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Norms of Public Argument: A Speech Act Perspective

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The aim of this special issue is to use the framework of speech act theory to understand the broadly construed normativity of disputes ("argument" in one sense) and reasoning ("argument" in another sense) in the public sphere. We preserve the ambiguity of the natural-language "argument" to capture the broad range of communicative phenomena where normative aspects of discourse are particularly at stake. Indeed, disputes as breakdowns of communication reveal the norms and sanctions governing our linguistic exchanges. We believe that speech act theory, which is enjoying nothing short of a revival today, provides a promising framework for combining insights from philosophy, pragmatics, argumentation theory, and other disciplines studying the normative aspect of public argument.

Speech act theory was originally conceived to better understand reasonable uses of language whose functions go beyond describing reality or drawing logical inferences. While seemingly nonsensical on an unrelenting form of logical analysis à la early Carnap, many of the non-assertoric uses of language turn out reasonable when their capacity to perform various socially relevant acts is duly considered. "You can't do that!", "I'm sorry!", "I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*", or "A deal!" all do important jobs: they admonish or prohibit, express sympathy or convey apologies, name things, and establish contracts (Austin 1962; Searle 1969).

Three tenets of speech act theory have defined its enduring utility for a philosophical critique of ordinary language over the last 60 years. First, while not easily amenable to strict empirical or logical verification, all speech acts operate under normative conditions, variously called "felicity", "happiness", or simply "success conditions". There is something not quite right in prohibiting our superiors, naming the wrong ship, or apologising for things we are proud to have done. A lively debate on the sources of normativity of speech acts continues (see esp. Fogal et al. 2018, and Green 2020, for recent overviews): perhaps they are to be found in conventionally encoded ways of living and speaking in a given society; in rational constraints on intentional, cooperative action; in evolutionarily developed proper functions of our communication; or in a combination thereof. One way or another, attention to speech acts entails attention to the norms that are operative in linguistic practice (see esp. papers collected in Witek & Witczak-Plisiecka 2019). Some of them are constitutive of illocutionary act types, others regulate their appropriate performance, and still others set criteria of their objective correctness (Sbisà 2019). Speech acts are not only governed by norms, but also bring about or modify normative facts construed as commitments and rights of the interacting agents (Lance and Kukla 2013; Sbisà 2013, 2019; Ball 2014, 2019; Witek 2019), thereby changing the network of interpersonal normative relations (Heal 2013). The norm-oriented speech act-theoretic framework is used to cast new light on a variety of linguistic and social phenomena: the practice of meaning-making in discourse (Fetzer 2019); legal interpretation (Matczak 2019); verbal irony (Corredor 2019; Witek 2022b); meaningful silence (Kurzon 2019); and presumptions understood as speech acts (Corredor 2017; Witek 2021).

Second, performative powers of speech acts can be used for good or for ill. Under the right circumstances, one can "happily" – in the speech act-theoretic sense – prohibit proliferation of nuclear weapons or prohibit an ethnic minority from casting a valid vote; one can appoint or subordinate; give voice or silence; authorise emancipatory or abusive behaviour. Special care has thus been given to what speech acts perform and how. An open question remains to what extent the ill behind pernicious speech acts is reducible

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to their infelicity or unhappiness. Lying, misleading, and usurping authority (capable of harming others) are among Austin's original examples of his early "doctrine of the infelicities". But then there are speech acts performed felicitously – under correct circumstances, by the right persons, and with proper intentions – that turn out bad nonetheless. "Bad advice" given by a caring and sincere friend, and a "bad verdict" announced by a legitimate and honest judge are bad not because they are void or misleading, but because they subsequently turn out to be objectively incorrect. Speech-act critique should thus mind its own limits: "That an act is happy or felicitous in all our ways does not exempt it from all criticism" (Austin 1962, p. 42; see also Sbisà 2019). If this is so, the second tenet of speech act theory does not reduce to the first one. This is amply reflected in recent literature which draws on speech act concepts, but also other resources of the analytic philosophy of language, while aiming at a socially engaged critique of discursive practices.

