Commentary: Canadian infrastructure for a ‘Canadian’ ‘school’ of informal logic and argumentation

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Canadian infrastructure for a ‘Canadian’ ‘school’ of informal logic and argumentation

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1. Introduction

As a person who has been heavily influenced by the informal logic movement and as a former advisee of J. Anthony Blair at University of Windsor, I feel happy about Dr. Federico Puppo’s project to make a case for a ‘Canadian’ school of informal logic and argumentation. However, my emotion is one thing, and the existence of Canadian school of informal logic and argumentation is another thing. We have to be careful not to buy into a thesis without thinking through reasons in support of it, particularly if we want to label ourselves argumentation scholars who are supposed to be good at reasoning and arguing.

In his OSSA article Puppo attempts to satisfy his dialectical obligation to respond to Blair’s (2019) confession that he is unable “to recognize anything distinctively Canadian about our [John Woods and Douglas Walton, Trudy Govier, David Hitchcock, Michael Gilbert, and Ralph Johnson and Blair’s] contributions” in the emergence of argumentation as a field of scholarly inquiry (p. 59). As a respondent who have written on history of the informal logic movement in the 1970s and 1980s several times (Konishi 2009, 2011, 2016, 2016, 2019), I would like to focus on the early days of the movement and bring up some relevant issues based on my own research, disregarding the mid-1990s and later due to the limited access to the materials to base my comments on. Some will add another layer to think about the ‘Canadian’ part of Puppo’s Canadian-school-of argumentation thesis. Others will focus on the ‘school of thought’ part of it. Section two briefly offers the gist of his article as a starting point for my comment. Section three focuses on the notion of ‘Canadian’ with reference to my oral history interview with Govier and Blar and Johnson’s published and unpublished documents. Section four focuses on the notion of ‘school of thought’ and offer several instances to think about “an unbroken intellectual tradition” among a group of philosophers in the history of informal logic and argumentation (Jaspers, 1949/1959, qtd in Puppo 2020, p. 13). Section five concludes this comment. In serving my role as a commentator, I would like to modify Jürgen Habermas’ notion of public sphere and browse the informal logic movement, draw our attention to the media function of Blair and Ralph H. Johnson as well as relationship between history and theory of informal logic and argumentation (Konishi 2009, p. 22).

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1 Although Puppo (2020) refers to Megarian school as a third sense of school in his article—a group of philosophers under the same appellation (pp. 14-16), the author will group Jaspers’ sense of school of thought and Megarian school together but focus more on Jasper’s sense because these two may be separate but overlap each other.

Another reason to group these two senses together but focus more on Jaspers’ sense is that this is a new line of support that Puppo (2020) introduces in his OSSA article, distinctively different from his introduction to Informal Logic: A ‘Canadian’ Approach to Argument.
In an attempt to make a case against Blair’s question on the existence of distinct Canadian contributions to the birth and rise of argumentation, Puppo (2020) turns his attention to John Woods, who uses such phrases as “Canadian influence on theories of argument” or “Windsor approach to formal logic.” Accepting Woods’ position, Puppo (2020) states that:

it seems possible to affirm sufficient clues to sustain the idea that there is, fundamentally, a certain tradition of thought or approach among the ‘Canadians’: that of informal logic and of the analytical approach to philosophy, with a particular way of looking at argumentation and reasoning, and a geographical context which spurred them to share – and often to debate – their respective points of view. This is not to say that only Canadian scholars have developed the informal logic orientation or that only Canadians are involved in its study: but it does seem that this tradition exists and that it was born and was developed in Canada, with a notable connection to Windsor. (p. 5)

Based on this presumption that there seems to be a ‘Canadian’ approach, he refers to Leo Groarke’s scholarship on visual argumentation, Michael Gilbert’s scholarship on multi-modal argumentation, Cristopher Tindale’s scholarship on rhetorical argumentation, as collective support for the existence of informal logics and “a more expansive view of argumentation.” (p. 10). In section six of his article, Puppo (2020) draws on Karl Jaspers’ work that explains two ways in which schools of thought develop:

One way is to imitate a master whose work we carry on by extension, adaptation, and analogous achievement. The other way involves an unbroken intellectual tradition, within which the student may be quite as independent as his teacher, since the tradition usually does not center around a single personality but a group. (Jaspers 1948/1958, qtd in Puppo 2020, pp. 12-13)

Endorsing the second way of developing schools of thought, Puppo (2020) states that: a “Canadian school” of argumentation “respects the same rule: people inspired by the same principle, working together in an institute” (p. 13). Puppo’s position in the paper is clearly stated in the following paragraph.

