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Commentary on: Manfred Kraus' "Arguing or Reasoning? Argumentation in Rhetorical Context"

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Kraus proposes a convincing dialogical analysis of rhetorical texts that are presented by a speaker to a non-interactive audience. By thus analyzing rhetorical texts, he attempts to resolve "the apparent contradiction between a fundamentally dialogical concept of argumentation and the presence of argumentation in rhetorical texts". The problem is, however, that such an analysis of monological discourse has already been given by argumentation theorists favoring a dialogical approach to argumentation.¹ His analysis seems, for instance, to be completely in line with the view taken in pragma-dialectics on the dialogical character of monologues, as the following quote by van Eemeren and Grootendorst shows:

The pragma-dialectical argumentation theory assumes that, in principle, argumentative language is always part of an exchange of views between two parties that do not hold the same opinion, even when the exchange of views takes place by way of a monologue. The monologue is then taken to be a specific kind of critical discussion where the protagonist is speaking (or writing) and the role of the antagonist remains implicit. Even if the role of the antagonist is not actively and explicitly performed, the discourse of the protagonist can still be analyzed as a contribution to a critical discussion: The protagonist makes an attempt to counter (potential) doubt or criticism of a specific or non-specific audience or readership (2004, p. 59).

In their monograph *Argumentation, Communication and Fallacies* which was published in 1992, van Eemeren and Grootendorst introduce the term "implicit discussion" for discursive texts that appear to be a monologue at first sight. They justify their analysis of monological texts as an implicit discussion as follows:

A speaker or writer who is intent on resolving a dispute will have to take just as much account of implicit doubt about his standpoint as of doubt that has been expressed explicitly. He may also deal with doubt that is purely imaginary. The presumed antagonist need not even exist, as when the speaker or writer imagines

¹ Kraus maintains that monologues should be distinguished from solo performances, because he believes that in the case of monologues there is no audience. In ordinary usage, however, the term 'monologue' is more commonly used to refer to longer stretches of talk by a speaker addressed at a listener or group of listeners that do not interrupt the speaker. It is in this latter sense that I use the term 'monologue' here.

how his standpoint might be received by a skeptical listener or reader. Then he is anticipating possible doubt. His argumentative discourse is in all these cases, as it were, part of a real or imagined *implicit discussion* (1992, p. 43).

Kraus' remark that in dialogical approaches such as pragma-dialectics "dialogue is assumed to be a necessary condition for argumentation" thus needs to be made more precise: in a dialogical approach to argumentation, it should be possible to reconstruct the argumentative discourse as a dialogue, but it is not necessary for the discourse to be explicitly dialogical.

In the pragma-dialectical theory, the protagonist's argumentation is seen as a complex whole made up of statements put forward to deal with real or anticipated critical reactions from an antagonist (Snoeck Henkemans, 1992, p. 19). Kraus' assumption that "the idea of a hidden dialogue structure of rhetorical texts might even be reconcilable with the pragma-dialectical model" is therefore completely justified. But unlike Kraus suggests, this was already the case within the standard pragma-dialectical theory, that is, before the integration of a rhetorical component into the theory, just as it has always been possible to make a distinction between the ideal model of a critical discussion and cases of argumentation as they occur in practice.

Van Eemeren and Houtlosser chose to add a rhetorical dimension to the theoretical frame-work of pragma-dialectics in order to make it possible to account for the strategic design of argumentative discourse (van Eemeren, 2012, p. 440). Next to the dimension of *reasonableness* predominant in the pragma-dialectical standard theory they thus incorporated the dimension of *effectiveness* in their theorizing (van Eemeren, 2012, p. 441). That their theory still has a dialectical basis, and is not intended as a fully rhetorical theory is explicitly recognized by van Eemeren:

Far from subsuming all of rhetoric, in pragma-dialectics insights from rhetoric are only used in so far as they are of help in the analysis and evaluation of strategic manoeuvring. The scope of rhetoric is, of course, much broader, and utilizing rhetorical insights for this specific purpose in a dialectical framework of analysis leaves rhetoric as such untouched (van Eemeren, 2012, p. 446).

In sum, I believe that even though the dialogical analysis of rhetorical discourse presented by Kraus is in itself completely defensible, some of the starting-points underlying the attempt at giving such an analysis are untenable.

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