

and engaging philosophical prose. He warns the reader of formal technicalities involving symbolic logic in parts of his exposition, but states that the main points can be understood by anyone who has taken a first course in logic willing to work patiently through the arguments, and advises skipping over the more challenging proofs. I think this is optimistic, since much of Priest's discussion involves compact formal demonstrations that require prior familiarity with many of the classical results of mathematical logic. Priest is onto something interesting about the role of apparent contradictions at the periphery of thought in some of the most important chapters of the history of philosophy. To have raised and boldly tried to answer these difficult questions concerning contradiction at the limits of thought is a sufficiently valuable contribution in itself to recommend Priest's argument to anyone interested in logic and the history of philosophy.

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L'argumentation

par Christian Plantin

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Reviewed by Claude Gratton

This is a very short book written by the French linguist, Christian Plantin, the author of *Essais sur l'argumentation, Introduction linguistique à l'étude de l'argumentation*. He does not state anywhere the main purpose of his booklet. It is probably not intended to break new ground in argumentation theory, for the author touches on so many topics in so few pages that his discussion is unavoidably superficial. It is also probably not intended to help students improve their reasoning skills, for in addition to the light and quick coverage of many topics, there are no exercises, and only one textbook is mentioned among the suggested readings. His main goal seems to be to help a novice to become quickly acquainted with many topics of argumentation theory, or perhaps to help a student to review quickly such topics.

As I was reading this booklet I was getting the impression of looking at many snap shots of the theoretical landscape of argumentation. I will give a general description of this "photo album", and identify some of the "photos" that depict the landscape correctly, and some that are out of focus.

Plantin sees argumentation theory as originating with the sophists, and describes some of their contributions to dialectics, antiphony, probability, and paradoxes. Unfortunately, the only "paradox" he uses, to illustrate that language is not as transparent as it usually appears to common sense, is not a genuine paradox. He deliberately chooses an example that is not serious: *This is your dog, so it's yours; this dog has pups, so it's a father; it's a father and it's yours, so it's your father*. He believes that this is a paradox because he thinks that the absurd conclusion is derived from true premises. The author overlooks that the absurd conclusion also rests on a false implicit premise: If one owns a dog, and it has a certain relation to x (e.g., some other dog), then one's dog has that relation to oneself. The apparently derived absurdity is not a sign of the lack of transparency of language, but rather a sign of our blindness to what is implicit, and of our hastiness to draw a conclusion.

He describes some of the historical connections between argumentation theory and rhetoric, and summarizes very well the contemporary studies since the 1945, and the current pragmatic tendencies. He touches on premise and conclusion indicators, the notion of argumentation, some different perspectives (e.g., cognitive, linguistic, social) from which to examine arguments, and on different approaches (e.g. the descriptive/normative) within those perspectives. He summarizes well the Toulmin model, but does not consider the Beardsley and Thomas models. Plantin presents different definitions of 'argument', and touches on the differences between a refutation and an objection, and between an argument and a demonstration. There is a good discussion of formal and informal fallacies. He describes succinctly how Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, Toulmin, and van Eemeren and Grootendorst classify arguments.

There is a chapter devoted to causal reasoning. The only weakness in this chapter is an unclear example of a slippery slope argument. I was surprised to see that he did not point out an important consequence of a fundamental difference that he mentions between an argument and an explanation. The conclusion of an explanation is assumed to be true, but the conclusion of an argument is not assumed to be true. A consequence of this difference is that a premises can be adequate for the conclusion of an explanation, but the same premises can be inadequate for the same conclusion of an argument. For example, I can explain why many people voted for a certain political party by showing that they believed that the policies of that party would be more beneficial to them and their country than the policies of the other competing parties, and by granting that people usually behave in their best interest. However, if I want to argue that it is true that many people voted for that political party, those same reasons would be irrelevant.

The chapter on analogies has a number of weaknesses. First, his general description of an argument from analogy is much too general to help students understand such arguments. His description goes as follows.

1. *The truth of proposition P, and the relevance of action A are at issue.*
2. *Proposition P' is accepted as true, action A' is adequate [effective].*
3. *P and A are respectively analogous to P' and A' with respect to certain properties.*
4. *So P is true and A is effective.*

This description contains in fact two arguments from analogy that should be distinguished, and that would be expressed more clearly in a standard form. For example, let *A* and *A'* be analogous with respect to properties *a* and *b*;

Action *A'* has properties *a, b, c.*

Action *A* has properties *a, b.*

So, *A* has property *c.*

By using the standard form, we can explain more clearly to students that the crucial components of this argument from analogy are the strength of the connection between the set of properties *a, b,* and property *c,* and the differences between *A'* and *A* that weaken that connection. Similar comments apply to the other argument about propositions *P'* and *P.*

Secondly, he does not explain how "pushing an analogy farther" refutes an argument based on that analogy, and his illustration is inadequate. He has us consider the following examples.

(A) *Society should pay for the methadone treatment of drug addicts.*

For drug addicts are like alcoholics, and society pays for their medical treatment.

