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RESPONSE OF FRANS H. VAN EEMEREN

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[Editor's Note: Professor Van Eemeren's and Professor Grootendorst's remarks, which followed papers by Professors Kline, Jackson, and Wenzel, have been assembled from notes and transcription.]

Reminding ourselves of the old preacher's proverb "After twenty minutes no more souls are saved", Rob and I will try to say a few things in response to the comments on our book made by Susan Kline, Sally Jackson and Joe Wenzel, and we'll try to be brief.

It's difficult to respond "a capella" as it was called earlier. Of course we would have liked to respond in greater detail but first we'll have to think on those things being said today.

First of all, I must apologize for our English. We are taught English at school, but we don't speak it very often, so we lack practice. [To speak offhandedly is--of course--especially difficult.] That's why we scribbled down a few notes in advance and we will be adding some comments on the contributions of Susan Kline, Joseph Wenzel and Sally Jackson while talking. We can talk about a great variety of subjects, but in view of the time available a choice has to be made. We're anxious to discuss other topics at the Amsterdam Conference next year.

Rob Grootendorst and I are most pleased with the attention given to our book and we are pleasantly surprised at the degree of agreement between American scholars and ourselves. In our opinion there appears to be no substantial differences of opinion on the main issues between Kline, Jackson and Wenzel, and ourselves. Therefore, we would like to seize the opportunity to stress some points we consider of particular importance with regard to Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions and we would like to offer you some information about our research scheme and the current state of affairs in our research. As a matter of fact we finished the work on Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions in 1981 and we have done quite a great deal of research as a follow-up, mostly published in Dutch. By no means did we mean the book to be an all-embracing and everlasting complete whole. It was meant to be a starting-point for further research. And so it proved to be. Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions provided the basis for several kinds of publications and continued research in the Netherlands.

I shall now tell you briefly what happened after we finished Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions, leaving out the particulars. Later on, Rob Grootendorst will tell you something more about our opinion on some topics which are specially relevant in view of the remarks made earlier. Apart from sketching an overall picture of the development in our research, I may be mentioning (if time permits) some often overlooked characteristics of dialectical analysis which we consider of great importance.

In our study, argumentation theory is linked to speech communication, although we dropped the speech communication part in the English translation (because it was very much adjusted to the circumstances in The Netherlands). We try to connect problems from argumentation theory as well as formal dialectics with speech act theory and with the Gricean ideas about implicatures and with discourse analysis.

The intention behind Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions is to make a contribution to the theoretical analysis of argumentation conducted for the purpose of resolving disputes, by formulating a code of conduct for rational discussants. Such analysis is necessary if one is to be able to make sensible suggestions for the improvement of the practice of discussion, one of the objects of the study of speech communication. Answering Professor Joe Wenzel, we can assure him that the model is not meant in this form to be an exemplar model for real discussants. It is, in our opinion, of crucial importance for public life that people be critical of argumentation; so, we would like to create a frame of mind (and of reference) which furthers a critical attitude toward argumentation--political or otherwise, but political in particular. We are trying to develop instruments for letting people know in a systematic way what to look for in a discussion or a speech. We would want our system to be important for someone not primarily interested in rhetoric but in the issue which is at stake. An adequate approach to argumentative language usage that will accord with the starting points for speech communication research preferred by Rob Grootendorst and myself is only possible if the subject of investigation is functionalized, externalized, socialized and dialectified.

Functionalization means that argumentation is treated as a purposive language usage activity. Externalization means that argumentation is linked to the verbal expression of attitudes, viewpoints and opinions. Socialization means that argumentation is regarded as a component of a dialogue with a language user who reacts to the argumentation, and dialectification means that argumentation is placed in the context of a critical discussion in which both pro- and contra-argumentation can be advanced so that a regimented interaction of speech acts takes place.

A language user is rational if during the discussion he performs only speech acts which are compatible with a system of rules acceptable to all discussants which furthers the creation of a dialectic capable of leading to a resolution of the dispute at the center of the discussion. It is obvious that the rational language user postulated in Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions and the model which is outlined for a rational discussion represent an ideal attuned to the resolution of disputes with a great deal of abstraction and even deviation from reality. Generally speaking, all research efforts from our part after finishing Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions have been aimed at finding ways to bridge, or at least narrow, the gap between normative theoretical insights and empirical argumentative practice. This has been tried in various ways. Here I can only touch on some salient examples.

