ISSA Proceedings 2002 – The Situation Of Argumentation Studies In France: A New Legitimacy

This presentation of the current state of argumentation studies in France will focus on four points.

Firstly, some remarks about a difference of meaning between the basic terms designating our field of research in English and in French, that is (*an*) *argument*, (*an*) *argumentation* compared with (*un*) *argument*, (*une*) *argumentation*.

Secondly, a broad historical perspective will be taken. It will help to understand an intellectual and academic background characterized by a strong distrust for rhetoric and argumentation. This situation prevailed until the 1970s.

Thirdly, Grize's 'Natural logic' and Ducrot's 'Argumentation within language' theories will be briefly discussed. These programs, developed since the early 70s, and very well alive, have restored argumentation studies to favor in France, where they certainly still represent the leading traditions of research.

Finally an attempt will be made to summarize the main trends of the present situation, which seems to favor discourse analytic approaches to argumentation.

1. A caveat: Argument versus argument

The French word *argumentation* is indeed a good counterpart of argumentation, and the field of 'argumentation studies' tallies very well with the field of 'études de l'argumentation'. But things get more difficult as soon as we take the next step, and consider the English noun *an argument* and the verb *to argue*. In a systematic set of occurrences, *an argument* is not *un argument*, and *to argue* doesn't correspond *to argumenter*.

Following O'Keefe (1977), the Webster Dictionary, and my English informants, two meanings of *to argue*, that we will call to *argue-1* and to *argue-2*, must be set apart:

to *argue-1* means 'to give reasons' (Webster); with this meaning, to argue is followed by a that clause, and designates a monological activity.

to argue-2 means 'to have a disagreement; a quarrel; a dispute' (Webster); with this meaning, to argue is followed by the preposition about, and refers to a vast domain of interactions ranging from lively discussions to verbal and paraverbal fights. *Arguing with someone about something* is a dialogical activity.

The noun an argument has the same duality of meaning, being either a dispute or a good reason – and, sometimes, a good reason put forward in a dispute. The monosemic meaning of argumentation might look surprising ; but morphology has its caprices.

In French, argumenter has a single meaning, always equivalent to to argue that -, 'to give reasons'. This meaning is inherited by all the words belonging to its lexico-semantic field, including argument and argumentation. Un argument is always a reason, never a quarrel. The verb argumenter is an excellent equivalent of to argue that 'to give reasons'; but a very poor translation of to argue with, which corresponds to 'discuter (de manière agressive, in an agressive way)'.

The problem becomes acute when we compare the French words *argumentatif*, *argumentativité* with the English adjective argumentative. In French, these words are derivatives from *un argument*, and carry only one meaning related to 'building up a good reason'. We think always and only of 'argumentation' when we deal with *argument, argumenter, argumentatif,* and *argumentativité*. In American English argumentative is on the *argue with* – side; the Collins Dictionnary translates *argumentative* as 'ergoteur, discutailleur'

That is, a risk of misunderstanding appears with French expressions like 'l'orientation argumentative d'un énoncé', this being basic in Ducrot's theory of argumentation. The (unavoidable) translation 'the argumentative orientation of an utterance' should not be taken to mean or evoke anything akin to a dispute. It just means that the sentence conveys as (part of) its meaning an orientation towards a conclusion. The consequence is that, when we translate in English our French cogitations on *l'orientation argumentative* or *les échelles argumentatives*, we have to force a new meaning upon the word argumentative – and we must be conscious that we do it at our risks and perils.

The AE lexical data point to an interesting theoretical question, on the relations between the study of the 'arguing that-' and 'arguing with-' process, that is, the relations between argumentation study and interpersonal conflict study.

To check how far these two fields are interconnected, I had a look at *Conflict talk*, a collection of essays edited by Grimshaw (1990), subtitled *Sociolinguistic investigations on arguments in conversation*. In his substantial presentation and

conclusion Grimshaw never refers to 'argumentation studies', and never uses the word argumentation.