(B) *But methadone is not a treatment but a drug. I agree that society should pay for the treatment of alcoholics, but not for their drinking.*

To "push" the analogy farther, he would have to identify a property of alcoholics that is not attributable to drug addicts, but infer from the similarity between drug addicts and alcoholics that drug addicts have that property. Consider the following example. *The universe is like a clock; a clock has a maker; so, the universe has a maker: it was created by God.* To show that such an argument is not acceptable from a monotheistic perspective, one could "push" the analogy farther in this way: *The universe is like a clock; a clock has many makers (e.g., miners, metalurgists, various craftspersons, etc.); so, the universe has many makers: it was created by many Gods.* Here I have identified a property of watches that is not attributable to God from a monotheistic point of view, but I infer from the proposed similarity between the universe and a watch that the universe has that property. Example (B) looks more like an attempted counter-example by analogy. But even if it were intended to be one, it would misfire because it is not analogous in the relevant respect to the argument it is intended to refute: the key word, 'treatment', is not used in (B) in the same way that it is used in (A), for the author of (B) mistakenly attributes to the author of (A) the assumptions that the methadone

treatment is no different than an alcoholic's drinking of alcohol, and that the methadone treatment is for methadone addicts.

The chapter on analogies includes better discussions of precedents, induction, the function of analogical arguments in moral reasoning, and the explanative function of some analogies.

In the the chapter on definitions Plantin describes their general structure; addresses the topic of essentialism; states a few conditions to prevent *ad hoc* definitions of key word(s) in a conclusion one wishes to establish; and illustrates some applications of definitions to arguments.

The author attempts to show in the chapter titled, "The Resources of Language", that language contains a linguistic logic which he describes as preconstructed argumentative patterns or structures ("schémas") which link certain statements, and which are not easily reducible to formal structures. Unfortunately he does not explain what "linguistic structures" means, and it is not clear what his examples illustrate. His first example, *The doll is under the hat, the hat is under the covers, so the doll is under the covers*, is reducible to formal logic if we treat "is under" as an asymmetric and transitive relation. In the second example, *Pierre can't stand Marie, and Marie will be there. So, Pierre will call in sick*, the conclusion does not follow. For Pierre could still go there, but avoid Marie all the time; or he could go there and attempt to embarrass her. In the third example, *Pittbulls are ferocious. I do not want such dogs at my home*, the conclusion again does not follow. For the ferociousness of Pittbulls could also be a reason to want them as watch dogs to protect my home. Since neither conclusion follows, and without any further information the premises provide at best only weak support, it is not clear how Plantin's "linguistic logic" "links" the premises to the conclusion.

In this same chapter on language Plantin describes well how language can conceal the circularity of an argument. He also illustrates what he calls arguments from opposites, e.g., (E) *Their arrival did not benefit us, so their departure will not harm us*. (F) *High interest rates lead to unemployment, so lower interest rates would diminish unemployment*. He acknowledges that these arguments are invalid, but considers them plausible without presenting and applying any standards of plausibility.

In the following chapter the author touches on various connotative and emotive uses of language in arguments, and shows that it is not always easy to find a neutral language. He also illustrates well how language can be used to transform an argument into a 'self-supporting' statement. He transforms the argument, *Pierre insulted Paul, so Pierre will be punished*, into the statement, *The insulter will be punished*. In this context the definite description, "the insulter" denotes Pierre, and presupposes that Pierre has insulted someone. This presupposition of the claim, *The insulter will be punished*, provides some support for this very claim, and so the transformation of the argument results in a partly self-supporting claim.

In the remaining chapters Plantin summarizes well some central ideas of the works of the linguists, Anscombe and Ducrot; discusses implicit aspects of arguments (hidden premises and conclusion, presuppositions); describes the importance of knowing the values, interest, and beliefs of those whom we are trying to convince; and examines the use of authority in arguments. He believes that the criticism of expertise is mainly technical, and so he does not offer any general strategies that non-experts could use.

Plantin suggests thirty nine books for further reading in the last four pages. They include contributions published in French, English, and German, and they address such areas as argumentation theory, rhetoric, logic, informal logic, methods of sciences, and linguistics. He mentions only one textbook, Trudy Govier's *A Practical Study of Argument*, which is a very good suggestion to the reader, but he should also have suggested Pierre Blackburn's *Logique de l'argumentation*. In the section on methods of sciences it would have been appropriate to mention Ronald N. Giere's *Understanding Scientific Reasoning*, third edition, and Stephen S. Carey's *A Beginner's Guide to Scientific Method*. The author suggests three important journals, *Argumentation*, *Informal Logic*, *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, but unfortunately he does not mention *Inquiry*, *Critical Thinking across the Disciplines*, and *Argumentation and Advocacy*.

This booklet does succeed in giving a quick overview of many topics in argumentation theory. However, some snap-shots of the theoretical landscape are not clear, and they are compiled in such a way that it would be difficult for a novice to have a unified picture of the field. Most of the material is presented as if there were no controversies, the author offers very little critical comments, and he does not identify where there is a need for further research.

However, if someone simply wants to read in French many nuggets of information on argumentation theory, then this booklet would be adequate. But if someone wants to explore in French argumentation theory in some depth and breadth, then he or she should read instead Plantin's *Essais sur l'argumentation*, Paris, Éditions Kimé, 1990, ISBN 2-908212-04-8.

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