

Book Review

Giving Reasons: A Linguistic-Pragmatic Approach to Argumentation Theory

by **Lilian Bermejo-Luque**

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Review by **YUN XIE**

It has been years since argumentation theorists started to readdress the relationship among different approaches to argumentation, with a hope of fostering some possible integration. Recently, more and more proposals have been developed, attempting to bring different approaches together into a comprehensive framework to build some unified theory. Bermejo-Luque's newly published book, *Giving Reasons: A Linguistic-Pragmatic Approach to Argumentation Theory*, is exactly another endeavor of this kind. The book shares the ambition of facilitating "the integration of argumentation's logical, dialectical rhetorical and epistemic dimensions" (p. viii), and tries to realize it by developing a novel *linguistic-pragmatic* theory of argumentation, one that conceives of argumentation as some particular speech-acts, and unpacks its normativity into the linguistic and pragmatic nature of argumentation. The central thesis argued in this book is that argumentation should be characterized as a speech-act complex, whose constitutive goal is showing a target-claim to be correct, and accordingly, that the appraisal of argumentation involves both a semantic evaluation determining the *correctness* of its target-claim and a pragmatic evaluation determining its goodness in *showing* that correctness.

Chapter 1 gives a general introduction of "*Argumentation and Its Study*". Argumentation has a widespread presence in human interaction, since it is not only "closely connected to the specifics of human language and communication" (p. 2), but it

has also been valued as something important and good for “humans as both rational and social beings” (p. 2). However, Argumentation Theory as a discipline has only a late emergence, due to the influence of the developments of western philosophy (pp. 6-8). Here Bermejo-Luque defines “Argumentation Theory as a discipline” to be only “the study of argumentation from a normative perspective”, specifically attempting to address four *founding questions*: “what is argumentation?” “How should we interpret and analyze argumentative practices?” “What is good argumentation?” and “How can we determine argumentation goodness?” (p. 9). Argumentation theorists, when answering these questions, have taken distinct approaches. They emphasize different aspects of arguing, and differ from each other on the definition, analysis and appraisal of argumentation. However, their integration can be adequately achieved, so Bermejo-Luque claims, by her linguistic-pragmatic approach forthcoming in the remaining chapters (p. 10).

If Argumentation Theory is to be understood essentially as normative, then what is an adequate way to conceptualize the idea of argumentative value, and how can we justify the norms or normative models of argumentation developed accordingly in our theories? Considerations about these “crucial meta-theoretical questions” are the content of Chapter 2, *Why Do We Need a New Theory of Argumentation*. Bermejo-Luque seriously doubts that we already have some satisfactory theory with regard to argumentation goodness. The traditional account of argumentative value has endorsed a “deductivist ideal of justification”, thus proposing a characterization of “argumentation goodness only in terms of the status of its premises and their inferential relations to its conclusion, ignoring the pragmatic conditions of argumentation as a communicative activity” (p. 21). To counterbalance the traditional “semantic-deductivist” approach, which has severe limitations, contemporary argumentation theory gives rise to a “pragmatic account of argumentative value” (p. 23). But this new account, as criticized by Bermejo-Luque, is essentially an “instrumentalist conception of argumentative value”, according to which “good argumentation would be a matter of its ability to achieve the typical ends which those engaged in the practice of arguing were aiming at” (p. 23). This implicit instrumentalism fails to distinguish argumentation goodness from argumentation success. It is doomed to result in

some unacceptable form of relativism, and makes it senseless for us to talk about good argumentation *simpliciter* (p. 33). According to Bermejo-Luque, “it is a mistake to think that argumentation goodness consists in any type of perlocutionary achievement” (p. 33), even if we add to this achievement some additional “qualifications” which “demand more than mere perlocutionary effectiveness”, such as Perelman’s “idealized universal audience”, Johnson’s “rational persuasion” or Pragmadiialecticians’ “reasonable resolution of a difference of opinion” (pp. 26-30). Basically, all those instrumentalist conceptions of argumentative value provided by contemporary argumentation theorists confuse “intrinsic argumentative value” with “the instrumental value that a piece of argumentation may have in relation to some further (extrinsic) end” (p. 34). Therefore, a new theory of Argumentation is needed, which should rightly take argumentation’s intrinsic value as its central concern, and avoid characterizing it in instrumental terms.

