A glance behind the scenes : the state of the art in the study of argumentation

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A GLANCE BEHIND THE SCENES: THE STATE OF THE ART IN THE STUDY OF ARGUMENTATION

In 'A glance between the scenes: The state of the art in the study of argumentation', Frans H. van Eemeren provides an overview of different approaches to argumentation, varying from Toulmin's model of analysis, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's new rhetoric, informal logic, radical argumentativism, formal dialectical approaches and pragma-dialectics to modern rhetorical approaches. Next he introduces some crucial problem areas in the study of argumentation: manifestations of argumentative commitments, argument schemes, argumentation structures, reconstruction of argumentative discourse, normativity and fallacies, specific argumentative practices.

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1. Different approaches to the study of argumentation

What is the subject matter of the study of argumentation? According to our handbook Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory, 'argumentation can be defined as a verbal, social and rational activity aimed at convincing a reasonable critic of the acceptability of a standpoint by advancing a constellation of propositions justifying or refuting the proposition expressed in the standpoint' (van Eemeren et al. 1996). This definition does justice to the so-called process-product ambiguity of the word "argumentation": it not only refers to the activity of advancing reasons, but also to the shorter or longer text that results from it.

An essential characteristic of argumentation is that it always pertains to a specific point of view with regard to a certain issue. The speaker or writer who advances argumentation defends this 'standpoint' to a listener or reader who doubts the acceptability of the standpoint or has a different standpoint. The argumentation is aimed at convincing the listener or reader of the acceptability of the standpoint. When someone advances argumentation, that person makes an appeal to reasonableness and silently assumes that the listener or reader will act as a reasonable critic when evaluating the argumentation. Otherwise it would not make sense to advance argumentation.

It is the task of argumentation theorists to determine which soundness criteria should be satisfied for the argumentation to be called reasonable. Many argumentation theorists who are inspired by logic study argumentation for normative purposes. There are also argumentation theorists however, who have a merely descriptive goal. Especially linguistically oriented scholars in textual and discourse analysis are only interested in describing how, with varying degrees of success, language users make use of argumentation to convince others. Although in current research practice both extremes are represented, most argumentation theorists take a middle position. Their starting point is that the study of argumentation has a normative as well as a descriptive dimension.

The study of argumentation has not yet resulted in a universally accepted theory. The state of the art is characterized by the co-existence of a variety of approaches, differing considerably in conceptualization, scope and degree of theoretical refinement, albeit that all modern approaches are strongly influenced by classical and post-classical rhetoric and dialectic. Together with approaches with a more limited scope or a less developed research program, the most important approaches are discussed in

considerable detail in Fundamentals of Argumentation Theory. As an introduction to the great variety of the field, I shall give a brief overview of these theoretical contributions. When discussing the main problem areas in the study of argumentation against this background, I shall also add some information about interesting current developments.

1.1. Toulmin's model of analysis

Toulmin's The Uses of Argument, which appeared in 1958, is mainly known for the model of argumentation presented in this book. This model represents the 'procedural form' of argumentation: the various steps that can be distinguished in the defense of a standpoint or claim. According to Toulmin, the soundness of argumentation is primarily determined by the degree to which the warrant, which connects the data adduced in the argumentation with the claim that is defended, is made acceptable by a backing.

The procedural form of argumentation is in Toulmin's view 'field independent.' This means that the steps that are taken - and which are represented in the model - are always the same, irrespective of the kind of subject the argumentation refers to. What kind of backing is required, however, is dependent on the field to which the question at issue belongs. An ethical justification, for instance, requires a different kind of backing than a legal justification. Toulmin concludes from this that the evaluation criteria for determining the soundness of argumentation are 'field dependent.'

Initially, Toulmin's somewhat revolutionary approach to argumentation met with a hostile response from most philosophers and logicians. American speech communication scholars, however, welcomed his model of argumentation enthusiastically and set out to use it in their classes, making various amendments and additions in the process. Toulmin's model also became a popular tool of analysis in the social sciences. In spite of certain theoretical disadvantages, such as the total abandonment of logic and the lack of integration of any pragmatic insight concerning the functional use of language, and in spite of certain practical problems, such as those caused by the troublesome definition of the distinction between 'data' and warrant, Toulmin's model is still widely used in the practice of teaching argumentation.

