

The Epistemic Inferiority of Pragma-Dialectics — A Reply to Botting

CHRISTOPH LUMER

Università degli Studi di Siena
Dipartimento di Filosofia
Via Roma, 47 53100
Siena Italy
lumer@unisi.it

Abstract: In a recent paper in this journal, David Botting defended pragma-dialectics against epistemological criticisms by exponents of the epistemological approach to argumentation, i.e., Harvey Siegel, John Biro and me. In particular, Botting tries to justify with new arguments a Functional Claim, that the function of argumentation is to resolve disputes, and a Normative Claim, that standpoints that have the unqualified consensus of all participants in a dispute will generally be epistemically sound. In this reply it is shown that Botting's arguments are fallacious, that the two Claims are false and that the epistemological approach to argumentation, of course, outclasses pragma-dialectics epistemically and is at least as good as it in other respects.

Résumé: Dans un récent article paru dans cette revue, David Botting a défendu la pragma-dialectique contre les critiques épistémologiques avancées par des représentants de l'approche épistémologique de l'argumentation, à savoir Harvey Siegel, John Biro et moi. En particulier, Botting tente de justifier avec des arguments nouveaux une position fonctionnelle selon laquelle le rôle de l'argumentation consiste à résoudre des différends, et une position normative selon laquelle des points de vue qui reçoivent un consensus non qualifié de tous les participants à un différend sont généralement épistémiquement solides. Je montre que les arguments de Botting sont fallacieux, que les deux positions sont fausses et que l'approche épistémologique de l'argumentation surclasse épistémiquement la pragma-dialectique et est au moins aussi bonne à d'autres égards.

Keywords: pragma-dialectics, epistemological approach to argumentation, epistemic merits of argumentation theories, justified belief, consensus, critical rationalism, foundationalism, Münchhausen Trilemma, David Botting, Christoph Lumer

1. Background and aim of this Reply

In recent times defenders of the epistemological approach to argumentation (“epistemologists” for short) have fundamentally criticised pragma-dialectics in several respects (Siegel & Biro 1997; Siegel & Biro 2008; Lumer 2010). In particular, while

recognising that pragma-dialectics defends some epistemic reasonableness and has some epistemically conducive elements, they criticise that the basic setting of pragma-dialectical discussions is consensualistic, i.e., organised in such a way as to achieve an epistemically unqualified consensus on the basis of premises and inference rules freely (without epistemological constraints) stipulated in the discussion's opening stage, which must lead to epistemically inferior results: too many false and unjustified beliefs. In addition, I have criticised in particular that pragma-dialectics does not provide an acceptable justification of the pragma-dialectical aim of "critical discussions," i.e., "resolution of a difference of opinion" or, to put it another way, (epistemically) unqualified consensus; and that, in fact, this aim is usually less worthy to be strived for than the aim of epistemological discourses, namely epistemically qualified consensus, shared justified and true, or at least acceptable, belief.

In the 2010 (No. 4) issue of *Informal Logic* David Botting (2010) replied to these challenges, especially those which I raised, with a major attempt to prove the epistemical value of pragma-dialectics with the help of several new arguments.¹ He tries to defend three claims, which he thinks are central claims of pragma-dialectics:

The Functional Claim: The function of argumentation is to resolve disputes on the basis of the better argument.

The Instrumental Claim: Following the pragma-dialectical rules conduces to the reasonable resolution of disputes.

The Normative Claim: Standpoints that have the unqualified consensus of all participants in the dispute will generally be epistemically sound. (Botting 2010: 413 f.)

In addition, Botting has answered some single criticisms in the context of these claims, though he leaves unanswered many further important criticisms. These include: pragma-dialectics is not even interested in truth; because of the externalisation rule participants in a discussion do not need to believe in their claims; pragma-dialectical discussion rules are not purposefully developed for resolving differences of opinion; pragma-dialecticians hold to conventionalism even in logic; pragma-dialectics does not develop a real theory of good arguments (in the sense of premise-conclusion sequences) but only of discourse (see Lumer 2010).

¹ Bart Garssen and Jan Albert van Laar (2010), in a recent paper in this journal, have taken up the challenge too and mainly responded to Siegel and Biro's criticisms. Siegel and Biro have replied to this (Siegel & Biro 2010).

In this reply I want to criticise the Functional and the Normative Claim as well as Botting's justifications for them; I leave aside the less important Instrumental Claim, which, correctly understood, says only that the pragma-dialectical discussion rules are designed to achieve the resolution of disputes, i.e., the aim established in the Functional Claim, and are effectively designed to that end.² In addition, I want to show why epistemologically designed discourses are epistemically and altogether superior to pragma-dialectical discussions.

2. Botting and Pragma-Dialectics

Botting introduces the three claims with the sentence: "The pragma-dialectical theory makes three claims" (Botting 2010: 413). He continues by admitting, however: "The Normative Claim, I should say, is more implied than claimed, the strength of this implication varying among the members of the Amsterdam School" (414). And the relevant reference footnote adds:

The Functional and Instrumental Claims can be found in any introductory text to pragma-dialectics, e.g.,

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pragmadiialectics.

The Normative Claim is difficult to find explicitly stated, but I believe it to be the strongest, most interesting and most consistent way of interpreting van Eemeren's notion of a "rational judge" (see Huss 2005 for this claim [...], and also Lumer 2000, esp. footnote 2). At the very least, I think van Eemeren would approve of pragma-dialectics having this kind of epistemic normativity, if such could be defended [...]. (414, fn. 1)

In brief: pragma-dialecticians do *not* endorse the Normative Claim. Some of them even oppose it explicitly:

So, different from Popper's philosophy of science, which is motivated by the quest for true theories, the pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation remains restricted to the investigation of standpoints in the light of particular sets of starting points. Given that the pragma-dialectical theory is about defending standpoints against an address-

² As I have argued in my original critique (Lumer 2010: 48-51), the pragma-dialectical rules are *not* simply designed to achieve unqualified consensus: pragma-dialecticians do not even try to prove that their rules are the best for reaching this aim, but the rules are already a blend of rules for unqualified consensus and epistemically rational elements—a blend quite typical of pragma-dialectics. Botting, however, in his paper does not try to justify the Instrumental Claim either; so I can leave my criticism at the earlier stage.

ee with a particular set of commitments, rather than about trying to approach true theories or standpoints that are acceptable *as such*, there is not even a whiff of justificationism in pragma-dialectics.” (Garssen & Laar 2010: 138)

All the worse for pragma-dialectics, one might reply, and interpret Botting’s undertaking only as an attempt to make the epistemically best out of pragma-dialectics—against pragma-dialecticians’ resistance. These passages reveal several things.

1. Botting is not a member of the Amsterdam School, and not even a pragma-dialectician in a somewhat stricter sense, but someone interested in this theory. And he is obviously much more interested in epistemically sound argumentation and truth than pragma-dialecticians. In this vein, he several times criticises Garssen’s and van Laar’s (2010) defence of pragma-dialectics as missing the point (Botting 2010: 415, 423, 424); he concedes one of my criticisms of the pragma-dialectical discourse rules (namely that these rules require retraction of a justifiedly believed thesis if it cannot be defended in the discussion on the basis of the shared argument schemes and premises—which is epistemically irrational and constitutes a sort of muzzling of the informed and a dictatorship of the ignorant (Lumer 2010: 46 f.)), saying that this rule is too strict (Botting 2010: 427); and, finally, he even concedes that a system of (epistemically qualified) discourse rules that, like the epistemological approach, does not simply take accepted premises and types of inferences, including epistemically unsound ones, as the argumentative basis may be *more* truth-conducive than a system oriented to unqualified consensus, like pragma-dialectics (428). Perhaps he tries to seek the false friends.
2. Botting does not seem to sufficiently know pragma-dialectics. In the following sections some gross distortions of pragma-dialectics by Botting have to be tackled. Apart from such distortions, the whole style is somewhat blithe with respect to a truthful representation of pragma-dialectics; Botting, e.g., very rarely provides references which could prove what he ascribes to pragma-dialectics; this holds already for the three Claims.³

³ As the quotes above show, for the three Claims Botting does not provide references to the original works of pragma-dialecticians but relies on Wikipedia and his opponent’s publications (and, on top, on references to unfitting passages). The foundational works of pragma-dialectics (like van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984; 1992; 2004) are not even listed among the references. And instead of referring to the theoretically fundamental

