Literature Review

Argumentation in Germany and Austria:
An Overview of the Recent Literature

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1. Present Situation

After World War II, due to the misuse of rhetoric in Nazi propaganda, rhetoric and argumentation played no major role at universities, colleges and schools in Austria and Germany. This started to change from the early seventies onwards. Today the situation is completely different: public speech and techniques of debate have found their place in the curriculum both at the high school level and in academic institutions; there is an evergrowing amount of research and publishing activities, which has produced such a wealth of literature that I can't seriously claim to be able to give an exhaustive overview.

2. Institutions

Despite the current interest in rhetoric and argumentation, there are usually no departments specialized in the study of argumentation in Austria and Germany (like the departments of speech and communication in the United States and elsewhere). Among the most notable exceptions are the Institute of General Rhetoric (*Seminar für Allgemeine Rhetorik*) at the University of Tübingen/Germany and the Department of Speech and Communication (*Fachgebiet Sprechkunde und Sprecherziehung*) at the University of Saarbrücken/Germany. But most research on argumentation is done at departments of linguistics, philosophy and

law. Moreover, no overall association (comparable to the International Society for the Study of Argumentation) has been established so far by people doing research in the field of rhetoric and argumentation in the German-speaking area.

3. Conferences and Publishing Activities

Due to the diversity of institutions there is more communication within departments and/or faculties than across disciplines. But there are also a few interdisciplinary activities:

• A first step was made already in 1975 at the *Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung* (Centre for Interdisciplinary Research) at the University of Bielefeld: a conference on argumentation was attended by representatives of various disciplines; their contributions are published in Schecker (1977).

• Starting in the seventies, J. Kopperschmidt, H. F. Plett, H. Schanze and others organized conferences on subjects like "rhetorical perspectives," "argumentative topics," "argument/argumentation" and "rhetoric and philosophy." The proceedings have been published regularly (see Plett 1977; Breuer and Schanze 1981; Kopperschmidt and Schanze 1985; Schanze and Kopperschmidt 1989). Here experts from various fields (rhetoric, philosophy, law and linguistics) come together and deal with the specific themes of the conferences following different interests and methods.

• An *Historical Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* is being edited by W. Jens and G. Ueding (Institute of General Rhetoric, University of Tübingen); the first two volumes of the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* are in press. In connection with this project, an interdisciplinary conference on *Rhetorik zwischen den Wissenschaften* (Rhetoric between the Disciplines) was organized in 1989; the proceedings were published by Ueding (1990).

• In 1980, an annual periodical, *Rhetoric. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*, was started. It is edited by W. Jens, G. Ueding and J. Dyck and contains articles, reviews and bibliographical information on all aspects of rhetoric, including special issues in rhetoric and related subjects (like rhetoric and linguistics and rhetoric and theology).

• Occasionally, other journals devote special issues to themes like "argumentation," e.g., *Der Deutschunterricht* 27 (1975), 28 (1976) and *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 38/39 (1980).

• A bibliography of research on rhetoric and argumentation in the German-speaking area from 1945 to 1980 was published by Jamison and Dyck (1983).

4. Active Figures and Groups

In the following, I give a survey (which is far from being complete) of prominent authors. Most of them have produced a considerable amount of literature on rhetoric and argumentation. I start with scholars who are particularly interested in rhetoric (and speech and communication) and then go on to specialists from linguistics, philosophy and law.

Among German **rhetoricians**, I want to mention J. Kopperschmidt, who has written outstanding contributions to the field of rhetoric and argumentation. He has developed a comprehensive normative theory, using insights from ancient rhetoric, speech act theory and text linguistics and the theory

of communication and argumentation of J. Habermas (see Kopperschmidt's books 1976a, 1980, 1989a). Moreover, he has written many articles on the history of rhetoric and the applications of theoretical frameworks to the analysis and evaluation of political speeches (Kopperschmidt 1975, 1976b, 1977, 1981, 1989b, 1990a). Recently, he edited two books on rhetoric as a theory of the production of texts and influences of rhetoric in other disciplines (Kopperschmidt 1990b, 1991). A concise exposition of central concepts of Kopperschmidt's view of argumentation in English is available in van Eemeren *et al.* (1987).

