

# ISSA Proceedings 2006 - Communication Principles For Controversies - An Historical Perspective



## 1. Introduction

For centuries people have complained about their opponents in controversies who tend to make chaos of rational argumentation by evading arguments, by writing incomprehensibly, by intentionally misunderstanding their opponent, by insulting him, and by committing all kinds of fallacies. (A similar list of infringements of principles was drawn up by Leibniz, cf. Leibniz, “Art of controversies”, Ch. 27.) These complaints presuppose ideal forms of controversy and the validity of relevant principles which should guide the actions of the participants. They form an important part of what one could call the implicit theory of controversy that people apply in their practice. Most of the time speakers and writers follow these principles as a matter of routine without having to formulate them explicitly. Sometimes, however, occasion arises to make such principles explicit. This is the case when one *teaches* or when one *complains* and *criticizes*. Teachers of argumentation skills have always formulated rules or principles for good argumentation, from Aristotle’s “Sophistical Refutations” and the traditional rules of disputation (cf. Jakob Thomasius, 1670) to the ten pragma-dialectical rules for critical discussion (cf. van Eemeren/Grootendorst/Snoeck Henkemans 2002, 182f.). Students of disputation should be lead from that senseless type of dispute in which everything is confused without order and formal presentation to a more useful kind of reasoning which aims at discovering the truth (“ab insano illo conflictu, qvo sine ordine, sine formali discursu miscentur vulgo ac turbantur omnia ... ad magis proficuum veritatis eruendae rationem”, Thomasius 1670, 140). The importance of the participants’ critical remarks on ongoing discussions for a theory of dialectics was emphasized by Hamblin in his book on fallacies: “... the development of a theory of charges, objections or points of order is a first essential” (Hamblin 1970, 303). It is therefore not surprising that for an historical analysis of communication

principles the complaints and accusations concerning dialectical malpractice uttered in the course of historical controversies should form a prime source of data (cf. Fritz 2005).

Before embarking on a survey of such principles I should like to clarify what I mean by communication principles. The simplest way to do this is to say *communication principles* are basically what Grice called *maxims of conversation* (cf. Grice 1989, 26ff.). In saying this, I am not subscribing to the Gricean theory in general, including the cooperative principle etc. As far as the assumption of basic principles is concerned, my sympathies lie with theories like Hintikka's (Hintikka 1986) and Kasher's (Kasher 1976) who emphasize the foundational role of some kind of rationality principle - which of course was also mentioned by Grice (Grice 1989, 29f.). However, I feel that at the present stage of research it may be useful to concentrate on the *empirical* study of communication principles in order to get a more vivid picture of how rationality is put into practice. And maybe this empirical approach will also show that there are principles which are *not* in any simple way related to standard assumptions of rationality, e.g. principles which people inherited from earlier periods without adapting them to new communicative demands.

Taken at a certain level, such principles seem to be fairly simple and universal, like for example the principle of relevance, but as soon as we go into empirical detail we realize that the principles people mention (and follow) are often much more fine-grained and that they form highly complex families which are differentiated according to social groups (e.g. scholars vs. courtiers) and types of text (pamphlets vs. reviews) etc., and which, for good reasons - this is a basic assumption of this paper - are historically variable. If such principles are indeed derived from a general principle of rationality, then what counts as an *application* of this general principle is a rather complicated matter and can be assumed to be subject to historical changes. On the one hand, there are long-lasting traditions of certain principles, e.g. the Aristotelian tradition of criticizing certain types of fallacies, on the other hand there are obvious changes over time which are linked to social developments, e.g. the development of social groups, the development of a culture of conversation, or the developments of media. A few examples may be in order: In 17th century polite conversation, contradicting an equal was a highly problematic move, which had to be accompanied with face-saving utterances (cf. Shapin 1994, 114ff.). When 17th century scholars became advisers at court, they had to give up their academic bickering. And when the new scientific journals

were created by the end of the 17th century, academic discussions had to conform to new principles of text production, which differed from traditional pamphlet writing.

The following observations are based on case studies within the framework of Historical Pragmatics, mainly from the 16th to the 18th century.**[i]** In this framework, the history of communication principles is part of the study of the conditions of continuity and change in forms of communication. Controversies are a particularly rewarding object of study for Historical Pragmatics, as they show fairly clear basic structures, as there is a large amount of interesting data available, and as many of the writers of polemical texts tended to reflect on their own polemical practice and that of their opponents.

