

Book Review

Geert-Lueke Lueken (Hg.) (2000). *Formen der Argumentation*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 237 pp.

The 11 papers in the collective volume 'Ways of Argumentation' ('Formen der Argumentation'), edited by the German philosopher and argumentation theorist G.-L. Lueken, stem from a variety of theoretical and institutional backgrounds, although philosophical perspectives dominate. Most of the contributors – including the editor, who has written an important book on incommensurability as a problem for rational argumentation¹ – are distinguished scholars in the field of argumentation theory and analysis, both in the German-speaking and Anglo-Saxon world.

Most of the papers were originally written for quite different purposes. Four of them (that is, those written by Chr. Lumer, K. Lorenz, B. Strecker, O. Scholz) were first presented at the workshop 'Logic and Argumentation' at the University of Leipzig, Germany in April 1996, organized by G.-L. Lueken. Four others appear for the first time as (revised) German versions of English originals which have already been published elsewhere (A. Deppermann, F. Kambartel, M.H. Salmon/C.M. Zeitz, H. Wohlrapp). Finally, three papers have been especially written for this volume, namely, those by G.-L. Lueken, P. Stekeler-Weithofer and N. Rescher.

The papers are grouped together in four sections. The first two sections contain theoretically orientated contributions dealing with the relationship of logic and argumentation theory (Lueken, Lumer) and the establishment of (logical) rules of argumentation (Kambartel, Lorenz, Stekeler-Weithofer). The papers in the last two sections are empirically orientated contributions, which deal with semantic, hermeneutic (Strecker, Deppermann, Scholz) and pragmatic analyses of argumentation (Wohlrapp, Rescher, Salmon/Zeitz).

Lueken's article 'Paradigmen einer Philosophie des Argumentierens' ('Paradigms of a Philosophy of Argumentation') opens the volume with a classification of recent studies in argumentation according to a threefold distinction between a logical, a forensic and a dialogical-pragmatical paradigm, respectively (pp. 17ff.). Lueken criticizes the reductionist tendencies within the logical paradigm, but also the danger inherent in both the logical and the forensic paradigm – the latter is exemplified with van Eemeren/Grootendorst's *Pragma-Dialectics* – to see everyday argumentation as inherently deficient. Therefore, Lueken argues for the third alternative. In this approach, too, rules for argumentative dialogues are developed which should enable the discussants to free themselves from the pressures of individual and/or group interests and to improve a thesis until all potential objections are met. But the dialogical-pragmatic approach in the sense of Lueken is characterized by a less normative and more



dynamic view of the dialogue rules, which can always be challenged and changed during an ongoing discussion.

In the second article ('Argumentationstheorie und Logik' – 'Argumentation Theory and Logic'), the German philosopher Lumer develops his earlier work on the theory and analysis of argumentation² to deal with the controversial issue whether formal logic and argumentation theory are two independent fields of research or could be treated as (sub-)components of one and the same theory. Lumer criticizes reductionist attempts from both sides, but insists that argumentation theory presupposes formal logic, but not the other way round. Moreover, Lumer defends a monological view of argumentation (p. 55). He then sketches an overview of the functions of an argumentation theory, among them, the development of a theory of deductive and non-deductive forms of argumentation. Non-deductive forms of argumentation have to be described according to criteria of adequacy ('Adäquatheitsbedingungen'), which are relative to specific situations and have to be distinguished from criteria of validity ('Gültigkeitsbedingungen'), which are context-independent (p. 61).

The German philosopher Friedrich Kambartel tries to establish a theoretical distinction which is often neglected in discussions about the (lack of) preciseness in everyday language and languages for special purposes, namely, the distinction between 'Strenge und Exaktheit' ('Rigour and Exactness'). On the one hand, 'exactness' ('Exaktheit') is defined by Kambartel as the property of an expression *a* in a language *L* to have its use determined by semantically invariant messages (where semantic invariance can be absolute or relative to some standard situations). Moreover, the use of *a* in *L* is schematically controlled by formal rules (p. 82). On the other hand, 'rigour' ('Strenge') is defined as a type of preciseness which is typical for 'reason' ('Vernunft'). According to Kambartel, reason typically does not try to idealize away specific contexts and situations of language use, but tries rather to take into account all relevant problems, all relevant standards of rationality and to transcend group-specific perspectives of problems within given situations (p. 84).