I have already mentioned the activities of W. Jens and G. Ueding as editors of the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* and the periodical *Rhetoric. Ein internationales Jahrbuch*. Moreover, Jens has written many important contributions to the study of political rhetoric and the history of rhetoric (see the collection in Jens 1983). Together with B. Steinbrink, G. Ueding has written an introduction to rhetoric based on the classical tradition, including a short survey of the history of rhetoric from antiquity to the 20th century (Ueding and Steinbrink 1986). G. Kalivoda, who is also editing the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik* at the Institute of General Rhetoric in Tübingen, is the author of a book on structures and processes of political argumentation (Kalivoda 1986). He uses classical rhetoric, modern argumentation theory and historical studies as background for an empirical analysis of debates in the first Prussian parliament in Berlin in 1847.

My next remarks are concerned with a distinguished **representative of the study of speech and communication** in the German-speaking area, namely, H. Geißner. Besides practical contributions to the field, he has developed a theory of oral communication based on insights from semiotics, linguistics and the rhetorical tradition (*Sprechwissenschaft*; see Geißner 1978, 1981). Though Geißner has also contributed to the critical evaluation of actual

rhetorical practice, he takes a less normative stance than Kopperschmidt and is less willing to "idealize away" actual restrictions of dialogical and argumentative ability (see Geißner 1977). An English survey of his basic theoretical concepts can be found in van Eemeren *et al.* (1987).
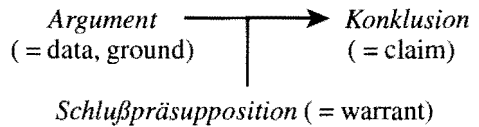
Another expert dealing with questions of speech and communication is N. Gutenburg. He has contributed to the processes of listening, understanding and judgement (Gutenburg 1984), but also to the discussion of rhetoric, dialectic and truth (cf. his English paper in van Eemeren *et al.* 1987). To finish this short survey in speech and communication, I want to mention L. Berger, who has written several articles on verbal and nonverbal clues of ironic argumentation (e.g., Berger 1988).

In the context of **rhetoric and literary criticism**, some books and articles have been written to show how categories of ancient rhetoric can be used for the description and interpretation of literary texts: H. Plett has used ancient classifications of figures of speech, but also insights from semiotics and text linguistics to establish a new typology of stylistic devices (Plett 1975); M. Beetz has tried to show the influence of classical rhetoric (and logic) in works of Baroque literature (Beetz 1980a, 1980b), and he has also written a paper on the modifications of the notion of "argument" ("argumentum") in rhetorical treatises of the 17th and 18th centuries (Beetz 1985). J. Brandt has used categories of ancient rhetoric to describe the structure of argumentative dialogues in Seneca's tragedies (Brandt 1986). As far as metatheory of literary criticism is concerned, I would like to mention S. Schmidt's paper on argumentation in literary criticism (Schmidt 1977).

I now turn to **linguistic studies of argumentation**. From the early seventies onwards, the developments in speech act theory and conversation analysis caused a strong interest on the part of linguists in speech acts like "to argue," "to explain," "to prove" and various sorts of argumentative

dialogues. Linguistic studies very often are strongly influenced by the theories of argumentation of S. Toulmin and J. Habermas (much less by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca). Quite often, the main interest is empirical description and a corpus of written or spoken argumentative texts is used. Usually, linguists are not very interested in the use of formal logic for the description of everyday argumentation and only rarely try to develop new kinds of formalisms (but see the formally oriented studies of Metzing 1975, Wunderlich 1980 and Heidrich 1982). A project on the formal analysis of natural language argumentation is going on at the University of Bielefeld, organized by W. Kindt.

