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Henrique J. Ribeiro (ed): Inside Arguments. Logic and the Study of Argumentation

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Sara Greco Morasso

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1 Introduction

This volume explores and critically discusses the relation between argumentation and logic, which is of particular importance as these two disciplines have been tightly connected since the origin of modern argumentation theory; and so were they in the ancient reflection on rhetoric, from Aristotle onwards.

What the Editor claims at the beginning of his very well-thought Introduction is that the volume aims at doing more than a simple overview of the connections between two disciplines. Henrique J. Ribeiro inserts the study of argumentation and logic into a broader philosophical framework, claiming that argumentation is the new paradigm of human reason (p. 11) in post-modern reflection, which characterizes the contemporary intellectual world. This is because argumentation focuses on agreement rather than on truth (p. 4). As questionable as this claim might be—I am not sure that its epistemological premises would be accepted by all argumentation theorists—it certainly attributes enormous importance not only to argumentation studies but also to the specific relation between argumentation and logic as *the* kernel of all philosophical studies. When studying this relation, in fact, we deal with a definition of human reason and its limits.

Henrique J. Ribeiro is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra, Portugal, where he teaches logic, rhetoric and argumentation theory.

S. Greco Morasso (✉)
Institute of Argumentation, Linguistics and Semiotics, Faculty of Communication Sciences,
Università della Svizzera italiana, Via G. Buffi 13, 6900 Lugano, Switzerland
e-mail: sara.greco@usi.ch

2 On the Contents

The Editor deliberately chose not to introduce macro-sections in this volume in order not to conceal the theoretical connections between the eighteen contributions forming this collection, as he argues. This does not mean, however, that classifications of such contributions are not possible. To start with, authors clearly belong to different schools of thought, not to say disciplines. Some of them are between the initiators of informal logic, while others are formal logicians; some are scholars in philosophy, others in critical thinking; some have been working in computer sciences and artificial intelligence as well; finally, some could be more appropriately described as argumentation scholars—and most of these latter adopt the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation theory.

Moreover, the eighteen papers have very different scopes. Some of them adopt a theoretical approach, discussing the relation between logic and argumentation in general, or revisiting the history of these disciplines in order to explore their convergence as well as their specific characteristics. This is the case of almost the first half of this volume (chapters 1–7), plus chapters 9, 11, 14, 15 and 17. Other chapters are better qualified as case-studies, in which the different authors attempt at making the logic-argumentation relationship clear in practice. Some of them analyse a specific *context* of application for argumentation and/or logic: this is the case of chapter 12, which deals with public deliberation; chapter 16, which is focused on scientific controversies; as well as chapter 18, devoted to “logic and fiction”. Other chapters are concentrating on a specific theoretical problem, such as the *tu quoque* fallacy (ch. 8), the argument from expert opinion (ch. 10) and presupposition (ch. 13).

More specifically, after the Editor’s introduction, the reflections presented in chapter 1 (“A little light logic”), by Alec Fisher, originate from the author’s long experience in teaching logic. He is in a unique position to describe how logic needs argumentation if it is to describe natural language reasoning, starting from the educational needs he started to acknowledge in the early 1970s. Fisher is not alone in raising educational concerns in this volume; several of the contributors, in fact, declare to have been inspired to consider the relation between logic and argumentation by their first-hand experience as teachers (another prime example of this is chapter 6 by Ralph Johnson).

In chapter 2 (“Finding the logic in argumentation”), Douglas Walton introduces the concept of a *defeasible* logic which should work, in his opinion, as underlying logical system for argumentation schemes. He also introduces *Carneades*, a mathematical and computational model for argument mapping and evaluation which admits of defeasible logic. Chapter 3 (“The place of logic in argument studies”), by James Freeman, is also devoted to the province of logic in the study of argumentative discourse. In particular, this author concentrates on whether logic should consider the acceptability of *premises* (warrants) or not (see also Freeman 2005 and, within this volume, Hansen, pp. 102–103).

In Chapter 4 (“Inference claims”), David Hitchcock discusses the notion of *inference*, which is common to argumentation and logic, analysing in particular what it means for a conclusion *to follow* from given premises. Like the preceding

chapter, which deals with *premises*, this contribution elaborates on two key-notions in the relation between argumentation and logic, i.e. *inference* and *conclusion*.

