'Ideological' fallacies [1]

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to extend the critique which informal logic employs against fallacious reasoning to a critique of ideological argumentation. Two main problems are addressed: the first problem concerns criteria for the identification of 'ideological' fallacies, and the second concerns the place which 'ideological' fallacies are to be accorded in a 'taxonomy' of fallacies. I address the first problem by developing a critical concept of ideology: argumentative ideological discourse serves to justify relations of domination and exploitation and is potentially misleading. Two illustrative examples of 'ideological' fallacy are presented: an 'appeal to public interest' and an 'appeal to the will of God'. In addressing the second problem, I argue that these 'ideological' fallacies may best be classified as ***typical variations*** *of main classes of fallacies which are traditionally distinguished (inconsistent premises and relevance).*

1. Introduction

This paper takes for granted that there are fallacies[2], that they occur not infrequently in argumentative discourse and that they have a legitimate place in the curriculum of courses in critical thinking or informal logic. It goes on to argue that it makes logical sense to identify, and pedagogical sense to make students acquainted with fallacy variations which can properly be called 'ideological' fallacies.

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1 This essay is a reworked version of a paper presented at the 12th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking at Sonoma State University, California, USA, August 9-12, 1992. South African referees have made useful suggestions for the improvement of the essay.

2 By 'fallacy' I mean an argument which is incorrect in *a typical* manner and is also deceptive in appearance or in the manner of reasoning in such a way that it can be mistaken for a good argument (cf. Van Veuren, 1991:83-84).

The identification of 'ideological' fallacies implies that the critique which informal logic employs against fallacious reasoning is extended to a critique of ideological argumentation. This procedure poses two problems which need to be addressed. The first problem concerns the criteria for the identification of 'ideological' fallacies and calls for a clarification of the concept of ideology. The second problem concerns the place which 'ideological' fallacies are to be accorded in a 'taxonomy' of fallacies. In what follows I shall discuss and clarify the meaning of the concept of ideology for the concerns of this paper. Following this theoretical discussion I shall present instances of 'ideological' fallacies and argue that the teaching of 'ideological' fallacies contributes in a special way to the critical orientation which courses in critical thinking want to foster in students.

2. Ideology and fallacy

The program formulated above to extend the critique which logic employs against fallacious reasoning to a critique of argumentation which serves an ideological purpose demands a *negative* or *critical* concept of ideology. However, such a concept of ideology is confronted in contemporary literature on the subject by a dominantly *positive* or *neutral* concept of ideology. In this section I shall argue that a negative or critical concept of ideology does have some legitimacy.

Ideological argumentation has not (to any noticeable extent) been made an object of study in informal logic. It has, however, received some attention in studies on *rhetoric*. It seems that in this context authors generally favour the neutral concept of ideology.[3] The neutral concept of ideology can be illuminated by the metaphor of 'social cement': an ideology is a system of ideas (or alternatively a systematized set of values) which establishes social relations and fosters social coherence and integration. The neutral concept of ideology is also elaborated in the Marxist tradition from Lenin through Lukács and Gramsci to Althusser. In this tradition the 'social cement' of ideology unifies members of a class on the level of class consciousness. In Lenin, for example, socialist consciousness is a fusion of proletarian class consciousness, ideology and science (Larrain, 1983:68). In the non-Marxist tradition too, influential contemporary authors (like Clifford Geertz

3 For example: Balthrop, 1984:343; McGee & Martin, 1983:50. Chaim Perelman (1979: 143, 145) writes: "To exercise power it is essential that it be recognized as legitimate and that it enjoys an authority that brings about the consent of those who are subject to it. This is the necessary role of ideologies. [...] Denying all value to ideologies is to return political life to an armed struggle for power from which the most influential military leader will undoubtably emerge successful." This conception of ideology leads to the consequence that it "is from another ideology, another ideal of man and society that the prevailing ideology can be criticized" (Perelman, 1979:143), which seems to exclude a logical critique of ideological reasoning.

and Martin Seliger) seem to prefer some version of the neutral or positive concept of ideology.