The social philosophy of language is especially interested in investigating the ways in which language can not only express and promote bigoted views, but also enact and impose abusive norms, thus fostering or exacerbating social injustices. Certain tools, in particular, seem able to change the norms governing a given conversation. This amounts to modifying – often covertly – what is permissible, as well as what should be done or would be preferable to do in a context, or to reinforcing existing oppressive norms (McGowan 2019; Caponetto and Cepollaro 2021). Think of devices such as "sneaky" presuppositions, including those aimed at unduly accommodating the authority of the speaker (Bach and Harnish 1979; Sbisà 1999; Langton 2015, 2018; Cepollaro 2020; Caponetto 2022); insinuations (Camp 2018, 2022; Domínguez-Armas and Soria-Ruiz 2021; Oswald 2022); conversational exercitives (McGowan 2004); discursive distorsions (Kukla 2014); subordinating speech (Langton 1993; Maitra & McGowan 2012); dogwhistles and figleaves (Saul 2017, 2018, 2021); code words (Khoo 2017) and propagandistic discourse more in general (Stanley 2015) (for a recent collection of topics in this debate, see Khoo & Sterken 2021). The study of such linguistic tools also raises the question of how to resist them: the literature on counterspeech aims to develop ways to prevent or challenge such harmful conversational moves (Langton 2018; Lepoutre 2021; Lewiński 2022; Tirrell 2021; see Cepollaro et al. 2023 for an overview).

Third, speech act theory as a prominent theoretical account within the broader post-war movement of ordinary language philosophy is responsive to how language actually operates under conditions of naturally occurring communication. To invoke the later Carnap's well-known criteria for good conceptual work, the theory should thus, whenever possible, be aligned with ordinary intuitions and generate concepts and methods fruitful in attaining its express objective: that of better grasping how natural language works. Yet being a philosophical theory, it should also be as exact and parsimonious as possible, simplifying and abstracting from real data for the sake of theoretical elegance and generality. A successful balancing of these often-conflicting demands accounts, at least partly, for the lasting success and applicability of speech act theory. But some of its simplifications and abstractions begin to wear and tear when explainability of real-life communicative phenomena is at stake. Traditionally, speech act theory conceives of communication in terms of dyadic encounters between an individual Speaker and an individual Hearer. It also stipulates that speech acts would typically have only one primary illocutionary force. And it remains somewhat vague on how this illocutionary force is fixed in the first place: via Speaker's intentions, Hearers' uptake, some form of on-the-fly contract between them, or some external (actual or idealised) factors. What's more, online communication breeds all kinds of complex dynamics unfit for the model back-and-forth snippets of local exchanges typically looked at by speech act theorists. Philosophers' catching-up game with what "ordinary language" actually means and how to best theorise it thus continues and, recently, picks up speed. Benefitting from inspiring insights from, broadly speaking, sociolinguists such as Herbert Clark, Erving Goffman, and Stephen Levinson, philosophers have turned their attention to group speech acts (Hughes 1984; Lackey 2018; Ludwig 2020; Townsend 2020); complex "polylogical" exchanges (Lewiński 2021a, b); speech act pluralism and illocutionary pluralism in particular (Cappelen and Lepore 2005; Egan 2009; Johnson 2019; Lewiński 2021a; Sbisà 2013); the complexities of uptake (McDonald 2022; Sbisà 2009; Witek 2022a); varied functions of speech acts in online contexts (Connolly 2022; Labinaz and Sbisà 2021; Marsili 2021; McDonald 2021) and other related phenomena populating our daily communicative lives.

Each paper in this special issue contributes, in its own unique way, to the discussion on at least one of these lines of speech act-theoretic inquiry. Below, we briefly summarise how.

