

I'm not robot!

YES: This city can and must conserve more water. We've been able to cut back consumption by 25 percent so far, but with the reservoirs down to a month's supply, people should really start seeing the need to stop washing their cars or leaving their sprinklers going . . . These are exactly the same facts, even stated in similar phrases and sentences, but this overall feeling is sharply different. The point is not to be mindlessly optimistic. We should not ignore the negative. But when we let it fill the screen, we're really, negatively, becoming the only reality. We create more of us, we preoccupy ourselves with it, and it gets our energy and attention even if we wish to resist it. Part of the power of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s iconic "I Have a Dream" speech is that it is, after all, about dreams: about visions for a shared and just future. "I have a dream that the children of former slaves and the children of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. . . ." In one way this is exactly the same idea—but if King had put it this way, would his great speech live on today? All arguments—not just in public debates—should try to offer something positive. Again, though, there is a special energy and often urgency in public debates, which is why I place this rule in this chapter. A group's optimism and excitement can be infectious, and it can become a power of its own, as can a sense of gloom and disempowerment. Which will you choose to create? 80 48 48. Work from common ground Work from common ground Public debate is often framed by extreme positions. In fact, however, even most partisans in those debates actually hold "in-between" views when they speak more thoughtfully and carefully. Hardly anyone truly favors wholly eliminating guns, say, or ending all oil drilling. Likewise, hardly anyone favors leaving guns, or oil drilling, wholly unrestricted. Even in the never-ending and highly divisive abortion debate, most pro-choice advocates accept and indeed often favor some restrictions on abortion, and most pro-life advocates are willing to accept abortion in some circumstances. You have to look for this kind of common ground. If you only expect bumper-sticker-positions, simple and insistent, not only will you find them, but probably they're all you will find. Everything else—the nuance of even the fiercest positions, and all views between—will be pushed into the shadows. Advocates of in-between positions may themselves feel forced toward the extremes, in order to be heard at all. When you look for in-between views and areas of overlap, disagreements—while still quite real—will seem manageable, even potentially pro-active. We start seem to differ about the causes of climate change. Whether it is mostly caused by natural processes or by human activity, though, surely we need to respond to it by smarter building and emergency planning. The seas are rising. Shouldn't we be working together to meet these new challenges, regardless of cause? Even when disagreements really are radical, it is still more useful to try to work toward some sort of compromise, rather than trying to convert someone straight out. You may debate animal rights all day, but most people on both (all) sides would probably at least agree that we would be better off if we ate less meat. Pro-life and pro-choice sides actually have wide areas of agreement and have even worked together at times, for example to reduce the felt need for 48. Work from common ground 81 abortion in the first place.10 Disagreements certainly remain in these cases, and they are important and worth talking about, but they needn't fill the whole screen or claim all our energy. There are intelligent ways of making progress together. Moreover, people's actual positions are usually complex and, well, just plain interesting—even those with which we may disagree. Gun advocates have legitimate concerns about citizens being defenseless against tyranny if guns are outlawed, while gun opponents have legitimate concerns about safety when guns are everywhere. Meanwhile the actual evidence tends to complicate things, as it often does. Many countries have strict gun control without any kind of tyranny—Canada, for example. Meanwhile, the United States has far more guns per capita than almost any other country, including the most war-torn, but also a comparatively moderate gun death rate, although the sheer number remains distressingly high. Seriously addressing facts like these might transform the gun debate into something quite different. Still, there will be occasions where no change seems possible without repeated, persistent, even radical opposition. Go to it, then. But beware of supposing that every debate must be such a battle, or every argument a battering ram against the other side's perversity or ignorance. No matter how they approach you—at first—in-*invite* something more collaborative, as if you both stand on the same side and need to address a shared problem together. Stick to it until they get it. See what happens. This approach might be used in more formal public debates too—debates with an audience, for example. Set it up not as two people versus each other, or even two arguments versus each other, but as a forum for exploring the arguments around an issue. And include more than two! 10. Google the Common Ground Network for Life and Choice, a project of Search for Common Ground, whose current projects also deserve a look. For an academic treatment, see Robin West, Justin Murray, and Meredith Esser, editors. In Search of Common Ground: From Culture War to Reproductive Justice (Ashgate, 2014). 