

Frans H. van Eemeren (ed.). *Examining Argumentation in Context: Fifteen studies on strategic maneuvering*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2009, 305 pp., (hb.), ISBN 9789027211187, EUR 95.00.

Janice Schuetz

Department of Communication and Journalism,
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA.
jschuetz@unm.edu

Received: 4-5-2010 **Accepted:** 7-10-2010

Argumentation theorists will welcome Frans H. van Eemeren's collection of fifteen essays on strategic maneuvering, dedicated to Peter Houtlosser with whom the editor worked for a decade to develop the theory as an extension of pragma dialectics. This collection brings together European and North American scholars whose work on strategic maneuvering enhances both its breadth of applications and its depth potential for argumentation analysis. The contents of this edited volume certify that the evolving theory of strategic maneuvering evokes interest from scholars of informal logic, rhetoric, linguistics, politics, law, and marketing. My review highlights the content of a few of these essays in order to identify promising new directions for this theory.

Chapter 1 explicates the main concepts and principles of strategic maneuvering drawn from several previously published essays by van Eemeren and Houtlosser. The essay evolves sequentially showing how the elements of this theory developed over time. (1) Grounded in pragma dialectics, the goal of the theory is to integrate the "artful effectiveness" of rhetoric with the "critical reasonableness" of dialectics. (2) The chapter explains how the topical potential, audience directed adjustments, and rhetorical stylistics intersect within an argumentative discourse during the confrontation, open-

ing, argumentation, and concluding phases of a critical discussion. (3) This theory defines the strategic elements of the maneuvering within the discourse as results achieved, routes taken, constraints imposed, and commitments made through definitions. (4) Expansions to this theory explain fallacies, such as false appeals to authority, as derailments of strategic maneuvering. (5) The aforementioned features of argument occur as part of the activity types of adjudication, mediation, negotiation, and public debate. The chapter emphasizes that understanding the context is key to the reconstruction and explication of the strategic design of argumentative discourse. Clearly this chapter's replication of previous theorizing on strategic maneuvering will assist readers in understanding how the fifteen essays of the collection relate to and elaborate existing theory.

In chapter 3, Christopher Tindale makes a useful critique and elaboration. He claims that rhetoric deserves a prominent place in strategic maneuvering because the audience participates in argument and reasonableness is a co-construction of the arguer, audience, and argument. He emphasizes the prominent role audiences play in the arguers' design of their arguments as well as in the effects they produce. Tindale distinguishes his rhetorical focus from van Eemeren and Houtlosser, claiming that rhetoric gives issues interest and prominence and it also calls attention to how audiences' experiences are relevant to arguers' intent and message design. Audiences do not just respond to arguments strategically designed by the arguers, but they aid the construction of arguments through their active participation with the arguer and their implied presence in the content. By referencing Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, Tindale notes the importance of the audience to the arguer for identifying the topical potential and for using presentational devices. Moreover, argumentation does not depend only on dialectic for its rational component. Rather rhetoric creates intersubjective reasonableness between arguer and audience without requiring compliance with a set of dialectical rules. Effectiveness, he says, is measured by the adherence of audiences to claims, which allows the audience to "bridge the divide between what is the case for me and what ought to be the case for others." Tindale's emphasis on the audience and rhetorical features as significant forces in creating reasonableness adds depth to strategic maneuvering theory.

By stressing the importance of institutional logic to argumentation pro-

cesses, C. Thomas Goodnight (chapter 5) adds breadth to strategic maneuvering. Specifically, he defines institutional logic as “symbolic and material structures that offer codes of conduct, regulatory norms, standards of research, programs of coordination, and goals for reasonable practices.” Institutional logic establishes standards that differ from dialectical and logical rules. Goodnight claims that institutional logic is not regulated by conversational norms nor effects on opinion but by the logic of the institution that embraces “state of the art standards,” and “best practices” that determine “burden of proof, presumption, and local of decision making between practitioner and client.” In this way, institutional logic illuminates the complex dialectical process of strategic maneuvering between professionals and clients in contexts that previously have received little theoretical consideration in strategic maneuvering. Accounting for institutional logic gives argumentation analysts another means of understanding both the surface and the deep structure of argumentative discourse. In addition to the provider-client interaction with health advertisements featured by Goodnight, institutional logic likely affects the strategic maneuvering in business transactions, counseling interactions, contract disputes, and policy discussions as much as it does in the general activity types described by van Eemeren and Houtlosser.