To begin with, I return to the required functionalization of the subject of investigation. The starting point here is the standard version of Searle's speech act theory, various points of which are in Speech Acts

in Argumentative Discussions amended and augmented. A distinction is made between communicational and interactional aspects of language use. Communicative aspects relate to the illocutionary effect that the listener understands the performed speech act and interactional aspects relate to the perlocutionary effect that the listener accepts the speech act and acts accordingly. This perlocutionary effect is part of the conventional speech act itself, as distinct from any other possible consequences.

In 1983 we published a book--it's written in Dutch--in which we used these theoretical concepts to develop a normative pragmatic frame of reference for a general introduction to speech communication and argumentative analysis. Anyone familiar with the problems facing somebody who tries to apply the Searlean speech act theory to analyse real life everyday discourse, will understand that quite a few adaptations have to be provided to make it work. I do think we certainly made a lot of progress in this respect, although it is perfectly obvious that much more research is yet required. So far we have done a bit of conversational analysis, related to the work of Jacobs and Jackson, and we have carried out several pencil and paper tests and psycholinguistic experiments concerning the identification of arguments and suppressed premises, profiting from research such as Johnson-Laird's, Van Dijk and Kintsch's, etc.

Our 1983 book is a textbook of use in university classes, so we also had to pay a lot of attention to the didactics and we had to add a number of practical exercises, adequately reflecting the critical rationalistic approach we would like to advocate.

The 1983 book is the first of a series of three books. It provides the necessary equipment for analyzing expository texts and argumentative discussions. Topics discussed are, for example, argumentation structure, argument identification and the explicitization of suppressed premises.

The second book of this series, to be published this year, deals with fallacies. Just as in Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions fallacies are being treated as violations of a code of conduct for rational discussants. Rob Grootendorst will tell you more about it.

The third and last book of the series, to be published next year, deals with argumentation schemata. It is comparable in a way with, for instance, Windes and Hastings. In it several types of arguments are distinguished. Each type, in our opinion, is characterized by a certain argumentation schema, implying certain critical questions.

All these books are a result of our scientific research, often carried out in co-operation with other members of our staff, and the results of these surveys have been published or will be published in the Dutch Journal of Speech Communication. Maybe we can publish some of the results in English as well. Finally, I would like to mention another project of ours. That is the study of argumentation in the context of law. We are employed in the Faculty of Arts, but in co-operation with judicial experts we are exploring the characteristics of argumentation and argument evaluation in a well-defined and restricted institutional context in which the settlement of disputes is of central importance and is guided by

written and unwritten rules which in some sense link up with our code of conduct. But don't let me dwell too long on this subject. I'd better say something in response to the members of the panel.

In response to some comments made by Sally Jackson--which are, by the way, very interesting and we hope to get the opportunity to react in a more appropriate way on paper after we have actually read her contribution.

In response to her comments on our way of analyzing non-assertive speech acts (which are part of argumentation) as if they were meant to be assertive, I would like to remark first that our way of analyzing has exactly the same advantages and is in the same way realistic as when one analyses all other kinds of direct speech acts as indirect speech acts instead of taking them at face value. Real people in real discourse (by which I don't want to suggest that we are not real) are also acting appropriately when they act this way. They won't answer the question, "Do you know what time it is?" simply by saying "Yes I do" and leave it at that.

Of course we agree with Sally that argumentation, in principle, may consist of all kinds of speech acts and not just of assertives, but in our book we present it as a useful device for analyzing argumentation to proceed as if it consisted of assertives. So in the analysis you'll have to translate other kinds of speech acts (remember the umbrella example) in terms of (and as if they were) assertives. So it's a way of analyzing speech acts which aren't at face value. Assertives (which are actually not assertive) are analyzed as if they were. We still think this is a useful way to proceed in view of the commitments undertaken by people presenting speech acts as argumentative.

A dialectical analysis of argumentative discourse, in our opinion, has to make precisely explicit all these commitments of the language users involved in the dispute. This may be the occasion to assess briefly some of the differences between dialectical analysis and the so called "pure description" of argumentative discourse.

In view of the idealization involved in Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions a comparison between dialectal analysis and pure description of argumentative discourse may be illuminating.

For the sake of clarity, I would like to stress from the outset that, in our opinion, for all practical purposes, it is necessary that a complete theory of verbal communication and interaction which purports to be of importance for discussants, be normative as well as descriptive. In order to comment constructively on a particular specimen of language use one has to know what purpose is served by the verbal utterances and to what extent the verbal behavior is adequate to this purpose. Characteristic of the normative conception we advocate is that, as a matter of principle, every argumentation is considered part of a critical discussion aimed at resolving a dispute, regardless of whether the dispute and the discussion are externalized or not.

