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In Response to: Leo Groarke's *Where does philosophy belong within the argumentation theory?*

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Professor Groarke directs our attention to questions about the contribution philosophy ought make to argumentation theory. To illustrate the importance of these questions, Groarke offers a response to Ralph Johnson's critique of deductivism. I plan to leave defense of Johnson's critique to Professor Johnson. As a rhetorician, who shares with philosophers an interest in the development of argumentation theory, I welcome and endorse Groarke's call for careful attention to what argumentation theorists ought to learn from philosophy proper. I do, however, have a reservation about the framework within which Groarke would have us conceptualize the relationships between a philosophy of argument and argumentation theory. My response to his paper will focus on that qualm.

Groarke recommends that we think about the relationship between the philosophical study of argumentation, on the one hand, and argumentation theory, on the other, as a relationship between "pure" and "applied" theory. Groarke characterizes "applied argumentation theory" as "the attempt to construct a theory of natural language argument that has a practical application. Such a theory encompasses ways of determining when argument does and does not occur, the conditions under which it can be classed as good and bad argument; and the ways of determining how one can and should respond to particular incidents of argument." Practical applications of such theories are found in attempts to teach reasoning skills and in more formal attempts to design computational models of argument (2001, pp. 2-3). "Pure theories," Groarke suggests, attempt "to answer theoretical questions about argument that do not have a direct practical application, or are not studied in a way that has this as their goal. Such theories may ask abstract questions about the nature and limits of argument and of theories of argument; they may study paradoxes that arise in the context of particular kinds of reasoning; and they may attempt to understand the presuppositions assumed by particular accounts of argument. It is, for example, the natural arena in which one might ask questions about the kind of epistemology or metaphysics assumed by a theory of argument." Pure theories of argument would include a discipline properly thought of as the philosophy of argument, analogous to such more familiar branches as philosophy of art, philosophy of the social sciences, etc. (2001, p. 3).

These remarks convey a rough sense of the scope Groarke assigns respectively to pure and applied argumentation theory, but they also leave much for his reader to supply from common knowledge of a familiar, if difficult, distinction between pure and applied study. More specifically, Groarke implies but does not delineate differences in the approaches scholars typically adopt when engaged in pure versus applied research. We can better recall those differences in research methods by turning to the work of Robert Craig, a communication theorist who has a sustained interest in argumentation. Craig holds that argumentation theories range over a continuum running from relatively pure theory at one pole to practical or applied theory at the other (1996, p. 463). At the theory end, Craig finds scholarly discourses which are "relatively formal or systematic or abstract"—"systematic to the degree that the discourse follows the formal contours of an explicitly elaborated conceptual structure; abstract to the degree that it refers to matters in general (universals rather than particulars) and is not restricted to local context of situation (1996, p. 464). At the practice end of his continuum, Craig finds discourse which is relatively unrestrained by a specific conceptual system but is bound to

consequences of particular local contexts; accordingly studies (and practices) at this end of the continuum apply some “degree of abstract conceptualization or theory” (1996, p. 465).¹ I cannot be certain that Groarke would distinguish between pure and applied theory in just these terms, but something very like Craig’s characterization seems to be implied by Groarke’s description of pure argumentation theory as “abstract,” concerned with “the nature and limits of argument and of theories of argument . . . paradoxes that arise in the context of particular kinds of reasoning . . . the presuppositions assumed by particular accounts of argument” (2001, pp. 2-3). Likewise, Groarke’s characterization of applied argumentation theory as an “attempt to construct a theory of natural language argument that has a practical application” seems to commit him to something very like Craig’s characterization of studies at the practical pole of his continuum. Moreover, it seems that Craig’s descriptions reflect familiar differences in the approaches taken by pure versus applied theoretical work. So it seems that the tendency of Groarke’s recommendations would be to promote pure theories of argumentation that are formal, systematic and abstract and which also avoid the contingencies and consequences of local contexts.

