

Formalizing Practical Argumentation

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Bahia Blanca, June 1998

1 Aim and topic of the course

When people face a practical problem, on what to do, believe or decide, they often engage in practical argumentation. This takes place in daily life, law, bureaucracies and organisations, etcetera. In practical argumentation (whether alone or debating with other people) arguments for and against a solution to a problem are constructed, attacked and compared, to see which solution is tenable.

The aim of this course is to give insight in the problems and prospects of formalizing practical argumentation for the purpose of AI implementation. The main source of inspiration and examples will be legal reasoning. The general structure of the course is given by a four-layered picture of practical argumentation:

- The *logical* layer, that defines the construction of arguments;
- the *dialectical* layer, that defines when arguments attack each other, and which arguments prevail;
- the *procedural* layer, that states discourse norms for entering new information into or withdrawing old information from a dispute;
- the *strategic* layer, that defines rational strategies and heuristics for conducting a dispute

A crucial difference between the first two and the last two layers is that in the first two layers the information on which the reasoning operates is fixed, while in the last two layers the information is constructed dynamically in the course of a dispute.

2 Overview of the lectures

1 Introduction

- Introduction
- Background: four layers in argumentation
- Overview of the course

Reading:

- [Prakken & Vreeswijk, 1998], Sections 1, 2 and 3

2 Logics for defeasible argumentation I. Semantics

- The idea of status assignments. Argument-based semantics in the style of Bondarenko, Dung, Kowalski and Toni, in particular how various notions of defeasible consequence can be defined.
- Partial computation (Pollock). The idea of defeasibility as arising from partial computation instead as from incomplete information.
- Reasoning about priorities (Prakken & Sartor)

Reading:

- [Prakken & Vreeswijk, 1998], Sections 4, 5.2 and 5.7

3 Logics for defeasible argumentation II. Dialectical proof theory

The idea of a defeasible proof as a dialogue game between a proponent and an opponent of a claim.

Reading:

- [Prakken & Vreeswijk, 1998], Section 6
- [Prakken, 1998].

4 AI & Law research on adversarial argumentation

Discussion of two (implemented) benchmark systems for adversarial argumentation in the legal domain.

- HYPO: a system for analogical reasoning with cases.
- CABARET: a system for combining reasoning with cases and with rules.

Reading:

- [Ashley, 1989] or (if you have time) [Ashley, 1991]
- [Skalak & Rissland, 1989]

- [Prakken & Sartor, 1998], Sections 3.1 and 3.3.

5 Formalizing adversarial reasoning with precedents

A Formal reconstruction of HYPO-style arguing with cases, in terms of Prakken & Sartor's system of defeasible argumentation.

- Analogy: inference or heuristic?
- 'Actual' dialogues: dialogues in which the set of premises is constructed dynamically, during the dialogue.

Reading:

- [Prakken & Sartor, 1998], Sections 1, 4, 5 and 6.

6 On formalizing the procedural layer

Two studies of dialectical protocols for dispute.

- Gordon's Pleading's Game: an AI model of procedural justice
- Vreeswijk on self-modifying procedures.

Reading:

- [Gordon, 1993]

- [Vreeswijk, 1996]

7 Formalizing rules of order for meetings

A discussion of a research project to add rules of order to an electronic discussion and decision making forum. Part of the project is to formalize Robert's Rules of Order, the standard rules of parliamentary procedure in the USA.

Reading:

- [Prakken & Gordon, 1998]

8 Argumentation and negotiation

Discussion of a formal model of negotiation as defeasible argumentation.

Reading:

- [Parsons *et al.*, 1998]

9 Evaluation and discussion

References

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