

## BOOK REVIEWS

### ***FALLACIES: CLASSICAL AND CONTEMPORARY READINGS***

**Edited by Hans V. Hansen & Robert C. Pinto**

University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995. Pp. xi, 1-356. ISBN 0-271-01417-2 (paper). US\$18. 95 (paper).

### **Reviewed by Jim MacKenzie**

This anthology has two, not entirely congruent, purposes: to present a selection of the most important historical texts on fallacies, and to make some of the best post-Hamblin work on fallacies available in a single volume for the benefit of those in the field and also educators, philosopher, logicians, and teachers of communication and forensic science.

The historical section skips from Aristotle straight to Arnauld & Nicole's Port-Royal Logic. Then we have the passage from Locke which introduced the names *ad verecundiam*, *ad ignoratiam*, *ad hominem*, and *ad iudicium*, which is followed by extracts from Isaac Watts, Richard Whately, and John Stuart Mill's introduction of an explicit category of inductive fallacies. This list notably omits the Middle Ages. The omission is the more regrettable because an editorial note by Alexander Fraser to his nineteenth century edition of the Locke passage reprinted here (p. 55) says that appeals to human authority "in medieval reasoning had so much taken the place of a purely intellectual appeal". This comment does less than justice to the scholastics' knowledge of the Sophistical Refutations and its distinction between Didactic and other kinds of argument (ii, 165b1). Medieval writers rejected arguments from authority in contexts where we should unhesitatingly accept them: a gloss to the *Graecismus* of Eberhard of Bethune, one of the standard textbooks of the thirteenth century, reads:

Since Priscian did not teach grammar by every possible means, the value of his books is greatly diminished. Thus he gives many constructions without assigning reasons for them, relying solely on the authority of the ancient grammarians. Therefore he should not teach, because those only should teach who give reasons for what they say. (Quoted by Paetow, 1910, p. 35).

Nevertheless, since Hamblin set the study of fallacies firmly in a historical context, it is pleasing to have at least some of the central texts so easily available to students.

The section on Analyses of Specific Fallacies contains some valuable work and (in John Wood's delightful paper on "Appeal to Force") enjoyable writing. There are two analyses of *ad hominem*, one by Alan Brinton from the perspective of rhetoric, and the other by Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst from the perspective of dialectical pragmatics. Here are the roots of a tendency towards academic drift which becomes more apparent in the section on Contemporary Theory and Criticism: from informing the reader about the subject matter, we move to debating how the subject matter is to be treated. The reader of a first-aid collection who hoped for straightforward instructions on how to treat snake bite and broken legs and who finds rather contributions to a debate about the aims of first aid and its relation to medicine has a right to be disappointed. In the present case, since the subject is fallacies, the contributions are themselves examples of reasoning and may therefore commit "live" or "real-world" fallacies. The practical student is likely still to be disappointed, for arguments about the nature of fallacies, even though apt to contain fallacies, are somewhat more rarefied and less obviously exciting than arguments about more concrete and widely debated issues. The answer is clear: this is not a book for the person who simply wants to do the job of detecting and exposing fallacies, but for the reader who is more critical and reflective and wants to understand the nature of fallaciousness. Sad to say, this nature is something which those interested in the question have not yet managed to describe.

Indeed, the matter is worse than that. A massive challenge has been presented to fallacy theory by Gerald Massey in his claim that whereas we can show at least some good arguments to be good (by using formal logic to show them to be valid, and then investigating the truth of the premisses), we cannot show any bad arguments to be bad except by the theoretically trivial, logic-independent method of showing that the argument in question has true premisses and a false conclusion. (Massey's argument was anticipated by Oliver, 1967, and developed independently by Staines, 1981). An excerpt from Massey's 1981 paper, "The fallacy behind fallacies", in which he argued for this position, appears in this collection.

As Trudy Govier said in her reply to Massey (p. 175), Massey's account might be welcomed by informal logicians "who thought this took the formalists down a peg or two". But as she went on to say, "Any alliance between informal logicians and Massey is premature and would not be to his taste. For him a theory is a formal theory, and a judgement without a theory is only a very slight improvement on no judgement at all" (p. 175). Govier's reply to Massey is interesting to the student of fallacies as an example of reasoning. She reconstructs his argument (p. 176), stating the first premiss as:

- (1) Whatever fallacies are, they are invalid arguments.

