

THE AMSTERDAM ARGUMENTATION CHRONICLE

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Dear readers,

Once again, we are glad to send you a new issue of the *Amsterdam Argumentation Chronicle*. Another academic year has come to an end and a great many of our MA students are now getting ready for their graduation and eventually saying farewell to the city of Amsterdam. We are hoping that all students, those who are leaving us soon as well as those who are staying, have enjoyed studying at our school and are now looking forward in good spirits to the next step. This year has been a wonderful year indeed, not only because we have had the chance to meet and work with remarkably enthusiastic and excellent students, but also because we are about to host the sixth instalment of one of the most important and exciting events for argumentation scholars, the ISSA conference, the four-yearly meeting of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation. More than 400 participants have so far signed in for this great event and here in Amsterdam everyone is doing their best to provide the most suitable setting for our guests. With anticipating delight, we would like to say 'Thank you' to all individuals, especially our students, who have devoted some of their time and efforts to make this event a success.

Frans van Eemeren

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STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR STUDY PROGRAM

RAP: Rewarding academic program

Written by Roosmaryn Pilgram



Roosmaryn Pilgram is a first year student in the Research Master program of Rhetoric Argumentation and Philosophy.

When I tell people about studying argumentation theory, I frequently get a “then I shouldn’t start arguing with you” reply. I always love to ironically confirm that, while – most of the time – eventually trying to explain what argumentation theory is really about.

As a student in the *Rhetoric, Argumentation theory and Philosophy* (RAP) program, I have already learned much about the various different aspects to the study of argumentation: not only can it be examined from a debate oriented perspective, it can also be discussed in terms of, for instance, statistics, law and philosophy. I really like the fact that this program offers students the opportunity to theoretically explore argumentative practice from such different angles – by discussing them in class or examining them in specific tutorials – while simultaneously providing students with the benefits

of studying at the centre of expertise in pragma-dialectical theory.

During my undergraduate education at *University College Utrecht*, I already had a very enthusiastic and rapid introductory course to pragma-dialectics by Leah Polcar. Because I really liked the analytical component of that course, I wanted to learn more about argumentation theory. Leah was willing to help me with that and I ended up doing tutorials and attending the research colloquia. This made me realise that, even though it was not really part of my official coursework, I preferred looking into argumentation issues over topics in other fields of study, because of the various aspects they encompass – such as argumentation analysis, evaluation and production. Moreover, I noticed that there is still so much to be elucidated in this area, which I then already secretly saw myself contributing to.

Looking more into pragma-dialectical theory made me additionally aware of the very professional approach the department of *Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric* takes to the study of argumentation, which, in the end, was the decisive factor for me to apply for this particular master program. I am happy to say that this professionalism, despite the occasional organisational problem, is also apparent in the RAP program: I have not at all been disappointed by the quality of teaching and the extremely good contact between students and academic staff – as respectively illustrated by the teachers’ clear introduction to crucial concepts in argumentation theory and our common research evaluations in Scheltema.

In addition to the nice experiences with the staff I have had so far, my contact with fellow students has been flourishing as well. Even though we have different backgrounds – in both a cultural and an academic sense – our shared interest in argumentation overcomes these differences, resulting in (and indeed maybe even ensuring) many interesting conversations, experiences and friendships. The different takes that each of us has on argumentative phenomena are not only interesting to observe, but also stimulate me to be critical of what we learn and how to put that into practice.

So, I am very glad to be participating in the RAP program and, having experienced nice arguments with (soon to be) argumentation experts, I continue assuring people that argumentation students are not as frightening as they sound!

VOICE FROM WITHIN

An argumentation theorist with a feel for language

Interview with Dr. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans



Dr. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans is associate professor in the Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation theory and Rhetoric. Her research interests include characteristics of argumentative discourse, style, argumentation analysis and argumentative writing. On April the 20th, Bilal Amjarso had this interview with her.

Amjarso: As an introductory question, what is your story with argumentation theory? How did it start?

Snoeck Henkemans: Here in the department Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst, as it was in the seventies, were busy developing their own approach to speech communication in which argumentation played a central role. This meant that many of the classes that were offered and much of the literature that was offered in the department were argumentative in nature. In the beginning, I did not yet feel very much at ease with argumentation theory. I was more interested in pragmatics and linguistics. I worked for three years as a student assistant in psycholinguistics. Together with Agnès van Rees, I published bibliographies of

psycholinguistics. My master's thesis was about indirect language use, and had nothing to do with argumentation. But I did like many of the classes I followed in argumentation, and my PhD thesis was on an argumentative subject.

So it was largely the influence of the people around you. You could have become a linguist had the right people been here.

I don't think so. Before starting my master's program, I did indeed hesitate between linguistics and speech communication, but I liked the combination of theory and practice that you found in the field of argumentation and speech communication. The fact that you could look at argumentation both from a philosophical or theoretical angle and from a practical point of view, by paying attention to problems of analysis and by looking at texts and seeing how they function in practice. In linguistics this would have been different.

How do you describe, from your personal perspective, the development of both pragma-dialectics and pragma-dialecticians throughout the years? It's also a learning process I guess. People learn. Even those who create theories learn in the process.

Of course! First of all, I was, of course, not the founding father of pragma-dialectics. I was a student of Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst. And, yes, as I remember it, the development happened step by step. The choice was first made to focus in particular on argumentative uses of language as the subject of research in speech communication. Others in Holland in the field of speech communication concentrated on informative types of texts, and were concerned with how to write instructions or brochures. Here, the choice was to concentrate on argumentative language use. Frans wrote a paper very much in the beginning that was called 'Objects and aims of speech communication', in which he sketched what the study should be about and what sort of methods should be used, and in that paper he coined the notion of *normative pragmatics* as the direction that he would like to take. The aim was thus to develop a norm, not just for argumentation, but for communication in general, such as comprehensibility and acceptability. Apart from such norms, the idea was that you also need insight into what goes on in practice, so you need to do research of a descriptive and empirical nature and you need to combine this research with the normative framework in some way.