Thus, if we follow Groarke’s recommendation, our common understanding of the distinction between pure and applied theories will incline us to develop argumentation theories along two distinct lines: the one, a pure theory of argumentation, will be relatively formal, systematic, abstract, and not restricted to context or situation; the other, relatively unrestrained by specific conceptual systems but bound to consequences related to local contexts. This division of labor should, I think, be approached with great caution. It has a potential to deprive pure theories of argumentation of the pragmatic orientation necessary to an adequate grasp of the intentional concepts on which any adequate theory of argumentation must draw.

At this point I assume that a pure theory of argumentation along the lines Groarke recommends will treat some intentional concepts. I do not know whether Groarke would accept this assumption, but I do not see that there would much choice for argumentation theorists of the pure variety. Arguments are products of the activity we ordinarily refer to as *arguing*. That activity is itself intentional. Persons engage in that activity by performing intentional acts of saying, asserting, claiming, testifying, showing, objecting, refuting, proposing, advising, accusing, etc. We might be tempted to envision a pure theory of argument which abstracts away from all acts which go into arguing and focus only on the products of such acts, perhaps on assertions, propositions, etc. But we should resist that temptation as inviting us to take a serious step backwards. To move in that direction would require that we abandon most of what informal logicians have taught us about the role of dialectic in argument (Johnson, 2000, pp. 164-173), the insights pragmatic dialecticians have drawn from the study of speech acts (van Eemeren et al., 1993, pp. 1-19), and indeed the moorings provided to the study of argument by work in the philosophy of language.

My worry is that a “pure theory” of argument may lack the resources necessary to explicate intentional acts necessary to the activity of arguing. This concern is rooted in the nature of our concept of intentional acts. A little reflection on G. E. M. Anscombe’s seminal account of intentional concepts suggests that in order to explicate our concepts of intentional endeavors it is

¹ The Pragma-Dialectical approach to argumentation studies has developed a well-elaborated view of the relationships between pure and applied studies of argumentation (Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson & Jacobs, 1993, pp. 20-25).

necessary to work both in the abstract analytical modes of study associated with pure theory and in the situation oriented modes of reflection and investigation associated with applied theory. If that is so, then a pure theory of argumentation, at least one developed along familiar lines, would be deficient in scholarly assets needed for an adequate account of argumentative activity.

The account of our knowledge of actions provided by G. E. M. Anscombe's monograph on *Intention*, first published in 1957, remains a cornerstone for study of intentional concepts.² Anscombe observes that many of our concepts pertaining to action "are directly dependent on our possessing the form of description of intentional actions" (1957, p. 84). We would not, that is, have such concepts, if we did not have the basic notion of *x-ing* in order to get *y*, where *y* is at a distance from *x* and is something wanted. Insulting a person, for example, can be done unintentionally, but we would not have our concept of insulting someone, if we did not have an idea of a scornful action or utterance calculated to wound self-respect. Many intention dependent acts-concepts are also intention specific. That is, such concepts derive their coherence from a corresponding stable ends-means calculation which, given favorable circumstances, is potentially efficacious (Anscombe, 1957, p. 87; Stampe, 1967). Storing something is a good example. To store something is to put it in a safe or secure place, so that it will be available at a later time. Here the essentials of our concept (putting something in a safe or secure place) are means which are practically necessary constituents of a potentially efficacious strategy for securing a certain end. We might, of course, store things for other purposes, but our concept of storing things depends for its coherence on the paradigm case securing things for future retrieval.

Notice that full explication of an intention specific concept requires investigation at two levels. One level requires an analysis of the concept, which identifies the conditions necessary and sufficient for its truthful application. So, relying on an example I have discussed in more detail elsewhere at this conference, if Grice's analysis of our concept of seriously saying and meaning something is correct, then a speaker will have meant something by an utterance on the specific occasion of its use, if and only if she produces that utterance with a complex reflexive intention. She must, that is, produce the utterance intending (or acting as if she intends) that some auditor respond in a particular way (e. g., believe that *p*), and she must further intend both that her auditor recognize her primary intention and that her auditor recognize that he is intended to recognize that primary intention, and she must still further intend that her auditor's complex recognition of her intentions provide the auditor with reason to respond as primarily intended.³ The second, deeper level, requires identification of the paradigmatic practical calculation which underlies and constitutes the intention specific concept. Here one regards the essentials of the concept, disclosed by analysis, as means which are practically necessary to implement a potentially efficacious strategy. A key pragmatic question for a Gricean account of seriously saying and meaning something is how could (supposing favorable circumstances) a speaker reasonably expect to provide an addressee with reason to, e. g. believe what the speaker says simply by producing an utterance, while deliberately and openly manifesting her intention to get her addressee to believe that utterance.