In the next two articles, the German philosophers Kuno Lorenz ('Sinnbestimmung und Geltungssicherung' – 'Determination of Sense and Guarantee of Validity') and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer ('Schlüsse, Folgen und Begründungen' – 'Inferences, Conclusions and Justifications') try to show that the rules of formal logical systems ultimately have a pragmatic basis. Starting from elementary (speech) acts, Lorenz systematically develops pragmatic and semiotic functions of (more) complex linguistic expressions and utterances. In his view, arguments are to be defined as linguistic means to justify or challenge the conviction of a discussant in a dialogue, who thinks he or she has found a winning strategy establishing the truth of a statement (p. 106). Stekeler-Weithofer insists on the fact that justifications cannot be reduced to deductions within a formal system. Justifications within everyday argumentation and languages for special

purposes (e.g. scientific languages) proceed according to empirical hypotheses and conceptual presuppositions, which are plausible and only function in an optimal way in default cases. They can always be challenged and must not be generalized and thus become metaphysical reifications (pp. 126ff.).

The empirical sections are opened with an article by the German linguist Bruno Strecker on 'Logic and the Meaning of German Sentences' ('Logik und die Bedeutung von Sätzen der deutschen Sprache'). Strecker wants to show that truth-conditional semantics does describe a crucial part of the meaning of German sentences, but also has important shortcomings. More specifically, Strecker emphasizes that truth-conditional semantics cannot describe the following semantic aspects of German sentences: 1. non-standard truth-conditional uses of conditional complementizers and 2. non-truth-conditional uses of German particles. Here are two examples for such uses: 1. *Goethe wurde 1749 in Frankfurt geboren, wenn die Geschichtsschreibung korrekt ist* ('Goethe was born 1749 in Frankfurt, if the historical literature is right'). 2. *Du bist ja irre!* (Typically, such sentences are hard to translate literally; an approximate translation could use an emphasizing subjunct³ like *definitely* or *really* to translate the German particle *ja*: 'You are **definitely** nuts!').

The next paper ('Semantische Verschiebungen in Argumentationsprozessen: Zur wechselseitigen Elaboration von Semantik, Quaestiones und Positionen der Argumentierenden' – 'Semantic shifts in Argumentative Processes: On the Mutual Elaboration of Semantics, Quaestiones and Standpoints of Discussants')⁴ has been contributed by a German linguist, too: Arnulf Deppermann analyzes transcribed passages from a public discussion about ecological issues, to show that the use of ambiguous expressions and semantic shifts in everyday argumentation are not always to be described as instances of the fallacy of equivocation. Semantic shifts, argues Deppermann, should rather be described as part of the strategic attempts of the discussants to (re)define crucial terms of discussions in a way which is favorable to themselves, or to express a preference for disagreement or to develop a global coherent standpoint within the discussion (pp. 151ff.).

In his contribution 'Was heißt es, eine Argumentation zu verstehen? – Zur konstitutiven Rolle von Präsumtionen' ('What does it Mean to Understand an Argument? – On the Constitutive Role of Presumptions'), the German philosopher Oliver Scholz systematically develops a detailed list of principles of interpretation. These principles apply to communication in general as well as to argumentative discourse (pp. 165ff.). Scholz also tries to justify the assumption that these principles are indeed indispensable and constitutive for the understanding of communicative acts.

The section on pragmatic analyses is opened with a paper ("Argumentum" ad baculum') by the German philosopher Harald Wohlrapp, who has written substantial contributions to argumentation theory.⁵ Wohlrapp

criticizes earlier descriptions of the *Argumentum ad baculum* because in his view these attempts fail to distinguish between arguments, advice, warnings and threats. Moreover, Wohlrapp argues that threats can be rational speech acts, but can never be arguments. Furthermore, Wohlrapp criticizes Habermas' theory of the ideal speech situation and sketches an alternative approach, characterizing argumentation as 'theoretical distance' ('theoretische Distanz', p. 184). Finally, Wohlrapp discusses various examples of the *Argumentum ad baculum*, taken from the relevant scholarly literature.

The US-American philosopher Nicholas Rescher has contributed a paper 'On Circularity and Regress in Rational Justification' ('Über Zirkularität und Regreß beim rationalen Geltungserweis'). Rescher wants to show that there are some innocuous instances of circularity. For example, the justification of modes of argument can only proceed successfully by justifying them with the help of other modes of argument. At least sometimes, these other modes are of the same type as the justified modes of argument. Nevertheless, this circular justification cannot be judged as an instance of the fallacy *Petitio principii*. These uses of circularity are better judged as presystematic uses of modes of reasoning, which are made explicit and justified by logic later on.