Many linguists deal with the famous Toulmin-scheme and try to apply it to the analysis of argumentative texts (e.g., Huth 1975, Settekorn 1977, Göttert 1978 and Quasthoff 1978); others try to integrate G. H. von Wright's concept of practical syllogism with Toulmin's scheme (e.g., Schwitalla 1976 or Völzing 1979, who provides a complex extension of Toulmin's scheme). On the other hand, some linguists try to reduce the Toulmin-scheme and argue for a basic scheme with only three categories, e.g., Öhlschläger (1979, 1980; this scheme is taken up in Kienpointner 1983):

$$\textit{Argument} \quad \longrightarrow \quad \textit{Konklusion}$$
(= data, ground)   (= claim)

Schlußpräsupposition (= warrant)

A comprehensive typology of schemes of everyday argumentation is developed in Kienpointner (1992; English surveys of the typology and some examples are available in van Eemeren *et al.* (1987) and in Kienpointner (in press)). The typology is based on the ancient topical tradition (especially Aristotle's *Topics*) and modern approaches (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, Hastings, Schellens, van Eemeren and Kruiger, Govier) and applied to a corpus of spoken and written argumentative texts.

Another line of linguistic research is connected with speech act theory and the analysis of (sequences of) speech acts in argumentative texts. Öhlschläger (1979) treats the speech act "to argue," Strecker (1976) describes the speech act "to prove," Klein (1987) deals with a whole group of speech acts like "to confirm," "to explain," "to infer" and "to justify." Apeltauer (1978) gives a comprehensive survey of sequences of speech acts, moves and strategies in debates and discussions (cf. also Zillig 1982). There are only a few studies which treat the macrostructure of argumentative texts. In all of them, the overall structure of the text(s) is made visible with the help of complex diagrams which show the interrelation of the simple (that is, not complex) arguments (see Deimer 1975; Grewendorf 1975, 1980; Klein 1980; Frixen 1987; Kopperschmidt 1989a).

Other linguistic approaches concentrate on the conflict management in dialogues and conflict-solving strategies. These studies combine psychological and sociological perspectives with techniques of conversation analysis (e.g., turn taking mechanisms), e.g., Frankenberg (1976), Schwitalla (1987a). The English paper of Schwitalla contained in van Eemeren *et al.* (1987) shows that argumentation is not only a means to solve conflicts, but also an instrument to maintain consensus and to confirm group identity. Völzing has written a book on the development of argumentative capacities from early childhood onwards (1981; see the English survey in van Eemeren *et al.* 1987).

The relations between ideology, mass media and argumentation are being studied by a research group at the University of Vienna (see Wodak *et al.* 1990). Using linguistic, psychological and sociological methods, this group analyzes a corpus of texts (editorials, TV interviews, recordings of street interviews) to detect and describe anti-semitic tendencies in the political discourse of Austria before and after the election of K. Waldheim.

I want to finish this overview of linguistic research on argumentation in the German-speaking area with a few remarks concerning linguistic activities in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). From the sixties onwards, W. Schmidt developed a functional-communicative theory of grammar (see Schmidt *et al.* 1981). Based on a Marxist perspective, a detailed typology of communicative devices (*Kommunikationsverfahren*) was established to provide the speaker with efficient tools to reach certain communicative goals. Among these procedures are also (complex) speech acts like "to argue," "to explain," "to prove," etc. The practical intention of these studies was to improve communicative competence (see Michel 1985 and similar approaches in Richter 1986, Holik 1988). Other studies published in the former GDR tried to elaborate approaches from text linguistics and speech act theory to describe speech acts like "to explain" or "to infer" (see Lang 1976, Pasch 1987, Rosengren 1987). Some of these studies contain ideological premises and statements about political circumstances in the former GDR which are hardly acceptable (at least for me); but still, they are interesting contributions to the study of argumentation.

