Competition and conflict between communicative norms

Is it reasonable to be polite?

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When engaging with each other, discussants navigate a complex set of communicative norms that aim at very different goals. Within argumentation theory naturally the most studied set of norms are those aiming at reasonableness, of which I take the pragma-dialectical rule set to be a representative example. They are however far from the only norms that guide communicative behavior. This paper offers an analysis of the areas of intersection and potential conflict of reasonableness (as understood by pragma-dialectics) with other communicative norms in general and rules of politeness (as presented by Geoffrey Leech) in particular.

Keywords: argumentation, communicative norms, critical discussion, maxims, politeness, reasonableness

1. Introduction

Since its beginning a little over thirty years ago, the pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion has been a game changer in argumentation theory. The model and its manifold theoretical offshoots have provided argument scholars with a detailed, well-founded, and sophisticatedly tested way of understanding reasonable discourse, that has been shown to be both problem-valid and conventionally valid (comp. van Eemeren et al. 2014: 573ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2007: 367ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009: 51ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2015a: 757ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2015c: 793ff.). Not the least achievement of this model is its ability to overcome the old definition of fallacy as an "argument that seems to be valid, but is not" (systematically debunked by Charles Hamblin, 1970), while avoiding the pitfalls of overly technical and logo-centric approaches or ad-hoc approaches (van Eemeren 2010: 190ff.).

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But pragma-dialectics and its definition of reasonable discourse is not the only communicative standard. When engaging in a (critical) dialogue, discussants frequently strive for additional goals beyond being reasonable and solving a difference of opinion on its merits. One of these additional goals, the rhetorical aim to be persuasive, has been addressed in detail by members of the pragma-dialectical group under the heading of "strategic maneuvering" (van Eemeren 2010; van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002a; van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002b). The resulting studies have shown, how arguers can "maintain a delicate balance" (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002a) between their interests to be reasonable and to persuade. While these studies naturally give primacy to the goal of reasonableness and could potentially benefit from a rhetorically driven counter-perspective, there is much to be said in favor of this integration of reasonableness and persuasion. However, being persuasive is not the only additional goal to which a reasonable discussant might subscribe. The communicative realm is regulated by a colorful set of additional norms that need to be acknowledged in order to capture communicative reality. Discussants might also strive to be polite, funny, ironic, flirtatious, to name just a few. Accordingly, one might entertain the thought that there could be the need for "polite maneuvering", "humorous maneuvering", "flirtatious maneuvering" and the like.[1]

In this paper I want to address in of the tensions that can arise when discussants strive to fulfill multiple communicative norms at the same time. This being an argumentation theory paper, the natural Archimedean point is the concept of reasonableness as defined in the pragma-dialectical critical discussion. Accordingly, I will first take a closer look at norms of communication in general, before concentrating on a second step, one specific area of conflict, namely that between norms of reasonableness and norms of politeness.

2. Speaking about rules and norms

In this section I need to make some preliminary remarks concerning a variety of aspects of communicative rules and norms, and clarify some terminological choices in this paper. To prevent any misunderstandings in an area that contains terminology which is hotly contested and in some disciplines meticulously distinguished, I want to make my aim absolutely clear: This is not an attempt at a unifying theory of communicative norms or a contribution to the theory of normativity

1. In practice, extending the pragma-dialectical model to accommodate every potential tension with a set of competing communicative rules and goals would not be feasible or desirable and I will not argue for such an aim in this paper.

of any kind. Rather, it is a brief remark on working definitions that strives at minimizing terminological misunderstandings. This remark seems called for because (a) the authors in the communicative disciplines concerned, use some of the key terms in quite different ways and (b) I am not aware of an established model that covers the terminological field at hand and offers a set of terminological concepts that could be applied here. To illustrate this further: (a) While some disciplines put a significant amount of thought into distinguishing for example "rules", "regulations" and "norms" (e.g. Boghossian 2015: 3ff.; Hage 2015: 13ff.), established authors in argumentation theory use the terms without discernible difference.[2] A similar case can be made for "maxims" and "strategies" (e.g. Leech 2014: 85) and other central terms referring to concepts that aim at expressing and describing the regulation of human behavior. (b) Because these concepts are so central to a number of philosophical and communicative disciplines there is a vast body of work defining and distinguishing normative terminology, including e.g. Searle's distinction between "constitutive rules" and "regulative rules" (Searle 1969: 33–41), van Eemeren's work on rule-governed behavior (van Eemeren 2010: 136), Kant's differentiation between hypothetical and categorical imperatives (Kant 2012, 414: 4ff.) or the perspectives collected in Maier 1989. Unfortunately, none of these works covers the full set of communicative norms that is required here, and as a result I cannot simply defer to any of them but need to clarify some distinctions that are useful for the remainder of this paper. These mainly concern different types of communicative norms, their relationship to sanctions, and the scope of norms in communication. Following the usage in van Eemeren et al. quoted above I will treat "rules" and "norms" mostly as synonyms for the purpose of this paper.[3]