The predominance of the neutral concept of ideology in literature on the subject should, however, not be allowed to obscure the fact that there also exists a tradition of the negative use of the concept.[4] This negative, critical concept of ideology goes back to Napoleon's abusive use of the term *ideologues* for members of Destutt de Tracy's *Institut National* and his derogatory reference to the term *ideology* as a kind of 'shadowy metaphysics' (cf. Thompson, 1990:31). De Tracy's *Éléments d'Idéologie* (1803-1815) is an exercise in foundationalism: the project of his 'science of ideas' as a 'first science' is to give a foundation for all knowledge and the rational management of social relations and social change. This 'science of ideas' was conceived only to counteract the effects of the Jacobin Terror during the French Revolution and not to abrogate the project of the Enlightenment as such. It was in effect a re-affirmation of this project and of the declaration of universal human rights. Thus, although Napoleon at first supported De Tracy's project, he later became a vehement critic of 'ideology' and the 'ideologues' because their project was incompatible with his authoritarian rule as First Consul (1799-1810). Napoleon's use of the term *ideology* was a first step in the development of a negative meaning of the term: as De Tracy used it, it referred in a neutral way to the *science of ideas*; as Napoleon used it, it referred also to the ideas themselves as a system of ideas which are erroneous and divorced from the realities of political practice (cf. Thompson, 1990:32).

2.1 Marx's negative concept of ideology

Through his exile in Paris (1844-1845) Marx was familiar with De Tracy's work and Napoleon's attack on it; he and Engels employed the concept in a negative sense in *The German Ideology*, which was written immediately after the end of Marx's exile (1845-46).

In the initial stages of the development of its meaning, the negative import of the concept of ideology was based on a rather simplistic contrast between abstract ideas and concrete political practice. Marx, however, underpins the negative content of the concept with a philosophical theory of some sophistication. In the present context two features of Marx's theory of ideology need to be highlighted: the illusionary and misleading nature of these ideas and the functional nature of these ideas.

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4 J.B. Thompson (1990:29-73) has argued for this point in some detail.

Marx's critical conception of ideology links up with the first stage in the development of the negative meaning of the concept, in which 'abstract' ideas are contrasted with concrete practical activity. However, in Marx the disjunction between 'theory' and 'praxis' is not a polemical move, but it is something which has a *historical* origin in the division of material and mental labour. According to Marx this division enables consciousness to emancipate itself from existing practice and "flatter itself ... that ... it is *really* conceiving something without conceiving something *real* ... and ... proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc." (Marx & Engels, 1938:20). This body of ideas is 'ideological' in the sense that it produces the illusion that it constitutes a separate, real and independent sphere which is completely divorced from the field of human praxis, and that it causally influences the concrete historical situation in which people make history by producing and reproducing their material existence. It is crucial for understanding Marx's concept of ideology to note that the autonomy and efficacy of ideas which are divorced from praxis are illusionary. Such ideas are but "reflexes and echos" (Marx & Engels, 1938:14). Nevertheless they are "the ideal expression of the dominant material relationship grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore the ideas of its dominance" (Marx & Engels, 1938:39). In Marx's famous phrase the "ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas" which serve to entrench, perpetuate and rationalize its power (Marx & Engels, 1938:39).

It seems to me that if one wants to take the tradition of the negative concept of ideology seriously in the present, two elements of Marx's theory of ideology need to be salvaged, i.e. his insistence on the misleading and illusionary character of ideology, and the function ideological discourse has in sustaining relations of domination, inequality and exploitation.

It is not possible to give a detailed critique of all the relevant theses of Marx's philosophy within the confines of this paper; therefore I shall mention only two which are crucial in the present context. In my view these theses have become untenable and are therefore not incorporated in the negative concept of ideology which is proposed here.

2.1.1 Relations of domination and exploitation

In Marx relations of domination and exploitation in modern Western society are understood exclusively in terms of the relation between owners of the means of production and the working class, whose members are compelled to sell their labour on the market. In present-day Western societies, however, the lines of demarcation which Marx employed to differentiate between classes in capitalist society have become fuzzy, with the result that relations of domination and

exploitation which are not based on class have gained in definition and prominence, e.g. those based on gender, ethnicity and economic hegemony ('North-South' divide).