82 49 49. At least be civil At least be civil Don't deride or attack other debaters. This is a mistake that even has its own name: the ad hominem ("to the man") fallacy (see Appendix I). You don't have to like the people you are debating with, let alone agree with them. You may have trouble even taking them seriously—and likely they will return the (dis)favor. You can still have some courtesy. So can they. In a way, such occasions are what civility is for. Focus on their arguments. Describe your opponents' position in fair ways. Avoid loaded language: build on substance, as Rule 5 puts it, not overturn. Make it clear that you know that they have premises worth considering, even if you wholly reject their conclusions or their premises in the end. NO: My opponent's argument reeks of centuries of illiberal ideas, going all the way back to Plato's self-serving rationalization for the dictatorship of the elite. He ought to be ashamed to bring such discredited propaganda into public discussion today . . . YES: My opponent's argument stands in a long tradition of conservative political thinking, going all the way back to the Athenian philosopher Plato's mistrust of democracy. Plato had his reasons, for sure. That he was right, however, or that his reasons apply today, is quite another matter . . . Think of it as a minimalist kind of ethics. For better or worse, everyone with whom you debate is still part of the same society, someone with whom you have to live at the end of the day, and moreover is probably not an absolute scoundrel or crazy either. We debate with real people, not with some stuffed-shirt caricatures. We're all trying to make sense of a world that is complex and constantly in flux, not comprehended fully by any of us. And we are all trying, by 50. Leave them thinking when you go 83 our arguments among other means, to improve things a little bit, at least as we see it. Even the ranters and the most closed-minded, however backwards they appear to us. Civility honors them at least for that. And of course, likewise, we wish to be treated civilly ourselves, even by those who disagree with us and might even place us, shockingly enough, among the ranters or the closed-minded. From a purely practical point of view, then, civility gives us some leverage, as Rule 46 puts it. When we are civil to others, we have a clearer right to ask the same civility back. Certainly you are more apt to get civility back if you offer it than if you don't! Sometimes it is hard to even think straight when we feel deliberately misrepresented and put down. In that case, you aren't likely to feel too generous to the other side when your turn comes. Just remember that your opponents feel the same way. Civility appeals to everyone's better selves. Besides, maybe—just maybe—your opponents aren't totally wrong. In an uncertain and complex world, there is more than one way to "put it all together," as represented by the many people who do put it all together in ways very different from ourselves. We may have a few things to learn from them, or at least it would be polite to act as though we do. Civility in this case is partly a kind of honest humility. You don't feel like others are being very civil right now? Me neither. We may hope for civility back from others, but we may not get it. Again, though, it is the job of civil debaters to get out in front regardless. Take the lead. Do it first. Maybe your generosity will be infectious, a model to others to shift their ways of debating too. In any case, you thereby uplift civility itself, in the larger society, even if it might have to follow a wider track to come back to you again. 50 Leave them thinking when you go Even the best argument in the world is only part of a debate—maybe quite a small part. Debates stay with us because they have many related aspects, draw on many facts and claims that 84 50. Leave them thinking when you go are uncertain or controversial or conflicting themselves, and allow a variety of conclusions. Philosophers have been debating about happiness, for example, for a few thousand years. Certainly we have made progress, but no argument has simply "won," nor, surely, should it. Single arguments may make a difference, but rarely will one argument make all the difference, even if it is completely correct. Single arguments or arguers may address one aspect of a debate, revise and improve certain other arguments, take up other aspects or new ideas . . . all the time changing as they go. But the debate itself shifts slowly, usually, like a great ship turning in the sea. The upshot is that public debate takes patience. The great ship is going to turn slowly no matter how energetically or persuasively we hold forth on deck. And because it is whole debates that shift, carrying with them a jumble of specific arguments on all sides, people may not change their minds on the biggest themes even when they acknowledge unanswered arguments against some parts of their views. The world may still seem to make more sense the old way. And they are not being irrational, any more than you or I are being irrational in holding onto our own favorite views of things even when (to be honest) there may be good arguments against parts of them also. Change not only takes time, it usually takes a more attractive overall view of things too. No matter how good your argument is, then, do not expect most people to rise as one to agree with you the moment you