## 2. *Types of communication principles*

In order to illustrate the range of principles we are dealing with, I shall now present a selection of principles which are regularly mentioned in early modern controversies. This is an open list and a rather mixed collection, partially ordered, which could be analysed into different groups, e.g. logical principles, dialectical principles, rhetorical principles, hermeneutical principles, principles of text production, linguistic principles, and politeness principles.**[ii]** Of course, these labels only give a vague indication of the type and background of the respective principles, quite apart from the fact that, for example, rhetorical principles shade into dialectical ones (cf. van Eemeren/Houtlosser 2002) and both types of principles determine principles of text production. I shall give the whole list first, then comment on a few of them, and finally deal with two types of principle in more detail. Of course, each one of them would deserve a detailed study, which indeed some of them have received, e.g. principles banning *ad hominem* moves or certain types of arguments from authority (cf. van Eemeren & Grootendorst (1993), Walton (1997) and others).

1. Statements should be truthful.
2. Claims should be given adequate backing. (One should not make *nudae assertiones*, „naked assertions“).
3. The critic carries the burden of proof (*principle of onus probandi*).
4. Claims should be refuted completely point by point (*principles of completeness and thoroughness*).
5. One should state the main question (the *status controversiae*) clearly and correctly.

6. One should relate one's arguments to the main question.
7. One should avoid irrelevant topics.
8. One should avoid unnecessary repetition of arguments.
9. One should be brief (*the principle of brevity, amabilis brevitatis*).
10. One should write clearly and comprehensibly (*the principle of perspicuity*).
11. One should not use meaningless jargon (e.g. scholastic terminology).
12. One should avoid formal fallacies (e.g. *a particulari ad universale*).
13. If considered necessary, one should set out the arguments "in form" (i.e. in the explicit form of a syllogism).
14. One should not rely (exclusively) on arguments from authority.
15. One should avoid personal attacks (*ad hominem*).
16. One may (or: one should not) retort in kind (*retorsio*).
17. One should give a reasonable interpretation to the utterances of the opponent (*principle of charity*).
18. One should take the perspective of the other party (*la place d'autrui*, cf. Leibniz, "Art of Controversies", Ch.
19. One should not make fun of the opponent and take his arguments seriously (*principle of seriousness*).
20. One should not use rhetorical devices like irony or sarcasm.
21. One should be polite towards the opponent (*politeness principles*).
22. One should approach the opponent in a spirit of Christian meekness. (cf. Matthew 5, 5)
23. One should be tolerant towards one's opponents.

A first group of principles, which includes, amongst others, the backing of assertions, the burden of proof, the point-by-point principle, the principles concerning fallacies, and various relevance principles, belongs to the hard core of principles taught within the tradition of academic disputation, which were part of the curriculum in all European universities during the Early Modern age. As can be seen from the form of traditional pamphlets and from frequent remarks of their authors, these principles were transferred also into controversies outside university life. So they form the backbone of the common-sense theory of controversy. A good example is the principle requiring the correct statement of the question under debate (*formare statum controversiae*), which is the duty of both participants in a disputation at the beginning of each round. This principle explains why participants often complain that the opponent has not properly or correctly stated the main question. The burden-of-proof principle can be traced

back to both the disputation rules and to basic rules of legal procedure. As it lowered the requirements of proof for the proponent (the *respondens*), it could be exploited strategically to uphold a thesis not by proving it, but by only refuting the objections of the opponent (cf. Leibniz, “Art of Controversies”, Ch. 41). One could also decline to prove a thesis considered to be generally accepted by claiming that in defending this thesis one had the role of respondent. This move was made as late as 1778 by Melchior Goeze in his famous controversy with Lessing (Goeze 1893, 170). The example shows that this principle tends to favour traditional standpoints as opposed to new standpoints. In view of the strategical importance of the burden of proof, it is not surprising that trying to shift the burden of proof was a frequent type of move in traditional controversies. The point-by-point principle determines the characteristic form of pamphlets in the 16th to 18th centuries. I shall have more to say about this principle in paragraph 4.

Among the principles directed against the committing of fallacies, the one forbidding arguments from authority is of particular historical interest. Throughout the 17th century disputes between the “ancients” and the “moderns”, denouncing the reliance on classical authorities like Aristotle for physics, Pliny for natural history, and Galenus for medicine was a frequent move on the side of the “modernists”. However, interestingly enough, the modernists themselves also frequently referred to expert opinion, but naturally they preferred modern authorities, whom they explicitly introduced using epitheta like “the famous X” and similar laudatory expressions. In his polemic against traditional medicine, Janus Abrahamus à Gehema introduced the “unwavering reformer Bontekoe” (“der unverzagte Reformator Bontekoe”, Gehema 1688, Vorrede, p. 4) and referred to “the excellent Englishmen Boyle, Entius and Charlton” (“die vortrefflichen Engelländer”), of which the last (Charlton) had provided “wonderful proofs” (“herrliche Beweissthümer”, Gehema 1688, 9).

