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On the Objectivity of Norms of Argumentation

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Abstract: This paper addresses the relationship between norms of reasoning and norms of politeness: To what extent can one be polite and reasonable at the same time? For this purpose, a normative system of reasoning (i.e. the model of the pragma-dialectical critical discussion) is contrasted with normative systems of politeness (Leech's Politeness Maxims and Brown/Levinson's FTA avoidance). If and when they are in conflict: How can the communicator solve this tension?

Keywords: argumentation, communicative norms, maxims, objectivity, politeness, reasonableness

1. Introduction

In his landmark work on politeness theory Geoffrey Leech presents two formulations of his politeness principle: "Minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs" and "Maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs" (Leech 1983, p. 81; similarly, Leech 2014, p. 35; pp. 90ff.). He goes on to divide this principle into six (1983 version) respectively ten (2007/2014 version) maxims that explain how one achieves the maximization or minimization of these expressions.

In this paper I will take a closer look at the too easily disregarded *ceteris paribus* clause that opens Leech's definition of the politeness principle and that – explicitly or implicitly – underlies a large number of other communicative imperatives. Everything else being equal, communicators are well advised in following a large number of communicative principles or maxims: Be polite! – Reduce the threat to other people's face, and maintain communicative concord. Be funny! – Bring happiness and mirth to people, take tragedy out of human life and help us see underappreciated connections in language and life. Be flirtatious! – Fulfill your desires in life, find love and partnership and ultimately even foster evolutionary goals. Be ironic! – Take some of the dullness out of proper communication, and stimulate thinking and conversations by making language less binary. Be reasonable! – Maximize the likelihood to resolve differences of opinion on their merits, and reach lasting agreement on standpoints. Be persuasive! – Get your will, succeed and lead people in the direction you know or believe to be advantageous. The list goes on.

Taken individually each of these imperatives has a lot to commend itself. But what happens when things aren't equal and two or more of these imperatives clash? Some of the problems that can arise out of the tension or interaction between the guiding imperatives (and the academic disciplines that tag along with them: politeness theory, humor studies, courtship studies, stylistics, dialectics, rhetoric) have already received ample scholarly attention. This is particularly true for example for the interaction between humor and politeness or courtship and humor (e.g. Dynel 2016; Haugh 2011; Holmes and Schnurr 2005; Matthews, Hancock and Dunham 2006). Conflicts involving norms of reasonableness seem to have received less attention

– with one exception: The tension arising between norms of reasonableness as understood by the pragma-dialectical school and the rhetorical aim to be persuasive has been studied at great length and with impressive attention to detail (albeit mainly from a dialectical perspective) under the heading of “strategic maneuvering” (van Eemeren 2010; van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002a; van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002b). In this paper I will focus mainly on a different potential conflict: That between norms of politeness and norms of reasonableness. Simply put: Is it reasonable to be polite?¹ Or, is it polite to be reasonable? Alternatively, and slightly more technically: Under what conditions can norms of politeness and norms of reasonableness conflict, and what options do individual communicators have to avoid, minimize or resolve these conflicts? For the purposes of this paper I will use the ten commandments of the pragma-dialectical school, as a representative formulation of the rules of communicative reasonableness, and Leech’s ten maxims as their counterpart for communicative politeness.

Unfortunately, the nature of communicative rules, norms, imperatives and maxims is highly ambiguous.² I have no intention of making a meaningful contribution to a general theory of normativity in communication (or even to give an overview over existing theories) at this time, but I believe that some working definitions of the different kinds of communicative rules are required for the purposes of this paper. Similarly, a number of preliminary remarks on the choice of rules are in order to avoid misunderstandings. From this follows the structure of the body of this paper. In the first part I will address the methodological framework, including the different levels of rules in communication, and explain the choice of Leech’s model and the pragma-dialectical model for the purposes of this study. In part two I will draw attention to the different modes of interaction of competing communicative imperatives in general. Part three is focused on areas of potential conflict of the specific sets of communicative imperatives (politeness and reasonableness) at hand. Finally, in part four I will address strategies or options of dealing with inter-norm conflict where it arises.

2. Rules in communication

The status of different kinds of communicative rules continues to be a rich source of criticism and misunderstanding. To avoid some of these in this paper I will introduce a working definition of three levels of rules in communicative disciplines. Each of these working definitions will be open to a variety of theoretical objections and they leave a large grey area between them, but I believe the resulting terminology will be of use for the discussion of politeness and reasonableness below.