finish your case. Instead, just ask for their open-minded consideration. Expect them to be willing to consider changing. And, again, you will be most successful at this if you are visibly willing to consider changing yourself. Pushing harder may just bring up those unpleasant stereotypes of "argument" that drive people further into rigid thinking. Debate is certainly not the only, or even always the best way of taking part in public discourse. There will be times when passionate appeals are more to the point, perhaps, or personal testimony, or sermons. Moreover, there may be times when we are sorely tempted to make bad arguments ourselves: knowingly using loaded language, dubious sources, and all the rest, especially when it seems like the other side stoops that low routinely. It's tempting, yes. But let me close with two cautions. 50. Leave them thinking when you go 85 One: in the long run, making bad arguments devalues good arguments—careful thinking—in general. This cannot be good for our society. Unfortunately, at times, it might be your side that has to carry the burden of clearly and thoughtfully. If the other side truly is not. Still, in the long run, standing up for good arguments is the only truly winning way. Second, honestly, if the other side really does routinely stoop that low, then they are also probably much better at it much better practiced, much better funded, and with many fewer remaining objections. It's not a winning game for you. Play instead to your strength—doing argument that proud, now that you have this book under your belt—which happens to be the right thing to do as well. Raise good arguments, then, as openly and thoughtfully as you can. Offer something positive. Hear the other side out, and respond and connect as best you can. But recognize that the debate will continue. Life is short, the debate is long. There are also many worthwhile and constructive things to do besides debate, both in and out of public discourse. At some point you will need to step away. Just leave them thinking when you go! Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies Fallacies are misleading types of arguments. Many of them are so tempting, and therefore so common, that they even have their own names. This may make them seem like a separate and new topic. Actually, though, to call something a fallacy is usually just another way of saying that it violates one of the rules for good arguments. The fallacy of "false cause," for example, is a questionable conclusion about causes, and you can look to Chapter V for explanation. Here is a short list and explanation of some of the classical fallacies, including their Latin names when frequently used. ad hominem (literally, "to the man"): attacking the person of a source rather than his or her qualifications or reliability or the actual argument he or she makes. You know from Chapter IV that supposed authorities may be disqualified if they are not informed, impartial, or largely in agreement. But other sorts of attacks on supposed authorities are typically not legitimate. It's no surprise that Carl Sagan argued for life on Mars—after all, he was a well-known atheist. I don't believe it for a minute. Although Sagan did take part in the public discussion about religion and science, there is no reason to think that his views about religion colored his scientific judgment about Martian life. Look to the argument, not "the man," ad ignorantiam (appeal to ignorance): arguing that a claim is true just because it has not been shown to be false. A classic example is this statement by Senator Joseph McCarthy when he was asked 87 88 Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies for the very place they want to end: complex question: posing a question in such a way that people cannot agree or disagree with you without committing themselves to some other claim you wish to promote. A simple example: "Are you still as self-centered as you used to be?" Answering either "yes" or "no" commits you to agreeing that you used to be self-centered. A 90 Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies more subtle example: "Will you follow your conscience instead of your pocketbook and donate to the cause?" Saying "no," regardless of their real reasons for not donating, makes people feel guilty. Saying "yes," regardless of their real reasons for donating, makes them noble. If you want a donation, just ask for it, denying the antecedent: a deductive mistake of the form If p then q. Not-p. Therefore, not-q. Remember that, in the statement "If p then q," p is called the "antecedent" and q the "consequent." The second premise of a modus tollens—a valid form—denies the consequent, q (go back to Rule 23 and check). Denying the antecedent (p), though, yields quite a different—and invalid—form. A true conclusion is not guaranteed even if the premises are true. For example: Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies 89 When the roads are icy, the mail is late. The mail is late. Therefore, the roads are icy. Although the mail would be late if the roads were icy, it may be late for other reasons too. This argument overlooks alternatives, begging the question: implicitly using your conclusion as a premise. God exists because it says so in the Bible, which I know is true because God wrote it, after all! To put this argument in premise-and-conclusion form, you'd have to write: The Bible is true, because God wrote it. The Bible says that God exists. Therefore, God exists. To defend the claim that the Bible is true, the arguer claims