

Argumentation in Context 9

Let's talk politics

New essays on deliberative rhetoric

EDITED BY

Hilde Van Belle,
Kris Rutten, Paul Gillaerts,
Dorien Van De Mieroop
and Baldwin Van Gorp



John Benjamins Publishing Company

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Hilde Van Belle

KU Leuven | Campus Antwerpen

Kris Rutten

Ghent University

Paul Gillaerts

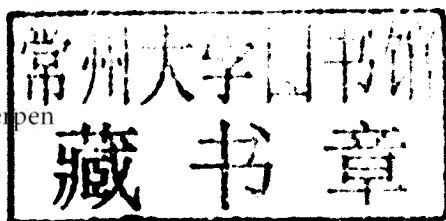
KU Leuven | Campus Antwerpen

Dorien Van De Mieroop

KU Leuven

Baldwin Van Gorp

KU Leuven | Campus Antwerpen



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Let's talk politics

Argumentation in Context (AIC)

This new book series highlights the variety of argumentative practices that have become established in modern society by focusing on the study of context-dependent characteristics of argumentative discourse that vary according to the demands of the more or less institutionalized communicative activity type in which the discourse takes place. Examples of such activity types are parliamentary debates and political interviews, medical consultations and health brochures, legal annotations and judicial sentences, editorials and advertorials in newspapers, and scholarly reviews and essays.

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Volume 6

Let's talk politics. New essays on deliberative rhetoric

Edited by Hilde Van Belle, Kris Rutten, Paul Gillaerts, Dorien Van De Mierop
and Baldwin Van Gorp

List of authors

Kris Rutten
Department of Educational Studies
Ghent University
Henri Dunantlaan 2
9000 Ghent – Belgium
Kris.Rutten@ugent.be

Hilde van Belle
Faculteit Letteren
Taal en Communicatie
KU Leuven Campus Antwerpen
Sint Andriesstraat 2
B-2000 Antwerpen
Belgium
hilde.vanbelle@arts.kuleuven.be

Paul Gillaerts
Faculteit Letteren
Taal en Communicatie
KU Leuven Campus Antwerpen
Sint Andriesstraat 2
B-2000 Antwerpen
Belgium
paul.gillaerts@arts.kuleuven.be

Christian Kock
Dept. of Media, Cognition
and Communication
University of Copenhagen
Karen Blixens Vej 4
2300 Copenhagen S
Denmark
kock@hum.ku.dk

Lisa S. Villadsen
Dept. of Media, Cognition
and Communication
University of Copenhagen
Karen Blixens Vej 4
2300 Copenhagen S
Denmark
lisas@hum.ku.dk

Manfred Kraus
Philologisches Seminar
Universität Tübingen
Wilhelmstraße 36
72074 Tübingen
Germany
manfred.kraus@uni-tuebingen.de

Ernest Jakaza
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Stellenbosch University
Private Bag X1
Matieland 7600
South Africa
jakazaet@gmail.com

Tetyana Sayenko
Apt. 809, Leopold Flat Shinsakae
Shinsakae 1-5-31
Naka-ku, Nagoya-shi
Aichi
Japan 460-0007
tisayenko10@yahoo.com

Maria Svensson
Institutionen för moderna språk
Box 636
S-751 26 Uppsala
Sweden
Maria.Svensson@moderna.uu.se

Jason A. Edwards, Ph.D.
Department of Communication Studies
Bridgewater State University
Bridgewater, MA 02325
U.S.A.
jasonedwards57@hotmail.com

Amber Luckie
Department of Education
St. Mary's University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55104
U.S.A.
luckie_parks@yahoo.com

Sine Nørholm Just
Department of Business and Politics
Copenhagen Business School
Porcelænshaven 24
2000 Frederiksberg
Denmark
snj.dbp@cbs.dk

Kristine Marie Berg
Department of Media, Cognition
and Communication
University of Copenhagen
Karen Blixens Vej 4
2300 Copenhagen S
Denmark
kristinebe@hum.ku.dk