Authors in politeness theory, argumentation theory, and related disciplines, frequently refer to one of three (different, but interrelated and overlapping) phenomena when using language that involves “rules” and related terms (“norms”, “maxims”, “principles”, “imperatives”): 1. Normal behavior, 2. Strategic advice, and 3. Constitutive norms. In this paper I will refer to them as level 1 rules, level 2 rules and level 3 rules:

¹ This question is almost identical to the title of a 1993 paper, but the author takes it into a very different direction (Kingwell 1993).

² Leech’s model of politeness gives a particularly good illustration of the perceived problems of the term “maxim”. After introducing six maxims in his 1983 model (Leech 1983, pp. 131ff.), Leech is repeatedly criticized for the prescriptive nature they imply, to a point that he eliminates the term in his 2007 version of the model, substituting it by “constraint” (Leech 2007, p. 182). In 2014 he returns to “maxim” acknowledging the problem, but realizing that there is no easy alternative. (Leech 2014, p. 85)

Level 1 rules describe recurring or normal communicative behavior. It could be argued that using normative language for phenomena of this kind is a mistake in the first place, but if so, it is a frequently recurring mistake. Some rules of societal etiquette fall under these groups of rules, as well as for example, dress codes (in western societies women tend to wear skirts more frequently than men do) or rules of ritualized communication.

Level 2 rules give strategic advice to communicators who strive for a particular goal. Most rhetorical rules are of this nature. The key quality of these rules is their dependence on a higher objective.³ The communicator will often be well advised to follow these rules, but is also at liberty to reach his or her objective while violating these rules without any consequence for the overarching goal.

Level 3 rules are absolute norms, that are not strategically goal-dependent and define the communicative activity. Breaking these rules makes achieving their constitutive aim impossible.⁴ Accordingly, communicators are expected to follow these rules while looking for strategies to achieve their objective, rather than considering these rules a general advice that can be overridden by better strategies in a given case.

The purpose of distinguishing between these levels is not an attempt to create watertight categories for communicative rules, but rather to clarify the vocabulary for some necessary distinctions here. Linking a particular set of rules to either of the above levels is frequently anything but trivial. Two examples that are closely relevant for the present paper can be used to illustrate this: 1. Grice's Cooperative Principle including his four maxims (Grice 1975) that is of central importance for early models of politeness (e.g. Lakoff 1973; Brown and Levinson 1978; Brown and Levinson 1987; Leech 1983), and 2. the pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion.

Grice's famous cooperative principle is a particularly interesting case in point regarding levels of rules. It has been so frequently misinterpreted as a set of level 2 rules for effective communication, or even as a set of level 3 rules of ethical principles of communication. Admittedly, Grice is probably partially to blame for some of these misunderstandings. His formulation of the principle as an imperative ("*Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.*" 1975, p. 45), his explicit reference to Kant (1975, p. 45), and his wording of the "maxims", all might lead some readers to infer that they are dealing with level 2 or level 3 rules. It takes a closer reading to catch the explicit clarifications in Grice that the cooperative principle and its maxims are indeed an example of level 1 rules. He writes "*These analogies are relevant to what I regard as a fundamental question about the CP and its attendant maxims, [...], that talkers will in general (ceteris paribus and in the absence of indications to the contrary) proceed in the manner that these principles prescribe.*" (Grice 1975, pp. 47f.). The cooperative principle thus describes how communicators usually *do* act, not how they *should* act.⁵ And after all, this descriptive nature of the cooperative principle is what gives it its considerable value for the reconstruction of unexpressed premises in argumentative discourse.

³ In Kant's terminology these are hypothetical imperatives (Kant 2012, 414:4ff.). While I do not think that his distinction between hypothetical and categorical imperatives is useful for the present purposes, some of the distinctions overlap.

⁴ These rules largely coincide with Searle's description of "constitutive rules" (Searle 1969, pp. 33-41), while his "regulative rules" do not neatly fit into the present distinctions. Risking a certain amount of oversimplification one could also draw a parallel from the ethical realm between level 2 utilitarian rules and level 3 deontological rules.

⁵ In Leech's words, who also provides one of the most eloquent and concise discussions of the misunderstanding (Leech 2014, pp. 310-313) "It was the *logic* of conversation, not the *ethics* of conversation, that interested [Grice]."

Given that Leech explicitly postulates a parallel rank of his politeness principle and maxims to Grice's cooperative principle and maxims, understanding Grice as a level 1 example will become relevant below again.