2.1.2 Ideology as 'ideas' and ideas being essentially passive

In Marx's theory of ideology *ideas* or *theories* which are divorced from praxis are 'ideological'. The emphasis on 'ideas' (or 'systems of ideas') harks back to the original meaning of the term ideology in De Tracy's "Elements of Ideology". This emphasis on 'ideas' is characteristic of the age of rationalism and 'philosophy-as-epistemology'. Moreover, in *The German Ideology* Marx views ideological ideas as "echos" and "reflections" of the "real forces and relations of production". These metaphors suggest that ideology is essentially passive – a point which Marx wishes to make against Hegel. Marx's metaphor of an 'ideological superstructure' has the same import: it is based on naval terminology which refers to the superstructure of a ship, which is based on the hull of the ship and is bound to follow its movement. Both of these claims of Marx – i.e. that ideology is constituted by 'ideas' and that these ideas are essentially passive – have been firmly set aside in recent literature on ideology which connects ideology with *language*.[5]

2.2 Ideology as discourse

The connection of ideology with language has some important implications for the study of ideology: it turns it away from the study of 'ideas' towards a study of language. In the context of language 'ideas' cease to be purely mental phenomena: rather they are utterances, expressions – i.e. words which are spoken or inscribed and circulate in a social world in which people communicate with each other, interact with each other, produce history and reproduce the society in which they live. Language itself is, to paraphrase Thompson (1990: 58), a constitutive factor of social reality and is actively involved in the creation of relations between individuals and groups. Therefore, in the context of language, ideology does not exist in 'passive' ideas but in the active ways in which language serves to establish and to sustain relations of domination. Domination obtains

> ... when established relations of power are 'systematically asymmetrical', that is, when particular agents or groups of agents are endowed with power in a durable way which excludes, and to some significant degree remains in-

5 J.B. Thompson (1984) reviews the (mainly French) literature on the relationship between ideology and language.

> accessible to, other agents or groups of agents, irrespective of the basis upon which such exclusion is carried out (Thompson, 1990:59).

Language can of course be studied on various levels (e.g. the levels of phonology, morphology, syntax, etc.). The level on which language functions in everyday communication and interaction between people is primarily the level of *discourse*, in other words the level of linguistic units that exceed the limits of single sentences. Instances of discourse are conversations, speeches, texts, etc. (cf. Thompson, 1984:8). Language on the level of discourse is capable of sustaining the functional nature of ideology which I have already pointed out: it is on this level that a complex series of strategies by which language is mobilized for the maintenance of relations of domination come into operation. This means that a study of ideology is not so much a study of the content of 'ideas' but of the various ways in which discursive language serves to establish and sustain relations of domination in concrete situations (cf. Thompson, 1984:41). If an analysis of ideology is conceived in this way, it must perforce be contextualized. The 'ideologicalness' of instances of discourse is not an 'inherent' feature of these instances, but rather a feature which is constituted by the function of discourse in specific social situations. These concrete social situations require close consideration, and where necessary social-historical analysis in order to amass and present evidence of power relations which are "systematically asymmetrical" (cf. Thompson, 1990:23, 283-4).

2.3 Ideological functions of discourse

Thompson (1990:60) presents a list which suggests five different ideological functions which discourse may have. I want to draw on his suggestions in the following reconstruction, but I shall not follow it in detail because of some measure of confusion it seems to contain concerning the argumentative structure discourse may exhibit in some instances. While Thompson accords a subordinate position to argumentative structure in his list (he ties it rather exclusively to *rationalization* as a "strategy of symbolic construction"), I want to propose that argumentative structure be accorded a more important place in the analysis of discourse. Analysis of a variety of texts in which language acquires an ideological function, suggests a division of discourse into at least two main categories, i.e. that of *argumentative* discourse and that of *suggestive* discourse.[6] While the first type of discourse is characterized by reasoning, the second type is charac-

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6 This categorization does not intend to be exhaustive: there are various other types of discourse (e.g. narrative, descriptive, etc.) and various strategies other than those mentioned in Table 1. Furthermore, one type of discourse is seldom found without the admixture of other types. Table 1 represents the barest minimum of distinctions which are necessary for my argument in this paper.

terized by rhetorical procedures. Various powerful argumentative and rhetorical *strategies* which can have an ideological function can be linked to these types of discourse, as the table below shows.

Table 1

Strategies and ideological functions of various types of discourse

Types	*Strategies*	*Functions*
Argumentative	Universalization	Justification
	Deification	
Suggestive	Displacement	Dissimulation
	Euphemization	
	Fragmentation	

The distinction between *argumentative* and *suggestive* types of discourse seems to me to be of importance for the program which I propose, i.e. to extend the logical critique of fallacious reasoning to discourse which serves to sustain relations of domination. This program presupposes that such discourse has at least in some instances an argumentative structure. It seems to me that discourse which serves to entrench relations of domination proceeds by way of argumentation especially in those cases where *justification* or *legitimacy* is sought by providing grounds or reasons for the implementation or existence of social policies or measures which facilitate domination and exploitation. Argumentative strategies need to be clearly distinguished from strategies which operate through *suggestion* in order to *dissimulate* relations of domination and exploitation. I shall first discuss some of these mainly rhetorical strategies and then return to the strategies of argumentation.

