

Book Reviews

David Hitchcock, On Reasoning and Argument. Essays in Informal Logic and on Critical Thinking, New York: Springer, 2017, xxv + 553 pp.

David Hitchcock's rather comprehensive book *On Reasoning and Argument. Essays in Informal Logic and on Critical Thinking* is a (revised and supplemented) collection of the author's essays on these broad topics, which were published independently during his long-lasting career of almost fifty years. As such, it fulfils the role of Hitchcock's long-awaited monograph on central issues in informal logic and critical thinking, both of which he had been teaching as a university professor at McMaster University in Canada. Though he had (co)-authored two other books earlier (*Critical thinking: A guide to evaluating information*, 1983. and *Evidence-based practice: Logic and critical thinking in medicine*, 2005), former of them a textbook, only *On Reasoning and Argument* provides a systematic overview of his views on informal logic and critical thinking, emphasizing *inter alia* in the concluding part of the book that these two notions should be carefully distinguished; first one pertaining to "sub-discipline of philosophy that seeks to develop criteria, standards and procedures for the construction, identification, analysis, interpretation, evaluation and criticism of arguments" (511), different from the one employed in formal logic, and second one pertaining to "a process of reflectively thinking about an issue with a view to reaching a reasoned judgment on what is to be believed or done" (511), an educational ideal which is to be fostered at all levels. The book is divided into several parts (I–VII), each of which comprises several chronologically ordered chapters—essays, accompanied by *References* and ending in a *Postscript*, written in retrospect for the purpose of this publication. In the *Postscripts* Hitchcock summarizes his theses from the chapters-essays, providing additional information on their genesis and adding critical remarks to his earlier views where needed. The book is also equipped with *Index* of names and concepts and a helpful *Foreword* by J. Anthony Blair, who encouraged Hitchcock to publish it in the first place, and a *Preface* by Hitchcock himself.

In Part I (*Deduction, Induction and Conduction*), composed of two essays written almost four decades apart, Hitchcock dwells on two well-established distinctions in argumentation theory (or philosophy of argumentation, as he puts it); deduction vs. induction—when it comes to different types of argument validity—and linked vs. convergent—when it comes to two or more reasons supporting a claim. Concerning the first topic,

Hitchcock in his original essay rejects objections to deduction vs. induction distinction on grounds (i) ‘that some traditionally inductive and some traditionally deductive arguments provide conclusive grounds for their conclusions and some do not’ (objection by Perry Waddle) and that (ii) reconstructing arguer’s intention is necessary to classify arguments as of one type or another. Ad (i), Hitchcock points out that reasons for a claim being conclusive is not equivalent to argument’s being deductive and that filling inductive arguments with premisses which would turn them into deductive ones is not possible due to premisses not being justified independently of the conclusion. Ad (ii), although conceding that appraisal is concerned with arguments, not arguers, he maintains that “using a version of the principle of charity in settling on the standards by which to assess an argument. That is, we should assess it by those standards which give it the best chance of being a cogent argument” (19). As far as the linked vs. convergent distinction is concerned, Hitchcock considers it useful but only when applied non-derivatively to types of support of premisses to a conclusion and only derivatively to argument structures. Main revision in the *Postscript* to the original text consists in defining inductive strength as a type of support or a standard of appraisal, not as type of validity (33).

Part II (*Material Consequence*), containing six chapters, is probably central to the book since it addresses issues which have, according to Hitchcock himself, occupied him throughout his career. Starting with a paper on enthymematic arguments, Hitchcock emphasizes two problems regarding them which haven’t been satisfactorily solved: (i) the demarcation problem, i.e. distinguishing enthymemes from deductively valid arguments on the one hand and mere *non sequiturs* on the other hand and (ii) the evaluation problem, i. e. how to evaluate the inference in an enthymematic argument (40). He rejects defining enthymemes as arguments whose authors have omitted one or more premisses for two reasons: (i) we are often not in a position to question the arguer about whether the arguer had another premise in mind and (ii) authors of acknowledged enthymemes often have no additional premise in mind (43). He accepts the alternative approach according to which the implicit assumption of an enthymematic argument is a rule of inference (non-formal rule since its statement includes at least one content expression) in virtue of which the conclusion follows from the premisses (53). In the following chapter he continues the same idea, discussing various conceptions of logical consequence (64–68) and opting for introduction of enthymematic consequence, he revises definition of logical consequence in the following way: conclusion is a consequence of given premisses in the revised generic sense if the argument has a general feature which is incompatible with the argument’s having true premisses and a false conclusion, even though it is both compatible with its having true premisses and compatible with its having a false conclusion (77), thus he is able to define enthymematic consequence as one where the general feature includes a reference to at least one extra-logical constant. Similarly, he defends Stephen Toulmin’s notion of warrants as general rules of inference, not implicit premisses, answering objections to his distinction between data or grounds and warrants. Hitchcock further advances an ontic, not epistemic conception of inferential support according to which the conclusion of an argument

