

Chapter 2

Building a Theory of Argumentation



2.1 Meta-Theoretical Principles

In order to theorize adequately about argumentation, certain meta-theoretical principles must be observed that need to be taken into account in building an adequate theory of argumentation. These principles pertain to fundamental characteristics of the theorizing that define the nature of the theory that is aimed for as well as the way in which this theory is to be constructed. They determine the methodological requirements that must be fulfilled for an argumentation theory to serve its purposes and to avoid deficiencies in the theorizing. Because the meta-theoretical principles indicate what kind of shape the theory to be constructed should take, they constitute the methodological starting points that regulate the way in which the theorizing is to take place. By explaining, before we set out the pragma-dialectical theory in the following chapters, which meta-theoretical principles we consider vital to the theorizing, we do not only make clear what, in our view, adequate theorizing about argumentation involves, but also what the distinctive features are of the perspective on the study of argumentation that is expounded in this volume. It is the implementation of these meta-theoretical principles that distinguishes the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation distinctively from other approaches.

The meta-theoretical principles guiding the pragma-dialectical approach have been established on the basis of our reflection on the theorizing about argumentation in other theoretical approaches to argumentation that we scrutinized in the 1970s. Each of these principles was inspired by our examination of the various approaches and they were all articulated in order to avoid certain drawbacks of these approaches that we noticed in the process. Among these other approaches were, next to the classical approaches to dialectic-cum-syllogistic-logic and rhetoric

This chapter is primarily based on van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 1–18).

of Aristotle and other antique philosophers, modern formal logic, modern rhetoric and American academic debate, Naess's analytical tools for clarifying discussions, Toulmin's procedural model of argumentation, the new rhetoric of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, and Barth and Krabbe's formal dialectic *in statu nascendi*.

The meta-theoretical principles for the theorizing about argumentation that determine the methodological starting points of pragma-dialectics are "functionalization", "socialization", "externalization" and "dialectification". In our view, these four general principles need to be brought to bear explicitly and consistently in the theorizing about argumentation. In that sense they have constituted from the very beginning the methodological framework in which the development of the pragma-dialectical theory has taken place. Each of the principles that are involved indicates a particular facet of the way in which argumentation is to be treated in the theorizing—each time in contradistinction to the way in which it is treated in certain other approaches. When taken together, the four principles define the unique position that the pragma-dialectical approach, in spite of certain commonalities with various other approaches, occupies in argumentation theory.

The principles of functionalization, socialization, externalization and dialectification enable us to do justice in the theorizing to the general characteristics of argumentation we have discussed in Sect. 1.1. Functionalization is primarily associated with the properties of argumentation as a communicative act complex, socialization with its properties as an interactional act complex, externalization with the identification of what the arguer can be held accountable for, and dialectification with determining the acceptability of argumentation for a rational judge who judges reasonably. As will be made clear in the remainder of this volume, in carrying out the pragma-dialectical interpretation of the research program for argumentation theory, the four meta-theoretical principles are instrumental in giving substance, both in the descriptive and in the normative research, to the methodical integration of the pragmatic dimension and the dialectical dimension of the study of argumentative discourse that we aim for.

2.2 Functionalization of Argumentation Theory

In logical approaches, especially in the formal ones, argumentation is as a rule treated as a logical inference in which a conclusion is derived from certain premises. This means that in such approaches argumentation is viewed exclusively in structural terms. In dealing with problems of logic such structural treatments may have much to recommend them, but when problems of argumentation are involved, as is by definition the case in argumentation theory, they miss the point. Treatments of argumentation that are purely structural do not do justice to the functional rationale of the design of argumentation as a communicative and interactional act complex aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. As a result, the basic function of argumentation in the management of disagreement and the way in which it is geared to fulfilling this function tend to be ignored.

Argumentation always arises in response to, or in anticipation of, a difference of opinion, and the lines of justification that are chosen in the argumentation are contrived to realizing the purpose of resolving this difference of opinion in the case concerned. The need for argumentation, the requirements the justification by means of argumentation has to fulfil and the structure of the argumentation as a whole are in principle all adapted to the presumed or actually expressed doubts, objections and counterclaims of its addressee, and this is reflected in the argumentative moves that are made in the discourse. The theorizing about argumentation should therefore concentrate on the specific functions that the various kinds of argumentative moves made by the parties involved in argumentative discourse fulfil in managing their disagreement. This is why, in our view, in dealing with the subject matter at issue in argumentation theory “functionalization” is required.