that God wrote it. But, obviously, if God wrote the Bible, then God exists. The arguer assumes just what it is trying to prove, circular argument: same as begging the question. You can count on WARP News for the facts, because the station's motto is "we just give you the facts," so there must be a fact too! Real-life circular arguments often follow a bigger circle, but they all eventually end up starting in the very place they want to end: complex question: posing a question in such a way that people cannot agree or disagree with you without committing themselves to some other claim you wish to promote. A simple example: "Are you still as self-centered as you used to be?" Answering either "yes" or "no" commits you to agreeing that you used to be self-centered. A 90 Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies more subtle example: "Will you follow your conscience instead of your pocketbook and donate to the cause?" Saying "no," regardless of their real reasons for not donating, makes people feel guilty. Saying "yes," regardless of their real reasons for donating, makes them noble. If you want a donation, just ask for it, denying the antecedent: a deductive mistake of the form If p then q. Not-p. Therefore, not-q. 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The sexes are not physically and emotionally "equal" in the sense in which "equal" means simply "identical." Equality before the law, however, does not mean "physically and emotionally identical" but "entitled to the same rights and opportunities." Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies 91 Rephrased with the two different senses of "equal" made clear, the argument goes: Women and men are not physically and emotionally identical. Therefore, women and men are not entitled to the same rights and opportunities. Once the equivocation is removed, it is clear that the argument's conclusion is neither supported by nor even related to the premise. No reason is offered to show that physical and emotional differences imply different rights and opportunities. false cause: generic term for any questionable conclusion about cause and effect. To figure out specifically why the conclusion is (said to be) questionable, go back to Chapter V, false dilemma: reducing the options you consider to just two, often diametrically opposed to each other and unfair to the people against whom the dilemma is posed. For example, "America: Love It or Leave It." A more subtle example from a student paper: "Since the universe could not have been created out of nothingness, it must have been created by an intelligent life force. . . ." Well, maybe, but is creation by an intelligent life force the only other possibility? This argument overlooks alternatives. Ethical arguments seem especially prone to false dilemmas. Either the fetus is a human being with all the rights you and I have, we say, or else it is a lump of tissue with no moral significance at all. Either every use of animal products is wrong, or all of the current uses are acceptable. In fact, other possibilities usually exist. Try to increase the number of options you consider, not narrow them! loaded language: language that primarily plays on the emotions. It does not make an argument at all, in truth, but is only a form of manipulation. See Rule 5, mere redescription: Offering a premise that really only rephrases the conclusion, rather than offering a specific, independent reason for it. (Mere redescription is a form of begging the question, 92 Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies broadly speaking, but here the premise and the conclusion are not distinguished enough for us to say that the premise really presupposes the conclusion. It's more helpful to recognize mere redescription as a separate fallacy.) Leo: Marisol is a fine architect. Lalla: Why do you say that? Leo: Marisol is a very capable designer of buildings. But being a fine architect is basically the same thing as being a very capable designer of buildings. Leo hasn't really offered any specific evidence for his first claim, but only restated it. Actual evidence might be professional recognitions and well-regarded buildings that Marisol has designed. A classical satirical example of mere redescription occurs in Molière's play The Imaginary Invalid. One of the doctor's attendants explains why a certain medicine helps people to sleep by saying that it has a "dormitive principle." This sounds very helpful and scientific until you realize that it simply says that the medicine puts people to sleep—nothing about how or why. It looks like an explanation but in fact it explains nothing, only repeats itself in Latin. Ig-Bay-ele-Day, non sequitur: drawing a conclusion that "does not follow," that is, a conclusion that is not a reasonable inference from, or even related to, the evidence. This is a very general term for a bad argument. Try to figure out specifically what is supposed to be wrong with it, overgeneralizing: generalizing from too few examples. Just because your student friends are all athletes or business majors or vegetarians, it doesn't follow that all of your fellow students are the same (remember Rules 7 and 8). You can't generalize even from a large sample unless it is demonstrably representative. Take care! overlooking alternatives: forgetting that things may happen for a variety of reasons, not just one. For example, Rule 19 pointed out Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies 93 that just because events E1 and E2 may correlate, it does not follow that