1999:182). Unless irony is invoked on behalf of the speaker, its use should be cautioned, and if a sender does not know its audience, irony can diminish ethos. A speaker can even run the risk of invoking sympathy on behalf of the criticised. The same dangers are relevant in Simonsen's critique through the *ad hominem* argument, where irony is often an element.

Hyperboles, or exaggerations, can function both as tropes and figures. As a trope, the linguistic meaning of words is used as the exaggeration. One example is Simonsen's description of Western Norway's defeat in the issue of local hospitals as a "funeral feast" (DB 3.1), comparing politics to death. As figures, metaphorical hyperboles can be amusing because of the obvious discrepancy between the actual situation and the literal meaning of the hyperbole. Again, audiences have to reflect on what exact meaning is intended. "The Conservative party could not pass a keyboard without stepping in it" (DB 3.3) writes Simonsen, using a hyperbole with a clear ironic element. When she claims that NHO "attack[s] welfare beneficiaries as the suicide bombers of the welfare state" (DB 7.1) and

calls voters “full of devilry” (DB 3.1), Simonsen again shows humorous exaggeration. “After today’s serving in the opera, party goers had a hangover even before sitting down at the table” (DB 7.1), Simonsen writes after NHO’s conference on welfare, again encouraging readers to laugh. These hyperboles invite the audience to construct the actual meaning of the argument, and establish common ground between the speaker and the audience.

The same persuasive effect can be attributed to rhetorical questions, which Marie Simonsen includes several of in her commentaries. She either answers the questions herself or leaves them as an invitation for audiences to reflect on the answer: “Are things really this easy?” (DB 3.1), “Is this owed to an uproar in the district?” (DB 3.1), “Who works to care for the elderly?” (DB 26.2), and “Why would the party not bet on such an obvious talent?” (DB 3.3). By including readers in her evaluations and considerations, Simonsen’s rhetorical questions serve to be convincing in an argumentative context. However, the value of rhetorical questions is dependent on the audiences’ attitudes and positions (Kjeldsen 2006:224). Because rhetorical questions have a tendency to direct attention at the issue and argumentation, rhetorical questions may seem confusing to audiences if they are not matched with good arguments, argues Kjeldsen. As elements of Simonsen’s argumentation were evaluated as fallacious, her rhetorical questions could similarly stand in danger of backfiring.

Rhetorical figures like allusions and allegories are also represented in Simonsen’s commentaries. Asserting that Ap’s party principles are dominated by the perspective “either you are with us or against us” (DB 22.1), the pundit uses an allusion with a biblical reference. The expression has probably become equally well known for its reference to former American President George W. Bush Jr.’s utterance about the war on terror after the terrorist attacks on 9/11. The purpose of allegories and allusions is that the receiver should understand the similarities between the allusion and what it implicitly says about the concrete case (Sigrell 1999:156). Viewed as a generalisation, this allusion could be interpreted to suggest similarities between Jesus, George Bush Jr. and Jens Stoltenberg. Again, it is the implicit and non-apparent meaning of the figure that makes them especially efficient in persuasion. They direct the audience to understand the issue in a certain way and involve them by requiring an understanding of the implicit. However, the possibility that allusions and allegories exclude readers who do not understand is just as

great. The commentary writer's ethos should be strengthened among those who understand the implicitness, as long as they do not strongly object to the inferred message. Nevertheless, many who disagree could again very well appreciate the humour and wit of the presentational device – in this case a provocative analogy. Simonsen also uses tropes to convey meaning by using words unconventionally. "Toads" (DB 3.3) refers to what is often perceived as an ugly, slimy and unattractive amphibian, which are characteristics implied to belong to the men of the Conservative party. "Political asylum" (DB 22.1) is a metaphor the commentator invents to compare Jens Stoltenberg's stronghold on his advisors to Maria Amelie's flight from persecution. By forcing the reader to reflect on the similarities between the new concept and reality, the metaphor serves to be persuasive. However, as some readers might again see it as obviously absurd and unfitting, they might refuse it as offensive. Interpreting tropes has implications for our actions and decision-making because they lead our attention towards a particular aspect of the issue. Tropes used by the commentator therefore reflect the choices and standpoints Simonsen thinks the audience should make on the issues she comments on.

Because tropes and figures appeal to pathos through its powers of connotations and implications (Roksvold 2006:196), a huge part of Simonsen's argumentation rests in the implicit. By using irony, hyperboles and tropes, Simonsen invites readers to draw conclusions, relieving her of the need to spell out potentially offensive remarks. Many of the most powerful *ad hominem*-arguments are made when the proponent does not come directly out and assert the flaws of the opponent (Walton 2007:189). Being implicit helps Simonsen avoid repercussions from offended readers, preventing her from losing face. The use of humour has the same effect. Marie Simonsen's main ethos-constituting manoeuvre in her presentational devices is therefore instilling the audience with an emotion. Generally, these feelings are amusement and enjoyment.

#### 5.3.1.3 A COMMENTATOR FOR THE PEOPLE

Commentaries written by Marie Simonsen in *Dagbladet* are dominated by humour, irony and ridicule. "The Conservative party is known for eating their own, but Julie Voldberg got stuck in the throat" (DB 3.3) is a typical Marie Simonsen-sentence, contributing to her ethos as entertaining and satirical commentator. Additionally, these remarks serve to diminish the credibility of the other parties in the discussion. The pragma-dialectical

analysis reveals some fallacious elements in Simonsen's argumentation. They occur when she disarranges the balance between reason and persuasiveness, and the element of entertainment is emphasised at the expense of debate and argumentation. Instead of basing her opinions on reason and argumentation directed at the issue, Simonsen uses humorous characterisations to get the reader to laugh maliciously along with her, bullying someone who deserves it. She reacts to the rhetorical situation – a time of critique of the government, economic troubles and scandal – and utilises it to present more critique. She exploits both the sense of alienation between voters and the government as well as the uncertainties about our future to reassure readers that she is on their side.

Simonsen always pokes fun at political elites, business organisations and corporations who are actors of power and therefore legitimate targets for ridicule. Simonsen presents herself to readers as a commentator of and for the people. She calls attention to asylum seekers, welfare beneficiaries, minimum wage workers and minorities, and the pundit also speaks out on political arrogance and injustices against women. *Arête* is therefore an essential dimension of the ethos constituted in Simonsen's commentaries, as she reveals her character to be virtuous. By protecting the weak and innocent from the strong, Simonsen reflects an essential value in our society – and a trait especially coveted in journalism. The emotional appeal that is evidence for *arête* (Garver 1994:119) is also present in her use of pathos. Simonsen chooses from the *topical potential* issues where she can criticise, allowing her to establish a communion with the audience she is protecting. This reflects Aristotle's concepts of praise and blame, as the commentator implies praise on behalf of herself for knowing what is virtuous and taking action accordingly. Whenever blame is asserted, the commentator is polemical, and not afraid to cause stir and disturbance, illustrated with facsimile 1. Simonsen's commentaries are clearly in opposition and conflict with others, allowing the pundit to be engaging and provocative. Fearless attacks serve to entertain and amuse audiences and include the masses in discussions on politics and power in society. This suggests Simonsen is a commentator with strong *eunoia*, as she instils the audience with emotions to help them understand their world.

Hvorfor hørte ikke Frp lyden av en tikkende bombe? spør **Marie Simonsen**.