3. Too often Botting “invents” his own “pragma-dialectics,” be it because of lack of knowledge or to make pragma-dialectics fit better with his epistemological claims. In the Functional Claim (“The function of argumentation is to resolve disputes on the basis of the better argument”) for example, the supplement “on the basis of the better argument” is Botting’s invention (more inspired by Habermas than by pragma-dialectics), whereas pragma-dialecticians mostly use some bare formula like: argumentation aims at “resolving a difference of opinion” (Eemeren et al. 2002: xi; cf. Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984: 1; 2004: 57); sometimes they add qualifications of the means to be used like “by means of a regulated exchange of ideas” (Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 52) or “through a regular exchange of speech acts” (Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992: xiii) or “by verbal means” (Eemeren et al. 2002, ix); but at least I have never found in their writings Botting’s supplement (and as already mentioned, Botting provides no reference). Of course, an addition of the qualification “on the basis of better argument” in the Functional Claim could turn the theory proposed by Botting into a radically altered, “epistemologised” version of pragma-dialectics⁴—*if* “better argument” is meant in the usual, epistemological sense; unfortunately, Botting does not express himself about this meaning. Further “adjustments” of pragma-dialectics by Botting will be discussed below. What has just been said under 2 and 3 about Botting’s insufficient knowledge and “adjustments” of pragma-dialectics unfortunately applies also to his dealing with critical rationalism and the epistemological approach to argumentation.⁵

As a consequence of these observations, the focus of the following discussion will be less on the authenticity—in terms of reflecting what pragma-dialecticians have really said—of Botting’s theses and more on the truth of his Claims as well as on the question of whether pragma-dialectics, perhaps only after some reinterpretation, has the epistemic value which Botting maintains it has.

elaboration of the pragma-dialectical discussion rules, i.e., the Code of Conduct (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984: 152-174; 2004: 136-157) he refers only to their simplified and incomplete textbook version, i.e. the Ten Commandments (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1987, 284-293; van Eemeren & Grootendorst & Snoeck Henkemans 2002: 109-139; 182-183).

⁴ Thanks to Harvey Siegel for suggesting this consideration to me.

⁵ Of the critical rationalists Botting cites only Popper’s *Open Society*, which is not an epistemological work. Nor does he seem to know any central constructive work of the epistemologists (as they are, e.g., portrayed in Lumer 2005b).

3. The functional claim—Botting’s (failed) intuitionist justification

One of my main criticisms of pragma-dialectics was that it lacks a theory of the function of arguments, does not justify its most basic functional assumption and that this assumption does not capture what is really the most valuable aspect of argumentation and argumentative discussion, namely obtaining and transmitting true or acceptable justified belief by argumentation and making these beliefs more certain, to reduce the number of always possible falsities as well as to enlarge the stock of acceptable and justified beliefs by argumentative discourse (Lumer 2010: 43-48; 62-64). Botting replies to this criticism that I have misunderstood the order of explanation in pragma-dialectics and that “they [probably the pragma-dialecticians, C.L.] do provide an argument, albeit a pragmatic rather than a theoretical one” (Botting 2010: 421). And he goes on to design a nice fictitious dialogue between Frans van Eemeren and me, wherein this pragmatic argument is developed: “van Eemeren” and “Lumer” agree that “we know what the fallacies are” and that “we do not need a theory of the function of argumentation for that.” In the next step “van Eemeren” proposes to identify rules of good argumentation that capture these fallacies; and finally he advances his hypothesis that the Ten Commandments of pragma-dialectics are a system of rules that fulfils this function (Botting 2010: 421). To “Lumer’s” objection that he has provided a systematic and unified theory of fallacies too (i.e., Lumer 2000), “van Eemeren” replies that time and critical testing will reveal which is the better approach (Botting 2010: 422). So, the methodological idea of Botting’s argument in defence of the Functional Claim is intuitionistic: we have clear, reliable and intersubjectively shared intuitions about the fallacies; and positive argumentation rules hypothesised by argumentation theory as well as functional claims about argumentation are hypotheses put forward to systematise these intuitions. This methodological approach is only an *idea*; Botting in no way proceeds to its realisation, showing that the pragma-dialectical rules and the Functional Claim would really be the outcome. He seems even to admit that in fact at present one cannot prove that the pragma-dialectical reconstruction is right or better than the epistemological.⁶

⁶ In the fictitious dialogue, “van Eemeren”, i.e. Botting’s voice, confronted with the fact that the epistemologists have provided models of argumentative dialogues as well, says: “Relative to our respective theoretical assumptions, each of our theories is correct and are equally good for as long as they both account for the data. Only time and severe critical testing will tell which is better” (Botting 2010: 422).

So the whole intuitionist justification amounts to no more than a mere allegation that this procedure *would* lead to pragma-dialectical results.

Be that as it may, neither pragma-dialecticians nor epistemologists uphold this intuitionist conception of the justification of argumentation rules. (Botting again fails to provide any reference to justify his intuitionist interpretation of pragma-dialectics.) Both develop an instrumentalist approach instead, where first the aims of arguments, argumentation and argumentative discussions are established; subsequently rules for arguments, argumentation and argumentative discourses are developed to realise these aims; finally, fallacies are defined as violations of these rules and systematised according to the rules violated. Fallacies are considered to be problematic because they impair fulfilment of the respective aims and functions. In their first systematic exposition of fallacies, van Eemeren and Grootendorst are already following this instrumentalist route:

Fallacies as incorrect moves in a discussion: [...] In a dialectical approach, the starting point is that the discussants do have the intention of jointly resolving the dispute. [...] In order to identify fallacies, it is first necessary to establish the rules that have to be observed in a critical discussion. Therefore, we shall formulate the rules [...] and also indicate possible violations of these rules and mention the various fallacies associated with them. (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1987: 283-284)

After this introductory explanation, van Eemeren and Grootendorst introduce the Ten Commandments and subsequently an explanation of singular fallacies as violations of these Commandments (284-293). In their later elaborations this methodological approach does not change (see, e.g., van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992: 92-207, in particular 104 f.; van Eemeren et al. 2002: 109-139, in particular 109 f.; van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 158-186, in particular 162).

My own account follows exactly the same methodologically instrumentalist route: First, the aim, the function of argumentation is established, then criteria for good argumentations are developed which are designed to fulfil this function and, finally, a systematisation of a huge mass of fallacy types is provided which identifies them as violations of these criteria (Lumer 2000).

First there should be a positive theory of good arguments, among others, providing exact criteria for good arguments; then ‘fallacy’ should be defined as an argument not complying with these criteria; finally, there should be

a systematization and explanation of fallacies in relation to those criteria. (Lumer 2000: 405)

Of course, in the epistemic approach, and hence in my own, the function of argumentation is different from that assumed by pragma-dialectics; in monologic argumentation the aim (more precisely: the standard output) is justified true or acceptable belief; in argumentative discussion the internal aim of the game is justified consensus and the external aim, i.e., the aim with which a rational individual enters an argumentative discourse, is to acquire new justified beliefs and to make old ones more certain by exposing them to a critical judge (Lumer 1988: 447-450).

In the light of these proofs, it seems to be quite clear who has misunderstood the order of explanation or justification in pragma-dialectics and attributed false views to other theorists. However, this by itself, of course, does not exclude that Botting, in the fictitious dialogue, has provided a good justification of the pragma-dialectical discourse aim and discussion rules. Hence this intuitionist justification has to be assessed separately. Now, the initial problem with it is that the basis of the whole argument and intuitionist methodology does not exist: in contrast to what Botting (2010: 421) holds, we do not simply “know what the fallacies are”; we do not have the clear, reliable and intersubjectively shared intuitions about the fallacies; so the main premise of Botting’s argument is false. Today there is some consensus among theorists of argumentation about a core group of fallacies. This core, however, is not clear-cut; and outside this core there is much and strong disagreement.

First, the dispute between pragma-dialecticians and epistemologists about the criteria for good argumentation, of course, also comprises differences of opinion about which arguments and argumentations are fallacious. So, if two discussants agree that the gambler’s fallacy is a good argument scheme and on this basis infer a shared conclusion, for pragma-dialectics this is not a fallacious argumentation, whereas from an epistemological point of view this is clearly a fallacy, and this difference shows the futility of the unqualified consensus criterion (cf. Biro & Siegel 1992: 91, Goldman 1999: 159, Lumer 2010: 64, Siegel & Biro 2010: 473-474; and on the other side: Garssen and van Laar 2010: 126-127). Analogous disagreements about general criteria for fallacies and hence about the validity of single argument schemes exist between these two approaches and further approaches like the rhetorical approach to argumentation.

Second, even apart from such general divergences there is disagreement among argumentation theorists about the validity of many argument schemes: arguments from analogy, abduction, Walton and colleagues’ defeasible modus ponens (e.g., Walton

et al. <2008> 2010: 242, 253, 366 f.), Rescher's presumptive specialisation (Rescher 2006: 77, 33 f.).⁷

Third, what is considered to be a good or a fallacious argument by the majority of specialists has historically changed. Revelation, for example, once an enormously influential argumentation scheme, is now no longer accepted by serious researchers; and a fallacy like the base rate fallacy in probabilistic arguments could not have been considered as fallacious 300 years ago for the simple reason that quantified probabilistic arguments at that time had not even been invented.