1.2. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's new rhetoric

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca provide in La nouvelle rhétorique (1958) an inventory of frequently-used 'argumentation techniques.' They regard argumentation as sound if it adduces (more) assent with the standpoint that is defended among the audience the argumentation is aimed at. Thus the soundness of argumentation is in the new rhetoric measured against its effect on the target group. This target group may consist of a 'particular audience,' but it can also be the so-called 'universal audience': the people who are for the speaker or writer the embodiment of reason-ableness.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's contribution to argumentation theory consists first of all in an extensive list of elements that can serve as point of departure or as argument(ation) scheme when constructing the argumentation that should convince or persuade the audience. With the help of a 'quasi-logical' argument scheme, which resembles a logically valid argument form in some way, one can, for instance, sometimes achieve the effect that the public considers the standpoint defended in a reasonable way. Another way of justifying a standpoint is the use of an argument scheme, such as analogy, that 'structures reality,' so that the audience will conclude that the standpoint defended is in a similar way acceptable as a different kind of standpoint that they already accept.

With their 'new rhetoric', Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca proposed an approach that at first did not receive the recognition it deserved. This is probably partly due to the fact that these ideas were initially published only in French. After the English translation had appeared in 1969, the appreciation for the new rhetoric grew considerably, most notably among speech communication scholars and among lawyers, who could not help valuing the fact that juridical argumentation served as the model of rea-sonableness. The new rhetoric too has certain theoretical disadvantages, such as - again - the total neglect of insight from logic and pragmatics. It also suffers from certain practical defects, such as the fact that the cata-logue of argument schemes is in actual practice hard to use univocally be-cause its categories are not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, the new rhetoric is still a popular argumentation theory.

As a consequence of Toulmin's and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's successes, argumentation became not only a topic of attention in peda-gogy but was also rediscovered as a subject matter for research. The Nor-wegian philosopher Naess and the British philosopher Crawshay-

Williams, to mention just two scholars who published their ideas even before Toulmin and Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca, benefited from this new interest in argumentation. Their works, Communication and Argument (1947/1966) and Methods and Criteria of Reasoning (1957), which had been until then been underestimated or had even gone unnoticed, now received the reception they were entitled to. Today, however, I would like to concentrate upon what followed after Toulmin and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca.

1.3. Informal logic

Out of dissatisfaction with the way in which argumentation was treated in introductory logical textbooks, an approach to argumentation has been propagated in Canada and the United States from the beginning of the seventies which is known as informal logic. Since 1978 the journal Informal Logic, edited by Blair and Johnson, has been the speaking voice of the informal logic movement. Informal logic is not a new kind of logic, but an approach to the normative study of argumentation in ordinary language that remains closer to the practice of argumentation than formal logic (Blair and Johnson 1987).

Informal logicians want to develop norms and procedures for interpreting, assessing and construing argumentation. Their starting point is that argumentation should be sound in a logical sense. Apart from the fact that it is clear that something else is meant by this than that the arguments used must be valid in a formal-logical sense, it is not yet transparent what this means. It is clear though that informal logicians are primarily interested in the relations between premises and conclusions and it is also clear that their interest is not restricted to reasoning aimed at convincing.

Johnson and Blair have indicated what they have in mind when they speak of an informal logical alternative for the formal criterion of deductive validity. In their view, the premises of an argument have to meet three criteria: (1) acceptability, (2) relevance, and (3) sufficiency (ARS). These criteria are introduced in Logical self-defense (1977/1994); they are, albeit sometimes under different names, adopted by other informal logicians, e.g., by Govier (1987). In the case of 'acceptability' the question is whether the premises are true, probable, or in some other way trustworthy; in the case of 'relevance', whether there is an adequate substantial relation between the premises and the conclusion of an argu-

ment; and in the case of 'sufficiency', whether the premises provide enough evidence for the conclusion.