These ideas were already there very much at the beginning and that is in fact what subsequently

Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst set out to do when writing their own doctoral thesis (in the English translation: *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions*): they wanted to develop a theory of argumentation which, on the one hand, provided a normative ideal, a normative standard for the reasonableness of argumentative discussions and, on the other hand, was not just a very formal theory which had nothing to do with practice; it had to be developed in such a way that it would be applicable to real life discussions, and the insights provided in the normative part should be of use to ordinary language users who want to improve their arguing skills.

So that is how it began and a big event was of course when the thesis came out in 1982. As students we had already in classes of just four or five people been studying the different topics which subsequently were worked out in the thesis itself. So, for instance, you would have a course on unexpressed premises, approaches of others, the limitations of those approaches and the possibilities of getting a better grip on the problem by choosing a pragmatic approach such as the Gricean, using Gricean maxims and seeing missing premises as conversational implicatures.

You are mainly known for your work on argumentative structures more than any other issue in argumentation research. How did your interest in the study of argumentation structures begin? And how has it informed the work you have done recently?

The inspiration for starting to work on my dissertation on argumentation structure was that both as a student and as an instructor I found it sometimes rather frustrating that there was so little instruction on how to decide whether the argumentation had structure x or structure y. That often seemed arbitrary. The definitions were rather unclear, for instance it was not really explained what made arguments independent or interdependent. In many approaches, there was also not any attention paid to how you could justify your analysis by referring to clues in the presentation.

Out of that frustration I started working on my thesis, and I ended up doing two things: developing a dialogical model – in fact a primitive form of a dialectical profile – the idea of how argumentation becomes more complex in response to specific criticisms. Also, I paid attention to different types of clues for the analysis, namely those clues that were rendered possible by the dialogical model.

In a way, the *Indicators* project is an extension of this research. But especially at the beginning of this project on argumentative indicators, it was

necessary to get a good idea of what had already been done in linguistics, especially concerning discourse markers and connectives. It looked as if these would be particularly relevant and those were in fact also the only types of verbal clues that had been written about. But of course these were not the only type of indicators that we were interested in. For instance, if you are talking about how you can recognize argumentation of a certain type, that is, identify the argumentation that is based on a relationship of comparison, causal relationship, or relationship of concomitance, then you don't have a whole lot to go on if you look at what is there in the existing literature on discourse markers. Then it's more like trying to get an idea of what such a relationship involves and what types of words or expressions might be indicative of that. So rather soon we found out that we would not get very far by using the linguistic literature. Of course, in the end we have here and there referred to some relevant linguistic analyses, but often only in an indirect way.

To what extent do you think argumentation theory has benefited from linguistic analysis?

I think it is indispensable to pay attention also to the linguistic aspect of argumentation if you want to be able to analyse and evaluate texts. What you often see with logicians and philosophers is that they make it seem as if the analysis of real life texts is an unproblematic issue. You just get out the right formula, reconstruct the reasoning in the right way and subsequently start evaluating the argument. I am making it sound a bit more simplistic than any of my colleagues would describe it, but still, in some of what you read, it seems as if it is not difficult to give the analysis, and I think that as soon as you are confronted with real life texts and you are trying to find out how they are structured or what type of standpoint is being put forward and whether there is a specific type of difference of opinion, etc., you are obliged to also pay attention to the pragma-linguistic side of things.

I have always thought of linguistic analysis as a risky practice, in the sense that the line between the functions of certain elements of argumentative discourse, as for example theorized about in PD, and the linguistic manifestations of these functions is a so loose and unstable it can easily be passed by the analyst without any notice, resulting in the analyst making unfounded linkages between the linguistic and theoretical components. Have you been confronted with this problem?

This is a loaded question that you are asking me! It presupposes that I would think that there would be a simple one-to-one relationship between specific

linguistic forms and specific pragmatic functions and theoretical notions, such as those we are interested in in argumentation theory. Of course, I would never claim that it is as simple as that, and if, for instance, you would look at the book *Argumentative Indicators*, that we published recently, it is not, I think, suggested there that it is just a matter of finding some expressions and then knowing with certainty which argumentative notion is indicated by means of those expressions. What you are doing, in fact, is more like making a translation. You take argumentation theoretical notions, and from there you try to get a sort of starting point to see what characteristics are essential. If you take the notion of standpoint in Pragma-dialectics, then it has to do with the commitment to a proposition in the context of a difference of opinion or some sort of conflict. At least, there must be some room for doubt; there must be some controversial issue, and from that you know that expressions by means of which commitments are indicated or expressions by means of which someone can make it clear that there is room for doubt, that there is some reason to expect disagreement, may have an indicative function. Of course, you can never be certain, but you are trying to give a justification of why specific expressions, again in a specific context and often in reaction to what other people have said, may be indicative of a particular argumentative move or pattern of moves.

To give one example: take an expression like “and then I wouldn’t even mention” or “leaving aside that,” those sorts of expressions that are often used in the preteritio technique. If you are interested in the analysis of argumentative structure, and you are starting from the idea that these structures are put forward in a specific dialogical context, in reaction to specific forms of criticism, and you know that to take a well-founded decision on whether the argumentation should be seen as multiple or as coordinative, you need to decide whether the arguments can stand alone or can be independent of each other, then the fact that the speaker introduces his arguments by “leaving aside that” or “and I don’t even want to mention that,” or something like that, makes it clear that in his own eyes one of these arguments is not necessary, even though he mentions it and then comes up with another argument which then supposedly should be enough by itself. Of course, “leaving aside” does not mean: ‘I am now presenting a multiple argument,’ but if it is used to introduce an argument and subsequently another argument is given, it can be argued that this is a dialogical situation which is typical for multiple

argumentation. So it’s more like a sort of argument that you present.