The second case in point, the pragma-dialectical rules for a critical discussion are even harder to grasp in terms of their level of communicative rules. It is of course impossible to do full justice to a model that has triggered hundreds (if not thousands) of books and articles discussing its details. However, for the present purposes a brief discussion of the location of its rules on the outlined scale is essential, because it influences the way in which they can conflict with other sets of rules. The representative formulation for the present purpose is the "code of conduct for reasonable discussants" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, pp. 187-196). At first glance there are a couple of indicators in favor of treating the "ten commandments for reasonable discussants" as a set of level 3 rules. First, the name itself and its (tongue in cheek) reference to the single most famous level 3 rules in western civilization could be taken as an indicator of its kind.⁶ Second, and more importantly, the wording of the commandments themselves suggest a categorical nature. Finally, the fact that the communicative activity itself (the critical discussion) is defined by the adherence to the rules, and that any violation is treated as an (objectionable) fallacy (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, p. 22; van Eemeren et al. 2014, pp. 544ff.) points towards the constitutive nature of these rules. There are however stronger indicators for understanding the pragma-dialectical rules as a kind of goal-dependent strategic advice. Van Eemeren and his collaborators make it redundantly clear that they consider the pragma-dialectical rules as *instrumental* for the resolution of a difference of opinion on its merits, or to "play the game effectively, and they are to be judged for their capacity to serve this purpose well [...] (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, p. 187), a quality that they call "problem validity" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, p. 17, p. 22, p. 57, p. 132, p. 134, p. 187; van Eemeren 2015, pp. 129ff.; van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2015b, pp. 164ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009, pp. 20ff; van Eemeren et al. 2014, pp. 192ff. and 527ff.). The kind of instrumentality found in the pragma-dialectical rules is quite different from other instrumental advice, such as classical rhetorical rules. Individual communicators can violate rhetorical rules (such as "put your strongest argument first, your second strongest last and your weakest in the middle of a speech") in order to reach their goal without any notable repercussions. The same cannot presumably be said of an arguer who violates the ten commandments in order to reach a resolution of a difference of opinion more effectively. (comp. also van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2015a, pp. 120ff.). If one were to draw a parallel between the realm of communicative imperatives and ethical imperatives, rhetorical rules could thus be considered the functional equivalent of act-utilitarian principles and pragma-dialectical rules could be the equivalent of rule-utilitarianism (see also van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, pp. 187f.). The case of pragma-dialectics is unfortunately even further complicated by a final aspect. In pointing out that their rules are not only problem-valid, but also conventionally valid and (up to a point) habitually used by ordinary arguers (an aspect that has drawn considerable attention in the empirical research branch of pragma-dialectics; comp. van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, p. 17, p. 22, p. 57, p. 132, p. 134, p. 187; van Eemeren et al. 2014, pp. 573-581; van Eemeren, Meuffels and Verburg 2000, pp. 416ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2007, pp. 367ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009, pp. 51ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2015a, pp. 757ff; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2012a pp. 33ff. / 2015b, pp. 771ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and

⁶ As observed in the case of Grice above it is of course dangerous to put too much weight on these kinds of figurative or ironic references.

Meuffels 2015c, pp. 793ff., Garssen 2008, pp. 66ff.) van Eemeren and his team treat them at least partially as level 1 rules that describe normal communicative reality. This aspect does not seem to be the dominant quality of the pragma-dialectical system however.⁷

3. The choice of representative rules and disclaimers

Distinguishing between the three levels of communicative rules above, now allows us to address the question of choosing the right set of rules representing reasonableness and politeness for the purpose of analyzing their potential areas of conflict. Two aspects are of primary importance for this choice: 1) the level of the rule set, and 2) the representativeness and theoretical sophistication of the model for the field.

It is clear from the above outline that only models that broadly fall into the level 2 or level 3 groups are of interest for the present purpose, because, only these can create a conflict for a communicator who is trying to reach a particular goal or follow a normative code. Conflicts between level 1 rules can not create a problem for practical communicators. At best they can be a challenge for the communication analyst who needs to embed additional aspects in his or her model. Because level 1 rules describe how communicators *do* in practice act, rather than how they *should* act, their conflict (where it is possible at all) describes a theoretical deficit in a communication model, not a set of incompatible practical imperatives.

The guiding question of this paper (Under what conditions can norms of politeness and norms of reasonableness conflict, and what options do individual communicators have to avoid, minimize or resolve these conflicts?) would principally allow the exemplary analysis of any set of two norms of reasonableness and politeness that are available. One might argue however, that the practical relevance of this analysis is significantly influenced by representativeness and quality of the chosen models. If the models in question only poorly represent the ideas of politeness and reasonableness or have long been discredited, then showing yet another problem in their practical usage might be futile, and lead to a straw man fallacy against the respective discipline. Accordingly, I will briefly justify my choice of both models in the light of the first restraint above.

