

Introduction:

Deep Disagreement Reexamined

Nearly twenty years ago, in this journal, Robert Fogelin made radical and shocking claims:

...deep disagreements cannot be resolved through the use of argument, for they undercut the conditions essential to arguing. (1985, p. 5: this issue p. 8)

...there are disagreements, sometimes on important issues, which by their very nature, are not subject to rational resolution. (1985, p. 7: this issue p.11)

Cannot be resolved through argument? Not subject to rational resolution? How could that be? Fogelin seemed to be rejecting a major presupposition of the informal logic movement (and its popular classroom application, critical thinking). If he was right, what would become of the field? Even more importantly, arguably, what could be done about deep disagreements themselves? The field and all of the good it meant to accomplish seemed to be threatened all at once.

Fogelin's view has at times been attacked and defended (Lugg, 1986; Davson-Galle, 1992), but for the most part, it has not been met head on by the community of scholars working on informal logic, critical thinking, or argumentation theory. Was Fogelin that obviously wrong? Or did we not know what he was talking about? Or is there a degree of denial here? Or have we simply had no answer? Or what?

In this special issue, we reexamine Fogelin's challenge, and we hope to thereby spark renewed reflection on these sorts of fundamental questions. Fogelin's original paper comes first, followed by some attempts to weigh, cast new light upon, clarify, and apply some of his claims.¹ Feldman argues that while there is much to be said for Fogelin's "pessimistic" view, one need not treat deep disagreements as irresolvable, since even "suspending judgment" can be a resolution of a sort. Turner and Wright contend that once appropriately developed, Fogelin's modest conclusion—that there are deep disagreements—can be defended against criticisms leveled against it by Lugg (1986). With respect to Fogelin's more radical conclusion—that such disagreements cannot, in principle, be resolved rationally—they remain unconvinced.

Campolo's paper comes closer to granting both Fogelin's modest and radical claims about deep disagreement. The well-meaning attempt to find common ground

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at higher levels of generality, he argues, involves substantial risks to our reasoning skills themselves. Thus, sometimes resolution shouldn't even be attempted! On a more constructive note, Friemann shows how the scientific study of emotion can contribute to the diagnosis of deep disagreements, and how psychotherapeutic techniques can be used to address them. Finally, Adams considers several recent controversies in bioethics that seem to be prime candidates for deep disagreements to explore the crucial epistemological question: How do we know when a seemingly intractable controversy is, in fact, a deep disagreement?

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Guest Editors

Note

¹ The references to Fogelin's paper above, and in the articles in this issue of *Informal Logic*, cite the page numbers of the original 1985 printing. In the reprint of Fogelin's 1985 paper that follows on pages 3-11 below, for the convenience of readers who want to check those references, we have inserted a boldface number in brackets at the point where the page by that number began in the original 1985 printing.