

Book Review

Norms in Argumentation, edited by Robert Maier

JOSINA M. MAKAU *The Ohio State University*

Maier, Robert. (Ed.). (1989). *Norms in Argumentation: Proceedings of the Conference on Norms 1988*. Dordrecht-Holland/Providence, RI-USA: Foris Publications. Pp. vi, 1-218. ISBN 90 6765 423 X. Paper. US\$36.

This book, a collection of thirteen essays presented during the University of Utrecht's 1988 Workshop on Norms, provides readers a wide array of perspectives on its important topic. In the book's introductory chapter, editor Robert Maier expresses gratitude for the workshop participants' "energetic contributions" and "tenacity to overcome seemingly unbridgeable conflicts of opinion" (1). Readers of the workshop proceedings will find strong textual support for Maier's assessment. This collection of essays reveals the contributors' deep commitments to their diverse points of view.

Maier acknowledges in his introduction that the book does not contain resolutions to the problems it addresses. Rather, the book was written to "confront the different approaches to norms and to discuss the divergent consequences of these various approaches" (1). Faithful throughout to its editor's promise, the book explores a wide diversity of perspectives, from the more widely known to less considered alternatives.

The exploration begins with the issue of whether there is an obligation to argue. Lorenz's chapter argues affirmatively, supporting the following "meta-rule of action:

'who gets questioned concerning validity of his assertion or command ought to argue'" (26). Krabbe's chapter questions Lorenz's position, suggesting that choosing to argue is one possible choice among many. Krabbe asks the provocative question, "why couldn't there be *reasons* to prefer a quarrel in one particular case and *reasons* to prefer an argumentative discussion in another?" (28, Krabbe's italics).

Following these introductory chapters, the book provides two sets of complementary essays, one on the natural logic perspective and the other on the issue of relevance. Borel's chapter presents an apology for natural logic. Her essay illustrates the consequences of attempting to "construct an anthropology, in its widest sense, of discursive significations constructed and exchanged in texts or speeches" (34). Borel admonishes readers not to forget the important distinction between the position of the agent of an argumentation and of the speech activity's witness.

Borel next draws on Ricoeur's ideas to argue that each of these positions "has its own standard of validity" associated with disparate "aims and means" (34-35). She applies this discussion to argumentation theory, arguing that many theorists tend to "promote a certain type of rationality" without fully recognizing or acknowledging their aim (34).

Borel's own critique leads her to value what she terms the dialect norm. Satisfying this norm "requires the other to listen,

to distance himself or herself in relation to his or her own position, in a word to cooperate" (46). As such, Borel views it as "an Ideal of interaction for communication and an Ideal of rationality for knowledge" (46).

Maier's follow-up chapter on the natural logic approach is less apologetic. Nonetheless, he provides a concise summary of this perspective's constituents. Maier draws upon Grize's work to argue that the ideals of logical demonstrations cannot usefully be applied to actual discourse because the formal calculus fails to account either for "subjects doing the reasoning" or for related contextual variables (50). Natural logicians have demonstrated therefore, as have their informal logic and New Rhetoric counterparts, that everyday discourse is "by definition outside of classical logic" (51).

Maier goes on, however, to challenge the value of natural logic in overcoming resulting theoretical problems. He addresses two ironies. First, natural logic fails to account for either the subject or the audience, both recognized as central to the argumentation enterprise. Second, despite natural logic's preoccupation with "everyday argumentation," this school of thought fails to situate rationality "in the real interactions" of everyday discourse. Maier goes on to raise other troubling questions for natural logic proponents, emphasizing that important normative consequences derive from these theorists' selection of a model and of objects of analysis.

Blair and Wenzel's chapters shift the book's attention to the concept of relevance. In a spirit of cooperation, Blair's chapter introduces the issues, while Wenzel's essay builds on Blair's foundation. Blair provides a clear explication of issues, neatly distinguishing, for example, positive from negative and broad from narrow relevance. He draws upon Toulmin's work to show that "the kinds of consideration that can warrant the relevance of premises seem as varied as the kinds of topic that can be

argued about" (80). Blair shows that, in the final analysis, there "is no neat criterion to be applied to decide whether a premise is relevant" (81). Significantly, at least to this reviewer, Blair's discussion effectively draws on the important concept of a community of model interlocutors. His discussion demonstrates the applicability of this concept to the study of relevance.

Wenzel's accompanying essay builds on Blair's discussion. Wenzel describes his chapter as a supplement to Blair's essay, but he offers readers much more than a mere supplement. Drawing upon his previous work, Wenzel explicates differences between the perspectives of rhetoric, dialect, and logic. He shows, among other things, that the question of what constitutes a "good" argument will differ depending upon which of these perspectives governs the analysis. He shows further that these diverse perspectives evolve from different interests: "the rhetorical interest in adapting discourse to audiences in order to gain their agreement; the dialectical interest in testing these through critical discussion; and the logical interest in judging the merits of particular arguments" (86).

Wenzel goes on to demonstrate the importance of considering the rhetorical perspective. To support this position, Wenzel cites Blair and Johnson's 1987 admonition that theorists look to arguments' "purpose and their function," rather than simply studying their structure (91). He then draws upon Blair and Johnson's concept of model interlocutors to show how attention to audience may provide the grounding for the criterion of relevance. Wenzel's explication of the constituents of membership in the model audience (90-92) builds a durable bridge between traditional rhetorical studies and recent work in informal logic.