(W)e can now give a positive answer to the question which began this essay: in our opinion, and for the reasons we have already stated, one can speak of a ‘Canadian school of argumentation’ because there exists, at the very least, a group of Canadian scholars who practice a certain philosophical method [analytic philosophy]; share common goals (to understand and teach argumentation); read and react to similar texts and ideas; carry out a common process of preparation, teaching and learning of knowledge; work within shared educational and scientific organizations; and are associated with common conferences and research center. The Canadian ‘school’ inevitably deals with works and ideas that constitute a large set of theories that, like the pieces of a mosaic, may not fit together perfectly: but, as figurative arts and music teach us, a possible dissonance does not diminish a fundamental harmony. Opinions we find expressed by people we can easily recognize as part of that group demonstrate different perspectives on common themes, but
in a way that reflects their dialogue with each other. These are, basically, opinions expressed by people who work or have worked in the same place (in Windsor, in Ontario, in Canada) and who, as we know, have in some cases become friends: everyone can personally testify. And it is in this very quality that we find, perhaps, the most important confirmation of the existence of a ‘school’. (p. 16)

A brief comment at this point is that Puppo’s arguments in favor of the existence of Canadian school of argumentation depend on acceptability of Jaspers’ conception of schools of thought. By offering what school of thought means or is in Jaspers’ sense, Puppo seems to presume that we ought to use school in the second sense of Jaspers. Jumping from is to ought may be a common topic among philosophers, but his position can be interpreted as an instance of pragmatic (consequential) argument, because he seems to argue that the second sense of Jaspers’ school ought to be adopted; it would produce positive consequences to the community of Canadian informal logicians and argumentation scholars, a school brand that Pragma-Dialecticians have enjoyed but Canadians have not. The logical, dialectical, and rhetorical cogency of this pragmatic definition or pragmatic argument on school of thought deserves serious inquiry. However, as a commentator I will take a different route to think through Canadian school, or an unbroken intellectual tradition of Canadian and other informal logicians and argumentation scholars. My lines of thought will focus more on media or infrastructure of knowledge production and close examination of historical records.

3. Public sphere as a framework for understanding the ‘Canadian’ informal logic movement

In his historico-sociological research, Jürgen Habermas has analyzed bourgeois public sphere, or “a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed” (Habermas 1974, p. 49). Three major principles of literary public sphere are (1) to disregard status so that the force of arguments determine the outcome of the critical argumentation, (2) to allow participants to problematize what has been unquestioned, and (3) to make the sphere inclusive2 (Habermas 1991, pp. 36-37). It is, of course, beyond the scope of this comment to judge how empirical his sense of public sphere. For the sake of argument, however, the author will extend the concept to view how consistent the informal logic movement led by Johnson and Blair in the 1970s and 1980s look with the spirit and the principles of the public sphere: formation of common or public opinions of a philosopher’s community regarding informal logic and argumentation, based on open exchange of arguments among participants about the unquestioned presupposition. The process of examination here seems to lay some grounds to offer an answer to the issue of the ‘Canadian’ part of the Canadian-school-of-thought thesis that Puppo has advanced.

If we see scholarly activities as ongoing collective communication among participants, it can be argued that the defining moment for the informal logic movement was Windsor Symposium on Informal Logic that Johnson and Blair held at University of Windsor, on June 26-

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2 While Habermas (1991) emphasizes inclusiveness, he admits the public sphere is open to those with property and educated. A fair amount of money was necessary to purchase books (commercial commodity) and a certain amount of literacy was a must to read and discuss the literary work. If we apply these conditions for exclusion to public sphere for informal logicians and argumentation scholars, we can say that argumentative literacy is required to engage in scholarship on argumentation.
28, 1978. Michael Scriven, Howard Kahane, Woods, Walton, Govier, Robert Pinto, John McPeck, Robert Ennis, Deborah Orr and others got together. At a symposium Scriven (1980), “a founder of informal logic” in Johnson and Blair’s (1994) view, powerfully questioned the dominance of formal logic at the time; Woods’ (1980) questioned the existence of informal logic; Johnson and Blair (1980) described the state of the art of informal logic and presented a list of problems and issues. Most participants were philosophers, but some faculty members at different departments of University of Windsor attended it.