Chiara Degano
Department of Foreign Languages
and Cultures
University of Milan
(Università degli Studi di Milano)
Piazza Indro Montanelli 1
20099 Sesto San Giovanni (MI)
Italia
Chiara.Degano@unimi.it

Cezar Ornatowski
Department of Rhetoric
and Writing Studies and
Master of Science Program
in Homeland Security
Academic Senator, The California State
University
San Diego State University
San Diego, California 92182-4452
U.S.A.
ornat@mail.sdsu.edu

Table of contents

List of authors	VII
Introduction	
Let's talk politics: Introduction <i>Kris Rutten, Hilde Van Belle, and Paul Gillaerts</i>	3
Part I. Theory	
1. Aristotle on deliberation: Its place in ethics, politics and rhetoric <i>Christian Kock</i>	13
2. More than a nice ritual: Official apologies as a rhetorical act in need of theoretical re-conceptualization <i>Lisa Storm Villadsen</i>	27
3. Cultural diversity, globalization, and political correctness: Rhetorical argumentation in multicultural societies <i>Manfred Kraus</i>	45
Part II. Cases	
4. Dialogic voices: A pragma-dialectical approach to R. G. Mugabe's ceremonial speeches <i>Ernest Jakaza and Marianna W. Visser</i>	63
5. Prosodic enhancers of humorous effect in political speeches <i>Tetyana Sayenko</i>	81
6. Correlative markers in EU-parliamentary French debate: The case of <i>non seulement... mais</i> in comparison with <i>et même</i> <i>Maria Svensson</i>	99

7. British Prime Minister David Cameron's apology for Bloody Sunday <i>Jason A. Edwards and Amber Luckie</i>	115
8. Entropa: Rhetoric of parody and provocation <i>Sine Nørholm Just and Kristine Marie Berg</i>	131
9. US <i>National Security Strategy</i> : Different presidencies, different rhetoric? <i>Chiara Degano</i>	149
10. The Bridge: The rhetorical construction of Barack Obama's biography by David Remnick <i>Hilde Van Belle</i>	171
11. Learning to differ: Transforming parliament through argument and debate in Poland post-1989 <i>Cezar M. Ornatowski</i>	185
Name index	205
Subject index	207

Introduction

Let's talk politics

Introduction

Kris Rutten, Hilde Van Belle, and Paul Gillaerts

Discussions about politics often focus on the poor quality of political participation and political understanding by citizens, and on the alleged decline of the social and political order that is related to this lack of engagement. It is an issue that comes up whenever the development of democratic culture in new and emerging democracies is considered, but also when the supposed decline of political involvement and civic engagement in established democracies is problematized (Biesta, 2009). At the same time, there is a strong focus on how political participation could be stimulated, which has become an important focus of a number of government initiatives and citizenship education programs (for an extended discussion on this, see Biesta, 2011). We concur with Biesta (2011) that these initiatives often focus too straightforwardly on the most 'effective' ways to achieve 'good citizenship' rather than to deliberate on what 'good citizenship' could or should be, and that there is a need for an on-going inquiry into the possible meanings of political and civic engagement (see also Rutten and Soetaert, 2013). This implies a shift from an understanding of citizenship as a political 'status' that someone can achieve (e.g. by holding a passport or by abiding to the law) to an understanding of citizenship as a political 'practice' that is related to identification with, and deliberation on, public issues. The focus on 'citizenship-in-context' should redirect the discussion about citizenship and politics in formal terms to a discussion of the different and differing meanings, practices, communications and identities that citizens are confronted with in the public and political realm (Biesta, 2011). In this volume, we will explore how the study of rhetoric – with its double focus as academic discipline and political practice (Kock and Villadsen, 2012) – stands in a unique position to engage with such a contextualized understanding of politics and civic engagement.