Chapter 5 and 6 assume the vantage point of informal logic. In chapter 5 (“An enquiry into the methods of informal logic”), Hans V. Hansen reviews the different methods adopted by informal logicians in the study of argumentation, while chapter 6 (“Informal logic and its contribution to argumentation theory”), by Ralph J. Johnson, constitutes an informative retrospective reflection on the historical development of informal logic and on its past and present contributions to argumentation theory.

In chapter 7 (“The role of logic in analysing and evaluating argumentation”), Frans H. van Eemeren discusses the role of logic in argumentation in light of the pragma-dialectical approach. In this perspective, logic is there to scrutinize the validity of argument; but it never overlaps with the whole of an analysis of an argumentative discussion. In “Charges of inconsistency and the *tu quoque* fallacy” (ch. 8), Bart Garssen brings van Eemeren’s conclusions forward by providing a specific example of the place of logic in an argumentative reconstruction. In particular, the *tu quoque* fallacy is explained in terms of a violation of the *freedom rule* of a critical discussion rather than in mere formal logic terms (cf. van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992).

In chapter 9 (“Formals and ties: Connecting argumentation studies with formal disciplines”), Erik C. Krabbe goes back to the possible uses of logic for the analysis of argumentation. Beside the formalisation and evaluation of informal arguments, the author acknowledges the importance of logic for conceptual clarification and theoretical elucidation of concepts (see in particular pp. 173–174). The role he attributes to different formal systems, in this sense, is contiguous to the disambiguating role of *semantic analysis* discussed by Rigotti (2008).

Jan Albert van Laar (“Logical criticism and argumentation schemes: Argument from expert opinion as a case in point”, ch. 10) discusses argumentation from expert opinion from the point of view of what room there is for the opponent to put forward logical criticism in response to an argument in which this argument scheme has been applied. Expert opinion is taken as a case in point, albeit the author’s goal is to define general criteria for logical criticism. Central to his contribution is the notion of *argumentation* (or *argument*) *scheme*, which he compares to that of *deductive scheme* (pp. 201–203). Argument schemes are one of the common themes for several contributors to this volume (see in particular chapter 2).

Developed in the perspective of dialogical logic, chapter 11, by Jesse Alama and Sara L. Uckelman, criticize the applicability of Lorenzen’s and Lorenz’s (1978) and Lorenzen’s (1987) notion of *dialogue games* to everyday argumentative dialogue.

The two chapters that follow focus on specific aspects. Marcin Lewiński (“Public deliberation as a polylogue: challenges of argumentation analysis and evaluation”, ch. 12) interprets the context of public deliberation as one involving more than two parties to an argumentative discussion. His problem is then how to interpret these types of multi-party practice in light of the models of sound argumentation developed in disciplines such as logic and dialectics (p. 224). He discusses the features of polylogues which go beyond two-party argumentation and argues for the need for modelling this type of interaction. In “Reconstructing and assessing the

conditions of meaningfulness. An argumentative approach to presupposition” (ch. 13), Fabrizio Macagno discusses the role of the linguistic phenomenon of presupposition in argumentation. He proposes to connect presupposition to the epistemic notion of *presumption* (p. 252 ff).

In chapter 14, Bruno Leclercq investigates the connection between argumentation and mathematical proof, showing that formal proof is not sufficient even in mathematics. In fact, because “there is an important *demonstrative* or *ostensive* dimension to formal proofs” (p. 273), these latter are closer to visual rhetoric and informal proofs than one could expect.

Elaborating on the connections between argumentation theory, on the one hand, and semantics and pragmatics, on the other, Chapter 15 by Andrei Moldovan is at the boundaries between argumentation and philosophy of language, as well as linguistic semantics and pragmatics. The author focuses on the notion of *implicature*, insisting on the distinction between what is said and what is implicated, and argues against the existence of exclusively *argumentative* implicatures. His claim is that argumentative analysis is often poor in terms of the analysis of implicatures and this may lead “to unfortunate analyses of speech acts of arguing, as well as to the general impression that logic is inapplicable to real life arguments” (p. 300).

