

Book Review

Frans H. van Eemeren, Frans H. and Bart Garssen (Eds.). 2009. *Pondering on Problems of Argumentation: Twenty Essays on Theoretical Issues*. Series: *Argumentation Library*, Vol. 14. Dordrecht: Springer. (Pp. xxii, 306 p. 9 illus.; Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4020-9164; US\$ 199.00)

Pondering on Problems of Argumentation is another fine volume in the long list of publications edited by Frans H. van Eemeren, here with Bart Garssen. The volume collects 20 essays that were presented, save for one (Jacobs), at the 2006 ISSA conference in Amsterdam and then published in the *Proceedings of the Sixth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation* (Sic Sat 2007). Under the rubric *problems of argumentation*, van Eemeren and Garssen have divided the 20 essays equally into five sub-headings:

- **Argumentative strategies**—treating the interface between dialectical and rhetorical insights into the pragmatics of discourse and discourse analysis: F.H. van Eemeren & P. Houtlosser, A.F. Snoeck Henkemans, M.A. van Rees, C. Ilie.
- **Norms of reasonableness and fallaciousness**—treating concerns of continuing to define *fallacies* outside formal assessment as a kind of argumentative move, as also the relationship between their formal and pragmatic analyses: S. Jacobs, D.J. O’Keefe, T. Govier, D. Jacquette.
- **Types of argument and argument schemes**—treating the relationships between various kinds of arguments and their purposes, where their schematization provides an assessment of the support relationship: M. Kraus, B. Garssen, M. Doury, E. Rigotti.
- **Structure of argumentation**—treating concerns to clarify the character of complex arguments consisting in multiple arguments, whether linked or convergent, whether independent or dependent, with a pervasive theme to amend Toulmin’s probability concept, even with the case of visual arguments: G.C. Goddu, J.B. Freeman, A. Rocci, L. Groarke.

- **Rules for advocacy and discussion**—treating concerns, especially within a dialectical perspective, that formulate discussion rules according to certain normative ideals, whether aiming at epistemic or rhetorical goals: E.C.W. Krabbe, J. Gough, G.T. Goodnight, J. Goodwin.

The authors will be familiar to scholars who have been following the modern argumentation movement since its inception in the 1970s. There is an editors' introduction of eleven pages that provides a nice prospectus of the book, the 20 essays consisting in 298 pages, and at the close a two-page list of contributors and a four-page index that principally catalogs names mentioned throughout.

As the editors indicate at the outset, a principal criterion for selecting these essays is to provide a multidisciplinary outlook on theoretical issues discussed within the international community of philosophers of argument. It may be no surprise that together these essays lean decidedly toward broadly treating the pragmatics of argumentative discourse. In this connection, then, the kinds of theoretical issues are generally circumscribed by pragma-dialectical and rhetorical approaches that address issues relating to

- assessing *strategic maneuvering* in dialectical discussion (van Eemeren & Houtlosser) and in relation to rhetorical questioning (Snoeck Henkemans), examining whether with dissociation reasonableness is compromised (van Rees), and assessing refutation strategies (Ilie).
- taking the *critical discussion* approach to managing argumentative discourse where, for example, the notion of *fallacy* turns generally on abiding normative (moral) rules, to assessing concerns of advocacy (O'Keefe, Goodnight), the contextual acceptability, or reasonableness, of using fallacies (Jacobs), finding a middle way between composition and division (Govier), and negotiating the opening of an argumentative exchange (Krabbe) and conditions for appropriately closing an argument (Goodwin).
- parsing arguments/argumentations to develop *typologies* according to their objectives, in which the pervasive force of *contrarium* is assessed rhetorically (Kraus), treating the power of figurative analogy within a pragma-dialectical framework (Garssen), discussing comparative analyses of argument-kinds (Doury), and incorporating classical topics within contemporary argumentation theory (Rigotti).

- assessing the *reasonableness* of rhetorical and dialectical moves in argumentative situations (Snoeck Henkemans, van Rees, Jacobs, Govier).
- reassessing Toulmin's model of *argument assessment* by developing the notion of ampliative probability to define sufficient argument strength (Freeman), employing the notion of relative modality to refine Toulmin's notions of field-invariance and field-dependence (Rocci), and assessing visual arguments (political cartoons) according to Toulmin's notion of data-warrant (Groarke).

While the editors have selected essays that do not strictly reproduce the results of empirical studies, it is nevertheless evident that these essays are especially rooted in empirical research. This is not a distracting feature of this collection, since it is broadly characteristic of how philosophers within the modern argumentation movement ground their analyses; indeed, it is one of the special underpinnings of their important contributions to understanding human reasoning. The general texture of these essays, then, has an empirical foundation. Moreover, while these contributions extend discussions on constructing, managing, and examining argumentation, each article works squarely within the contours of the argumentation movement that generally obviates the strictures of formal logic. A notable exception is Jacquette's article that engages deductivism in assessing fallacies.

The kinds of theoretical problems treated in these essays aim more at clarification of concepts and principles used by philosophers of argument—whether working within a pragma-dialectical, rhetorical, or informal logical perspective—than with taking up foundational philosophical problems. There are no treatments, for example, of the problems of relativism that emerge when acceptability of premises and inferential links supplant truth conditions in argumentation, nor of the possibility of eclipsing justice when adhering to rules of critical discussion in cases of settling disputes. This problem is all too familiar in mediating disputants, say in settling accounts in a divorce or coming to agreement in a labor arbitration. As these essays attest, there is considerable discussion within philosophy of argument about assessing argument structures and the pragmatics of discourse. However, there is no attention to the consequences of such studies becoming just as formalistic as formal logic. With the turn to pragmatics and proliferation of studies on argument schemes, whether from pragma-dialectic, informal and dialogical logic perspectives, argumentation philosophers have become just as much preoccupied with forms of discourse. Relevance in this context, while referencing propositional content, often subordinates the truth or falsity of that content in favor of abiding

by the rules of, for example, critical discussion. Perhaps, then, the complaint about formal logic's irrelevance might be just as applicable to philosophers of argument.

Notwithstanding this possible shortcoming, again, falling outside the scope prescribed by the editors, this volume is an important compendium of some focal concerns within the modern argumentation movement. Having used *Pondering on Problems of Argumentation* in my seminar on argumentation for senior philosophy majors, I can attest to its valuable contribution to enriching their experiences with reasoning. Each essay is organized on the same principle, namely—providing an introduction, discussion, and then concluding remarks. This feature, in conjunction with the selection of topics and their treatment by accomplished scholars, makes the material accessible to undergraduate students eager to pursue topics in philosophy of argument. The essays are well written, informative, and especially successful at provoking thoughtful discussion of important issues occupying the wide array of concerns now treated by philosophers of argument. Moreover, this collection of essays once again affirms the profound sensitivity of argumentation philosophers to the complexities of the human condition, and thus it affirms the foundational humanist disposition of participants in the modern argumentation movement.

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