Even if there were a broad consensus (also historically and interculturally) on what the fallacies are, this consensus would have to be explained—for theoretical reasons but also for the practical reason that we want to know whether the (by hypothesis shared) opinions on fallacies stem from a reliable mechanism which links them in some way to truth. Botting does not tackle this question. So if these opinions are really intuitions and hence rely on subjectively unjustified impressions, where do they come from? Do these impressions originate from a kind of fallacy sense? Given the theoretical complications of such a hypothesis and the just-stated historical, theory-induced and other extensional differences in fallacy lists, this is not very plausible. A much better explanation of the sources of our fallacy judgements is that there is a continuum of origins of fallacy judgements spreading out from (i) simply not accepting the premises, to (ii) not recognising socially learned argumentation schemes or applying socially learned criteria of fallacies, then to (iii) simple considerations of the type that even if the premises were true what is claimed in the conclusion could be quite different to, finally, (iv) theoretically founded judgements of experts, where such expert judgements and criteria then may trickle down to non-experts (see (i) and (ii)) via the usual ways of social knowledge transfer. This explanation captures the aforementioned interpersonal, theory-induced and historical differences in fallacy lists. Historical changes, for example, are owed to major theoretical changes in theorists' majority opinions or to scientific revolutions. With this explanatory hypothesis, however, we are back to the role of *theories*, in particular positive theories of argumentation as sources of fallacy lists, i.e., we are back to the route of justification assumed, e.g., in my critique (Lumer 2010) (i.e., first to establish criteria for good arguments and argumen-

⁷ In a recent paper on argument schemes, for example, I have found wanting more than half of Walton, Reed and Macagno's argument schemes (Walton et al. <2008> 2010: 308-346)—57 out of 108, to be precise (Lumer 2011: Section 2.2).

tation and then for fallacies), which is inverse to the route proposed by Botting.

Another consideration which brings us back to the positive theory of arguments is this. Even if there were shared intuitive opinions about fallacies, the question of the functional value of argumentation and the disvalue of fallacies would remain open: why should we not give up the whole practice of arguing or change the criteria for good and fallacious arguments? Thus, also a successful intuitionist justification does not relieve us of the necessity of giving a functional and practical justification for good argument—which is however lacking in the pragma-dialectical approach.

Given the fact that our criteria for good argumentation and hence for fallacies are changeable and not inborn, the question (re-)arises why we should adopt certain criteria and not others. (This question is somewhat independent of the explanatory question why certain criteria were adopted.) In other publications (Lumer 2005a: Section 9 (236-239), 1990: 30-51, 1988: 448-450) I have provided instrumental reasons why we should rationally adopt criteria for good argumentation as proposed by the epistemic approach, namely, to give a hint, that because of these criteria's link to truth conditions, their use maximises the ratio of our true or truthlike opinions about all the questions to which we desire an answer; in addition, the respective arguments can be used to transfer knowledge interpersonally (and not only beliefs) as such, and epistemologically conceived argumentative dialogues bring knowledge of different people together and help to make their beliefs more certain and safe from errors by exposing them to interpersonal control, etc. And in the paper discussed by Botting (Lumer 2010) I have criticised pragma-dialectics in that although it is an instrumentalist approach to argumentation it does not assume, still less justify, a good and specific function of argumentation in the first place; hence it fails at the point of departure, and the instruments developed on this basis have insufficient value. The critique said that although reaching an unqualified consensus (the pragma-dialectical aim of discussion) may resolve social conflicts, such a conflict resolution could also be obtained by an epistemically qualified consensus, so that the pragma-dialectical and the epistemic approach are on a par in this respect. However, the really argumentation-specific aspect, namely, leading to true or truthlike beliefs, is neglected by pragma-dialectics and as a consequence the epistemological approach outclasses pragma-dialectics in this much more important respect. This is a practical, instrumentalist justification of the functional assumption of the epistemological approach and a practical critique of pragma-dialectics' functional assumption, which are independent of an

intuitionist justification; yet Botting has not answered the challenge of the earlier epistemologists' critiques.⁸ Given that Botting—in contrast to pragma-dialecticians—is really interested in truth and justified beliefs as results of argumentative discourse (see his defence of the Normative Claim), why does he then, instead of counting on the epistemological approach, adhere to pragma-dialectics and the Functional Claim in the first place, although the latter do not have any obvious relation to these aims and do not further any comparably valuable aim?

4. The Normative Claim – 1. The alleged critical rationalist foundation of pragma-dialectics

Botting seems to want to justify the Normative Claim (“standpoints that have the unqualified consensus of all participants in the dispute will generally be epistemically sound”) with two lines of thought, first, by showing the critical rationalist foundations of pragma-dialectics and, second, by taking up an argument of Felix Kaufmann, according to which the highest rules in science are always communally stipulated conventions. I write “Botting seems to want” because the whole train of thought in his paper is not well organised, with many byways and ramifications where the main argument is often lost in the midst of somewhat associative considerations; filtering out the two arguments for the Normative Claim seems to me to give the strongest interpretation. I will deal with the first line of thought in this section, and with the second in the following section.

The strategy of the first line of defence of the Normative Claim is to show that pragma-dialectics is based on the critical rationalist epistemology—in particular the pragma-dialectical critical discussion is supposed to model the critical rationalist process of conjecture and refutation—and hence pragma-dialectics is based on a normative epistemology, so that it is epistemologically normative or sound or good (Botting 2010: 415-416).

The rationale of pragma-dialectics—in particular its concepts of a *critical discussion*, rationality and reasonable-

⁸ When Botting, via van Eemeren's voice, concedes in the fictitious dialogue that as regards the comparison of the pragma-dialectical and the epistemological theory of fallacies “only time and severe critical testing will tell us which is better” (Botting 2010: 422) this does *not* refer to a *practical*, instrumentalist comparison of both theories but to their *better explanatory* power regarding intuitions about fallacies. The latter kind of comparison is obsolete, however, because both approaches are normative in a broad sense, instrumentalist, and do not aim at providing the best explanation of our “given” intuitions.

ness—is based on a version of Popper’s *critical rationalism*. [...] *Critical discussions* model the *critical rationalist* procedure of conjecture and refutation: standpoints are put forward and sincere attempts are made to falsify those standpoints.” (Botting 2010: 415)

Popper’s “basic statements” are simply statements that the scientific community all agree to and are fallible. This lends scientific methodology to the possibility of being modelled dialectically as a *critical discussion*. This *critical discussion* is an epistemically normative process that begins and ends with a consensus. (416)

Botting tries to strengthen the critical rationalist epistemic content of pragma-dialectics still more by referring to van Laar’s conditions of a disagreement’s reasonable solution, which include requests such as: that everybody in the discourse has to provide his *best* arguments, that the arguments *have to be critically tested* by subjecting them to critical questions and that the participants *help* each other in fulfilling these conditions (Laar 2003: 2, cited by Botting 2010: 418). These requirements go beyond the pragma-dialectical Code of Conduct or the Ten Commandments—which maximally give *permission* to act in this way—in demanding a real commitment to the critical rationalist spirit of inquiry. They have been added to the orthodox version of pragma-dialectics by van Laar, who generally tries to give pragma-dialectics a critical rationalist interpretation.

This attempt to give pragma-dialectics an epistemologically strong basis and thereby to prove the Normative Claim, faces several problems.

1. Popper’s (and Albert’s) critical rationalism is *one* of the epistemological sources of pragma-dialectics, but not the only one. Other important sources are the Erlangen School, in particular Lorenzen (Kamlah & Lorenzen 1973) and Lorenz and their constructivism, and Barth and Krabbe’s Formal Dialectics.⁹ Van Eemeren and Grootendorst have taken pieces from all these sources, amalgamating them in an often incoherent way.