Functionalization in argumentation theory should concentrate on determining how linguistic, visual and other semiotic means are used in communication aimed at resolving a difference of opinion by means of argumentation. When it comes to verbal argumentation, the argumentative functions of the use of the communicative tools can be determined by making use of the amended version of speech act theory we have developed in pragma-dialectics.¹ According to speech act theory, speaking or writing a language consists of performing “speech acts” that create certain speech act-related functional commitments for the language users concerned. Such functional commitments may consist in the case of a promise in the obligation to do something, in the case of a request in trying make someone else do something and in the case of an assertion in maintaining that something is the case. Treating argumentative discourse as communicating specific kinds of functional commitments by means of speech acts is a first way in which we give substance to the pragmatic dimension of the study of argumentation in the pragma-dialectical theory.

In oral as well as written discourse speakers and writers perform speech acts that we call *communicative acts* to achieve the communicative effect of understanding in their listeners or readers.² In each of these communicative acts a particular proposition presented in the speech act is given a particular communicative function. The proposition concerned always consists of a reference to a subject (e.g. *Corina*) and a predicate mentioning a property (e.g. *not wearing trousers*) that is assigned to it (e.g. *Corina does not wear trousers*). Giving a particular communicative function (e.g. the function of a *request*) to the proposition involved completes the communicative act (e.g. “I request Corina not to wear trousers”). The communicative effect of understanding that is aimed for in performing a communicative act always concerns the combination of the proposition conveyed and its communicative function.

¹The main sources of speech act theory we started from in making speech act theory suitable for dealing with argumentation in verbal communication and interaction are Austin (1975) and Searle (1969, 1979).

²For the sake of clarity we re-baptized Austin and Searle’s “illocutionary acts” into “communicative acts”.

Next to the “elementary” communicative acts performed at the level of individual sentences that traditional speech act theory concentrates upon, we distinguish in pragma-dialectics also “complex” communicative acts that generally include a combination of sentences and are performed at a higher textual level, such as argumentation. Complex communicative acts consist in principle of more than one elementary communicative act and relate at the higher textual level to another communicative act performed or presupposed in the discourse. Argumentation, for instance, includes in its justification as premises in principle more elementary communicative acts and always relates to a standpoint.³ This means that the speech acts involved in such a complex communicative act have a communicative function on the level of the constitutive elementary communicative acts (they are, for instance, assertions or statements) and another communicative function when taken together (they then constitute, for instance, an argumentation). When speech act theory is in this way amended by adding the notion of complex communicative acts to the theoretical framework, the functionalization aimed for in pragma-dialectics can be given substance for all argumentative moves, both at the sentence level and at a higher textual level.

According to the pragma-dialectically amended speech act theory, in order for a sentence or combination of sentences expressed in the discourse to count as a particular elementary or complex communicative act and to be recognizable as such for a listener or reader, certain “identity conditions” have to be fulfilled in the speech acts concerned. If these identity conditions have not been fulfilled, it is not possible for listeners or readers to determine what the communicative function of the speech acts they are dealing with is. In formulating the identity conditions of the communicative act complex of argumentation, which is pivotal in argumentation theory, we assume that, next to the argumentation, the speaker or writer has performed another communicative act in which a standpoint is advanced with respect to a proposition *p*. We also assume that the speaker or writer is addressing the listener or reader by means of the elementary communicative acts 1, 2, ..., *n*. Then the following two identity conditions have to be met in the complex communicative act of argumentation:

- (1) In 1, 2, ..., *n* certain commitments are undertaken to the propositions that are expressed in these elementary communicative acts.
- (2) The performance of the constellation of communicative acts 1, 2, ..., *n* counts as an attempt to justify *p*, i.e. as an attempt by the speaker or writer to convince the listener or reader of the acceptability of the standpoint that is advanced with respect to *p*.