2.3.1 Rhetorical strategies

As Thompson (1990:62) points out, relations of domination may be established and sustained by being concealed, denied or obscured, or by being represented in a way which deflects attention from or glosses over existing relations or processes. The following examples are highlighted:

* The strategy of *displacement* through which the positive connotation of a term is transferred into a context where it has a dissimulative function; for instance, the law which *prohibited* black South Africans from attending 'white' universities was called *The Extension of University Education Act*.

* *Euphemization* is another strategy which facilitates the dissimulation of relations of domination and exploitation. Actions, institutions, policies, etc. are described or redescribed in terms which elicit a positive evaluation. South African apartheid has furnished numerous examples of this practice: the name of the Department of Bantu Education was changed to the Department of Education and Training; the Department of Bantu Affairs was changed to the Department of Plural Relations; the policy of apartheid came to be called 'separate development'.

* *Fragmentation* is a strategy which has been used in South Africa to great effect. It consists in fragmenting individuals or groups that are mounting an effective challenge to the dominant group. In the 80s it was often claimed by supporters of the policy of apartheid that 'South Africa is a country of racial and tribal minorities'. This was said at a time in which black opposition to apartheid was more unified than ever, and was meant to deflect attention from this fact.

2.3.2 Strategies of argumentation

I shall now discuss two *arguments* which satisfy the criteria specified above for fallacious reasoning with an ideological function, i.e. they are both *potentially misleading* and they have in fact *served to establish and justify relations of domination and exploitation.*[7]

2.3.2.1 Universalization: appeal to the public interest

Domination and exploitation have no inherent sanction and must therefore derive it from elsewhere, for example from religious beliefs or from the criterion of public interest.[8]

An appeal to the public interest in argumentative discourse may have the function of establishing and justifying relations of domination and exploitation. Appeals to the public interest occur frequently in discussions and debates concerning public

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7 More examples of arguments which may be construed as 'ideological' fallacies can be found in Van Veuren (1991:114-115).

8 See in this regard Flathman (1973).

policy, in which cases it serves as a criterion by which public policy may be measured. If a policy is judged to be in the 'public interest' (or in the 'interest of the country') it is implied that the costs and benefits of the policy in principle accrue indiscriminately to all members of the community. Such is the conventional connotation of the term.

In order to ascertain whether a specific instance of argumentative justification of a policy or law by an appeal to the public interest has an ideological function and contains fallacious reasoning the argument (such as the following one) must be subjected to close analysis.

> The connection between white poverty and the presence of coloureds and natives in the country must be openly faced. It is impossible to make proposals to enhance the economic prosperity of the white poor without affecting the other groups in one way or another. The dilemma in which we find ourselves is that in the interest of the country more prosperity *must* be gained for the white poor and that, also in the interest of the country, it may not be gained in a way which will make the economic side of the coloured and native problems insoluble. This much must be honestly admitted. Therefore, when discrimination in favour of the white worker can be found in some of the economic proposals, then it must be realized that not only has what is advantageous for our problem group – the white poor – been considered, but what is advantageous for the country! For example, where a certain preferential treatment of the white poor causes a problem – but a soluble problem for the non-white, there has been no hesitation in choosing it ... This is a policy statement if you wish, of giving sympathetic consideration to the rights and interests of the whites and non-whites, and then resolutely choosing what serves the interest of the community as a whole, even if it has the superficial appearance of preferential treatment (Verwoerd, 1972:55).

This convoluted argument gives a justification of 'job reservation' by an appeal to the public interest. The argumentation of Verwoerd's speech can be reconstructed according to the following pattern:

*	(Premise 1)	Policy/administrative measure P is in the interests of group G (formulated explicitly or implicitly).
*	(Premise 2)	(But) policy/administrative measure P is (also) in the public/national interest.
*	(Conclusion)	Therefore implementation/existence of policy/administrative measure P is justified.