A number of principles could be subsumed under the heading of *efficiency* principles, e.g. the principle of brevity, the principle of non-repetition, various principles of relevance, and principles of comprehensibility and perspicuity. Many of these were traditional rhetorical principles, of which some, however, had a particular historical flavour, e.g. the principle of comprehensibility presupposed in anti-traditionalist accusations against Aristotelian school philosophers by authors like Hobbes, Locke and many others. In his controversy with Bishop Bramhall, Hobbes frequently accused his opponent of incomprehensible jargon:

„This term of *insufficient* cause, which also the Schools call *deficient*, that they may rhyme to *efficient*, is not intelligible, but a word devised like *hocus pocus*, to juggle a difficulty out of sight.“ [...] „I can make no answer; because I understand no more what he means by sufficiency in a divided sense, and sufficiency in a compounded sense, than if he had said sufficiency in a divided nonsense, and sufficiency in a compounded nonsense“ (Hobbes 1656/1841, 384). This is one of Hobbes’s favourite ploys, and Bramhall was thoroughly annoyed with him for using it. In a similar vein, Locke wrote in his “Essay”: “(The schoolmen) procure to themselves the admiration of others, by unintelligible Terms (Locke 1689/1975, 494).**[iii]**

Another group of principles concerns the relationship between the two antagonists. These are partly politeness principles forbidding face-threatening acts, partly principles advocating a serious and charitable attitude towards the opponent and his standpoint. Of these, the principle of taking the perspective of the other, which was discussed by Leibniz, is particularly interesting. I shall make a few remarks on this principle in the following paragraph. A noteworthy anti-rhetorical principle is the one banning irony and sarcasm. This principle marks a boundary between dialectics and rhetoric, where scientific discourse was not supposed to trespass. Retorsion (*retorsio*), e.g. answering an insult with an insult, was legally permitted (*ius talionis*), but it stood in conflict with Christian ethics. A Christian should not reply in kind and answer an insult with an insult. He should, on the contrary, “turn to (his opponent) the other cheek also” (Matthew 5, 39). In this respect, theologians did often not behave like Christians. But they had a good excuse: In dealing with heretics one was allowed to use sharp weapons.

### 3. *Properties of communication principles and their contexts of application*

To understand the role of communicative principles in the history of forms of communication, one has to take into account some of their properties and contexts of application:

- (i) A first fact is that *principles are just as often violated as they are followed and mentioned*. The same person will claim that one should not insult one’s opponent and start insulting him in the worst fashion a few pages later. This has to do with the pragmatic structure of controversies, including different aims of the opponents, different styles of argumentation, the presence of an audience etc.
- (ii) A second point is that we often find a *conflict of principles*. It is, for example, often impossible to give a complete survey of a problem and to be brief at the

same time. In such cases, the principles of completeness and of brevity are in conflict. So speakers have to balance the advantages and disadvantages of following one principle or the other, and they have to find some kind of compromise. In some cases both a principle and its counter-principle are invoked, as in the case of retorsion.

(iii) The third point is that *certain principles hold for some types of communication or text types and not for others*. Seriousness, for example, is strictly demanded in some parts of a controversy and less so in others. As Nicholas Jardine remarked in his book on the controversy of the astronomer Kepler with Ursus: „Whereas in a *refutatio* aggressive irony, ad hominem appeals, and even jocular facetiousness are quite proper, the tone of a *confirmatio* (i.e. a statement of one's own position, e.g. Kepler's *Apologia pro Tychone*, G.F.) is supposed to be modest, confident and fully serious“(Jardine 1984, 78). Another example, also from the astronomer Kepler, shows that some principles were only considered valid for certain domains of discourse. When, in the year 1609, Kepler conducted a controversy about astrology with an old acquaintance (Helisaeus Röslin), the latter insisted that Kepler should be more polite and friendly. Kepler, however, replied that in *scientific* discourse – as opposed to *political* discourse – politeness and friendliness had to come second to clarity (cf. Kepler 1610, 111, 21ff.). A similar claim was made some 150 years later by the German author Lessing in his controversy with Klotz (cf. Dieckmann 2005, 222). This distinction is closely related to the contrast of quarrelsome scholar vs. civil gentleman, which was a stereotype in the discourse about politeness in the second half of the 17th century.