The first identity condition that is stated here is called the *propositional content condition*, because it indicates with which requirements the content of the propositions

³According to Toulmin (2003), argumentation for a claim always contains “data” and a “warrant”; in pragma-dialectics we distinguish between “non-bridging” and “bridging” premises in support of a standpoint.

that are advanced in the argumentation needs to comply with. If this propositional content condition has not been fulfilled, no argumentation has been advanced. The second identity condition stated here is called the *essential condition*, because it indicates which requirement needs to be realized in order to make the constellation of elementary communicative acts that is advanced a complex communicative act of argumentation. If this essential condition has not been fulfilled, no argumentation has been advanced. In order to be recognizable as such, all communicative acts, whatever communicative acts they may be, need to comply with the propositional content and essential conditions applying to the communicative act concerned.

Because the propositional content and the essential conditions of a speech act determine together the identity of a communicative act, irrespective of whether it concerns an elementary or a complex communicative act, it is vital to the functionalization of argumentation theory that the identity conditions of the communicative acts that are performed in the argumentative moves made in argumentative discourse are for all communicative acts formulated in a similar way, along the lines we have just demonstrated for argumentation. In this way a functional definition can be provided of the various kinds of argumentative moves that play a part in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. This means that in functionalizing argumentation theory not only the argumentation that is advanced in argumentative discourse must be described as a functional elementary or complex speech act, but also the standpoints at issue and in addition all other argumentative moves in the discourse that are instrumental in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits.

2.3 Socialization of Argumentation Theory

In approaches concentrating on the epistemic role of argumentation in justifying a standpoint, argumentation tends to be primarily viewed as the product of an individual's reasoning process aimed at establishing the truth of the standpoint, thus ignoring the fact that argumentation pertains not only to descriptive standpoints but more often than not also to evaluative or prescriptive standpoints. Whatever type of standpoint happens to be at issue, it is characteristic of real-life argumentation that in all cases it is aimed at resolving a difference of opinion between two different parties who do not see eye to eye about its acceptability. This means that the argumentation advanced in actual argumentative discourse is always part of an explicit or implicit dialogue between the two parties that have a difference of opinion. In our view, in dealing with argumentation it must therefore never be neglected that argumentation involves as a matter of course discursive interaction.

Since argumentation entails discursive interaction between the parties involved in the difference of opinion that is to be resolved, it is recommendable to distinguish clearly between these parties. In doing so, we will designate the party that has advanced the standpoint at issue the *protagonist*. In order to resolve the difference of opinion about the standpoint, the protagonist has to advance argumentation that responds methodically to the questions, doubts, objections and counterclaims put

forward, or supposed to be entertained, by the other party. That other party we will designate the *antagonist*. In order to resolve the difference of opinion, the antagonist has to advance the various kinds of critical reactions of whatever kind that the standpoint and the arguments in defence of the standpoint put forward by the protagonist may instigate. The dialogical character of the way in which the parties involved in a difference of opinion in argumentative discourse attempt to resolve their difference should be reflected in the theorizing about argumentation by treating argumentation as part of an interactional exchange in which the protagonist's and the antagonist's contributions systematically depend on each other. This is why, in our view, in dealing with the subject matter at issue in argumentation theory "socialization" is required.

In the pragma-dialectical theorizing, socialization is given shape by defining the interactional roles of the protagonist and the antagonist in resolving a difference of opinion in terms of the obligations that are taken on as commitments in assuming these roles. The argumentative obligations of the two parties involved in a difference of opinion can be described by specifying which speech acts performed by the protagonist and the antagonist are instrumental in resolving the difference of opinion. After having advanced their standpoints, protagonists have the task of defending these standpoints systematically against all challenges involved in the critical reactions of the antagonists and to perform in the process the speech acts that are most suitable for that purpose. It is the task of antagonists who have doubts about the acceptability of the standpoints at issue, or even contradict them, to respond critically to all arguments advanced by the protagonists until a joint outcome has been reached. Together the protagonists and the antagonists have to come to agreements on the procedural starting points (i.e. the rules to be followed), the material starting points of the discussion (i.e. the shared premises) and the conclusion that has been reached. The social embedding of argumentation means that the interactional character of argumentative discourse is reflected in the nature, the distribution and the mutual relationships of the communicative acts that the parties involved in a difference of opinion need to perform in order to make the argumentative moves that are instrumental in resolving their difference of opinion.