Yet, before we do so, one additional remark is needed to better lay out the rationale behind the special issue. Arguments – in the sense of inferences, disputes, and public performances – have been an object of philosophical inquiry ever since Aristotle's careful analyses of logic, dialectic, and rhetoric. (This limitation to the occidental tradition is merely for illustrative purposes; similar developments mark the Chinese, Indian, and Arab traditions, see Dutilh Novaes 2022.) But many influential approaches in contemporary argumentation theory find speech act theory a particularly fruitful framework to elucidate its central concepts, those

of argument and argumentation (see Lewiński 2021b and Oswald 2023 for recent overviews). To start with, as repeatedly exemplified by Austin, "to argue" is a prototypical illocutionary act. Several prominent theories have developed around the efforts to capture the uniqueness of argumentation among other speech acts, focusing on its complexity unacknowledged in early speech act theory (Bermejo-Luque 2011; van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984; Hitchcock 2007). Furthermore, the complex speech act of argumentation is typically constructed within argumentative discussions – and these discussions include a plethora of argumentation-relevant speech acts which are not *per se* speech acts of argumentation: agreeing on a starting point, advancing a position, asking critical questions, conceding a point, retracting, concluding, etc. (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984; Walton and Krabbe 1995). Conversely, other theorists have argued that the performance of all speech acts is undergirded by argumentation. Argumentation is a part of our communication meant to defend any (actually or potentially) defective speech act and hence is best understood as a disagreement-relevant expansion of speech acts (Jackson and Jacobs 1980; Jacobs 1989). Assertions are predominantly seen as having the argumentative justification built into their very norms – a speaker must stand ready to justify their assertion with arguments when challenged (e.g., Brandom 1983; Lackey 2007). But Brandom's "justificatory responsibility" (1983, pp. 641–642) can arguably spread to any other speech act, including offers, promises, even expressives ("I'm truly sorry – I had no idea what you went through until John told me just now").

Altogether, the inescapable interdependence between performing speech acts and arguing creates a fertile ground for examining intricate relations between speech acts and arguments, not least from a normative angle. Indeed, this special issue is but one among others in a larger collective effort to further advance this examination. Lilian Bermejo-Luque & Andrei Moldovan have recently edited a Special Issue on "Speech Acts and Argumentation" for *Informal Logic* (2021); Steve Oswald a Special Issue on "Pragmatics and Argumentation" for *Languages* (2022); and Martin Hinton a Special Issue on "Pragmatics in Argumentation Research" for the *Journal of Pragmatics* (2023). The papers gathered here contribute to this larger conversation, while providing a unique perspective, firmly grounded in recent advances in speech act theory and argumentation theory. As noted, mainstream contemporary models of argumentation have initially drawn on speech act-theoretic insights to characterise their object of study and to feed their normative requirements in the description of sound argumentation. It is accordingly only natural that present-day accounts of argumentation take stock of the above-mentioned recent (and massive) advances in speech act theory for relevant updates. This volume can thus also be seen as an attempt to document and showcase such recent developments. (Admittedly, the study of norms of argumentation at large extends well beyond speech act theory, and includes various linguistic, logical, epistemic, dialectical, rhetorical, and also legal and political norms; see Zenker et al. 2023 for a recent overview.)

We have organised the contributions to the Special Issue into three groups, although without any claim to their firm boundaries or mutual exclusivity; quite the opposite, we happily embrace interesting and inescapable overlaps. The first group includes the more theoretical papers of Green, Marsili, Gaszczyk, and Paterson, who inquire into fundamental, "good" speech acts such as assertion and explanation. They trace their genealogy, examine their norms and criteria for correct application, while shedding light on the ways in which they can be corrupted and repaired. The second group turns the attention to normatively "fishy" communicative phenomena: duplicity, insinuations, figleaves, dogwhistles, sugar-coating, and hate speech. Such prejudiced forms of public argument are analysed across these contributions – of McGowan; Domínguez-Armas, Soria-Ruiz, & Lewiński; Bräuer; Howdle; Adams; and Cousens – with careful consideration of the harmful impact new forms of online and otherwise public communication have on public discourse, and of the challenges they pose to the speech act theory as such. Finally, the third group comprises papers more strictly dealing with argumentation-theoretic issues, from the more abstract analysis of the speech act of argumentation and its norms (Haro Marchal, Corredor), to a communicative account of practical reasoning (van Berkel & Wagemans), and a study of threat appeals, understood both as problematic speech acts and as fallacious arguments (Yu & Zenker). These three groups nicely mirror the features of speech act theory we outlined above: its normative character, its attention to harmful and complex forms of communication, and its connection to argumentation.