But what exactly is this intrinsic value of argumentation? And how can we unpack it in some non-instrumental way? Bermejo-Luque gives her answers by defending a “constitutivist” conception of argumentative value, which draws a distinction between the “constitutive goal” and the “additional goals” pursued in our acts of arguing. In particular, “the activity of arguing is, constitutively, an attempt at justifying a target-claim”, so “justification is the intrinsic argumentative value”, and “arguing well *is* justifying” (pp. 38-39). More importantly, “this account of argumentative value in terms of justification is meant to be completely empty” (p. 39), thus it could avoid any possibility of falling into some form of instrumentalism. By taking justification as being both the constitutive goal and the intrinsic value of argumentation, Bermejo-Luque claims that we have not only captured our pre-theoretical concepts of argumentation and of argumentation value, but also found the solution to the justification problem of normative models (pp. 44-45). So, in the end, one final relevant question remains: “What does justification, so understood, consist in?” and the answer, according to Bermejo-Luque, turns out to be dependent on “the very characterization of argumentation that we endorse” (p. 39).

Naturally, Chapter 3, *Acts of Arguing*, is devoted to a characterization of argumentation, proposed as the theoretical object

for the new linguistic-pragmatic theory to be developed in this book. Bermejo-Luque firstly identifies justification, the constitutive goal of argumentation, as showing the correctness of the target-claim by giving reasons. Then she characterizes argumentation as a linguistic-pragmatic object. On the one hand, an act of arguing is indeed a “speech-act complex” which is “composed of two further speech-acts, namely, the speech-act of adducing and the speech-act of concluding” (p. 60). On the other hand, these speech-act complexes are “second order” in nature, because “they can only be performed by means of a first order speech-act—namely, constative speech-acts” (p. 60). Specifically, a speech-act will be interpreted as “second order” when it is possible to point out “a certain relationship with another speech-act” which turns this speech-act into another kind of illocution (p. 61). Regarding argumentation, it consists of two constatives, *R* and *C*, which become respectively the second order acts of “adducing (a reason)” and “concluding (a target-claim)”, and “this occurs because of their relationship to each other by means of an implicit inference-claim whose propositional content is ‘if *r*, then *c*’” (p. 60). Obviously, in order to interpret certain speech-acts as acts of arguing in this way, as Bermejo-Luque claims, “we will have to make a presumption concerning the relationship between *R* and *C*”, and this amounts to “attributing to the speaker an implicit assertion *I*, whose content is ‘if *r* (*the content of R*), then *c* (*the content of C*)’” (p. 61). This implicit inference-claim is also “constitutive of any act of arguing” (p. 62), and its propositional content is simply a “particular indicative conditional” (p.62) of which “a truth-functional interpretation” is favored (p. 64). Bermejo-Luque then adopts Bach and Harnish’s Speech-act Schema (SAS) to characterize the acts of arguing understood as a second order speech-act complex, and illustrates in detail with an example (pp. 64-68).

This speech-act complex characterization of argumentation, according to Bermejo-Luque, has two advantages. First, it can provide “a unitary account of argumentation as a justificatory and as a persuasive device” (p. 56). That is, acts of arguing are characterized as speech-acts “whose illocutionary force is that of an attempt at showing a target-claim to be correct” (p. 58), while their perlocutionary effect is inducing reasoning in others, or “an invitation to inference” to the addressee (p. 73), which, as a result, explains the practical achievement of producing beliefs or

persuading the others (p. 58). Second, this characterization of argumentation facilitates a possibility to integrate the logical, dialectical and rhetorical dimensions of argumentation (p. 54), since “justifying a claim will be equivalent to showing it to be correct”; and “in order to do that it will have to satisfy not only logical and dialectical conditions, but rhetorical conditions as well” (p. 58).