Two papers use the word argument to refer to their object, Goodwin & Goodwin, 'Interstitial argument' and Schiffrin, 'The management of a cooperative self during argument: The role of opinions and stories'. If I have checked correctly, they never use the word argumentation. The conclusion seems to be that there is no relation between these fields. In the 90s, the study of the *arguing with –* process was developing independently from the study of the *arguing that –* process. This situation certainly suggests a considerable distinction between argument and argumentation, and shows that lexical distinctions might have their conceptual import.

2. Historical background: Late 19th – early 20th century: Rhetoric is excluded from the university; logic becomes a formal discipline

Some aspects of the present situation of argumentation studies in France can be considered as consequences of a long historical trend, going back to the late 19th – early 20th century.

2.1 Argumentation and rhetoric

By the end of the 19th century, rhetoric, as a theoretical and practical discipline, disappeared from the new-born Republican French University. Rhetoric was eliminated, as a non scientific, therefore illegitimate study. In France, it has never recovered from that accusation.

2.1.1 A new concept of knowledge

After the 1870 defeat of France against Germany, a new start in politics as well as in intellectual life was necessary. The end of the century was a period of intense political and ideological activity; a new conception of knowledge emerged, and, consequently, a new definition of the tasks and curriculum of the university. This general re-modeling was promoted by the 3rd Republic, on a basis of both a secular and positivistic view of science, culture and society.

These transformations of the intellectual life were impulsed by a new conception of knowledge, 'positive knowledge'. Positive knowledge relies on hard facts. Truth is reached, in the long run, through a step by step process, a patient and systematic accumulation of local but well-confirmed, substantial truths.

This vision of science is totally antagonistic with the rhetorical 'know how', aiming not at hard truth but at the plausible or probable truth, occasional truths, working with consensus, topoi, doxa, amplification or eloquence, exploiting

(shamelessly) every favorable occasion, and relying on the power of language more than on the power of facts. Science progresses by observation, experimentation and demonstration, not by rhetorical manipulations – which is true.

Not being able to deliver 'substantial' knowledge but only sham knowledge, rhetoric had no role to play in the positivist university. Consequently, rhetoric was supplanted by history, considered as the prototypical positive method, the rising star of the new humanities, and their polar star, if I might say. It was a long time before critical historians noticed that historical discourse was also a form of rhetorical discourse.

Finally, the curriculum in French studies and Belles Lettres was re-shaped, an historical approach to literature substituting for a rhetorical one, new forms of academic expression appeared in high schools (lycées)(French composition, literary history, literary text commentary). All these new forms of expression excluded rhetoric as a discipline.

2.1.2 Two aggravating circumstances

Thus, rhetorical knowledge is not knowledge at all. Moreover, two aggravating circumstances pleaded against rhetoric. Firstly, politically, rhetoric was on the wrong side, as the basis of Jesuit education, in a period of intense contest between the Church and the State; a secular state could only want to get rid of rhetoric as a symbol of a prejudiced religious education. Secondly, via its use in Jesuit colleges, rhetoric was tied to latin; all rhetorical exercises were practiced in that language. The period marked a peak in the never-ending quarrel concerning the place of Latin in literary studies, the Moderns pleading for an emancipation of French from Latin.

Therefore no wonder that, tied to the old conception of education, rhetoric became the easy symbol of out-dated clerical reaction compared with the positive knowledge promoted by the modern republican university. Such is the basis of the persisting feeling of illegitimacy of rhetoric in France.

As far as argumentation studies could be associated with rhetorical studies, they were clearly on the wrong side. But how far on the wrong side were they? It must be emphasized that the rhetoric which was excluded from the syllabus, the jesuit rhetoric, was not argumentation-focused but focused rather on 'praelectio', that is to say, something like text explanation and amplification: a form of oratory not intended to convince by proof and debate, but to subjugate by verbal splendor. Anyway, argumentation studies were certainly affected by the fate of rhetoric: in

1888, Chaignet published *La rhétorique et son histoire*, the last introductory book to Aristotle's argumentation theory (and a very good one), with a substantial part on rhetorical argument. The rhetoric which was expelled from the University was certainly not purely ornamental.