Lately, there is a tendency among informal logicians to put more emphasis on the dialectical dimension of argumentation. Johnson (2000), for one, proposes in Manifest Rationality to add 'a dialectical tier' to the study of argumentation. The informal logician Pinto (2001) has expressed a similar kind of interest.

1.4. Radical argumentativism

Starting at the beginning of the seventies, Ducrot and Anscombre have developed in a number of - almost exclusively French - publications a linguistic approach to language and argumentation. Because Anscombre and Ducrot (1983) are of the opinion that all verbal utterances lead the listener or reader to a certain class of conclusions and therefore always involve an argumentative relation, they refer to their theoretical position as radical argumentativism.

Ducrot and Anscombre's descriptive approach is characterized by a great interest in words such as 'only,' 'no less than,' 'but,' 'even,' 'still,' 'because' and 'so,' which can serve as argumentative 'operators' or 'connectors' and give the utterances a certain argumentative force and argumentative direction. In a certain context, the sentence "The ring costs only one hundred euros" can point in the direction of a conclusion such as "Buy that ring"; in the same context, the sentence "The ring costs almost one hundred euros" points rather in the direction of a conclusion such as "Do not buy that ring."

Another kind of observation made by Ducrot and Anscombre is that a word such as 'but' only determines the direction of the conclusion that is suggested by the sentence, not the content of this conclusion. This content is also dependent on the context and the situation in which the sentence is uttered. Whatever conclusion may be drawn in a specific context, the presence of the word 'but' causes in all cases this conclusion to be the opposite of, and also stronger than, the conclusion that has to be drawn from the part of the sentence preceding 'but.' According to Ducrot and Anscombre the opposite standpoints that in a sentence such as "Paul is rich, but he is married" are suggested by 'but' select two different 'argumentative principles' which are on a par with the topoi from classical rhetoric (van Eemeren et al. 1996). In the context assumed by Nølke (1992), in this example these are "The more someone has the

property of being rich, the more attractive it is for a woman to get to know him better" and "The more someone is tied to another woman, the less attractive it is for a woman to get to know him better." In this case the latter topos has a bigger argumentative force than the first, which is as it were put aside - overruled - by the latter. Thereby the last topos determines the eventual argumentative direction of the sentence, which leads to an implicit conclusion such as "It is no use trying to get to know Paul better."

In Lyon, there is nowadays an active group of French scholars who pursue a related linguistic interest. As far as the study of argumentation is concerned, Plantin (1990) is their most prominent representative.

1.5. Formal dialectical approaches

To modern dialecticians argumentation is part of a procedure to resolve a difference of opinion by means of a regulated discussion. They attempt to formulate 'problem-sound' rules that are instrumental in resolving a difference of opinion. These rules must also be 'conventionally valid' in the sense that they are intersubjectively acceptable (Barth and Krabbe 1982: 21-22). When designing a procedure for language users who would like to resolve a dispute by means of a critical dialogue, the 'new dialecticians' make use of the ideas propounded by Crawshay-Williams and Naess and ideas of Lorenzen, Lorenz and other members of the Erlangen School. Because the first moves towards a new dialectic were made by formal logicians using a formal language, they not only remained for a long time invisible to other argumentation scholars, but also to a large extent inaccessible.

Barth and Krabbe developed specific proposals for a formal new dialectic. In From Axiom to Dialogue they described a 'formal-dialectical' procedure to determine whether a standpoint can be maintained in the light of certain starting points or 'concessions.' The name formal dialectics was earlier introduced by Hamblin (1970). The indication 'formal' refers to the strictly regimented character of the dialogue games. In dialogue logic an argument is presented as a dialogue game between a 'proponent' and an 'opponent' of a thesis. Together these two parties try to establish whether the thesis can be defended successfully against critical attacks. In the defense the proponent can make use of the propositions the opponent is prepared to commits himself to. The proponent attempts to bring the opponent in a contradictory position by skillfully exploiting

these concessions. If the proponent succeeds, the thesis has been successfully defended given the concessions (and therefore ex concessis).

The efforts to develop formal dialectics further into an appropriate theory of argumentation are during the last two decades continued by Krabbe. Walton published together with Krabbe the useful study Commitment in Dialogue (1995). Inspired by Hamblin, Woods and Walton had already earlier published a series of studies of the fallacies from a formal perspective (Woods and Walton 1989).