Massey is certainly committed to that premiss, for he says:

In his informative treatise on fallacy, Hamblin succinctly describes a fallacious argument as an argument that seems valid without being so (Hamblin, 1970,

12). It is with fallacies so defined that I will hereafter be concerned. (Massey, this volume, p. 163)

Given that this is Massey's definition of "fallacy", Govier's claim that invalidity is not a necessary condition of fallaciousness (p. 177), because there are fallacies which are not invalid (she cites begging the question and straw man), is beside the point. If they do not meet Hamblin's condition of not being valid, they are not fallacies of the kind with which Massey is concerning himself. Govier then concedes Massey's definition "for the sake of argument" and objects to Massey's inference from having no formally adequate method of showing invalidity to having no theoretically adequate method of showing it (p. 179): "This move shows Massey's formalist predilections. Anyone who thinks that respectable nonformal theories are possible will not accept this move and will not move to the final conclusion either" (p. 179). Indeed; but if Govier wishes to reject the final conclusion, she is claiming that we have theoretically adequate methods, albeit nonformal ones, for showing invalidity; and since who asserts must prove, at least in the case of existential claims, the onus is on Govier to support this by indicating such methods, which she does not do. Neither "Not accepting the opponent's definition", nor "Not proving an existential assertion", is on the usual list of fallacies, but they are both common enough defects of argument. The only methods of showing invalidity she mentions are an untheorised human capacity to appreciate how arguments work, and paraphrase into a formal system (p. 180). Massey's argument has clearly raised important worries at the heart of fallacy theory, and Ralph Johnson (pp. 111-113, p. 118), John Woods (pp. 189f.), and David Hitchcock (pp. 322f.) also discuss his argument.

Since Massey wrote there has been a development of a theory (to which Frans Van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst have been major contributors) of fallacy, taking it to be (not an invalid argument but) a breach of the rules of rational discussion. This definition is, of course, foreshadowed in Hamblin's Chapter 8, with its attempts to explain fallacies in terms of properties of dialogues, but van Eemeren and Grootendorst do not formulate their rules in so austere formal a way as Hamblin did.

The collection concludes with two papers on focusing on fallacies in teaching, and a select bibliography compiled by Hans Hansen. The book will join Woods & Walton (1989) as a central collection of readings in the field. The study of fallacies has come a long way since Hamblin wrote.

## References

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- Staines, Phillip J. 1981: "Some formal aspects of the argument-translation relation." *Australian Logic Teachers' Journal* 5(3), pp. 1-15.
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***MENTAL LEAPS: ANALOGY IN CREATIVE THOUGHT***  
**by Keith J. Holyoak and Paul Thagard**

Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995. Pp. xiv + 320. ISBN 0-262-08233-0. US \$24.95.

**Reviewed by David Hitchcock**

Every informal logician who intends to write about analogies should read this book.

Keith Holyoak, a cognitive psychologist, and Paul Thagard, a philosopher, here advance a general theory of analogical thinking. They illustrate their theory with reference to the use of analogies in a wide variety of domains, including the thinking of animals and children, decision-making, philosophy, science, education, cultural practices, and psychotherapy. The index lists 120 analogies mentioned in the book.

According to Holyoak and Thagard, analogical thinking is governed by the multiple constraints of similarity, structure and purpose. Take a simple example of animal learning (p. 39): if a bird eats a noxious monarch butterfly, it will likely refrain in future from eating other monarch butterflies, as well as from eating viceroy butterflies, a species which looks like the monarch. But it will eat other kinds of butterflies which look less like the monarch. The bird's purpose here is to get acceptable meals. Having this goal, it avoids new butterflies which share certain perceptual similarities with the unacceptable monarch it tried to eat. The implicit comparison between the source (the monarch which tasted bad) and the target (a butterfly which looks like that monarch) involves a one-to-one matching between a set of characteristics of the source and a set of characteristics of the target. In this case, the structure matches the simplest kind of characteristics, immediately perceptible attributes.