Since its beginning in the early 1970s politeness theory has become a vibrant academic field with its own journal, thousands of scholarly works (Watts already lists more than a thousand in 2003, Watts 2003, p. xi) and more than a dozen influential theories and models. The key figures of politeness studies, including Robin Lakoff (1973, 1989, 2005, also Lakoff and Ide 2005), Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1978 and 1987, also Brown 2001), Geoffrey Leech (1983), Yueguo Gu (1990), Sachiko Ide (1982 and 1989), Bruce Fraser and William Nolen (1981, also Fraser 1990 and 2005), Watts (1989, 1992, 2003), Gino Eelen (2001), Sara Mills (2003), Miriam Locher (2004, also Locher and Watts 2005), and Dániel Kádár and Michael Haugh (2013, also Haugh 2014) each left a distinctive mark on the field, and many of the produced alternative politeness models that could be used.⁸ Of these arguably the most famous and most influential are Lakoff's pioneering work (1973) that drew attention to the field, Brown and Levinson's Gricean approach that put the Goffman's concept of "face" (Goffman

⁷ See for example van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels' explicit clarification (2015a, p. 757): "[The extended pragma-dialectical argumentation theory] is not an empirical model of the various ways in which ordinary arguers try to achieve effective persuasion within the boundaries of dialectical rationality."

⁸ A historical overview over recent developments in politeness theory can be found in Eelen (2001, pp. 1-20), Watts (2005, pp. xi-xlvii), Hoppmann (2008, pp. 826-836) and Leech (2014, pp. 32-43).

1967) and so-called “face threatening acts / FTAs” at its center, and Leech’s equally Gricean model of six maxims (1983). These three (groups of) authors also happen to be the only ones that offer clear models of politeness that aspire to universal validity and which are formulated in the form of level 2 rules. In the case of Lakoff these are three general rules, Brown and Levinson offer 40 strategies of how to deal with face threatening acts and five main categories of FTA interaction, and Leech postulates a politeness principle (PP) parallel to Grice’s cooperative principle (CP), broken down into six maxims. The more recent studies of politeness shift their attention away from formulating universal models with level 2 rules and onto criticism of the early three, the focus on one particular aspect of politeness (gender, culture, impoliteness, etc.) or empirical studies of polite behavior. Of the three, Lakoff’s model is not sufficiently detailed (or influential) for the present paper. Brown and Levinson’s model is a tempting candidate, given its huge influence on the field, but also the strikingly easy juxtaposition of its “strategies” (e.g. strategy II, 6: “Avoid disagreement”, pp. 113ff., strategy IV, 7 “Use contradictions”, p. 221, or strategy IV, 11 “Be ambiguous”, p. 225) to rules of reasonableness. At the same time, it is also one of the most heavily criticized and probably slightly outdated model. In this paper I will use Leech’s work which is not only one of the pioneering models, but also, one of the most recently updated theories. His 2014 model presents the far most modern theory of scale that is formulated in level 2 rules. His own positioning of the politeness principle to Grice’s cooperative principle (which as observed above is a level 1 rule set that would make Leech’s model also a level 1 rule set, thereby disqualifying it for the present purposes) is a challenge. This challenge can be briefly addressed in two points: First, as Huang observed (Huang 2007, pp. 37ff.; similar Hoppmann 2008, pp. 831f.) the parallel position of the PP and CP is theoretically highly doubtful (a critique that Leech explicitly addresses, but IMHO does not ultimately answer, Leech 2014, p. 86). Second, *even if*, the PP partially function as a level 1 rule, its ten maxims (in the 2014 version) can certainly *also* be read as an instrumental advice for the practical communicator who strives to be polite.

Compared to the choice of representative politeness model, the selection of its counterpart in argumentation theory is relatively trivial. The pragma-dialectical model of the critical discussion has been so hugely influential in recent argumentation theory, that it far overshadows potential alternatives in earlier formal dialectics, or more recent other branches of normative pragmatics or informal logic. Within pragma-dialectics the “ten commandments” seem to be more appropriate for the present purpose than the “fifteen rules”, due to: their stronger focus on the practical communicator, their more normative formulation, and their greater simplicity and economy. This choice is of course ultimately of little relevance as the content of both sets of rules is theoretically equivalent.

Given the structure of the fields involved one final paragraph on methodological question seems in order. The pragma-dialectical model has been studied with an extreme level of sophistication, and work on its varying aspects, fields, perspectives, realms etc. are legion. Modern works on politeness theory frequently consist of more than fifty percent criticism of earlier oversimplifications, terminological and methodological clarifications, procedural disclaimer and limitations, and the like. In the context of the present paper, even enumerating (let alone addressing or replicating) these disclaimers would more than double its size. I will therefore limit myself to a meta-disclaimer: Yes, there are many limitations in the scope and representativeness of the models and the aspects discussed (regarding the Anglo-centric nature of Leech’s model, gender, class and culture variations of polite behavior, the differences between non-polite and impolite behavior, the scalar nature of politeness, the phenomenon of over-

politeness etc. pp.), but these limitations should not distract from the fascinating question at hand: what happens when communicative norms clash?

