Response to my commentator

Manfred Kraus

University of Tübingen, Philologisches Seminar

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Response to my Commentator

MANFRED KRAUS

Philologisches Seminar
University of Tübingen
Wilhelmstraße 36
72074 Tübingen
Germany
manfred.kraus@uni-tuebingen.de

1. INTRODUCTION

The commentary acknowledges that my dialogical analysis of rhetorical texts, that is of larger sequences of uninterrupted one-way communication from an orator to a passive audience is basically convincing. Yet it argues that my analysis proceeds from untenable starting points, especially because it allegedly imputes to the pragma-dialectical model an entirely dialogical conception of argument.

2. PRAGMA-DIALECTICS AND 'MONOLOGUES'

As far as pragma-dialectics is concerned, I admit that I may perhaps have forced an open door. It can’t be denied that even before the introduction of strategic maneuvering as an additional, rhetorically based element to the pragma-dialectical model, by introducing the term “implicit discussion,” pragma-dialectical theory had always basically allowed for its application to what they call ‘monologues.’ Yet this does not disprove that the model as such continues to be essentially dialectical, since it maintains that even in such texts the argumentative discourse can always be reconstructed as a dialogue. I do not deny this; in fact this is what I have tried to do in my paper. As a matter of fact, the commentary itself admits that “their theory still has a dialectical basis,” and the quotation from van Eemeren (2012, p. 446) explicitly speaks of the persistence of “a dialectical framework of analysis.”

Yet apart from pragma-dialectics it can hardly be denied that Ralph Johnson’s and Douglas Walton’s theories of argument in particular are very strongly dialectical (Johnson, 2000; Walton, 1996), far more so than the pragma-dialectical model. Walton insists on the presence of the “context of a dialogue” for there to be an argument (Walton, 1996, pp. 41). Hence it may have been Walton’s theory more so than van Eemeren’s that provoked Blair’s concept of ‘solo arguments’ (Blair, 1998, p. 333), which I found helpful in bridging the gap between the outwardly monological appearance of rhetorical argumentation and its hidden dialogical structure.

3. DIALECTICAL VS. DIALOGICAL

I fully admit, however, that my argument is at times guilty of using the terms ‘dialectical’ and ‘dialogical’ quite as interchangeably as has rightly been criticized by
Blair. I agree that ‘dialectical’ should be reserved for “the properties of all arguments related to their involving doubts and disagreements”, and ‘dialogical’ to “turn-taking verbal exchanges” (Blair, 1998, p. 337). Had I been more consistent in keeping those two terms apart, it might have turned out as a simple result that rhetorical argumentation is just not dialogical, but still basically dialectical.

4. CONCLUSION

All this considered, while I do accept part of the commentary’s criticism, I find little reason to retract my analysis of rhetorical argumentation as inadequate.

REFERENCES