

Book Reviews

***Making Up Your Mind* by Robert Mutti**

Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002.. Pp. v, 1-179. CDN\$49.95. US\$34.95, £22.99, AU\$85. ISBN 1551114275..

Reviewed by Lisa Warenski

An instructor of critical reasoning is often challenged to show students why studying abstract topics such as validity and fallacious forms of inference have practical value. Robert Mutti's book *Making Up Your Mind* (Broadview Press 2002) helps meet this challenge through its focus on practical decision making and the inclusion of novel exercises on constructing arguments. The task of successful reasoning is framed as the task of making up one's mind, and the emphasis is on decisions about action. Accordingly, the exercises on constructing arguments require the student to identify proposed goals and evaluate alternative ways of achieving them.

Mutti has created a highly readable text that addresses a range of well-chosen topics in fifteen chapters. The early chapters cover some logical concepts, including the truth conditions for the logical connectives, singular vs. general terms, quantifiers and modal operators, as well as logical relationships between propositions. These are all handled informally. The concepts of prescriptive assertion and explanation are discussed in separate chapters, and the categorical syllogism is introduced as a special kind of standard form for explanation. Against this background, an argument is defined as a set of assertions that explain why one member of the set must be accepted. The student is then invited to construct an argument of his or her own about action in accordance with an argument outline presented in Chapter Seven. The outline requires the student to state a goal and exactly two alternative proposals for achieving the goal. Next, the student identifies the pros and cons of each of the alternatives, which are expressed as hopes and fears about the proposed course of action. Finally, the student identifies the evidence and its source for each of the pros and cons.

A second argument-construction exercise is given in Chapter Seven as a project to be worked on for the duration of the course. The outline for the second exercise is the same as the first; however, the student is instructed to take a position on the adoption of a controversial policy within a community of which he or she is a member and to argue against hypothetical opponents. A list of suggested topics is provided. This project is intended to provide a focal point for the subjects covered in the second half of the book, which include validity, deduction and induction, unstated premises, fallacies and evaluation of sources of evidence.

While the focus of *Making Up Your Mind* on practical reasoning may be useful pedagogically, the narrow conception of critical reasoning that the book

employs is arguably one of its shortcomings. The task of critical reasoning can be conceived more broadly as that of forming well-founded beliefs. One might also take issue with some of Mutti's definitions of logical concepts. For example, it is a requirement on a deductive argument that its premises be such that we must accept them (p. 96), and in a discussion of implication within conditionals, logical truth is taken to be equivalent to a version of Fregean analyticity because it is defined in term of a notion of implication whereby one assertion implies another if the former contains all of the same information as the latter (pp. 17-22). These definitions are flagged as partially stipulative, but they are non-standard.

Although some of the topics could be covered in more depth, *Making Up Your Mind* presents a clear narrative that will no doubt succeed in helping students to engage with the subject matter. Because all of the answers to the numbered exercises are in the back of the book, the text is probably most useful as a secondary workbook for students; however, the type of argument-construction exercises covered in Chapter Seven are worth including in any course on critical reasoning.

Lisa Warenski
Advisors Program, Honors College
The City University of New York
365 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10016

***Walking the Tightrope of Reason: The Precarious Life of a Rational Animal* by Robert Fogelin**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 224pp. Hardcover: ISBN 0-19-516026-6, US\$22.00. Paperback: ISBN 0-19-517753-1, US\$12.95

Reviewed by Daniel H. Cohen

In a survey of the history of the field, Ralph Johnson notes that Robert Fogelin was among the first to use the phrase "informal logic" in its current sense. While Fogelin's most recent book, *Walking the Tightrope of Reason: The Precarious Life of a Rational Animal*, does not directly address questions from the discourses of informal logic, argumentation theory or critical thinking, it beautifully exhibits the tools of argument analysis. It is a splendid example of philosophical argumentation and deserves the attention of workers in those fields. Fogelin has a sophisticated understanding of what argumentation is all about and he is admirably adept in practice. When it comes to philosophical argumentation in particular, he has a deep understanding of how it can go wrong. And, of more importance, he has definite ideas on how it can be made right.