Socializing the treatment of argumentation in this way requires some further amendments of speech act theory as it was traditionally envisaged. Instead of maintaining a general philosophical perspective, in dealing with the speech acts performed in actual argumentative discourse the speaker's or writer's perspective and the listener's or reader's perspective need to be differentiated. In the descriptions of speech acts given by Austin and Searle a perspective is assumed that presupposes having a full view of the available possibilities and what is in the minds of those involved in the performance of a speech act. In practice however such a God's eye view is not a reality and the speaker's or writer's perception of a speech act may differ in some important respects from that of the listener or reader. These differences are caused by the fact that in real-life communication and interaction they cannot be sure about the fulfilment of certain speech act conditions and as a consequence they will have different perspectives on the speech acts that have been performed. In the case of a question, for instance, the speakers or writers

may not know whether the listeners or readers are indeed capable of answering the question they have asked and the speakers or readers may not know whether the speaker or writer really wants to know the answer. In our amended version of speech act theory we therefore differentiated between the distinctive features of a speech act viewed from the perspective of the speaker or writer and the distinctive features of a speech act viewed from the perspective of the listener or reader.

Whereas the communicative acts performed in speech acts are aimed at achieving the communicative effect of understanding in the listener or reader, viewed as interactional acts these speech acts are aimed at achieving the interactional effect of acceptance.⁴ Because communicative acts and interactional acts are always performed simultaneously by means of the same linguistic or other semiotic expression, they represent different dimensions of the same speech act rather than different speech acts. When speech acts are viewed as *interactional acts*, the focus is on how the speaker or writer intends to achieve a particular response from the listener or hearer based on the communicative act that is performed in the speech act. The interactional effect aimed for by performing the complex communicative act of argumentation is, for instance, that due to their understanding of the argumentation the addressees get convinced of the acceptability of the standpoint at issue.

Being convinced can be seen as the optimal interactional effect aimed for in advancing argumentation, but in actual practice it is usually hard to establish when exactly the psychological state of being convinced has been achieved. In principle, it is easier to detect whether or not the listener or reader indicates that the interactional effect has been achieved than the standpoint at issue in the exchange has been accepted after the argumentation has been advanced, irrespective of whether this means that he or she is fully convinced in a psychological sense. Aiming for the achievement of the interactional effect of acceptance based on the communicative act performed in a speech act is in fact inherent in all interactional acts. In some cases, however, like in the case of argumentation and convincing, there exists a conventional relationship between performing a particular type of communicative act and trying to achieve a particular kind of interactional effect, so that there is a more or less fixed association between the communicative and the interactional dimension of the speech act.

2.4 Externalization of Argumentation Theory

In present-day rhetorical approaches to argumentation, but also in some approaches more generally known as discourse analysis, in the analysis and evaluation of argumentative discourse references are often made to what the arguer is supposed to have had in mind or felt when saying or writing something. This means that in such

⁴For the sake of clarity we re-baptized the “perlocutionary acts” of Austin and Searle into “interactional acts”.

cases these approaches are relying on somewhat speculative judgements concerning the motives or attitudes underlying the argumentative moves that have been made in the discourse. Such indulging in “psychologizing” is not desirable if we want to be able to hold analysts and evaluators to account for what they ascribe to the arguers. In principle it is not necessary either, because when they engage in argumentative discourse the arguers concerned may be regarded to put up their standpoints and other argumentative moves for public scrutiny. If they do not express their intentions explicitly and these intentions are not known otherwise, they may be supposed to have conveyed these intentions implicitly or indirectly. Anyway, the arguers can always be held to account for what they have communicated in the discourse.

Instead of starting from the motives and attitudes that the parties taking part in argumentative discourse may have, the theorizing about argumentation should focus on uncovering and explicating what exactly the arguers may be considered responsible for in making the argumentative moves they have made in the speech event in which they are engaged. Due to the way in which speakers and writers have expressed themselves in the communication and interaction with their listeners or readers, they have accumulated during the discourse certain commitments which represent the argumentative responsibilities they have undertaken. These commitments, which pertain to the propositions advanced and their communicative function, may result in particular interactional obligations. Speakers or writers who have advanced a standpoint, for instance, can be held to the acceptability of this standpoint and have an interactional obligation to defend it when challenged to do so by the listener or reader. This is why, in dealing with argumentative discourse, tracing the commitments acquired in the discourse is vital and their “externalization” is required.