Being a specialist in the analysis of the structure of argumentation, how do you think this aspect of argumentative discourse can be linked to the concept of strategic manoeuvring? As an exemplary question—perhaps also a somewhat naïve one—do people really make conscious and purposeful choices among different argumentative structures?

Apart from the question of whether strategic manoeuvring can only exist if people are conscious of every step they take in argumentation, I know of some contexts where it is very clear that people make such conscious choices because they are the subject of discussion. Take lawyers, for instance: they often justify the way they present their argumentation by saying things like: if you use this structure, then the other party will find it more difficult to attack your position. So it is clear that in some contexts these distinctions play a very important role and that language users are very much aware of them, but those are institutional contexts. Nonetheless, you sometimes also find similar considerations in other contexts. There is, for instance, an example in the Dutch version of the *Argumentation* book where you have the Dutch union against cursing (Bond tegen het vloeken), giving an explanation for why they have formulated several reasons why you should not curse, which amounts to “we know that not each of these reasons separately will be convincing to everyone, but we hope that by giving several different there must be something for everyone there, so that is why we thought it would be better to present several reasons.”

Apart from all this, I think that anything that may make a difference to the evaluation of the argumentation can be used deliberately to produce some result. If someone put forward an argument and the other party deliberately interpreted the structure of the argument in such a way that it is to his own advantage and to the other party’s disadvantage, the other party’s position is misrepresented in such a way that it becomes easier to attack the arguer’s position. On the other hand, a protagonist could present his own argumentation in such a way that it seems stronger, for instance, by making it seem as if it were multiple argumentation, whereas if you look at it more closely it is very questionable whether it really is multiple. So the fact in itself that you can commit fallacies with the structures, whereas fallacies can always be seen as derailments of strategic manoeuvring, means that it should be possible to manoeuvre strategically with

the way you present the structure of your argumentation.

Now, we move to educational matters. You have been coordinator of the BA program Language and Communication. How do you introduce argumentation theory to students interested in communication and not in theory for its own sake? Do you think argumentation theory can provide communication-oriented students with what they need to know?

It's a bachelor program, which means that some students will later go on and participate in the Research Master and others will choose a more professional sequel, such as the Professional master Text and Communication. Of course, the combination of language and communication, the idea that you both study a foreign language and subjects in the area of communication and argumentation theory, may be interesting for people who would like to do things like public relations, speech writing, publicity, and editing. As is true for every bachelor program, it should in principle also be possible to immediately start working after having obtained the bachelor's degree.

When one attends a lecture on argumentation theory, a considerable part of what you hear can be classified as philosophy-proper. Sometimes you have to teach people who want to learn more about communication. Argumentation theory is undoubtedly important for these people. How can you successfully present argumentation theory as a communication theory?

It's not so very hard, of course, because a lot of ordinary communication is argumentative in nature. If you are planning to work as a writer of policy documents or advertisements or a writer of brochures, knowing more about argumentation will be very important for you. So, in itself, that you pay attention to argumentation is not so difficult to justify. What might be more difficult—but that's not particular for this program—is that not everyone will be as much interested in the philosophical and theoretical aspects of argumentation. What you then try to do is explain that it is essential to think about the norms and criteria for reasonable argumentation if you want to improve argumentative practice, advise others on how to discuss or write or if you want to produce a convincing argument yourself. So in a very simple way, you can explain why it is essential that you consider the issue of reasonableness and norms for argumentation, and most of the time you can then get the students to be interested in the subject.

How do you think the *Indicators* book, authored by Frans van Eemeren, Peter Houtlosser, and yourself, fits within the work that has been done here at this department? Can we consider it as another major reference for people who want to have an elaborate idea of pragma-dialectics?

It's hard for me to predict. What is new in this book is that many dialectical profiles are here spelled out for the first time. Also, we have tried to show how the analytical component of argumentative discourse can take shape in more detail than has happened anywhere else, in the sense that we look at all kinds of expressions both in the presentation of different moves and in the reaction to those moves and in the protagonist's follow up of his own moves. I think the book can be seen as a systematic attempt at saying more about what type of expressions you can use to justify your analysis. In text books paying attention to the analysis of argumentation, you will rarely find much more than "watch out for expressions like 'because' and 'since,' and 'moreover' may also be helpful to identify an argument." And that's about it. There's hardly ever any sort of systematic instruction given on how to identify those elements that are important in the argumentative text.

Meanwhile, we do expect students to be capable of analyzing argumentative texts, and we also want to be able to have discussions about texts in class and to argue for the fact that why the one analysis seems more justified than the other. I don't know of any other publication in which for literally each discussion move, so not just the moves in the argumentation stage, indicators are identified that are used in varying degrees of explicitness, from very clear clues to rather implicit or indirect indications, that you can use to use to justify your analysis. So in that sense, I think it is new and hopefully helpful and maybe also inspiring to some students to work further on the subject.

After the completion of the *Indicators* book, are there any specific projects that you would like to see completed in the near future?

At present, I am working on a project on style. I hope to be able to write a monography about that in five years or something like that, in which I try to look at different stylistic devices. For the moment, I am concentrating mainly on tropes from the perspective of strategic manoeuvring. So, for instance, I wrote a paper on metonymy and I am trying to show that this device can, from the perspective of strategic manoeuvring, indeed be considered a rhetorical device, in the sense that it can really be helpful to forward rhetorical goals.

Good luck and thank you very much for this interview.