² The *New York Times* obituary for G. E. M. Anscombe reports that Donald Davidson described her work on intention and action as "the most important treatment of action since Aristotle" (January 13, 2001).

³ I have more fully discussed this analysis elsewhere in the proceedings.

Work at each these levels requires distinct modes of reflection and investigation. Analysis of a concept proceeds by testing what can consistently be said using the concept in question and by identifying the conditions that distinguish that concept from related concepts. Grice defends his analysis of seriously saying and meaning something by pointing to the fact that our concept of an utterance-meaning is distinct from our concept of natural sign meaning. He constructs his analysis of utterance-meaning (of which seriously saying something is a species) by positing conditions necessary to distinguish between these two kinds of meaning, successively adding conditions to the analysis in response to counterexamples based on increasingly complex cases of natural sign meaning. The analysis starts with the intuition that in clear instances of utterance-meaning, the speaker intends to secure a response from her addressee, while in many cases of natural sign meaning, no such intention is present. Where a person takes smoke to be a natural sign of fire, there is no intention on the part of the fire to induce any belief from any party. But the intention to secure some response from another party does not suffice to distinguish utterance-meaning from all cases of natural sign inference. If *A* leaves *B*'s personal effects at the scene of a crime intending that the investigating officer believe *B* committed the crime, *A*'s actions satisfy the primary condition in Grice's analysis, i. e., *A* intends that the arranged evidence induce a related response from the investigating officer. However, in cases of deliberately arranged sign inference, communication is not effected by a person's saying and meaning something. In order to rule out simple cases of arranged evidence, Grice adds a further condition to his analysis that requires that the speaker further intend that her auditor recognize her primary intention. *A* intends that the investigating officer believe that *B* committed the crime, but *A* does not intend that the investigating officer recognize that primary intention (Grice, 1957). Further reflexive speaker intentions posited by Grice's analysis are motivated by more complex cases of arranged natural sign meaning (1969). This line of defense provides powerful analytical motivation for Grice's definition of utterance-meaning.

But an analysis along these lines does not answer the more substantial pragmatic question of how by deliberately and openly manifesting her intention to, e.g., get her addressee to believe that *p*, a speaker could ever manage to provide the addressee with reason to produce that response. To identify the practical calculation that underlies our ordinary concept of seriously saying and meaning something, one's inquiry must proceed along different lines. Now one is concerned with uncovering a practical calculation that could be expected to work, not universally, but only in certain favorable circumstances. One is interested in identifying a strategy within which the conditions that analysis shows to be necessary and sufficient components of our concept of saying something are practically necessary and potentially efficacious means for securing the various responses speaker do in fact secure by communicative means. This is an interpretative problem which Dennis Stampe solves by showing that a speaker's deliberately and openly manifesting her primary intention to secure a response from her addressee is functionally equivalent to her openly taking responsibility for her communicative effort, an effort which enables the speaker to generate a presumption on behalf of the veracity of what she says (Stampe, 1967). A full defense of Stampe's account would have to show, among other things, how variations on the basic strategy he posits could reasonably be expected to work across the various circumstance and with respect to the wide ranges of objectives which are, in fact, served by seriously saying things.