As far as the commitments that can be ascribed to the parties have not already been proclaimed in the starting points of the argumentative discourse or have not been explicitly externalized in the discourse, they should be externalizable from what has been said or can be regarded as understood in the discourse. The first source for determining the commitments acquired by the parties in argumentative discourse is the oral or written text that is communicated in order to resolve a difference of opinion. If the parties involved have not externalized their commitments straightforwardly in the text, the context in which the speech act at issue has been performed constitutes a second source. Next to the linguistic “micro-context” preceding or following the speech act at issue, the context may consist of the situational “meso-context” in which the speech act is performed (e.g. conveying doubt when the listener casts a questioning look at the speaker who has just advanced a standpoint), the institutional “macro-context” of the communicative activity type in which the speech act occurs (e.g. a parliamentary debate) or the relevant “intertextual context” (e.g. the article defending the standpoint to which the text containing the speech act at issue responds). A third source for determining commitments consists of the logical and pragmatic inferences that can be made from the argumentative discourse, which may vary from logical presuppositions

and implications to pragmatic implicatures as described by Grice (1975).⁵ A fourth source is provided by the general background information available to everyone who is part of the communicative community and sometimes also by specific background information only available to those who are “in the know” about the subject at issue, such as eye-witnesses or people who have the relevant expertise.

The main theoretical tool for describing the commitments acquired by the performance of speech acts in argumentative discourse is, again, our amended version of speech act theory. This amended theory makes it possible to describe the commitments assumed by the arguers in the discourse precisely and systematically in terms of conditions for the performance of communicative acts. The four types of conditions distinguished by Austin and Searle are in pragma-dialectics divided into two categories. First, as explained in Sect. 2.2, there are the “identity conditions”, which consist of the propositional content and essential conditions distinguished by Searle. To make it possible to recognize of what type a communicative act is, its identity conditions need to be fulfilled (e.g. by the speaker’s emphatic expression of allegiance to a proposition about a future action on his part in the case of a promise), so that the identity conditions can also be seen as “recognisability conditions”. Second, in addition to the identity conditions, there are the “correctness conditions”, which consist of the preparatory and the sincerity conditions distinguished by Searle. The correctness conditions need to be fulfilled to make a speech act a correct performance of a particular communicative act (e.g. the one who makes a promise needs to be capable of realizing it and may be regarded to want to realize it). Since the correctness of a communicative act depends not so much on the sincerity of the speakers or writers (which is as a rule hard to verify anyway), but on their acceptance of the responsibility for aiming to realize the point of the communicative act, we prefer to refer to the sincerity condition as *responsibility condition*.

In externalizing argumentative discourse in pragma-dialectics the various moves made in the discourse are described by formulating next to the identity conditions of the communicative acts by which these moves are made also their correctness conditions. In this way, all argumentative moves that play a constructive role in resolving a difference of opinion can be defined by describing the identity-related and the correctness-related commitments involved in performing the communicative acts by which these moves are made. Communicative acts that play a crucial role in argumentative discourse, such as for instance “accepting” and “doubting”, are then externalized by stating the specific and publicly assumed commitments that have been undertaken in performing these communicative acts. In linking the externalization of communicative acts thus realized with the interactional acts associated with these communicative acts in the process of resolving a difference of opinion, “accepting” can be defined interactively as giving the response that is preferred by the other party to an arguable act, while “doubting” can be conceptualized as creating an opposition between the communicative act performed and a

⁵For a theoretical approach to verbal communication and interaction integrating the Gricean maxims with the speech act conditions, see van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1992: 49–55).

communicative act relating to the same proposition (or combination of propositions) in which a standpoint has been advanced.

Instead of being treated as being merely “internal” states of minds, or “mental states”, in pragma-dialectics notions such as “accepting” and “doubting” are in this way defined in terms of the performance of specific verbal activities in the discourse. Starting from the externalizations thus achieved, other interactional acts depending on communicative acts that are crucial to resolving a difference of opinion by means of argumentative discourse can be conceptualized in the same externalized vein. The interactional act of convincing, for instance, which is aimed at achieving by means of the crucial communicative act complex of argumentation the interactional effect of “being convinced”, is in pragma-dialectics conceptualized in an externalized way as performing the communicative act of accepting the standpoint at issue in a difference of opinion based on the argumentation that has been advanced in its support.⁶