The integration of the three dimensions, regarding both the analysis and evaluation of argumentation, is the main theme of the following four chapters. Chapters 4-6 attempt to develop these three dimensions respectively, and Chapter 7 aims to explain their integration in more detail. Bermejo-Luque deals with “*The Logical Dimension of Argumentation*” first in Chapter 4. The basic position argued in this chapter is that Logic should be understood as a “non-formal normative theory of inference” whose goal is to characterize a “non-formal concept of validity” (p. 96). Particularly, the logical dimension of argumentation focuses on its “semantic properties”, and thus plays an important role in argumentation evaluation by providing criteria for determining the goodness of inferences that supervene in our acts of arguing (p. 88). To defend such a particular conception of Logic, Bermejo-Luque relies heavily on Toulmin’s ideas of logic in *The Uses of Argument* (1958). She argues that Toulmin has already proposed this promising characterization of logic (p. 81), but he fails to see a crucial distinction between “the real objects on which inferences supervene—namely, acts of arguing and reasoning—and their semantic representations” (p. 82). So Bermejo-Luque distinguishes strictly the communicative acts of arguing, or argumentation, from “arguments”, which are conceived of as “just theoretical reconstructions”, namely, each being “a representation of the semantic and syntactic properties of an act of arguing” (pp. 56-57). The logical study of argumentation takes argument, or more specifically, the inferential structure represented in argument, as its object, developing normative theories with regard to its goodness. In line with the criticisms made by Toulmin against the formal approach to Logic, Bermejo-Luque has proposed a broader concept of “non-formal validity” that is “not analytic but pragmatic” (p. 96), according to which “valid arguments are arguments whose warrants represent correct claims, in the sense that they entitle us to put forward our conclusion with the qualifier with which we have actually put it

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forward” (p. 98). As a result, logical evaluation becomes a task to “determine which qualifiers really correspond to the premises and warrants that represent the reason and the inference-claim of the corresponding act of reasoning and arguing” (p. 100), and on that basis, to judge “whether the correctness of premise and the warrant actually make the conclusion, as qualified in the act of arguing, correct” (p. 175). Accordingly, in the logical dimension “the working concept for argument appraisal will be the concept of *qualifier*” (p. 168).

Bermejo-Luque further distinguishes two kinds of qualifier: ontological and epistemic. She believes that this distinction is expressed in two forms of our uses of modal terms. When we say “ p is true”, “ p is necessary” or “ p is probable”...“we are saying something about its representativeness respecting the world” (p. 170). This type of modal term is called an “ontological qualifier”, by means of which we express “the type of pragmatic force with which we put forward the corresponding contents in claiming” (p. 170). By contrast, when we say “it is likely that p ”, “it is necessary that p ”, or “probably p ”...“we are saying something about the status of this claim as knowledge, about the confidence we should put in this claim or our entitlement to it” (p. 170). This type of modal term is called an “epistemic qualifier”; with it we make “an illocutionary act of concluding” (p. 171). Moreover, by imposing the ascription of qualifiers to all the elements of argument (i.e., premise, conclusion, warrant and backing, rebuttal), Bermejo-Luque puts forward an extended Toulmin model of argumentation (p. 115), in which the qualifier of the conclusion is epistemic, while all the others are ontological. Thusly, the proposed “non-formal concept of validity” is now better clarified: “For an argument to be valid its conclusion has to be qualified with an epistemic qualifier which corresponds to the ontological qualifier that correctly qualifies its warrant” (p. 176).

However, as we can imagine, sometimes in reality our activity of arguing involves not just a neat complex of claiming the reason (and the inference-claim) and concluding the target-claim, but also some more efforts to justify or defend our reasons and inference-claims, especially when they are controversial or challenged. That is to say, our acts of arguing actually need to expand in some way in order to succeed in achieving their communicative goal. Bermejo-Luque regards this aspect of argu-

mentation as its “dialectical dimension”, and proposes to explain it in terms of “the recursive nature of acts of arguing” (p. 120).

