Book Review

Reflections on Theoretical Issues in Argumentation Theory

Frans H. van Eemeren and Bart Garssen (Eds.)

Reviewed by KAITLYN HAYNAL

Department of Communication
University of Pittsburgh
1123 CL Pittsburgh, PA 15260
kah216@pitt.edu

Reflections on Theoretical Issues in Argumentation Theory, edited by Frans H. van Eemeren and Bart Garssen, is a collection of 20 papers selected from contributions to the proceedings of the 8th conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation (ISSA), held in Amsterdam in 2014. This collection is filtered into six dimensions of argumentation theory: general perspectives; analysis of argumentation; evaluation of argumentation; argument schemes; contextual embedding of argumentation; and linguistic approaches to argumentation. These six themes chosen for the collection appear to be distilled from the 18 themes featured in the ISSA conference, although the absence of editorial commentary on this organizational scheme leaves such speculation up to the reader. The different parts follow a natural order, beginning with ways to approach the process of argument theory as a whole, continuing with ways to work through the actual argument construction and ending with ways to put these theories into verbal practice.

The first section explores *general perspectives* on argumentation theory. Here, we find four chapters, each of which offer approachable pathways scholars can use as entry-points by which to evaluate argument. In "Bingo! Promising Developments in Argumentation Theory," editor, Frans H. van Eemeren, recommends integration of three critical approaches to argumentation theory, including the trend toward empiricalization, atten-

tion to institutional macro-contexts, and movement toward argument's formalization, which he identifies as three of the major trends of the many recent developments in argumentation theory that he finds promising to scholars. In the next chapter, J. Anthony Blair asks, "What is Informal Logic?" To address this question, he develops analytic tools for recognizing, identifying, and displaying so-called "non-interactive" argumentation, while also theorizing evaluative tools for accessing deductive, inductive, and other sorts of argument. In the third chapter, "Toward a Foundation for Argumentation Theory," G.C. Goddu presents principles already agreed upon by argumentation theorists as a starting point for cross-theoretical evaluation. Finally, Douglas Niño and Danny Marreno's chapter, "The Agentive Approach to Argumentation: A Proposal," gives us an agent-centered approach to evaluate argument from, offering a break from mainstream argumentation theory because it does not establish an a priori approach to the function of agents, rather focusing on the agenda of agents. Together, this set of chapters function to clarify varied, innovative, and necessary first steps for scholars interested in argument to work through in framing their approach to reasoned evaluation.

After setting the groundwork for lenses by which to shape perspectives for evaluating argument, the second section looks at theory surrounding *analysis of argumentation*, focusing on the various locations where argumentation unfolds, and how differences in context might inform interpretation. Co-authors Sharon Bailin and Mark Battersby write in "Conductive Argumentation, Degrees of Confidence, and the Communication of Uncertainty" that conclusions in conductive argument ought to be expressed with varied strength of judgments made based on the unavoidable degree of uncertainty found because of the dialectical nature of argumentation. David Hitchcock, in "The Linked-Convergent Distinction," forwards argumentation by Stephen Thomas relating to theory of distinctions that argues for the importance in an approach to argument, which draws distinctions between ways that various reasons can support a claim "for the strength of support of finding a premiss questionable or false" (p. 84). "Identifying the Warrant of an Argument," written by James B. Freeman, utilizes Hitchcock's foundational work on breaking down argument, arguing that in specific cases, attempts to extract the warrant from an argument can be problematic, but resolved by identifying the power of symbolization in formal languages to address problems. Jens E. Kjeldsen's chapter, "Where is Visual Argument?" ties this section together, observing that argumentation theory currently suffers from a lack of empirical studies regarding how audiences respond to visual ar-

gument, a deficit perhaps due to the difficult analytical challenge associated with interpreting arguments that are enthymematic in nature. Each of these pieces provides a new perspective by which to analyze different places of argumentation, contributing to a holistic view of the complex nature and components of argument.