2.5 Dialectification of Argumentation Theory

Discourse and conversation analysts dealing with argumentative discourse restrict themselves as a rule to describing argumentation as it actually occurs in the communicative domains they are examining (e.g. Doury 2006). They tend to view argumentative reality from an “emic” perspective, i.e. without starting from any preconceived theoretical premises, staying in their theoretical observations as closely as possible to the way in which the phenomenon at issue is seen by the participants in the discourse.⁷ A similar descriptive approach is basically taken by the “new rhetoricians” inspired by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca and, in spite of their divergent quantitative approach, also by “persuasion researchers” paying attention to argumentation. However, if argumentation theory is to be instrumental in improving argumentative practices, as we believe it should, limiting the research merely to description will not do. In our view, next to a descriptive empirical dimension, argumentation theory also has a normative critical dimension concentrating on what is required for argumentative discourse to be suitable for resolving a difference of opinion on the merits.

Like other argumentation theorists interested in the normative dimension of argumentation theory, pragma-dialecticians do not content themselves with just any outcome of a difference of opinion, indifferently of the way in which this outcome has been reached. Instead, they are interested in reaching an outcome that is based

⁶For a discussion of the relationship between the communicative (“illocutionary”) act complex of argumentation and the interactional (“perlocutionary”) act of convincing see van Eemeren and Grootendorst (1984: 47–74), Jacobs (1987: 231–233) and van Eemeren (2010: 36–39).

⁷For a pragma-dialectical take on Pike’s (1967) distinction between an “internal”, participant-centred *emic* approach to discourse and an “external”, theory-driven *etic* approach, see van Eemeren (2010: 137–138).

on the quality of the argumentative moves that have been made in the argumentative discourse, particularly the argumentation. This means that, in their view, it needs to be established what kind of reasonableness conditions the speech acts performed in the argumentative discourse need to comply with in order to function as argumentative moves that contribute constructively to the resolution of a difference of opinion. The normative approach required for this purpose must start from an external, “etic” perspective, inspired by an adequate philosophical conception of reasonableness: it has to provide a theoretical model of how the critical exchange of argumentation and other argumentative moves should be regulated in order to be instrumental in resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. This is why, in our view, in dealing with the subject matter at issue in argumentation theory, “dialectification” is required.

Dialectification means that argumentative discourse is viewed from the perspective of the theoretical ideal of a critical discussion aimed at resolving a difference of opinion on the merits and subjected to rules which incorporate all standards of reasonableness that need to be observed in the argumentative discourse for achieving this purpose. In order to realize a reasonable exchange of argumentative moves that leads to an outcome based on the quality of the argumentative moves that have been made, the regimentation of a critical discussion cannot be “geometrical” in the philosophical sense of guaranteeing that the argumentative moves that are made are always true and the connections between them are always logically valid. In argumentative discourse more often than not it is not the truth of standpoints or other speech acts that is at issue but their acceptability in a broader sense and it is not a final justification in terms of logically valid reasoning that is aimed for but a systematic checking of the tenability of the one party’s argumentation against the other party’s criticism. A regimentation that is “anthropological” in the philosophical sense will not do either, because it equates reasonableness completely with the acceptance of the argumentative moves that are made and the way in which the standpoint is supported by the intended addressees, without incorporating any external standards of quality. According to pragma-dialectics, the dialectification of argumentation theory requires a regimentation of the performance of the exchange of speech acts conveying argumentative moves that is “critical” in the philosophical sense, which is, in spite of incorporating some of their properties, fundamentally different from the geometrical and the anthropological reasonableness conceptions.

A critical regimentation based on a *critical rationalist* philosophy of reasonableness abandons aiming for a final justification of standpoints and replaces it by a systematic critical testing aimed at checking whether the standpoint at issue can be undermined.⁸ Such testing may pertain to differences of opinion about descriptive standpoints but also to differences of opinion about evaluative or prescriptive standpoints. Next to trying to contradict a descriptive standpoint such as “In the Netherlands women work fewer hours than in any other country in Europe”,

⁸See, for instance, Popper (1972, 1974) and Albert (1975).

argumentation can for instance also be aimed at undermining the evaluative standpoint “The Godfather is the best movie that is ever made” or the prescriptive standpoint “Everyone should start swimming at least twice a week”. In all cases the argumentative discourse conducted must comply with rules for critical discussion that prevent the process of resolving the difference of opinion on the merits from going astray. When taken together, these rules are to constitute a critical regimentation of argumentative discourse that provides a dialectical procedure for resolving a difference of opinion on the merits.