In his conclusion, Wenzel expresses the hope that future argumentation study will one day integrate dialectical, rhetorical, and logical perspectives. Here I would offer a supplement to the approaches represented

in the book. I would suggest consideration of research on jurisprudential reasoning. These studies show that justices on the United States Supreme Court use argumentation in the service of deliberation (to make decisions), persuasion (to persuade one another to accept their judgments), and justification (to persuade audiences that their decision was reasonable, fair, impartial, and constitutionally permissible). In short, judicial argumentation provides the integration Wenzel and many others seek.

Judicial argumentation meets an additional challenge posed in the workshop proceedings. In their provocative closing chapter, Pinxten and Balagangadhara critique van Eemeren and Grootendorst's ten basic rules for reasoned interaction. According to Pinxten and Balagangadhara, the "ideal" nature of these rules significantly reduces their potential to provide tools for the resolution "of the conflict of avowed opinions" (209). On the face of it, this challenge seems warranted. After all, van Eemeren and Grootendorst do suggest in their essay that the aim of all argumentation is to persuade (98). If this is so, then Pinxten and Balagangadhara's challenge would be powerful indeed. However, suppose we turn to a jurisprudential model to modify van Eemeren and Grootendorst's perspective. Such a turn would require us first to acknowledge deliberation as a legitimate purpose of argumentation and second to identify our ten basic rules as guides for facilitating cooperative dialogue among persons seeking to make good decisions (that is, stressing the development of juridical rather than adversarial skills). With these modifications, van Eemeren and Grootendorst's guidelines would meet Pinxten and Balagangadhara's challenge.

Pinxten and Balagangadhara raise an additional concern, however. Noting that many western argumentation theorists require "knowledgeability in the particular domain" as "an entrance fee to be paid in order to be a partner in a rhetorical event" (206), they argue that "this price is not only

too steep for the ordinary citizen, but it also effectively excludes cogitations about almost all issues of social, political and moral significance" (206). Based on this criticism, the authors reject the pragma-dialectic and related theories as essentially worthless to the resolution of real-world problems.

Although difficult to overcome, this criticism does not justify Pinxten and Balagangadhara's ultimate rejection of all efforts to develop guidelines for reasoned interaction. What they miss is the essential contribution such efforts make in enabling people to reflect carefully about the issues which affect them and their communities. Whether construed as "basic rules" or as norms, guidelines for effective cooperation dialogue have the potential to empower all those fortunate enough to be trained in their use.

Willard's essay speaks directly to this important point. He asks the reader to imagine the consequences of providing people with opportunities for free expression without the requisite training to make use of their freedoms. He asks us to consider, for example, a situation in which "options are incoherent to the actors" or in which "speakers are inarticulate or inane" or "have nothing to say" (169). Argumentation theorists work most productively when they work hand-in-hand, developing non-elitist, empowering standards for effective reasoned interaction and at the same time helping people develop requisite knowledge and skills. Willard's insightful discussion of the evolution of animal welfare rhetoric illustrates this point well. Willard's explication shows the importance of maintaining "an organizing concern for 'improving communicative practice'" (169).

Jackson's essay on empirical studies is relevant here. In her contribution to the proceedings, Jackson shows "ways in which descriptive and normative theories cooperate" (121). She argues that there "may be methods for defending normative claims empirically" (120). According to

Jackson, empirical research of this kind may ultimately help provide "the justification of one normative model as against another" (120).

Although not mentioned in Jackson's article, recent work by Gilligan and her associates strongly supports Jackson's position. In such works as *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* and "Moral Orientation and Moral Development," Gilligan uncovers an alternative to the dominant paradigm of moral development. These and related efforts confirm Borel's point that argumentation theorists "promote a certain rationality." Similarly, Gilligan's findings lend support to Sihnha, Pinxten and Balagangadhara, and Willard's expressions of concern about the role ideology plays in maintaining the hegemony of elitist rationality criteria. Those who accept Shotter's hermeneutical perspective will also find support in these and related empirical studies.

According to Shotter, normal circumstances "cannot be given an abstract, context-independent characterization" (143). Shotter argues that meaning "is not a property of words or deeds in themselves, but is of the situations in which they are used, of the contexts which people 'construct' in the *joint action* between them and their surroundings." He concludes that people's behavior is influenced primarily by the context which "they must act 'into'" (148, Shotter's italics).

As we have seen, Shotter's perspective is but one of many which underscore the importance of Jackson's call to consider empirical studies of argumentation norms.

Such work would help theorists discover norms-in-practice, as well as sources of these norms. Jackson's chapter does not fit neatly with the more theoretical discussions found throughout the book. Yet, as the foregoing comments reveal, her essay adds a valuable perspective to general considerations of argumentation norms. Inclusion of this essay enriches at the same time that it complicates the reading experience.

In general, readers will not find reading this book easy-going. Like the workshop participants whose diligent efforts created this complex collection of essays, readers of the resulting volume must have tenacity to work through the various discussions. Rough translations and related stylistic improprieties exacerbate this problem in several sections of the book. Especially disturbing is the prevalence of sexist language in all but five of the thirteen essays. The proceedings' lack of specific focus creates the additional strain of apparent incoherence, forcing the reader to supply links between the book's various sections.

At the same time, however, the book clearly fulfills its editor's promise to "knit a textual carpet which might serve as a ground for further elaborations" on the subject of argumentation norms (5). Readers committed enough to overlook the book's rough edges will find in its thirteen essays much ground for further elaborations.

JOSINA M. MAKAU
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLUMBUS, OH 43210-1360

□