In our opinion, this dialectical approach needs to be allied (among other allies) to the functionalist speech act approach, in so-called

normative pragmatics. Dialectical analysis of an argumentative discourse clearly differs from so called "pure" description. I could have illustrated this by way of an analysis of the confrontation stage of a specimen of political discourse as I have done in a paper completed earlier this year, but for the sake of brevity I shall not do this and confine myself to mentioning the most striking difference. Bearing in mind that even a "pure" description, if it is to be of any significance, has to be theoretically motivated, one must realize that the difference is not just between theory-loaded and not theory-loaded. It's rather a difference between a descriptive record and a normative reconstruction, both equally based on theoretical considerations. The normative perspective, however, as it manifests itself in the dialectical approach to argumentation, by its very nature, has its own characteristic impact. A comparison between dialectical analysis and pure description may show what this distinctive impact leads to.

The first difference between a normative reconstruction and a descriptive recording is one of selection. Depending on the criterion of relevance supplied by the theoretical framework serving as a starting point, some data are deemed worth noting while other data are left aside as immaterial. This doesn't mean that they aren't there, but they are left aside. This means that all redundancy is removed, so that the discourse can be reported in the dialectical garb or a dialogical tableau. This removal of redundancy is why the transformation which has taken place can also be called deletion.

The second noticeable difference is one of completion. This is partly a question of making arguments explicit (externalizing implicit elements which are required to fill the dialectical gaps) as when by contradicting a standpoint, somebody implicitly expresses his doubt about that standpoint. Completion is also partly a question of adding elements whose presence in a full-fledged dispute has to be assumed, as when somebody defends his position without any attacks being made. Because of this supplementary character, this transformation may also be called addition. In compliance with the dialectical theory adhered to, in certain cases the addition may even involve assigning an argumentative communicative force to a constellation of speech acts which seems to lack such force in its literal utterance.

The third difference between dialectical analysis and pure description to be mentioned here, is one of arrangement. In contrast to the procedure in a descriptive recording, the normative reconstruction of a dispute need not directly reflect the linear course of events in the sequential order of their actual occurrence. In the dialectical analysis, the arrangement is organized in order to bring out the composition of the dispute as well as possible, the reported facts corresponding to dialectically relevant factors. Because of the alterations it may bring about, this transformation may also be called permutation.

The fourth and last difference I will mention is one of notation. It is completely in line with the points just made to provide for an adequate notation of the analysis. It is best that the findings be reported in such a way that the things which are theoretically noteworthy are expressed clearly. Similar cases need to be recognizable as similar. Dialectically

relevant distinctions need to be easily identifiable, and so on. In order for a comparison to be possible, it is necessary to create a notation system and reformulate the various contributions to the dispute in its terms. In consequence of this procedure, diffuse and ambiguous wordings have to be replaced by standard formulations. For this reason, this transformation can also be called substitution. Different ways of expression, which, dialectically speaking, amount to the same thing, are given one and the same substitute, so that identical cases are treated alike. In a purely descriptive notation, differences of expression are maintained, and dialectical similarities may easily escape attention. That's what I wanted to say in a hurry, as she [Sally Jackson] mentioned. And Rob will continue with some other points, I think.

RESPONSE OF ROB GROOTENDORST

University of Amsterdam

Professor Wenzel seems to be rather satisfied with our treatment of unexpressed premises. In fact, he seems to be more satisfied than we are ourselves. Surely, we have no complaints about that. In addition we are grateful for his helpful suggestions on clarifying the role of the context in explicating unexpressed premises with the help of field theory. Besides this we feel there are a number of other problems to be solved and a number of other things to be worked out.

In talking about unexpressed premises with other people and in continued reflecting on the subject, we have learned that our treatment of unexpressed premises in Chapter Six of our book can raise the following questions:

- (1) Does there in fact exist such a thing as an "indeterminate context"?
- (2) Does the "conversational minimum" hold always in every other (specific) context than an indeterminate context?
- (3) Do the guidelines formulated in Chapter Six automatically lead to the explicitization of the unexpressed premise in a given context?
- (4) Is it justified to assume that the speaker always has the intention to use deductively valid arguments?

No doubt there are many other questions which could be asked about the explicitization of unexpressed premises. The questions mentioned, however, are essential to our theoretical approach. I will confine myself therefore to some short remarks concerning these questions, without claiming to give any definitive answers.

(1) Of course every piece of real-life argumentation occurs always in some concrete context which is never indeterminate nor neutral. We use the concept of an indeterminate context as a starting point for the explicitization of unexpressed premises, and not as an indication of an existing entity. For us it is just a heuristic device.