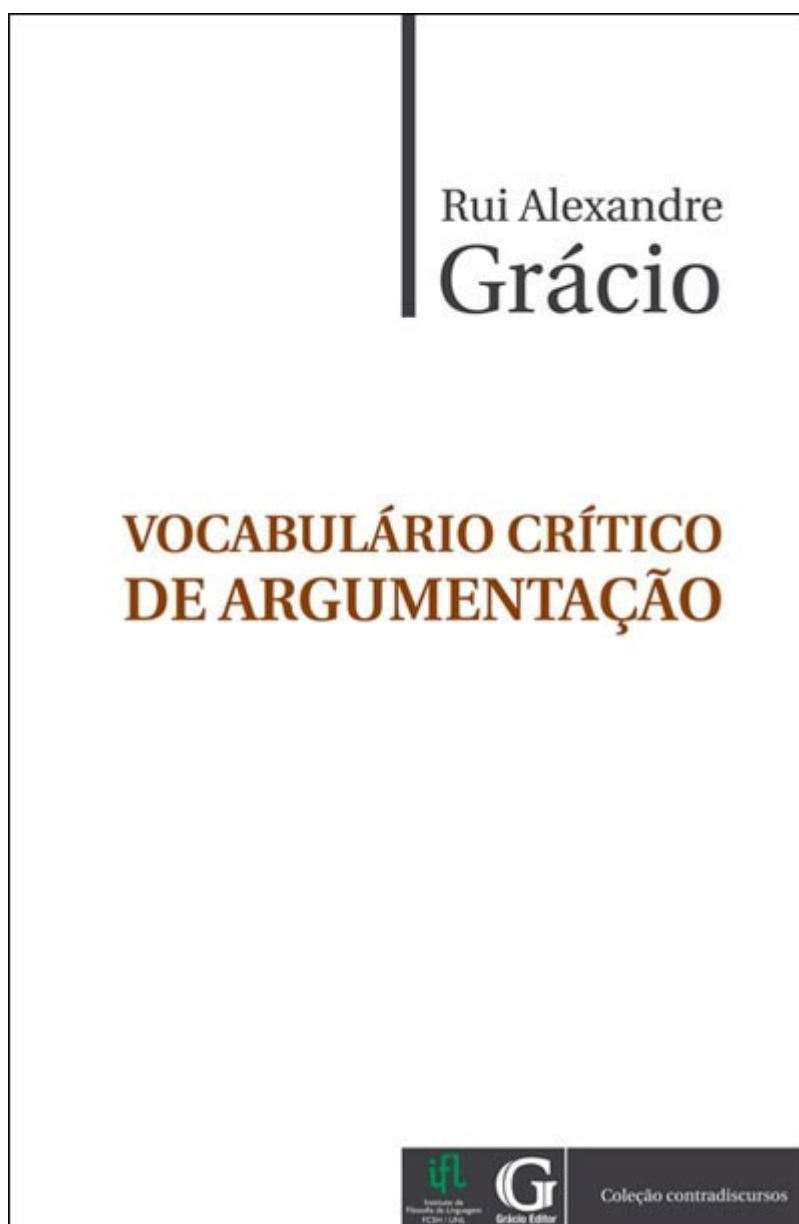


GRÁCIO, Rui Alexandre. *Vocabulário Crítico de Argumentação*. [Critical Vocabulary of Argumentation]. Prefácio de Rui Pereira. Coimbra: Grácio Editor/Instituto de Filosofia da Linguagem da Univ. Nacional de Lisboa, 2013. 144 p.

*Lineide do Lago Salvador Mosca**



*Universidade de São Paulo – USP, São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil; lineide@usp.br

This new book positively contributes to Rui Grácio's work and brings with its title the force that drives him, that is, the critical view of someone who has a long-standing commitment to themes related to argumentation and persuasion. In fact, since 1993 some of his books, which characterize his line of research, have engendered. They have also had great repercussion in the Science of Language, more specifically in Rhetoric and its related domains, such as Philosophy, Juridical Sciences, and Communication Theories.

In *Racionalidade Argumentativa* (1993), Grácio reaches a timely junction of *rationality* and its nature, pointing at the specificity that outlines the argumentation framework, with its own logic that belongs to the domain of uncertainty, of plausibility, of what is being called *reasonability*. That book was followed by several others: *Consequências da Retórica* (1998); *Discursividade e Perspectivas. Questões de Argumentação* (2009), as an editor; *A Interação Argumentativa* (2010); *Fenomenologia, Hermenêutica, Retórica e Argumentação* (2011); and *Teorias da Argumentação* (2012). This year (2013), two more books were added to his list of works: *Perspectivismo e Argumentação*, and the one that is the focus of this review, *Vocabulário Crítico de Argumentação*. Its relevance to this thematic edition on Discourse and Argumentation of *Bakhtiniana* is clear as it seems to synthesize the key points that are constant themes in the most varied theories in the field, regardless of adopted positions. Thus, it is the concepts and their applications that prevail.