2. I have analysed the role of these various pieces in pragma-dialectics (Lumer 2010: Section 4 (51-58)). Critical rationalist pieces, apart from justifying the dialogical character of pragma-dialectical argumentation, *de facto* have more the role of a theoretical or “ideological” superstructure, in the sense of a

⁹ All these sources play an important role in the construction of the first major English elaboration of pragma-dialectics (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984) and after. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst commit to all these sources explicitly; e.g. in their “Rationale” (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1988: e.g. 282).

nice theoretical discourse which does not really influence what is going on at the basis, whereas the hard material core of pragma-dialectics, i.e., the internal aims and the rules of discussion, are primarily inspired by Lorenzen's constructivist Dialogic Logic and Barth and Krabbe's Formal Dialectics. As a consequence, what in pragma-dialectics happens on the level of the dialogue rules is exactly the opposite of what critical rationalism requires. Critical rationalism criticises positive, foundationalist justification and fosters negative criticism of hypotheses, which have to be advanced without justification, whereas pragma-dialectics instead requires positive justification if the opponent asks for it, though on the basis of shared premises (Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984: 160 (rule 5); 2004: 139 (rule 3)) and it does not permit real critique of the proponent's claims by advancing and justifying a counterclaim (not p) or by attacking the proponent's justification for his/her claim. It maximally permits the opponent to ask for justifications (Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984: 165 (rule 8); 2004: 144 (rule 6)).¹⁰ As a consequence, also the roles of the proponent and the opponent are different in the two theories. The proponent's role, according to critical rationalism, is to invent a clever hypothesis and then to wait, whereas the opponent tries to confute this hypothesis. In pragma-dialectics the proponent advances a hypothesis or claim and defends it on request, whereas the opponent perhaps asks for such a positive justification. So, pragma-dialectical critical discussions absolutely do *not* model the critical rationalist procedure of conjecture and refutation (Lumer 2010: 59)—in contrast to what Botting claims (Botting 2010: 415, 416).¹¹ As a conse-

¹⁰ A detailed reconstruction and elucidation, including an explanation of why two simple dialogues—one about p and the other about not p —cannot simply be added to form one complex dialogue, is provided in Lumer 2010: 58-60. By the way, models of argumentative dialogues designed by epistemologists are much more powerful and dialogical in that they admit real attacks, justifications of attacks and regulate the coordination of these moves (cf. Goldman 1999: 139-149, Lumer 1988).

¹¹ A reviewer seems to have raised this objection to Botting's line of thought too (see Botting 2010: 416, fn. 2). Therefore Botting gives two (spurious) answers to it. First, the Ten Commandments in the 2004 version have been formulated negatively as prohibitions of argumentative moves, which is more consistent with critical rationalism. Second, convincing somebody of a standpoint is always a matter of showing that the commitment store is inconsistent otherwise; so this is a falsificationist enterprise (415-416).

Both answers, to put it mildly, completely miss the point. The 2004 Ten Commandments, unlike earlier versions, are formulated as prohibitions throughout, yes, but this does not change their content at all. The 1987 Commandment regarding the obligation to argue for one's claim, e.g., reads as follows: "Whoever advances a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked to do so" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1987: 285), whereas the 2004 formulation is: "Discussants who advance a standpoint may not refuse to defend this

quence, pragma-dialectics does not inherit the possible epistemological advantages of the critical rationalist logic of research either.

A further important difference of pragma-dialectics and critical rationalism with respect to their epistemological value is that critical rationalism is really interested in truth¹² and, as a substitute for it, in verisimilitude, i.e., truthlikeness, and that as epistemic organon it mainly, apart from observation, uses logic, whose inferences transfer the (perhaps only hypothesised) truth of the premises to the conclusion. Because of this interest in truth it would never allow making inferences with the help of argument schemes simply agreed upon by the participants of a

standpoint when requested to do so” (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 2004: 191). Now, “it is not allowed that not p ” (or: “one may not refuse to bring about p ”) in deontic logic is *defined* as: “it is obligatory that p ”; so by the reformulation the content remains analytically *identical*. The newer formulations of the pragma-dialectical rules by no means suddenly introduce the permission or even obligation to offensively criticise and the prohibition to positively justify. Incidentally, the Code of Conduct, as opposed to the Ten Commandments, is not even reformulated from positive obligations to negative prohibitions.

Botting’s second answer is no better: (i) If someone shows that from the (accepted) premises p_1, \dots, p_n the claim c follows, one usually does not show that the set $\{p_1, \dots, p_n, \text{not-}c\}$ is inconsistent but simply derives the conclusion. (ii) The usual way of showing that the set $\{p_1, \dots, p_n, \text{not-}c\}$ is inconsistent is to prove that from p_1, \dots, p_n, c follows; and subsequently one states that c contradicts not- c so that the set $\{p_1, \dots, p_n, \text{not-}c\}$ is inconsistent. So this proof of a contradiction first follows the original way of proving c ; and the additional step, i.e., proving the inconsistency of $\{p_1, \dots, p_n, \text{not-}c\}$, does not add anything to the proof of c . (iii) Even if Botting were right in his contention that the pragma-dialectical arguments proceed via a proof that the commitment store would be inconsistent otherwise, the resulting hypotheses and epistemic dynamics in pragma-dialectics and critical rationalism would be as different as they were before. In the case of a critical rationalist confutation there are a hypothesis h (in addition, possibly hypotheses h_1, \dots, h_m of a lower degree of generalisation) and empirical facts p_1, \dots, p_{n-1} ; from these premises an observational sentence not- p_n is derived, which however contradicts p_n , a well-known fact; therefore (and because h_1, \dots, h_m are regarded as being more secure than h), h is rejected—where however h is a strong, e.g., universal, positive conjecture and p_n is a proven fact of *in se* minor importance. According to Botting’s idea, however, we have premises p_1, \dots, p_n , by which (via proving c , as remarked above) not- c is confuted and hence c is positively proved—where the confuted not- c is a relatively weak negative claim and the confirmed c is a relatively strong positive claim. Considering these confutations, I think it is fair to say that Botting’s replies have some associative connection with the question but completely miss the point, being *ignorationes elenchi* at best.

¹² See e.g. his papers “Three Views Concerning Human Knowledge” and “Truth, Rationality, and the Growth of Scientific Knowledge” (Popper <1963> 2002: 130-160; 291-338), where he defends the view that truth and knowledge are the aims of science, relies on Tarskis’s definition of ‘truth’ and on this basis tries to define ‘verisimilitude’.

dialogue. Pragma-dialectics on the other hand, seeing the resolution of conflicts of opinion as the aim of argumentation, simply is not primarily interested in truth. In van Eemeren's and Grootendorst's paper "Rationale for a Pragma-Dialectical Perspective" (1988), which is perhaps the most "epistemological" of their publications and where their heritage from critical rationalism is developed, the central concept is "reasonableness" in argumentation, which is specified as problem-solving validity and conventional validity, i.e., validity in terms of whether an approach to argumentation leads to the resolution of disputes and to "intersubjective acceptability for the discussants" (van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1988: 280). Truth and knowledge do not play any role here (as far as I can see not even the words 'truth' and 'knowledge' appear in this paper). Because of this their rules allow fallacious forms of inferences if the participants in the dialogue agree on the respective fallacious argument schemes. What van Eemeren and Grootendorst have really taken from critical rationalism is some idea of dialectics (1988: 280) and allegedly the ideas of fallibility and of systematical critical testing, where however the latter ideas are put into the context of problem-solving (279) and the problem to be solved later is identified with the intersubjective difference of opinion—but not with finding the truth, as in critical rationalism. To resume, whatever pragma-dialectics takes from critical rationalism it is not the epistemological concern for truth and the rules that should guarantee approaching to truth. Hence, the critical rationalist heritage in pragma-dialectics cannot be taken as a proof of pragma-dialectics' positive epistemic value and, in the end, of the Normative Claim, in contrast to what Botting asserts.

A further problem with Botting's critical rationalism argument is that even if the pragma-dialectics were designed in accordance with what critical rationalism requires this would show that pragma-dialectics had an epistemological basis but it would not show that this basis is epistemologically good and hence it would not prove the Normative Claim (that the results of a pragma-dialectical discourse will generally be epistemically sound). And there are some strong reasons why critical rationalism is not a good epistemology (and why justificationism is better). Without any positive justification, the spectrum of possible hypotheses would be so huge that successful falsifications would not bring us near to truth. Furthermore, without positive justification and argumentation we could not even falsify most hypotheses, because their falsifying evidence is logically complex. It is difficult to see how this problem can be resolved without relying on a positive justification of the falsifying evidence, which however would be self-defeating in terms of falsificationism. In addition to this, a real falsification of theories is

(nearly) impossible, because the theory can (nearly) always be saved by introducing auxiliary hypotheses. Popper's reply to this objection, that we have to distinguish between ad hoc and not ad hoc auxiliary hypotheses, faces the problem that the most obvious way to establish that an auxiliary hypothesis is not ad hoc is to positively justify it.¹³

Each of the objections raised so far defeats Botting's defence of the Normative Claim via the critical rationalist component in pragma-dialectics, so there is no need to expand these criticisms further. I would, however, like to reply to some of Botting's claims regarding the Münchhausen Trilemma, which is part of the justification of critical rationalism. Van Eemeren and Grootendorst in several passages have adopted Albert's Münchhausen Trilemma against justificationism. It says that justificationism must lead (i) to an infinite regress of justification, or (ii) to a logical circle, or (iii) to breaking off the justification, which for Albert is the reason for adopting criticism (Albert 1980: 8-15). For van Eemeren and Grootendorst, too, the Münchhausen Trilemma is the reason to give up the idea of positive justification and to bet on (negative) criticism instead and thereby on dialectics, i.e., the inclusion of other persons, critics, as necessary elements in the process of theoretical rationality (Eemeren & Grootendorst 1984: 16, 1988: 279-280, 2004: 131-132). As already stated above, however, van Eemeren and Grootendorst's attitudes in this respect are quite incoherent, for their argumentation rules require positive justification and prohibit offensive criticism; the only thing they really put into practice is the idea of dialectics. Siegel & Biro (2008: 199-202) and I have criticised this as well as Albert's Münchhausen Trilemma (Lumer 1990: 197-209, 2010: 51f.). A central passage of my own criticism, also referred to by Botting (2010: 423f., fn. 10), reads:

The Münchhausen-Trilemma is simply false. It rests on a hidden and false premise, namely that deduction from true premises is the only form of acceptable justification. This premise, together with the well-known properties of deductive justification, namely, first, to presuppose already justified premises and, second, to preserve at best, mostly to reduce but never to increase the informational content of the justified conclusion compared with that of the premises, leads to the exposed trilemma. But of course, there are forms of justification that do not rely on already justified premises, in particular observation; and there are ampliative forms of justification (i.e. forms of

¹³ For some further criticisms of falsificationism see: Siegel & Biro 2008: 197f.

justification that increase the thesis' informational content), in particular inductive reasoning. (Lumer 2010: 51)

And all three epistemologists have made the criticism that Albert as well as van Eemeren and Grootendorst confuse infallibilism and justificationism, whereas the epistemologists themselves criticise infallibilism and defend justificationism. Botting replies:

Lumer, Siegel and Biro are scarcely any more charitable to the argument of van Eemeren and Grootendorst, who I think need not deny that there is positive justification in the sense illustrated. Their point is simply that such justification is relative to the system of rules and premises [...] agreed to in the actual discussion. (Botting 2010: 425)

This reply requires several answers. First, van Eemeren and Grootendorst endorse Albert's Münchhausen Trilemma and the criticist consequence Albert draws from it (see the references given above). How then can Siegel & Biro's and my critique of that trilemma be uncharitable to van Eemeren and Grootendorst?

Second, Botting says nothing about the merits of the epistemologists' criticism of the Münchhausen Trilemma; hence he does not reply to the point. Those criticisms are simply true; and, insofar as van Eemeren and Grootendorst endorse the Münchhausen Trilemma and the consequences Albert draws from it, they claim something false.

Third, neither for Albert nor for van Eemeren and Grootendorst is the consequence of the Münchhausen-Trilemma to base justifications on shared premises but to endorse criticism, which does not accept any premises based on which positive justification can proceed. For critical rationalism such reliance on shared premises would be a kind of dogmatic breaking of the justification. For van Eemeren and Grootendorst, however, the situation is different because, after their lip-service to criticism, in practice (i.e., in their discourse rules), very incoherently, they accept positive justification, albeit simply on the basis of shared premises. Botting's assertion that the consequence of the Münchhausen Trilemma is basing one's justifications on unqualifiedly accepted premises may be seen as an attempt to make sense of van Eemeren and Grootendorst's incoherence. Given that the Münchhausen Trilemma is false and criticism is a problematic epistemic approach, van Eemeren and Grootendorst, by their reversion to some form of justificationism, in a certain sense, have demonstrated a nose for epistemically better solutions, though they do not recognise their own inconsistency

and hence do not systematically develop epistemically satisfying rules on the basis of a better epistemology.

Fourth, the fundamental problem with the Münchhausen-Trilemma question is that neither Albert nor van Eemeren and Grootendorst have seen, apart from deduction and perhaps observation, the many other forms of positive justification, particularly introspection and probabilistic and practical reasoning (see Lumer 2011), which also include justifications without premises, and ampliative justifications. Only with the help also of the latter forms can we achieve those uncertain cognitions we need in our daily life, in particular cognitions of laws of nature for predicting action consequences. Because justificationism produces a sufficiently wide range of positive cognitions in a targeted manner and based on truth conditions, it is an epistemology by far better than criticism and unqualified consensualism.

Fifth, Botting is right when he says that all parties—Popper, van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Siegel, Biro and me—reject infallibilism and “strong foundationalism,” where Botting intends the latter to be a foundationalism based on infallible first premises (Botting 2010: 425, fn. 11). The rest of the discussion, however, is not—as Botting thinks (425, fn. 11)—simply a verbal dispute over the meaning of ‘justification,’ whether or not with those rejections also justification (in a narrow sense) is rejected. Even if there were a narrow sense of ‘justification’ used by Popper, Albert, van Eemeren and Grootendorst, and a wide sense used by the epistemologists (including uncertain and ampliative justifications)—though I think there is only the wide sense—Popper and Albert do not accept justification even in the wider sense, however it is called, whereas the epistemologists do; and the pragma-dialecticians are simply incoherent, as on the theoretical level they reject positive justification (also in the wide sense) and on the practical level they propose it.

5. The Normative Claim – 2. Kaufmann’s epistemic progress argument

In the last part of his paper Botting presents a second argument in favour of the Normative Claim, which is based on Felix Kaufmann’s philosophy of science (Kaufmann 1943; 1944). This argument extends over seven pages (Botting 2010: 427-433). It is better structured than the first one and, above all, more to the point. The main line of argumentation is still not too clear, however. I think the best way of interpreting it is to dissect it into the following main steps.

The epistemic progress argument in favour of the normative claim:

- S1: Accepted rules and corpus:* According to Kaufmann (1943) and Botting, a science has rules of procedure and a corpus of currently accepted propositions, whereby these propositions are permanently controlled whether or not they are in accordance with the rules (Botting 2010: 429).¹⁴
- S2: Correctness relative to current rules:* The “correctness” of a decision over a proposition is always relative to the rules and corpus at the time being (429). Note that these steps correspond to the pragma-dialectical rule of basing arguments on shared premises and inference rules.
- S3: Progress of rules and corpus:* The corpus grows and shrinks over time, as do the procedural rules (429). These changes, however, are progressive because science is a cumulative endeavour (430); also the rules change historically, and their “acceptance is, in the long run, a reliable indicator of verisimilitude” (432). (Botting does not use the word “progress” in this context; however, I think speaking of “cumulative endeavour” and “in the long run reliable indicator of verisimilitude” are best interpreted as ideas of “progress,” which is a handier formula.)
- S4: Progress by stipulated higher-order rules:* The historical progress of the accepted methodological rules is due to their criticism on the basis of higher-order rules. A disagreement on the highest order is a disagreement about the meaning of ‘science’ and ‘knowledge,’ which must be resolved via a decision of the community; so there are no criteria external to the system of rules. (431)
- S4.1: The example of magic:* As an example for this, Kaufmann (1944: 71) and Botting present the competition between magic and science—in which, according to the usual epistemic standards, science should be the winner.

Magic is inferior to science because [...] both share the rule that propositions be held up against experience. [...] Presupposing rules of the observational test of predictions as basic rules of both magic and science we can judge that science is preferable to magic in terms of the rate of fulfilled predictions pertinent to both

¹⁴ Kaufmann mainly defends a justificationist principle of sufficient reason (Kaufmann 1944: 70) together with a criticism (69) in the form of a “principle of permanent control” (70), which for him is a consequence of fallibilism. So Kaufmann’s criticism is completely different from Popper’s falsificationist criticism, which does not allow positive justification. (This idea of Kaufmann is in line with the epistemological approach, whereas Popper’s criticism is not.) Botting does not mention this important contrast between the authorities on which his position is based.

fields. [...] Over time science will [...] prove itself epistemically preferable to magic. (Botting 2010: 430)

S5: Transfer to discussions in general: These ideas about science can be transferred to discussions in general because such discussions, too, start on the basis of “accumulated wisdom of experience” (428). Each participant has premises and rules which s/he believes and has reasons for believing them. This knowledge does not disappear between one dialogue and the next. (431) The discourse continues and hence is progressive. It is a mistake on the part of the epistemologists not to see this and therefore to criticise unqualified consensus (431).

S6: The default of truth: Because of these mechanisms only a Cartesian demon can cause the general failure of unqualified consensus—where however the Cartesian demon is a problem of every epistemology (432).

The Normative Claim: Therefore, the Normative Claim holds: “Any arbitrary unqualified consensus is likely to be true unless positive evidence suggests otherwise is brought forward.” (433) So the pragma-dialectical unqualified consensus is an epistemic norm (432; 433)—in the sense of being epistemically good.

This epistemic progress argument requires several comments. A first, general, comment is that Botting here, again, is much more interested in the epistemic qualities of pragma-dialectical dialogues than are the pragma-dialecticians them=selves. Since the latter do not even speak of truth they would not hold the idea of approaching truth, epistemic progress and the Normative Claim altogether. This is only to say that Botting’s attempt is an epistemological improvement with respect to pragma-dialectics, which does not imply that it is sufficient.

Ad S1: Accepted rules and corpus: That a science, at each respective time, has rules of procedure and a corpus of currently accepted propositions is at best an approximation which holds only for some kernel of the respective science. This is a minor problem, however.