CAREER STORY

A way with words in construction

Written by Liisa Salmela



Liisa Salmela (Finland) graduated from the Master of Philosophy Program of Rhetoric, Argumentation theory and Philosophy in spring 2005. Currently, she works at a communications consultancy firm in Helsinki, Finland.

I have often been met with surprise when I tell people about the combination of my studies and the topics my work revolves around. How has someone with an entirely linguistic and philosophical training ended up in the field of construction, where you mostly meet engineers, lawyers and economists? The explanation is simpler than one might think: engineers, lawyers and economists need a good linguist, and I just grabbed a promising opportunity when it came along.

For over two years, I have been working at a small communications consultancy specialized in construction business. My tasks vary from interviewing workers at job sites to writing columns for high-ranking officials at ministries, from planning publications on three-dimensional computer programs for architectural design to

editing websites on infrastructure. On one hand, it has taken me a while to get used to the world of construction and its substance entirely different from the world of linguistics and philosophy. On the other hand, it is just as justified to say that language use and argumentation play a central role everywhere, and are not essentially different in construction than in any other area of specialization.

I came to Amsterdam as an exchange student from the University of Helsinki, where I had mainly studied Finnish but also literature and general linguistics. I was a devoted student, although my career ideas were rather vague at that time: all I knew was that I did not want to become a teacher. In my studies of Finnish, I had done quite a lot of critical discourse analysis, and when I found out that in Amsterdam there were courses of argumentation available, those topics seemed to fit together nicely. Not long after I had started my studies in Amsterdam, it dawned on me that I definitely did not want to return to my old university (despite its merits) but would rather like to write my thesis on argumentation. It felt as if I had been searching for something in academics without being able to put my finger on what it was, and argumentation provided an answer for my longing.

Came summer, and I headed for a job as a communications assistant that I had found by accident at a construction organization in Helsinki. Out of the blue, my employer asked whether I was interested in writing my thesis on one of their development projects, and I said yes without blinking an eye. I was granted a scholarship and was free to formulate my research topic as I pleased, which was something I had never anticipated. After completing my other courses in Amsterdam, the thought of writing my thesis alone in my tiny room at a dorm did not seem very attractive, so I took to searching for another job to go with the thesis. The firm that I presently work for offered me a deal, and soon I found myself in the field of construction again.

Being a person who loves practical applications of theories even more than theories themselves, I think the greatest value of argumentation theory is the vast universe it can be applied to. Therefore, after completing my thesis, I have had an urge to gather expertise in another field with a strong attachment to practice precisely in order to see how argumentation theory can be of assistance there. I enrolled on courses at the Helsinki School of Economics, where I so far have acquainted myself with principles of marketing, management and negotiation. Students of these commercial sciences are raised in a culture of practicality as the highest

value: if a theory cannot be applied to practice or it can only be applied to marginal cases, it is not interesting. These people ask of any idea introduced to them: Where's the beef? What's in it for me? This straightforwardness appeals to me, even if I believe it could do with a dose of genuine philosophical joy of discovery for its own sake.

To students of linguistics and argumentation theory who may have wondered what their chances are of getting meaningful work other than the traditional alternatives of teaching and research, I dare say: there are opportunities. Indeed, engineers, lawyers and economists need good linguists and philosophers – they just should be made aware of what we can offer.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Historical truth and the Holocaust
Written by Merel Boers



Merel Boers is a PhD student in the History department and the department of Speech Communication, Argumentation theory and Rhetoric of the University of Amsterdam. She is also participating in the Research Master of Rhetoric, Argumentation and Philosophy.

Researching: Two controversial Holocaust debates, conducted by historians

Why: To show that the debate is obstructed by irrelevant contributions (philosophical viewpoints)

What is so special about scholars vehemently disagreeing on philosophical viewpoints of an issue? Hardly anything. Then why is this research necessary? For two reasons. First of all, my training is in history. And although I am trying very hard to reset my brain to argumentation theory, at least half my loyalty lies with historians and their quest to write a comprehensible past. I think argumentation theory can help them organise their thoughts. Secondly, I think there *is* something interesting for argumentation theory to historians discussing the Holocaust. Why? Because they are discussing the *Holocaust*, an event that looms so large in our culture and memory that it gets a special treatment from historians.

By the scarcity of source material alone, most historians are forced to accept that reaching for 'truth' is overly ambitious. I say most historians, because there are some who firmly believe in the attainability of absolute historical truth. So here we have a group of scholars, working to piece together the past from its fragmented, sometimes mysterious leftovers. The Dutch historian Frank Ankersmit was an important contributor to the (nowadays common) philosophical view of the historical profession as governed by *narrative*. In short: the historian frames his source material in a metaphor to make it 'feel' comprehensible. Think of the French Revolution. It used to be considered a 'peasant revolt', until the source material was read differently. Now we see it as a 'middle class rebellion'. This image is the narrative, the meta-concept of a period in time that allows you to take it in all at once, instead of having to consider bits and pieces of information first. The historian serves a meal, not separate ingredients assembled on a plate. Narratives may exist alongside: one can easily present a book with political, socio-economical and micro-historical readings of the French Revolution.

In the discussion of 'ordinary' historical topics as the French Revolution, you will not find the kind of 'deep disagreement' on narrative as you encounter in texts dealing with an aspect of the Holocaust. Sometimes it seems impossible to discuss the historical sub-questions of the theme, for instance, "Did the men of Police Battalion A have initial trouble killing the Jews in village X?" The discussion of such a question starts out quite neatly, but soon you will find historians diverging to the larger sociological questions: "Can human beings become callous and indifferent to killing?". Or they take on even bigger, philosophical questions such as "Is genocide a universal human capability?" or "Is the Holocaust unique, and, if so, can we justly compare it to other genocides?" The

problem is not that historians *pose* these questions. The problem is they are not adequately equipped to debate, let alone *answer* them satisfactorily. Historians are used to weighing source evidence to piece together a convincing picture of 'how it might have been'. They are (usually) not trained to give lengthy exposés on the nature of man and what history can or cannot teach us about it. There are some grand old historians who might introduce or conclude their books with a compelling pondering of such issues. But they are never *proving* these philosophical concepts in a philosophical way. They are merely trying to convince us that their philosophical beliefs follow from the narrative they paint for us.