might have inferential support though an addressee of the argument is not aware of its having it. He requires that inference-licensing covering generalizations be not only true (or otherwise acceptable) but also capable of supporting counterfactual instances.

In Part III (*Patterns of Reasoning*), composed of seven essays, Hitchcock deals with various issues, starting with validity of non-deductive arguments. He rejects his earlier position of methodological deductivism, i. e. proposal that “non-deductive arguments could be treated as if they were deductive, as long as one recognized that the proposition one added to make the argument deductively valid was not entirely the responsibility of the arguer, that it could in certain respects be presumed to be true unless shown otherwise” (199) and proposes methodological conclusivism instead, i. e. treating non-conclusive arguments as conclusive if a proposition to which the author is committed by the argument is added, presuming the added proposition to be true until shown otherwise. Examining reasoning by analogy and acknowledging its various kinds, Hitchcock aims to give criteria for good analogical inference according to his general theory of good inference, but also to discard the thesis of epistemological subject specificity of analogical reasoning. In essay on Pollock’s model of practical reasoning, Hitchcock applauds his point that “practical reasoning requires not only the beliefs and desires which theorists of practical reasoning have required for millennia, and not just the additional distinct category of intentions for which Michael Bratman has argued, but also likings” (223). He objects incompleteness of the model due to lack of interconnected features of communication between rational agents, social cooperation and the recognition of moral constraints, Hitchcock also considers Pollock’s requirement of a cardinal measure of situation-likings applicable only to computational simulation of a rational agent, but no to human beings (222). In the following essay on argument schemes he argues for a combined top bottom and bottom up approach (e. g. Woods and Walton) due to theoretical arbitrariness of the former and empirical inadequateness of the latter, acknowledging that the system of schemes needn’t be complete but comprehensive. In essays concerning instrumental rationality and practical reasoning, where “Instrumental rationality”, i.e. the rational selection of means for achieving a given goal is analyzed as more complex than finding an effective means of getting to a chosen goal (ensurement of achievability of the goal and permissibility of means, determination that no alternative means is preferable, weighing side effects and benefits of achieving the goal etc.). Discussing what Trudy Govier labels “conductive arguments”, Hitchcock argues that they’re better described as appeals to considerations or to criteria where the conclusion may follow either conclusively from its premisses or non-conclusively or not at all. He emphasizes that weighing the pros and cons is only one, and probably the last way to judge whether the conclusion follows.

The rather short Part IV (*Interpersonal Discussion*) is Hitchcock’s enterprise in exploring dialectical aspects of argumentation, however emphasizing that although study of argument must take these into account, both descriptively and prescriptively, it often exaggerates in viewing all arguments as in a dialectical setting (336). He also stresses important features of arguments which are in common with monological reasoning, such as their infer-

ential structure and their components' epistemic status. He is chiefly concerned not with rules which are supposed to guide a rational mutual inquiry (he acknowledges that the title is a bit misleading), but sets of principles to which such rules should comply (315). Hitchcock concludes that the study of formal dialectical systems can have both theoretical and practical benefits (clarification of dialectical concepts like proponent and opponent, exploring various commonly recognized fallacies, especially those like begging the question), many questions etc. which only occur in interpersonal discussion). Additionally, he proposes amendments to Ralph Johnson's *Manifest Rationality*, primarily concerning Johnson's use of term argumentation as a sociocultural activity of producing, interpreting and evaluating arguments; Hitchcock believes term argumentative discussion is more appropriate and in line with other authors' use (cites e. g. early Pragmadiialectics). He also objects to Johnson's positioning argumentative discussion prior to the concept of argument in the order of intelligibility, binding him to circularity in defining both concepts.