4. Interaction of competing communicative norms

Any set of communicative imperatives can interact with another in a variety of ways. Three aspects of this field of potential interactions are particularly noteworthy: 1) the influence of permissiveness and prescriptiveness of rules on rule set interaction, 2) the difference between minimum fulfillments of rule requirements and their ideal maximization, and 3) the graph of potential rule interaction in communicative behaviors.

When looking at the interaction of communicative rule sets, it is important to distinguish between permissive and prescriptive rules. Permissive rules ('may', 'do not have to') of one rule set cannot clash with other (permissive or prescriptive) rules of the same or a different set. Their *spirit* may well be in conflict with other rules (e.g. of a rule of "Discussant may always challenge each others opinions" with another "S must avoid challenging the opinion of O."), but by following the prescriptive rule the communicator can – strictly speaking – avoid breaking either imperative. This might nevertheless lead to contra productive effects for the aim for which the specified rule was instrumental. Prescriptive rules ('must', 'may not') on the other hand are more prone to produce inter-set conflicts. When analyzing the interaction between any two sets of communicative rules, prescriptive rules are therefore of principle interest.

Beyond the distinction between permissive and prescriptive groups, communicative rules can also be differentiated based on their absolute or scalar quality. While some rules ban, permit or prescribe a particular (more or less precisely defined) communicative behavior, others instruct the communicator to strive for a particular ideal or to maximize a certain aspect. Of the sets in question, the pragma-dialectical rules fall mostly into the former class,⁹ whereas Leech's maxims occupy a curious position in this regard. While ostensibly mostly similar in content, the 1983 version of his maxims is phrased in the latter form (e.g. "Agreement maxim: Minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other", Leech 1983, p. 132),¹⁰ whereas the 2014 version is phrased in the former form (e.g. "(M7) Give high value to O's opinions (Agreement maxim)", Leech 2014, p. 96), but the explanation of the rules maintains a spirit of maximization. With regards to the potential areas of conflict, this distinction is important, because maximization rules give rise to the danger of creating straw men or near straw men by contrasting utopic maxima rather than realistically attainable optima. This is particularly evident for rules such as Brown and Levinson's. If one was to understand their "Be vague" strategy (1987, p. 226) as an appeal to maximize vagueness in communication for example, then just about any argumentative rule might easily clash with this norm.

Finally, it is important to note that any interaction between two sets of communicative norms produce a two-dimensional graph with four quadrants, each of which may be interesting for different purposes. Communicative behavior in the tension of reasonableness and politeness can thus always be portrayed on the following graph:

⁹ Although the pragma-dialectical model refers to the "ideal" of a critical discussion, van Eemeren & Grootendorst make it very clear (e.g. van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, pp. 187ff.) that they are to be understood as simple first order rules that work as "well-defined guidelines", not "striving for an unattainable utopia" (2004, p. 188). Beyond that the semantic structure of the rules and the commandments is very clear in that regard.

¹⁰ Leech (1983, p. 132) clarifies that this phrasing is shorthand for "Minimize the expression of beliefs which express or imply [disagreement between self and other]", but this explanation is of no consequence for the point at hand.

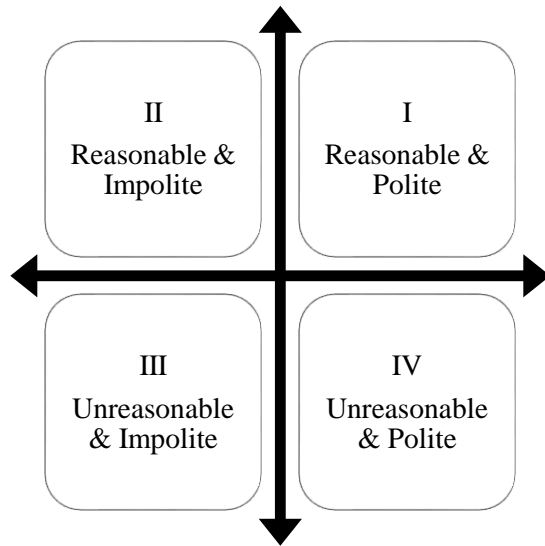


Figure 1: The four quadrants of polite and reasonable communicative behavior

For the present purpose quadrants II and IV are of particular interest. For other studies, quadrants I and III might be the most important, for example when trying to analyze level 1 rule behavior of participants in an empirical study, and whether their perception of a communicative act as problematic is based on their understanding of reasonableness or politeness. (e.g. van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2007, pp. 371f.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009, pp. 70ff.).