2.2 Argumentation and logic

Thus, it would be an over-simplification to conclude that the exclusion of rhetoric automatically brought about a decline of argumentation study. Other considerations concerning logic must come into play.

2.1.1. Logic as a branch of mathematics

Logic was no more considered as the 'Art of Thinking' but simply as a branch of mathematics. The publication of the *Begriffschrift* (or 'Conceptual writing') by G. Frege, in 1879, marks a turning point in this evolution. Logic became that 'formal' discipline against which 'natural logic', 'informal logic' and 'substantial logic' were to rebel one century later.

This is of course the result of a complex, long term general evolution, punctuated in France by landmarks such as the Port-Royal Logic (1662), where logic is classically defined as the «art of thinking». At the end of the 18th century, Condillac published his *Treatise on the art of reasoning* (1796); in this Treatise, the 'art of reasoning' is no more the 'art of thinking', but merely the 'art of doing mathematics'. Typically enough, analogy is explained away as mere proportion.

Is it possible to conclude that, along with rhetoric and traditional logic, argumentation studies were actually abandoned at the turn of the century? A possible hypothesis is that the interest for argumentation lived on, but in the restricted domain of religious education, as an essential part of the Neo-Thomist philosophy.

2.1.2 Neo-Thomism

1879 could be considered as a key date for argumentation studies. In the same year, 1879, when Frege published his *Begriffschrift*, Pope Leo the XIIIth published the encyclical *AEerni Patris*. This encyclical established Thomas Aquinas as a kind of official philosopher of the Catholic Church. There is certainly a connection between this decision and the fact that important developments on traditional logic and some consideration on kinds of arguments can be found in philosophical handbooks such as Abbé Henri Collin's *Handbook of Thomist Philosophy* (1926) dedicated to higher religious education. Likewise, an important treatise like Jacques Maritain's *Elements of Philosophy II – Formal Logic* (21st ed.

1966), must also be considered as a proof of a permanent interest in logic as a philosophy of natural cognition in a Neo-Thomist framework. But, to my knowledge, this tradition cannot be linked with any contemporary form of revival of argumentation studies. Without influence on secular education or philosophy, it got lost in the sands.

2.1.3 Fallacies of irrelevant argumentation
Another point needing more investigation concerns argumentation as a practice. As mentioned above, the period was highly polemical, on religious, political and scientific topics. It might be suspected that, in some way, well-intentioned passionate religious polemists resorted to the age-old argumentation techniques to contest the best-established scientific results – particularly in the field of history and anthropology, about topics such as the age of the Earth or the date of the appearance of Man on Earth. There was clearly a clash between argumentative discourse and the reality of scientific proofs. Stepping outside their field of validity, argumentative practices were prey to devastating refutations on the conclusions they delivered, and, further, at risk of being invalidated as a possible method in any field. There is a saying about the last time when gentlemen ('honnêtes gens') tried to argue rhetorically on technical points: it is said to be in the 20s, in a Paris salon; the theme was the theory of relativity.
To sum up: at the turn of the century, rhetoric was associated with a group characterized by its anti-republicanism and excluded from the state education curriculum; history was the star of the renovated University; logic had turned into a branch of mathematics; argumentation studies were restricted to Neo-Thomist philosophy and religious education; and finally, argumentation practices were discredited by irrelevant interventions. This situation was to remain unchanged until at least the 1970s.

3. The 60s and 70s: the New Rhetoric vs Discourse Analysis ?

3.1 An ideological period
With the fifties comes the well-known and justly celebrated time of the revival of argumentation studies in Europe, some landmarks being, in German, Curtius (1948); Lausberg, (1960); in English, Toulmin (1958); in French, but not in France, Ch. Perelman & L. Olbrechts-Tyteca (1958).
This revival has certainly an ideological (but without negative connotations), a political side. It can be considered as a rejection of the 'totalitarian discourses' nazi and stalinists. One should remember here the opposition made by Tchakotine

between 'senso-propaganda', or propaganda appealing to the senses, versus 'ratio-propaganda', or propaganda appealing to reason. The revival of rhetorical argumentation is seen as the best possible democratic reply to the 'senso-propaganda' of totalitarian states (Tchakotine 1939, 152).