Part V (*Relevance*) discusses ontological status of relevance (relation, not a property), its relation to irrelevance (contradictory pair), types of relevance etc. Defining relevance as a triadic relation between an item, an outcome or goal, and a situation, Hitchcock distinguishes epistemic from causal and practical relevance, focusing on the first of the three. He describes epistemic relevance as irreflexive, symmetric and vacuously transitive in a strict sense, and in the loose sense it is either reflexive or irreflexive (depending on the epistemic goal), non-symmetric and transitive (357). Concerning relevance within argumentative setting, an argument is said to have an irrelevant conclusion "if its conclusion cannot be ineliminably combined with other potentially accurate information to achieve the epistemic goal to which the argument is addressed. It has an irrelevant premiss if the premiss cannot be ineliminably combined with other potentially accurate information to achieve the epistemic goal to which the argument is addressed" (367). Hitchcock discusses Locke's *ad fallacies* of relevance and acknowledges them as fallacies of relevance with respect to the epistemic goal of instruction (such appeals don't bring knowledge), but claims there are not necessarily irrelevant with respect to other epistemic goals, e. g. rational acceptance of a conclusion from authorities with expertise in a cognitive domain to which the conclusion belongs. In essay 'Good Reasoning on the Toulmin Model' Hitchcock examines individually necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for good reasoning (justified grounds, adequate information, justified warrant, justification in assuming no exceptions apply) in the Toulmin model, comparing it to parallel approaches of argumentation schemes and their critical questions.

In Part VI (*Fallacies*) Hitchcock discusses a more general issue of usefulness of teaching fallacies in teaching critical thinking and a more specific issue of *ad hominem* arguments. Inspired among other things by his own experience in teaching fallacies to students, Hitchcock advances several arguments against fallacies having central role in teaching critical thinking: (i) the correct identification of an argumentative move as a fallacy requires a complex apparatus of analysis, hence it makes more sense to teach the analytical apparatus for correct reasoning than to begin with the fallacies;

(ii) fallacy labels are not necessary to the exercise of critical thinking; everything that can be said with the use of these labels can be said without them (in general said more clearly); (iii) fallacies approach is unduly negative and fosters an attitude of looking for the mistake and labelling it, instead of dealing with the substance of what one is discussing; (iv) learning the fallacies is of no help in constructing good arguments of one's own and appreciating the merits of good arguments, which are components of critical thinking. Adopting Ennis' definition of critical thinking as reasonable and reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do, Hitchcock emphasizes its constructive and reactive aspects which particularly goes against fallacies approach (425). He is also concerned with discrepancy between empirical data on types and frequency of mistakes in reasoning and traditional catalogue of fallacies (which John Woods named Gang of Eighteen). Discussing argument *ad hominem*, Hitchcock argues that it is not a fallacy in neither of its variants (abusive, circumstantial, *tu quoque*) due to the conception of a fallacy as a common mistake in reasoning that is commonly deceptive, but a legitimate dialectical strategy (similar to Woods' approach). However, he believes *ad hominem* attacks are necessary in teaching critical thinking since they concern finding good sources of information (students should learn under which conditions allegations of bias, incompetence or bad character are relevant to judging the quality of a source of information).

In the concluding Part VII (*Informal Logic and Critical Thinking*) Hitchcock discusses place of informal logic in philosophy, different concepts of argument which can be found within it, its relation to critical thinking and effectiveness of teaching critical thinking. As far as the first topic is concerned, Hitchcock is akin to classify informal logic as philosophy of argument, a sub-discipline of philosophy in its own right, particularly addressing often stated remarks on informal logic as applied or social epistemology (Battersby, Goldman), which he believes start from mistaken point of equating informal logic to critical thinking (which is a topic in philosophy of education). As mentioned above, Hitchcock accepts Ennis' definition of critical thinking and further differentiates it from the logical appraisal of arguments in extending beyond a single argument, thus having a creative component, and involving critical assessment of evidence. Critical thinking requires both skills, attitudes and dispositions which enable the critical thinker to think critically when required and do it well. Examining effectiveness of instruction in critical thinking, Hitchcock observes that its success is rather moderate, with more significant improvement in courses involving computer-assisted tutoring (argument mapping) or which are combined with writing instruction and practice (student discussion).

Although lacking a textbook structure, *On Reasoning and Argument* offers an informative overview of main topics in informal logic and critical thinking. It is probably more suitable for readers already introduced in these topics, although may appeal to novices. Hitchcock's careful approach is a fine example to younger scholars working in argumentation theory.