

question is wrong or right provided certain specified circumstances pertain. There is also an unwarranted individualism in his approach to ethics. His requirement that an argument can be a moral argument only if an individual agent can be identified (p. 10) rules out important areas of moral discussion, e.g., international relations. Nor is he even-handed in his selection of passages. The section on abortion and sterilization, for example, contains ten anti-abortion texts and only six in favour of liberalized abortion laws (either up to or beyond the liberalization effected briefly by the U.S. Supreme Court decision of 1973). (In addition, the section contains two brief pieces on the completely separate question of sterilization--one from the Knights of Columbus and one from William Buckley advocating the "punitive sterilization" of wastrels--together with a report of a speech by Spiro Agnew so incoherent as to defy classification.)

The main doubts about Baum's book, however, concern its utility. According to Baum it could be used either for informal logic courses concerned with diagnosing fallacies, or for an ethics course concerned with contemporary issues. The trouble is that these two types of course require different things of a book of readings. Put neatly and overly simply: the ethics course requires that the arguments presented be reasonably strong ones; the informal logic course, on the other hand, requires that they be relatively weak. From the point of view of the logic course there are, it is true, plenty of fallacies to expose in Baum's selection. But many of the examples are extremely long if they are to be used for the sort of detailed, extended analysis Baum suggests. And since the book is not arranged according to the logical structure of the arguments involved it would be difficult to use in a systematic way. In short, it would require a good and very selective logic teacher if the book were to be successfully used to teach the evaluation of informal arguments. On the other hand, for an ethics course, the complete lack of any philosophically sophisticated texts should prove a drawback. Since the book was originally designed for an ethics course it is hard to understand why philosophers should have been completely excluded. The result is that important issues which need discussion get omitted or fudged. There is nothing, for example, of the strongest arguments for abortion on demand (those of Judith Thomson, Philosophy and Public Affairs, 1971). It cannot be that such texts were excluded on the grounds that they were too difficult. Thomson's central argument is notably simple, can be easily excerpted from a long article and raises interesting logical questions to boot. Moreover, even journalism by philosophers has been eschewed. Peter Singer, e.g., has written frequently and vividly about animal rights, but is not included--although, ironically enough, two letters to the editor of The National Observer commenting somewhat naively on one of his articles are (p. 99). This is not to say, of course, that all the arguments given are bad ones, but anyone using the book to illuminate contemporary moral issues will have to plough through long pages of tedious confusion and prejudice.

It is not difficult for newspaper readers to find examples of fallacies. What is much more difficult is to find fallacies which can

be easily and briefly presented (together with their relevant context), are susceptible to a relatively straight-forward diagnosis, exemplify important logical points and concern matters which are worth taking seriously. Baum's examples usually satisfy the last two requirements, but in many cases not the others. Engel's examples almost always satisfy the first, but less frequently the other three. However, what is most difficult of all is to present the fallacies in such a way that the collection can be used in a systematic way in the classroom to develop skills in logical evaluation. This is not easy given the present unsatisfactory state of fallacy theory, but informal logic teachers are entitled to more help in this regard from the compilers of books of passages for evaluation than they get from either Baum or Engel. *

discussion note

ANOTHER NOTE ON THE "SURPRISE TEST" PUZZLE

Peter Galle (Capricornia Institute of Advanced Education, Rockhampton, Australia)

[Eds' Note: In ILN, ii.1 we ran a discussion note from Harry Nielsen--a proposed solution of the "surprise test" puzzle. Peter Galle writes: "I found myself dissatisfied with Nielsen's analysis and propose the following as more clearly what has gone wrong with the student's reasoning." Below is a reprint of the puzzle as Nielsen presented it, followed by Galle's analysis:]

A schoolteacher announces to her class that there will be a surprise test during the following week. She specifies that by a "surprise test" she means one which no one could reasonably predict while walking to school. Immediately, one of her brighter students claims that she has contradicted herself. He offers this argument: The surprise test could take place on Friday, for if there had been no test up until Friday, then from that fact and the knowledge that there will be a test any student could predict while walking to school that he was going to be given the test on Friday. So the test must take place between Monday and Thursday. But the

same argument works for Thursday. That is, on Thursday morning, any student could deduce from the facts that there can be no surprise test on Friday, and that there will be a test, and as it is Thursday the correct prediction is that the test will be given that day. Clearly the argument can be extended to show that the test cannot be given on Wednesday, Tuesday or Monday. The conclusion is that the test cannot be given at all.