3.2 Rhetorical argumentation and French discourse analysis

In this paragraph I'll try to deal with a difficult problem, the impact of this European research trend in France during the sixties and the seventies. Bluntly expressed, my answer would be: 'nil'. This fact should be taken as a proof of what was said before on the de-legitimization of rhetorical argumentation as a decent academical subject. All these brilliant works were unable to confer a new legitimacy to rhetoric – if they were read at all.

3.2.1 The New Rhetoric: not influential in the 60s and 70s

We need research on the reception of Perelman's book in France. It seems that Perelman's *Treatise* was not practiced in the sixties and seventies; at least, the book was not really influential at that time. This claim must be qualified on two points.

Firstly, Perelman's work has always been well-known and highly appreciated in the specialized circle of philosophers of law. Secondly, the *New rhetoric* appears to be a central theme of reflection for the Neuchâtel circle, around Jean-Blaise Grize, at least during its period of constitution. Nonetheless, the general trend seems clear. Perelman was not a 'cultural leader', especially his work had absolutely no influence on education at that time. Neither Perelman's nor Toulmin's works stimulated any investigation program aiming at a practical revival of rhetorical argumentation, neither as a social, discourse-theoretic discipline, nor in education.

When rhetoric was mentioned or discussed, it was not in relation with Perelman or Toulmin's proposals, nor with any form of revival of argumentation studies. Two works can be considered. Roland Barthes' essay on the key notions of the ancient rhetoric (1970) is a short and useful reminder of the structure of ancient rhetorical theory, but it cannot be compared with Lausberg's *Handbook* which appeared ten years earlier. The same year, the so-called Groupe Mu (Dubois & al.) published a *Rhétorique générale*. This is a fascinating book on figures of speech analyzed from a linguistic point of view, in tune with the mainstream structuralist approach to semantics. Although led in Liége, Belgium, this research mentions Perelman only in a footnote: their programs of investigation are

radically different .

3.2.2 The rhetorical argumentation program vs the French Discourse Analysis program

To account for this general attitude of neglect, one should go into the particulars of the prevailing intellectual atmosphere of the period. The general ideological orientations favored views of discourse and speech in sharp contrast with the general program of argumentation studies. As an example of such opposition, let's consider some core positions of so-called 'French Discourse Analysis'. This program was proposed by Michel Foucault in *L'archéologie du savoir*, (1969); in the early 70s, Michel Pêcheux developed a parallel program, partly overlapping and partly competing with Foucauld's (see Maldidier 1990*, L'inquiétude du discours*). This Discourse Analysis program is now generally considered as superseded, including by some of its former proponents; passions have cooled down. Nevertheless, I think that it put forward one fundamental critical point which still deserves careful attention.

The discourse analysis program was characterized by a radical and coherent refusal of a set of notions, among which the concepts of subject, text, discourse, meaning and intention, intersubjective communication, etc. At first sight we notice that classical rhetorical practices are grounded precisely on this set of concepts (Lausberg 1960, § I-8). Classical rhetorical argumentation shares the common sense view that:

– there is a subject, at the basis of the rhetorical activity;
– this subject plans his/her discourse according to a certain conscious intention; that is, he/she is the source of the discourse;
– that he/she controls the development of his/her discourse in order to achieve a certain goal.

This is precisely the view that Foucault permanently and consistently rejects, for example in the following passage (writen in the grand old style of the seventies):
Discourse is not the majestically unfolding manifestation of a thinking, knowing, speaking subject, but, on the contrary, a totality, in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined (…) it is neither by recourse to a transcendental subject nor by recourse to a psychological subjectivity that the regulation of its enunciation should be defined.
(Foucault 1969, quoted and translated by Williams 1999, 84; see also Pêcheux in Maldidier 1990, 37, 50).