It is all very well that Holocaust historians toy around with concepts such as the *Sonderweg* and 'the crooked road to Auschwitz' to label their narratives and set them apart from each other philosophically. But the Holocaust, so omnipresent in our Western mind, tricks historians into actually *discussing* big philosophical issues. A thing they avoid doing when they discuss other subjects, and wisely so. The discussion of big philosophical questions becomes a dogmatic exchange in the hands of most historians. So discussions of the Holocaust very often run into a dead end, because historians cannot agree on 'the nature of man' or 'the uniqueness of Jewish suffering'. Which is a pity, because the big questions are not always of the essence, however seductively they might loom in the background. To historians, most philosophical questions should be irrelevant. Why? Because they do not have the training to discuss them. I hope my research will show at least that. Be modest! Do what you are good at!

THESIS SUMMARY

What is the "Socratic method"?

Written by Carol Chung Chi Wa



Carol, Chung Chi Wa (Hong Kong), graduated cum laude in 2005 with an M.A. in Discourse and Argumentation Studies at UvA.

To be more precise, it is *elenchus*, the dialectical method Socrates espouses in the early Socratic dialogues, that my Master thesis studies.

Elenchus, in the early dialogues, generally begins with Socrates asking others to give a standpoint and further concessions on an issue. The interlocutor is found to be self-contradictory in his concessions and is then refuted.

The precise nature of *elenchus*, however, remains a controversial issue in the literature. Previous studies have attempted to characterize it from different perspectives. Some scholars characterize it as a procedure in examining one's consistent beliefs. Others focus on the result of the procedure by emphasizing how the goal(s) is/are related to the procedural form. Yet still, the various interpretations do not yield any consensus as to whether *elenchus* is intended to be a philosophical form in testing, refuting, and justifying a standpoint, gaining philosophical knowledge by means of a rational, rule-governed procedure, or whether it is intended to serve personal goals in putting the interlocutor to public shame of being refuted,

winning the debate match by means of rhetorical means (or even eristical, fallacious tricks). Socrates in the dialogues has not given clear descriptions.

In "*Elenchus*" illuminated: dialectical and rhetorical analyses of the Socratic dialogue within *Pragma-dialectics*, an attempt is made to better understand, firstly, *what* the procedure of *elenchus* constitutes and, secondly, *what* and *how* the procedure offers Socrates the rhetorical possibilities in winning the discussion; in other words, *why* the form is as such in relation to the (Socrates') goals of practicing *elenchus*.

The pragma-dialectical theory, with its ideal model of critically testing standpoints, is used in the normative characterization, amounting to an analytical reconstruction of an early Socratic dialogue as the ideal model of critical discussion. The main question is: To what extent can the Socratic dialogue be procedurally viewed as an ideal critical discussion, and also be viewed as of the philosophical (dialectical) goal in critically testing standpoints and be viewed as of the personal (rhetorical) goal in refutation?

An adequate answer to this question requires a dialectical and a rhetorical analysis. The dialectical analysis that reconstructs the discussants' dialectical moves sheds light on the extent the procedure of *elenchus* is practiced in a representative Socratic dialogue. The discussion stages and the discussants' dialectical rights and obligations are thus externalized in the critical testing procedure, paving the way for a more in-depth characterization of the procedure of *elenchus*.

Using the concept of strategic manoeuvring, light is shed upon how the dialectical possibilities offered within the discussion procedure are exploited in view of the dialectical and rhetorical goals. In a rhetorical analysis of the dialectically reconstructed dialogue, the goals of *elenchus* in relation to Socrates' strategic procedural moves are characterized. The opening stage, in particular, is focused upon in the analysis, as it is where the interlocutor's concessions are collected in establishing inconsistency and refutation. Socrates' strategies have been identified as exploring and manoeuvring the dialectical possibilities which are allowed in the procedural rules.

With this thesis, I have come to some insights on the procedural form of *elenchus*. I am also led to further interesting issues regarding the reasonableness of Socrates' strategic manoeuvring. *Elenchus* is a rich material for argumentation theorists in the study of dialectical forms and rhetorical moves. It is hoped that my interests in

questioning will keep me working on these issues in the future.

VOICE FROM WITHOUT

Argument in sphere

Interview with Professor Thomas Goodnight



Professor G. Thomas Goodnight is director of the doctoral program of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California. His current research interests include deliberation and postwar society, science communication, argument and aesthetics, public discourse studies, and communicative reason in controversy. On May the 9th, Bilal Amjarso conducted this interview with him.

Amjarso: Welcome to this interview. First of all, how did you start as an argumentation theorist?

Goodnight: There are two answers to this question. One answer is: I was always interested in political science and social theory, and from that, when I was in High School and college, I practiced debate, and from the practice of debate it was a likely step to thinking about the traditions that informed the way argument about issues and public questions developed. The reason I always maintained this interest is, it seems to me, that argument in debate can give a greater range of freedom of thought and perspective and disciplinary commitment.

This is certainly not your first visit to the University of Amsterdam.

This is the first time I have guess-lectured here, although I have been to the university a number of times before.

So you have been an associate of the Amsterdam School of Argumentation for a long time. I would like to know how this relationship started.

Well, it started when a friend of mine, Charlie Willard, and I were talking about an organisation we were imagining, called The International Society for the Study of Argument, and then Willard met Frans and Rob at The ALTA Conference. It was their first time to come to that conference.