Ad S2: Correctness relative to current rules: The real problem behind the claim that correctness is relative to the methods and premises accepted for the time being is the rhetorical insight that for an argument to be really convincing it has to use accepted premises and inference types. This by no means implies, however, that the *epistemological correctness* of an argument—in the sense of implying the thesis’s truth (or at least

its truthlikeness or probable truth)—is guaranteed by *consensualist correctness*, i.e., the dialogue partners' acceptance of the premises and inference type as well as the correct application of the latter. As we all know, of course, people often believe in false premises and false inference types, which result generally in theses' falseness. This holds also for entire methods of proving like magic or revelation. There is, however, a solution to this tension between epistemological correctness and the rhetorical insight, namely distinguishing between an argument's epistemological correctness or argumentative validity (true premises and valid inference, etc.) on the one hand and its adequate use for rationally convincing, which requires the justified acceptance of the premises and of the inference type by the addressee, on the other hand. Epistemically good argumentation has to fulfil *both* conditions (Lumer 2005a: 219-220, 225-231, 234-236 (Sections 4; 6; 8)). Hence consensualist correctness of an argument is not only not sufficient for its epistemological correctness, it is not even necessary. Most of the epistemologically good arguments are not adequate means for rationally convincing in a given situation. And sometimes even *no* epistemologically good argument is also adequate for rationally convincing a given addressee of a justified thesis, because the addressee does not have sufficient knowledge, is irrational, etc. To sum up, epistemological correctness is not relative to current rules—but to objective epistemological principles that guarantee the conclusion's truth or epistemic acceptability.

Ad S3: Progress of rules and corpus: First, the idea of an epistemic progress, if it is not simply a quantitative increase in the number of accepted premises and rules but a qualitative improvement with a higher ratio of true beliefs and methods and inference rules that lead more reliably to truth and provide answers to more important questions, contradicts the historical and social relativism of S2, because the concept of "progress" presupposes a common measure for the whole development. This common, universal measure is exactly what is missing in pragma-dialectics, however. Second, in so far as Botting speaks of "verisimilitude" (Botting 2010: 432) as a result of this development, he introduces such a universal measure. By no means, however, does he explain why historical development merely on the basis of shared premises and methodological rules produces a progress in these terms. Here exactly those elements are missing whose absence makes up the epistemological deficit of pragma-dialectics, namely epistemically objective criteria of good arguments and epistemic rules in general. This is the main problem with Botting's argument, which rests on the idea of an epistemic progress: he cannot explain this progress by means of

an unqualified consensus on the basis of shared premises and inference rules.

Ad S4: Progress by stipulated higher-order rules: The idea of higher-order rules does not provide this epistemological universal criterion either, because it is only a hierarchy within merely shared rules where at the top, according to Botting, there is only an unjustified decision—though one in the light of the various consequences (Botting 2010: 431).

Of course, there is epistemic progress, but pragmatodialectics and the additional elements brought in by Botting cannot explain it. So how can it be explained? First, we have to distinguish (at least), on the one hand, constitutive semantical rules, which define the truth of propositions in a compositional way, and, on the other, methodological as well as inferential rules, which allow us to recognise the truth (or truthlikeness or probable truth) in an indirect way, which does not follow the compositional path of a direct verification. (To give an example: the direct verification of “tomorrow it will rain here” (with a contextually clarified “here” and “today”) is to wait here until tomorrow and then observe whether and how much raindrops fall. This does not help if we want to know the truth today. For this purpose we need the indirect, uncertain but more informative methods of weather forecasting.) Because the constitutive rules define a proposition’s truth their epistemic value is not in need of a particular proof: following them, *by definition*, leads to a true proposition. (This does not preclude the definitions themselves from being justified in terms of the usefulness of the respective concepts and syntactical structures; but this is not the present concern. Nor does it preclude someone thinking s/he has followed the truth-defining rules with a positive result, and hence believing in the proposition’s truth, when in fact s/he has not; this possibility is one reason for fallibilism.) This is different for the methodological and inferential rules. Now, deductive inferential rules are not identical with constitutive rules but they *follow* from the definitions of the logical operators ‘not,’ ‘and,’ ‘all,’ etc. Given how these operators are defined it is impossible that if the premises of a valid inference are true its conclusion is false— this is shown in introductory logic courses and books. The validity of these rules, however, i.e., that such rules from true premises always lead to a true conclusion, of course, is independent of whether a particular interlocutor has attended such a course or is willing to concede the validity of logical rules (though most people of some acquaintance with logical operators and inferences master the most important inferences “intuitively,” without attending a logic course). And the validity is independent of the historical discovery of the valid inferences and of formal logic (though, again, even before these dates linguisti-

cally competent people have mastered many important inferences intuitively as a consequence of their use of the logical operators). In this sense the validity of these rules is objective. So valid logical inferences rules exist as Platonic entities as a consequence of the definitions of the logical operators and independent of their discovery. Finally, there are methodological and inferential rules which do not follow from the truth-defining rules and do not guarantee the conclusion's truth but only its epistemic acceptability, i.e., its truthlikeness or probable truth, e.g., the rules of the probability calculus, rules of projective statistics, rules for applying "utility" or "desirability" definitions under conditions of limited knowledge. These rules do not drop out of the sky; they have been invented (or, Platonically speaking, discovered) historically, but their validity again does not depend on someone accepting them. Such rules are instruments that have to fulfil at least three main requirements. First, the system of such rules has to be *epistemically productive* in the sense of providing that information which, as a consequence of our anthropological make-up, we need or which is important for us, even if it is not certain—think, e.g., of the weather forecast. Only because we need such uncertain information for practical purposes do we take the risk of relying also on insecure epistemological methods. Second, the rules must be *epistemically efficient*, i.e., lead to at least acceptable (true, truthlike or probably true) propositions. Third, the rules must be *practicable*, i.e., their application has to be feasible and economically efficient in the wide sense of not requiring too much effort, time, etc. As usual with instruments, there is a trade-off between such requirements. Optimising only one of these dimensions we obtain rules that do not fulfil one of the other requirements at all or only to an insufficient degree. Optimising epistemic efficiency, e.g., leads to staying with secure rules only, and hence to the violation of the productivity requirement. Clever inventions of new systems of rules improve fulfilment of one or two requirements without losses or with only smaller losses for the others. Scientific methods, e.g., improved epistemic productivity and efficiency enormously at high, though still economically viable, cost. This historical process is not finished yet; but so far in science and similar discursive enterprises we have reached epistemic rules with high standards, which should define what good arguments are. The historically final and best standards so far exist only as Platonic entities, which nobody knows. That the achieved epistemic rules are highly developed and arguments designed on their basis are good is a consequence of these rules fulfilling the three (and perhaps other) requirements quite well. It does not depend on an interlocutor accepting these rules; in this sense the epistemic rules are objective(ly good). With the help of such

improved epistemic rules we also obtain more, and more acceptable, material knowledge.

So, there is epistemic progress, but not as a consequence of correcting epistemic and argumentative rules on the basis of a decisionistically adopted highest-order criterion or of simply continuing the discourse from one instance to the next. It is, instead, a consequence of defining and respecting clear truth conditions, of discovering and applying objectively valid logical inference rules and of developing and observing objectively good insecure epistemological rules and methods. And this is what the epistemological approach says.

Ad S4.1: The example of magic: It is rather unlikely that magic includes the rule that its propositions should be held up against experience; at least, the idea of the highest relative frequency of successful predictions, as any kind of frequentist criterion, is too modern to be part of magical thinking. Hence there is no consensualistic basis for comparing magic and science in these terms and, consequently, the basis for Botting's and Kaufmann's explanation of this part of scientific progress is inappropriate in their account. But even if magic accepted this methodological rule there are other epistemic systems which more or less explicitly even reject this rule: in particular, the monotheistic systems of revelation. If their religious techniques and predictions did not help to prevent a disaster, the failure—in our terms—was reinterpreted as a divine trial or punishment (Weber <1921> 1980: 261). Hence, there are no internal standards to overcome these epistemic systems. (This often makes it difficult to discuss with very religious people.) There are only external standards. The only way out of this closure is that more reasonable religious people grasp the idea of these external standards, perhaps with the help of arguments brought forward by secular people who demonstrate the advantages of these standards. Prognostic success has historically been accepted as a criterion for good epistemic rules only gradually; today it is accepted by the majority of educated people but not by all. In addition, of course, the reason magic is inferior to science is not because there is a *shared* rule whose application shows that it is, but because the former fails in terms of an *objective criterion*: predictive validity—which is one useful operationalisation of the just-explained requirement of epistemic efficiency. By alleging, I think falsely, that magic accepts predictive success as a proper criterion for a good epistemic rule and hence, accidentally, an objectively good rule, Kaufmann and Botting help themselves to an important objectively good criterion, which cannot however be presupposed by a consensualistic approach.