1.6. Pragma-dialectics

In Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions, van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984) developed a theory of argumentation, pragma-dialectics, which connects immediately with formal dialectics, but is also different. The agreement is expressed in the term dialectics; the replacement of formal by pragma (short for 'pragmatic') refers to the differences. The pragmatic elements in pragma-dialectics are primarily inspired by insights of 'ordinary language philosophers' concerning speech acts, conversational rationality, and discourse analysis; the dialectical elements are inspired by insights from the work of 'critical rationalists' such as Karl Popper.

In the pragma-dialectical ideal model of a critical discussion four stages are distinguished. In the confrontation stage a participant in the discussion puts forward a standpoint and another participant expresses doubt concerning the acceptability of the standpoint or contradicts it. In the opening stage, which is in practice often largely implicit, the participants who take on the roles of 'protagonist' and 'antagonist' of the standpoint determine what the point of departure of the discussion is. Here the question becomes what are the common starting points and which rules are being observed? Then, in the argumentation stage, the protagonist advances argumentation to defend his or her standpoint and adds, if necessary, new arguments to answer further critical reactions. If the arguments that are advanced lead to the acceptance of the standpoint by the antagonist in the concluding stage, the difference of opinion has been resolved; this is also the case if the protagonist withdraws the standpoint because of the critical reactions of the antagonist.

Besides an ideal model of the speech acts performed in the various stages of a critical discussion by a protagonist and an antagonist who make an attempt to resolve their difference of opinion in a reasonable way, the pragma-dialectical discussion procedure includes a series of basic

rules which together constitute a code of conduct for reasonable discussants (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992). Each violation of a rule amounts to an incorrect discussion move that is an impediment to the resolution of a difference of opinion. This can happen in each stage of the discussion. The incorrectness involved generally resembles one or more of the well-known fallacies or a similar offence against reasonableness.

In the last two decades, the pragma-dialecticians have been engaged in carrying out an encompassing research program that includes not only philosophical and theoretical components, but also empirical, analytical, and practical components. Along these lines, a broad group of argumentation scholars, not exclusively stemming from the University of Amsterdam, have made a variety of contributions to the further development of pragma-dialectics. The only result I would like to mention here explicitly is Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse, a study into the analysis of argumentation by van Eemeren and Grootendorst published together with Jackson and Jacobs (1993).

1.7. Modern rhetorical approaches

In recent years a powerful revaluation of rhetoric has taken place. The irrational and even anti-rational image of rhetoric that has come into being during the past centuries has now been revised. And the sharp division between rhetoric and dialectic made in the past appears to require weakening. Several argumentation theorists have become aware that rhetoric as the study of persuasive techniques is not per se incompatible with maintaining a critical ideal of reasonableness.

It is remarkable that the rehabilitation of rhetoric in the study of argumentation has started at about the same time in various countries. A considerable time after the pioneering work by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca several argumentation scholars in the United States have defended the rational qualities of rhetoric. Wenzel (1980), for one, would like to give rhetoric full credit, but then emphatically in relation with logic and, more in particular, dialectics. Leff (2002) too stresses the importance of a sensible division of labor between rhetoric and dialectic. In France, Reboul (1990) wishes to give rhetoric a satisfactory position in the study of argumentation beside dialectics. He regards rhetoric and dialectic as different disciplines, which also display some overlap: rhetoric applies dialectic to public discussions while dialectic is at the same time a part of rhetoric because dialectic provides rhetoric with intellectual tools. In

Germany Kopperschmidt (1989) takes a step further: he argues that, viewing things also from a historical perspective, rhetoric is the central concern of argumentation theorists. In the Netherlands, van Eemeren and Houtlosser (1999, 2002) aim for an integration of insight from rhetoric into their 'pragma-dialectical' method for analyzing argumentative discourse. In their view, there is a rhetorical goal corresponding with each of the dialectical stages of the process of resolving a difference of opinion. They think that an argumentative text or discussion can be reconstructed with more subtlety, and can be more fully accounted for, if the strategic maneuvering is investigated that takes place in each dialectical stage regarding the selection from the 'topical potential' (the possible discussion moves) available in the discussion stage concerned, the adaptation to the wishes of the audience and the use of presentational devices.