I think it is apparent that the sort of thinking which goes into the analysis of an intentional concept is the sort of scholarship Groarke would expect from a pure theory of argument. Grice's

analysis of utterance-meaning is undertaken to clarify fundamental theoretical questions about language and communication. The methods Grice uses to construct his analysis are formal, systematic, and abstract. On the other hand, the inquiry necessary to adduce the practical calculation which underlies and constitutes that concept requires that the scholar think in terms which are more contextual, critical, and related to the consequences of particular situations. In short, to reconstruct the practical calculation underlying an intentional concept, one must work in ways we associate more with applied scholarship.

The risk we would run in uncritically developing pure theories of argumentation is that we might construct a sub-discipline which, owing to its methodological biases, would not be adequately equipped to explicate the intentional concepts which any adequate theory of argument, pure or applied, must treat. The pure argumentation theorist would, I fear, be inclined to study such acts as saying, asserting, claiming, testifying, showing, objecting, refuting, proposing, advising, accusing by focusing on their analytic essentials, giving scant attention to their pragmatic constitutions. In doing so pure theories of argument would be likely to bog down in a mire of unresolvable problems and puzzles.

The history of Grice's analysis of utterance-meaning reinforces my apprehension that pure theories of argument may wind up unable to deal adequately with the intentional acts which comprise the activity of arguing. Grice's analysis of utterance-meaning has been ably defended in light of counter-examples (Avramides, 1989, p. ix). But Grice and his students, with the exception of unpublished work by Dennis Stampe, have not given equally careful attention to the pragmatics of seriously saying something, i. e., to the question of how a speaker's deliberately and openly manifesting her primary intention *could* provide an addressee with reason to respond as the speaker primarily intends (Kauffeld, 2001). Failure to attend carefully to the pragmatics of utterance-meaning has created two difficulties for Grice's analysis. As the analysis has been elaborated in response to increasingly complex cases involving staged or arranged evidence it has seemed to some theorists that there is no real limit to the possibility of producing such counter-examples and, so, no limit to a potential regress of reflexive speaker-intentions (Black, 1975, pp. 117-18 & 1137-38; Recanati, 1987, pp. 191-207; Schiffer, 1972, pp. 18-26; Strawson, 1964, p. 447). Grice has expressed concern over this possibility but doubts whether it is either substantial or dangerous (Grice, 1969, pp. 156-58; Grice, 1989, pp. 96-100). The second difficulty is that in the absence of a satisfying account of the pragmatics of utterance-meaning, Grice's analysis seems to be a radically *ad hoc* construction which does not reflect what goes on when persons communicate with one another (Avramides, 1989, p. p. 14; Black, 1975, p. 118; Evans & McDowell, 1976, pp. xix-xxiii; Grandy & Warner, 1986, 8-13; MacKay, 1972, p. 60). Both problems can be resolved within an account that explains in practical terms how the essentials of utterance-meaning work to provide addressees with reason to respond as primarily intended.

I have been arguing that as we contemplate the possibility of developing "pure theories" of argumentation, we should avoid approaches so rarefied that they neglect the pragmatic constitution of the intentional acts that comprise the activity of arguing. Of course, nothing in my argument should discourage efforts to develop a philosophy of argument. On the contrary, the preceding reflections open questions a philosophy of argument ought to address and with far more care than is possible in this brief response. Is argumentation properly classed as an activity? Must an account of argumentation examine such intentional acts as showing, testifying, asserting, etc. or can pure theories of argument focus exclusively on the product of such acts?

How are argumentation theorists to treat the pragmatic nature of intentional argumentative acts? I have pointed to answers to these questions that bear on how we ought to approach a pure study of argumentation. But I certainly have not answered them satisfactorily, and that fact counts in favor of the research directions suggested by Groarke.

Nor have I tried to suggest that students of argumentation should avoid “pure” theorizing in the sense of studies which are relatively unconcerned with teaching students to produce adequate arguments, improve the conduct of argumentation in public settings, etc. The activity of arguing holds an interest for scholars that can and ought to be pursued without constant concern for the practical application to how arguments are conducted in the world at large. My only concern here has been to warn against the possibility that, as philosophers heed Professor Groarke’s excellent call for a philosophy of argument, they not yield to the temptation to produce theories so pure that they fail to illuminate the practical constitution of arguing.

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