E1 causes E2. E2 could cause E1; something else could cause both E1 and E2; E1 may cause E2 and E2 may cause E1; or E1 and E2 might not even be related. False dilemma is another example: there are usually many more options than two. persuasive definition: defining a term in a way that may seem to be straightforward but in fact is loaded. For example, someone might define "evolution" as "the atheistic view that species develop as a result of mere chance events over a supposed period of billions of years." Persuasive definitions may be favorably loaded too: for example, someone might define a "conservative" as "a person with a realistic view of human limits," *petitio principii*: Latin for begging the question, poisoning the well: using loaded language to disparage an argument before even mentioning it. I'm confident you haven't been taken in by those few holdouts who still harbor the superstition that. . . . More subtly: No sensitive person thinks that. . . . post hoc, ergo propter hoc (literally, "after this, therefore because of this"; sometimes just called the post hoc fallacy): assuming causation too readily on the basis of mere succession in time. Again a very general term for what Chapter V tries to make precise. Return to Chapter V and try to figure out if other causal explanations are more plausible, red herring: introducing an irrelevant or secondary subject and thereby diverting attention from the main subject. Usually the red herring is an issue about which people get heated quickly, so that no one notices how their attention is being diverted. In a discussion of 94 Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies the relative safety of different makes of cars, for instance, the issue of which cars are made in America is a red herring, straw person: a caricature of an opposing view, exaggerated from what anyone is likely to hold, so that it is easy to refute. See Rule 5, Appendix II Definitions Some arguments require attention to the meaning of words. Sometimes we may not know the established meaning of a word, or the established meaning may be specialized. If the conclusion of your argument is that "Wejacks are herbivorous," your first task is to define your terms, unless you are speaking to an Algonquian ecologist.11 If you encounter this conclusion elsewhere, the first thing you need is a dictionary. Other times, a term may be in popular use but still unclear. We debate "assisted suicide," for example, but don't necessarily understand exactly what it means. Before we can argue effectively about it, we need an agreed-upon idea of what we are arguing about. Still another kind of definition is required when the meaning of a term is contested. What is a "drug," for example? Is alcohol a drug? Is tobacco? What if they are? Can we find any logical way to answer these questions? D1 When terms are unclear, get specific A neighbor of mine was taken to task by the city's Historic Districts Commission for putting up a four-foot model lighthouse in her front yard. City ordinances prohibit any yard fixtures in historic districts. She was hauled before the commission 11. "Wejack" is the Algonquian name for a weasel-like animal of eastern North America called the "fisher" in English. "Herbivorous" are animals that eat only or mostly plants. Actually, wejacks are not herbivorous. 95 96 D1. When terms are unclear, get specific and told to remove it. A furor erupted and the story got into the newspapers. Here the dictionary saved the day. According to Webster's, a "fixture" is something fixed or attached, as to a building, such as a permanent appendage or structural part. The lighthouse, however, was movable—more like a lawn ornament. Hence, it was not a "fixture"—seeing as the law did not specify any alternative definition. Hence, not prohibited. When issues get more difficult, dictionaries are less helpful. Dictionary definitions often offer synonyms, for one thing, that may be just as unclear as the word you're trying to define. Dictionaries also may give multiple definitions, so you have to choose between them. And sometimes, dictionaries are just plain wrong. Webster's may be the hero of the last story, but it also defines "headache" as "a pain in the head"—far too broad a definition. A bee sting or cut on your forehead or nose would be a pain in the head but not a headache. For some words, then, you need to make the term more precise yourself. Use concrete, definite terms rather than vague ones (Rule 4). Be specific without narrowing the term too much. Organic foods are foods produced without chemical fertilizers or pesticides. Definitions like this call a clear idea to mind, something you can investigate or evaluate. Be sure, of course, to stick to your definition as you go on with your argument (no equivocation). One virtue of the dictionary is that it is fairly neutral. Webster's defines "abortion," for example, as "the forcible expulsion of the mammalian fetus prematurely." This is an appropriately neutral definition. It is not up to the dictionary to decide if abortion is moral or immoral. Compare a common definition from one side of the abortion debate: "Abortion" means "murdering babies." This definition is loaded. Fetuses are not the same as babies, and the term "murder" unfairly imputes evil intentions to well-intentioned people. That ending the life of a fetus is comparable to ending the life of a baby is an arguable proposition, but it is for an argument to D2. When terms are contested, work from the clear cases 97 show—not simply assume by definition. (See