Let us now briefly introduce each of the individual contributions to the special issue.

In "On the Genealogy and Potential Abuse of Assertoric Norms", Mitchell S. Green adopts an evolutionary approach to speech act practices and their normative aspect. He focuses on the practice of assertion and argues that the concept of *commitment* associated with it can be decomposed into three different notions of *liability*, *frankness*, and *fidelity*. With this distinction in hand, he describes hypothetical practices of *ursertion* and *semisertion* and considers them as possible evolutionary precursors of the modern practice of assertion. Ursertions are defined as utterances governed only by the liability norm, whereas semisertions are acts governed by the liability and frankness, but not the fidelity norm. According to Green, his evolutionary model sheds

new light on the question whether, and if so to what extent, speech acts are conventional. What is more, it also enables us to identify and describe a form of abusive language which he calls *puffery*: the practice of putting forth contents as meeting higher epistemic standards than they in fact do. Puffers present themselves as asserting what they say despite the fact that they do not meet all the requirements defined by the norms underlying the practice of making assertions. For this reason, puffery is especially pernicious in public discourse. Puffers are not liars, since they believe what they say. Nevertheless, they are cheaters, because they pretend to have epistemic authority that they actually lack.

Continuing an inquiry into the norms of assertion and their violation, in "Group Assertions and Group Lies" Neri Marsili offers an account of assertion and lying as they may be performed by groups of people – as opposed to assertions and lies performed by individuals. While the individual versions of these speech acts have long been discussed in philosophical research, their respective group counterparts have received comparatively less attention. Regarding assertions performed by groups, Marsili's account revises and improves extant accounts by offering sufficient conditions for group assertion and by clarifying issues with the definition of assertoric commitment, so that group assertions can be sharply distinguished from other group speech acts and from group implicatures. In addition, Marsili argues in favour of stripping down the definition of group lying from intention and advocates that group insincerity should be approached through graded-belief models that incorporate the possibility of insincere intentions. While challenges related to the specificities of group speech acts (e.g., resulting from inconsistent group credences) remain, the research presented in this contribution clarifies core issues and sets the stage for future research on group beliefs and group speech acts.

Grzegorz Gaszczyk's paper "Helping Others to Understand: A Normative Account of the Speech Act of Explanation" builds on the discussions regarding the constitutive norm of assertion (Williamson 1996; Lackey 2007) to define explanation as a distinct speech act. To this end, he offers the following understanding-based norm of explanation: "UN One must: explain e by communicating p only if one puts the audience in a position to understand e by means of p". Accordingly, the main virtue of a felicitous explanation is that it is tailored to its audience in a way that promotes the audience's understanding of the thing to be explained. As Gaszczyk defends, this account correctly predicts some common but philosophically challenging cases of explanation to be felicitous. This includes explanations of theories such as evolutionism or creationism by speakers who do not believe the theories, as well as simplified, and to this extent false, explanations, e.g., of evolution or atoms as provided to primary school students. This audience-centric account has curious properties – good explanations can be non-factive! – which opens an interesting debate on the relation between the speech acts of explanation and assertion, and on the possible plurality of illocutionary acts performed when explanations are being offered.