(iv) The friendliness example also shows that the application of principles is to a certain extent *negotiable*.

(v) To understand the status of certain principles one has to know their *context of justification*. Some politeness principles can be justified on the basis of Christian ethics (e.g. the principle of meekness), others on the rules of courtly conduct. Very often, of course, there is a convergence of Christian and courtly principles. In some cases principles seem to be rooted (and justifiable) either in the context of argumentative *strategy* or in the context of an *ethics* of controversy – or both. A case in point is the principle that one should take the perspective of the other, *la place d'autrui*, as Marcelo Dascal showed for Leibniz (Dascal 1995). Leibniz considered following this principle both strategically useful and morally advisable. These contexts of justification can also change over time, as in the case of politeness principles.

(vi) To understand the status of communication principles one also has to know the *consequences of their application*. I shall exemplify this point in paragraph 4 by showing some of the consequences of the point-by-point principle.

(vii) My final point is a consequence of the others: Communicative principles and their ranges and modes of application are *historically variable*. A simple example is the principle of brevity which is often mentioned but rarely applied in 17th century pamphlets, which tend to be notoriously long. This principle gained a much higher degree of practical relevance when controversies started to be conducted in journals which provided less space to the opponents, who were therefore forced to be brief. This generated new genres of text like short critical notices and reviews. Principles of politeness also form a highly interesting case in point, to which I shall return in paragraph 5.

#### 4. *The principle of point-to-point refutation*

To demonstrate the consequences of the application of a certain principle I shall now turn to the principle of point to point refutation, a principle which plays a major role in many controversies from the 16th to the 18th century. This principle determines to a large extent the textual structure of traditional pamphlets and it also contributes to the dialogical coherence between successive contributions in a controversy. As mentioned before, it derives from the rules of disputation, which were taught in all the universities in Europe during the early modern age. And from there it was taken over into the practice of controversies outside the university. In its strict version the principle requires that a participant in a controversy should answer

- (i) all the points raised by his opponent
- (ii) and only those points
- (iii) and answer them in the given order.

This principle has a number of interesting properties and consequences. Point-by-point refutation is both a logical strategy and a strategy of topic management. From the point of view of logic it is a safety strategy. If one wants to make sure that all the opponent's theses have been refuted, one has to refute each one individually. (Of course, there are also master arguments, with which one can refute whole sets of theses.) From the point of view of topic management, the principle is meant to avoid topical chaos, as 17th century authors writing on the rules of disputation explicitly stated. Point-for-point follows quite naturally from the principles of relevance and completeness, and it therefore corresponds to a



natural strategy of everyday conversation. If a speaker wants to be cooperative, he will deal with all the aspects of a topic which his partner introduced. One of the possible sequencing strategies in this situation is to actually follow the order in which the other person introduced certain aspects of the topic in hand.

Now, in controversies based on this model, the strategy governed by this principle had both advantages and disadvantages for the players. An advantage of this model consisted in the fact that the principle clearly indicated what was expected of the refuting party and thus provided a standard of quality. Lack of completeness and lack of orderliness could both be used as criteria for criticizing the quality of the opponent's contribution. The principle could even be used as a kind of decision procedure: If the opponent failed to refute the claims of the proponent point by point, he could be declared the loser.

But there are also grave *disadvantages*. Once an author had introduced a number of points in a certain order, this determined the structure of the controversy for his opponent and, later on, for himself, which could have far-reaching consequences. Commitment to the principle of completeness forced an author to deal with points which he really considered irrelevant. For example, in the last few pages of a pamphlet directed against two Jesuits in 1586, the Protestant theologian Osiander stated that a number of points raised by his opponents were totally irrelevant but that he would answer them nevertheless, so that his opponents could not say he had not read them or had not been able to refute them (Osiander, "Verantwortung", 1586, 95). Therefore, commitment to this principle had an inflationary effect and often lead to the production of very long and boring pamphlets. Furthermore, contemporaries remarked on the fact that having to treat all this rubbish made a writer frustrated and aggressive.

Secondly, in those cases where the original order of points was not convenient for the opponent he would have to give extra arguments why he wanted to change the given order, and he would still be suspected of dodging the issue.