The relationship between rhetoric, citizenship and politics is rich and multifaceted. In its origin, the study and practice of rhetoric was strongly related to the first experiments with democracy in Classical Athens. Being able to speak

eloquently became an important skill for a competent citizen in an emerging democratic society. Rhetoric was related to specific virtues and became a central feature of classical education or *paideia* (Woodruff, 2006). Many scholars (a.o. Sproat, 2008) have pointed out this close relationship between ‘good’ education, ‘good’ rhetoric and ‘good’ democracy. Classical rhetorical training was considered to be a lifelong learning process of which the goal was – next to generating a body of knowledge and technological proficiency – to ‘become’ a certain kind of citizen (Terriil, 2011; for an extended discussion, see Rutten and Soetaert, 2012). All the major classical rhetorical scholars such as Isocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian focused on politics as the ‘principal locus’ for rhetoric and their rhetorical theory and practice were aimed at citizens as political agents (Bitzer, 1998).

No doubt the relation between rhetoric, citizenship and democracy needs to be situated in its historical context. Eagleton (1998) cautions us against “nostalgically resurrecting some Bakhtinian carnival of the word from the ancient Polis” (p. 90). As Nathan Crick (2010) points out, there is undeniably attraction to this classical rhetorical tradition for contemporary discussions about politics, citizenship and democracy. However, he argues that this tradition tends to create a “heroic notion of the humanistic self” that is capable of using an aesthetically formed and moral discourse to emancipate oneself and others from social and political binds while ignoring more pervasive technological and economic influences and concrete sets of power relations that cannot be overcome by eloquence alone (p. 3). One could even argue that reducing rhetoric and communication to an aesthetic and moral theory of eloquent citizenship might put rhetoric and argumentation studies ‘at the service’ of new forms of political control rather than developing a critical engagement with contemporary configurations of power (Greene, in Crick, 2010; see also Rutten and Soetaert, 2013).

Contemporary rhetorical scholarship shows a body of work that broadens the confinement of rhetoric within the traditional fields of education, politics and literature, not by abandoning these fields but by refiguring them (Gaonkar, 1993). This broadening of rhetoric is reflected in the work of such scholars as Kenneth Burke, I. A. Richards, Richard McKeon, Chaim Perelman and others (for an overview see e.g. Bizell and Herzberg 2001; Herrick 2004; Rutten and Soetaert, 2012). These scholars caused an important shift in the rhetorical tradition, and the rhetorical canon has been challenged and elaborated upon ever since: “Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian were no longer the last word on rhetoric, but the first word in a whole new conversation about the ubiquity of rhetorical performances” (Tietge, 2008, p. 6). Scholars within the new rhetoric tradition describe rhetoric as a tool for *identification* (Burke, 1969a, b), as a tool to enable our understanding of *contextualized* reasoning or argumentation (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969) and as a tool to avoid violence and build community

through a *listening rhetoric* (Booth, 2004). The shift from 'old' to 'new' rhetoric broadens the understanding of rhetoric as the art of *persuasion* to rhetoric as a way to understand *how* language functions in general and in the establishment of social relationships and social identities in particular, and thus explores the pervasive and mediating role of rhetoric in culture and society (Strecker and Tyler, 2009; Biesta, 2012; Rutten and Soetaert, 2012). This implies that rhetoric also exerts a 'structuring' force upon society. We do not only shape our reality with words, we are also shaped by the words we have at our disposal.

Obviously, a rhetorical analysis of political contexts aims at more or rather at something else than the alleged uses or misuses of language by politicians; it is, as Bitzer (1998, p. 1) points out, also about a focus on "the engagement of motives, principles, thoughts, arguments, and sentiments in communications – an engagement which functions pragmatically to form attitudes and assist judgments regarding the broad range of civic affairs" (Bitzer, 1998, p. 1). Rhetoric and politics intersect on various levels. The focus can be on political deliberation in the public domain, not to 'unmask' politicians but to understand how they frame their messages and structure their arguments, and to explore how this leads to specific actions and policy measures. There is at the same time a continuing need to study the persuasiveness of traditional forms of rhetoric such as public speeches and debates in new and changing political contexts. Rhetoric and politics can furthermore intersect in the assessment of strategies that citizens apply for rhetorically positioning themselves in society. If language is *symbolic action*, as Kenneth Burke claims, then we should also examine how a study of words can contribute to critical citizenship, political action and rhetorical strategy. These different intersections of rhetoric and politics are the underlying issues that we explore in the present issue.