# Råtne epler

SIDE 3



Marie Simonsen  
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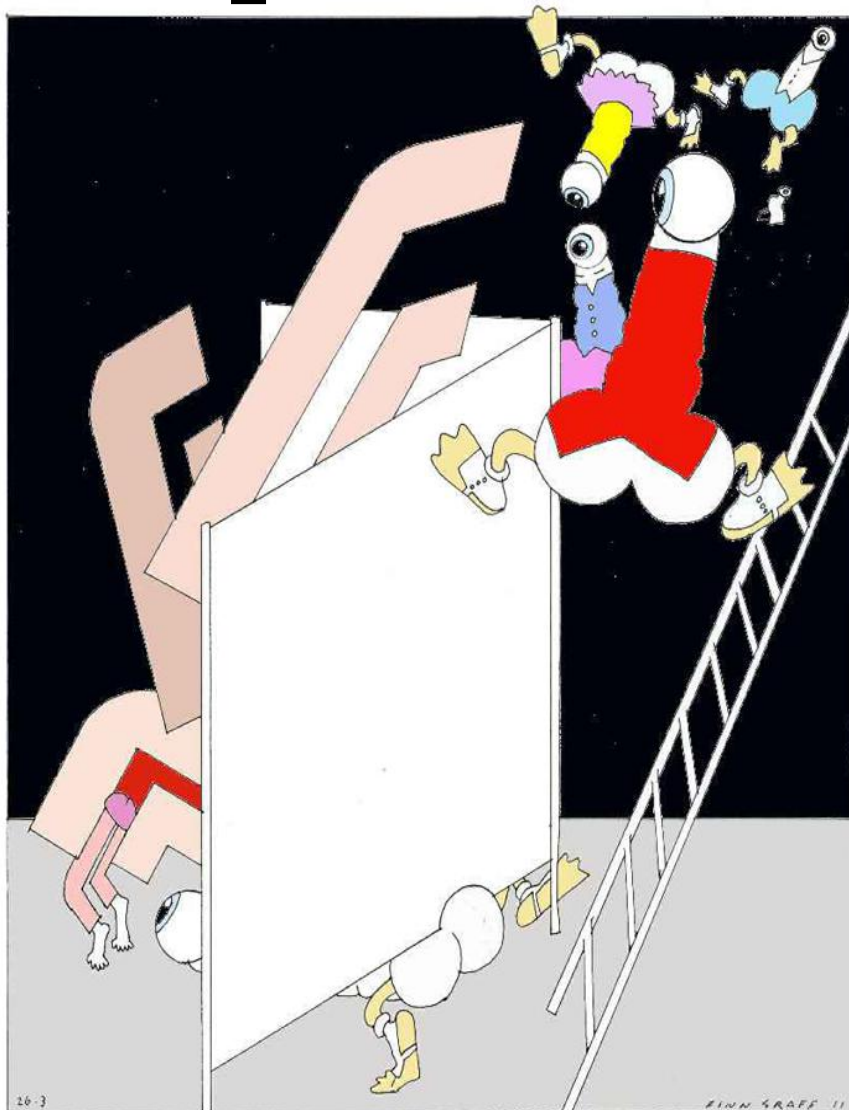
**DE KAN IKKE** ha visst. De må ha skjont at før eller siden ville det komme fram, er en vantro reaksjon på skandalen i Frp. Jeg har stilt spørsmålet selv den siste uka uten å finne annet svar enn det historien viser gang på gang. Skandalens anatomi inneholder nesten alltid et selvdestruktivt element; et øyeblikk hvor man misbrukte sjansen til å gjøre det rette. Det kan være en kalkulert risiko eller en ryggmargsrefleks. Det kan skyldes kynisme eller svekket vurderingsevne i en presset situasjon.

Det øyeblikket inntraff i Frp-ledelsen da et 15 år gammelt FpU-medlem varslet at han skulle ha blitt utsatt for overgrep av Trond Birkedal, en profilert Frp-topp.

**HVA GJORDE LEDELSEN** i lov- og ordenpartiet? Med Søviknes-saken i minne, gikk de grundig inn i saken? Tok de kontakt med politiet? Nei, ikke engang med 15-åringens foreldre. De valgte å tro Birkedal på hans ord, mens 15-åringen ble overlatt til seg selv, med en oppfordring om å anmelde saken. Det gjorde han ikke. Selv voksne kvier seg for å kontakte politiet i slike saker. Det er ikke et renn av mindreårige heller.

Dette er allmennkunnskap og kan umulig ha gått Frp forbi. Det er faktisk pålagt å varsle politiet, hvis man har kunnskap om alvorlige forbrytelser, men loven om varsleplikt når det gjelder seksuelle handlinger med barn ble først i fjor utvidet til å gjelde mindreårige opp til 16 år. Frp hadde altså sitt på det tørre åtte måneder tidligere, men det var neppe juss alene som ledet til feilvurderingen. Birkedals framtid lå i potten, og dermed ble en ung gutts påstand ikke behandlet med det alvor den fortjente.

Birkedals stjerne i partiet var høy og fortsatte å stige. Nye rykter om hans omgang med gutter i ungdomspartiet ble ikke grepet fatt i. Generalsekretær Geir A. Mo forklarer det med at det er så man-



Facsimile 1: This commentary from Marie Simonsen in *Dagbladet* on March 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 illustrates how caricatures associated with her articles are often equally provoking and confrontational as her texts. This particular image by *Dagbladet*-illustrator Finn Graff depicts multiple variants of the male genitalia, also signifying camera eyes. Simonsen's article comments on the arrest of the Progressive party's Trond Birkedal, after young male party members had accused him of filming them taking showers in his apartment. Birkedal was also charged with sexual abuse against a minor. Complementing Simonsen's commentaries with satirical and suggestive caricatures underlines her role as uncompromising and controversial pundit.

Simonsen's use of implicit argumentation flatters the audience, as they have to take an active part in decoding her messages. Nevertheless, the use of irony, satire and parody

can be rhetorically dangerous for the same reason. Resting on implicit information and critique, the commentator sometimes stands in danger of alienating the readers who do not follow or simply disagrees with her implied remarks. Although personal attacks, irony and ridicule can diminish the credibility of others, it does not automatically serve to increase the personal credibility of the arguer that makes the argument. As there is sometimes too little sound argumentation to legitimise attacks in Simonsen's commentaries, readers might not be persuaded by pathos alone. As a result, the commentator's ethos might even be weakened in favour of the criticised. Nevertheless, it seems that the humour and amusement presented through ridicule is well worth risking alienation of readers, and a provocative style seems to be her identity as a commentator. Instead, the possibility of negative consequences underlines Simonsen's courage and audacity, other good moral qualities. Readers are thereby assured that Simonsen always brings the candid honest to God truth in all situations and on all issues. Her ethos as pundit is therefore dominated by unrelenting courage, as a reader can always count on Simonsen to unapologetically offer her two cents in an amusing manner. Speaking her mind without regard to the consequences could also suggest authenticity. However, as her commentaries largely rest on implicit communication, this creates a distance between readers and commentator, and her argumentation does not necessarily communicate authentic behaviour. Her provocative and ironic style of comment can therefore seem like a role Simonsen has taken on. In fact, the use of implicitness and irony could hide her true opinions of Simonsen, and therefore also obstruct the establishing of ethos. Similarly, when she is arguing why her opponents in a discussion is wrong, the pundit is often neglecting to voice her own standpoints. Readers therefore learn little about her personal ideas and opinions, and the lack of authenticity could eventually damage her ethos.

*Dagbladet's* tabloid format suggests Simonsen must adapt to a heterogenous readership. Her emphasis on universal values is an appeal to such a mass audience. Simonsen also attracts to readers who are looking to be oriented on political issues from a more sceptical and cynical point of view. Her commentary does not offer heavy political analysis and the context of humour and wit instead makes issues less dreary and conventional. Much of *Dagbladet's* characteristic subjective, merciless journalism aimed at increasing the temperature in debate is recognisable in Simonsen's texts. The

commentator constitutes a dwelling place for the audience in which the cost of entry is low. Simonsen creates interest and engagement in politics, making her a credible commentator for those who turn to her for her amusing take on politics. As many of the readers of *Dagbladet* could very well buy the paper for its entertainment value rather than the pursuit of serious journalism, the informal and simple style of deliberation found in Simonsen's commentaries could be fitting. The tabloid commentary's quality as *infotainment* – a genre mix of information and entertainment – is therefore valued more than debate and deliberation. As humour is such an important element of Simonsen's argumentation, it could very well be that the fallacies of *ad hominem* and *straw man* are utilised for their entertainment value more than their soundness as arguments. In addition to being amusing, the perception of her arguments as sound contributions to political debate serves to legitimise Simonsen's commentary as serious opinion journalism. Nevertheless, as the commentator often lets caricatures and distorted accounts of her opponent dominate, readers could argue that dialectical objectives are largely suppressed by the aim for persuasiveness. When questioned from reason, many of Simonsen's arguments do not hold up as they are, and ethos would consequently decrease. Avoiding deliberation when exhibiting the virtue of protecting individuals against powerful elites and basing her accusations on fallacies could furthermore weaken the positive effects from her communion with the people. In her *eunoia*-based attempts to befriend the audience, there is never a plurality of emotions at work, which is necessary to utilise the *eunoia*-dimension in ethos. Instead, Simonsen seems most concerned with using humour and amusement on behalf of others, no matter the nature of the issue. As Aristotle noted, *eunoia* only arises when the friendship with the audience is one of virtue, not of pleasure (Garver 1994:190). Because there is less trust in the latter, the credibility of Simonsen's arguments might not be as strong as she would like. The connection between *arête* and *phronesis* also entails that *arête* is not enough to persuade if the speaker does not deliberate and reveal that an active choice is made to follow the values presented. Presenting her opinions as fact, Simonsen suggests her qualities result automatically in authority. However, skipping the deliberation part may also reveal arrogance in hiding the reasoning that her analysis is based on. Persuading readers of the accuracy in her analysis rests on her personal comedic appeal, rather than argumentation. In this respect, readers might not find any value in the ethos constituted by Simonsen exceeding beyond entertainment. As Halloran warned about personality



surpassing character, a critical reader could therefore challenge Simonsen’s ethos and view it as being too reliant on her personal qualities in communication. Simonsen’s criticism of others can therefore look superficial, and the effect of strengthening her ethos as amusing and tongue in cheek pundit may be lost. The commentator could instead be viewed as neglecting her commitment to the ideal of a critical discussion in an attempt to win the other party over to her side. Allowing reason to be overruled by the aim of persuasion may victimise the other party in the debate (E&H 2002:142). As a result, many of Simonsen’s argumentation moves derail and become fallacious.