Thirdly, if an opponent wanted to introduce extra information or new claims, he had to arrange them within the existing framework of topics, which was often rather awkward and lead to badly-structured texts. So the principle favoured a conservative treatment of topics. One can often notice the authors struggling with this principle by explicitly announcing digressions and by introducing additional statements of their own position on top of the point-by-point refutation. Examples of these textual strategies could be supplied from various authors, e.g. from Kepler or Hobbes.

Finally, it was very difficult for the readers to get the drift of the argument if they did not actually have the original text available at which the refutation was aimed. So the authors had to present the opponent's position before they could start their refutation, which was, of course, also a requirement of disputation rules. This was often not attractive for the writer of a refutation, and it made classical pamphlets rather difficult reading.

So, generally speaking, the disadvantages of the point-by-point procedure, rigidly applied, seem to outweigh the advantages. This example shows how a basically sound principle may be self-defeating in the long run if it is applied too restrictively. One way out for a writer was to use a different genre of text altogether, where he could free himself of the requirements of the point-to-point procedure, e.g. in an open letter where he could address exactly those points which he considered relevant for his cause (e.g. A.H. Francke, "Beantwortung", 1706, cf. Fritz/Glüer 2001). This is also – at least partly – true of the shorter forms of critical text which became characteristic of the new journals by the end of the 17th century.

Still, pamphlets of the traditional type continued to be written by the end of the 18th century, although they must have looked somewhat old-fashioned to the contemporaries (cf. the lengthy works of the theologian Semler, e.g. Semler 1772), and the principle was also mentioned as a standard of quality for academic polemics during this period. Up to the present day we can find examples of the point-by-point procedure in academic writings, and we can even find traces of this traditional principle in controversies on the internet, when an author complains that his opponent did not take up all the important arguments in his favour.

### *5. Politeness principles*

The second kind of principle I want to discuss in some more detail is principles of politeness. Now the history of politeness in the Early Modern age is a large topic in its own right, and I cannot go into it here in any detail. For a general outline of relevant developments in this period cf. Beetz (1990), Beetz (1999), and Gierl (1997). Useful information on the relationship between civility and science can be found in Shapin (1994).

In this paragraph I shall restrict myself to presenting a few observations on politeness in 16th and 17th century controversies. In this period, at least in Germany, Christian ideals formed an important source of principles forbidding face-threatening acts. In 1586, the Jesuit Rosenbusch accused his opponent

Osiander of making fun of his opponents: "This secular and mocking manner of speech does ill behove a theologian, whoever he may be". („Die Weltlich / spöttlich Art zu reden / stehet einem *Theologo*, er sey wer er wöll / nit woll an", Rosenbusch 1586, 6). Earlier on in my paper I mentioned the debate between Kepler and his friend Röslin, where Röslin explicitly stated that one should "defend one's position and refute one's opponent and criticize him not with insults and accusations / (as is nowadays the habit with wrong-headed scholars) but the way it behoves Christians to do, with friendliness and instruction / and I shall be and remain his friend / even though we disagree on various points." („Da würd ich mich verantworten / vnd jhnen refutirn vnd straffen / nicht mit Lästern vnd schelten / (wie bey verkehrt Gelehrten jetzt der brauch ist) sondern wie sich Christen zu thun vntereinander gebürt mit freundligkeit vnd vnterweisung / vnd wil sein Freund sein vnnd bleiben / wenn wir schon in etlich Puncten einander zu wieder sein"; Röslin, „Diskurs" 1609, C ij b/C iij)

80 years later, we find a similar statement in the medical controversy between Gehema and Geuder (1688/89): „(A participant in a controversy) should treat his fellow-man in a friendly manner / and present his errors to him with proper modesty and meekness. [...] It befits all reasonable people, especially Christians, to practice meekness in all their *conversation* as well as their lives in general." And this should apply especially to educated people, as he adds later on. („daß er seinen Neben=Menschen glimpfflich *tractirt* / und mit gebührender Bescheidenheit und Sanfftmuth ihme seinen Irrthum vor Augen stelle. [...] so stehet es ja allen und jeden vernünfftigen Menschen / sonderlich denen Christen wol an / daß sie in aller *Conversation*, in allem Leben und Wandel sich einer sanfftmütigen Art bedienen"; Geuder 1689, A4). The repeated use of the word *meekness* („Sanftmut" in the German text) is of course an allusion to one of the seven Beatitudes which Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount: „Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5,5).