Ad S5: Transfer to discussions in general: First, there are several important differences between science and discussions in

general. Discussions in general are not held by an, ideally, (i) universal scientific community (ii) of trained experts (iii) with written, and hence more or less carefully produced, (iv) and stored, as well as, again ideally, historically and geographically universally accessible contributions; (v) and they usually do not include meta-discourses on epistemological criteria, etc. A kind of universal continuity is reproduced in general discussions mostly only via trickle-down effects of scientific discourse. These effects usually lead to at least some basic level of quality in such discussions; but apart from that, general discussions are quite patchy (in the sense of being short, including only few people who perhaps continue to debate on the same topic in another group) and with the strongest continuity being only biographical. So, important mechanisms that lead to historical epistemic progress in science are radically cut in general discourse, which makes its results usually much inferior from an epistemic point of view. Therefore, the proposed transfer of the metatheoretical results about scientific discourse to discussion in general is valid only to a very reduced extent. This does not preclude good epistemic results of general discussions, but they are less frequent.

Ad S6: The default of truth: As already noted, Botting, Kaufmann and pragma-dialecticians cannot by their means explain why unqualified consensus in science leads to true or truthlike propositions and historically to epistemic progress. Even less (because of ‘ad S5’) can they explain this for general discussions. Of course, in many cases the consensual result of a discussion is true. This is not, however, the consequence of simply following the pragma-dialectical discourse rules but of following objective standards, of using epistemologically good arguments and rules of cognition. ...

Ad: The Normative Claim: ... And, therefore, if “unqualified consensus” means (strong meaning) that the consensus has been achieved without actually following objective standards, then the result is true only by accident and hence is very, very unlikely to be true—in contrast to what the Normative Claim says, so that *the Normative Claim is false*. If, however, “unqualified consensus” means (weak meaning) that the consensus has been reached in a discussion following the pragma-dialectical rules, which neither prescribe nor forbid following objective standards¹⁵ then the Normative Claim is *perhaps* true. Whatever

¹⁵ Botting writes: “The aims of unqualified consensus and justified consensus are, Lumer (2010) argues, incompatible, there being no necessary connection between agreement and truth” (Botting 2010: 414f.). To “aim at unqualified consensus” can be understood in a strong sense, where “unqualified” is part of the intention’s propositional content, i.e., the subject intends the consensus to be (epistemically) unqualified, and a weak interpretation, where “unquali-

interpretation Botting intended—this is not sufficiently clear to me—I think the weakly interpreted Normative Claim expresses better the epistemic strength of pragma-dialectics because pragma-dialectics is neutral with respect to objective epistemic standards but not hostile to them. Now, the weak Normative Claim *perhaps* is true because many people often follow epistemically good standards, so that the chances that after some discussion in which one participant has brought forward reasons for the claim and both participants finally agree on it the claim in question is true may be slightly over 50%. It may be, but also it may not be; it depends on the rate of how often people follow epistemically good standards. If one thinks of the consensus in everyday popular debate (of course, after a discussion which respects the pragma-dialectical rules) one may be pessimistic about whether the 50% threshold, which would make (the very weak interpretation of) the Normative Claim true, is outperformed in the whole of society. Botting has not brought forward any good reason why it is over 50%; and I do not venture to make a qualified guess. So, the truth of the very weak interpretation of the Normative Claim remains an open question, whereas its strong interpretation is clearly false. In any case, however, even if the weak interpretation turned out to be true the possibly

fied” is an external characterisation of the content the subject is striving for, i.e., the intention’s content is only to reach a consensus, period. This distinction is somewhat different from but similar to the distinction between the two meanings of ‘unqualified consensus’ (above, in the body text). With the strong interpretation of “aiming at unqualified consensus” the proposition attributed to me is true because in this case, according to the definition, the consensus is *intended* to be unqualified and hence not justified. But with the weak interpretation the proposition attributed to me is false. If one aims at a consensus, period, this does not preclude the consensus finally reached also being—more or less accidentally—justified. The proposition (understood in the weak sense) attributed to me contains an analytical fallacy: from “no necessary connection” between agreement and truth does not follow that they are incompatible (thanks to Harvey Siegel for this analysis). Now, when I wrote that pragma-dialectics aims at unqualified consensus I clearly intended the weak sense (Lumer 2010: 43). So, did I commit a fallacy and claim a false proposition in the thought Botting attributes to me? No, Botting misquotes what I wrote. My criticism was that pragma-dialectics does not aim at an epistemically qualified consensus (in the weak sense) because, as a consequence of not doing so, following its rules will lead to epistemically inferior results; but I did not say that aiming at an unqualified consensus (in the weak sense) is incompatible with reaching a justified consensus. Botting immediately below the quoted sentence defends the compatibility of the aims of unqualified consensus and justified consensus (Botting 2010: 415); hence he, coherently, should intend “aiming at unqualified consensus” in the weak sense—at least in this passage. However, the Normative Claim speaks of “standpoints that have the unqualified consensus” only, without referring to aims. For this kind of usage the strong interpretation, at least spontaneously, may be more natural. So, it is not clear which interpretation of the Normative Claim Botting has in mind.

epistemically good results of this kind of unqualified consensus are not a consequence of following the pragma-dialectical rules—they leave aside the problem of how to achieve truths—but of using objective epistemological rules.¹⁶ On the contrary, the fact that the pragma-dialectical rules do not permit offensive criticism diminishes the chances of arriving at true results.

Probably Botting overrates the chances of a (pragma-dialectically achieved) consensus being true, because he assumes too many true propositions to be in the shared commitment store, so that unrealistically many false propositions under discussion simply could be falsified by inferring their negation from the common premises. He writes e.g.:

So, while it is true that the gamblers cannot be criticized through an external criterion, repeated failures of their predictions soon brings [sic] about an internal inconsistency in their commitments. Assuming that it is part of their rules of procedure to believe the evidence of their own eyes, the gamblers' [sic] fallacy is soon revealed as a fallacy. (Botting 2010: 431-432)

First, one can easily criticise the gambler's fallacy with the help of an argument that proves its fallaciousness according to epistemically objective standards, i.e., with an argumentatively valid argument. Often, however, this will not be successful because the gambler does not accept the premises. This is because of the above-mentioned difference between the argumentative validity of an argument and its adequacy for rationally convincing. In such a case we can try it with another argumentatively valid argument, which it is hoped is also adequate. But perhaps there is no such argument; then we cannot do very much to convince the gambler. However, because the argument is valid the gambler's fallacy is a fallacy even if this fallaciousness cannot be demonstrated to the gambler or, vice versa, if two gamblers agree that the gambler's fallacy is a valid inference (Biro & Siegel 1992: 91). Second, the body of evidence in the gambler's case is not so readily available as Botting assumes. If the gambler has made a *certain* prediction it can easily be falsified. Most gamblers, however, will assume only a higher probability of the desired result as a consequence of the many unfavourable outcomes in

¹⁶ Botting is right when he holds that the propositions and inference types initially agreed upon do not drop out of the sky but that the participants have their reasons for believing them (Botting 2010: 431); the epistemologists do not deny this. What they criticise, however, is this: that these reasons are good reasons, if they are, is not a consequence of following the pragma-dialectical rules but of the participants' using objectively good epistemological standards. Pragma-dialectics has no merits in this respect.

previous attempts. In such a case, falsification is much more difficult; and the necessary premises are usually *not* in the shared commitment store. One could register an enormous number of attempts and show that the relative frequency of a further unfavourable outcome in the $n+1^{\text{th}}$ trial after n unfavourable outcomes of a fair random device is as high as after only one unfavourable outcome. This would require us, depending on the type of game and the length n of the series of unfavourable outcomes, to know the results of thousands of trials. Another way is to try to explain what ‘independence of events’ and ‘random sequence’ mean, to argue that the present game consists of random sequences, etc. All this requires much more knowledge than Botting assumes, and this knowledge may not be available, so that the prospect of reaching a justified consensus about the gambler’s fallacy’s fallaciousness may be slim.

6. Conclusion: The superiority of the epistemological approach

Botting’s Normative Claim is only qualitative. He does not want to lodge a stronger, comparative, claim:

I do not wish to claim that the Ten Commandments are more conducive to epistemic goals than other systems of rules. I leave it an open question whether argumentation would be more *truth-conducive* without the contentious rule [i.e. to argue on the basis of shared premises and inference rules, C.L.], but a system of rule containing it does not, because it contains it, *fail* to be *truth-conducive*. (Botting 2010: 428; emphases by Botting)

However, if Botting in his paper, by trying to substantiate the Normative Claim, really does want to defend pragma-dialectics as a good theory of argumentation to be adopted by the scientific community and the wider public—and not simply to show what the Claim says (that unqualified consensus in a dispute will generally be epistemically sound)—then the Normative Claim is too weak and hence Botting’s argument is an *ignoratio elenchi* in the first place. This is so because a defence and a plea for adopting pragma-dialectics have to show that it is an instrument at least similarly as good as other available tools, since otherwise rational people will not adopt this tool as their own option. If, for example, someone successfully showed that one can heat a room (somewhat) with a set of candles, this would not be a good argument for adopting this solution instead of one or another modern heating system.