We aim to contribute to the study of argumentation in context by developing an explicit rhetorical approach. A recent model of argumentation that combines the dialectical approach to argument with an acceptance of rhetorical features, is the pragma-dialectical model developed in a series of papers by Van Eemeren and Grootendorst (e.g. 1988), which has also been a central feature in different volumes of this book series. Specifically, the so-called extended version of pragma-dialectics, developed by Van Eemeren and Houtlosser (2002), in which the key notion *strategic maneuvering* adds the promotion of one's position as a discussant to the dialectical framework described, introduces rhetorical insights into the analysis of argumentation. This evolution is consistent with the so-called 'rhetorical turn' in argumentation studies, the aim of which is to combine the study of argument with rhetorical positioning, persuasion, deliberation and inquiry (Tindale, 2004). Rhetorical argumentation, from this perspective, should not only

draw from the rhetorical tradition, but should also confront the classical concepts with innovations and advances in the study of rhetoric and argumentation.

With this volume we thus aim to further the rhetorical turn in argumentation studies by exploring the intersections between rhetoric, argumentation and politics on different levels and in different contexts. Contributions in this volume confront classical rhetorical concepts and theories with current political developments such as globalization and multiculturalism and the emergence of new democracies. Other contributions start from argumentation studies and focus on deliberative rhetoric, which is still one of the central issues of rhetoric in the context of politics. Some contributions also apply rhetorical criticism to political texts and public events and explore what this can imply for developing a 'critical' citizenship. The volume consists of two parts, respectively focusing on theory (Part I) and practice (Part II).

The *first part* introduces theoretical perspectives for a rhetorical approach to politics, not by developing new theories as such, but by confronting existing theories with new developments in the realm of politics and, more generally, in the world of civic affairs. In Chapter 1, 'Aristotle on Deliberation: Its Place in Ethics, Politics and Rhetoric – Then and Now', Christian Kock discusses how Aristotle differs from most later philosophers in distinguishing clearly between epistemic reasoning, which aims for truth, and practical reasoning, which does not. Kock explores how the concepts of deliberation (*boulē*, *bouleusis*) and deliberate choice (*proairesis*) help to link Aristotle's rhetoric, ethics, and politics together and help provide definitions of all three. These key concepts and Aristotle's discussions of them, Kock argues, offer inspiration for modern theories of 'deliberative democracy', citizenship, argumentation, debate, and the public sphere.

In Chapter 2, 'More than a nice ritual: Official apologies as a rhetorical act in need of theoretical re-conceptualization', Lisa Villadsen starts from public apologies as an increasingly common instance of rhetoric in society. In this chapter, the focus is on *official apologies* understood as public statements of regret presented in the name of collectivities (nation states, governments, or religious institutions) for wrongful acts. Starting from a critical examination of the rhetorical merits of such rhetorical utterances, the chapter asks: In what ways might these apologies by proxy make sense? It is argued that a re-conceptualisation of official apologies is needed. The chapter explores how official apologies and the processes that lead up to them thus inform us of discursive struggles over what it means to be a citizen. In this way rhetorical practice might be central to the development of the normative foundation of civic life.

In Chapter 3, 'Cultural Diversity, Globalization, and Political Correctness: Rhetorical Argumentation in Multicultural Societies', Manfred Kraus starts from the premise that rhetoricians have at all times been aware of the fact that one of

the pivotal parameters that ensure acceptance of arguments is their resonance with the audience's cognitive and cultural background. It is explored how in today's globalized world with its multicultural civilizations these parameters come under pressure. The chapter addresses the issue of how rhetorical argumentation will still be possible on a world-wide and cross-cultural scale under the impact of globalization and political correctness.