Moving this collection of work on understanding argumentation theory forward, the third section includes four pieces addressing *evaluation of argument*, bringing us to the process of looking to answer different questions surrounding assessment challenges faced by argument theorists. Daniel H. Cohen leads off with "Missed Opportunities in Argument Evaluation," questioning a double standard facing arguers, where they are held culpable for missing obvious objections against their position, but not obvious reasons in their favor through offering an explanation for "this odd asymmetry" (p. 121) in evaluation of argument. Maurice A. Finocchiaro argues in "Ubiquity, Ambiguity, and Metarationality: Searching for the Fallacy of Compostition" that ubiquity, ambiguity, and metarationality are key tools for reading fallacies of composition. Although the ubiquity thesis forwards that composition seems to be the most frequent and important of claimed fallacies, little attention has been paid to it in argumentation theory, suggesting that either the fallacy of composition is "common and important, or uncommon and unimportant" (p. 133). He continues with explaining that the ambiguity of the three distinct notions of what is meant by fallacy of composition (reasoning from premises using a term distributively to a conclusion using the same term collectively, reasoning from some property of the parts to the same property of the whole, and reasoning from some property of the members of a group to the same property for the entire group), are confused with one another. Finally, he offers a metarationality hypothesis asking whether fallacies exist in practice or only in the mind of the interpreter. In their chapter "Don't Feed the Trolls: Straw Men and Iron Men," Scott Aikin and John Casey provide straightforward advice for recognizing straw, weak, and hollow variants of the "straw men" fallacy. They also advocate for recognition of a fourth variant, the *iron* man, for cases of inappropriately reconstructing stronger versions of an opponent's argument. Finally, Paula Olmos wraps up this section on evaluating argumentation, by proposing a multi-dimensional and explicit approach to assessing the role of narrative argument in "Story Credibility in Narrative Arguments."

Section four, *argument schemes*, includes just two pieces, "Arguments by Analogy (and What We Can Learn about Them from Aristotle)" by Manfred Kraus and "A Means-End Classifi-

cation of Argumentation Schemes" by Fabrizio Macagno. Manfred Kraus concentrates on answering the question of how certain arguments can be deductive, yet defeasible through his alternative solution of viewing "arguments by analogy within a greater range of argument types that derive from comparisons and similarities" (p. 172). Argumentative schemes as prototypical combinations of two separate and distinct abstractions are addressed by Fabrizio Macagno through his problematization of the shortcomings found in existing classifications. Instead, he proposes a new model prioritizing the pragmatic purpose of argument in dialogue. Though the shortest of these sections, the transition from *evaluation of argument* to *argument schemes,* helps draw out important nuanced differences in the ways construction matters for argument effectiveness.

Section five looks at *contextual embedding of argumentation*. Harvey Siegel's chapter looks to the significance of context-independents in evaluating the argument quality of the contextual dimension of argumentative norms in "Argumentative Norms: How Contextual Can They Be? A Cautionary Tale." Next, A. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans and Jean Wagemans explore how pragma-dialectical theory considers the role of institutional conventions in "Reasonableness in Context: Taking into Account Institutional Conventions in the Pragma-Dialectical Evaluation of Argumentative Discourse." Finally, in "Difference, Distrust, and Delegation: Three Design Hypotheses," Sally Jackson argues that "design hypotheses" based on new communication technologies offers societies the ability to try out ideas for different ways to reach conclusions and agreements in argument. These differently designed hypotheses create non-competitive manners of completion with empirical hypotheses, contributing to changing theoretical ideas about appeal to authority.

Finally, section six pulls together papers on *linguistic approaches to argumentation,* as a means of discussion for implications of the theoretical contestations of construction seen above. In "A Plea for a Linguistic Distinction Between Explanation and Argument," Thierry Herman calls for scholars to utilize a linguistic perspective to better show how rhetorical strategies exploit the blurred but important differences between explanation and argument, arguing that the former is more philosophical, while the latter deals with linguistics. The role of verbs of appearance as indicators of argument are explored in "Verbs of Appearance and Argument Schemes: Italian *Sembrare* as an Argumentative Indicator," written by Johanna Miecznikowski and Elena Musi. Together, they examine 40 varied texts utilizing the Italian verb *sembrare* ('to seem'), looking for application as an

argumentative indicator, important in guiding the interlocutors and readers. In the third and final piece of this collection, Pierre-Yves Raccah studies discourses for empirical hints involved in institutional conventionalized practices of strategic maneuvering in "Linguistic Argumentation as a Shortcut for Empirical Study of Argumentative Strategies," further developing prior work to show how his shortcut is of use for those interested in "better description of the semantics of natural languages" (p. 280). Concluding these six unique parts through *linguistic approaches to argumentation*, sets the tone for keeping in mind the larger institutional preconditions which dictate and influence argumentation theory and practice. Overall, this collection offers argumentation scholars an impressive and expansive range of reflections on theoretical issues to draw inspiration from in continuing to develop the field of argument.