Which year was that?

It would be, maybe, two or three years before the first ISSA, so it's the 1980s, very back in the primitive days of the argument study. I met Frans and Rob, coming to the first conference at the University of Amsterdam in 1986, and then Leff and I came over from Northwestern University to visit here, one fall around Christmas time, and then Frans and Rob came to Northwestern—this was in the early 90s—in a step towards an exchange program with Northwestern, so it worked that way.

I kind of imagined a space for what Charlie said about getting together across the world of arguments, and Frans and Rob actually did that in the first conference, and afterwards we had an exchange program. So it's been a long productive association.

You have taught at different American universities. What do you think of the state of argument studies in the USA?

Well, two things: one: it's quite vigorous and tied to practice, and practice is either critical, with the examination of case studies or, it's pedagogical in terms of teaching people how to think critically or debate. In that sense, the study of argument exists in both English departments and Speech Departments. So that's why it is a very widespread array of practices. On the other side, the systematic theoretical development of argumentation inquiry, I think, has some work in it that could be done.

The study of argumentation from a dialectical perspective is seen as a branch of philosophy in the US. In the way I see it, argument study in the US is mainly a branch of communication studies. How do you qualify the difference between the two distinct approaches to the study of argument?

That's an interesting question. The term dialectic itself has only undergone recent renaissance. In about 1980 I wanted to teach a course called dialectic and there was very little written in the 20th century. I think this, at least in the West, may be a

Cold War artefact, since dialectic was grounded in history and associated with 19th century philosophy.

In the way we look at it in the rhetorical tradition, the term dialectic is a counterpart of rhetoric. The question of whether it is communication or philosophy probably depends upon the method you want to use to analyse how dialectic works. The way I think of dialectic is that it is a marvellous world where you can submit practice to criticism, and then criticism is itself sustained or self-sustaining, but takes on the responsibility to reshaping practices, its roots and its customs.

When you talk about argument sphere, do you have in mind a definition for argument or an approach to argument?

In a way there is an ambiguity to the term spheres. In a sense, the idea of sphere is the idea of a context, and sometimes the context can be very strong and regulated by the law, social customs, socialisation, institutional forums, so that if you violate the boundaries there are penalties, and what counts as reasonable or unreasonable or evidence or who's in authority and what the subject matter is is very tightly regulated by the people engaged. And so, in a way, the idea of sphere is to acknowledge the situatedness and the context-bound quality of argument.

Now, the other idea is that spheres change over time, and so one can imagine different kinds of relationships, different kinds of arguments, different ways of borrowing from practices in one sphere and adapting them to another context. So a context is not constant, and arguers argue about the rules and their boundaries all the time, and spheres are dialectically engaged in generative spaces of new theories on argument.

So only by understanding the characteristics and demands of a particular sphere are we in a position to give explanations about what goes wrong in argument. I mean the notion of argument quality is dependent on the spheres within which the argument in question takes place. Is that correct?

I think so. And the notion of sphere: I don't mean by that to say that you can understand arguments simply by looking at controlling rules within a situation. Most of the time situations are complex and part of what you can find are tensions that pull in different directions and how people negotiate these tensions and what's at stake become a way of reading and appreciating the difficulty of the argument, its accomplishments and its limits. For instance, when a doctor addresses a patient, sometimes the doctor would want to use scientific language because, you know, this is what she's

trained to; this is how she thinks; this is what she sees, but the choice to move outside of the scientific language to talk about personal consequences is a difficult one because science does not tell you about how to make arguments about the quality of life; it just gives the instruments of making choices about what could be done to organs. And so how arguments combine different fields or move from one field to the other or stay within a field can lead to the criticism where the significance of cases for appreciating the difficulty of circumstantial arguments is known.

Argument spheres are historical constructs. What does that tell us about the nature of arguments?

That by and large argument practices are associated with national literatures, the rise of institutions, reform movements, and these are captured through stories or narratives. Sometimes the narratives are built up, and sometimes they are taken down, so in a way argument exists in between dogmatism which says that the story can be this way and the scepticism which says that stories have no meaning.

In your first lecture you talked about the concept of reasonability. Different spheres entail different reasonabilities. When members of different spheres argue with each other, when, say, the public sphere interacts with the technical sphere, what kind of reasonability becomes the point of reference?

Well, one of the things to talk about and that I have written about is what you call complex cases, and in complex cases what you have so much is not a set of premises that agree with one another. Pragma-dialectics has the idea of the complex case where every one of the premises leads together to support the conclusion. But what you have in practice is independent premises which, when you put them together, all point in the same direction, and what you have is a technical question, for instance, should we ban a particular kind of drug, if the scientific evidence shows that there is a possible harm, if the survey evidence shows that people have been harmed, if people are afraid and really would afford something else, and something else is more expensive, but people are ready to pay the money, then the ban in question may be supported. All four reasons are different, but a case is made when you kind of add them up and they are all pointing in the same direction, so the more arguments that point in the same direction, the efficiency motive, the scientific motive, the survey evidence, and the fears of risk—even though they do not have the same weight and even though they do not link to one another—the stronger the case is. The problem is that in most public issues in

modern society, the vexes of truth point in opposite directions and there is no real way to say how, when you have proof pointing in opposite directions inconsistently, to add them, and so what happens in the public sphere is you have social movements and ideologies that produce a preferred way of reading evidence and determining what evidence should count.

You have done quite a lot of work on the public sphere and have tried to bring insight from the theory of argument to the study of policy decision making in the US. I have read a little of what you wrote on argument making regarding issues such as the Cold War and the Post-Cold War era. Are you aware of the fact that by writing on such issues one may slip to the public sphere and suddenly find himself in the mid of political activism?