The teacher heard this objection out, and then gave the test on the following Tuesday, surprising, in the required sense, everyone.

The puzzle here is to see what has gone wrong with the argument. Clearly the teacher can give the surprise test. How is it the case, then, that an apparently impeccable argument can produce the conclusion that no surprise test is possible?

The student's claim is that there could be no surprise test at all, for on each day of the week he would be in a position to predict whether there would be a test that day and so, by the teacher's rules, there can't be! His method of reasoning to this conclusion is by a day by day ruling out of tests beginning at Friday. He contends that a Friday test won't occur by using the following argument:

- A.
1. The only candidate test days are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
 2. No test on any day when a test could otherwise have been predicted on the morning of that day.
 3. No test Monday.
 4. No test Tuesday.
 5. No test Wednesday.
 6. No test Thursday.

Therefore: No test Friday.

The argument is valid, moreover, 1 & 2 are known to be true from the teacher's assurance and by Friday 3 - 6 are known by experience.

So, it would seem that a Friday test can be ruled out on Friday morning.

So far, so good. What of Thursday? It would seem that on Thursday morning our student would employ the following argument:

- B.
- 1'. The only candidate test days are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.
 - 2'. No test on any day when a test could otherwise have been predicted on the morning of that day.
 - 3'. No test Monday.
 - 4'. No test Tuesday.
 - 5'. No test Wednesday.
 - 6'. No test Friday.

Therefore: No test Thursday.

Now, again the argument is valid and premises 1' - 5' are warranted, as in argument A. It is premise 6' that causes the difficulty. Obviously on Thursday morning it can't be a

lesson of experience. But, so what, one might think; haven't we shown by argument A that 6' is true? Perhaps, but the proof rested vitally on premise 6, i.e., no test Thursday, which is the conclusion of the present argument! So, I see the problem as one of begging the question in B (and in subsequent arguments ruling out Monday - Wednesday). *

conference reports

FIRST NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CRITICAL THINKING,
MORAL EDUCATION, AND RATIONALITY

Sonoma State University

May 22-23, 1981

Richard Paul, Chairman of the Philosophy Department at Sonoma State, organized this conference to examine the connections between the three domains listed in its title. Papers were read by: Richard Paul, Michael Scriven (San Francisco), Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburgh), Anthony Blair (Windsor), Joseph Ullian (Washington University), Richard Wasserstrom (California, Santa Cruz), Ralph Johnson (Windsor), Peter Diamandopoulos (Sonoma State) and Harvey Siegel (Sonoma State). Outlined below are those of the papers which seemed to have special interest for informal logic. (These outlines are based on this reporter's rather spotty notes and erratic memory. Apologies to the participants; I hope I have at least spelled your names right.)

"The Problem of Critical Thinking, Moral Education and Rationality," Richard Paul. Paul distinguished between a weak and a strong sense of, respectively, "thinking critically", "be moral" and "be rational". In the weak sense, the good critical thinker performs well in critical thinking courses and holds his own in arguments. In the strong sense, he in addition detects in himself blocks to reasoning well (e.g., biases, loyalties). The moral person, in the weak sense, consciously intends to respect the rights of others; he is what might be called a "good-hearted" person. In the strong sense, the moral person also takes measures to ensure the success of his intentions: he tries to correct his perceptions, he takes pains to develop his moral insight. The rational person, in the weak sense, is one who is efficient at adjusting means to ends; in the strong sense a rational person also has a moral commitment to reason in the service of truth.