Arguments according to this pattern are of course not necessarily fallacious arguments – it is conceivable that the interests of group G coincides completely

with the public/national interest. However, if policy/administrative measure P is such that it in fact serves only the economic and/or political interests of group G, then these *particular* interests have been *universalized* in Premise 2 (i.e. *re-presented* as serving the interests of the community or the nation at large), in such a way that we get an argument with *inconsistent* premises. Verwoerd's argument states in Premise 1: *Job reservation is in the interest of the poor white worker* and Premise 2 states: *Job reservation is in the interest of the country/ community as a whole.* In his novel *1984* George Orwell calls the ability to think inconsistently without logical discomfort "doublethink". In *1984* the facade of the Ministry of Truth bears the following inscription:

> War is Peace
>
> Freedom is Slavery
>
> Ignorance is Strength

The government in *1984* encourages such 'double thinking' in order to condition its subjects to accept indefensible government policies.

The confusing complexity of Verwoerd's argument tends to hide the inconsistency in its premises. However, if an argument's premises are inconsistent, one of the statements must necessarily be false, and the conjunction of the two inconsistent statements is also logically false. Such premises necessarily undermine the argument in which they are used. It should be noted that the social-historical context of Verwoerd's argument is implicated in the reconstruction of the argument which is given above. In the face of a great deal of evidence (which is common knowledge) it is taken for granted that the apartheid policy of job reservation in fact served only the economic and political power interests of the poor white worker, and (by implication) that the statement made in Premise 2 is false. However, common knowledge can be questioned and it could turn out that a detailed social-historical analysis needs to be given to provide better support for the reconstruction of the argument presented above. In the final analysis no *conclusive proof* can be given that the argument is incorrect, but a convincing case may still be made that the argument is incorrect and has contributed to establishing and sustaining relations of domination and exploitation.

2.3.2.2 Deification: appeal to the will of God

Relations of social, political and economic domination in South African society mainly coincide with the primary division between 'white' and 'non-white'. Divisions of a society according to skin colour in order to establish asymmetrical relations of power in the society differ from other criteria of division in that they are based on an empirical criterion. Whereas social divisions on the basis of class, religion or language may have blurred edges and may be disguised in

various ways, division according to skin colour is unambiguous and very obvious. The social, economic and political subordination of one group to the other on the basis of skin colour cannot easily be dissimulated, but needs to be justified directly.

One of the ways this is done in argumentative discourse is by an appeal to the will of God. Relations of domination are justified as unalterable 'ordinances of creation' or as an expression of God's will which cannot be questioned and must therefore be accepted. This strategy of *deification* is employed in the following argument.

> The congress ['Congress of the People' at Bloemfontein, September 1944] also stated its conviction that this policy [of racial apartheid] 'is based on Holy Scripture which teaches us that not uniformity but multiplicity of nations is the will of God and that he fulfils his design through the multiplicity of nations, races, languages and cultures' ... when God wills a division, then he wills it in an absolute sense (Groenewald, 1947:42, 49).

The structure of this argument can be represented in the following way:

*	(Premise 1)	A asserts that policy/administrative measure P is the will of God/in accordance with the will of God.
*	(Conclusion 1/ Premise 2)	Policy/administrative measure P is the will of God/in accordance with the will of God.
*	(Conclusion 2)	The implementation/existence of policy/administrative measure P is justified.

Assertions about the will of God usually make an appeal to authoritative interpretations of the Bible. In some cases reference to A (Premise 1) is omitted, suppressed, or an *ad populum* appeal is substituted for it. In cases where an appeal is explicitly made to an authoritative interpretation of the Bible the argument is fallacious if the authoritative wisdom is prejudiced by special interests and is therefore *ipso facto* controversial, or controversial for other reasons.[9] This is the case in the example above, where the authority to which an appeal is made is the 'Congress of the [white Afrikaner] People'. This appeal does not give any support to the claim made in conclusion 1, or in the (implied) conclusion 2 of the argument, i.e. that the implementation of the policy of apartheid is justified. Again it should be noted that the social-historical context of the argument is implicated

9 For example: the authoritative pronouncement is not consistent with what other experts in the relevant domain say, or is inconsistent with known evidence in the relevant domain (Walton, 1989).

in the construal of the argument as a fallacious appeal to authority (*ad verecundiam*). The special interest (economic and political power conferred on white Afrikaner people by the policy of racial apartheid) which qualifies the authority as 'prejudicial' in this case, is taken to be common knowledge. However, this construal of the argument and the contribution it made to establishing and sustaining relations of domination in South Africa could be better supported and clarified by a social-historical analysis.