Types of norms

The status of different types of communicative rules continues to be a rich source of criticism and misunderstanding. To avoid some of these in this paper I will

2. E.g.: Van Eemeren et al. (2014): 539: "*The critical* norms *of reasonableness authorizing the performance of speech acts in the various stages of resolving a difference of opinion on the merits are in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation depicted as* rules *for critical discussion. […] The* rules *for critical discussion […], covering all the* norms *that are pertinent to resolving a difference of opinion on the merits.* ";Ibid. 545: "*The discussion* rules *they proposed in their pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation represent the standards or general soundness* norms *for critical discussion.*"; similarly, Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (2004): 134f.

3. This overlapping and thereby potentially synonymous usage also seems to be acknowledged passim by the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "norm" (I.1.b) as "*A standard or pattern of social behaviour that is accepted in or expected of a group.*" and of "rule" (I.3.a) "*A principle regulating practice or procedure; a dominant custom or habit.*" (OED Online, Sep. 2016).

introduce a working definition of three types of rules in communicative disciplines: 1. Normal behavior, 2. Strategic advice, and 3. Constitutive norms. I will refer to them as type 1 rules, type 2 rules and type 3 rules:

Type 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.

Type 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. 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.

Type 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. 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 types 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 types is frequently anything but trivial. However, keeping the distinction between different types of rules in mind is very important for the present purposes, because the kinds of conflicts that are of interest in this paper are usually limited to the tension of T2 and T3 rules.

Norms and sanctions

A second important aspect that is useful for distinguishing communicative norms and general norms with communicative implications is the presence or absence of sanctions that penalize breaching a norm. This is a distinction that has a complicated relationship with the types of norms above. It does not present a neat subdivision of any kind, but it offers an additional perspective into (descriptive) reasons or (normative) justifications for navigating a norm conflict in a specific way.

Sanctions evidently do not apply to T1 rules because these lack an imperative character that is a necessary condition for the application of any penalties. The situation is more complicated in the case of T2 and T3 rules. In each of these

there can be close to no discernable sanctions for breaches, non-codified societal sanctions, or explicitly codified penalties. In the case of T2 rules the sanction is usually linked to the failure to reach the specific goal that the norms foster (e.g. the failure to be polite, as opposed to the failure to fulfill a specific politeness strategy or maxim), whereas in the case of T3 rules, a penalty can be applied to the breach of an individual norm (e.g. engaging in an inadmissible communicative act that violates procedural norms in front of a court of law). While harsher penalties will frequently be codified explicitly, the presence or absence of an explicit code of sanctions or the difference between breaching T2 or T3 rules is not necessarily a strong indicator about the strength of the sanctions or the motivation of the communicator to avoid those sanctions.

Scope of norms in communication

Depending on the specific situation, location, and communicative activity type, discussants can be addressed by a wide variety of norms that guide their behavior. Some of these norms may be explicitly spelled out (e.g. procedural law or the rules of the critical discussion), or some of these are implicit but easy to reconstruct (e.g. norms of successful use of humor or courtship), and while they may belong to different groups, they can nevertheless conflict. It is easy to imagine an individual wanting to be reasonable and funny at the same time, or persuasive and polite.

On a larger scale all of the norms of interest can be divided into two main groups: (a) norms governing human behavior in general with implications for communicative behavior and (b) norms governing communicative behavior in specific.