Grace Paterson's contribution focuses on the speech act of disavowal through which a speaker attempts to express that they no longer subscribe to some views they may have expressed in the past. Disavowals, which are thus analysed as distinct from stronger retractions, are presented as threefold speech acts which require (i) an admission of a previous act, (ii) a denunciation of the latter and (iii) an explanation of said act. Crucially, speakers resort to them when related speech acts such as retractions, apologies, or denials are not contextually viable options. Ultimately, disavowals are characterised as strategies deployed to fulfil face-saving functions which can also turn out to be powerful repair devices that are able to reverse normative shifts in conversations caused by the disavowed speech act. In this way, Paterson's paper contributes to the growing literature on retractions and other forms of reparatory discourse.

Mary Kate McGowan's paper "On Media Reports, Politicians, Indirection, and Duplicity" opens the discussion of various abuses of speech act norms in the context of often media-driven public arguments. McGowan describes two hitherto unrecognised indirect speech actions which can be found in the public domain and, next, considers ways in which they can be misleading and duplicitous. More specifically, she distinguishes between two forms of intentional though covert indirectness: one with respect to other agent re-use and the other with respect to intended audience. In the case of the former, the speaker's primary point is to produce a sound or text bite that other agents can quote, replicate, or re-use; in other words, their goal is not so much to contribute a certain officially communicated content to the conversation, but to enable others to re-use or quote their words. In the case of the latter, the speaker's primary intention is to convey some information to a group of people other than the official addressee. Unlike conversational implicatures, which are cases of indirection at the level of content, and indirect speech acts, which are cases of overt indirection at the illocutionary level, most speech actions involving the two less discussed forms of indirection are covert in that their underlying primary intentions can be fulfilled only if they are not recognised. Discussing a number of fictionalised examples, McGowan considers various ways in which the speech actions in question can be duplicitous and potentially misleading. She concludes by considering how such real-life communicative complications put "pressure on the orthodoxy" within speech act theory, defined by the seminal work of Austin (1962) and Lewis (1979).

Conversations, and their scores, extend across space, time, and multiple participants, which affords speakers to strategically design their illocutionary acts beyond conveying one primary force to be recognised by their unique hearer.

Continuing critical examination of sneaky, covert speech acts in public contexts, Álvaro Domínguez-Armas, Andrés Soria-Ruiz and Marcin Lewiński focus on the argumentative roles of a particular kind of insinuation, namely provocative insinuation. Provocative insinuations are defined as off-record inferences realised through conversational elicitures, themselves triggered by the use of specific generic predicates (e.g., "Iraqi refugee"), and which invite negative ascriptions onto the target of the insinuation. As these contents are potentially hurtful and uncooperative while simultaneously likely to be accommodated by hearers and denied by speakers, they pose a notable set of problems in communication. In particular, while they can be consequential in perpetuating prejudiced argumentative discussions about various social actors, their potentially nefarious effects on the representation of the latter are difficult to counter. The authors accordingly offer a full account that (i) describes in detail the inferential nature of provocative insinuations, (ii) assesses their argumentative functions in terms of the implicit support they bring for underlying *questions under discussion* related to policies regarding the social group targeted by the insinuation, and (iii) evaluates possible responses, highlighting that challenging the choice of language seems to be the way to go to block this kind of "soft" hate speech.

Felix Bräuer's "Statistics as Figleaves" argues that certain ways to appeal to statistics can and in fact do work as a *figleaf*. This notion, recently introduced and explored by Jennifer Saul (2017, 2021), refers to discourse moves that aim to cover the racist or sexist character of an utterance or of a speaker, at least for some portion of the audience. In addition to allowing a given harmful contribution to pass as acceptable, this instance of double speech is especially dangerous for its potential to also shift the boundaries of permissibility, that is, of what can be done and said in a given context (see McGowan 2019). Bräuer's work thus unveils how the allegedly neutral and objective domain of statistics can be exploited to work just like Saul's figleaves, namely, to cover the prejudiced potential of certain interventions (e.g., racist or sexist) by making them look like acceptable moves. Not only does this work point to a new kind of figleaf, but it also argues that it is an especially dangerous one, compared to the prototypical examples discussed in the literature. In addition to analysing the phenomenon of resorting to statistics as a figleaf, Bräuer also considers and illustrates ways in which speakers can respond to such appeals to statistics so as to refute their potential to obscure their hateful nature.