Sixty-nine article-like entries constitute *Vocabulário* and bring upon the main concepts that preside the theory and the practice of argumentation. Grácio peruses many reference authors in the subjects, incorporating a position that suggests that what is important are the ideas and notions with which one works, regardless of theoretical frameworks, schools, or origins. It reinforces the fact that there is not a single or exclusive theory in the studies of argumentation, which differentiates them from the views that examine the discursive objects and their respective emphases.

Thus, intakes from various theoretical origins are exploited, such as the ones from Pragma-Dialectics, led by Frans van Eemeren, from University of Amsterdam, which consider the norms that rule an intelligent discussion and, therefore, in a prescriptive view, move towards the dismissal of every type of fallacy in a collaborative

argumentation, especially *ad hominem*, *ad personam* and *ad ignorantiam* arguments, among others.

To illustrate what we are exposing, we will consider the entry “Descriptive approaches and normative approaches” (p.14 - 16), in which Grácio outlines the main focus on the study of argumentation. According to the author, argumentativity is primarily important in Discourse Analysis. It can lean towards a descriptive view or a normative view, in case it is either concerned with the study of strategies, mechanisms and criteria that are responsible for discourse efficiency, or focused upon argument evaluation, following critical reasoning. That type of analysis is also concerned with the understanding of the strength of arguments in the interlocutor, and it is essentially descriptive.

The normative view points to validity and acceptability in arguments and reasoning, that is, to the ways one argues, and, therefore, it establishes universal rules and ideas for the concrete argumentative practice.

The interactionist perspective puts both views, descriptive and normative, together; thus, discourse and counter-discourse face a controversial question. From that point of view, the argumentative act comes about when one establishes a critical point, a question, and highlights the roles of interlocution: a proponent, an opponent and a third party. In that sense, Grácio quotes authors, such as Perelman, Toulmin, Plantin, Angenot, Ducrot, Amossy, and others.

The bibliographic references, widespread in the entries, show us much of what has been produced in the field of argumentation with contributions from studies which were carried out in several countries and specialties, ranging from Philosophy to Sociology and, naturally, Discourse Studies as well.

The choice of the basic concepts that are used as an introduction to *Vocabulário Crítico de Argumentação* provides us with the outline of that subject and with the construction of a harmonious overview of it once each part is put together. They are not random pieces, but components which, when added, form the basic structure of every argumentative act. For this and other reasons, we claim that it is not a simple “Vocabulary,” in spite of the adjective that follows it - “critical.” In fact, the result is a compendium of argumentation that condenses discussions on the themes and the state-

of-the-art into teaching practice with applications in the most varied types of discourse and languages.

A few examples are already enough to illustrate this explanatory and critical characteristic of the book, as referenced by the entries *audience* (“*auditório*”), *kairós*, *ethos*, *topoi*, *argumentative situation* (“*situação argumentativa*”), among many others. It is possible for the reader to make a correlation between them in order to have a synthetic view of the field: between the argumentative situation and *kairós*, for example, the notion of opportunity, dear to Aristotle, is what links those concepts, without which argumentation cannot take place satisfactorily. In that case, planning does not invalidate improvisation, a necessary feature to face the variations that happen during practice when the argumentative occurrence takes place.

Besides the description of a phenomenon, the entries overlay the author’s critical analysis as he comments on many positions on the topic in a flexible way, without suggesting definite solutions for contentious issues. In the entry “Typology of dialogues” (p.123-124), for instance, Grácio presents a table proposed by Walton, in 1989, with the main types of dialogues classified according to their purposes and context, i.e., debate, skirmish, critical discussion, negotiation, search for information, search for action, knowledge advertising. “Typology of dialogues ”points not only to the advantages of such classification, but also to its value as it considers arguments according to objectives and contexts which are determined by purposes, i.e., in a pragmatic view, highlighting their weaknesses and the fact that the interaction is neither organized in a standardized way nor used for a single purpose; hence, it is necessary to consider those functions in their multidimensionality, built through interaction.

As a matter of fact, Rui Grácio has boosted the studies of Argumentation and Rhetoric, participating in the revitalization movement of what was a prestigious science in Ancient Times and which, in its comprehensive and inclusive view, remains essential to the definition of humanity and to the education of citizens. The studies of discourse have a long history in Western thought, being associated with the production of ancient Greek philosophers even today. It is true that the art of good speaking was part of citizenship education, so much so that discursive ability became the most important performance skill in that society. It is still accepted that the ability to argue is a fundamental activity in social life as well as a basic form of thought in several

situations. As such, it refers back to a dialogic process of great complexity once it involves cognitive procedures, psychological and passionate components. That ability is also not free from ethical and political implications as one considers the argumentative activity to be an action over the other which is, at the same time, created by the other. That happens because of its decisional characteristic, which leads to decision-making.

For these and many other reasons, the scholarly claim of the contemporary studies of argumentation revitalizes the legacy of an important past and offers new advances, which include Rui Grácio's work, showcased in this text. His work invites us to enjoy a retrospective and prospective reading that contributes to the present while it prepares us for the future.

Translated by the author.

Received November 26, 2013

Accepted April 18, 2014