The Symposium was followed by publication of a periodical medium. Blair and Johnson started *Informal Logic Newsletter* in 1978, “designed to be an informational organ for philosophers and others working in the field. Now in its second year, the Newsletter has begun publication of short articles and critical reviews, and its expansion into a journal seems imminent” (Blair and Johnson 1980, p. 161). As has been written elsewhere (Konishi 2016b), the theoretical turn of the Newsletter introduced scholarly debate on induction and deduction, conductive argument and *a priori* analogy, principles of charity, just to name a few.

Another achievement of the 1978 Symposium was publication of the proceedings in 1980 by Edgepress, a small publishing firm owned by Scriven. The publication helped informal logic gain some presence in intellectual space, as evidenced by Habermas’ (1984, pp. 23-24) quotation of the proceedings in his *Theory of Communicative Action*. The phrase informal logic and its approach started to gain currency in the early 1980s.

To make a long historical story short, two more International Symposiums on Informal Logic in 1983 and 1989, creation of a peer-review journal *Informal Logic*, founding a scholarly association AILACT (Association of Informal Logic and Critical Thinking) and another proceedings of the symposium published in 1994, collectively sustained the informal logic movement until OSSA took over the parts of the conference and proceedings. The ‘Canadian’ approach to informal logic and argumentation that Puppo endorses in his article, or an analytic philosophizing of informal logic and argumentation, came into being because of those which constituted forums or spheres in which scholars could freely express their ideas on informal logic and argumentation. The significance of these Canadian spheres cannot be emphasized too much in the development of informal logic and argumentation studies.

However, informal logicians and philosophers of argumentation in Canada and elsewhere have not given sufficient credit to these Canadian infrastructure of knowledge production, or these Canadian scholarly media that served as a vehicle for communication among scholars. This is precisely because argumentation theorists love and enjoy talking about argumentation theories, without recognizing what make those theorizing acts possible. If the author quotes exactly the same part of Blair’s (2019) article as Puppo, it is clear that Blair recognizes the value and casually mentions it.

*Johnson and I did get support from our university as well as from a small conference fund from the federal government administered by a national research-funding council, but I assume that other countries had similar funding available....Canadians got on board partly because of the Windsor conferences, and because the Informal Logic journal cornered the philosophy side of the market as the journal of record for*

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3 In the first version of this article sent to the commentator, Puppo seems to be confused that there were two symposiums on informal logic in 1978 and 1980. The 1978 symposium was Windsor Symposium on Informal Logic, and its proceedings was published by Edgepress in 1980, and the symposium was re-named The First International Symposium on Informal Logic (FISIL).
philosophically-oriented theorizing early on. Perhaps I am too close to see it, but I must confess to an inability to recognize anything distinctively Canadian about our contributions (Blair 2019, italics in original p. 59).

In the author’s view, what Blair dismisses in the above quotation—symposiums and journal *Informal Logic*—made the ‘Canadian’ approach to informal logic and argumentation possible. It is true that Michael Scriven was an established figure when Blair and Johnson held the FISIL in 1978 and financially supported the publication of the proceedings, so he can be regarded as the founding father of informal logic. However, it is Blair and Johnson who created and sustained Canadian public spheres for philosophizing informal logic, by convening three international symposiums as face-to-face communication forums and publishing *Informal Logic Newsletters* and journal *Informal Logic* as well as two proceedings of the three symposiums as literature to further research in the field. The author regards Blair as too humble in expressing his sentiments that nothing is distinctively Canadian about the contributions made by himself and Johnson, Woods, Walton, Gilbert, and Hitchcock.