Chapter 16 (“Argumentation theory vs. formal logic: The case of scientific argumentation and the ‘logic’ of controversies”), by Xavier de Donato Rodríguez, examines the context of scientific controversies. He first analyses this argumentation context applying the method of (some) formal approaches, considering in particular Lorenzen and Lorenz (1978) and Dung (1995); second, he interprets scientific disagreement in terms of “informal” argumentation models. His view is that these two types of approach—the informal and the formal one—can be fruitfully combined. On the same line of thought, Maurice A. Finocchiaro’s programmatic contribution (“Logical theory, argumentation theory and meta-argumentation”, ch. 17) aims at showing that it is possible to construct a project for the study of argumentation, which he calls *the meta-argumentation project*, combining elements of traditional formal deductive logic, recent informal logic, argumentation theory and the historical-textual approach (Finocchiaro 2005).

The volume is concluded with Maria Marzano’s contribution titled “Logic and fiction” (ch. 18), in which the author applies different logics to the analysis of excerpts of literary texts taken from quite different sources. There is no conclusion provided by the Editor to this collection of papers.

3 Discussion and Critical Remarks

An interesting aspect shared by many of the contributions in this volume is the retrospective, sometimes apologetic, reflection (as in the case of Johnson’s chapter 6, cf. p. 120) proposed by informal logicians on the genesis and current status of their discipline. Informal logic is, to some extent, derived from the same origin as argumentation, i.e. discontent with the limits of formal logic as applied to model natural language interactions (see for example Fisher, pp. 21-21; and Johnson,

p. 123). As a consequence, informal logic aims at modelling argumentative discourse; the object it deals with is at least partially overlapping with that of argumentation. This makes the reflection on the role and cross-fertilization between these two disciplines even more urgent.

Most importantly, however, what emerges this volume is that the problem about the relation between argumentation and logic mainly amounts to a problem of *definition of (formal) logic* (more than of argumentation). What is formal logic? One of the aspects which are clearly stated in several chapters is that we should not speak of one “logic” but of different “logics”. It is a well-established acquisition that we have different types of formal models, which are used to represent different aspects of natural language. Among models of formal logic, one could mention for example *modal* logic, which includes operators expressing modality; or *fuzzy* logic, which admits for intermediate truth values between true and false (the binary opposition 1-0). Johnson (p. 117) suggests that, if we consider different logics, then we are bound to admit that there might be different relations between these logics and argumentation. Freeman (p. 77) maintains that these relations “are complex, but not opaque” and that, as a consequence, they can be analysed and mapped. Johnson, again, recalls that, historically, when informal logic originated as a reaction to formal logic, opposition was indeed to an oversimplified version of logic presented in introductory logic textbooks rather than to formal deductive logic per se (p. 120). The same holds true for the origin of argumentation theory and critical thinking. Therefore, it seems worth rethinking of the role of formal logic models in light of a more comprehensive definition of the developments of this discipline. All in all, a definition of logic(s) is probably one of the main issues to be thoroughly addressed when approaching its possible contribution(s) to argumentation theory.

The main limitations of this volume are due to the fact that, while the central problem of identifying a relation between argumentation and logic(s) is insightfully approached in several chapters, a reader perceives some disconnection between these theoretically-oriented chapters and the specific applications and case-studies analysed by other authors. These latter sometimes lack connection to the general problem addressed by this volume. This is probably the main limitation of this book, which, although courageously attempting to describe an interesting topic and despite being full of insightful considerations, lacks a unitary perspective. It is also clearly acknowledgeable that not all the authors are involved in a regular dialogue on these topics. In this sense, the fact that the book lacks a conclusion or postface by the Editor impoverishes it, despite the completeness of the Introduction, as the reader is left with the impression that too many issues are left unresolved.

Probably as a corollary of this problem, one has the impression that some of the authors are not well-informed on the other contributors’ research on the central topic. As an example, take Moldovan’s suggestion to consider implicatures in the analysis of argumentation, in order to distinguish what is said from what is implicated. Contrary to what the author states, the analysis of implicit material in argumentation is not new in the literature on argumentation. On the one hand, the reconstruction of implicit premises has been broadly discussed (Macagno, this volume, van Eemeren, this volume; see also Ennis 1982; Walton 2001, 2008; Bigi and Greco Morasso 2012). On the other hand, the difference between argumentation

as a *communicated* inference and forms of *communicative* (pragmatic) inferences, such as implicatures, has been discussed as well (Rocci 2006).

Despite these weak points, my personal view is that this collection of papers could be rightfully considered as a first valuable step in the direction of studying how argumentation and logic are related and of understanding the place of formal and informal logic in current studies on argumentation.

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