Giles Howdle's "Microtargeting, Dogwhistles, and Deliberative Democracy" combines insights from political philosophy and speech act theory to develop the argument that microtargeted political advertisements and dogwhistles are democratically wrong on content-neutral grounds. That is, even though these are invariably problematic in terms of their discriminatory (e.g., racist and sexist) content, they are additionally *morally wrong*. The gist of Howdle's argument builds on the effects that these speech acts have in public discourse, which are said to prevent adequate deliberative processes from taking place. Specifically, they impose restrictions on the accessibility of salient political information to (parts of) audiences. Such balkanisation of information undermines deliberative practices by generating unequal access to relevant information among political actors, who are accordingly prevented from making informed and thus legitimate political decisions.

In "A Spoonful of Sugar Makes the Hate Speech Go Down: Sugar-Coating in White Nationalist Recruitment Speech", Kyle Adams identifies and analyses an overlooked linguistic tactic employed by white nationalists to convey their bigoted messages without risking censorship. Such a strategy he calls "sugar-coating": it consists in crafting prejudiced content – which would be otherwise unacceptable in the public arena – by pairing it with some kind of reward meant to motivate readers to take up the writer's move. For one thing, this paper provides new tools to uncover White nationalist doublespeak recruitment rhetoric, arguing that it is best understood as instantiating sugar-coating, rather than other phenomena in the neighbourhood, like figleaves, dogwhistles, or bullshit. In addition, and more broadly, this work also sheds light on a new linguistic tactic that was previously neglected. This is a valuable and insightful contribution to the growing literature on doublespeak strategies that has drawn the attention of scholars in social philosophy of language and argumentation theory.

Closing the set of contributions discussing various forms of noxious speech is Cousens' paper "Solving the Authority Problem: Why We Won't Debate You, Bro". Cousens takes into scrutiny the so-called "authority problem" of hate speech, discussed earlier by Maitra (2012) and Bianchi (2019), among others. For hate speech to be performatively strong enough to constitute (and not merely cause) harm, it should come from a speaker endowed with adequate authority. Yet "ordinary" hate speakers communicating in quotidian circumstances characteristically lack such authority. So either their speech cannot be really harmful, or hate speech is not authoritative in any principled way – both of which are highly counterintuitive results. Cousens' take on this problem is to defend a deflated kind of authority, which can be gained from the hate speaker's standing in a norm-governed "activity of oppression". Hate speakers' authority need not

rely on anything other than playing the oppressor's role in oppressive speech activities. But if this is so, then engaging such speakers, even if only to challenge their position with rational counterargument, can still legitimise and even elevate their hateful standing. Therefore, over and above devising corrective forms of counterspeech, "we should be careful about who we platform or debate" in the first place. In this way, Cousens contributes to the important discussion on the limits of free and rational public argument (see, e.g., Langton 2018; Maitra & McGowan 2012; McGowan 2019).

The remaining four papers continue a speech act-theoretic critique of norms of public argument, but also resort more explicitly to concepts and methods developed within argumentation theory.