The Discourse Analysis program criticizes the concept of 'author' (or 'intentionality'), as the 'source of meaning', and focuses on the socio-psychological determinations of discourse, that is, its 'conditions of production'. As far as I understand this expression, it means that discourse cannot be 'accounted for' by its internal structure, avowed meaning, or its author's intentions, but only by the external, material conditions in which it is produced. Discourse is 'explained' via the social conditions of its occurrence, its relation with a 'discursive formation', and the place occupied by the speaker in society, from the point of view of a marxist social analysis, as well as the psychoanalytical constraints on his/her speech. For such an investigation program, rhetorical activities could only be considered, and denounced, as a form of alienation, the reduplication, at the theoretical level, of the subject's general illusions about what he or she says, wants, aims at, etc. (Maldidier 1990, 34-35, etc). Bluntly put, classical rhetorical theory is typically a 'formation imaginaire', which not only is the opposite of what a scientific investigation should be, but above all is an obstacle to this investigation. The proof is that it doesn't provide analysis but paraphrase of the text, the kind of things Pêcheux called statement of the obvious 'Vérités de La Palice', 'La Palice's truth'.

I won't go further, neither into the particulars of this specific concept of discourse analysis nor into considerations about its own misadventures and metamorphosis, and its final disappearance or retractation at the beginning of the 80s.
It must also be mentioned that ideological oppositions were no less important than theoretical oppositions. The political programs coming with these approaches favored hard protest and radicalization of conflict, which is in opposition to the program of negotiation and mediation rationally led, which generally comes with argumentation studies.
This situation prevailed more or less until the end of the 80s. At that time, a new period began with the return of Perelman's *New rhetoric*, which is now quite widely read, along with Ducrot and Grize. But traces of this century-long distrust towards argumentation can be easily found, for example, in the fact that major works in English, such as Hamblin's *Fallacies* , or major American efforts to adapt and re-think rhetorical theory are still generally unknown and unmentioned, with the exception of some general presentations.

4. The turning point of the 70s: Argumentation reinstated
In the 70s, the influence of Ducrot and Grize was decisive for the re-introduction

of the concept of argumentation in the field of human sciences. Both have re-defined the classical meaning of the term.

4.1 Natural logic

Jean-Blaise Grize has developed the concept of 'natural logic' since the 1970s, with a particular attention to its logical, linguistic, psychological and sociological implications and basis.

The Natural logic program can be seen as part of the general trend developing in the 70s criticizing formal logic as unsubstantial. This logic is called 'natural' as far as it is a logic of dialogue and a logic of objects.

It is a logic of dialogue only in a restricted sense of the word: the situation generally considered corresponds to a speaker/writer addressing an utterance (or a text) to a listener (or a reader). This is quite compatible with the classical conception of the rhetorical situation, where an orator tries to modify an audience's representation, without actual feedback from his audience. The natural logic is not a «dialectic».

The concept of 'logic of object' is at the very core of the program. For natural logic, arguing is schematizing, that is, building up, by a logico-linguistic process, a representation expressed by a linguistic form, a sentence or a text. At the text level, schematization is first of all an affair of objects (that is, entities to which reference can be made). The theory focuses on the mode of introduction of objects in the text (a text = a schematization), their transformations, their connections with other objects, the role played by their properties or their parts, etc. From a logical point of view, the basic theory is mereology; from a linguistic point of view, the approach exploits and develop researches on modes of reference and anaphora.

The resulting schematization shows the linguistic content under a certain light, or 'point of view' ('éclairage'). Basically, according to this approach, arguing is schematizing for a listener, that is building up a schematization and proposing it to the audience. The audience can only accept or reject it. The argumentative strength of a schematization comes from the fact that it pretends to be a true mirror of reality. The best argument is a fact, as Grize use to say; if you can't show the fact, build the best true-looking schematization you can.

The concept of scaffolding ('étayage') has been designed to express the classical argumentative relation {argument, conclusion}: the argument 'props up' or 'backs up' the conclusion. A specific argumentative text expresses what Grize

calls a 'reasoned organization'. Its global argumentative value is the combined result of the schematization operations and the proping up operations.