Examples of the former are legal rules (which will for example ban certain communicative acts as perjury, slander or hate speech), ethical rules (which might ban utterances as lies, unnecessary harm or similar), religious rules (with rules of deference for certain agents and bans of statements as blasphemy or heresy), and group codes and bylaws. For the present purpose these norms are not of principal interest, because they are highly variant depending on location and social group, frequently vague or hard to reconstruct, rarely interfering with rules of reasonableness, or any combination of the above. This is not to say that the tension between rules of reasonableness and these norms does not contain interesting areas, but rather that the tension between reasonableness and specific communicative norms is of more immediate interest for the present purpose.

Examples of the latter are communicative rules that guide discussants towards achieving a particular goal. These are of central interest for the present purpose and will be discussed next.

3. Norms of communication

Communicators are confronted with a wide set of specific imperatives that guide them towards the achievement of a number of desirable goals. Prioritizing these goals is a task of the individual communicator and will be influenced by a number of contextual factors: including the communicative activity type in which they engage, personal preferences, and strategic plans. It is most important to note however, that none of these goals is *per se* superior to any of the others. Depending on the context some goals might be more frequently prioritized, but defaulting into any of them, or even giving one of them categorical superiority would be a mistake. I am not aware of a way to produce a complete list of communicative goals, and will limit myself to listing some representative examples instead.

Reasonableness

The first communicative goal is the most evident in the present context contrasting reasonableness with politeness. Discussants may choose to communicate as reasonably as possible, because they aim at solving a difference of opinion on the merits and believe that the rules of the critical discussion (or a similar model for that matter) are an effective way of doing so. The problem-validity and conventional validity of this model has been mentioned above and the advantages of reasonable argumentation have been theorized in a great amount of detail in many previous works. (e.g. van Eemeren et al. 2014: 573ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2007: 367ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009: 51ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2015a: 757ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2015c: 793ff.)

Persuasion

Communicators may also aim at persuading the other party or an audience, because they believe that the standpoint they defend deserves to be adopted – either in the common interest or for less altruistic reasons. Rhetorical textbooks from Anaximenes onwards have provided a sophisticated (pun intended) set of rules of doing so in the most efficient way. The resulting set of T2 rules is less concise and more context dependent than the rules of the critical discussion, but they have been proven to be highly effective for the last 2500 years. The conflicts that can arise from the tension of reasonableness and persuasion have been addressed in detail by pragma-dialectical scholars under the heading of "strategic maneuvering".

Humor

Humor, wit and ridicule have long been identified as important subservient tools for rhetorical purposes by Cicero (De orat. II, 234–290), Quintilian (Inst. Orat. VI, 3), Campbell (I, 2) and many others, but also as independent communicative goals. (Cicero 1948: 369ff.; Quintilian 2001: 65ff.; Campbell 1963: 8ff.) One does not need to strive for persuasion in order to appreciate the benefits of bringing mirth and laughter into a group of people. Laughter is inherently pleasant and having a sense of humor is regarded as a very positive character trait by many. While there are many theories about what causes laughter, the individual norms that need to be followed in order to achieve it are less well understood so far, than the norms of reasonableness or rhetoric.

Courtship

Probably one of the most fundamental communicative goals is the courting of erotic partners. All of the above aims may at times be made subservient to these goals (i.e. appearing to be reasonable, being persuasive or seeming to have a sense of humor), but being flirtations can also be a lesser goal in a communicative setting driven by other priorities. As in the case of humor, the rules of successful courtship are less well understood than those of reasonableness and persuasion (although a myriad of practical guidebooks claim the opposite), but some basic imperatives can be derived by looking at the courtship strategies reported by Clark, Shaver, and Abrahams (1999), or the flirting styles reported by Hall and others (Hall and Xing 2015; Hall 2013; Hall, Carter, Cody, and Albright 2010).

Politeness

Politeness as a communicative goal and the norms that guide its achievement have been theorized in great detail since the 1970s. While different theories emphasize different aspects of politeness the preservation of discussants' face and the maintenance of communicative concord are recurring themes. Without these, discussions may quickly break down and other goals become unachievable. In some settings (such as diplomatic events, receptions and societal events) being and appearing polite may even be the sole aim of communicators.

Taken individually each of these sets of norms has a lot to commend itself. But what happens when two or more of these rule sets 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 the above mentioned exception of the tension arising between norms of reasonableness as understood by the pragma-dialectical school and the rhetorical aim to be persuasive which has been studied at great length and with impressive attention to detail 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?[4] 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? As such, this paper takes a neutral stance with regards to individual norm sets or models (such as pragma-dialectics), and investigates the general problem of potential inter-normset-conflict on the particular dyad of pragma-dialectics and Leechian maxims of politeness.