In "Argumentation as a Speech Act: Two Levels of Analysis", Amalia Haro Marchal uses the framework of speech act theory to characterise argumentation as a complex illocutionary act. In so doing, she follows the tradition initiated by Frans H. van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst (1984) and continued by Lilian Bermejo-Luque (2011), the author of the Linguistic Normative Model of Argumentation. Unlike the above-mentioned scholars, however, Haro Marchal claims that the characteristic effect of an act of arguing does not reduce to the securing of uptake. More specifically, she argues for extending the Searlean perspective, which she believes is present in both the Pragma-Dialectical Theory and the Linguistic Normative Model, by including elements of the interactional approach, whose proponents emphasise the hearer's active role in determining the effect of the speaker's speech acts. According to Haro Marchal, the successful act of arguing not only secures uptake, but also modifies the network of normative relations between the speaker and the hearer or, in other words, affects their deontic modal competence in Marina Sbisà's sense. Haro Marchal concludes that to account for the two above-mentioned effects of the act of arguing, we have to distinguish between two levels of analysis: one that focuses on the speaker's utterance and abstracts from the hearer's response to it, and the other that takes into account the interaction between the speaker and the hearer.

In "Agreeing on a Norm: What Sort of Speech Act?", Cristina Corredor offers a speech act-based model of practical argumentation. She focuses on deliberative dialogues aimed at reaching an agreement on the best course of action and considers what illocutionary acts take effect as their normative conclusions. Viewed from the speech act-theoretic perspective, the conclusion of a practical argument can be described either as an exercitive act., i.e., "the giving of a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it" (Austin 1962, p. 154), or as a kind of verdictive act, i.e., a practical judgement about what ought to be done. Corredor adopts the latter and argues that the conclusion of a deliberative dialogue can be best understood as a statement of a norm – i.e., a declarative phrase saying that a certain action *A* should be carried out – which constitutes the performance of a verdictive act. She adds, however, that if the context is appropriate, and the interacting agents are sincerely or institutionally committed to their argumentative exchange and its conclusion, then the concluding verdictive act motivates and institutes a corresponding exercitive act of enacting the stated norm. More specifically, she argues that the act of speech which concludes a deliberative dialogue can constitute or take effect as two illocutionary acts, i.e., a verdictive act of stating a norm and an exercitive act of its enactment, where the former invites the latter.

Van Berkel and Wagemans' "Practical Reasoning and Practical Argumentation: A Stakeholder Commitment Approach" further examines the normative aspects of practical argumentation, understood as a communicative activity of deliberation. Departing from the rich philosophical tradition of analysing practical inference, van Berkel and Wagemans turn their attention to the theories which explicitly look at it as part and parcel of collective argumentative activities, namely to the theories they label the 'Public Performance Approach' (PPA) and the 'Policy Debate Approach' (PDA). A compare-and-contrast analysis of these two approaches leads them to formulate their own Stakeholder Commitment Approach (SCA) focused on the public commitments associated with the speech acts performed by various stakeholders to deliberative activities. Crucially, the authors' distinction between the roles of *problem holder* (the one that "holds the problem") and *problem solver* (the one "invited or necessitated to solve it") lets them shed light on somewhat neglected second- and third-person practical reasoning – and various combinations thereof – thus refining the extant models of practical argumentation.

Finally, Shiyang Yu and Frank Zenker's paper "A Scheme and Critical Questions for the *Argumentum ad Baculum*" is a valuable example of how pragmatic and argumentative scholarship can be combined to simultaneously yield beneficial outcomes for both disciplines. This contribution addresses the problematic status of the fallacious appeal to threat, also known as the *argumentum ad baculum*, by noting that no satisfactory normative account of this fallacy is available. Through a combination of the speech act-theoretic notion of felicity conditions and the concept of critical questions found in the argumentation scheme approach, the authors bridge the gap between pragmatics and argumentation by proposing a novel rendering of the *ad baculum* argument scheme. Moreover, beyond the argumentative import of their analysis, an original revision of the felicity conditions that are associated with the speech act of threatening is provided.

In these diverse ways, all the contributions in this Special Issue illustrate the variety and dynamics of norms governing

communicative and argumentative practices. They do so by examining and cataloguing the mechanisms that underlie the enactment, persistence, and evolution of norms governing speech acts, as well as the various ways in which these norms are violated, exploited, or negotiated. In so doing, the papers collected here advance the recent speech act-theoretic debate on the norms of public speech in interesting and fruitful directions.

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