Grize's basic position is that all the cognitivo-linguistic operations underlying a text or a sentence have an argumentative value; one sentence is enough for expressing a complete schematization; that is, argumentation begins at the sentence level – and not at the pair of sentences level, that is, at the discourse level (consequently, it could rightly be considered a theory of 'argumentation within language' of another kind than Ducrot's). Natural logic emphasizes the global aspect of argumentation. In a way, arguing is describing; and a description is always given from a point of view, that is with an argumentative orientation. This conception leads to a better consideration of the self-denying, non-popperian, character of everyday argumentation.

4.2 The 'Argumentation within language' ('A. dans la langue') theory
Oswald Ducrot introduced the concept of argumentation in a 1973 paper titled 'The argumentative ladders' 'Les échelles argumentatives'. The focus here will be on one theoretical point: Ducrot's theory of argumentation is a theory of meaning. The concept of argumentation is introduced as a very specific technical concept functioning in the field of linguistic semantics. The specificity of this use is frequently acknowledged by Anscombre, who speaks of 'l'argumentation dans notre sens' that is: 'our concept of argument' . Of course, the remark doesn't imply any criticism of this concept, but it does imply that its relation with the classical concept of argument is problematic, and that its application to the classical field of argumentation studies cannot be taken for granted. The best-known results of the theory (the analysis of connectives, operators, of polyphony – not to mention a new concept of topos) are only manifestations of a deeper insight into the nature of linguistic meaning.

Let's consider Ducrot's favourite example, the utterance 'the weather is fine', (P1). What is the meaning of P1? According to Ducrot, it should not be conceived as a description of a certain state of affairs. To understand the meaning of P1 is to understand what the speaker aims at when he/she utters it, for example, an invitation to go to the beach. Uttering a sentence is pointing to something else, a possible continuation or conclusion 'out of the sentence', a second utterance (P2), here 'let's go to the beach'. In other words, in this theory, there is an equivalence between 'P2 is the meaning of P1' and 'P1 is an argument for P2'.

P1 is a good reason to do, believe, admire, feel... P2

in/by saying P1, the speaker wants to prove, to suggest... P2

when the speaker says P1, she means P2

P2 is the meaning of P1

Interpreted in an Aristotelian framework, this theory defines the meaning of the sentence as the 'final cause' of the sentence, that is the conclusion it aims at.

This vision of argumentation is quite coherent with the well-known fact that conclusion comes first, arguments are found afterwards. As says the cruel Queen of Hearts: 'Sentence first, verdict afterwards'.

Of course, such a theory must face its consequences. In the expression 'argumentation dans la langue', the word *langue* must be taken in its strict saussurian sense, as opposed to 'parole' = 'speech or discourse'. An explicit translation would be something like 'argumentation is a fact of linguistic competence'. If arguing is practicing a linguistic competence, that means that as soon as you speak, you argue; if argumentation is within language, in Ducrot's sense, it cannot be good or bad; it is only grammatically correct or incorrect. The same is true for Grize.

This claim should sound surprising. Actually, the fact that, in the 70s, this concept of argument was accepted without discussion can be considered as a symptom of the total absence of any classical or perelmanian concept of argument in the intellectual field at that time. All classical theories agree that argumentation is a discursive phenomenon, and that the capacity to argue is certainly not a characteristic of linguistic competence, it is a specific discursive competence, which can be taught and improved. Again, I'm not suggesting that these consequences cannot be defended, only that they cannot be admitted without discussion.

Grize's and Ducrot's approaches to argumentation are central to the understanding of what is going on in to-day's research in France. Although very different at first sight, they share a significant thesis: both are generalized theories of argumentation: no sentence without a certain light ('éclairage')(Grize); no sentence without an orientation (Ducrot). As a consequence, neither include a 'critical component'. There is not much that you can do against a schematization or an orientation, apart confronting them with another ones. That's why the idea of a 'criticism of argument', of a theory of fallacies, sounds very strange in this context; and the recent Perelmanian's vogue will certainly not change the situation very much.

5. The ecumenical tendencies of the 9Os

The most salient fact of the present situation is certainly the come back of Perelman, who is now almost a bestseller. There is even a tendency to consider that Perelman's views on argument give the final word on all the problems in the field. After having been utterly ignored, it seems that the New Rhetoric is now on the way of becoming a real 'epistemological obstacle'.