There are two lines of support for my contention that Canadian infrastructure made the ‘Canadian’ approach possible. Blair and Johnson (1980) write in afterword of the proceedings of the FISIL that “(f)or many of those who attended the Symposium itself, it served to stimulate an active interest in the field of informal logic” (p. 161). One clear instance of the stimulated figure is Trudy Govier. In an oral history interview with the author, she (2007) talks about her memories of the FISIL.

(H)e [Michael Scriven] gave a very fiery sort of speech, in which he really claimed that there was a cheat with formal logic, because it simply couldn’t handle all of these kinds of arguments and it couldn’t really, couldn’t usefully describe them and couldn’t usefully be used to teach people to handle them. I was very influenced by that speech. I thought there was a whole research agenda here, because if people have this kind of logic, it doesn’t handle these kinds of arguments. Then the question arises: “Well what does handle these kinds of arguments?” And it just seemed to me to be a whole new territory. So I was very influenced by that and that’s the thing that I remember the most of it.

Although Govier had reviewed the manuscript of *Logical Self-Defense* prior to the FISIL, what would have happened to her scholarly career without the FISIL, and what consequences would it have produced to the community of informal logicians and philosophers of argumentation if there had been no FISIL? It is an important ‘what-if’ question given that her (1987) *Problems in Argument Analysis* and evaluation had strongly influenced Johnson’s *Manifest Rationality: A Pragmatic Theory of Argument*, and in *A Practical Study of Argument* can be seen as a clear instance of pluralistic theory of argument encapsulating deduction, induction and a third class of argument such as conductive or *a priori* analogy. *Informal Logic Newsletter* and *Informal Logic* constitute another line of support for my contention that Canadian infrastructure enabled a ‘Canadian’ approach to develop. They are media for written communication among scholars, and the immediate influence is not recognized as easily as the face-to-face medium of the symposium, as instantiated by Scriven’s influence on Govier. However, these periodical media sustained the scholarly discussion and communication on a regular basis, and Blair and Johnson (1988) recognize implications of the periodical media
to scholarly communities when they applied to Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) in Canada for the grant to publish *Informal Logic* in 1988.

*Informal Logic* serves Canadian authors by providing a forum with an international audience for their research; it serves Canadian Subscribers by putting on display the results of the best research in the field both in and out of Canada….To both our contributors and our readers it provides a sense of the field and the problem that face it.

In the same document they (1988) refer to Govier, Hitchcock, Walton, Woods and Binkley as scholars who have published in the *Newsletter* or *Informal Logic* and are involved in the editorial process. They also refer to Groarke, Tindale, Sharon Bailin or James Gough as young scholars.

Just like Habermas’ sense of public sphere limited people’s access with property and education, *Informal Logic* also consciously took a position regarding its accessibility.

We avoid as much as possible publishing articles about logic which can be published in other more appropriate journals, such as *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, *Studia Logic*, or *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*. We have adopted a liberal interpretation of what relates to informal logic, because the field is new and we have been the only journal devoted especially to the publication of such research. (Blair and Johnson 1988)

This passage reveals that in the 1980s *Informal Logic* tried to be as open as it could be to informal logicians and argumentation scholars, but it also tried to create a separate forum than other logic journals. While we need more careful historical research on the substance of articles published in *Informal Logic* to conclude that the ‘Canadian’ approach to informal logic and argumentation may be a version of analytic philosophy, it can be distinct from other versions of analytic philosophy that other logic journals consciously and unconsciously endorse.

In summary, the author does not agree or find a strong reason that the ‘Canadian’ approach to informal logic and argumentation is characterized by analytic philosophy. It is because we need further research to characterize the Canadian analytic philosophy developed in *Informal Logic* or OSSA conferences. However, it seems clear that Canadian public spheres or infrastructure that Blair and Johnson created and sustained in the 1970s and 1980s enabled informal logicians and philosophers of argumentation to develop the ‘Canadian’ approach to argumentation.

4. What can an unbroken intellectual tradition of informal logicians be traced to?

In advancing a position that a Canadian school of thought with regard to informal logic and argumentation exists, Puppo seems to be informed by Woods (2019) who states that “(t)he Canadian brand was never as well-defined and organizationally and doctrinally sustained as the Amsterdam brand” (p. 94).

