

informal logic

newsletter

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

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from the editors

Looking back, and ahead

As we complete our fourth year of publication, we look back with a sense of satisfaction at having begun to meet the mandate which brought us into existence, and we look forward to the continuing growth of the Informal Logic Newsletter. Response has been encouraging on all fronts: some of our readers have told us that ILN is the only periodical they read from cover to cover and that they are always glad to find it in their mailboxes. That is good to hear. We continue to receive a steady trickle of high calibre material for publication in the newsletter, though we could always wish for more. Subscriptions have grown

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at a fairly steady rate: we head into our fifth year with some 300 subscribers, most of them in parts of North America, who have helped keep the ILN solvent. Thus we believe that ILN seems to have carved out a nice little niche for itself in the overall scheme of things.

We do not contemplate any significant editorial changes for Volume V. We have decided to keep the ILN pretty much as is: a hybrid which features scholarly articles and critical reviews worthy of publication in a journal. At the same time, we shall keep our pages open to those who wish to explore a new idea, launch a train of inquiry, ask a question, publicize a conference, or report on various experiments they have tried. We plan to keep the turn-around time short, so that interesting issues can be addressed without unseemly delays. We will probably continue to tinker with the format and layout until we have it the way we would like it.

The one change we do foresee comes under the Department of Internal Affairs. Last year, as some of you know, we were somewhat disorganized in our subscriptions department. Checks were misfiled and left uncashed, there were long delays in processing orders, and some subscribers failed to receive their copies. We have taken measures to remedy these problems. With the return of our Managing Editor (Welcome back, Peter!) from a well-deserved sabbatical, we think we will be right on top of things next year.

So our thanks to all who have helped with this volume, particularly Mrs. Mary Lou Byng who has undertaken various tasks (typing and mailing) during this volume run.

With this issue, we complete Volume IV. Subscription renewals are therefore due. We have been able to hold the line so that the fee remains unchanged: \$6.00/yr to individuals and \$10.00/yr to institutions. But the handwriting on our walls is not difficult to decipher: we will almost certainly have to raise the fee for 1983-84 (Volume VI). Please return the enclosed form with your check as soon as possible and do your part to keep ILN solvent.

In this issue

The exchange between Professors Fogelin and Schwartz not only marks the first appearance of these two contributors (to both of whom: Welcome!) but also deals with an important issue in logical criticism: the question of logical neutrality. We think you'll find the exchange illuminating. We also wish to welcome for the first time Professors Hoagland and Roblin, and to thank Trudy Govier for her continuing support!

We also wish to thank Ms. Kate Parr for her able handling of the "Textbook Contents" section of this number. Writing up those reports is a somewhat tedious task, but we're convinced that it represents a useful service for our readers, many of whom must select texts and need an idea of what is covered in them.

Note, finally, that this number includes the Examples Supplement for Volume IV. ●

articles

Charitable Reconstruction and Logical Neutrality

Robert Fogelin
Dartmouth College

A number of years ago, at a colloquium held at Carnegie-Mellon University on the teaching of logic, Thomas Schwartz offered an analysis of one aspect of the anti-abortion argument that struck me as both fascinating and wrong. At the time I lacked the wit to articulate my misgivings, but now that this analysis has found its way into his text, *The Art of Logical Reasoning* [1], I have had the opportunity to examine it in detail and I think that I now know what I should have said then. I'm sure that Schwartz will have something to say in reply to my criticisms, and an exchange on these matters may be of interest to readers of this newsletter.

In the discussion that interests me, Schwartz asks whether it is possible to produce an adequate reconstruction connecting the following premise and conclusion:

(P1) Normally a human fetus has the status *S* [that of a living creature, a full-fledged human being, a person, a possessor of the right to life, or whatnot].

(C) Normally it is wrong to abort a human fetus. (p. 232)

(To his credit, Schwartz acknowledges the solecism involved in speaking of aborting a fetus rather than a pregnancy. In the same way, missions are aborted, not space rockets.)

In the present discussion the status *S* is not at issue, and this explains Schwartz's casual specification of it. Nor is anything made of the occurrence of the word "normally" in both the premise and the conclusion. Schwartz's point, and it is remarkable if true, is that this argument can be shown to fail without attacking either the specification of the state *S* or the reference to normality.

Schwartz begins his analysis in a way that has now become standard in elementary informal logic texts: he specifies formally adequate premises which, together with the stated premise, validly establish the conclusion.