5. Politeness according to Leech vs reasonableness according to Pragma-Dialectics

One important quality that Leech's maxims and the ten commandments of the pragma-dialectical school have in common is that they both constitute first-order conditions for achieving their goals (maintaining communicative concord and solving differences of opinion in a reasonable way respectively). While conflicts between first-order conditions of competing communicative norm sets are the most tangible and presumably open to the clearest analyses, second-order and third-order conditions are certainly capable of clashing as well, and even likely to do so in the case of politeness and reasonableness (comp. Barth and Krabbe 1982, p. 75; van Eemeren et al. 1993, pp. 30-34; van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, pp. 187-190). The ideal mindset for preserving communicative concord is likely to be different from those who strive to solve a difference of opinion on its merits; and attempting to attain one, might occasionally conflict with attaining the other. Similarly, ideal societal conditions for communicating politely are probably at least partially different from their critical argumentative counterpart. For the present purposes I will focus on exemplifying some of the areas of potential conflict in the first-order conditions, being well aware that even this field is already too large to be satisfactorily covered in a single paper.

In his most recent explanation of the politeness principle Geoffrey Leech provides a list of ten maxims with their respective brief imperative summary as follows (Leech 2014, pp. 90-98; comp. also Leech 2007, pp. 182-189):

- M1. Generosity: *Give a high value to O's wants*
- M2. Tact: *Give a low value to S' wants*

- M3. Approbation: *Give a high value to O's qualities*
- M4. Modesty: *Give a low value to S's qualities*
- M5. Obligation (of S to O): *Give a high value to S's obligation to O*
- M6. Obligation (of O to S): *Give a low value to O's obligation to S*
- M7. Agreement: *Give a high value to O's opinions*
- M8. Opinion reticence: *Give a low value to S's opinions*
- M9. Sympathy: *Give a high value to O's feelings*
- M10. Feeling reticence: *Give a low value to S's feelings*

Leech observes that these maxims can under certain conditions lead to intra-set conflicts, for example when two communicators argue over who should pay the bill in a restaurant (politeness here may mandate to violate the agreement maxim in favor of following the generosity maxim). These cases are interesting, but for the present purposes relatively trivial, as they can usually be solved based on additional pragmatic knowledge and cultural preferences, as aptly illustrated by Leech himself (Leech 2014, pp. 101-103).

Van Eemeren and Grootendorst offer an introduction and detailed explanation of their code of conduct for reasonable discussants centered around their ten commandments in *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation* (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, pp. 187-196). Van Eemeren and his team also provide an overview of how the rules of the critical discussion can be broken by practical communicators in a later work (van Eemeren et al. 2014, pp. 544-552). In the 2004 version the ten commandments are stated as follows (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004, pp. 190-196):

1. Freedom rule: *Discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from calling standpoints into question.*
2. Obligation-to-defend rule: *Discussants who advance a standpoint may not refuse to defend this standpoint when requested to do so.*
3. Standpoint rule: *Attacks on standpoints may not bear on a standpoint that has not actually been put forward by the other party.*
4. Relevance rule: *Standpoints may not be defended by non-argumentation or argumentation that is not relevant to the standpoint.*
5. Unexpressed-premise rule: *Discussants may not falsely attribute unexpressed premises to the other party, nor disown responsibility for their own unexpressed premises.*
6. Starting-point rule: *Discussants may not falsely present something as an accepted starting point or falsely deny that something is an accepted starting point.*
7. Validity rule: *Reasoning that in an argumentation is presented as formally conclusive may not be invalid in a logical sense.*
8. Argument scheme rule: *Standpoints may not be regarded as conclusively defended by argumentation that is not presented as based on formally conclusive reasoning if the defense does not take place by means of appropriate argument schemes that are applied correctly.*
9. Concluding rule: *Inconclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintaining these standpoints, and conclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintaining expressions of doubt concerning these standpoints.*

10. Language use rule: *Discussants may not use any formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous, and they may not deliberately misinterpret the other party's formulations.*

Compared to Leech's maxims, in the pragma-dialectical system it is harder to see, under what conditions these commandments could internally conflict with each other, and I am not aware of the existence of any previous work on this question. For the present purposes it will be safe to assume that (as in Leech) intra-set conflict is not an essential problem.

Contrasting the two sets of communicative rules with each other produces the following table. Each of the cells (or groups of cells) in this table indicates a potential area of conflict between imperatives of politeness and reasonableness, as understood by Leech and Pragma-Dialectics. In the final part of this analysis I will draw attention to a select few of these areas. It goes without saying that this selection makes no claim to completeness, although a full analysis of all areas of conflict would be an academic desideratum. For ease of reference each cell is numbered.