One quick point, as a person trained in graduate programs in communication studies at Wayne State University and University of Pittsburgh (both in the United States) and in philosophy graduate program at University of Windsor, is what is wrong with non-existence of school of thought among philosophers in the first place? Inquiries into argumentation within communication studies enjoy diversities (in a good sense) or chaos (in a bad sense) of different
approaches. Communication studies as a field of inquiry consists of humanities and social sciences, and so rhetoricians and rhetorical historians (Joseph Wenzel or David Zarefsky), discourse analysts (Scott Jacobs and Sally Jackson), social constructionism scholars (Charles Willard), or public argument scholars (Thomas Goodnight or Gordon Mitchell) seriously inquire into argumentation. I doubt if they buy into a common doctrine. They may well come from different ontological and epistemological perspectives and treat different types of argument with different methodologies. Pragma-Dialectics is arguably an exceptional brand in argumentation studies that van Eemeren and Grootendorst or van Eemeren and Houtlosser strongly controlled its substance over thirty years.

In maintaining Informal Logic as a forum for theorizing, Blair and Johnson consciously took a route not to create the Canadian brand like the Amsterdam brand of Pragma-Dialectics, so a Canadian school of argumentation was a non-starter from the beginning under their leadership. The grant application document states that: “(w)e have tried to avoid imposing our personal theoretical outlook upon it. However, by selections we make we encourage what seems to us interesting new developments” (Blair and Johnson 1988). In the oral history interview of Blair in Amsterdam at the ISSA Conference, Blair (2018) recalls how editors of Informal Logic operated.

We didn’t have any – any direction in mind at all. We weren’t – we weren’t leading the – we weren’t sending a signal that this is what we wanted papers on….If…everybody was writing about argument schemes, then we were getting lots of contributions on argument schemes. If everyone was writing about deductive-inductive, we were…getting papers about deductive-inductive and we were publishing those papers. So, we…followed the interests of…the community rather than led by it. Now, of course…there’s likely to be…a mutual interest. We had certain kinds of papers, we publish them, people read the journal, they get interested in those topics, they start writing about them and they send us papers – and so the papers that had earlier appeared in the journal…led to the papers that later appeared in the journal. But it was not because we said, “We want papers on this topic.” It was because that’s how the scholar – the interests of the contributors developed.

Based on the instance of communication studies of argumentation, the informal logic movement seems to have more commonalities with communication studies of argumentation rather than Amsterdam school of Pragma-Dialectics. The records of editorship of Informal Logic also strongly imply that two leaders of the informal logic movement did not have an ambition to create a Canadian school of argumentation in the strong sense. So, these written records and the oral testimony serve as additional support for Puppo’s (2020) conclusion that “a Canadian school of logic in the strong sense does not exist (p.94).

Setting aside the position that a Canadian school exists in a strong sense, the key question is whether it exists in a different sense. Puppo (2020) resorts to Jaspers’ conception of schools of

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4 The pronoun ‘we’ here probably includes Hans V. Hansen and Christopher Tindale as well as Blair and Johnson.

The editors of Informal Logic were Blair and Johnson between 1984 and 1999, then Blair, Johnson, Hansen and Tindale between 2000 and 2016, and have been Blair and Tindale since then.

5 It is open to debate whether it is worth pursuing the brand in argumentation studies. When Johnson and Blair (1994) lamented the lack of paradigm in the informal logic at the Third International Symposium on Informal Logic (TISIL) in 1989, Scriven pointed out that the notion of paradigm is a dubious construct in history and philosophy of science (Johnson and Blair 1994, p. 4, 15). The search for paradigm of informal logic therefore could mean commitment to the dubious notion. In a similar vein, Puppo’s position to search for a Canadian brand based on Woods could be problematic commitment. The onus is Puppo and Woods to defend the value of the Canadian brand.
thought as an unbroken intellectual tradition to maintain his position that the Canadian ‘school’ of argumentation exists because:

there exists, at the very least, a group of Canadian scholars who practice a certain philosophical method [analytic philosophy]; share common goals (to understand and teach argumentation); read and react to similar texts and ideas; carry out a common process of preparation, teaching and learning of knowledge; work within shared educational and scientific organizations; and are associated with common conferences and research center. (Puppo 2020, p. 16)

A simple question is how we can trace whether “an unbroken intellectual tradition” exists among philosophers to argue for the existence of a Canadian school of argumentation. The quotation above looks fine on the surface. However, it makes us realize that we need closer examination of theoretical scholarship to see if these conditions are met. Is it generally true that scholars use analytic philosophy as a method? Do they read and discuss similar texts and ideas? What does it mean the process of preparation, teaching, and learning of knowledge is common? What does it mean that people work within common educational and scientific organizations? How do we judge people are associated with common conferences and research center? These are questions but not criticism on the above text. However, we should not presuppose these conditions are met because they constitute the support for Puppo’s position.

