

Editorial Foreword

Dr. Noel Balzer brings a human face to logic. His studies of the foundations of human rationality keep a keen eye on how we learn to live in the world by principles of thought. Thus, he pursues value inquiry into logic, mathematics, language, and knowledge theory. The inquiry has led Dr. Balzer to remove obstacles in the thinking of great figures in Western thought, from Aristotle to Bertrand Russell, as well as obstacles in the counting of jelly beans by a youngster brought to his medical office. The combination of sophisticated theorizing and plain good sense lends to this book its intellectual value and its agreeable accessibility as an original contribution to understanding. Dr. Balzer's lifelong search, recounted in the genial introduction, has been for the fundamental principles of thought upon which all of logic rests.

The author's discoveries are presented with a disarming clarity and simplicity which nonetheless are the very hallmarks of good logical writing. Balzer's Principles are:

An instance of a class is the class.

and

A class is an instance of itself.

While the claim, "A cat is a cat" may sound like an idle truism, we are hard put to account for the claim, "A cat is an animal," without use of Balzer's Principles. Only through use of the classes, truth and falsity, are we able to know whether or not different classes are necessarily connected. A class, Dr. Balzer warns us, as he lets the cat out of the bag, is not a collection as such, but what is classified. Armed with a healthy view of class theory, Dr. Balzer tries his hand at curing the celebrated paradoxes that have beset logic. His refreshing inquiry into the history of ideas is salutary.

On the puzzle of how the natural numbers [1, 2, 3, etc.] arise, Dr. Balzer proposes a remarkably simple yet apparently unnoticed origin, explainable in terms of instances and Balzer's Principles. Such numbers come from the human processes of counting. The credit for the natural numbers goes to our humanity. Yet this is not a purely artistic or arbitrary invention, for it serves us in dealing with the world.

But then, Dr. Balzer reminds us, in his moving conclusion, we all live in the same troubled world, and as human beings we are equal in the power to reason and to understand. In a word, in this world, we all count. This humane approach to reasoning Dr. Balzer shares with his distinguished philosopher-physician predecessors,

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Aristotle and Locke. Such efforts at understanding human understanding may advance not only our understanding but our humanity.

Robert Ginsberg
Executive Editor