David Zarefsky (chapter 7) and Isabela Ie_cu-Fairclough (chapter 8) examine argumentation in political contexts. Both authors emphasize the role of power in political argumentation, a concept not directly addressed in strategic maneuvering. Zarefsky emphasizes the unique features of political controversies as arguments, noting that these controversies lack identifiable disputants and often involve large groups of advocates and audiences arguing about diverse political issues over long expanses of time and without obvious resolution of the disputes. Zarefsky identifies additional salient features to strategic maneuvering of political arguments, such as changing the subject, reframing arguments, and appealing to liberal and conservative presumptions. These features complicate political argumentation in ways not previously addressed by strategic maneuvering theory, by showing how political arguments deviate from the reasoning in the argument types and in the phases of critical discussion.

Ie_cu-Fairclough also focuses on power and political argument, but she examines the dilemmas arguers face when they exert power and try to le-

gitimize their argumentation for diverse audience interests. She concentrates on a single argument episode (the President of Romania defending himself against accusations from his Parliament), describes this argumentative interaction as adjudication, and identifies fallacies used by President Băsescu in defending himself from the attacks of members of the Romanian Parliament. This case study suggests theoretical extensions to strategic maneuvering. By appropriating Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of "political game" as "a double game," for example, the author claims that politicians simultaneously play a political game with adversaries at the same time they play a social game with constituents. In other words, political arguers often find themselves in a difficult position because they cannot easily represent their own political power to opposing adversaries at the same time they support the power positions and wishes of their constituents. This dilemma makes it difficult for political arguers to achieve the kind of legitimacy that Habermas views as central to public deliberation and consensus making or the kind of reasonableness associated with the dialectical rules usually connected to strategic maneuvering.

Both essays make clear how strategic maneuvering in political contexts differs from what occurs in many other types of interactions. Both Goodnight and Ieșcu-Fairclough add concepts to strategic maneuvering so that this theory can account for the complexities and power relationships between political arguers and audiences that currently fall outside of current theorizing.

For readers interested less in theory development and more in using strategic maneuvering for argumentation analysis, several chapters take one concept of strategic maneuvering and systematically apply it to examples of argumentation discourse. For example, Manfred Kienpointner emphasizes the plausible but fallacious strategies arguers sometimes use to silence their opponents in historical and contemporary national controversies. Corina Andone examines inconsistencies that take place in the confrontation stage of a critical discussion between an interviewer and a politician. Other authors suggest new concepts that refine strategic maneuvering theory, such as topic shifting, polyphonic framing, rhetorical stylistics, and persuasive effects. By embellishing and applying strategic maneuvering theory to understand incidents of argumentation, these chapters offer useful case studies for teaching this theory to students and to other argumentation theorists.

The strength of this collection is its focus on strategic maneuvering for use in argumentation analysis. Readers of this collection will learn about the evolution, complexities, extensions, and applications of this theory. This volume is so focused that even readers with little or no background in strategic maneuvering theory or in pragma dialectics can understand a great deal about this theory and its relevance to the study of argumentation. Since several of the chapters have been published separately in journals, it would be helpful for readers to know where these articles appeared prior to this publication, a statement that could be added as a pre-note or endnote to each of the articles. The late Peter Houtlosser, to whom this book is dedicated, surely would be pleased to see so many provocative essays that his work with van Eemeren has inspired from a wide range of disciplinary interests and from many European and North American authors.