

BOOK REVIEWS

Many of our subscribers have asked whether we plan to do reviews. The answer is a qualified "yes." The qualifications are two. First, we propose that reviews should be expository rather than critical. The aim of our newsletter, at this point, is to provide information and act as a network through which to feed it. It is our opinion that expository reviews will serve this purpose better than would critical reviews. There may come a time when we shall add critical reviews, but we don't think we've reached that stage yet. Second, while we are willing to do our share, the editors have no intention of undertaking the task alone. We will start this feature off in this number, but we solicit support from our subscribers. If there is a text or book which you have read, please share your knowledge with us, using the format of the two expository reviews which follow.

Understanding Arguments: An Introduction to Informal Logic.

Robert J. Fogelin. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1978. Pp. 351 + xii.

1) Statement of Purpose: "This book is about arguments. It considers arguments not in the narrow sense of quarrels or squabbles but in the broader, logician's sense of giving reasons in behalf of some claim. Viewing arguments in this way, we see that they are a common feature of daily life. . . . For certain purposes, arguments are best studied as abstract patterns. Logic is not concerned with particular arguments--for example, your attempt to prove that the bank, not you, has made a mistake. The task of logic is to discover the fundamental principles for distinguishing good arguments from bad ones. . . . A different but complementary way of viewing an argument is to treat it as a particular use of language: arguing is one of the things that we do with words. This approach places stress upon arguing as a linguistic activity. Instead of studying arguments as abstract patterns, it takes them "in the rough," as they occur in actual argumentation. It raises questions of the following kind: What is the place of argument within language as a whole? In a given language (say, our own) what words or phrases are characteristic of arguments? What task or tasks are arguments supposed to perform? When an approach to arguments has this form, the study is called informal logic. As its subtitle indicates, Understanding Arguments is primarily a text in informal logic." (v-vi)

2) Table of Contents:

Part One: The Analysis of Argument

1. The Web of Language
2. The Language of Argument
3. The Art of Close Analysis
4. Fallacies of Clarity and Relevance
5. Other Uses of Argument
6. The Formal Analysis of Argument: Part One
7. The Formal Analysis of Argument: Part Two

Part Two: Specimens of Argument

8. Issues of Public Concern
9. Legal Reasoning
10. A Moral Debate
11. Scientific Arguments
12. A Theological Debate
13. Philosophical Arguments

3) Special Features:

****Fogelin gives attention, in Chapter 1, to speech acts performatives, conversational implication, and pragmatics. Appendices to the text contain Austin's article "Performative Utterances" and Grice's "Logic and Conversation."

****In Chapter 2, Fogelin deals with what he calls assuring, hedging, and discounting--as devices which are used to build defensive perimeters. That is, they are ways of someone's trying to shield his or her position against criticism.

****Also in Chapter 2, Fogelin discusses various substitutes for argument: slanting and persuasive definition.

****In Chapter 3, Fogelin presents a method for analyzing arguments of some length. His procedure involves making notations (using a set of abbreviations) in the margins of the argument. This method is an adaptation of a method first used by Monroe Beardsley in Practical Logic (1950) and also used by Stephen Thomas in Practical Reasoning in Natural Language (1973).

****Chapter 3 ends with a discussion of argument standpoints, such as claiming middle ground, the disinterested party, the reasonable man, the voice in the wilderness and others.

****In Chapter 5, under "Refutations," Fogelin deals with various methods of refuting arguments: counter-examples, how to handle self-sealing positions.

****As the Table of Contents shows, Part Two consists of examples of argumentation drawn from different areas. In Chapter 8, for example, the issues dealt with are Safety in Nuclear Power Plants (190-208) with various illustrative materials; and Affirmative Action and Reverse Discrimination (209-216). Generally these chapters are about thirty pages long with several long passages of reasoning presented as specimens.

Argument, A Guide to Critical Thinking, Perry Weddle.

New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978. Pp. 192 + xi.

1) Statement of Purpose: "This book is designed to encourage the democratic art of thoughtful, articulate discussion. It attempts to help its readers think out their own ideas and those of others. It should prove useful to students of rhetoric, composition, and debate, and should aid journalism students in improving their reporting of scientific and economic news. It complements the formal logic provided by a university-level general education course in logic. And it should aid the general reader, for its guiding principle is the question, 'What skills do educated citizens need in order to handle the argumentative raw material which confronts them daily?'" (ix)

2) Table of Contents:

- Ch. 1 The Realm of Reason. Argument Mechanics; Argument Ecology; Good Reasoning.
- Ch. 2 Fallacy. Oversimplification; Smokescreen.
- Ch. 3 Language. Argument Language; Trading on Words; Definition.
- Ch. 4 Authority. Experts and Others; Other Sources of Authority; Ad Hominem; Statistics.
- Ch. 5 Generality. The Logic of General Statements; Generalizing; Sampling Sampling; Polls and Surveys.
- Ch. 6 Comparison. Mastering Analogical Reasoning; Historical Comparisons; Moral Comparisons; Implicit Comparisons.
- Ch. 7 Cause. The Idea of Cause; Causal Arguments; Causal Reasoning and the Idea of Cause.

3) Special Features:

****The book is salted with examples: some invented to make a point (but not artificial); most taken from live argumentation (daily press, books on topics under discussion, literature, philosophy).

****Each chapter has three useful devices to help readers apply and develop its ideas: (1) "'Quick Checks,' a series of short straightforward problems, with answers or suggestions, which will enable readers to develop and gauge comprehension on their own." (2) "'Examples and Comments,' . . . intended to foster the arts of discussion critical judgment, and patient, orderly explanation. About a third of the problems are commented on . . . examples range from ones calling for straightforward answers to ones where the sensible reply will be, 'I don't know; here are some possibilities' (3) "'Applications,' . . . to narrow the gap between the 'on-paper' world and the world as it really is." (x-xi)

****Weddle aims to steer a middle ground between starting from scratch, ignoring the "rich" but "hodgepodge" ancestry of informal logic, and including what has real value in the tradition, what would be useful to educated people.

****The book tries to de-emphasize terminology: "careful explanation is invariably better than categorizing and name-calling" (x).

****Most tradition informal logic material is discussed at one point or another (deductive arguments, uses and abuses of language, the application of probability theory and scientific method in statistics, polling and causal argument). The book's organization is intended, "partly to avoid the impression that scientific, technical and inductive thinking differs fundamentally from every other kind of thinking" (x).

INFORMAL LOGIC NETWORK

In the first issue of the Newsletter there appeared a list of the names and addresses of those who attended the Windsor Symposium on Informal Logic last June, in order to create a communication network of people interested in the field. We have received a number of requests from others who wish to be included in this network. We shall list these and future additions to the network in an upcoming issue. In the meantime, others who would like to be listed should inform us: write giving your name, address for correspondence, and your area(s) of special interest in informal logic.