### 5.3.2 Arne Strand: *let me tell you (what I think)*

The future outcome of political situations and issues is a dominating element in Arne Strand’s commentaries. In fact, predictions become so prevalent that most of his commentaries are directly focused on presenting his expert guesses or explaining in retrospect why his forecasts did not pan out as expected. An overview of Arne Strand’s commentaries serves to highlight just how dominant the ability to foresee is in his argumentation:

Table 3: Overview of Arne Strand’s commentaries

Date	Title	Reconstructed standpoints
18.1	“The Government comes unglued”	The government is coming unglued over Amelie-issue. The decision to arrest her is wrong.
22.1	“The Government’s repairman”	Crisis is avoided because Halvorsen convinced her party the government was more important. I was still correct to predict otherwise.
29.1	“At the risk of life”	The issue of oil exploration in Lofoten can blow the government. But the government will not let it.
1.2	“Jens profits from being tough”	It paid off for Ap to be strict on asylum policy, because the people changed their mind on Amelie. But continuing to override the coalition will be deadly.
5.2	“Rising from the dead”	Despite being politically dead, Terje Riis-Johansen resurrects. I was correct, but outside events changed.
9.2	“Cheeky confrontation	Ap will be successful in focusing on business policy and

	with the Conservatives”	moving into the territories of the Conservatives. But Ap will struggle if not hospitals and oil is resolved.
12.2	“Winning on away-ground”	Ap will do well in elections and will be successful in their move into right wing policies because they have the better policy.
18.2	“Agreeing until Dovre falls”	Norway will do good if they stick to Ap’s economic policies.
19.2	“Will Kristin go?”	SV and Sp could break the government over Lofoten because prestige and drama has entered the issue.
26.2	“The danger is over”	There will be no crisis over Lofoten because the government is more important than Lofoten.

Strand’s ability to predict and foresee manifests as a strong belief in his authority and expertise. Although it is inherently impossible to know what the future brings, Strand seems unafraid to assert his thoughts on it with fervour and confidence. The overview of violations against discussion rules in table 1 shows that Arne Strand pinnacles at especially two fallacies. First, Strand seems particularly eager to present his characterisations about policy and politicians, which often results in unsupported vague *ambiguity* fallacies in violation of discussion rule 10. Second, the commentator avoids defending his standpoints and arguments and instead leaves his assertions as obvious facts, equal to the fallacy of *evading the burden of proof*, breaking rule 2.

#### 4.3.2.1 EXPERT COMMENTATOR AND LEAD JUDGE

“He who asserts must prove” is the basic rule of the burden of proof in reasonable dialogue (Walton 1991:59). Arne Strand’s personal evaluations are nevertheless often presented as all the support the audience is thought to need. In the case of Maria Amelie, the commentator concludes that Jens Stoltenberg is tough enough to successfully use the issue to steal voters from the immigration sceptic Progressive Party, but not so tough that he alienates those who believe Amelie should stay (DA 1.2):

About my political role model, Einar Gerhardsen it was said that he could shoot when someone had to die. But the characteristic that was left was “Einar the mild”. Gerhardsen is our “country father” because he managed to gather people, districts and organisations to rebuild the country after the war. In my opinion, Stoltenberg’s best trait as politician is that he is including and gathering. He suits the name “Jens the mild” better than nicknames like “Tough-Jens” or “Iron-Jens” (DA 1.2).

The excerpt is a typical Strand argument, where the expertise of his personal evaluations and judgements seemingly substitute the need for arguments to defend his claims. Strand is also drawing heavily on his strong ties with the Labour party, as he often emphasises the positive attributes of the party and link them to himself. The passage above is also typical of the characteristics and adjectives Strand often attributes to political actors. “Gathering”, “mild” and “tough” are adjectives so vague that when they are not supported by examples, clarifications or explanations, they seem almost empty of meaning and argumentative value. Taken together, Strand’s strategy of argumentation suggests he understands his role as commentator as being an elevated expert who confidently serves his exclusive interpretations, evaluations and explanations to the audience. This role of authoritative pundit combined with his personal qualities is thought to be the entire authorisation necessary for readers, as he confidently states his estimates as truths. To illustrate, assertions are given with few reservations when Strand concludes that poor communication was the reason for the protests on transmission towers last July:

There was hardly one person in Hordaland or other parts of the country who understood why the difficult electricity situation in Bergen had to be handled in this brutal manner (DA 5.2).

Although the hyperbole “one person” should perhaps not be taken literally, stating the opinion so absolutely suggests Strand’s evaluations should in some way be elevated from doubt – so superior it does not need justification. Claiming to know what the entire country does or does not understand suggests great authority and knowledge on behalf of the commentator. “The case is lost for opponents of transmission towers” (DA 5.2) he later similarly asserts. By not offering argumentation or substantiation, audiences know little of the presuppositions and assumptions that lie behind the claim. “The question of oil drilling outside Lofoten was one of the toughest issues of negotiation at Soria Moria<sup>15</sup>” (DA 19.2) is another statement that also implies a role of insider on behalf of Strand, as he suggests he has the necessary oversight and insight into politics to present such claims. The audience has of course no way of knowing the truth-value of Strand’s insider knowledge, and they are left to trust his word. This suggests Strand is particularly dependent on a secure ethos. Much good could surely come from listening to Strand’s implied political shrewdness and competence. This variant of the *ad*

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<sup>15</sup> The convention hotel where the government negotiations took place.

*verecundiam* fallacy and the lack of sound argumentation do however not help readers to take part and deliberate in the discussion, and the debate is brought to a standstill.

“The Conservative party are in the shape of their lives” (DA 26.2) is a typical characterisation presented by Strand. In another commentary, the Conservative party is described as “about to find their own tone. The party is on the field (“på banen”) with a clearer policy” (DA 12.2). Similarly, “Ap’s plan for integration has good cover and a solid content” (DA 12.2), asserts Strand, again allowing little back up to explain why or how. His only arguments directed at the actual content of the integration plan is:

[Foreign Minister] Støre scares nobody when he says that society must place equal demands on their new countrymen as ethnical Norwegians. Nobody protests when Støre points out that the Norwegian language is crucial to succeed in the labour market. Nobody can honestly say that it is ok for parents to decide who their children should marry (DA 12.2).

By only referring to the consensual ideas on which almost all can agree, he denies his opponents in the discussion to present doubt. The premises on which almost everyone agrees are also presented in vague terms. When suggesting that Ap has made tactical errors in their political strategising, Strand again uses vague and ambiguous language:

Ap **made a mistake** when the party before Christmas met the Conservative party with a **grimace** because Erna claimed they have their heart in the welfare state. Erna is wrong, of course [...] there was no reason for the Ap-leadership to **get angry** at the Conservative party before Christmas. The leadership should have **embraced Erna with warm smiles** (DA 12.2).

Because of the imprecise characterisations, readers could be unsure about what degree of defence would suffice to consider the standpoint successfully supported. How does one define the political manoeuvre of embracing another party with “warm smiles”? In what ways did Ap reveal they were “angry” and what does making “grimaces” in politics entail? Again, Strand reflects a role as expert, as he makes no attempt to make his claims acceptable or probable to audiences. In politics and commentary columns, characterisations like “good speech” (DA 22.1), “politically upright” (“politisk stående”) and “smiling” (DA 5.2), or “mark 1 – fail (“karakter 1 - stryk”))” (DA 5.2) have little argumentative value when left unexplained. Presented this assertively, they nonetheless state immediate authority.

**EGYPT:**



**300 milliarder borte på ti år**  
Norske selskaper har trolig bidratt til kapitalflukten.  
VERDEN side 18-19

ANALYSE  
**«Hvem er redd for brorskapet?»**



IVAR A. IVERSEN side 19



**Doblet lesefarten på bare tre uker**  
Et nytt lesetreningsprogram har gjort underverker for Mikkel Heiene (17) og andre skoleelever.  
SAMFUNN side 6

Hver onsdag:  
**NYE BØKER**

**Underlig om lidenskap**

# Frekk Jens stjal fra Erna

**ALT OM APS LANDSSTYREMØTE:**

- Arne Strand: Jens stjal høyreretorikken
- Klemte Kjell Inge Røkke, Stein Erik Hagen, Odd Reitan og Petter Stordalen til sitt bryst
- Vil gi staten kontroll over pengegaver til trossamfunn

KOMMENTAR side 3  
SAMFUNN side 8-10



Facsimile 2: On this cover of *Dagsavisen* on February 9<sup>th</sup> 2011, Arne Strand's commentary on the Labour party's National Committee provides the basis for the main cover story. Parts of the ingress are direct excerpts from Strand's commentary. Using their political editor's opinion as front-page news, *Dagsavisen* underlines Strand's role as expert and authority.

