

From logic to people

Michael A. Gilbert
gilbert@yorku.ca
YORK UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Toronto, Canada

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I first began my interest in logic as a graduate student in philosophy at SUNY Buffalo in 1966. I took basic logic, advanced logic and studied philosophy of mathematics. I continued this interest when I moved to Canada (for political reasons) and entered the University of Waterloo. At that time I became very interested in the so-called “paradoxes of implication”. These focus on the anomalous theorems $[p \supset (q \supset p)]$ and $[\sim p \supset (p \supset q)]$. One possible interpretation of these statements is that, respectively, a true statement is implied by everything, and a false statement implies everything. One line of response to these was the work of Anderson and Belnap and their followers. These scholars introduced relevance to the idea of logic as a means of fixing these paradoxes. My thesis argued that the idea of relevance they relied on was simplistic and did not do the job it was intended to.

By the time my post-graduate education was finished relevance logic had, like modal logic, become a quagmire of competing axiom sets and highly mathematical. My interest in the whole issue stemmed from the distance the paradoxes indicated between the way people use implication and its formal rendition. I began to realise that formal logic [FL] did not have the answers I sought, and looked elsewhere. At the time I was in my final year of graduate studies. In order to increase my income I constructed a course entitled “How to win an Argument,” and offered it as a Continuing Studies course at Conestoga College in Kitchener. The course was accepted, but as luck would have it, I was offered contract position at the University of Toronto which I, of course, accepted.

The following year (1994) I offered the same course to the UT School of Continuing Studies and taught it for several years. The popularity of the course

demonstrated to me that people were very interested in how to argue and how to argue better. The more I looked at the idea of argument the more I realised how little it was connected to formal logic. Mind you, I did and still do, believe that understanding the idea of validity is essential to understanding argument. However, the other major assumptions of FL, most notably the axiom of bivalence, had no relevance to the daily argumentation undertaken by regular people.

My ensuing research lead me to the idea that people used different modes of argument/discussion when in the real world. This culminated in my essay, "Multi-modal Argumentation" (Gilbert, 1994), available in Spanish as Chapter 4 of Leal, Ramírez & Favila (2010: 73-91). There is also a copy of this and my other papers at *academia.edu*. Since then I have advocated for the role of emotion in argument (Gilbert, 2010) as well as other modes. For me, "logic" goes well beyond Formal Deductive Logic, and has ancillary uses and applications in a wide variety of human contexts. This has culminated in my most recent book, *Arguing with People* (Gilbert, 2014), currently being translated into Spanish.

Bibliografía

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