Chapter 5, *The Dialectical Dimension of Argumentation*, is focused on analyzing the dialectical properties of acts of arguing. It is first argued that “argumentation maybe said to be recursive in its development and in its very nature as a procedure” (p. 127). On the one hand, “any argumentative discourse may nest additional acts of arguing for any of its claims” (p. 127), no matter whether it is viewed as a justificatory device or as a persuasive device. On the other hand, “in being a means to show that our claims are correct or to induce beliefs in others, its development as further argumentation is the way any act of arguing is able to warrant its own cogency as a justificatory device...or its own legitimacy as a persuasive device” (p. 127). This “twofold recursive nature of argumentation”, according to Bermejo-Luque, is at the base of some “second order intersubjectivity of argumentative communication”, a term that refers to an assumption of, or an appeal to, “a shared theoretical rationality” and the arguers’ “ability to acknowledge the justificatory power of good reasons” (pp. 123-128). Because of its recursivity, argumentation inevitably needs to expand dialectically, by taking additional moves and by going through some specific procedures. Following Rescher (1977), Bermejo-Luque continues to characterize dialectics “as the kind of activity that consists of certain basic discursive moves that can be combined in different ways” (p. 128). On that basis, a set of basic dialectical moves is proposed which is also a “set of the constitutive moves of acts of arguing” (pp. 131-132), and some dialectical procedures are distinguished and discussed, such as “weak” and “strong” opposition dialectical procedure (pp. 133-135). Moreover, Bermejo-Luque also takes pains to argue that “the practice of arguing is, at a minimum, an *als ob* activity regarding objectivity” (p. 137), with a hope to “solve a common difficulty found in current dialectical approaches to argumentative normativity, namely, the tendency to miss the grip of objectivity as the *raison d’être* of the activity of giving and asking for reasons” (p. 120).

Chapter 6, as expected, deals with the role of Rhetoric in Argumentation Theory, and “*The Rhetorical Dimension of Argumentation*”. Unlike those theorists who are reluctant to grant the value of Rhetoric in their (normative) argumentation studies, Bermejo-Luque insists that “argumentation always has a rhetori-

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cal dimension” (p. 139), and aims to defend the important role “that Rhetoric is to play in developing normative models shaping the concept of argumentative value” (p. 139). In general, she argues in this chapter that there are three roles that Rhetoric can play in argumentation studies: “(1) to facilitate its interpretation; (2) to make possible the appraisal of its rhetorical value, i.e. its value as a persuasive device; and (3) to make possible the appraisal of its argumentative value, i.e. its value as a justificatory device” (p. 140). To unpack these ideas, Bermejo-Luque proposes to characterize “the rhetorical dimension of argumentation as, in general, independent of speakers’ intentions” (p. 148), and to value the contemporary view of Rhetoric as providing tools for interpreting communication *as a means of influence*. As she has argued, the rhetorical properties of a piece of communication depend on some “causal power to influence individuals”, which is to be “understood in terms of what would be a normal response to such piece of communication” (p. 150). That is to say, we should take some elements or features of the performance as *causes* that would *normally* produce the corresponding effects. Consequently, the rhetorical analysis of a performance, i.e., interpreting it as a rhetorical device, is a matter of “discovering what we may call its rhetorical *import*” (p. 151), defined as “the sort of rhetorical effects that it is likely to produce in the addressee, given the circumstances, if the addressee responds in a ‘normal’ way” (p. 153).

When an act of arguing is analyzed as a rhetorical act, according to Bermejo-Luque, it “would *motivate* our inferring; that is, it would exercise a causal influence on us” (p. 156). In the appropriate circumstances, it will normally result in our coming to believe its target-claim in an inferential way, which she calls “indirectly judging” (p. 156). Accordingly, indirect judgments of the form “*target-claim since reason*” constitute “the rhetorical meaning of the act of arguing as a rhetorical act”, and inducing such a kind of indirect judgments is exactly the arguers’ rhetorical intention (pp. 156-157). Here traditional Rhetoric can be of help in our evaluation of arguers’ ability to satisfy this rhetorical intention, i.e., determining argumentation’s value as a rhetorical device. However, since “arguing well would depend both on the actual correctness of the target-claim and on the goodness of the argumentative act as a means for *showing* this” (p. 159), therefore, when evaluating argumentation’s value as a