3.1 Dialogue types and communicative activity types

In order for any two sets of communicative norms to be able to conflict they need to be applicable simultaneously in the setting. One possible objection to this ever being the case could be made with reference to types of dialogue or communicative activities. As a matter of fact, one of the driving motivations for Walton and Krabbe's (1995: 65) distinction between the different dialogue types was an attempt at understating derailments of communicative norms better. In other words, according to Walton and Krabbe different communication norms apply to deliberations, inquiries or negotiations. While this distinction may be useful to illustrate some argumentative fallacies, a number of problems in its theoretical construction and practical application have been observed (see e.g. van Eemeren 2010: 131ff.). Most importantly however, while the distinction between dialogue types is based on the goals of the discussants (to persuade the other, to make a deal, to elicit information etc.), these kinds of goals do not capture the breadth of the communicative goals mentioned above. One might still want to be polite while reaching a goal or be witty while seeking information.

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

An alternative model to the dialogue types proposed by Krabbe and Walton is the concept of communicative activity types (comp. van Eemeren 2010: 138ff.). This concept distinguishes between a principally unlimited set of activities that are less abstract and closer to communicative reality, such as court proceedings, presidential debates or peace talks. Each of these communicative activity types is usually linked to an institutional goal, such as deciding about the guilt of an accused, informing the voting public about their electoral choices, or ending a war between peoples. The problem with this concept for the present purpose is that the relationship between *institutional* goals and *individual* goals is quite complicated. *Even if* some communicative activity types might suggest the priority of some communicative goals, many of the more informal ones do not. And even for those that do, communicators will still need to navigate their own priorities with and against institutional interests.

3.2 Interaction of competing norms

Any set of communicative norms 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 other's 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 principal 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 below,

the pragma-dialectical rules fall mostly into the former class,[5] whereas politeness maxims according to Leech 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: 132),[6] whereas the 2014 version is phrased in the former (e.g. "(M7) Give high value to O's opinions (Agreement maxim)", Leech 2014: 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: 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:

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 type 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: 371f.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009: 70ff.) Note that the main function of Figure 1 below is to clarify (a) the main focus of this paper with regards to its reasonableness-politeness-combination (i.e. quadrant II and IV) as complementary and opposed to other works, and (b) the gradual and scalar nature of both reasonableness and politeness (communicative behavior can be more or less reasonable and more or less polite, not just either reasonable or unreasonable / polite or impolite); suggesting a dichotomous or binary nature of either concept is

5. 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: 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: 188). Beyond that the semantic structure of the rules and the commandments is very clear in that regard.

6. Leech (1983: 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.

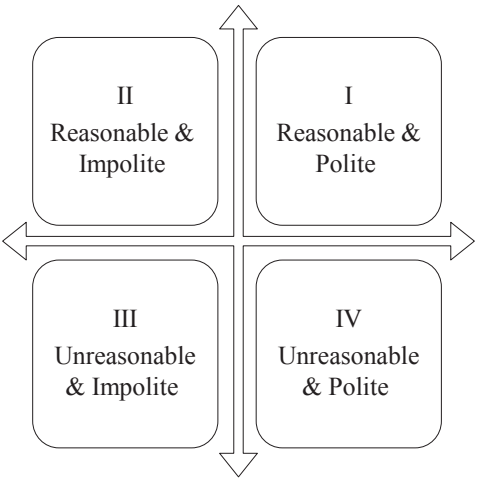

Figure 1. The four quadrants of polite and reasonable communicative behavior

not unintended and contrary to dominant scholarship in the respective fields (see e.g. Leech 2014: 4f.; van Eemeren et al. 2014: 528f.)