### 5.3.2.2 STYLE OF BIAS

Arne Strand also uses tropes and figures to make his language more fitting and persuasive to readers – although to a much less degree than Marie Simonsen. Tropes especially seem to be used as a strategy to signal severity and importance of the issues he comments on. Using tropes that connote war, conflict and danger, Strand refers to discussions on the issue of Lofoten as “a battle” (DA 29.1) in which the parties “arm themselves to the teeth”. Explaining how the government might “blow” (DA 26.2, DA

29.1), “break their backs if they fall down” (29.1), end up in “a public beating” (DA 22.1), or “public fighting matches” (DA 22.1) Strand uses tropes that all signify great magnitude in the issues he comments on. Describing how parties are given “ammunition to fire away” (DA 5.2) to prevent “knockout” (DA 29.1) or “pure execution” (DA 22.1) signifies the same. Another hyperbole emphasises how the stakes are high in government politics: “Media people love a government crisis and would therefore prefer that the government crashed into the sea outside Lofoten and Vesterålen” (DA 19.2). With this, Strand emphasises his own role as part of an exclusive group, as well as underline the accomplishment of Ap and the government, having made it against tough odds. Politics is similarly viewed as a “game” (DA 12.2) where the core issues of parties are presented as “home turf”, “the opponents arena” or “away ground”. Strand explains how “a solid team” can make you a “winner” (DA 12.2), as the ultimate goal is not becoming the “loser” (DA 29.1:4). The context of drama emphasises Strand’s abilities and dedication in directing newspaper readers on these major events.

Within this context of the world as a game, Strand is clear on who he thinks is or should be winning. When describing the Labour party as the “old eagle” (DA 9.2) of political parties, or the “Ap-ship” with “favouring winds” (DA 1.2), Strand uses tropes connoting experience and stability. The same positive associations are made when he calls former Ap-Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland “country mother” (DA 1.2). Similarly, when the commentator argues about oil exploration in Lofoten, his phrase “it does not mean snip, snap, snout the story’s out for the oil fairy-tale” (DA 26.2) draws on a metaphor referring to fairy tales. This establishes only positive associations to oil drilling. When referring to oil-supporters, Arne Strand similarly calls them “the trumpets of Nordland” (DA 26.2), an allusion to the 1700<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian poet Petter Dass and his renowned *Trumpet of Nordland* about the nature of Northern Norway and the Norwegian fisherman. Referring to a shared cultural and literal heritage with the audience, Strand is building a common base between himself and the audience. The remark has the added bonus of presenting the pundit as well read, at the same time as it implies that oil is the equivalent of fish resources. The claim that SSB and Norway’s Central bank stand together on economic policy “until Dovre falls” (DA 26.2) is another allusion in Strand’s commentaries, this time referring to the so-called Eidsvoll-oath stemming from the signing of the Norwegian constitution in 1814. Signifying “Loyal and

faithful until Dovre falls” (“Enig og tro inntil Dovre faller”), Strand again suggests stability and firmness on Ap’s behalf. Because of their clear bias, tropes may serve as arguments in these respects, as the audience is given a clear indication of what should lie at the forefront of their evaluations.

Other presentational devices seem to be included for the sake of ornamentation and creativity alone. Extending his government as a baby-analogy, Strand compares Kristin Halvorsen with the character of Nora from Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s house* on two occasions: “Kristin will end up in the same situation as Ibsen’s Nora: Where is she to go?” (DA 19.2) and “Kristin does not have to follow Nora’s way out of the doll house” (DA 26.2). Again, the pundit refers to common references as well as emphasise his qualities as well-read and culturally knowledgeable. The commentator also includes remarks that are amusing. He explains that Ap is successful with a metaphor when he writes that Jens Stoltenberg “is no longer hanging by the skirt” of Erna Solberg and Siv Jensen (DA 12.2). Whenever the commentator uses irony, it seems to be quite different from the sometimes scorning ridicule made by Marie Simonsen. Explaining just how “politically dead” Riis-Johansen was, Strand uses irony and exaggeration to be funny:

A colleague said one would have to hold the abilities of Princess Märtha Louise and speak to the dead to get in contact with Minister Johansen (DA 5.2).

Strand again forces the audience to participate and reconstruct what the commentator actually means. The remark is flattering to addressees who understand the reference to Märtha Lousie and her spirituality school’s teachings about healing and communication with angels. The pundit also invites readers to take part in interpreting his commentaries by including rhetorical questions.

### 5.3.2.3 THE ETHOS OF KNOWLEDGEABLE AUTHORITY

Strand exploits his initial ethos as knowledgeable political expert and Ap-supporter to its full potential in his commentaries, and he is the pundit that is by far most inclined to include himself in his argumentation. In addition to the examples mentioned already, Strand is frequently referring to his personal opinions through the first person singular: “I do not think” (DA 29.1), “in my opinion” (DA 29.1, DA 1.2), “...which I had hoped” (DA 1.2), “I am certain” (DA 19.2, DA 18.2), and “It has been a while since I...” (DA 9.2). Wahl-Jørgensen (2007:109) explains how the authority of the deep personal opinion is valued

in contemporary debate, because the personal angle is viewed as authentic. Underlining how opinions and evaluations presented in the commentary is his own, Strand shows how he is authentic, honest and forthcoming.

Strand's frequent use of predictions in his argumentation could lead to inconsistencies in his character, as the actual outcomes of situations deviate from his forecasts on several occasions. Basing his opinions so clearly on personal evaluations suggests his personal credibility could be at stake. When Strand's concrete opinions about the future turn out different, the commentator's ethos-constituting strategy is often to stick to his original analysis. Strand tries to show explicit consistency in his character, and assures: "I was right" (DA 22.1) and "I stand firm by the belief" (DA 5.2). He then rationalises after the fact to explain why his opinions and the evaluations of those around him were mistaken. In the Amelie-case, he changed his entire focus and suddenly emphasised the strategic cleverness of Ap instead of the personal fate of Amelie. On the Hardanger-issue, it was outside events that changed when consumers suddenly cared more about their electricity bill than invasive transmission towers. However, a confessional style of self-division could be a more efficient style in communication. Reflections around one's own mistakes could strengthen ethos because it suggests honesty and authenticity. By contrast, defending his mistaken analysis no matter the cost might portray the pundit as having little insight, not worthy of the authority he takes upon himself. Being more concerned with one's own reputation could in fact illustrate the opposite of *eunoia*, good will. Admittedly, when his predictions about the government splitting over the Lofoten-issue proved mistaken, Strand reveals reflexivity. Including a quote from Winston Churchill defining "political competence" as the "ability to predict what will happen (...) and after be able to explain why it didn't" (DA 26.2), gives a sense of what Strand thinks about his role as oracle. Although he acknowledges that "It is impossible to predict about the future", he nevertheless seems to view his yearlong experience, access to high level sources and political knowledge as the best chance readers have of coming close to it. And should he turn out to be wrong, he is still the best source to explain what really happened and why. Being open about his role as expert and often accentuating the personal nature of his opinions is also a strategy that shows fallibility. Strand makes no attempt to disguise his opinions as something other than what they are: his personal evaluations, again emphasising authenticity. But because his commentaries are so often



tied to predictions, Strand should perhaps take care to include argumentation to support his claims to avoid being perceived as inconsistent and over-confident on behalf of his own abilities.

The political situation at the brink of 2011 was one of government controversy. Arne Strand's rhetorical response sought to turn decreasing support into optimism. Compared to the other two commentators, Strand is alone in having all his ten commentaries be about Norwegian politics, the government or the Labour party specifically. His topical potential is reached by choosing topics that enable him to exploit his qualities as political analyst and the knowledge from his background. This is particularly illustrated by the way Strand gives personal advice to the government coalition: "The government must..." (DA 22.1), and "If these voters are to return..." (DA 26.2). Strand also devotes entire sections to political anecdotes and Ap-history. To include background information about Ap serves to underline both superiority in the Labour party – where he himself is associated – and his own detailed knowledge on Norwegian political history. Emphasizing how authenticity is a result of an intersection of politics and the personal (Wahl Jørgensen 2007:111), authenticity and *phronesis* seem to be the dominating ethos-appeals in Strand's commentary.