Without a doubt! One of the ideas I am working with is the difference between discourse formation and argument formation. A discourse formation is developed from the point of view of an archaeologist where you are simply reconstructing premises. No one really believes them, but they just seem to you a principle of reproduction of discourse at a particular time. What I am working with is again an accumulation of reasons that keep generating across time, but from an anthropological perspective, it is the discourse forms of reasoning of an institution, and by that I mean what the issues are, what's reasonable, what counts as evidence, what are the goals that are typically pursued in dealing with particulars, and so on.

The Cold War was an argument formation and what you can do once you realise that people continue to work with these arguments is you describe, you look at the controversies because all argument formations have pros and cons and then you try to reset the terms of debate in a way that makes sense in terms of: you can communicate; given the terms you have people can reason in a better way, and so in a way then I am aware that to enter into an argument is to become an advocate, but a I have peculiar definition of advocacy which means I am not simply a propagandist, I hope.

What's the bottom line for you in this enterprise?

The bottom line is that you are put in the position of having to make a commitment to your own point of view and to go public with it, whereas at the same time to take into account the opinions of others as fully and as completely as you can. And you do that in the interest of credibility, taking into account the possibility that you may be wrong, and so an informed responsible advocacy is not unrestrained partisanship but it's really a kind of balanced long-term view.

What are your projects at the moment?

Let me think.

Are you the kind of person who works on different things at the same time?

I work on too many different things at the same time, I think. Today, I am working on an essay on public memory in Haiti. The distinction I am trying to draw—which is a difficult one—is that there is a kind of collective memory which is available to everyone. Sometimes it is written formally as a history of broad opinions or narrations among states, peoples. Sometimes it is written aesthetically or produced through art, and pictures and novels.

However, there is a public memory, and public memory is where a group of advocates remember things in a certain way to support an issue at hand. So in writing about Haiti, you find some very poor arguments because people would say we should have never intervened because Haiti can't become democratic and it never has been, but in reconstructing that, the complicity of the United States and other nations in colonial repression is forgotten and responsibility is hit on the Haitians. What I am trying to deal with is how memory is used in public debate but also the wider opening up of public memory to critique through recollecting a wider scope and asking why those memories are present, and this piece is, what you could call, an intervention. It's not a neutral piece, because I think the quality of debate over intervention is very bad, and that leads to lots of policy issues.

On the other hand, I am working in an entirely different vein, on the qualities of arguments between doctors and patients in forming consent. I am trying to learn what counts as a sufficient information on crucial decisions, and my idea is that pragma-dialectics could become a powerful model for normative discussions in modern institutions because it creates obligations of establishing common ground between people of different backgrounds, so doctor and patient both have obligations to participate and to learn what to do in difficult situations. I have been working on the movements for patients' rights as well as informed consent to look at communicative freedoms. Politics is one notion. Institutional practice is another within the rhetoric of science.

And then finally, philosophically, I have been working on Habermas' theory of argumentation as a theory of argument and I have a piece coming out on that. There is a book to be published this year called *Philosophy's Philosophers on Communication*. I am thinking about what a communicative theory of argumentation is. Then eventually once I work through Habermas, I'll be

able to compare his work to the work of critical discourse analysts, informal logicians and pragma-dialecticians, because it seems that argumentation across the globe is a movement and it would be interesting to see what the overlaps and what the differences are.

You have already told me about a paper on the word 'imminent'. That's something I would like to know about.

That's another foreign policy piece that's coming out. This is a book called *Hitting First*. It's the University of Pittsburgh Press, and I think a version of the article is already on the web. The book is a combination of political scientists and people in rhetoric and it is a deliberately interdisciplinary type of work. The question is what rhetoricians can do for political scientists. What they can do, I argue in this article, is show how bringing pressure on a single word changes a whole argument formation. This was crucial to studying a persuasive campaign by the Bush administration and the President. In the old days, prior to the war in Iraq, imminent threat was a necessary condition for a justified move to engage in a war with another country. So you didn't have to wait until someone marched into your cities. You can defend your borders and people parade across. Bush's administration, through a public document, tried to change its definition. It is the imminence of nuclear weapons, because the threat of first use is so great you need to get them before they are developed, thus changing the logic of the age. What I tried to do throughout my work is to show how arguments have larger consequences for the practices and understanding of communication. In this article I show how Bush not only changes the notion of 'imminent' but also changes what the idea of deliberation is and the appropriateness of deliberation. I want to see how to think of it as a risk-benefit calculation, and how that brings and makes problems for the discourse of an international community, which is not too much based on risk-benefit calculation but on diplomatic and legal international constraints.

To what extent do you think the type of research you are engaged in has an impact on the practice of policy making in the US?

That's an interesting question. I just got a note on a particular essay that I had written for this *Hitting First* book. A speechwriter who is going to work in the White House is reading this and wants to use the model of analysis. In a way, you never know the impact of your work. What I am convinced of, however, and I have seen substantial signs of it, is that industry, state, non-governmental organisations—all search through theories of

communication in reflecting on the practice. After the invention of the Atomic bomb in the early 1940s there has been a huge revolution in communication theory and practice, largely to figure out how to deal with the Cold War situation. This resulted in a lot of different things, including game theory, mass media studies and ultimately the internet. What happened in the wake of 2001, which is kind of the evil twin of globalisation, with the rise of new communication technologies and science revolutions in terms of biological sciences and communicative sciences, is a search by institutions for new theories of communication, but, by and large, universities are not shifting to new theories of communication as much as working through critiquing them and intervening in their practices. So it's a strange kind of world! But whether the university as a whole is creating a dialogical situation that has had a substantial impact, my answer to that is yes, given the times and given what I know of the past and just and being familiar with the institutional discourses and seeing what's being done.

My last question to you: how do you conceive of the future of the argument study in the US?