3.3 Norm violations and fallacies

One final aspect to be considered on the general level of communicative norm conflict, addresses a question of definition. In pragma-dialectical usage a fallacy is defined as "…*as a speech act that prejudices or frustrates efforts to resolve a difference of opinion on the merits.*" (van Eemeren 2010: 193). In other words, any fallacy is a violation of one (or more) of the rules of the critical discussion and any violation of the rules of a critical discussion is a fallacy. Van Eemeren further specifies "*In our view, the fallacies could be better understood if they were treated as faux pas of communication – as argumentative moves whose wrongness consists in the fact that they are a hindrance or impediment to the resolution of a difference of opinion on the merits.*" (ibid.) For the general purpose of pragma-dialectics and its concentration on reasonableness as the principal goals of communicators this definition is unproblematic; however, for the present purpose it constitutes a problem. As van Eemeren (2010: 199) explicitly observes, the term "fallacy" contains a reference to the "… *treacherous character […] conveyed in the Latin word* fallax*, which means deceptive or deceitful, …*". In the context of the norm conflicts between rhetoric and reasonableness this might well be the usual case, but in the case of other norm conflict this definition is at least misleading. Breaking a norm of reasonableness in order to observe a norm of politeness or to follow a rule of humor or courtship will rarely be done with malicious intent, but will rather be

an expression of alternative priorities or the necessity to navigate an inter-norm conflict in a beneficial way. Thus, apparent rule violations could in many circumstances be better understood not as fallacies, but as alternative rule adherence to a conflicting set of communicative norms.

4. Is it reasonable to be polite?

After this brief sketch of some of the fundamental concepts involved in the tension of different communicative norm sets in general, I will in the remainder of the paper turn to a specific set: reasonableness and politeness.

4.1 The choice of representative rules and disclaimers

Distinguishing between the three types 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 type 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 type 2 or type 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 type 1 rules do not usually create a problem for practical communicators, although they might be a challenge for the communication analyst who needs to embed additional aspects in his or her model. Because type 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: 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), Richard 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.[7] 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 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 type 2 rules. In the case of Lakoff these are three general rules (1. Formality: keep aloof. 2. Deference: give options. 3. Comradery: show sympathy.; Lakoff 1973: 298ff.; Lakoff 2004: 88), Brown and Levinson offer 40 strategies of how to deal with face threatening acts and five main categories of FTA interaction (1. Baldly, 2. On record – positive politeness, 3. On record – negative politeness, 4. Off record, 5. Don't do the FTA; Brown and Levinson 1987: 68ff.), and Leech postulates a politeness principle (PP) parallel to Grice's (1975) cooperative principle (CP), broken down into six maxims (1. Maxim of Tact, 2. Maxim of Generosity, 3. Maxim of Modesty, 4. Maxim of Approbation, 5. Maxim of Agreement, 6. Maxim of Sympathy; Leech 1983: 132, Leech 2014: 80ff.). The more recent studies of politeness shift their attention away from formulating universal models with type 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": 113ff., strategy IV, 7 "Use contradictions": 221, or strategy IV, 11

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

"Be ambiguous": 225) to rules of reasonableness. At the same time, it is also one of the most heavily criticized and probably a 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 thus presents the most contemporary theory of scale that is formulated in type 2 rules. Additional benefits of choosing Leech's model over the two main alternatives is the comparable level of distinction in his norms (ten maxims, compared to three general rules in Lakoff and 40 strategies in Brown and Levinson) and his Gricean starting points that make him a good match to the pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion.

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. This choice assumes an understanding of the pragma-dialectical model as a set of T2 or T3 rules however, which should be briefly addressed here.

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 is a prerequisite of being able to 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: 187–196). At first glance there are a couple of indicators in favor of treating the "ten commandments for reasonable discussants" (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 190) as a set of type 3 rules. First, the name itself and its (tongue in cheek) reference to the single most famous type 3 rules in western civilization could be taken as an indicator of its kind. 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: 22; van Eemeren et al. 2014: 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: 187), a quality that they call "problem validity". (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 17: 22: 57: 132: 134: 187; van Eemeren 2015: 129ff.; van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2015b: 164ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009: 20ff.; van Eemeren et al. 2014: 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 presumable 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: 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: 187f.). It is important to note that while the pragma-dialectical rules share some aspects with constitutive rules, this does not mean that any violation of the rules (i.e. fallacies), thereby leads to an absence of, but rather a deficit in the critical discussion.[8] In other words, breaking one or more of the rules of the critical discussion does not end the potential striving for a continued optimization of the amount of reasonableness in that discourse.

