Preface

In 1991, I decided not to become an algebraic geometry researcher in Amsterdam. In 1992, I decided to become an artificial intelligence researcher in Maastricht. Both were decisions I do not regret.

Of course, things have developed very differently from what I expected then. I started with research on multimedia information retrieval, and ended with research on argumentation and defeat. Even though my research seemingly drifted away from the central goals of the ARCHIMEDES project, I have profited much from being a member of the project. It provided a broad learning environment and prevented me from involuntarily doing my research in isolation, as is so common for beginning researchers. At the frequent project meetings, I could test my research skills and get feedback on my ideas.

First of all I want to thank Jaap Hage. His constant enthusiasm and attention made learning from him and working with him a pleasure to me. He taught me many things, more than I am aware of now. By our shared attachment to the dialectical method, I could experience its fruitfulness in practice: when our opinions seemed to differ strongly, lively discussions led to better insights in the end. I owe him the name for the argumentation stages model described in the chapters 5 and 6. In the early days of that research, when he was skeptical and my ideas were not well developed, he teasingly called the stages ‘wolkjes’, the Dutch word for ‘small clouds’. ‘Clouds’ led to ‘cumuli’, and ‘cumuli’ to ‘CumulA’.

Second I thank Jaap van den Herik. He gave me the opportunity to become a researcher. His consistent emphasis on uncompromising self-criticism and high standards has been a lesson that I will have to teach and reteach myself in my future scientific life. He also taught me that the difficulty and importance of a good presentation of research cannot be overestimated.

I thank Gerard Vreeswijk for sharing his experiences as a researcher with me. Fate was on my side, when just after I gained interest in his work, he was appointed as a post-doc at the Department of Computer Science in Maastricht. His work paved the way for my CumulA model.

I thank Arno Lodder and Floris Wiesman for blurring the border between being colleagues and being friends. Arno’s sense of humor made life and work in room 0.062 at De Nieuwenhof much better. Meeting Floris again in Maastricht after more than twenty years was a pleasant coincidence. The similarity of our backgrounds and interests still strikes me. I am also grateful to Floris for compiling the index.

I thank the other members of the ARCHIMEDES project for their attention, even at the times that my presentations were unclear and unfinished. I thank Jan Dietz and Arie Hasman for their guidance and support, and Maarten van der Meulen, Ruud van der Pol and Georges Span for companionship, especially at the harder moments. I am Georges also grateful for his kind help and flexibility during the preparation of the camera ready version of the thesis.

I thank the administrative and management staff of the Faculty of Law, Department of Metajuridica, and of the Faculty of General Sciences, Department of Computer Science. I especially want to mention Annemie Jeukens, Math Lieben and Appie Luermans.

I thank Ron Loui for inviting me to work at the Computer Science Department of the Washington University in Saint Louis (Missouri) in the summer of 1996. Over the good coffee at Euclid, we had inspiring conversations and confirmed the agreement of our views on argumentation. He gave me the freedom to finish my thesis. I thank Fernando Tohmé for his warm friendship during the hot summer in Saint Louis, and for his support in the final writing stages. I thank Nina Kang and David Packer for proofreading the thesis.

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Guidelines for the reader

A cross-reference from one section to another section (e.g., see section 3.1) refers to a section in the same chapter, unless explicitly indicated otherwise (e.g., see chapter 2, section 3.1).

The following figure shows the interdependency of the chapters.

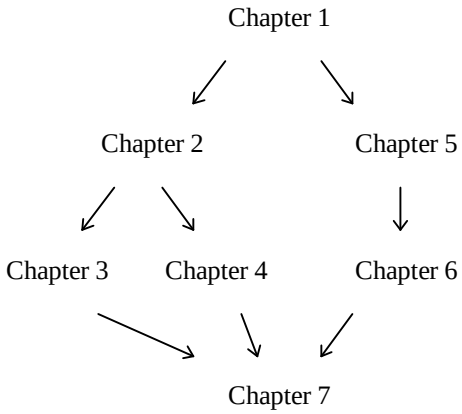

Figure 1: Interdependency of the chapters

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