

Book Reviews

Logic, Language and Argumentation in Projection of Philosophical Knowledge

By Georg Brutian

Armenian Library of Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Printed by Grafica De Coimbra, Ltd. Lisbon, 1998. 175 pages.

Reviewed by Juhani Pietarinen and Juho Ritola

An overview of the book

Professor Brutian's latest monograph, *Logic, Language and Argumentation in Projection of Philosophical Knowledge* (1998) is an interesting synopsis of his long and renowned career in philosophy. The book is divided into four chapters.

In the first chapter, the nature of philosophical language is investigated. The author does this by dividing the task into three different parts, of which the first is to describe the specificity of philosophical knowledge. In order to achieve such a description, the author creates interesting metaphors to illuminate the nature of philosophy and its place among sciences. He argues that the relationship between philosophy cannot be seen on one level only. The nature of philosophy is polyhedral, multiplying and multiform (p. 19). Second, Brutian examines the possibility of metaphilosophy and finds the term unsatisfactory. He argues that we cannot adequately separate philosophy and from metaphilosophy: both of them are activities on the same level. Whereas metabiology, for example, is not biology, but the philosophy of biology, there can no such difference between philosophy and metaphilosophy: philosophy is on a par with metaphilosophy. Third, some features of philosophy are discussed.

In the second chapter, the nature of logic is examined. The author contrasts different types of logic, especially differences between dialectical logic, as understood by Hegel, and formal logic. He argues that different types of logic do not rule out each other but should be seen as complementary. He then elucidates the nature of transformational logic, its rules and its relationship to transformational grammar. The rest of the chapter is devoted to Brutian's discussion of Kurt Gödel and to an historical introduction to the thinking of David the Invincible, a famous Armenian philosopher from the 5th Century who was interested in various questions of argumentation.

In the third chapter, Brutian presents his views on argumentation. He first sets up the scene by examining the architectonics of argumentation, the main concepts of argumentation, and the logic of argumentation. The study continues by probing deeper into the logic of argumentation and the problem of translatability of argumentation. The study is completed by examining certain specific features of argumentation. In the fourth chapter, the relationship between language and our image of the world is considered. The author does this by criticizing the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and examining the implications of Niels Bohr's idea of complementarity.

Brutian on argumentation

Because the third chapter, "Argumentation," is of main importance to the book and to Brutian's work as a whole, we would like to enter a little bit deeper into it. The aim of the chapter is to show that logic, while being a strong tool of human relations, is not sufficient in itself for such interaction. Therefore, logic should be modified to suit the needs of argumentation (p. 10). Brutian intends to achieve this modification within only thirty pages, which means that he does not go into technical details of his programme. Still, one would have wished to find a more extensive and clearer picture of his theory of argumentation. Lacking a detailed presentation of the theory, we will comment on some thoughts brought forward in Chapter 3.

The chapter begins with a remark that an adequate theory of argumentation can only be created if we first describe the real process of argumentation (p. 89). However, on the next page the author describes an abstract scheme of argumentation. Both empirical and theoretical studies surely have their place in the examination of argumentation, but they should be clearly separated to avoid confusion. Another distinction that is in need of clarification is the relationship between context-dependence and universality. On the one hand, Brutian seems to adhere to contextualist ideas on argumentation, as the following quote seems to imply: "The modification of argumentation according to the specificity of the area can be realised in different ways" (p. 90), and later on, when explaining the nature of logic: "The character of logic which we can and must use in argumentation depends on the character of the field in which the argumentation is on" (p. 106). On the other hand, however, he states that argumentation "is universal mode of reasoning and logic is, in principle, one of the main components of argumentation, its very essence" (p. 91). One would have hoped for some further clarification of this subject. For example, why does argumentation have a universal character, and logic does not? Perhaps the point is that we can distinguish universal patterns (logical structures) in argumentation, although in many practical situations, for instance in political rhetorics, those patterns are not followed.

On page 96, the author embarks upon a discussion of the nature of arguments. He states that since argumentation is a kind of reasoning process, it is quite natural to think that all components of argumentation are of mental character. He presents a case of spouses discussing the option of adopting a child. The wife tries to convince the husband with several arguments, without success. As the discussion continues, the door suddenly opens and their friend enters the room with a charmingly smiling child in his arms. The husband gives in to adopting a child and thus the problem is solved without words. However, Brutian remarks, this action has no mental character. He explains the situation by means of explicit arguments: the situation involves an enthymematic argument. According to the explanation, we use the thought about the object which we immediately fix in our consciousness without having enough time to express it in words. That is the reason why one may think that the object itself becomes an argument instead of its mental image. This is an extremely interesting idea, but still we are left with the question why exactly we should consider such cases as arguments. Do positive feelings in themselves count as arguments?

In all, Brutian's book raises very interesting new questions about the nature of argumentation. It also introduces the reader to many basic problems of argumentation in an original way. Our main wish, as we said above, is that the important topics would have been treated in a more detailed way. Perhaps Brutian's next book will go into this.

Juhani Pietarinen and Juho Ritola
Department of Philosophy
University of Turku
Turku
Finland
jpietari@utu.fi juho.ritola@utu.fi

About Thinking

by W. Ward Fearnside

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Reviewed by Maureen Linker

W. Ward Fearnside's text, *About Thinking*, starts with the inscription "To Students for whom the book was written." Any dedicated teacher of informal logic can appreciate the work involved in trying to craft a good logic text with students in mind. Clearly, Fearnside wanted to make that effort but whether he has succeeded is far less obvious. The principal flaw with *About Thinking*