There are three answers: one, it's going to be eclectic. I am from Texas, and there is the philosophy of Texastentialism, which rests on the premise that people are going to do what they are going to do, and so I think when you make a move to argument, it's a move too. So there are going to be many different types of efforts and programs, some repetitive, some idiosyncratic, others successful. This is the one thing.

Second, there is a huge challenge to theories of communication caused by the internet. I just did a paper at the Convention in Florida on this. The internet poses a challenge in two ways at least. But you can think of it in two directions: one is the study of argument is ripe to understand what happens on the internet, for a number of reasons: interaction, spontaneity, the availability of the information, the use of the net, the lowering of the cost of participation, the spread and decreasing cost and availability of technologies, the difficulty of regulating technologies. All of these things point to a demand where argument is practiced in ways that are open to inspection, that are useful. For instance, the biggest and most memorable academic innovation of the last five years, I think, are keyword searches and tagging. Between keyword search and tagging, you have a due new knowledge structure that's been created but that's under-theorised, but, in a sense, different than modernity's knowledge structures, or in a way it is a parasite on modernity's knowledge structures.

And what does that mean for knowledge and cognition and so on? So part of it then is that the internet becomes the opportunity that changes our research and invites more. The second thing is that the internet may change what we think of as argument; particularly, I am interested in the mypes, viruses, something I called argument games, which are sorts of tropes that play out, that mutate, change in blended forms where you don't have an argument that's made to support a claim; as a matter of fact, there may not even be a claim. My theory of spheres is made for contextually arranged positions or situations. In the internet you don't have that. What you have is simulations and illusions. So the idea of rumour, the spread of idle talk, images, and images blended with graphics and rumour, changing and so on. All of that needs to be thought through arguing.

The third thing is figuring out what the challenges of argument are now, with globalisation and a kind of tension between the nation and transnational entities, be they modernist or religious. That will be part of the subject of my keynote this summer because I want to talk about the duties of advocacy under conditions of asymmetry and modern institutions, disparities within the nation and differences as you have kind of alternate worlds that are struggling to clash with one another, hypothetically or by virtue of different kinds of life commitments.

Thank you very much.

NEWS

Yvon Tonnard joins the PhD team.

On April 1st, Yvon Tonnard was appointed as a PhD student at the Speech Communication, Argumentation theory and Rhetoric department.

Yvon received her Master degree in Dutch Language and Literature in 2000. The title of her Master's thesis was *Condemned by the Newspaper?* In this thesis, she analyzed the way journalists manoeuvre strategically in order to achieve an objective as well as an attractive presentation of events in their news reports.

After graduating, Yvon worked as an editor for the NOS News and later as a web designer for NPS.

Yvon's PhD project is part of the strategic manoeuvring research program subsidized by NWO. She will be concerned with the stylistic

aspects of shutting out a standpoint in political confrontations.

Frans van Eemeren presents at the USC Annenberg Research Seminar.

On Monday, April 17, 2006, Frans van Eemeren gave a presentation on Fallacies as derailments of strategic manoeuvring at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California. In this presentation, Frans argued that in order to explain the treacherous and often persuasive nature of fallacies it is necessary to treat them as derailments of strategic manoeuvring rather than just argumentative moves that fail to observe certain standards of reasonableness. The seminar was organised by The School of Communication, along with the International Interdisciplinary Discourse Analysis Seminar and the Provost's Distinguished Visitor Program.

Marcin Lewinski receives ASCA PhD scholarship

An ASCA scholarship for research in argumentation has been granted to Marcin Lewinski. As of September 1st 2006, Marcin will be appointed as a PhD student in the Department of Speech Communication, Argumentation theory and Rhetoric. Currently, he is a student in the research Master of Rhetoric, Argumentation and Philosophy. He already holds a Master of Arts degree in Polish Philology with a specialisation in Journalism from the University of Wroclaw. In the past, Marcin worked as a junior lecturer at the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication at the University of Lower Silesia, Wroclaw, Poland.

Marcin's PhD project will be about Argumentative activity types and conditions of reasonableness for strategic manoeuvring, with internet news forums as a case study.

Frans van Eemeren receives Fulbright Scholarship

Frans van Eemeren has received a Senior Fulbright Scholarship for the academic year 2006-2007. The Fulbright covers research as well as several guest lectures at three American universities. These are Northwestern University, Evanston/Chicago, University of Arizona, Tucson, and the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, L.A.

ISSA Conference to be held this month

From June 27 to June 30, 2006 the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation (ISSA) will be held in Amsterdam. The aim of the conference is to draw together scholars from a variety of disciplines that are working in the field of argumentation theory. The members of the planning committee of the conference are J. Anthony Blair (University of Windsor, Canada), Frans H. van Eemeren (University of Amsterdam), and Charles A. Willard (University of Louisville, USA).

This year's keynote speakers are Thomas Goodnight (Annenberg School for Communication, University of Southern California), Trudy Govier (University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada), and Marcelo Dascal (University of Tel Aviv).

A detailed programme as well as some practical information is published on the ISSA website: <http://cf.hum.uva.nl/issa/>.

PUBLICATIONS BY THE AMSTERDAM SCHOOL

Garssen, B. & Snoeck Henkemans, A. F., eds. (2006). *De Redelijkheid Zelve. Tien Pragma-dialectische Opstellen voor Frans van Eemeren*. Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers.

This publication contains ten pragma-dialectical essays that were written (in Dutch) for Frans van Eemeren on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday. Each rule for critical discussion gets its own essay. The contributors are: Eveline Feteris, Bart Garssen, Peter Houtlosser, Henrike Jansen, Jan Albert van Laar, Bert Meuffels, José Plug, Leah Polcar, Agnès van Rees, Francisca Snoeck Henkemans and Jean Wagemans.