In Strand's commentaries, fallacies often happen when Arne Strand skews the need for debate by underlining his personal authority as commentator rather than providing reasonable arguments to defend his claims. Being an opinionated newspaper supporting the ideals of the Labour movement could help explain the authoritative style of argumentation in Strand's commentaries. Communion is established with an audience that seemingly exists of Ap-enthusiasts, who are equally eager to speculate on what the future has in store for the party. As Strand's audience are thought to share his views and political ideology, the *Dagsavisen*-commentator may be inclined to skip argumentation that would help audiences to deliberate. Strand's opinion based on his personal expertise seem more interesting to emphasise than arguments in defence of well-known political standpoints and beliefs. However, as *Dagsavisen* undoubtedly also must satisfy readers who are both sceptical and unconvinced of Labour-policy, good quality reasonable arguments is part of what an audience might expect. Because of the intrinsic element of reason in "the architectonic practical intellectual virtue of *phronesis* and political wisdom" (Garver 1994:156), Strand's lack of argumentation might make the

construction of his personal ethical character weak. As *phronesis* is equal to the deliberation that allows making choices in ethos, not presenting the deliberation that his assertions, choices and opinion rest upon makes his constituted *phronesis* more related to an end than to a mean. Because *Dagsavisen* openly seeks and promotes serious debate – visible through their promotional slogan “News with meaning<sup>16</sup>” and their debate portal *New Opinions* – readers could demand more argumentation from the newspaper’s most visible and influential commentator. The authenticity revealed by Strand might be of less value in this perspective – and his credibility could be weakened as a result.

Although pragma-dialectics require parties to advance standpoints clearly and with conviction, problems arise if assertiveness completely overshadows the signal that the speaker will retract or amend these standpoints should they be refuted (E&H 2002:142). Christian Kock’s critique of commentary journalism in the context of the newspaper as a “credible guide” (2002:14) is related, as he believes the insistency of newspapers and commentators make them unreliable for readers. When commentators assertively come forward as judges furthering one-sided accounts of issues, Kock argues, newspapers are no longer credible (2002:50-1). As McCroskey also similarly held, continuously basing evaluations on authority without giving support draws from ethos instead of supporting it. Viewing ethos as dwelling, Strand’s reluctance to support his standpoints with argumentation seems to be what is most damaging to his credibility.

### *5.3.3 Harald Stanghelle and the analytical approach*

*Aftenposten*’s commentator is proof that precise analysis with non-fallacious argumentation does occur in the sample of commentary articles. Both when making standpoints and arguing to defend them, Harald Stanghelle gives more support to his evaluations and judgements. An overview of Stanghelle’s commentaries also shows that his standpoints are often views on which there exists consensus:

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<sup>16</sup> In Norwegian, the slogan ”Nyheter med mening” and the word ”mening” can be translated into the English word sense, idea, opinion and conviction.

Table 4: Overview of Harald Stanghelle's commentaries

Date	Title	Standpoints
4.1	"The flip side of the medal"	Veteran policy is insufficient and is becoming an increasingly important political issue in Norway.
17.1	"Stand up for the rules"	It is not certain that the rules are right when they override an individual like they do in the Amelie-issue. She is both her own case as well as being part of a bigger perspective.
20.1	"...not hypocritical to fall in love..."	The Amelie-issue fits so well into media dramaturgy they should be careful not to forget their power of definition.
3.2	"The change of the people's will"	The way public opinion has changed on the issues of Amelie and Hardanger shows how unwise it is to always rely on it in politics.
5.2	"The flight from fear"	We do not know the outcome of the uprising, but fear has left the Middle East. It was an unexpected uprising, but at the same time expected.
21.2	"The fear of Marte"	Politicians reacted to meeting a person of Downs syndrome because they would rather avoid seeing the real consequences of their policies.
9.3	"Olsen's own shop"	Per Arne Olsen has not behaved ethically and should be grateful media has not paid attention.
16.3	"The one against the many"	The Commission should give the Treholt-issue the room it deserves. Interrogating the whistle blower differently could mean they want him silenced or it could be customary procedure. The Commission must be transparent in its work.
26.3	"Janus face goes before the fall"	SV has never been more set on governing instead of being in opposition. It is no coincidence that this happens at the same time as Norwegian troops participate in Libya.
15.3	"Credibility at stake"	A lot is at stake in the Treholt-case, both for Treholt and the Commission.

Stanghelle's commentaries are clearly different from those of Marie Simonsen and Arne Strand. This is particularly evident in his argumentation on the controversy around Maria Amelie. First, the criticism that Stanghelle directs at the government is much more cautious: "But when an individual is run over by a rigid adherence to the rules, it is **far from certain** that the rules are **always** right" (AP 17.1). Stanghelle also merely suggests conflict in the government, which is especially in grave contrast to the predictions about the government's demise made by Arne Strand. In addition to focusing on the government's mistakes, Stanghelle also mentions the actions of UNE and the police, reflecting a more complex picture than the more simplified versions of Simonsen and Strand. Second, Stanghelle's other commentary on the Amelie-issue takes an alternative perspective on the issue and criticises the media for being one-sided. Because Stanghelle's media critical approach came before opinion polls revealed that support for Amelie had decreased, the alternative approach in his commentaries is underlined.

Stanghelle's tendency to further consensual and widely accepted claims – what can also be termed political correctness – illustrates his divergence from Marie Simonsen and Arne Strand. His most opinionated commentary is perhaps his column about the controversy after Marthe Goksøyr with Downs Syndrome appeared in the Parliament. Here, he argues that politicians "do not like it very well when they are in open confrontation with the people who are affected by the decisions they make" (AP 21.2). To characterise this assertion as the strongest standpoint in all of Stanghelle's ten commentaries underlines the discrepancy between him and his pundit colleagues. When he argues against Ap's claims that bringing such minority groups to Parliament turns politics into a circus, Stanghelle relies heavily on values and principles all readers could easily accept; denying a person of Downs Syndrome access to politicians because of a physical handicap seems like a huge contradiction to our values of participatory democracy and human rights. The dominating consensual nature of Stanghelle's standpoints is confirmed by the fact that he makes few fallacies. Whenever fallacious argumentation moves do occur, they often arise because of ambiguous and unclear argumentation, which is in line with his careful and non-assertive strategy of argumentation.

### 5.3.3.1 PROOF AND COUNTERARGUMENTS: AN ALTERNATIVE OUTLOOK

Stanghelle seems particularly concerned with supporting his argumentation. One way this manifests is his frequent use of sources – which is rare in the commentaries of Simonsen and Strand. Stanghelle is the commentator who relies most heavily on other authorities when he argues. These sources are nevertheless exploited in a very different manner than when they are a fallacious support for standpoints. Stanghelle often uses the argumentation of authorities as a starting point of discussion, rather than a way to close it off prematurely. Most often, the sources of authority included are referrals to other media, highlighting how re-interpretation of media events enforces the authority of the commentator. One example is Stanghelle's inclusion of an excerpt from a commentary in *Dagsavisen* by the magazine =Oslo's editor Anlov P. Mathiesen. Stanghelle uses the authority both as a confirmation of his claim that the media was acting in conformity on the issue of Amelie, and as a departure point of disagreement:

...he [Mathiesen] continues in *Dagsavisen*'s New opinions section. Sure – and that is fortunate. The myth of the objective journalist is... (AP 20.1)

Stanghelle also uses sources to support and defend what is actually impossible to defend or verify. As an example, the claim that fear has been driven away by the uprising against dictators in the Middle East is a value-statement on which there can be no clear conclusion. Because the claim is of this nature, it is highly unlikely that a newspaper audience would demand support for it. Even so, when Stanghelle presents this claim, he includes a quote from the newspaper *The Independent* where a woman actually exclaims "We will never fear again" (AP 5.2). When he later asserts that there is a changing societal climate in the Middle East, Stanghelle similarly includes a quote from the *The Wall Street Journal* as proof, where Syrian president Bashir al-Assad acknowledges that changes are necessary. These examples seem to give Stanghelle's commentaries a function as background articles rather than a presentation of his interpretation and personal standpoints. Although readers might not require it, providing proof for his claims serves as a guarantee that Stanghelle's argumentation is always based on more than his personal preferences. Stanghelle thereby presents himself as balanced and humble on behalf of his own opinions and their value.

Including the opinions of others could however also be seen as a way to avoid the need of presenting his own. Arguing the consensual claim that Norwegian veterans have been

given too little attention, Stanghelle leaves it up to an actual veteran to explain it and uses a quote from an *Aftenposten*-interview:

I have been met with an incredible amount of procrastination and incompetence. I feel like I am being tossed around in a system with no room for guys like me. Some people wish we would just go away. Sadly, many of my friends have done just that (AP 4.1).