Now, the real problem is not that Botting does not *show* that pragma-dialectics is similarly as good in epistemic turns as the epistemological approach, but that pragma-dialectics is several classes inferior to the latter. This is so because pragma-dialectical discussion rules are not even *designed* to lead to true or acceptable propositions (but rather to resolve differences of opinion); they do so only incidentally—as candles offer heat—whereas the dialogue rules and criteria for good argumentation provided by the epistemological approach are not only designed to reach this aim but do so efficiently by relying on epistemically efficient as well as epistemically productive and practicable rules of knowledge acquisition, transfer and improvement (by epistemically guided discourse). Hence pragma-dialectical discourses could in general be epistemically as good as epistemologically designed discussions only by a miracle. Pragma-dialectical discussion rules could be designed for other functions which epistemological arguments and discussions do not have. First, however, epistemologically designed discourses can resolve differences of opinion. Second, one can want to resolve differences of opinion for various reasons. One is to improve one's own or another person's cognisance (at least one of two contradicting claims is false, hence a difference of opinion can be a clue that one's own opinion is false), however this is the epistemic function, which is the domain of the epistemological approach. Another is to resolve social conflicts, particularly conflicts of interests, however in this case mediation or game-theoretically guided negotiation may be the better means. I fear therefore that pragma-dialectics is not even a good instrument for other functions—a candle compared with an electric spotlight, so to speak.

Considering these verdicts, one might try to defend the epistemic abstemiousness of pragma-dialectics along some such line *à la* Botting as follows. “Pragma-dialectical discussion rules provide only a forum, a structure, even for resolving epistemological conflicts. As some epistemologists (including Lumer) have conceded, epistemically good criteria and rules are not simply there (maximally as Platonic entities) but have to be invented, again according to epistemological standards (fulfilling the adequacy conditions of epistemic productivity, efficiency and practicality), whereby the possibility that present standards will be overcome by better standards one day is never precluded. Therefore, one should not prevent the possibility of such progress by prescribing epistemic standards within the discourse rules, but include the possibility of a discussion about epistemic rules in the discourse rules by leaving everything open to the participants' consensus.”

First, however, epistemologically designed discourses, of course, do not exclude discussions about epistemic rules and criteria, and the epistemological approach does not exclude the revision, enhancement and extension of such standards. These standards are layered. On the lowest level there are definitions which imply truth criteria for propositions and the structure of human practical interests. Higher levels are based on stronger presuppositions. This layered structure makes it possible to *recognise* new and better epistemic standards of higher levels (Lumer 1990: 434-447).

Second, the rules for good argumentation proposed by epistemologists are bound to scientific discourses and rely on historically achieved expertise. It is not realistic to expect people, laypeople and scientists alike, to invent them out of nothing—Botting, I think, would agree with this (cf. Botting 2010: 428)—but it is not much more realistic to expect an underground transfer of various discussion results about epistemic standards (as Botting suggests: Botting 2010: 428, 431) generally to reach the currently highest epistemological standards. It is exactly a major task of argumentation theory (together with epistemology in a wide sense) not only to find out such standards but also to mould them to rules of argumentation for the wider public. And if one day the respective scientific standards have improved sufficiently, handbooks and textbooks could simply follow this development.

Third, one problem with pragma-dialectics is that refraining from inserting epistemological standards into the discussion rules is probably not due to misconceptions about the role of formulating argumentation rules (whereas it could perhaps be Botting's error) but to the misconception about the function of argumentation altogether and to not aspiring to epistemic ends. And insofar as Botting, in contrast to pragma-dialectics, is interested in truth, epistemic acceptability of propositions, justification and epistemically good arguments he should turn to an approach which provides these things directly.

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Harvey Siegel for his very valuable suggestions and to Tony Blair for his helpful revisions.

References

- Albert, Hans. (1980). *Traktat über kritische Vernunft*. 4th, revised ed. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Biro, John [I.] & Harvey Siegel. (1992). "Normativity, Argumentation and an Epistemic Theory of Fallacies." In: Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, J. Anthony Blair & Charles Arthur Willard (Eds.), *Argumentation Illuminated*, pp. 85-103. Amsterdam: SicSat.
- Botting, David (2010). "A Pragma-Dialectical Default on the Question of Truth." *Informal Logic* 30: 413-434.
- Eemeren, Frans H. van & Rob Grootendorst. (1984). *Speech Acts in Argumentative Discussions. A Theoretical Model for the Analysis of Discussions Directed towards Solving Conflicts of Opinion*. Dordrecht/Cinnaminson: Foris.
- Eemeren, Frans H. van & Rob Grootendorst. (1987). "Fallacies in Pragma-Dialectical Perspective." *Argumentation* 1: 283-301.
- Eemeren, Frans H. van & Rob Grootendorst. (1988). "Rationale for a Pragma-Dialectical Perspective." *Argumentation* 2: 271-291.
- Eemeren, Frans H. van & Rob Grootendorst. (1992). *Argumentation, Communication, and Fallacies. A Pragma-Dialectical Perspective*. Hillsdale, NJ/London: Erlbaum.
- Eemeren, Frans H. van & Rob Grootendorst. (2004). *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation. The pragma-dialectical approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P.
- Eemeren Frans H. van; Rob Grootendorst & Fancisca Snoeck Henkemans. (2002). *Argumentation. Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation*. Mahwah, NJ/London: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Garssen, Bart [J.] & Jan Albert van Laar. (2010). "A Pragma-Dialectical Response to Objectivist Epistemic Challenges." *Informal Logic* 30: 122-141.
- Goldman, Alvin I. (1999). *Knowledge in a Social World*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Kamlah, Wilhelm & Paul Lorenzen. (1973). *Logische Propädeutik. Vorschule des vernünftigen Redens*. 2nd revised ed. Mannheim/Wien/Zürich: Bibliographisches Institut.
- Kaufmann, Felix. (1943). "Verification, Meaning, and Truth." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4: 267-284.
- Kaufmann, Felix. (1944). "Concerning Mr. Nagel's critical comments." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 5: 69-74.
- Laar, Jan Albert van. (2003). *The Dialectic of Ambiguity. A Contribution to the Study of Argumentation*. Dissertation Reiksuniversiteit Groningen. Online publication:

- <<http://dissertations.ub.rug.nl/faculties/fil/2003/j.a.van.laar>>, last access 15th August 2010.
- Lumer, Christoph. (1988). "The Disputation. A Special Type of Cooperative Argumentative Dialogue." *Argumentation* 2: 441-464.
- Lumer, Christoph. (1990). *Praktische Argumentationstheorie. Theoretische Grundlagen, praktische Begründung und Regeln wichtiger Argumentationsarten*. Braunschweig: Vieweg.
- Lumer, Christoph. (2000). "Reductionism in Fallacy Theory." *Argumentation* 14: 405-423.
- Lumer, Christoph. (2005a). "The Epistemological Theory of Argument – How and Why?" *Informal Logic* 25: 213-243.
- Lumer, Christoph. (2005b). "The Epistemological Approach to Argumentation – A Map." *Informal Logic* 25: 189-212.
- Lumer, Christoph. (2010). "Pragma-Dialectics and the Function of Argumentation." *Argumentation* 24: 41-69.
- Lumer, Christoph. (2011). "Argument Schemes – An Epistemological Approach." Forthcoming in: Frank Zenker (ed.): *Argumentation: Cognition and Community. Proceedings of the 9th International Conference of the Ontario Society for the Study of Argumentation (OSSA), May 18-21, 2011*. Windsor, Canada: CD ROM.
- Popper, Karl Raimund. (<1963> 2002). *Conjectures and Refutations. The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Siegel, Harvey & John Biro (1997). "Epistemic normativity, argumentation, and fallacies." *Argumentation* 11: 277-292.
- Siegel, Harvey & John Biro. (2008). "Rationality, Reasonableness, and Critical Rationalism. Problems with the Pragma-dialectical View." *Argumentation* 22: 191-203.
- Siegel, Harvey & John Biro. (2010). "The Pragma-Dialectician's Dilemma. Reply to Garsen and van Laar." *Informal Logic* 30: 457-480.
- Walton, Douglas, Chris[topher] Reed & Fabrizio Macagno. (<2008> 2010). *Argumentation Schemes*. Reprint. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weber, Max. (<1921> 1980). *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. Ed. by Johannes Winckelmann. 5th rev. ed. Tübingen: Mohr.