Having surveyed the linguistic research, I now proceed to describe **philosophical contributions**. Philosophers, of course, are much more interested in theoretical (epistemological, methodological, logical) and normative perspectives. The most influential approaches (which are probably best known outside of Germany and Austria) have been developed by J. Habermas (1971, 1973, 1988) and the members of the Erlangen school (Kamlah and Lorenzen 1967; Lorenzen and Schwemmer 1973; Lorenzen and Lorenz 1978; Gethmann 1980; cf. also the English papers of Lorenz 1982, 1987). Habermas developed an idealized, normative model of argumentation in an "ideal speech situation" (*ideale Sprechsituation*). The basic assumptions of

ideal communicative action and argumentation, however, are anticipated implicitly also in everyday situations; according to Habermas they can therefore serve as a critical standard for everyday argumentation. The Erlangen school transformed the classical model of deductive logic into a dialogical one and tried to formulate principles of rational dispute which are based on a critical reconstruction of everyday language. Both approaches are interesting normative attempts, but so far it is hard to see how they could be put into practice, despite the efforts of Gerhardus *et al.* (1975) and Berk (1979) to come closer to everyday practice.

Recently, Chr. Lumer has published a book where he develops an interesting normative approach (Lumer 1990; see also the extensions of his norms in his English paper, 1988). He tries to establish explicit rules and principles of argumentation which are closer to everyday practice and still as rationally acceptable as possible. Moreover, Lumer tries to clarify basic epistemological and methodological problems of argumentation theory, criticizing in some detail most of the standard approaches mentioned above.

Another German philosopher with special interest in argumentation, H. Wohlrapp, discusses analytical and constructivistic theories of science and argues for a modified dialogical procedure of justification (Wohlrapp 1979); in an English paper contained in van Eemeren *et al.* (1987), Wohlrapp criticizes Toulmin's scheme.

Finally, I want to mention J. Walther's book, *Philosophisches Argumentieren* (*Philosophical Argumentation*, 1990), which is a practical textbook containing formal and informal schemes and principles of philosophical argumentation. Walther gives a lot of examples from authentic philosophical texts and provides exercises (with solutions) at the end of each chapter.

I now turn to **studies of argumentation in law**. They can be characterized as being influenced either by logical and normative schools of thought or by rhetorical and rela-tivistic approaches. The first branch takes up the work done in deontic logic and normative models like the one of Habermas or the Erlangen school; the second follows the tradition of ancient topics (dialectic) and rhetoric. Alexy (1978) is an example of a highly elaborated normative model of legal argumentation which takes up standards of validity in deontic logic as well as discourse principles of Habermas and the Erlangen school. Alexy provides a set of explicitly stated rules for discussion about norms and values, which he then applies to legal argumentation. Rodingen (1977, 1981) is a representative of the group inspired by rhetoric (see also Ballweg 1989, Sobota 1990a and her English paper 1990b), taking up the revival of ancient topics and rhetoric which started with the work of Viehweg (1974, 1st edition 1953) and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca. Another representative of this group is Th. Siebert (1977, 1981; see also his English paper in van Eemeren *et al.* 1987), who is influenced by ancient and modern rhetoric and pragmatics.

A useful overview of research on legal argumentation is given by Neumann (1986), who critically discusses contributions from various theoretical backgrounds.

5. Trends and Tendencies

As the overview in **4** indicates, there are some areas of research which are dealt with frequently in the German literature on rhetoric and argumentation; moreover, there are a few authors, traditions and schools of thought which are especially influential. In the following, I want to sum them up briefly:

(a) Main areas of research:

- norms of argumentation, normative rules and principles of discourse;
- speech acts, speech act sequences, structure of argumentative dialogues;
- schemes of argumentation (formal and

informal ones);
• political argumentation, ideology and mass media;
• strategies of argumentation, figures of speech.

(b) Most influential theories and approaches:

• the theories of argumentation of S. Toulmin and J. Habermas;
• the dialogue logic developed by P. Lorenzen and others (Erlangen school);
• speech act theory, text linguistics, conversation analysis;
• modern semiotics, especially pragmatics;
• ancient and modern rhetoric (especially the "New Rhetoric" of Ch. Perelman;

• Wittgenstein's use theory of meaning (see especially Heringer et al. 1977, Strecker 1976, Öhlschläger 1979, Kienpointner 1983).

6. Conclusion

The study of rhetoric and argumentation has become a strong (and still growing) movement in the German-speaking area which crosses the borders of various disciplines. My hope is, first, that this tendency will continue and, second, that the gaps between highly abstract and normative and rather simple empirical and practical approaches will be bridged in the near future.

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