

A Systematic Theory of Argumentation

The pragma-dialectical approach

In *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation*, two of the leading figures in argumentation theory, Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst, present a view of argumentation as a means of resolving differences of opinion by testing the acceptability of the disputed positions. Their model of a “critical discussion” serves as a theoretical tool for analyzing, evaluating, and producing argumentative discourse. In this approach, pragmatic and dialectical insights are combined by conceiving a critical discussion as a methodological exchange of speech acts between two parties.

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst develop a method for the reconstruction of argumentative discourse that takes into account all aspects that are relevant to a critical assessment. They explicate a set of rules for the conduct of a critical discussion and propose a practical code of behavior for discussants who want to resolve their differences in a reasonable way.

A Systematic Theory of Argumentation is a major contribution to the study of argumentation and will be of particular value to professionals and graduate students in speech communication, informal logic, rhetoric, critical thinking, linguistics, and philosophy.

Frans H. van Eemeren is Professor of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory, and Rhetoric at the University of Amsterdam.

Until his death in 2000, Rob Grootendorst was Professor of Dutch Speech Communication at the University of Amsterdam.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-53772-8 — A Systematic Theory of Argumentation
Frans H. van Eemeren , Rob Grootendorst
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

To Jet Greebe

A Systematic Theory
of Argumentation

The pragma-dialectical approach

FRANS H. VAN EEMEREN

University of Amsterdam

ROB GROOTENDORST

Formerly, University of Amsterdam



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-53772-8 — A Systematic Theory of Argumentation
 Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521537728

© Frans H. van Eemeren and Henriette Greebe 2004

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2004

Reprinted 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Grootendorst, R.

A systematic theory of argumentation : the pragma-dialectical approach /

Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-521-83075-3 (hard.) – ISBN 0-521-53772-x (pb.)

1. Persuasion (Rhetoric) 2. Pragmatics. 3. Dialectic (Philosophy)

I. Eemeren, F. H. van. II. Title.

P301.5.P47G76 2003

808-dc21 2003046181

ISBN 978-0-521-83075-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-53772-8 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page</i> vii
1 Introduction	1
2 The realm of argumentation studies	9
<i>Argumentation theory as normative pragmatics</i>	9
<i>The philosophical estate</i>	11
<i>The theoretical estate</i>	18
<i>The analytical estate</i>	22
<i>The empirical estate</i>	27
<i>The practical estate</i>	31
<i>A program for the study of argumentation</i>	37
3 A model of a critical discussion	42
<i>Classical roots of argumentation studies</i>	42
<i>New rhetorics and new dialectics</i>	44
<i>Meta-theoretical principles of pragma-dialectics</i>	52
<i>Dialectical stages in the process of resolving a difference</i>	57
<i>Pragmatic moves in the resolution process</i>	62
4 Relevance	69
<i>Different approaches to relevance</i>	69
<i>From interpretation to analysis</i>	73
<i>Integration of Searlean and Gricean insights</i>	75
<i>A pragma-dialectical notion of relevance</i>	80
<i>The identification of a relevance problem</i>	84
<i>Conditional relevance</i>	87
5 Analysis as reconstruction	95
<i>Complications in argumentative reality</i>	95

	<i>Transformations in an analytical reconstruction</i>	100
	<i>The justification of a reconstruction</i>	110
	<i>Making an analytic overview</i>	118
6	Rules for a critical discussion	123
	<i>A critical-rationalistic view of reasonableness</i>	123
	<i>Conceptions of reasonableness in the study of argumentation</i>	127
	<i>A dialectical notion of reasonableness</i>	131
	<i>The pragma-dialectical discussion procedure</i>	135
7	Fallacies	158
	<i>The state of the art in the study of fallacies</i>	158
	<i>Fallacies and the concept of a critical discussion</i>	162
	<i>The pragma-dialectical discussion procedure and the analysis of fallacies</i>	174
	<i>Examples of an analysis of some well-known fallacies</i>	175
	<i>Fallacies and implicit language use</i>	180
	<i>The identification of fallacies</i>	184
8	A code of conduct for reasonable discussants	187
	<i>Characteristics of reasonable discussants</i>	187
	<i>Ten commandments for reasonable discussants</i>	190
	<i>References</i>	197
	<i>Index</i>	207

Preface

A Systematic Theory of Argumentation gives an overview of the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentative discourse that Rob Grootendorst and I [Frans H. van Eemeren] jointly developed over the past thirty years. It provides a sketch of our contribution to the study of argumentation by describing our approach to a number of issues that are crucial to the development of a comprehensive theory of argumentation. In the process, insights that we have achieved are explained. This book – our latest and last one – serves as a final report of our work together. Rob's early death in 2000 put an untimely end to our great collaboration.

Rob and I co-authored a variety of studies, textbooks, and more-popular books about argumentation in Dutch. Most of our theoretical work was also published in English, but our scholarly contributions are scattered over a great number of articles and other publications. That is why we thought it useful to give a general overview of our ideas. *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation* is aimed at making the main thrust of our views about argumentation more easily accessible to our fellow students of argumentation. The book, which is dedicated to Jet Greebe, Rob's widow, is meant to be a modest monument to Rob. I hope that it will help us all to commemorate Rob as the inspired argumentation scholar he always was.

I am grateful to the great many friends in the international community of argumentation scholars who have given me their support in completing the manuscript for this book. In particular, I would like

to thank Hans V. Hansen, Michael Leff, J. Anthony Blair, Alec Fisher, Joseph Wenzel, Douglas N. Walton, John Woods, Sally Jackson, Charles A. Willard, and Scott Jacobs for their encouragement and invaluable support. Tony Blair's help in correcting the manuscript has been of great significance to me.

As Rob and I had expected when we decided that I should finish the work that would otherwise have been left uncompleted, our dear colleagues in the department of Speech Communication, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric of the University of Amsterdam have given me all their help in getting the book ready for publication.

I thank them wholeheartedly for their critical assistance. I am particularly grateful to Erik C.W. Krabbe (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen), who is technically not a member but a friend of our department, Peter Houtlosser, A. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, and Leah E. Polcar. Without Erik's useful comments, Peter's constructive contributions to the writing process, Francisca's critical readings of my drafts, and Leah's corrections, I would not have been able to complete *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation* satisfactorily.

Cambridge University Press, too, deserves my thanks. The enthusiastic endorsements of its reviewers, together with these reviewers' detailed criticisms, have been a great stimulus to me to keep working on improving the text. I would like to thank Terence Moore, Publishing Director, Humanities, and Ronald Cohen for their kind support and constructive suggestions.