What we have here is a family of principles which is definitely accepted in theory. In practice, however, religious principles did not prevent priests and other Christians in the 16th century from hurling most atrocious insults at their opponents. They called one another *calumniators*, *bloodthirsty criminals*, *poisonous spiders* and similar things. Although this kind of behaviour was frequently criticized, as my examples show, it still seemed to be accepted as a fact of life. Generally speaking, in the 16th and early 17th century people seem to have tolerated much more verbal aggression in controversies than we are used to

in present-day controversies among academics.

By the middle of the 17th century, questions of polite conduct became an important issue in all European societies (cf. Beetz 1990), so it is not surprising that this question should also arise in the context of scholarly disputes. This new trend of politeness seems to have had two sources. On the one hand, there was the Christian tradition, which we already mentioned and which was partly strengthened, at least in Germany, by new religious movements like the Pietist movement. On the other hand there was a trend towards the cultivation of politeness which was founded on courtly traditions.

One representative of the Pietist movement who showed this heightened awareness of the defects of traditional polemical writing quite strongly, was August Hermann Francke. A striking aspect of his controversy theory is his view that pamphlets should primarily serve to edify, from which it follows that the worldly aggressiveness of traditional pamphlet writing had no place in religious argumentation. This view is expressed quite explicitly in one of his own pamphlets, which formed the end point of long controversy with an orthodox antagonist, Johann Friedrich Mayer: "Should anyone believe that I find pleasure in such [i.e. polemical] writings, he errs greatly; for my soul is disgusted by them: since I know and recognise in truth that railing, satirising and suchlike things which entice the worldly sense, whether they happen by mouth or in written form, in no way encourage true edification, which should be the only purpose even in pamphlets, by contrast they impede much good even in an otherwise just thing, equally, among other things, an attitude of derision is aroused and much unchristian gossip and godless ways are notably increased by it." ("Meynet niemand / daß ich an dergleichen [i.e. polemischen] Schrifften einen Gefallen habe / der irret sich weit; Denn meine Seele hat vielmehr einen grossen Eckel daran: sintemal ich weiß / und erkenne in der Wahrheit / daß durch railliren / satyrisieren / und dergleichen den irdischen Sinn kützelnde Dinge / sie geschehen mündlich oder schriftlich / die wahre Erbauung / die doch auch in Streit-Schrifften der einige Zweck seyn solte / keineswegs befördert / hingegen viel gutes / auch bey einer sonst gerechten Sache / gehindert / der Spott-Geist bey anderm ebenmässig erreget / und mancherley unchristliches Geschwätz und gottloses Wesen dadurch mercklich vermehret wird"; Francke, „Verantwortung“ 1707, 378). It is not surprising that in Francke's writings the principle of meekness („Sanfftmüt“) is also frequently alluded to.

By 1670, the question of scholarly conduct in controversies became a serious topic in its own right – in some cases a controversial topic – which was intimately connected to questions concerning the status and function of scholarly work in general (cf. Gierl 1997, 543ff.). According to Christian Thomasius and other contemporaries, educated persons should be fit to act in public office and at court. And in these surroundings cavilling and pedantical scholars were not acceptable. This kind of attitude was also present in contemporary books of manners (e.g. Hunold 1716, 50ff.). Shapin (1994, 114ff.) refers to similar views presented in English books of manners. Another factor discouraging traditional forms of controversy may have been the trend towards eclecticism as an epistemological attitude. Against this background, traditional procedures of disputation were now increasingly denounced as mere word battles (“logomachia”) and sectarian bickering, and many authors developed a negative attitude towards this type of scholarly exchange and the aggressiveness which they considered inherent in this type of controversy. In the course of the 18th century, awareness of the inherent problems of the traditional point-by-point principle and the new discussion of politeness principles seem to have conspired to weaken the position of the disputation pattern as a scholarly form of communication and the pamphlet as its prototypical textual form. So we have here an example of a remarkable change in forms of communication which is closely linked to changes in communication principles.

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up the result of this study: There are both long-lasting traditions and remarkable changes in the history of communication principles. In order to analyze these forms of evolution we have to consider the principles in their contexts of justification and application, including the consequences of the commitment to these principles. This kind of analysis requires detailed study of a large corpus of historical texts. So there is still a lot of work to do for the Historical Pragmatics of controversies.

## NOTES

**[i]** cf. Fritz (1995), Gloning (1999), Fritz (2003).

**[ii]** Lists of communication principles for 18th and 19th century controversies in Germany can be found in Goldenbaum (2004, 111f.) and Dieckmann (2005, 118ff.).

**[iii]** Similar examples from Galileo and other philosophers and scientists are

mentioned in Biagioli (1993, 211f.).

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