

EVENT PROGRAMME

FEB 6 – WORKSHOP ON THE CONCEPT OF ‘ARGUMENT’ – 9:00-13:00

Do researchers in argumentation theory who study argument(ation) virtues, abstract argument(ation) frameworks, argument(ation) schemes and structures, the speech act of argument(ation), multi-modal argument(ation), interpersonal argument(ation), logical, dialectical, and rhetorical argument(ation), etc., ever study the same thing? If not, then perhaps argumentation theory as a field is based on a simple equivocation, and we shouldn't be meeting at the same conferences and publish in the same journals?

Whichever the answer is, the many conceptions of argument(ation) are a cause for concern, especially when disciplinary backgrounds or philosophical proclivities foster simple and exclusionary dichotomies (e.g.: philosophy studies arguments as abstract objects and should steer clear of investigating argumentation as a communicative activity). But when the variety of senses is clearly distinguished, then the unity in diversity can be better seen, thus promoting a fruitful interdisciplinary exchange. The workshop aims to make a modest contribution to seeing both the diversity and the unity of the concept of argument(ation) across the disciplines of philosophy, linguistics, communication, computer science, and cognitive science.

9:00-9:30	<p>Jean Wagemans (University of Amsterdam, NL) Argument structures, argument schemes, and argument types</p> <p>In this talk, I address the question "What is an argument?" from the perspective of the Philosophy of Argument. I describe how philosophers and rhetoricians have conceptualized arguments, highlighting the differences and commonalities between "argument(ation) structures" and "argument(ation) schemes". After identifying some challenges in using these concepts to analyze and evaluate argumentative discourse, I present the notion of "argument types" as a promising alternative. I aim to show how this concept can overcome the limitations of existing frameworks, offering a more nuanced approach to understanding and assessing arguments.</p>
9:30-10:00	<p>Jan Albert van Laar (University of Groningen, NL) A dialogue-theoretical concept of argument</p> <p>How can we deny that we should listen to the 'arguments' that generative AI has to offer? Or that political and commercial advertising should be taken seriously as a form of multimodal 'argumentation'? Or that the Lisbon city map provides a compelling 'argument' for taking the metro to the university? I aim to show that dialogue theory (aka dialectics) allows us to develop a suitably restrictive concept of argument that is nevertheless sufficiently flexible to deal with arguments outside of face-to-face conversations.</p>
10:00-10:30	<p>Marcin Lewiński (NOVA University of Lisbon, PT) One concept of argument: On argumentative actions and products</p> <p>Part of the business of argumentation theory is a conceptual dispute over</p>

	<p>what argumentation and argument are in the first place. This dispute has produced various “concepts of argument.” The goal of this short presentation is to defend a position that there is but one concept of argument needed to account for diverse phenomena and conceptions of argument and argumentation. To this end, I first briefly sketch the discussion over arguments-as-activities and arguments-as-products. Second, I go back to the classic work of Kazimierz Twardowski as a fruitful background to navigate the conceptual map of thought, language, and argument. This conceptual housekeeping allows me, third, to critically engage some of the recent, Frege-inspired philosophical literature on the concept of argument, while defending act-based approaches to argument(ation). Fourth, I present a positive proposal of a minimal, contrastivist concept of argument as <i>a set of reasons advanced to support a conclusion C_1 rather than another conclusion C_n</i>. I argue this is the one concept we need to cover various conceptions and phenomena of argument.</p>
10:30-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-11:30	<p>Sara Greco (Università della Svizzera Italiana, CH) A linguistic approach to the analysis of argumentative talk and discourse This contribution presents a linguistics-based approach to argumentative talk and discourse. My presentation is divided into two parts. In the first part, which has the function of a premise, I discuss two philosophical and anthropological pillars of the approach to argumentation that is widely shared at the IALS at USI: the normative concept of reasonableness in argumentation and the dialogic approach to argumentation. In the second part of the talk, I present an example of empirical analysis of social media discourse and briefly discuss how linguistic approaches contribute to argumentation studies and what aspects they allow illuminating.</p>
11:30-12:00	<p>Steve Oswald (University of Fribourg, CH) Are pragmatic inferences argumentative? In argumentative discourse, pragmatic inference and argumentative inference coexist, so much so that it can sometimes be difficult to disentangle them. While there are grounds to both assimilate and distinguish them, existing work on their relationship has not reached consensus on their nature, similarities and/or differences. I discuss argumentation-theoretic, pragmatic, and cognitive psychological research to tell them apart and try to clarify the respective place of both kinds of inference in argumentative exchanges.</p>
12:00-12:30	<p>Anette Hautli-Janisz (University of Passau, DE) Argumentation & Natural Language Processing This talk gives an overview of how argumentation theory has found its way into argument mining, a subfield of NLP concerned with the automatic identification and analysis of argumentative structures in natural language.</p>

	<p>I show how heterogeneous the field is, down to different assumptions of what constitutes an argumentative unit, what types these units can have and what relations hold between units. I also briefly show how Large Language Models have been integrated in argument mining research, concluding with the challenges that remain.</p>
<p>12:30-13:00</p>	<p>Anna de Liddo (Open University, UK) The Concept of Argument in Public Engagement</p> <p>Recent events in the global landscape show an exacerbation of social conflicts and a dangerous loss of trust in institutions. Citizens, workers, students are demanding new ways to be involved in shaping their future, new spaces to make conscious collective choices and act urgently on pressing social issues. These can be seen as spaces for civilised dissent and comfortable disagreement, spaces to come together as a diverse society, to discuss and make sense of problems and find common ground for action. This is where the concept of argumentation in public engagement comes in.</p> <p>Argumentation in public engagement is the act or process by which citizens form reasons and draw conclusions by engaging in critical discussions to resolve differences of opinion, answer questions and address common issues. Argumentation in public deliberation is a goal-oriented process of interactive healthy dialogue around public issues.</p> <p>In this short talk, I will argue that, while in other fields of application argumentation can be seen as a ‘process of using reasoning and evidence to present and support a point of view in order to persuade others’, in public engagement the concept of argumentation needs to be decoupled from and even counterposed to the concept of persuasion, and should rather aim to explain differences and structure disagreements.</p> <p>I will describe how argumentation, and in particular the ambivalent thinking process that results from it, can be used as a lever for healthier public engagement and deliberation. I will link the concept of ambivalent thinking and cognitive dissonance to research on argumentation theory and technologies, and ask whether open deliberation of such ambivalence in public arenas, historically seen as a process that leads to polarisation and division, can instead be a healthy process, which we should thrive and design for.</p>