The concept of argument

The definition

- a set of one or more interlinked premiss-illative-conclusion sequences

- Two types of interlinking

    - Chaining: the conclusion of one sequence is a premiss of another

    - Embedding: one sequence is a premiss of another

- Every premiss is an assertive, not necessarily asserted by anyone.

- Every conclusion is a speech act (any type), not necessarily performed by anyone.

- expressible in language or in images or in physical behaviour

- An expressed argument invites its addressees to accept each conclusion on the basis of the acceptance of the assertives in its immediately supporting reasons.

- Examples: Socrates' argument that injustice is never more profitable than justice (*Republic I.* 353e-354a), Euclid's proof that there is no largest prime number (*Elements* IX.20), Anselm's argument that there is a God (*Proslogium* 2)

Analysis of the definition

- precization of the "reasoning-giving" sense of 'argument' (argument 1) as opposed to the "disputational" sense of 'argument' (argument 2)

- incorporates parts of various theorists' conceptions of argument (Nancy)

Do we need a definition of 'argument'? (Nancy)

- Why bother? Why not just "name the language game"?

- Maybe we need to understand and evaluate arguments in more than one way:

    - visual, written, etc.

    - disputational, informative, persuasive

What sort of definition?

- descriptive or normative? (Khameiel)

- How can you operate with our ordinary usage when you don't say what ordinary usage is? (Khameiel)

Reason-giving (argument 1) and disputation (argument 2) (Khameiel)

- How often does reason-giving occur in the context of disputes?

- Everyday use of 'argument' blurs the two senses.

- Informal logic should study how they occur together.

- It should address the hostility attached to reason-giving.

Are insinuations arguments? (Nancy)

- Arguments are "invitations to inference". (Pinto)

- Insinuations are not arguments. (Hitchcock)

- But insinuations are invitations to inference. (Cathcart)

Arguments as premisses

- How can an argument be a premiss? (Khameiel)

Are arguments acts or sets?

- Arguments are complex speech acts. (Hitchcock, *apud* Goddu and Freeman)

- But the definition allows a set to be an argument. (Goddu)

- Why can't arguments be sets of acts? (Nancy)

Do arguments occur in solo reasoning?

- Yes, since the same premiss-conclusion structure occurs there. (Hitchcock)

- We use our rational abilities in trying to decide for ourselves what to do. (Leslie)

- Extension of study of argumentation to such reasoning might produce (Leslie):

    – better ways of doing it

    – warnings of pitfalls to avoid

- Objection: one might not be fair when arguing with oneself. (Leslie)

- Replies: not really an argument, in interpersonal argument there is an inner process of evaluating

What should we count as arguments?

- only discourse with an explicit premiss-conclusion structure (Hitchcock)

- many arguments do not have an explicit premiss-conclusion structure (Khameiel)

- Poster: picture of a child is the premiss, directive in words is the conclusion. (Hitchcock)

- Visual images that merely suggest a conclusion to be drawn by the viewer are not arguments. (Hitchcock)

- How do you know where to draw the line? (Khameiel)

- How do images function in arguments? (Kelly)

- Can entire arguments be asserted visually? (Kelly)

- Threatening gesture part of an argument only when the gesturer says, "your money or your life". (Hitchcock)

- So the argument can't be implied? (Khameiel)

- Then how does the account allow for visual arguments? (Khameiel)

Suppositional arguments

- Definition requires premisses to be assertives.

- Examples have suppositions as premisses.

- So change definition to allow suppositives to be premisses. (Goddu)

- Better: make suppositions antecedents of asserted conditionals (Patrick)

How do we get the illation relationship in the definition?

- Using illative words like 'since' will not get the illative relationship (Goddu)

    – Sam in 1805: "It is raining"

    – Luther in 1905: "so …"

    – Sally in 2005: "The ground is wet …"

- Goddu's proposal: Use the illative relationship

    – premissing for

    – concluding from