justificatory device, we will also need to bring in the contemporary “hermeneutic, non-intentional conception of Rhetoric” (p. 158) to “deal with the pragmatic conditions which determine how good an act of arguing is as a means of showing” (p. 159). With regard to this part of rhetorical argumentation appraisal, Bermejo-Luque develops a proposal by adopting Grice’s Cooperative Principle as the *regulative* conditions of acts of arguing, for “the Cooperative Principle is a standard for any talk exchange aimed at being ‘a maximally effective exchange of information’, that is, aimed at ‘showing something’” (p. 161).

The last chapter, Chapter 7, is titled “*Argumentation Appraisal*”, in which an overall framework of the normative model of argumentation is given. Good argumentation, according to this linguistic-pragmatic theory, is argumentation “showing its target-claim to be correct” (p. 165), which involves both a “semantic appraisal” and a “pragmatic appraisal”. Semantic conditions, provided by the logical dimension, determine the *correctness* of the target-claim of acts of arguing, while pragmatic conditions, provided mainly by rhetorical dimension, determine the quality of acts of arguing in *showing* that correctness. A dialectical dimension, however, will be involved in both (p. 166). Semantic appraisal takes the concept of “qualifier” as the key element, whereas the pragmatic appraisal uses the Cooperative Principle as a regulative condition, and regards the distribution of the *burden of proof* as another essential tool (pp. 192-193). To illustrate some applications of this theory, Bermejo-Luque gives a detailed analysis of enthymemes and incomplete argumentation, as well as of some traditional fallacies (pp. 189-192). Particularly, she argues that enthymemes are indeed “not ‘incomplete’ in the sense of lacking something that is constitutive of any act of arguing, but it would only be ‘acts of arguing lacking *inference-claim backings*’” (p. 185). And concerning the pragmatic failures of acts of arguing within this new model, she indicates that some new “kind of argumentation failure” becomes discernible. This new kind of failure, as opposed to “*bad* argumentation”, is named “*false* argumentation”. As Bermejo-Luque attempts to show, it refers to acts “that fall short of being ‘real’ argumentation” (p. 194), i.e., they “take the place of argumentation to pretend to be real argumentation”, but indeed violating the constitutive normativity of acts of arguing (pp. 199-200).

In general, Bermejo-Luque's *Giving Reasons* is an important contribution to the field. The chapters and sections of this book are clearly structured, and many of the arguments are well elaborated, and easy to follow. Most importantly, the discussions of many topics and issues are grounded on the author's extensive reading and good understanding of contemporary argumentation literature, as well as other relevant fields; hence many conclusions reached in this book are quite illuminating. It might be better, I think, if there could be one more chapter in the end summarizing all the basic ideas and contributions, together with a full-fledged application of the proposed new framework to some particular and illustrative example. As also a young scholar in this field, I am truly impressed by the depth and innovations Bermejo-Luque has achieved in her theorizing about argumentation in this book. But still, I also find some points she has made remain controversial, and some of her arguments in need of further development. However, here I will restrict myself to comment only on the following two respects.

To begin with, I find that some of Bermejo-Luque's critical readings of other argumentation theories are wanting. When urging a need for her own new theory, she took a critical attitude towards many prominent and influential theories developed in recent literature: Pragma-Dialectics, Informal Logic, Rhetorical Argumentation theory, Epistemological Approach to argumentation, etc. She aims to show that all of them have fundamental weaknesses, but her treatments of these theories are hasty, and her criticisms turn out to be premature. For one example, she has criticized Ralph Johnson's theory as being unable to provide a suitable understanding of good argumentation, on the basis of an analysis on the concept of "the rational persuasion of an addressee", which Johnson has regarded as the primary purpose of arguments. Bermejo-Luque examines the concept of "rational persuasion" from different points of view, arguing that, understood in some possible ways, it either cannot characterize argumentation goodness appropriately, or would only be reduced to "a matter of the rationality of a claim" (pp. 28-30). It is not very clear to me how and why this analysis goes against Johnson's theory, since here strangely Bermejo-Luque didn't specify anything about Johnson's own account of rational persuasion at all, nor did she discuss any of the criteria Johnson has developed to

characterize argumentation goodness. It appears as though she is just focusing too much on the concept, while talking past Johnson's theory.