Furthermore, and in the same vein, Rescher argues that there are harmful and harmless infinite regresses. Instances of the former are infinite regresses of proofs or definitions, instance of the latter are infinite regresses of plausible justifications and interpretations. Proofs and definitions are conditions *sine qua non* for the concepts or theses to be defined or proven. Therefore, they are worthless if they have to be proven or defined *ad infinitum*. However, unlike proofs and definitions, merely plausible justifications and interpretations are conditions *sine qua minus*; that is, they have a certain explanatory value, even if they are in need of justifications or interpretations themselves (etc. *ad infinitum*) (pp. 201ff.).

The final paper 'Zur Analyse argumentativer Gespräche' ('On the Analysis of Argumentative Dialogues') has been contributed by US-American co-authors, the philosopher Merrilee H. Salmon and the librarian and education technology expert Colleen M. Zeitz. They follow the dialectic tradition highlighted in recent studies of argumentation (exemplified with scholars such as Sally Jackson and Scott Jacobs, Frans van Eemeren and Rob Grootendorst). Using transcribed data from an experiment performed with students, they have developed a systematic way of diagramming elements of everyday argumentation such as theses, premises, conclusions, objections, concessions and challenges. In this way, they want to extract the dialogic structure of everyday discussions and to emphasize the description of argumentation as a type of social interaction.

Having presented all contributions to the collective volume, I now turn to its critical evaluation. First of all, I would like to stress that Lueken has

succeeded in bringing together a dozen stimulating contributions to the study of argumentation, which provide a vivid picture of the recent theoretical discussions going on within and across various influential frameworks. At the same time, the collective volume contains several interesting empirical contributions. The 11 papers cover a broad range of disciplines, from formal logic (both monological and dialogical logic), hermeneutics, semiotics and the theory of science to linguistics.

Moreover, I appreciate that the papers could serve to establish a more balanced and differentiated picture as far as some much-debated dichotomies are concerned. More specifically, the theoretical contributions by Lueken, Lumer, Kambartel, Lorenz and Stekeler-Weithofer quite convincingly demonstrate that the dichotomy between the formal paradigm and non-formal approaches should be replaced by a perspective which acknowledges that both logic and argumentation theory offer interesting (though differing) insights in the study of argumentative discourse.

Apart from this partial consensus across competing traditions, however, I have to admit that I am on the side of those who defend an inherently dialogical view of argumentation. Lumer is right in pointing out that the German expressions 'Argument' and 'Argumentation' are not so directly connected with the concept of dialogue as their English counterparts 'argument' and 'argumentation' (pp. 54ff.). However, apart from these language-specific considerations, which are not decisive for a terminological discussion of the concept of 'argumentation', I am convinced that a monological view of argumentation can only be justified as a secondary abstraction from the argumentative practice observable both in everyday communication and scientific discourse.

As a linguist, I am particularly pleased by the inclusion of two empirical contributions to the study of argumentation, which use authentic empirical evidence. The rich data presented by Deppermann and Salmon/Zeitz and their detailed analysis provide extremely interesting insights into the dynamics of argumentative processes. Apart from the purely theoretical contributions, at least some of the other more empirically orientated papers could also have profited from the use of authentic examples. However, most of the time the authors only use artificially invented examples or quote and discuss examples from the scholarly literature on argumentation.

As a follower of rhetorical approaches to argumentation, especially Chaim Perelman's *New Rhetoric*, I have been greatly interested in statements on rhetorical approaches to argumentation made by the philosophers among the contributors. In this respect, the hostile attitude of the past seems to have been replaced by a more positive attitude. But still, the term 'rhetoric' among philosophers even nowadays seems to stand for a potentially dubious or immoral attitude.

For example, Lueken writes that rhetorical approaches face the danger of portraying argumentation as an advertising event ('Die Betrachtung

des Argumentierens als Forschung beugt auch der Gefahr vor, in der pragmatische (oder "rhetorische") Perspektiven auf die Argumentationspraxis häufig stehen: nämlich das Argumentieren als eine bloße Werbeveranstaltung darzustellen . . .'; p. 40). Furthermore, although Lumer concedes that even 'rhetoric', in the negative sense of 'techniques of persuasion', can sometimes be useful and morally justified (p. 55, fn. 11), he also criticizes approaches which consider logic as irrelevant in the study of argumentation and adds that these approaches are particularly widespread within rhetorical frameworks (p. 54). Finally, when Wohlrapp criticizes threats which are disguised as advice, he remarks critically 'Das ist natürlich bloße Rhetorik' ('Of course, this is mere rhetoric'), clearly using 'rhetoric' in the pejorative sense.