Using a quote to express a pathos-dominated message preserves the logos-focused, nuanced and intellectual perception of the pundit. Similarly, instead of concluding on his own that the extraordinary elements in Maria Amelie's situation have not been sufficiently emphasised, Stanghelle recites "expert on immigration Vigdis Vevstad – herself a member of the Great Committee in UNE" in an interview with *Klassekampen*: "There is still a warrant to underline strong human considerations, but this warrant is outweighed by immigration political concerns" (AP 17.1). Again, this view seems reasonable, consensual and therefore likely to be accepted by audiences. Nevertheless, by avoiding asserting it himself, he is protected from losing face in the event that readers should disagree. Presenting what become opinions by proxy, Stanghelle is able to communicate the particular elements of the debate that cannot be proven by logos-arguments while at the same time preserving his image as non-speculative and detached. However, as Stanghelle could be accused of hiding behind the opinions of others, he could also be perceived as both cowardice and inauthentic, which could ultimately weakening his ethos. To leave it up to other experts to decide suggests these are the real authorities. As a result, Stanghelle reveals humility about his own role in a manner that is entirely different from Marie Simonsen and Arne Strand. When Stanghelle invokes this modesty-topos in his argumentation, he shows that he is of virtuous character and good morale, *arête*.

Stanghelle is also the only one of the three commentators to extensively use non-artistic means of persuasion, *atechnoi*, in his argumentation. Documents, reports and statistics can be distinguished from the artistic proofs of ethos, logos and pathos in rhetoric. Although some have suggested that *atechnoi* has an inferior position because it need not be invented and only employed, the discovery and presentation of evidence can be viewed as an integral part of rhetoric (Brandes 1986:243). Although Stanghelle does not invent it, he must employ his "good nose" (Brandes 1986:243) for ferreting out these sources of evidence. He uses a report from the UN (AP 5.2) and a report to the

Norwegian Parliament (AP 4.1) as proof in his argumentation and makes them available to the audience. In his commentary on the Progressive party's Per Arne Olsen and his corruption-charges, Stanghelle similarly bases his arguments on documentation from the investigation on the issue and a report from a municipal control committee (AP 9.3). Instead of emphasising his own standpoints and views on the case, the commentator presents documents to provide background information and introduce readers to an issue. Moreover, to bolster his uncontroversial argument that the coverage of the Maria Amelie-case has been extensive, Stanghelle even does a mini research in his commentary to measure how many minutes *NRK Dagsrevyen* has awarded the issue.

The fact that Harald Stanghelle criticises other commentary journalists for presenting weak argumentation should in itself prove that Stanghelle is more concerned with presenting valid argumentation. It is also interesting to see how Stanghelle anticipates a central point in the pragma-dialectical discussion rules when he is critical of the way Arne Strand bases his standpoints on the perception of public opinion:

“A Prime Minister cannot recklessly continue to forward his own will and not listen to the will of the people. We have not had such Prime Ministers in this country in peace time” Arne Strand said on NRK2 Aktuelte. It is an unusual interpretation of our parliamentary democracy that a Prime Minister should count the torches outside the government quarters before decisions are made – or before changing those already made (AP 3.2).

Stanghelle reflects on the shift in the people and emphasise the negative consequences of relying solely on opinion polls: “Is this line of reasoning also valid with the protest against the price of electricity?” (AP 3.2). Stanghelle contemplate how opinion polls change over time and refrains from using them as basis for calls for action. The pundit therefore avoids the criticism directed against polls for being meaningless snapshots of single instants of public thinking. Arguing that elections are “the only opinion poll that really counts” (AP 3.2), Stanghelle not only avoids making an ad populum-fallacy but also criticises others for making it. The commentator also disapproves of Arne Strand's many unfounded characterisations of politicians:

There have been signs of a discussion about whether Jens Stoltenberg is best suited as “tough Jens” or “mild Jens”. This is a rather superficial problem. For a chief of government it is rather a goal to show the type of predictability that a safe and solid governance consists of in a country that is actually not so bad to live in (AP 3.2).

The commentator is again most concerned with reflecting seriousness and thoughtful nuance. To present criticism of the media suggests the commentator is honest, even

when it is unfavourable to his own character – again revealing he is humble about his role as commentator. Showing that he has no exaggerated lofty beliefs about his own authority, Stanghelle is again underscoring the *arête*-dimension of his ethos.

#### 4.3.3.2 ACADEMIC STYLE

Stanghelle's style of commentary is detached and nuanced, and he seems to present nothing but the essential in his argumentation. Most of his commentaries are written in a natural style of language. The advantages of a natural style, argues Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, is that attention shifts from audiences generally approving the language to instead approving the standards expressed (1971:152). As ordinary language is an important manifestation of agreement, it can also help to promote agreement of ideas. The academic-like phrasing and neutral language of Stanghelle is reflected in these excerpts:

Much good can be said about such a [the media's] work code, but it can blind us to the powers of definition we ourselves utilise [...] But the great paradox for those swearing to the doubtful thesis of our time's great media power is the simple fact that... (AP 20.1).

It [article in Klassekampen] shows that the veritable confrontation about the government's planned "monster masts" through Hardanger is replaced by a people's demand for more and cheaper electricity (AP 3.2)

"Thesis", "paradox" and "veritable" are words that diverge from the ideal journalistic discourse, as the rules of communication normally prescribe journalists to be as clear and easy to understand as possible. Also, by showing distance to the expression monster masts through the use of quotation marks in the quote, Stanghelle shows he separates himself from much of other mainstream media.

Compared to the other commentators, Stanghelle makes little use of tropes and figures. Typical examples of the tropes he does use can be his description of the Amelie-case as "a mirror for the face of our age" ("et speil for tidens ansikt") (AP 17.1), calling the dictatorships in the Middle East a "troll ring" (AP 5.2), and referring to our reactions to them as a "ritual shrug of the shoulders" (AP 5.2). These are all tropes that serve to concretise the events he comments on. They make certain elements of the issues more central in the audiences' minds, giving them some argumentative value. Most of Stanghelle's tropes are dominated by passive academic-like formulations and language. To illustrate, Stanghelle contrasts "the consequential tyranny in force for any



governmental party” against SV’s “politically uninhibited past” (AP 26.3). SV can no longer be “an opposition party bedecked with government skin (“ikledd regjeringsham”)” writes Stanghelle, telling the party to forget “the memories of the oppositional existence’s non-committal blessings (“opposisjonstilværelsens uforpliktende velsignelser”)” (AP 26.3). Stanghelle also reiterates how Kristin Halvorsen encourages her party members to “bridle the critical impatience that Halvorsen knows is a part of SV’s soul” and “feel the joy over small work victories in the government apparatus’ toilsome journey towards change” (AP 26.3). These tropes and periphrases do not involve directions for the audience, and the value of the rhetorical figures is ornamental and decorative. Another example of a merely aesthetic phrase from Stanghelle is the metonymy “official Norway” (AP 16.3) for the justice system. Although such phrases can excite admiration of the speaker’s originality (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971:169), the conventional nature of this trope weakens its persuasive effect because readers might not react to it. Another manifestation of Stanghelle’s self-criticism is his referral to “know-it-alls” (AP 3.2), which could be directed at commentators. Perceived as self-irony, Stanghelle forces the audience to deconstruct the meaning of the phrase, while at the same time showing honesty and humility on behalf of his own role

The importance of agreement in Stanghelle’s commentaries and his subsequent reluctance to exclude readers is also reflected in the dialectical style of Stanghelle’s argumentation. There are two approaches to this” (AP 16.3), Stanghelle writes after explaining the different aspects of the Treholt-issue. He then reasons between “the one” and “the other model of interpretation”. Even after having balanced the pros and cons against each other, Stanghelle still feels it necessary to assure readers that his account is not black and white: “This does of course not mean that the commission has to say yes to reopen Arne Treholt’s case”, “Neither does credibility rest on it denying his petition” (AP 16.3). This dialectical style of discussion is also reflected in the pundit’s use of rhetorical questions, a commonly used rhetorical figure in Stanghelle’s commentaries. “Such motives are perhaps crude to ascribe to a State organ?” Stanghelle questions rhetorically after having speculated that irritation over Maria Amelie’s high profile and book stimulated UNE and the Police to prioritise her arrest. By using a question, Stanghelle seems less directly responsible for the assertive that is implied, while at the same time

being able to make what he obviously believes is a fruitful point. “But is it desirable?” asks Stanghelle rhetorically after presenting Marianne Aasen’s assurance that politicians can handle minority groups showing up in the Parliament (AP 21.2). He answers in the negative, before asking again, “what if a state secretary should meet a representative for the Norwegian indigenous people?” Used this way, questions serve to indirectly steer readers in the direction of certain beliefs, but without Stanghelle having to state the claim or speculate explicitly. “A thank you for the help?” (AP 9.3), Stanghelle similarly asks about the corruption-charged Per Arne Olsen – the closest he comes to suggesting corruption in his commentary article on the issue.

#### 5.3.3.3 AN EDUCATING ETHOS

Harald Stanghelle’s commentaries are filled with logos-dominated arguments and analysis that securely bolster his standpoints. Factual and nuanced arguments and background information are more prevalent than Stanghelle’s personal opinions and interpretations. He is the only pundit in the sample to include topics that were not on the national news agenda at the time, revealing that he is eager to enlighten audiences on issue that he feels are important. Together with the commentator’s prevalent use of external sources and their opinions, this reflects an ethos built on public service. Stanghelle shows he is well read, up to date on issues of political interest and eager to educate readers and provide them with the necessary background and overview. Choosing topics audiences might be unfamiliar with allows him to present arguments directed at informing rather than to be opinionated. Stanghelle thereby shows he is humble about his authority and qualifications, revealing he is of virtuous character and has good will towards his readers. His commentaries are comprehensive evaluations and assemblies of analysis from others directed at helping readers to make informed decision on issues in society.