Puppo (2000) draws on three scholars in advancing expansive view of argumentation: Leo Groarke, Michael Gilbert, and Christopher Tindale (pp. 6-11). Groarke’s scholarship on visual argumentation, to the best of the author’s knowledge, first started in Argumentation and Advocacy in 1996—American media for argumentation studies; Gilbert’s (1997) conception of argument is heavily influenced by Charles Willard, an American communication scholar, in developing multi-modal argumentation (p. 29); Tindale (1999) depends on Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (rhetoricians) as well as Sperber and Wilson (communication scientists) in developing his version of rhetorical argumentation. Arguably, these Canadian scholars research can be linked to different traditions to argumentation studies than Canadian, so the issue of inclusion in and exclusion from a Canadian school of argumentation, if there is any such species, calls for more careful and thorough empirical examination.

Turning our attention to Canadian infrastructure again, the author would like to suggest to pursue this line of empirical investigation by drawing on a list of agenda published in 1980 in a Canadian medium Informal Logic: The First International Symposium. In the proceedings that constituted part of Canadian infrastructure, Johnson and Blair (1980) offered thirteen problems and issues constituting the agenda:

1. The theory of logical criticism
2. The theory of argument
3. The theory of fallacy

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6 Groarke also published an article on visual argumentation in Informal Logic in 1996. However, this joint issue was published in 1997 or 1998, due to the perennial delay of publication of the journal (Blair and Johnson 1996). Which article was first published is one issue, but the author would like to point out that an American medium Argumentation and Advocacy was more liberal in publishing multiple papers on visual argumentation in the same issue. This concerns whose infrastructure or which media for publication—American communication studies or Canadian philosophy—can be linked to Groarke’s scholarship. In this respect this concerns the Canadian part of the Canadian-school-of-thought thesis as well.
4. The fallacy approach vs. the critical thinking approach
5. The viability of the inductive/deductive dichotomy
6. The ethics of argumentation and logical criticism
7. The problem of assumptions and missing premises
8. The problem of context
9. Methods of extracting arguments from context
10. Methods of displaying arguments
11. The problem of pedagogy
12. The nature, division and scope of informal logic
13. The relationship of informal logic to other inquiries (1980, pp. 25-26)

In light of the agenda, Groarke’s (1996) inquiry on visual argumentation is related to numbers 2, 9, 10, 11, and 12 and possibly to number 7; Gilbert’s (1997) multi-modal argumentation is related to numbers 1, 2, 7, 9, and 10.; Tindale’s (1999) rhetorical argumentation is related to numbers 1, 2, and 13. Turning our attention to other informal logicians, Walton has studied on nature of argument and reasoning as well as fallacies (numbers 2 and 3); Hitchcock (1979, 1987) has inquired into deduction and induction as standard for evaluating argument but not argument types (numbers 2 and 5) as well as enthymemes (number 7). Govier (1987) has examined conductive argument and a priori analogies as a third class of argument (numbers 2 and 5), as well as a fallacy theory and critical thinking (numbers 3 and 4). Simply put, Blair and Johnson’s research agenda serves as a checklist for us to examine an unbroken intellectual tradition of the informal logic movement.

The author does not imply that reference to the agenda by Blair and Johnson will give the decisive answer in establishing a claim on the existence of a Canadian school of argumentation. A careful textual analysis is necessary to see whether a particular article actually embodies the above agenda item. Also, the author understands that some informal logic scholarship, such as Woods and Walton’s joint articles (2007) predates the FISIL in 1978, and so an argument can be advance that the impact of the informal logic movement is not so enormous. However, if we regard informal logic as a philosophical community’s movement to establish a field of philosophical inquiry, the infrastructure (symposiums and conferences and books and periodicals) and leadership aspects are important because theorizing and philosophizing are easily done within the infrastructure prepared by leaders of the movement.