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, 17, 22, 57, 132, 134, 187; van Eemeren et al. 2014: 573–581; van Eemeren, Meuffels and Verburg 2000: 416ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2007: 367ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2009: 51ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2015a: 757ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2012: 33ff. / 2015b: 771ff.; van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels 2015c: 793ff., Garssen 2008: 66ff.) van Eemeren and his team treat them at least partially as type 1 rules that describe normal communicative reality. This aspect does not seem to be the dominant quality of the pragma-dialectical system however.[9]

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8. Comp. Van Eemeren et al. (2014: 545) *"Although the list of violations that van Eemeren and Grootendorst provide in Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies is, as a matter of course, not complete, it gives a good impression of the great variety of fallacious moves that can occur in the various stages of an argumentative discourse viewed as a critical discussion."*

9. See for example van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels' explicit clarification (2015a: 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."

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 questions seems in order. The pragma-dialectical model has been studied with an extreme level of sophistication, and works 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 disclaimers and limitations, and the like. These have been of importance for the advancement of the field at large, but the vast majority of these elements does not touch the respective core of the models of politeness that is relevant for the present purpose. 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?

4.2 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: 75; van Eemeren et al. 1993: 30–34; van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 187–190). The ideal mindset for preserving communicative concord is likely to be different from that of 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: 90–98; comp. also Leech 2007: 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*

These maxims are components of what Leech calls the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP), which is itself a manifestation of the Principle of Politeness (PP). Leech explicitly positions his PP parallel to Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) as a constraint on human communicative behavior (Leech 2014: 87). The ten maxims are presented in five pairs of one pos-politeness and one neg-politeness element each (Leech 2014: 11ff., 90ff.)

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: 101–103) Leech furthermore suggests a priority of neg-politeness maxims (even numbers) over pos-politeness maxims (odd numbers) and a priority of earlier maxims (lower numbers) over later ones (higher numbers) (Leech 2014: 98).

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: 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: 544–552). In the 2004 version

the ten commandments are stated as follows (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 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. The two models vary in a large number of theoretical aspects (e.g. the level of societal expectation regarding politeness and reasonableness, the level of context-dependence of each set of norms etc.) (Leech 2014: 4ff.; Van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 42ff.), but they arguably also share a large number of characteristics, of which their social perception is not the least important. In the words of Leech: "Politeness is generally thought to be a good thing, […]" (Leech 2014: 4) – an assessment that could easily be

postulated for reasonableness as well. Accordingly, the task of contrasting the two might be worthwhile.

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	110
M2: Tact	21	**22**	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	**210**
M3: Approbation	**31**	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	310
M4: Modesty	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	410
M5: Obligation (of S to O)	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	510
M6: Obligation (of O to S)	61	**62**	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	610
M7: Agreement	**71**	72	73	74	75	76	77	**78**	**79**	710
M8: Opinion reticence	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	**88**	**89**	810
M9: Sympathy	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	910
M10: Feeling reticence	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	1010

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 and 71, (b) cells 22, 62, and 210, (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:

Cells 31 and 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 antagonist[10] (O in Leech's terminology), but also from the protagonist (S). Maxims 3 and 7 strongly suggest such a prevention and thus call for self-censorship that undermines the goals of a critical discussion.

Cells 22, 62, and 210: 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*

10. 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 that available alternatives. Comp. also van Eemeren (2010: 195).

mitigating, S's imposition on H." (Leech 2014: 93). It is this softening and invitation to refuse a request that runs counter to the purpose of the obligation-to-defend rule. So while a common sense meaning of some of the maxims of politeness might not lead to an immediate conflict with the rules of reasonableness, the version as explained in Leech has the potential for this clash. A similar effect can be observed for cell 210. 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.)

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: 96) and "*In other cases, S consults H's opinion, deferring to H's supposed greater understanding, wisdom, or experience.*" (Leech 2014: 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 potential areas of conflict 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.

4.3 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.[11]

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 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 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 this of course ultimately amounts to declaring allegiance to neither of the principal aims of politeness or of reasonableness, but to the superior aim of persuasion.

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11. 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: 635–639), are less promising options in the present dilemma. Since many cases of conflict between rules of reasonableness and rules of politeness are manifested in a conflict between levels of explicitness of expressions of opinions, explicitly addresses this conflict will by itself already take a position in the conflict and lead to a performative paradox in the attempted meta-discussion.

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?

5. 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 types 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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