

# In Memoriam Michael Scriven 1928-2023

## À la mémoire de Michael Scriven 1928-2023

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## In Memoriam

Michael Scriven  
1928-2023

Michael Scriven has died at the age of 95. He was a strong supporter of informal logic—which he regarded as the theory of critical thinking—for more than 50 years, and he lent his considerable prestige to this journal, serving on its editorial board since its creation 39 years ago (although he could be unreliable as a timely referee). He was also a coeditor of and contributor to the prestigious *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*.

Professor Scriven received an honors BA in Mathematics and then an honors MA in the Philosophy of Mathematical Logic from the University of Melbourne (and was awarded an honorary doctorate in Education in 2013), before pursuing his PhD in Philosophy at Oxford University. He was a big bear of a man (he had rowed for Oxford while a student there) who could command attention with a booming voice, and he was possessed of a quiet, mischievous sense of humour. He was married to the feminist philosopher, Mary Anne Warren, who predeceased him in 2010.

He is principally famous for his ground-breaking contributions to the creation of evaluation as an independent academic discipline, receiving the American Evaluation Association's Lazarsfeld Medal in 1986. But he was also an accomplished scholar in a wide range of fields, serving as President of the American Educational Research Association and, importantly for us, making 50 years' worth of contributions to the theory and practice of informal logic and critical thinking.

Scriven created a publishing company, Edgepress, initially to publish his textbook, *Reasoning* (1976), but the company then later published *Informal Logic, The First International Symposium* (1980) and *Critical Thinking, Its Definition and Assessment*, which he co-authored with Alec Fisher (1997). Professor Scriven was one of the founders of *The Association of Informal Logic and Critical Thinking* (AILACT, 1984) and contributed to an annual cash prize to the author of the best essay of the year. Most recently, he financed

the publication of the anthology, *Studies in Critical Thinking* (2021), a collection of articles by leading figures representing current thinking on critical thinking topics.

Michael Scriven was enthusiastically curious about almost anything that caught his attention, and that curiosity invariably led him into further, deeper inquiries. As a result, he was possessed of an enviable and an encyclopedic mind. This encouraged enormous productivity. Yet, at the same time he was never too busy for a conversation. And he was the kind of person who thought to ask after a colleague's wife during a busy conference.

Above all, he was the consummate Platonic ideal of a critical thinker.