These remarks by distinguished philosophers, while less negative than in the past, still show a certain disregard of the following merits of rhetorical approaches to the study of argumentation: Firstly, today it is widely recognized that already Aristotle's Rhetoric basically is a theory of argumentation and combines both descriptive and normative approaches to everyday argumentation.⁶ Secondly, speaking of 'mere rhetoric' ignores the fact that European rhetoric, from its very beginning in antiquity (cf. above), also included a theory of argumentation and was only reduced to a theory of stilistics in early modern times due to historical developments initiated by the philosopher Petrus Ramus. Thirdly, it is not generally true that rhetorical approaches ignore logic. Perelman's New Rhetoric, for example, does not ignore logic altogether, Perelman was even an expert in formal logic, as in rhetoric;⁷ he only wanted to show the limitations of formal logic for the description and evaluation of argumentative discourse. Moreover, Perelman's New Rhetoric can be characterized by a deeply rooted humanistic and democratic attitude.⁸

With these remarks, I do not at all want to deny the importance of a normative perspective on argumentative practice. On the contrary, I would like to criticize the descriptivist attitude of Deppermann who finishes his paper asking for a non-normative reconstruction of argumentation (p. 158). However, the necessity of a reconciliation of descriptive and normative perspectives is shown unwillingly by Deppermann himself who, in spite of his descriptivist position, several times criticizes fallacious moves of discussants in his paper (cf. e.g. p. 152: the fallacy *secundum quid*, according to Deppermann committed by the discussant Haag-Born; p. 157: the fallacy of self-contradiction, also attributed to Haag-Born).

To sum up, I would like to stress again that Lueken has provided the community of argumentation specialists with an extremely interesting and stimulating collection of papers on many important issues concerning the theory and the analysis of argumentation.

NOTES

¹ Cf. G.-L. Lueken (1992): *Inkommensurabilität als Problem rationalen Argumentierens*. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog; I have reviewed this book in *Argumentation* 9 (1995): 511–516.

² Cf. Chr. Lumer (1990): *Praktische Argumentationstheorie*. Braunschweig: Vieweg; among his English papers, cf. e.g. Chr. Lumer (1995): Practical Arguments for Theoretical Theses. In: F. Van Eemeren et al. (eds.): *Proceedings of the Third ISSA Conference on Argumentation*. Vol. II. Amsterdam: SicSat, 91–101.

³ Cf. R. Quirk et al. (1985): *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. Harlow: Longman, p. 583. On different types of German particles cf. Helbig, Gerhard (1988): *Lexikon deutscher Partikeln*. Leipzig: VEB Verlag, pp. 32ff.

⁴ Deppermann's contribution is a revised version of a paper first presented at the Fourth International Conference on Argumentation: cf. A. Deppermann (1999): Semantic Shifts in Argumentative Processes: A Step beyond the Fallacy of Equivocation. In: F. Van Eemeren et al. (eds.): *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation*. Amsterdam: SicSat, 123–128.

⁵ Cf. H. Wohlrapp (ed.) (1995): *Wege der Argumentationsforschung*. Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog; Wohlrapp's contribution is a revised version of an English original first presented at the Second International Conference on Argumentation: cf. H. Wohlrapp (1991): Argumentum ad Baculum and Ideal Speech Situation. In: F. Van Eemeren et al. (eds.): *Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Argumentation*. Amsterdam: SicSat, 397–402.

⁶ On descriptive and normative aspects of Aristotle's Rhetoric cf. the contributions in D.J. Furley/A. Nehamas (eds.) (1994): *Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press; A.O. Rorty (ed.) (1996): *Essays on Aristotle's 'Rhetoric'*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

⁷ Cf. e.g. Ch. Perelman (1979): *Logik und Argumentation*. Königstein: Athenäum.

⁸ Cf. in this respect e.g. Ch. Perelman (1979): La philosophie du pluralisme et la Nouvelle Rhétorique. In: *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 127–128, 5–17.

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