3. 'Taxonomy'

I would like to turn now to the second problem mentioned in the Introduction, i.e. the place which 'ideological' fallacies are to be accorded in a 'taxonomy' of fallacies. The claim that there are 'ideological' fallacies obviously does not commit one to hold that *all ideological arguments are fallacious*. Besides, the statement in italics is untenable because it is easy to think of an ideological argument (i.e. one which justifies domination and exploitation) which is not fallacious (although it might be *incidentally* devious or wrong-headed (or both) because it has debatable premises and makes untenable assumptions). By way of example:

* (Premise 1) If it is desirable to maintain Western norms and standards in South Africa then the great majority of the black population should be re-located in the traditional tribal areas or 'homelands'.

* (Premise 2) It is desirable to maintain Western norms and standards in South Africa.

* (Conclusion) Therefore the great majority of the black population should be re-located in the traditional areas or 'homelands'.

What I wish to argue is that *some* cases of ideological reasoning are not *incidentally* devious or wrong-headed (or both), but exhibit a *typical* procedure of reasoning which, although it is *incorrect*, can have the *appearance* of correct reasoning and therefore can be (and in fact often is) mistakenly taken for correct reasoning by the person proposing the argument and/or the recipients of the argument. For example: under certain conditions ideological reasoning universalizes particular interests in such a way (an appeal to the public interest) that the argument acquires inconsistent premises. Because of the manner in which the argument proceeds, or because of psychological factors, or lack of knowledge (or all of these factors), the incorrectness of the reasoning is not apparent, and the argument can fool some people some of the time.

Although the 'ideological' fallacies which I have discussed in this section do exhibit *typical* characteristics in that they (respectively) make an appeal to 'the public interest' and to 'the will of God' it does not seem warranted to place them in a class of their own next to the main classes of fallacies which are usually distinguished (fallacies of relevance, unacceptable premises, etc.), because the incorrect reasoning in them can be subsumed under existing main classes of fallacies (inconsistent premises under unacceptable premises and *ad verecundiam* under fallacies of relevance). Therefore I want to suggest that these 'ideological' fallacies be taken as *typical variations* of the inconsistent premises and the *ad verecundiam* fallacies.

4. Critical thinking in the 'strong sense'

Definitions of *critical thinking*, a concept which originated in the USA in the 40s (Paul, 1992:1) are, to use a cliché, a dime a dozen. Because of the large number of definitions in circulation I shall simplify and highlight only the principal connotation which the term *critical* has acquired in combination with the term *thinking*.

There seems to be some consensus that 'critical thinking' can be defined in terms of a "skill dimension" and a "dispositional dimension" (Facione, 1991:8). The qualification 'critical' seems to be connected more directly with the 'skill dimension': skills in (for example) interpretation, analysis and inference have associated criteria by which their execution can be meaningfully evaluated. 'Critical' thinking would thus seem to be thinking which is explicitly aware of the criteria to which it should conform. In my view this connotation of 'critical' as a qualification of 'thinking' is unproblematic. However, the reservation should be made that it can lead (and in fact has led) to a limited conception of the task of critical thinking. Critical thinking which sets itself only the limited task of teaching students certain skills and the criteria which apply to them, tends to narrow the context in which these skills are exercised to the lecture room, and to select illustrative examples which have been divorced from the social context in which they function (or functioned). There is a tendency to present such examples to students as isolated logical puzzles, the solutions giving them some intellectual satisfaction but rarely confront them with the social-historical world in which they are active participants and which in its turn acts upon them.

Richard Paul (1982:3) has described critical thinking which is informed by this limited perspective on its own goals as "critical thinking in the weak sense" (in contrast to "critical thinking in the strong sense"). The former is the "traditional conception" of critical thinking. Paul does not scrap the 'traditional conception' but views it as "a limited set of moves within a more complex set of actual or

possible moves reflecting a variety of logically significant engagements in the world" (Paul, 1982:3).

With a view to "logically significant engagements in the world", the main purpose of my essay has been to develop a theoretical framework which may enable critical thinking to extend the scope of its critique to discourse which sometimes serves to establish, justify and dissimulate relations of domination and exploitation in the social world.[10] Teaching critical thinking 'in the strong sense' in this context would amount to building bridges between the academic study of argument and the social world, for example by pointing out to students that argumentative discourse often intersects with relations of power and domination in the social world, and that this discourse can be subjected to a logical critique. Such a critique of ideological reasoning can be a means of self-enlightenment about one's own vested interests and the ways in which one is moved by them to accept claims which are not supported by correct reasoning.

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10 This proposal ties in with a discussion on this topic by various other authors (Maker, 1982; Langsdorf, 1986; Blair & Johnson, 1991 and Ennis, 1991) but is more specific.

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