2. Crucial problem areas in the study of argumentation

In the various theoretical approaches to the study of argumentation the problems involved in the production, analysis and evaluation of argumentation are treated much differently. I shall indicate some of the main problems that argumentation theorists are jointly concerned with. Today, I shall concentrate on six problem areas in the study of argumentation that are presently seen as crucial: 'manifestations of argumentative commitments', 'argument schemes', 'argumentation structures', 'reconstruction of argumentative discourse', 'normativity and the fallacies', and 'specific argumentative practices'.

2.1. Manifestations of argumentative commitments

It is important to realize that verbal expressions are not "by nature" standpoints, arguments, or other kinds of units of language use which are interesting to argumentation theorists, but only when they occur in a context where they serve a specific function in the communication process. This means that these utterances must be in a specific way instrumental in achieving a certain goal. An oral or written expression is, for instance, a point of view if it expresses a certain positive or negative position with respect to a proposition, thus making clear what exactly the speaker or writer stands for.

In ordinary discourse, explicitness is the exception rather than the rule. Sometimes the communicative function of an utterance becomes

clear after the event, when this function is identified or indicated by one of the participants ("So, that is your standpoint then, eh?," "You have now heard my major arguments"), but more often than not no explicit identification will be given, while, moreover, the propositional content of the utterance remains ambiguous.

Fortunately, there are some verbal indicators which specifically refer to standpoints and argumentation, such as 'therefore,' 'hence,' 'so,' 'thus,' 'ergo,' and 'since,' 'for' and 'because.' Some of them, e.g., 'for,' are used retrogressively, referring to a preceding standpoint; others, e.g., 'so,' are used progressively, being followed by the standpoint, and some, e.g., 'because,' can be used in both ways ("I cannot do it because I am ill" and "Because I am ill I cannot do it"). The fewer the number of verbal pointers, the more it will be necessary to make use of verbal and non-verbal contextual clues. Usually, some background knowledge of the context and the type of speech event involved, and even some knowledge of the world, will be required to detect these clues and put them to good use. Taking all these factors into account, Houtlosser (2002) provides a sophisticated survey of the indicators of standpoints.

Confusingly, formulations of standpoints and reasons may be presented in speech acts that are, at first sight, non-assertive, as in "Let's take an umbrella, or do you want to get wet?" Taken literally, what the speaker does here is to confront the listener with a proposal, accompanied by a question. The (rhetorical) question, however, must be interpreted as a reason to accept the implicit standpoint that the two should take an umbrella. In order to correctly determine the speaker's commitments, one must diagnose this discourse as containing an implicit (and indirect) standpoint defended by an implicit (and indirect) reason: "We should take an umbrella, for we do not want to get wet." In the analysis of such implicitness (and indirectness), and in the justification of this analysis, an important role is usually played by general standards for reasoned discourse and by the context (in its broadest sense) of the specific discourse under analysis.

Unexpressed elements that are only implicitly present in the discourse are in practice often the pivotal points of an argument. This holds in particular for unexpressed premises and unexpressed standpoints. In the arguments composing ordinary argumentation usually one of the premises is left unexpressed. In some cases, the identification of the elements implicit in enthymematic argumentation is quite simple. It is obvious, for example, that in "Amos is pig-headed, because he is a teacher" the prem-

ise that is left unexpressed is "Teachers are pig-headed." In "I am sure that Amos is pig-headed, since all teachers are pig-headed," it is just as clear that the unexpressed premise is: "Amos is a teacher."

There are also cases in which the identification of unexpressed premises may cause more problems - usually, because there are several possibilities. In order to determine what the commitments of an arguer are, the analyst must, according to van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992), not only carry out a logical analysis, based on a formal, or a semantic, validity criterion, as proposed by Hitchcock (1983), but also a pragmatic analysis, based on standards for reasoned discourse. In the logical analysis an attempt is made to reconstruct the argument as one having a valid argument form; in the pragmatic analysis the unexpressed premise is then more precisely defined on the basis of contextual information and background knowledge. The logical analysis is thus instrumental to the achievement of a satisfactory pragmatic analysis.