The dialectical procedure developed in the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation consists of a set of rules for critical discussion that regulates the argumentative discourse in a reasonable way. This means that the procedure only allows for a critical exchange of speech acts which involve argumentative moves that contribute to resolving a difference of opinion and excludes all speech acts that prevent the difference of opinion from being resolved on the merits. The critical discussion procedure can be tested for its “problem-validity” as a dialectical procedure by checking whether all the rules that are included are indeed necessary and sufficient when taken together, not allowing for the occurrence of any argumentative move that is in any way fallacious.⁹ Even if the rules for critical discussion do indeed further the resolution of a difference of opinion on the merits and exclude all fallacious obstacles and hindrances to the resolution process, these rules still need to be intersubjectively acceptable to the people involved in the difference of opinion to which they are applied in order to lay claim to the “conventional validity” that makes them effective in practice.

In pragma-dialectics some further amendments of speech act theory are made to create the basis for the desired dialectification of the treatment of argumentation as a communicative and interactional act complex. To begin with, the interactional effect of acceptance aimed for in the interactional act of convincing that is conventionally associated with performing the communicative act complex of argumentation is specified as follows: (1) it is an effect intended to be reached by the speaker or writer; (2) it is an effect based on understanding of the communicative act complex of argumentation by the listener or reader; (3) it is an effect resulting from rational considerations of a listener or reader who judges reasonably. In specifying the interactional effect aimed for in argumentation in this way, the interactional effect of convincing is defined as an externalizable inherent interactional effect of the conventionally associated pair argumentation/convincing that consists of the performance of the desired communicative act of acceptance by the listener or reader. In the process, we have distinguished clearly between, on the one hand, persuading listeners or readers in any way whatsoever and, on the other hand, convincing them by means of argumentation through appealing to their reasonableness. The dialectical procedure provided in the pragma-dialectical argumentation theory should make it possible to determine in argumentative discourse in all

⁹A theory is problem-valid if it serves its purpose, i.e. proves to be capable of dealing with the problems it is supposed to deal with (Crawshay-Williams 1957; Barth and Krabbe 1982: 19–22).

(1) *Functionalization*

Treating argumentation only in structural terms as a complex of logical inferences or derivations does not do justice to the functional rationale of the design of the discourse. The theorizing about argumentation should concentrate in the first place on the specific functions that the speech acts put forward in argumentative discourse fulfil in managing disagreement. This is why, in dealing with the subject matter of argumentation theory, “functionalization” is required.

(2) *Socialization*

When argumentation is viewed merely as the product of an individual thought process aimed at establishing the truth of a statement, the role of communication and interaction with others in arguing for the acceptability of standpoints is neglected. The dialogical character of the way in which the disagreeing parties attempt to resolve their difference of opinion is to be reflected in the theorizing about argumentation. This is why, in dealing with the subject matter of argumentation theory, “socialization” is required.

(3) *Externalization*

Linking argumentation to speculations about how the arguers think or feel is not desirable for reasons of accountability and it is not necessary either. The theorizing about argumentation should be directed at explicating what the parties can be held accountable for due to the things they have said in the discourse against a certain pragmatic background in a particular context. This is why, in dealing with the subject matter of argumentation theory, “externalization” is required.

(4) *Dialectification*

Restricting the treatment of argumentation to descriptions of the way in which it occurs in reality does not enable us to judge argumentative discourse critically for its contribution to resolving a difference of opinion on the merits. Doing the latter calls for a normative approach that starts from a theoretically-motivated external perspective on what is involved in a reasonable exchange of argumentative moves in a regulated critical dialogue. This is why, in dealing with the subject matter of argumentation theory, “dialectification” is required.

Fig. 2.1 Meta-theoretical principles involved in the pragma-dialectical theorizing

cases whether or not the argumentative moves that are made do indeed legitimize the realization of the interactional effect of acceptance.

In Fig. 2.1 we give an overview of the meta-theoretical principles that determine the methodological starting points of the pragma-dialectical theorizing.

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