5.1 An 'argumentative turn'

In France, a large variety of academic fields are taking a strong (and relatively sudden) interest in argumentation. A kind of official 'argumentative turn' has been taken in 1996, when a practical exercise on argumentation was introduced as part of the 'baccalauréat' (twelfth grade, high school leaving exam); typically enough, this exercise is part of the test on French language and literature. Given the symbolic and practical importance of the 'baccalauréat' in the French education system, this is a kind of consecration for argumentation studies.

Various positive reasons for this move are sometimes evoked; for example, in political philosophy theories of social contract are no more in favor, the foundation of a social group is no more sought in a form of original, pre-historical convention, but in the capacity of the group to promote useful public discussions. Moreover, our society is said to be in a period of doubt, of permanent evolution, of crisis; in such a situation we are under the obligation to think and act on uncertain bases, that is to draw defeasable conclusions from scarce and hypothetical data, which is the very definition of the argumentative activity.

5.2 The disciplinary status of argumentation studies

Research on argumentation is developing throughout human and social sciences: law, sociology, political sciences, psychology, linguistics, communication, cognition, first and second language acquisition and marketing. This research expands via cognition studies and the didactics of disciplines to exact sciences (physics, mathematics...), where argumentation merges with explanation, demonstration and reasoning.

Each of these disciplines maintains a line of research in relation with argumentation studies, deeply influenced by the problematic and the research style of the field.

Some essays, papers, dissertation in argumentation develop entirely in a specific paradigm, for example as 'theory-driven' contributions to the 'argumentation in language' theory. But, in the main, research is 'data driven', that is based on large corpora in a variety of settings, the first objective being to give an accurate

description of the data. This kind of research is generally eclectic in its resources. According to the level of description, it turns to methods and concepts originating in different theoretical frameworks, argumentation in language, natural logic, neo-classical rhetoric, pragma-dialectic.

The broad impression is certainly that argumentation studies in France doesn't constitute, an autonomous field or a discipline. They are not unified by any paradigm, they develop within various encompassing frameworks or working hypothesis which can be inspired by interactionism, cognitivism or discourse analysis, etc.

Therefore, one could argue that argumentation studies in France are in a desperate state of dispersion; or that they are at their best, omnipresent and acting as a 'fertilizer' in human and social sciences, and extending to exact sciences.

5.3 Rhetoric

The status of rhetoric is debatable. On one side, the development of the history of rhetoric (particularly in the field of education and literature) is quite remarkable.

In literature, rhetoric is still alive and well as part of stylistics. In this sense, the name 'argumentation' is frequently used, and by the best authors, as a decent term to designate rhetorical analysis, either of literary or non-literary texts.

In my opinion, the possibility of a revival of a discipline called rhetoric, encompassing the modern development of its traditional objects, is quite limited. One can even wonder if it is worth trying. The main argument on this point is that the new disciplines of communication and interaction studies have definitely taken over the analytical and practical functions of rhetoric.

5.4 A shift to discourse

A number of questions considered as belonging to argumentation studies are dealt with in a linguistic framework, certainly under the combined influence of Grize and Ducrot. Familiar problems in rhetorical argumentation appear under another name – therefore under a different 'light'. Examples of these moves to language studies could be, for example, the treatment of the following phenomenon: *topos*, as a problem in textual analysis; *enthymeme* and the linguistic question of implicit at large; *ethos* and the study of subjectivity in discourse; *biased discourse* and the question of argumentative orientation. One could also mention the problem of *evidentiality*, or the more specific question of the relations all/part, and also the problem of connection, at a time unduly

popularized as the very core of the argumentative process.

5.5 A preference for global concepts

As a result, the highly polysemic concept of argumentation is frequently considered as a convenient 'resource concept', to which one can freely appeal for some one-off application. Contributions trying to articulate theoretical perspectives are needed.

Argumentation being taken as a global concept, the question of the types of arguments, considered as basic for argument theory, is rarely discussed as such. There is not many French contributions on, for example, *ad hominem* or *ad misericordiam or petitio principii*. When these categories are mentioned, they are simply used as labels, as convenient tools in the descriptive task. On the other hand, the concepts of topos, doxa and stereotypes are often considered as basic. These two facts are of course related.

