COST ACTION CLOSING CONFERENCE

ABSTRACTS

Universidade NOVA de Lisboa
Campus de Campolide – Reitoria
1099-032 Lisbon, Portugal

DAY 1: 23 MARCH 2023
Auditório B, Reitoria

14:00 – 15:30   SESSION 2   NORMATIVE STUDY OF ARGUMENTATION

14:00 – 14:45

ISIDORA STOJANOVIC (Département d'Études Cognitives, Institut Jean-Nicod, Paris, FR)

How Objective are Moral Statements? A Corpus Study, and Some Implications for Public Policy

Moral considerations play an important role in public policy making. Policies tell us what we ought to do, they aim to prescribe what is morally right and penalize actions that are morally wrong. This often presupposes that we should be able to tell right from wrong on objective grounds - an assumption that has been widely challenged in philosophy. In this talk, I will present the results of a linguistic corpus study, conducted in collaboration with Louise McNally (Universitat Pompeu Fabra) during a Short-Term Scientific Mission of the COST project, that tackles the question of the objectivity of morality from an empirical angle. Our study provides evidence that moral predicates exhibit hallmarks of subjectivity at the linguistic level, but also, that they differ significantly from paradigmatically subjective predicates.

14:45 – 15:30

MAEVE COOKE (Department of Philosophy, University College Dublin, IE)

Argumentation and the Anthropocene

The contemporary ecological crisis poses new difficulties for public argumentation theory. My paper discusses three such difficulties. All arise from our global situation of human-induced ecological devastation – for short, from the Anthropocene. 1. Humans globally will have to fundamentally reimagine and rearticulate what it means to be human. 2. Material abundance is a prerequisite for public argumentation, but may not be ecologically sustainable. 3. There is an urgent need for effective political action. For some political theorists, the urgency of the need demands strong leadership, top-down government and the extensive use of state bureaucracy. This poses a serious challenge for public argumentation theorists, who in general favour a democratic response based on public deliberation.

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 17:30 SESSION 3: EMPIRICAL STUDY OF ARGUMENTATION

16:00 – 16:45

ØYVIND IHLEN (Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, NO)

Dealing with Dissent from the Medical Ranks: Public Health Authorities and COVID-19 Communication

During a public health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, the public health authorities will typically be criticized for their efforts. When such criticism comes from the ranks of medical personnel, the challenge becomes more pronounced for the authorities as it suggests a public negotiation of who has the sufficient expertise to handle the pandemic. Hence, the authorities are faced with the challenge of defending their competence and advice, while at the same time adhering to a bureaucratic/scientific ethos that imposes communicative boundaries. This explorative study analyzes the response strategies used by the Norwegian public health authorities in this regard. A finding is that the authorities' responses were distributed along a defensive–accommodative continuum: the authorities a) stated that the critics were wrong, b) claimed to possess the best available knowledge, c) pointed to the need for situational adaption (proportionality), or d) gave concessions, saying changes were under way.

16:45 – 17:30

FABIO PAGLIERI (Istituto di Scienze e Tecnologie della Cognizione, CNR, Rome, IT)

The Fallacy of Teaching Fallacy Theory: Theoretical Considerations and Empirical Studies

The problems encountered in managing public debate and institutional communication during the Covid-19 pandemics revamped interest in fallacy theory, yet this field had already been targeted by well-motivated criticisms in previous years (e.g., Woods, 2013; Boudry et al., 2015; Paglieri, 2016, 2019; Mercier et al., 2017). However, in spite of mounting evidence against the conceptual and empirical tenability of fallacy theory, it remains overrepresented in textbooks used to teach critical thinking skills: this is potentially problematic, and the recent line of criticism against fallacy theory gives new strength to earlier concerns about this approach to critical thinking education (Hitchcock, 1995; Feldman, 2009). Such concerns motivated me and Hugo Mercier to start designing a set of experimental studies aimed at testing how exposure to fallacy theory actually impact critical thinking skills: in this talk, after briefly summarizing the current debate on the status of fallacy theory, I will outline the design, methods, research hypotheses, and preliminary test materials of these experiments. Spoiler alert: we expect exposure to fallacy theory to be at best ineffective and at worst detrimental for critical thinking skills, compared both to a control condition (no treatment) and to a "positive spin" condition, in which emphasis is primarily given to correct forms of reasoning, and only then are the circumstances in which such reasoning might go astray discussed (the exact opposite of the educational rationale of fallacy theory).

DAY 2: 24 MARCH 2023
Auditório A224, CAN

14:00 – 15:00 SESSION 4: WORK IN PROGRESS & NETWORKING OUTPUTS

14:00 – 14:30

SOLMU ANTTILA (VU Amsterdam, NL)
& ÁLVARO DOMÍNGUEZ-ARMAS (NOVA University Lisbon, PT)

Hate Speech as a Means of Argumentative Exclusion

Argumentative exclusion occurs when an agent is denied participation in an argument. The terms employed here are intended to be broad: i) denied agents can be individuals, groups, or group representatives capable of participating in argumentation, while ii) argumentation is the production and exchange of reasons in service of managing disagreement (Lewinski & Mohamed (2016); Jackson (2015)). In the first part of the paper, we distinguish between two

general axes of exclusion a) active/passive and b) structural/transactional argumentative exclusion, and subcategories of complete/partial, temporarily specific/general, enforced/unenforced. We discuss the case of Twitter user experience design to exemplify these distinctions.

In the second part of the paper, we analyse hate speech as a varied means of argumentative exclusion along the axes identified in the previous section. Hate speech here refers to public expressions that incite or justify discrimination against its victims (Waldron, 2012), including legally punishable calls for violence against the victim motivated by racial/ethnic/national prejudice but also surreptitious means that escape legal regulation such as insinuations or dog whistles. We argue that both explicit and implicit forms of hate speech contribute to the active and structural exclusion of victims, as they censor arguers' ability to argue. However, although we argue that hate speech excludes arguers, we do not claim that argumentative exclusion is a primary or essential function of hate speech nor that the harms of hate speech are effectively comprehensively cashed out in terms of argumentative exclusion.

14:30 – 15:00

MEHMET ALI ÜZELGÜN (Ibn Haldun University, TR; NOVA University Lisbon, PT)
RAHMI ORUÇ (Ibn Haldun University, TR)
Argumunazara: Exploring Post-Classical and Contemporary Argumentation Theories-Practices

ASSIMAKIS TSERONIS (Örebro Universiy, SE)
MEHMET ALI ÜZELGÜN (Ibn Haldun University, TR; NOVA University Lisbon, PT)
RAMY YOUNIS (University of Fribourg, CH)
Evaluation of Multimodal Argumentation in Environmental Campaign Posters: Weighing Criteria for Effectiveness and Norms for Reasonableness

BARBARA DE COCK (UC Louvain, BE)
& SARA GRECO (Università della Svizzera italiana, Lugano, CH)
The Discourse of Digital Activism: A Linguistic Analysis of Calls for Action Concerning the Fashion Revolution

15:30 – 16:30 SESSION 5: STAKEHOLDER PANEL

Argumentation in Public Policy: Communication between Science, Media and Policymakers

Rui Tavares, Portuguese MP and academic, previously MEP
Anders Olof Larsson, Professor in the Department of Communication, Kristiania University College, Norway, specialist in (online) political communication
Iliusi Vega del Valle, Researcher at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Germany
Walid el Houri, Media editor for the Cambridge Center for Lebanese Studies and previously Lead Editor for openDemocracy, UK / Germany / Lebanon