In the absence of any contextual information or background knowledge, the pragmatic identification of unexpressed premises will be hard to accomplish. A logical analysis must then suffice. Otherwise there is a danger that the added premise oversteps the mark, attributing more to the speaker than he or she is actually committed to. With unexpressed standpoints we are on safer ground. Starting from the explicit premises, a logical analysis of the underlying argument usually leads to an unequivocal determination of the conclusion representing the unexpressed standpoint that is being advocated.

2.2. Argument schemes

It should not be taken for granted that anyone who puts forward an argument is automatically involved in an attempt to logically derive the conclusion from the premises. Yet, in some way or other, a transfer of acceptance from the explicit premise to the standpoint must be aimed for. On this point, so far, formal logic has not much to offer. Modern logicians, even when they are concerned with developing alternative systems such as non-monotonic logic and default logic, seem almost unanimous in their concern with formal validity rather than substantive relations between premises and conclusions. Concentrating on the problems of implication and truth, they tend to ignore the problems of plausible inference and the transmission of acceptance.

The speaker or writer who puts forward an argument aims to bring

about a transfer of acceptance from the premises to the standpoint that makes the listener or reader accept the standpoint. Hence, the speaker attempts to design the argument in such a fashion that it will convince the listener. Take the following argument: "Daniel is sure to be concerned about the costs, because he is an American." When looking for an argument to defend the standpoint that Daniel will be concerned about the costs, the arguer may, for example, have entertained an unfriendly thought like "It is typical of Americans that they are materialistic." From this thought, the arguer's standpoint may have been backed up by the argument; the unexpressed premise being "Americans are inclined to care a lot about money." By arguing in this way, the speaker or writer is relying on a more or less ready-made argument scheme (which is sometimes also called argumentation scheme).

Argument schemes are conventionalized ways of displaying a relation between that which is stated in the explicit premise and what is stated in the standpoint. The internal organization of each single argument can be characterized by the argument scheme being employed. Because an argument scheme characterizes the type of justification or refutation provided for the standpoint in a single argument by the explicit premise for the standpoint, an analysis of the argument schemes used in a discourse produces information as to the principles, standards, criteria, or assumptions involved in a particular attempt at justification or refutation. In most cases some interpretative effort is required to identify the argument scheme that is being employed, i.e. to discover the topos on which the argumentation rests.

In this endeavor, again, pragmatic knowledge must be brought to bear. Argument schemes are among the concepts that are studied intensively by argumentation theorists to create a complementary alternative to the formal logical models and their validity norm. The point of departure in these studies generally is that in argumentative discourse, depending on the argument scheme that is used, various types of argumentation can be distinguished and that each type of argumentation calls for the answering of specific critical questions. This is the approach that is, for instance, taken by Hastings (1962), van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992), Schellens (1985), Walton (1996b), and Garssen (2002). An overview of the various argument schemes that have been distinguished is given in Kienpointner's Alltagslogik (1992).

2.3. Argumentation structures

A central problem in the analysis of argumentative discourse is the determination of the structure of the argumentation. The argumentation structure of a text, speech or discussion is determined by the way in which the reasons advanced hang together and jointly support the standpoint that is defended. An adequate evaluation of the argumentative discourse cannot take place as long as it is not clear what the structure of the argumentation is. What kind of structural relations can be distinguished? Argumentation for or against a standpoint can be simple: 'single argumentation' consists of one reason for or against the standpoint. But the argumentation can also have a more complex argumentation structure, depending on the way in which the defense of the standpoint has been organized in view of (anticipated) doubts or criticism. In a more complexly structured argumentation several reasons are put forward for or against the same standpoint. These reasons can be alternative defenses of the standpoint which are unrelated ("It is impossible that you saw my mother last week in Sheringham in Marks and Spencer's , because my mother died two years ago and Sheringham does not have a Marks and Spencer's"). They can also be interdependent, so that there is a 'parallel chain' of reasons which mutually strengthen or complement each other ("We have to dine out, because there is nothing left at home and all shops are closed"), or a 'serial chain' of reasons ("I cannot help you painting next week, because next week I do not have any time because I have to work for an exam then").

