

informal logic

newsletter

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eds., J. Anthony Blair & Ralph H. Johnson

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from the editors

Your editors have recently been spending most of their time wearing their hats as co-chairpersons of the Second International Symposium on Informal Logic (June 20-23 at the University of Windsor). Final preparations are well in hand for what promises to be an exciting and fruitful conference. The program is reprinted in the "Announcements" section of this issue.

We wish also to call attention to another important conference, to be held later this summer: the First International Conference on Critical Thinking, Education and the Rational Person, to be held at Sonoma State University, August 15-19. Its theme is undoubtedly dear to the hearts of many readers: the role of critical thinking in elementary, secondary and higher education. Details about the program, etc., can be found within, under "Announcements".

For a view of the proposition behind the Sonoma State conference, we refer you to the Discussion Note in this

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issue written by its convenor and organizer, Professor Richard Paul: "An Agenda Item for the Informal Logic/Critical Thinking Movement." In the last issue of this Newsletter (ILN, v.i, "From the Editors"), we wrote of the need for those interested in informal logic/critical thinking to develop an overview which would allow the formulation of an agenda of issues and problems that should be tackled. No discipline or area of research can develop coherently without such an agenda or research program. In his Discussion Note, Paul is responding to our call by tabling for the agenda an item which we had not mentioned: the need for informal logicians to get more actively involved in the design of educational programs. It has become fashionable to emphasize "basics" in the curriculum, and we hear a lot about the fourth "R"—Reasoning. Paul urges us to become more involved and knowledgeable about what schools are doing, what packages are being offered, and where we can provide input. Our own experience this spring with our local school board suggests to us that there is a receptivity to hearing from informal logicians and those who teach critical thinking at the university and college level. Thus we endorse Richard Paul's suggestion and encourage readers to look at his Note and consider attending the SSU conference in August.

in this issue

We are pleased to welcome four new contributors to the articles department of ILN. For those who thought we had closed the book on the inductive-deductive question: we were wrong! James Freeman's article, "Logical Form, Probability Interpretations, and the Inductive/Deductive Distinction," is a closely-reasoned response to Perry Weddle's challenge to the inductive-deductive distinction. (Weddle may claim respondent's rights in the near future.) The article by A.J.A. Binker and Marla Charbonneau, "Piagetian Insights and Teaching Critical Thinking," harkens back to last year's article by Richard Paul, "Teaching Critical Thinking in the 'Strong Sense'" (ILN, iv.2) and attempts to show how Piaget's work on egocentric and ethnocentric tendencies can be integrated into a critical thinking course. Daniel Rothbart's article, "Towards a Structured Analysis of Extended Arguments," deals with an important problem for informal logicians which has not yet received the attention it deserves: the problem of displaying, and teaching students how to display, the structure of an argument.

Though it is a brief item, we draw readers' attention to the abstract of the article, "The Speech Acts of Arguing and Convincing in Externalized Discussions," by F. H. van Eemeren and R. Grootendorst, which appeared in the *Journal of Pragmatics*. Worth reading in its own right, this article is also evidence that informal logic has a presence outside of North America, and it signals the need for all of us to become more familiar with work being done by colleagues in other parts of the world. We need to avoid, once again, the dangers of being insular. (Forgive us if, in saying this, we merely project our own sense of provincialism.) We can think, for example, of the work of Perelman and the School of Brussels (on the new rhetoric) in Belgium, and of the work of Habermas (on communicative competence) in Germany. The Discussion Note by Professor Vedung in this issue is evidence that there is activity in Sweden. We also remind readers of an informal logic tradition in Australia, which shares space amicably with formal logic in the *Australian Logic Teachers Journal*. The fine article by

T.J. Richards, "Attitudes to Reasoning," which ILN reprinted in iii.2 originally appeared in that journal. Who knows what other centres of work there are? This is not a rhetorical question; it is an invitation to our readers to send in information about, and samples of, work being done in other parts of the world as well as in cognate subjects, from which we all may profit.

We apologize for the delay in the publication of this issue. A rash of problems—e.g., preparations for the Second International Symposium, and a typesetting breakdown—intervened. Again we have had to place our trust in the patience of our readers.

articles

Logical Form, Probability Interpretations, and the Inductive/Deductive Distinction

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The *Informal Logic Newsletter* contains much discussion concerning whether the traditional division of arguments into inductive and deductive is viable. Skepticism has been expressed on two grounds. First, is the distinction exhaustive? Given any argument, can we assign it either to the inductive or deductive category? The leading skeptic here is Trudy Govier, who maintains we must admit a further distinct class of arguments, the conductive. The second type of skepticism is more radical: the induction/deduction distinction is just not viable. We cannot adequately mark the distinction or intelligibility give a criterion for distinguishing inductive from deductive arguments. Perry Weddle leads the attack here. Since, as he points out, this charge is more fundamental, we shall be concerned