EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

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1 Background to the issue   The origin of this special issue lay in a visit that Mic Detlefsen, Editor of the *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, made to Australia in 1995 as a guest of the Australasian Association of Logic and the Department of Philosophy at the University of Queensland. The visit allowed many enjoyable discussions concerning logic and philosophy. On one occasion, discussion turned to the fact that, though logicians in Australasia and Northern America work in much the same areas and publish in the same journals, there are, nonetheless, subjects on which they tend to have rather different perspectives. On why this is, the discussion was somewhat inconclusive. But after Mic's return to the U.S., it was decided to produce an issue of the *Journal* in which one of these differences would be explored in more detail. After some deliberation, we decided to make the topic that of impossible worlds. This bears on a number of different, but substantial, issues, both formal and philosophical, many of which are represented in the papers in this issue. Moreover, we thought, Australasian logicians are much more sympathetic to the notion of such worlds than North American logicians. Hence, the topic seemed a good one. Accordingly, we wrote to a number of philosophers and logicians on both continents. Essentially, this issue contains the product. The result is, perhaps, a rather surprising one. (At least, it surprised me.) All the papers, whether written by Australasians or North Americans, are sympathetic to the notion of an impossible world. The difference between the two groups emerged elsewhere. I will return to this matter later in this introduction.

I would like to thank Mic warmly for everything that he has done to make this issue itself not impossible. In the rest of this introduction, I want to put the papers in the collection, and the topics with which they deal, into some sort of perspective.

2 What is an impossible world?   The first question that needs to be addressed is "what is meant by 'impossible world'?". Let us take the notion of a world itself for granted for the nonce. There are still many different kinds of impossibility: epistemic, physical, metaphysical, logical. Though some of the contributors (notably Barwise) cast their nets wider, it is primarily logical impossibility that is the focus of the issue. But what is meant by 'a logically impossible world'?