	C1: Freedom rule	C2: Obligation-to-defend rule	C3: Standpoint rule	C4: Relevance rule	C5: Unexpressed-premise rule	C6: Starting-point rule	C7: Validity rule	C8: Argument scheme rule	C9: Concluding rule	C10: Language use rule
M1: Generosity	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10
M2: Tact	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	20
M3: Approbation	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	30
M4: Modesty	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	40
M5: Obligation (of S to O)	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	50
M6: Obligation (of O to S)	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	60
M7: Agreement	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	70
M8: Opinion reticence	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	80
M9: Sympathy	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	90
M10: Feeling reticence	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	00

Figure 2: Areas of interaction of pragma-dialectical rules and Leech's maxims

Leech's treatment of his maxims (both in 2007 and 2014) does not offer the same preciseness as the pragma-dialectical rules, and beyond his actual phrasing of the maxims he relies mostly on examples to specify them. Nevertheless, there are a couple of relationships between maxims and commandments that seem to carry a high potential for conflict in practical communication. These include: a) cells 31 & 71, b) cells 22, 62, and 20, c) cells 78, 79, 88, and 89. These are just interesting examples, and far from an exhaustive list. Exhaustiveness at this stage is not only prevented by the scope of this paper, but also by the fact that (in opposition to the pragma-dialectical rules), Leech explicitly does not claim completeness of his maxims, although one can be reasonably safe in assuming that he has been striving for at least approaching completeness in the three decades of working on and expanding his model (comp. Leech 2014, 98).

Taking a look at the table above, it does not come as a surprise that potential conflicts in some regions of the table are easier to identify than in others. Maxims 9 and 10 for example deal primarily with the communicators' feelings and are easier to satisfy in a critical discussion than those dealing with clarity and obligations.

Let us now take a closer look at the three groups of cells and areas of potential conflict mentioned above:

a) Cells 31 & 71

At face value neither the approbation maxim (Give a high value to O's qualities) nor the agreement maxim (Give a high value to O's opinions) seems to clash with the freedom rule (Discussants may not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from calling standpoints into question). On the contrary, paying a high communicative respect to one's interlocutor seems even to encourage keeping in line with the freedom rule. This perspective however, ignores that the purpose of installing this rule is to prevent the exclusion of new standpoints and criticism that may be instrumental for the further development of the resolution of the difference of opinion. Such a prevention cannot just come from the conversational antagonist¹¹ (O in Leech's terminology), but also from the protagonist (S). Maxims 3 and 7 strongly suggest such prevention and thus call for self-censorship that undermines the goals of a critical discussion.

b) Cells 22, 62, and 20

The two maxims of tact (Give a low value to S' wants) and obligation of O to S (Give a low value to O's obligation to S) stand at a similar tension to the obligation-to-defend rule (Discussants who advance a standpoint may not refuse to defend this standpoint when requested to do so) as approbation and agreement to the freedom rule above. Once again at face value there is no clash. The protagonist can maintain a high level of deference to the antagonist while maintaining his or her argumentative obligations. But once again, the purpose of this commandment is also undermined by the two maxims inasmuch as they require the protagonist to refrain from requesting a defense. Leech explains the tact maxim as follows: "*For example, requests are often indirect, tentative, giving an opportunity to refuse, and also softening, or mitigating, S's imposition on H*" (Leech 2014, p. 93). It is this softening and invitation to refuse a request that runs counter to the purpose of the obligation-to-defend rule. A similar effect can be observed for cell 20. The indirectness and tentativeness demanded by the tact maxim can easily get into conflict with the clarity and unambiguity demanded by the language use rule (Discussants may not use any formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous, and they may not deliberately misinterpret the other party's formulations.)

¹¹ I have to take a liberty with the terms "protagonist" and "antagonist" for the purposes of this discussion. They are here primarily meant to refer to party A (e.g. the party that requests a clarification) and party B (e.g. the party that provides this clarification). I believe that this wording is clearer than available alternatives.

c) Cells 78, 79, 88, and 89

The final group to be addressed here contains the cells that stand at the intersection of the two opinion maxims, agreement (Give a high value to O's opinions) and opinion reticence (Give a low value to S's opinions), with the argument scheme rule (Standpoints may not be regarded as conclusively defended by argumentation that is not presented as based on formally conclusive reasoning, if the defense does not take place by means of appropriate argument schemes that are applied correctly) and the concluding rule (Inconclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintaining these standpoints, and conclusive defenses of standpoints may not lead to maintaining expressions of doubt concerning these standpoints). The two opinion maxims instruct the communicator to minimize the disagreement with his or her interlocutor. In Leech's words: "*In responding to other's opinions or judgments, agreement is the preferred response and disagreement is dispreferred*" (Leech 2014, p. 96) and "*In other cases, S consults H's opinion, deferring to H's supposed greater understanding, wisdom, or experience*" (Leech 2014, p. 97). This deference creates a communicative asymmetry that is harmful for cooperatively judging the value of an argument or argumentation on its merits as required by the eighth and ninth commandment.