5.6 Argumentation as a critical discipline

As mentioned earlier, this global approach to argumentation as entrenched in language, the disinterest for the typological questions, goes with a neglect for the problem of fallacies; argumentation studies don't develop as "critical studies"; for example, argumentation in science education simply doesn't use the concept of fallacy.

In the field of social discourse, this might look surprising, given the strong practices of social criticism developped by the French Discourse Analysis School. New concerns towards the ethics of argumentative communication appear in communication studies.

5.7 Three global weaknesses, or challenges

5.7.1 The status of the data, after the dialogic turn

Argumentation studies in France, as well as everywhere, are deeply influenced by the analysis of natural dialogue. Since now 30 years, interaction studies have developped sophisticated methods of investigation, which have been successfully put to test on an ever increasing amount of data in a variety of languages and situations. New problems have also emerged.

The first one is not specifically French. Argumentation studies are now confronted with a young and robust discipline, interaction studies, which, to my knowledge, does not care so much about the old world of argumentation studies. Specifically, the introduction of spoken data goes on a par with the development of the study

of argument, that is (interpersonal) conflict studies. The articulation between the two domains doesn't appear clearly.

The second problem is linked with the status of the new data. In contrast with oral data, classical written data are of course limited to the verbal aspects of speech. But they can be completely and non ambiguously distributed to all comers in the field. Written examples quoted from widely accessible texts as well as invented data, are under the reader's eye, complete and unaltered.

The new techniques of data-sharing allow similar possibilities for all forms of interactional data (oral or not). But, concerning the French language, the situation of interactive data in general is not so good. We have no data base of transcriptions of spoken French available via internet. Specifically, we need a specialized data base for argumentation in interaction (oral or computer-mediated).

5.7.2 Education in argumentation

The central weakness of argumentation studies in France comes from the fact that the new interest taken in argumentation and the undisputable development of research hasn't brought about a parallel development in education in argumentation theories and practices. Here lies certainly the most serious lacuna. At high school level, teachers are supposed to teach argumentation competence; now, it appears that they have to rely mainly on self-training, some basic books and one-day crash courses. At university level, the situation is the same. Theorizing argumentation, analyzing argumentative discourse and interactions, necessitate some expertise. The contradiction is that nowadays, in France, there is no systematic academic teaching on these points. What is at stake here is certainly the future of argumentation studies.The concept of argument threatens to become just an interdisciplinary password, a kind of joker one can allude to at will in any scientific discipline or situation.

5.7.3 Ethnocentricity

A first aspect of the ethnocentricity might be the stress put on debate, in most studies of argumentation in interaction. Sometimes, arguing seems equated with debating, and debating seems rather culture-specific. Other forms of dialogue are no less argumentative than debate, counselling for example. But counselling is not part of the Aristotelian generic trilogy.

Argumentation studies (historical presentations included) in France are 'ethnocentric', that is entirely centered on greco-latin approaches. There is no

living theoretical dialog with our neighboring traditions, that is the Jewish tradition of the Talmudic disputation or the Muslim tradition of 'the sources of law'. We need not only intercultural studies on argumentation, but also comparative studies of the basic concepts of argument, that is studies on the sources of legitimacy, on the idea of consensus, and even on the limits of the recourse to argument.

6. Conclusion

In the introduction I mentioned the fact that, to my knowledge, there was no global essay on the situation of argumentation studies in France. Probably, there won't be many in the future, the development of argumentation studies in France being now, for better or for worse, linked with the new European organisation of research. Recently, I was participating at the examination board of a PhD dissertation on argumentation and demonstration in mathematics, at highschool level. The candidate was Italian, her dissertation was in French, the discussions were in English, French and Italian. In argumentation, her reference was Toulmin, that she used to discuss French and Italian theories on elementary mathematical demonstrations. It wouldn't make much sense to spend time asking if this dissertation was a contribution to French or Italian theories of argumentation. It was just a good contribution to argumentation studies in a specialized field.

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