Moreover, the basic strategy Bermejo-Luque has taken to criticize all the other contemporary theories is to charge them with the failure to distinguish the constitutive value and instrumental value of argumentation, and their inability to provide suitable criteria for argumentation goodness. As she has tried to prove, an epistemic account of constitutive value should be preferred, according to which "good argumentation would be argumentation able to justify a target-claim, in the sense of showing it to be correct" (p. 23). Hence, all her criticisms will eventually boil down to the fundamental question of "why *should* we prefer such an account and thereby use it to judge the other theories as being faulty"? Or, "why *should* we characterize the acts of arguing, in the way she has proposed, as *constitutively* attempts at justifying?" The only available answer I could find in the book appears to be grounded on her analysis of arguing as an intentional behavior (pp. 37-39), emphasizing that "in principle, we can argue and then aim or not aim at persuading a universal audience or an addressee in a reasonable way or at resolving a difference of opinion. This is why none of these goals is *constitutive* of arguing.... Yet...it would be senseless to say that we are arguing for a claim but not trying to justify it" (pp. 38-39). However, considering the recent disputes on the issue of the primary use of argument, I am reluctant to take this as a convincing argument for the supposed preference for "justification". Those who favor the option of "persuasion" would also observe that every act of arguing in reality is initiated by controversy or disagreement, thus they could also claim, in a similar way, that "it would be senseless to argue if not trying to persuade (the other or herself)". Even though I am quite sympathetic to Bermejo-Luque's position, I believe here she still needs further support for her position.

In general, she is certainly right to propose that our judgment whether an act of arguing is senseless or not will rely exactly upon our formulation of the *constitutive* condition(s) of acts of arguing. It's always easy to bring forward *some* possible formulation, but due to the complexity of our argumentative practices, it's quite hard to prove that it is *the* right one, especially when your proposed formulation involves the intention or

goal of arguing. Furthermore, if we really need to think of acts of arguing *constitutively*, I think Bermejo-Luque has indeed also hinted at another and better option—*giving reasons*—which is just the title of this book! The claim that “it would be senseless to say that we are arguing for a claim but not giving reasons” seems to be much more plausible and defensible. But Bermejo-Luque, surprisingly, chooses instead a particular understanding of “justification”, i.e., “*showing the target-claim to be correct by giving reasons*”. It’s a richer and more complicated proposal, but at same time, it also brings with it a much heavier burden of proof, namely, to justify the additions of “showing” and “to be correct”, about neither of which is there consensus among contemporary argumentation theorists.

For the second aspect to comment about, I find the logical dimension of argumentation developed in this book to be, though subtle, still in need of further improvements. The basic idea underlying this dimension, as I understand it, is that a logically good argument is one whose qualifier of its conclusion rightly matches the strength of support given by its reasons. Along with this idea, Bermejo-Luque has emphasized the key role of “qualifier” in argument. She not only extends the Toulmin Model by imposing the ascription of qualifiers to all elements, but has also advanced a proposal that “an ascription of qualifiers would be constitutive of arguments, and [logical] argument evaluation would be the process of determining the right ascription of qualifiers to each represented claim” (p. 115).