The *second part* – which is the most extended part of the volume – focuses on practice by presenting rhetorical analyses of the political enterprise on different levels and in different contexts. There is a continuing need to confront the theoretical perspectives with concrete cases and applications of rhetorical analysis of argumentation-in-context. In Chapter 4, 'Dialogic voices: A Pragma-Dialectical Approach to R G Mugabe's Ceremonial Speeches', Ernest Jakaza and Marianna Visser critically examine two of Mugabe's speeches; one he delivered at the United Nations (UN) climate change summit that was held in Copenhagen in 2009 and another one he delivered at the 2008 Zimbabwean independence celebrations. The speeches are examined by applying pragma-dialectical analysis. The pragma-dialectical analysis of the two speeches shows that speakers delivering speeches at ceremonies dialogically interact with the audience, both outside and inside, persuasively inviting them to align with them (speaker) and dis-align with the 'negative' voices.

In Chapter 5, 'Prosodic Enhancers of Humorous Effect in Political Speeches', Tetyana Sayenko focuses on humour as an important factor in establishing a communion between a speaker and his audience, specifically by focusing on the prosodic features of humour used in public speaking. Based on the analysis of six speeches the author argues that specific changes in tempo-rhythm and voice timbre, pragmatic pauses, and fluctuations of tone on focal words can serve as prosodic enhancers or markers of humour in public political speech.

In Chapter 6, 'Correlative markers in EU-parliamentary French debate. The case of *non seulement... mais* in comparison to *et même*', Maria Svensson aims to describe the function of the discourse markers *non seulement... mais* ('not only... but') and *et même* ('and even') in the organization of argumentation in EU-parliamentary debate. The author shows that *et même* marks a difference in argumentative force between the arguments, whereas this is not necessarily the case with *non seulement... mais*, which can also be used as an additive marker without implication on the scalarity between the arguments.

In Chapter 7, 'British Prime Minister David Cameron's Apology for Bloody Sunday', Amber Luckie and Jason Edwards focus on how collective apologies function to reconstitute and rebuild relationships harmed by historical injustices and serve as reconsiderations of past events. In this chapter, the authors examine Cameron's Bloody Sunday apology and its reception. Their analysis reveals his

rhetoric to be an exemplary apology that strengthens reconciliation efforts within Northern Ireland.

In Chapter 8, ‘Entropa – Rhetoric of parody and protest’, Kristine M. Berg and Sine Just focus on “Entropa,” the official piece of art of the 2009 Czech EU-presidency, which was initially said to be made by artists from the 27 member states, but turned out to be the work of one man, David Černý. The authors take a processual view of public debate as a starting point to conduct a textual-intertextual analysis of the piece of art and responses to it. They argue that “Entropa” performs three ambiguous functions: Firstly, it is both an official utterance and oppositional comment. Secondly, it is both support for and critique of the EU. Thirdly, it is both parody and provocation.

In Chapter 9, ‘US Homeland security strategy. Different presidencies, different rhetoric?’, Chiara Degano investigates the discursive modalities through which both the Bush and Obama Administrations have presented their plans for enhancing security, analysing two National Security Strategy reports (NSS) published respectively in 2002 and 2010. In particular the author analyses the linguistic and rhetorical devices used to try and orient the reception of the message, thus shedding light also on the ideological frames underlying the text.

In Chapter 10, ‘The Bridge: the rhetorical construction of Barack Obama’s biography by David Remnick’, Hilde Van Belle shows how Obama’s biographer David Remnick presents his subject as a living example of the rhetorician. The author also shows how the biography is structured around the general idea of rhetoric as a humanistic project, but how eventually this idea is exchanged for a different one that goes for the more mediagenic rhetoric of the race issue.

In Chapter 11, ‘Parliamentary Discourse as Constitutive Rhetoric: The Transformation of the Body Politic and the Discourse of the Polish Parliament Post-1989’, Cezar Ornatowski, examines parliamentary institutionalization in terms of how Polish members of parliament (MPs) *constituted*, or rather *reconstituted*, the institution of “parliament” through their discursive practices in the months following the transitional parliamentary elections of June 4, 1989. The paper assumes a “constitutive” perspective on parliamentary discourse, understanding constitution as, following Kenneth Burke, an “enactment arising in history”.

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