In concluding this section, we may need some principles or documents to track back to in justifying an unbroken intellectual tradition. It is my contention that the research agenda by Blair and Johnson (1980) is an important document as the beginning of the informal logic movement, and it may help us understand how the Canadian school of argumentation develop within Canadian infrastructure of argumentation.

5. Summation

Let me just lay out key points offered and developed in this comments to further discussion on the existence of a Canadian school of argumentation.

Firstly, it is up to the cogency of pragmatic argument based on Jasper’s conception of school of thought as an unbroken intellectual tradition. Puppo may presume that we should use Jasper’s conception because it helps us defend the thesis on the existence of the Canadian school of argumentation.
Secondly, however, it may be the case that the Amsterdam brand of Pragma-Dialectics may be an exceptional instance of a school of argumentation studies. American argumentation scholars in communication studies seem to live with diversities/chaos of their different scholarly approaches. In addition, Blair and Johnson, two leaders of the informal logic movement, did not seem to have an ambition to create a counterpart of Pragma-Dialectics.

Thirdly, instead of offering a doctrine that every informal logician must accept, Blair and Johnson helped to set up Canadian infrastructure or public sphere for informal logicians and argumentation scholars, such as international symposiums and their proceedings, a newsletter and a journal, and a professional organization. The Canadian infrastructure collectively served as media for exchanging scholarly ideas. It may be open to more empirical inquiry about the existence of a distinctively Canadian informal logic and argumentation, but it seems clear that the Canadian infrastructure helped scholarship to develop in the 1970s and 1980s.

Fourthly, the research agenda by Johnson and Blair (1980) can be the ignition plug to promote scholarship of a Canadian school of argumentation in Puppo’s sense. Since the agenda was published in the Canadian infrastructure of the informal logic movement, it can be argued that a school in a weak sense has existed because of the Canadian infrastructure.

These four points collectively add additional layer to the research that Puppo started. On the one hand they remind us of the importance of media or infrastructure of knowledge production. As theorists and practitioners of informal logic and argumentation, we tend to praise, admire, agree, disagree, or ignore ideas developed at conferences and journals. However, we do not fully understand significance of the media and infrastructure that enable us to maintain intellectual exchange of ideas and intellectual tradition.

On the other hand, Puppo’s research has prepared a new path to further historical research on argumentation studies. How have philosophers of argumentation interacted with each other to develop a school in a weak sense? How can we situate a particular philosopher’s research in the tradition of argumentation scholarship? I agree with Puppo that history of philosophy tells us something important. However, scholars need to be more careful about carrying out historical research. We must avoid jumping to a conclusion with a limited amount of historical evidence. For making a case for an unbroken intellectual tradition, we have to see how people interact using what media, in developing philosophzing and theorizing the field. As the present commentator (2009) has stated elsewhere, we have to be careful about how history and theory of informal logic and argumentation interact each other (p. 22).

If the author answers his own call for being careful not to jump to a conclusion, one weakness of the present comment must be pointed out. While Puppo draws heavily on the scholarship developed in the 1990s, the comment draws more on the scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s. Blair and Johnson were productive throughout these periods, it can be argued that their leadership role relatively decreased over years because Hansen and Tindale took care of more than ten OSSA conferences and were also partially resposible for the journal Informal Logic together with Blair and Johnson. More archival research in the 1990s and later can change the picture of history of Canadian infrastructure as well as a Canadian school of argumentation.

With that said, the the author would like to take this opportunity to thank Blair, Johnson, Hansen, Tindale, Hundleby Parr, Guarini, and late Bob Pinto for their efforts to maintain the sustainable development of informal logic and argumentation in Canada. Based on my historical research over ten years, I would like to thank particularly to Hansen and Blair, for sacrificing their own scholarship for the benefit of the community.
Acknowledgements: J Anthony Blair and Trudy Govier spared their time for oral history interviews. P. J. Collins did excellent work for transcription. Hans V. Hansen and Federico Puppo patiently waited for my comments. I truly appreciate all of these people for their time, support, and understanding.

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