I believe many readers would be in the first place very surprised to see a model of argument filled with qualifiers, because it’s just so unnatural when compared to our real life arguments. It certainly seems that, when arguing, we only occasionally qualify our conclusions, and more often than not, we just simply put forward conclusions as being right or acceptable, without any explicit qualifier. Moreover, regardless of this practical oddness, it still remains unclear in Bermejo-Luque account why *all* these qualifiers are needed, and *how* they could contribute to the logical analysis and evaluation of argument. As Bermejo-Luque has envisaged it, “all we need to evaluate an argument [logically] is to be able to determine what all these qualifiers in argument should be” (p. 109). And what she really means by this claim is that we are “to determine what the actual or correct ontological qualifiers that we should ascribe to the premise and

the warrant”, and then “to see whether the epistemic qualifier of the conclusion have been qualified accordingly” (p. 177). Moreover, for the concept of “non-formal concept of validity” that she has proposed for the logical value of argumentation, it bears entirely upon the correspondence of qualifiers between *conclusion* and *warrant* (p. 176). So we could actually find that there is no reference to the uses of qualifiers other than those ascribed to warrant and conclusion. Then why do we need to complicate the model of argument in the first place by imposing qualifiers to all elements? Here I believe the only way to defend this complicated model is to argue that all these qualifiers are interrelated in their ascriptions. That is, without first considering the right qualifiers ascribed to backing, premise and rebuttal, it is not possible to ascribe qualifiers of warrant and conclusion and then to determine the goodness of argument logically. But interestingly, this just leads us to see a defect of Bermejo-Luque’s theory, namely, its lack of a sufficient account of the interrelationship among those qualifiers of different elements, explaining the mechanism in which their ascriptions would interact with, or be influenced by, each other.

As we have seen, Bermejo-Luque is concerned solely in this book with the relationship between the qualifiers of the conclusion and the warrant (understood by her as an inference claim in a form of ‘*if reason, then conclusion*’), about which she contends that “for an argument to be valid its conclusion has to be qualified with an epistemic qualifier which *corresponds* to the ontological qualifiers that correctly qualify its warrant” (p. 176, italics mine). However, even if we restrict ourselves to consider only the qualifiers of these two elements, I think this simplified version of a *correspondence* mechanism also leaves room for doubt or need for further clarification. What exactly are the possible or acceptable ways of correspondence between the ontological qualifier of warrant and the epistemic qualifier of conclusion in Bermejo-Luque’s account? On the one hand, she appears to interpret it in a way that “the epistemic qualifier should be *identical* (in modal terms) with the ontological qualifier used”. For example, she believes that “if we want to conclude that ‘necessarily p,’ we have to ontologically qualify our inference-claim as necessary; if this inference-claim is true but not necessary, then our act of arguing will be semantically flawed” (p. 176). And she also explains that, “in order to know what on-

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tological qualifier the speaker attributes to her inference-claim, we just need to look at the epistemic qualifier of the target-claim” (p. 183). But on the other hand, it appears as though Bermejo-Luque also needs to make this correspondence relationship to be non-identical, in order to enable her to speak of *degrees* of justification. As she has argued, “we can make sense of the concept of the justificatory power of an argument by considering what the *strongest* qualifier is that we can ascribe to its conclusion, given the qualifiers that actually correspond to its premise and warrant” (p. 178). Besides, she admits likewise that “there are epistemic qualifiers without a straightforward ontological counterpart” (p. 173), and that “in general the criteria for using a particular epistemic qualifier are dependent upon the sort of evidence at the speaker’s disposal” (p. 173). As a whole, I am not sure whether Bermejo-Luque has provided us with a coherent and satisfactory account on the correspondence between epistemic and ontological qualifiers. Nor am I inclined to agree that the possible interactions among qualifiers of any other elements of argument would be clearer or easier to handle by some correspondence mechanism.

Anyway, even if a good argument really has a qualifier for its conclusion that rightly matches the *strength of support* given by its reasons, I think its ascription must depend upon the strength of reasons and the force of the supportive link involved, both of which are subject to their particular uses in different contexts. It is not clear whether, and how, the *strength* of reasons and the *force* of the supportive relation could be simply characterized by some ontological qualifiers, which in Bermejo-Luque account indicate the “representativeness respecting the world” (p. 170). And it is even harder to prove that the right qualifier for a conclusion is easily determined by some straightforward function of those qualifiers ascribed to other elements in the argument.

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