*Aftenposten* is Norway’s largest newspaper, and despite its national reach, the paper is based and concentrated around the Norwegian capitol and Eastern Norway. With the same regional stronghold, *Dagsavisen* is an important competitor over subscribers in these areas. However, with an indistinct political profile and with readers both in cities and districts, *Aftenposten* needs to adapt to a more heterogeneous readership. Allern (2001a:132) holds that newspapers read by people with several political affiliations

constantly balance the need for a political profile against the need to provoke as few as possible. In this respect, the clear logos-based arguments in Stanghelle's commentaries could be tactically motivated. Another factor that may force Stanghelle's argumentation style to be different from that of Simonsen and Strand is that he is the only pundit in the sample who occasionally has commentaries placed within the news section. When *Aftenposten* places commentary next to traditional neutral news discourse, it might be more fitting for Stanghelle to focus on background information and alternative perspectives draped in a dispassionate, matter-of-factly and neutral language. Credibility in traditional journalism is especially tied to remaining neutral and not reflecting personal opinion. It therefore seems natural that Stanghelle is less biased in his style of argumentation. Stanghelle's commentaries reflect commentary that lie closer to that of traditional journalists than the case of the personal style columns of Simonsen and Strand, whose columns are always clearly separated from the news section.

# USA: Jens Stoltenberg snakket ikke sant

Amerikanerne provosert av Irak-uttalelse

Derfor ble Stoltenberg ikke invitert til Det hvite hus

President George W. Bush mente Jens Stoltenberg ga ukorrekte opplysninger til norske medier om hva de hadde sagt på telefon da Bush ringte ham i 2005.

**ROBERT GJØRE**  
**AFLEIDE KOL**  
 Oslo/Paris

**«Jeg sa at ( . . . ) vi ønsker å fortsette kampen mot terror, men at vi har gjort uttrykk for at vi ønsker at norske offiserer ikke lenger skal være i Irak»**

**Jens Stoltenberg** hetet at han oppga dette til presstallet Bush da denne, på telefon, ga uttalelse om samtalene med presidenten.

**«Det er den eneste saken som Stoltenberg hadde tatt opp med Bush.»**

**«Det er den eneste saken som Stoltenberg hadde tatt opp med Bush.»**

**«Det er den eneste saken som Stoltenberg hadde tatt opp med Bush.»**



Jens Stoltenberg til NRK Dagsnytt 15. september 2005 om samtalen med president Bush

Jens Stoltenberg falt for fristelsen til å bløffe om en telefonsamtale med George W. Bush. Det straffet seg.

## Den menneskelige faktor



**Harald Stanghelle**, politisk uttalelse

I morgener møter statsminister Jens Stoltenberg president Barack Obama. I dagens avis forteller vi historien om hvorfor

den har tatt hele seks år før Stoltenberg blir mottatt i Det hvite hus.

Underlig nok finnes forklaringen hos Jens Stoltenberg selv. Rikstinget har den norske siden i brev plassert anerkennelse av Bush. Da presidenten ble i Norge, som i mange andre europeiske land, blevken ikke eller forsett. Derfor har vi da også sålt oss til ro med at amerikanske politikere har vist grunnen til den lokale daren i Washington gjennom Bush-tirre.

Vilgriheten er mer komplisert – og kontroversell.

Slut – og langt inn. For en rolle amerikaner og norske kilder forteller nå – naturligvis av leverandere – en annen historie.

Den handler om en norsk statsminister som misbrøkte en offentlig uttalelse med den amerikanske presidenten til å fremstå tøffere og mer resolutt enn det var det tilfellet. Det gjorde amerikanerne rasende – og mer langseint enn de burde være.

Det var altså ikke den ferske og roglomme regjeringens fraksstandpunkt som stengte døren. Det var en statsminister som

flere episoder knyttet til ham der vi ser at selv en toppolitikker kan handle på impuls, uten å tenke på nyere informasjon. Kvenestevnet av det kan gjere.

Norsk politikk er utvilsomt av slike episoder. Men kombinasjonen av Stoltenbergs store popularitet og dyktighet har gjort at de ikke betror så tungt ved nettopp ham.

Likvel har jeg beredt. I dette tilfellet i så sterk grad at Stoltenberg siden har mistet en stengt dør i Det hvite hus.

Episoden vil ikke Jens Stoltenberg i et bedtlys. Bebyttingen er såkalt skilt i livet.

«Det var altså ikke den ferske og roglomme regjeringens fraksstandpunkt som stengte døren. Det var en statsminister amerikanerne mente ikke var helt til å stole på.»

**«Forholdet ble ødt»**

Et forholdet mellom presidenten de norske statsministeren, der ble forhandlingen den 15. september, som ønsker å være åpne om forholdet etter at Nordstrøm i Irak. Problemet var at det ikke ble noe resultat.

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**Applaus fra venstre**

Jens Stoltenbergs uttale til Bush ble møtt med applaus fra Sosialistisk Ungdoms (SU). Det er svensk ungdomsgruppe som et linje på Irak i År er på vei over på SVS ringe 1.



Jens Stoltenberg til NRK Dagsnytt 15. september 2005 om samtalen med president Bush

Bush fikk he norske offiserer skal ut av Irak

«Jeg beklurer at George W. Bush ringte for å gjere en telefonsamtale med Stoltenberg om hva de hadde sagt på telefon da Bush ringte ham i 2005.»

**Vil ikke bli**

Statsminister Jens Stoltenberg vil ikke bli innringet til Det hvite hus. Dette er en nyhet som er viktig for å gjere en telefonsamtale med Stoltenberg om hva de hadde sagt på telefon da Bush ringte ham i 2005. Det er en nyhet som er viktig for å gjere en telefonsamtale med Stoltenberg om hva de hadde sagt på telefon da Bush ringte ham i 2005.

Facsimile 3: This page taken from *Aftenposten* on October 19<sup>th</sup> 2011 illustrates how Harald Stanghelle is quite visible in the daily news coverage in *Aftenposten*. Here,

Stanghelle's commentary - placed in the middle of the page – plays a prominent role in providing background and alternative perspectives on a features news story.

The correct and proper argumentation of Stanghelle constitutes an ethos similar to the profile of his employee *Aftenposten*. No matter the rhetorical situation, it seems that providing information and arguments on both sides of an issue are always the essential elements in his commentaries. In doing so, the pundit directs his persuasion at an audience thought to consist of rational and consensus-oriented people seeking agreement, compromise and understanding of different views and issues. By advocating equal rights for all, transparency and democracy, the commentator again reflects his virtuous character by stressing important cultural virtues all readers would agree to. However, as emotional means of persuasion are largely absent, the commentator seems to hold conceptions of *arête* and *eunoia* that fall short of causing emotions. As a result, his ethos could be less persuasive, as was noted by Garver (1994:119).

Although fallacies are extremely rare in Stanghelle's argumentation, a sense of sophistry can still be said to exist in his commentaries. Sophists embraced fallacies in argumentation because some questions were simply impossible to answer affirmatively. The same uneasiness about taking a stand, in the unfortunate event that someone disagrees, can also be detected in Stanghelle's excessive use of argumentation and proof. Although his argumentation clearly presents the audience with a choice, Stanghelle stops short of actually making a decision on his own and therefore reveals little choice and character. He nevertheless separates from the sophists in his infrequent use of presentational devices. Facts do have a privileged position in argumentation, argues Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971:67f). However, this privilege is lost when facts are placed as conclusion rather than starting points for discussion. To say that Stanghelle's commentaries only assert facts as standpoints is an exaggeration, but the overview shows his statements are largely consensual and in accord with widely held beliefs. Stanghelle's presence in his commentaries can therefore be perceived as weak. The following un-persuasive nature of his commentaries seems to stem from an unwarranted dependence on rationality and *logos*. Because neglecting persuasion only harms the arguer and not the adversary, this is not considered condemnable according to the ideal of the critical discussion (E&H 2002:142). However, the balance between rationality and persuasiveness is still distorted, and the argumentation is therefore

unsuccessful. Kristoffersen (1996) has argued that the de-politicisation of journalism might weaken the contributions of the press to a vibrant political public sphere:

An independent, descriptive and analysing approach in leaders might over time contribute to a weakening of newspapers' engagement in society, as pluralism of opinions is lost. (Kristoffersen 1996:66 [my translation]).