The structure of the argumentation is sometimes clearly indicated by the use of connecting expressions such as "apart from X, Y," "Y, moreover X," and "for, because Y, X" respectively. Or the structure may be clear from the content of the arguments. Often, however, a problem in the analysis of complex argumentation is that the literal presentation makes insufficiently clear how the argumentation is structured. To solve this problem, again, all kinds of contextual and other pragmatic factors need to be taken into account.

In Analysing Complex Argumentation, Snoeck Henkemans (1992) gives a thorough pragma-dialectical account of how the various kinds of argumentation structures come into being in explicit or implicit argumentative dialogues. Freeman (1991) treats the argumentation structures in Dialectics and the Macrostructure of Arguments in a Touminian way.

2.4. Reconstruction of argumentative discourse

The problems of reconstructing argumentative discourse and detecting strategic maneuvering require our attention when we are dealing with the state of the art in the analysis and evaluation of argumentation. These problems are approached much differently in the various theoretical contributions. Argument interpretation is the basis of argument reconstruction. Only after it has first been interpreted properly, argumentative discourse can be systematically reconstructed from a normative perspective developed for the purposes of argument evaluation. This is why argumentation theorists need not only be engaged in developing methods for reconstructing argumentative discourse in a well-motivated way, but also in disclosing the way in which ordinary language users proceed in making sense of argumentative discourse. As van Rees (2001) observes, in studies concerned with argument interpretation the interests center around general characteristics of the organization of discourse and the features of argumentative discourse ordinary language users orient to when interpreting arguments, and around the reasoning processes that are applied in argument interpretation.

The reconstruction of argumentation always starts from some specific theoretical perspective that serves as a heuristic tool as well as an analytic frame of reference. For Jackson and Jacobs (1982) and for Kauffeld (2002), to name just a few prominent analysts of argumentative discourse, speech act theory and the Gricean maxims for linguistic exchanges constitute such a theoretical perspective. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984), later joined by Jackson and Jacobs (1993, 1997) combined this perspective with a critical perspective. Dascal and Gross (1999), and Jacobs (2002), are outstanding examples of scholars who connect pragmatics in their analyses with rhetoric. Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002) also make use of rhetoric when they add insight in the discussants' strategic maneuvering between persuasiveness and critical reasonableness in their pragma-dialectical method of analysis. In their view, such insight can be of help in refining the reconstruction and in strengthening its justification.

2.5. Normativity and the fallacies

A theoretical concept argumentation theorists are especially interested in is that of the fallacies. Virtually every normative theory of argumentation

includes a treatment of the fallacies. In some sense, the quality of a normative theory of argumentation can even be judged from the degree to which it makes it possible to provide an adequate analysis of the fallacies. Conversely, it stands to reason that giving an analysis of notorious fallacies can be conducive to the examination of the norms of sound argumentation.

According to the standard definition, a fallacy is an argument that seems valid but is not (Hamblin 1970: 12). Well-known objections to this definition point out that a great number of the generally recognized fallacies are not arguments (e.g., "many questions") and others are (in modern interpretations) not invalid arguments (e.g., petitio principii) or the fallaciousness is not due to the invalidity of the argument (e.g., argumentum ad verecundiam, argumentum ad populum, argumentum ad hominem). Therefore, these fallacies are not covered by the definition.

One explanation why fallacy theorists stuck with this definition, although many fallacies are outside its scope, is that until recently most approaches to the fallacies have been logico-centric in a very restricted way. However, if the old definition is dropped, as most modern argumentation theorists have done, and fallacies are conceived as argumentative moves that damage in some way the quality of argumentative discourse, it is easier to bring to the light what is fallacious about them. For this purpose, because of the adaptation of such a "situated" view of the fallacies, a pragmatic approach is required which makes allowances for the communicative and interactional context in which the fallacies occur. Without taking pragmatic knowledge into account, many of the fallacies cannot be satisfactorily analyzed.