Beyond these observations on the *presence* of some potential areas of conflict between Leech's maxims and the pragma-dialectical commandments, a final note on the *absence* of other is in order. As noted above, while Leech's model seems to be the best representative of modern politeness norms, contrasting the rules of the critical discussion with Brown and Levinson's model would have led to more stark results. Many of their "off record" strategies such as "Use contradictions", "Be ambiguous", "Be vague", or "Be incomplete", "use ellipsis", encourage one form of ambiguity or the other, and stand in contradictory opposition to the tenth commandment. Ambiguity, while multiple times being hinted at, is not one of the explicit maxims of Leech.

6. Dealing with potential areas of inter-norm conflict

In the last section of this paper I want to briefly look at the options of a communicator when confronted with a potential conflict between: competing communicative norms in general, and the imperatives of politeness and reasonableness in particular. These remarks will take the form of a cursory outlook rather than a detailed analysis.¹²

The evident first option of polite and reasonable communicators is to minimize the conflict when or before it arises. The main strategy for this option is the abovementioned prioritization of prescriptive over permissive rules. While this strategy severely reduces the liberty of the communicator (now following two sets of prescriptive rules and their limitations rather than one set of prescriptive and permissive rules), it also significantly reduces the area of potential conflict of first-order conditions. As observed above, this strategy might come at the price of defeating some of the aims of the rules.

The second – and just as evident – option of the communicator at this tension is the prioritization of his or her communicative goals. If the serving two lords at the same time leads to contradictory orders, one is well advised to declare primary loyalty to one camp. However, in practice this choice might come at a high price and even ultimately undermine some of the purpose of the preferred goal. An overt lack of politeness might be harmful for the aim of

¹² The nature of this question is similar to that of how to respond to a fallacy in a practical discussion. Unfortunately, the options that are available then, such as initiating a meta-dialogue or an apparent counter-fallacy (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2015c, pp. 635-639), are no options in the present dilemma.

cooperatively spirited critical discussion and an unreasonable display of politeness might appear as obsequiousness rather than civility.

Third, in the presence of an audience and with an ultimate rhetorical goal in mind, a communicator might choose to outsource some of his or her choices to the (anticipated or observed) preferences of that audience. In the public sphere the conflict between behaving communicatively polite or reasonable will often ultimately boil down to the desire of being *perceived* as behaving polite or reasonable. If this is the case then the priority of the norms is not an intrinsic or agent driven question, but one of audience preference. On the larger scheme of things and in the metaphor above this of course ultimately amounts to declaring allegiance to neither of the lords of politeness or of reasonableness, but to the overlord of persuasion.

The final potential option comes in the form of an open question: Is it possible to explicitly address a conflict between the imperatives of politeness and reasonableness in a practical conversation? Or, to be more precise: Can it be *productive* to do so? Of course there are frequent examples of communicators explicitly addressing this conflict “Civility prevents me from stating my opinion on your standpoint, sir!”, but most of these seem to make little contribution to either the politeness *or* the reasonableness of the discourse, but rather are employed as stylistic devices. In the area of the rhetorical analysis of an inter-norm conflict between legal, moral or religious norm systems (i.e. stasis theory), justifying breaking one rule set with reference to the prescriptive demands of another rule set is known as equity defense: Is there an equity defense for being impolite or unreasonable?

7. Conclusion

Of course no one needs to be outright rude to be reasonable, nor does anyone need to be foolishly inconsistent in order to be polite, but politeness and reasonableness stand in a relationship of tension when applied to practical communication. In this paper I have tried to shed some light onto this tension by: taking a closer look at three distinct levels of communicative rules and how they can clash with each other, selecting two sets of representative rules (Leech’s ten maxims for politeness and the pragma-dialectical rules for reasonableness), and identifying how the first-order conditions expressed in these rule sets can contradict each other or the aims for which they are instrumental. I have paid particular attention to three exemplary areas of inter-norm conflict and briefly addressed how communicators that are caught up in these conflicts can deal with them.

The maxims of politeness are not the only communicative rules that can conflict with the norms of reasonableness. The imperatives that can be generated to guide communicators who are trying to be persuasive, funny, flirtatious or ironic – too name just a few – can similarly generate a tension with the imperatives of reasonableness. Analyzing their interaction with the pragma-dialectical rules could be a valuable contribution to our understanding of the limits of reasonableness.

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