Some elements of de-politicised analysis can be found in the consensus-based commentaries of Stanghelle. However, the problem with his columns may not only lie in their lack of being persuasive. In relation to ethos, there exists such a problem of being too rational. Rhetoric is less precise, not in order to be more logical, or more persuasive, but to be more ethical, argues Garver (1994:84). Because reasoning persuades as evidence of character, Aristotle held "it is more fitting that a virtuous man should show himself good than that his speech should be painfully exact" (Garver 1994:84). According to this line of reasoning, Stanghelle may be accused of being too focused on the inner aim of rhetoric, therefore revealing fault in his character. Without forgetting that rationality plays an essential part of persuasion, creating engagement and interest is equally important to get people to show up at the constructed place of gathering and dwelling. As Lasch and Dewey emphasised, debate is needed to focus and gain the proper attention of the audience. Many readers might therefore seek more assertive opinions and definite evaluations from Stanghelle to allow engagement and persuasion. To the same effect, the overt focus on logos could make Stanghelle's academic style inaccessible to many readers. Nevertheless, being less sensationalist and tabloid in his presentation means Stanghelle appeals to an entirely different segment of the population. Avoiding giving strong opinions and sticking to consensual views make Stanghelle a commentator that confirms and validate the order of things – a feeling that shores up confidence in our beliefs about the world and a conviction that we have understood it. Still, other readers might prefer a dwelling ethos of deliberation where they can more easily take part in an emotional process of "taking something to heart", as emphasised by Heidegger.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

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The unavoidable question in a normative analysis such as the pragma-dialectical is whether the argumentative discourse in the commentary works. The analysis of fallacies made by the pundits shows that the commentaries are not without fault in relation to the genre's ideals of democracy and information, and all ten rules of the critical discussion are violated at some time. The three most common rule violations reveal that commentators – although the regularity of the fallacies between the three pundits is very different – often give vague and unclear argumentation. Nevertheless, such claims are more often than not presented with a general air of self-importance and assertion. Other times, erroneous argumentation schemes are presented as valid arguments, or standpoints are not defended by arguments at all. The fallacies made serve to hide connections, explanations, argumentation and analysis. Commentators therefore often fail to make the presumptions, premises and counterfactuals of their statements clear, and readers have little possibility of evaluating the probability of their standpoints.

Describing the commentary column as sophistry, Nimmo and Combs explained how pundits give the impression of having expertise and knowledge by *depicting* authority. More important than convincing readers through arguments and substance is the need to persuade them through linguistic means. The reluctance of Marie Simonsen and Arne Strand to defend their claims with argumentation causes them to frequently depend on the argument from authority, what in argumentation theories often is referred to as *argumentum ad verecundiam*. In this respect, celebrity status and the role as star commentator seems to alleviate the need for support of evaluations. Making these direct ethotic arguments, Simonsen and Strand lends credibility to standpoints, although the argumentation and evidence for their probability are either low or non-existing. Newspaper readers are invited to draw the conclusions that 1) the commentator is the sort of person who know these things, and 2) the standpoint offered is one correct assessment of this situation. Because the main criterion for the *ad verecundiam* argument to be sound is that readers accept the authority presented, the credibility of the pundits is the only insurance they have of readers allowing their declarations to constantly be given without proof. Thus, the analysis seems to be brought full circle; in an argumentation analysis that incorporates the element of a dwelling and artful ethos,

it does not automatically follow that the audience concludes in the manner that pundits entail when they constantly draw on the authority argument.

There are also significant differences in how the three commentators argue. Commentator Harald Stanghelle of *Aftenposten* thwarts the entire analysis of fallacies, and simply does not include them much. Instead, Stanghelle argues in an entirely different style than the other two commentators, emphasising the dialectical objectives of the discussion rather than the rhetorical. He provides extensive proof for his standpoints and arguments, argues back and forth, and gives few standpoints that were not already widely agreed on. In contrast, commentator Marie Simonsen in *Dagbladet* relies especially on the fallacies of the personal attack, the straw man and irrelevant humour. This results in argumentation that often relates directly to the character of her opponents, where ridicule and humour is especially aimed at weakening their credibility in the discussion. Opponents therefore seem to be treated not as people with differing standpoints but merely opponents to be refuted. Accordingly, the conflict of opinion is reduced to a mere conflict. The use of humour may nevertheless reduce the severity of her personal attacks and scrutinising focus on others, along with having the fortunate bonus of attracting and amusing audiences. Arne Strand of *Dagsavisen* is the commentator who most easily resorts to fallacious arguments. His commentaries are dominated by predictions and forecasts about what could and should happen in politics – a scene most often presented as a game through the use of dramatic presentational devices. Strand is also the commentator who gives less argumentation in support of his standpoints.

Ethos is in this analysis understood in a manner that makes the credibility of pundits dependent on the quality of the deliberation they offer in their commentaries. But in order to be successful in communication, commentators also need to adapt to the concrete situations they are part of. The ethos enhancing manoeuvres of the pundits show that their commentaries lie close to the profile of their respective newspapers. The assertive nature of Arne Strand's argumentation makes him the pundit who most clearly assumes a role of expert and lead judge. He seems little concerned with legitimising his authority as commentator in something other than his personal qualities, and having been given the job of pundit seems to be enough validation to rightfully enjoy its prerogatives. Strand's role as editor in chief and the more narrow scope of *Dagsavisen*

allows him to more or less speak on behalf of an entire newspaper, its readership and all Labour party supporters, ascribing him with a natural sense of authority. Conversely, Harald Stanghelle and Marie Simonsen comment on behalf of a much more heterogeneous readership. They both seem to legitimise their authority as pundits in something other than their role as commentators on the media stage; Harald Stanghelle provides extensive argumentation and proof, and the columns of Marie Simonsen is particularly concerned with giving readers a worth while commentary experience. Again, Stanghelle adapts to *Aftenposten's* consensus-oriented profile, and Simonsen's provocative style of ridicule, irony and criticism can be directly related to her employer *Dagbladet*.

For newspapers to encourage fallacious or non-persuasive argumentation possibly harmful to their ethos might seem like a paradox – especially in light of the implications that individual manifestations of ethos may have on the professional ethos of journalism. It is therefore possible to argue that in these instances, the potential of the commentary is not fully reached. And sure enough, emphasising the ideal of journalism to create debate in a deliberative democracy reveals that the genre's conventions are not in fact sufficiently realised in some of these commentary articles. To emphasise the civic elements of ethos indicates that an ethos that does not acknowledge the public nature of deliberation is not fully persuasive. Therefore, the ethos-constitution of pundits becomes problematic whenever commentators are presented as private persons we should rely on to explain to us the realities of society. The ethos of Marie Simonsen as entertainer and Arne Strand as expert are both closely related to their personal qualifications, and are therefore ethoi that essentially deny the importance of ethos. While Simonsen and Strand again seem to confirm much of the criticism directed at the commentary genre, Stanghelle has again seemingly escaped it. Presenting commentary that lie closer to an ideal of dispersing information and knowledge about issues, Stanghelle seems sceptical of presenting subjective reflections and personal opinions. The weakness of his commentaries is rather that he – because of his seeming scepticism against rhetoric as empty persuasion without substance – denies the need for persuasion, and ultimately the existence of ethos. Although readers can agree to his widely consensual claims, there is no trust established.



The main objection that can be directed at the pragma-dialectics after employing it on journalistic discourse is that argumentation that can sometimes be highly relevant – like emotional and personal arguments – is deemed fallacious. The theory's concept of strategic manoeuvring lessens the focus of rationality to some degree. Strategic manoeuvring also relieves the negative focus that is given to the argumentation through the identification of its faults. However, all the while pragma-dialectical theory regards excessive use of ethos and pathos as non-argumentative means, it seems unlikely that the theory will escape the critique that it is too concerned with rationality – or rather, that the perception of it is too narrow. In this respect, acknowledging that the categorisation of an argument as fallacious was not the equivalent of its death sentence is helpful. An eclectic approach where the bar for what can be considered rational argumentation is somewhat lowered allows the theory to be better adapted to journalistic discourse. The normative dimension of the theory is however particularly useful in the exploration of argumentation.

It might seem like nitpicking to criticise commentators from both sides of the spectrum, where one is considered too rational and the two others not enough. Important in this respect is again to restate that the object of analysis is not to draw conclusions about the credibility of commentators, but to explore their argumentation and persuasive strategies in a normative perspective. Although this study is too limited to make general statements about argumentation and ethos in commentary journalism, it can give some insight into three different pundits that function as star commentators and sometimes even as brands for their newspapers. As all of them reveal weaknesses in terms of the ideal critical discussion, this analysis also illustrates how important it is to not confuse criticism against the commentary genre with criticism against its employment. Helping pundits and the audience that receives their comments to distinguish between fallacious and sound arguments is therefore a good tool to fully realise the possibilities that lie within the pundit column – both in terms of democratic debate and its advantages in a rapidly changing media landscape.

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