In the study of the fallacies a set of norms must be developed for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable moves in argumentative discourse. The criteria used in deciding whether such a norm has been violated, should also be investigated. For determining in specific cases if these criteria are satisfied, procedural tools are to be designed, involving the use of various kinds of contextual information. As a preliminary to this last enterprise, it must be established if the situation in which a would-be fallacy occurs is indeed within the scope of the norms.

Several contributions have recently been added to the post-Hamblin treatments of the fallacies I already mentioned, such as the Woods-Walton approach, the formal dialectical approach, and the pragma-dialectical approach. First of all, Walton published an impressive series of books on problems concerning the fallacies in which he attempts to achieve an ade-

quate pragmatic, rather than formal, approach of the various kinds of fallacies (1985, 1991, 1992, 1996a, 1996c, 1997, 1998a, 1998b, 1999). Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002) contributed to the explanation of the sometimes so problematic tractability of some of the fallacies by viewing them as 'derailments of strategic maneuvering'. O'Keefe's (2002) studies in the field of persuasion add an important empirical dimension to the study of the fallacies. The same applies to the efforts made by van Eemeren, Garssen and Meuffels (2002) to check the extent to which argumentative moves that are seen as fallacies from a critical normative perspective are also seen as lacking in reasonableness from the more naïve normative perspective of ordinary arguers.

2.6. Specific argumentative practices

In argumentative reality, of course, various kinds of more or less conventionalized practices can be distinguished. Some of them are closely connected with a specific kind of institutional context, such as the law or politics. Legal practice is in fact by many seen as the argumentative practice par excellence. In modern society various kinds of disputes cannot be resolved without recourse to specific legal procedures and the judgment of disinterested outsiders. Argumentation theorists are therefore well advised to pay, in line with the founding fathers of modern argumentation theory, Toulmin and Perelman, special attention to argumentative proceedings and relevant findings in the study of argumentation in the field of law.

As Feteris (1999) has shown, in the study of legal argumentation a great variety of topics and interests and approaches can be distinguished. Among the most prominent approaches are Aarnio's (1977), Alexy's (1978), and Pecenik's (1989). The different approaches usually involve different conceptions of the relation between the soundness criteria as applied in legal procedures and the soundness criteria as developed in argumentation theory. In what way do the two kinds of soundness criteria relate to each other? What kind of explanations can be given for the differences? What are the reasonableness conceptions underlying the various approaches to legal argumentation? Such questions are studied in this specific area of the study of argumentation and their answers can be illuminating to the field as a whole.

A related but less conventionalized argumentative practice is that of political discourse. It goes without saying that this problem area attracts

at the present time a lot of attention. See for an outstanding example, Zarefsky (1986, 1990). Van Dijk (1998) and Wodak et al. (1990) approach this subject from a more or less ideological perspective on argumentative discourse. Ilie (2000) and others are very much interested in making comparisons between the argumentation as conducted in parliamentary debates in different countries in Europe.

In the United States, and nowadays also in other parts of the world, there is a consistent interest in the well-regulated, and therefore also more artificial, characteristics of competitive debate. The debate practice, which takes various forms, owes a lot to the classical stasis theory of Hermagoras of Temnos. Several argumentation scholars have developed procedures for conducting such debates in an appropriate manner.

The comparison between ideal models for argumentation and actual argumentative discourse are also at issue in several current efforts to use insight from argumentation theory and promoting good practices of computer-mediated virtual argumentation. Among the protagonists of this stream of research are Reed (1998), Aakhus (2002), but first of all Jackson (2002). In most cases, they make an attempt to put theoretical insight in argumentation to good use in educational processes - not only to improve individual skills, but also to improve the argumentative procedures and discussion formats.

3. Conclusion

This speech was aimed at providing interested listeners with an overview of the state of the art in the theoretical study of argumentation. I have given a bird's eye view of the main approaches to argumentation and the main research areas. In the process, I have made an effort to point out some promising research trends and directions. This Lugano Conference on Argumentation may confirm some of my observations, but in a lively field such as the study of argumentation nowadays is, it will most certainly also add a lot to what I have said. Frankly, it may contradict some of my present remarks. Let us hope that we will have an inspiring conference, even if it would prove me wrong in various respects.

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