

# informal logic

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University of Windsor

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## from the editors

We are pleased to be able to reprint Professor Richard's article, "Attitudes to Reasoning" from the Australian Logic Teachers' Journal. Professor Richards opens up the question, "How is reasoning considered in the society in which we are trying to teach it?" As teachers we should know our students; also, as philosophers trying to have an impact we should know the social values and attitudes of the communities we want to influence. Professor Richards has some interesting things to say about the ethics of belief, too. The article was originally written in response to some proposed changes in the high school curriculum in the state of Victoria in Australia, however its applications to the North American setting are pretty straightforward.

Professor David Hitchcock's earlier contribution to the inductive-deductive debate which has been running in these columns has been the subject of a lot of critical comment from other contributors. We judged it only

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fair, then, to allow Professor Hitchcock a reply to his critics. This will be the last thrust in the inductive-deductive debate that we will run in the ILN for a while. (But didn't we say that before?)

Your editors have, in the past, been loath to publish their own work in the ILN. We view the Newsletter as a clearing house and forum for others, not a personal mouthpiece. This policy of restraint has had us bursting at the seams on more than one occasion, and finally the pressure has become too great. This year Ralph Johnson is on sabbatical leave, writing on informal logic. He has written a number of articles, none originally intended for the Newsletter. Thus it was that his co-editor, wearing editor's hat, approached him, wearing sabbaticant's hat, and convinced him to part with a couple of pieces for our columns. As a result we have an in-depth review of the recent text by Stephen Toulmin, Richard Rieke and Allan Janik, An Introduction to Reasoning, the first part of which appears in this issue, and the completion of which will appear next issue. And in the next issue we will also run a piece by Johnson on the Principle of Charity.

#### A NEWSLETTER/JOURNAL OF INFORMAL LOGIC?

We appreciate the double bind many potential contributors to the ILN find themselves in. On the one hand, they want to support the ILN and put their work before an audience that is interested in it; on the other hand they want to (a) support the informal logic movement by getting articles in informal logic published by established and prestigious journals (thus getting the subject/field recognized as a legitimate philosophical concern), and (b) advance their own work by having it taken seriously by the professional establishment.

There is no simple solution to this very real dilemma. We would ask those who are writing articles in the field to include ILN in their rotation--send us a piece for every one or two you send to Phil. Review, Meta-philosophy, APQ or Phil. & Rhetoric. Remember, we give you fast publication, quick published responses, and a readership 100% of whom are interested in informal logic. (Our current subscriptions total 335, and are growing weekly at a steady rate.)

To several friends who have expressed concern that our evolution towards a journal would be at the cost of valued informality and ready accessibility, let us reassure you that we see no need to give up the latter in order to become the forum for serious work in the theory and application of informal logic. Teaching ideas, examples for comment, brief notes, conference reports, notices, lists of textbooks, and so on--all must continue to have plenty of space in these columns. \*

Very special thanks to June Blair for editorial and production assistance in getting out this issue, and to Violet Smith for typing it.

# article

## Attitudes to Reasoning

Thomas J. Richards  
La Trobe University

I will make two assumptions in this paper. One is that reasoning can be taught; and the second is that the teaching of reasoning is the most important activity in the curriculum. In this I am at one with the Victorian Universities and Schools Examination Board, who have made English the one compulsory paper in Higher School Certificate, and who say in its prescription "The Course ... is intended to cultivate in students the whole variety of skills involved in an active, critical understanding of written and spoken English ... (to) enhance the student's critical abilities ... training him to think and express himself more clearly ..."<sup>1</sup>

At least, one would be forgiven for thinking they and I are at one on the importance of reasoning. But more of that later.

If I may make so bold as to improve upon the words of Leavis, whose thinking seems to dominate core English in the schools, I am looking for a logic that is for life. I want to devise a curriculum for Reasoning that can be taught in the schools and that aims to impart attitudes and skills of logicity and rationality; attitudes and skills that will serve in ways of importance in all aspects of life. I am thus not concerned with what logic should be taught as a background for academic philosophy; nor with the question of what should comprise the elementary stages of a University course in Logic. I have my views about both these questions, and one of my views is that they are distinct questions. If you want my views on the first of these questions, read my book, which is aimed at providing the background in Logic that I think is needed for academic philosophy.<sup>2</sup> But that, for various reasons, seems

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"Attitudes to Reasoning" first appeared in the Australian Logic Teachers' Journal, Vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 1-11, and the editors of ILN express their gratitude to Professor Richards and to ALTJ editors R. A. Girle and T. A. Halpin for their kind permission to reprint it here.

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