also Rule 5, and the fallacy of persuasive definition.) You may need to do a little research. You will find, for example, that "assisted suicide" means allowing doctors to help aware and rational people arrange and carry out their own dying. It does not include allowing doctors to "unplug" patients without their consent (that would be some form of "involuntary euthanasia"—a different category). People may have good reasons to object to assisted suicide as defined, but if the definition is made clear at the outset, at least the contending parties will be talking about the same thing. Sometimes we can define a term by specifying certain tests or procedures that determine whether or not it applies. This is called an operational definition. For example, Wisconsin law requires that all legislative meetings be open to the public. But what exactly counts as a "meeting" for purposes of this law? The law offers an elegant criterion: A "meeting" is any gathering of enough legislators to block action on the legislative measure that is the subject of the gathering. This definition is far too narrow to define the ordinary word "meeting." But it does accomplish the purpose of this law: to prevent legislators from making crucial decisions out of the public eye. D2 When terms are contested, work from the clear cases Sometimes a term is contested. That is, people argue over the proper application of the term itself. In that case, it is not enough simply to propose a clarification. A more involved kind of argument is needed. When a term is contested, you can distinguish three relevant sets of things. One set includes those things to which the term clearly applies. The second includes those things to which the term clearly does not apply. In the middle will be those things whose status is unclear—including the things being argued over. Your job is to formulate a definition that 98 D2. When terms are contested, work from the clear cases 1. includes all the things that the term clearly fits; 2. excludes all the things that the term clearly does not fit; and 3. draws the plainest possible line somewhere in between, and explains why the line belongs there and not somewhere else. For example, consider what defines a "bird." Exactly what is a bird, anyway? Is a bat a bird? To meet requirement 1, it is often helpful to begin with the general category (genus) to which the things being defined belong. For birds, the natural genus would be animals. To meet requirements 2 and 3, we then need to specify how birds differ from other animals (the differential). Our question therefore is: precisely what differentiates birds—all birds and only birds—from other animals? It's trickier than it may seem. We can't draw the line at flight, for example, because ostriches and penguins don't fly (so the proposed definition wouldn't cover all birds, violating the first requirement), and humbees and mosquitoes do (so the proposed definition would include some nonbirds, violating the second). What distinguishes all and only birds, it turns out, is having feathers. Penguins and ostriches have feathers even though they don't fly—they're still birds. But flying insects do not, and neither in case you were wondering) do bats. Now consider a harder case: what defines a "drug"? Start again with the clear cases. Heroin, cocaine, and marijuana clearly are drugs. Air, water, most foods, and shampoos clearly are not drugs—though all of these are "substances," like drugs, and are all ingested or applied to our body parts. Unclear cases include tobacco and alcohol.12 Our question, then, is: Does any general description cover all of the clear cases of drugs and none of the substances that clearly aren't drugs, drawing a clear line in between? A drug has been defined—even by a presidential commission—as a substance that affects mind or body in some way. But this 12. Unclear in another way are substances such as aspirin, antibiotics, vitamins, and antidepressants—the kinds of substances we buy in "drugstores" and call "drugs" in a pharmaceutical sense. But these are medicines and not drugs in the moral sense we are exploring. D3. Definitions don't replace arguments 99 definition is far too broad. It includes air, water, food, and so on, too, so it fails on the second requirement. We also can't define a drug as an illegal substance that affects mind or body in some way. This definition might cover more or less the right set of substances, but it does not meet requirement 3. It does not explain why the line belongs where it is. After all, part of the point of trying to define "drug" in the first place might well be to decide which substances should be legal and which should not! Defining a drug as an illegal substance short-circuits this project. (Technically, it commits the fallacy of begging the question.) Try this: A "drug" is a substance used primarily to alter our state of mind in some specific way. Heroin, cocaine, and marijuana obviously count. Food, air, and water don't—because even though they have effects on the mind, the effects are not specific and are not the primary reason why we eat, breathe, and drink. Unclear cases we then approach with the question: is the primary effect specific and on the mind? Perception-distorting and mood-altering effects do seem to be the chief concern in current moral debates about drugs, so arguably this definition captures the kind of distinction people really want to make. Should we add that drugs are addictive? Maybe not. Some substances are addictive but not drugs—certain foods, perhaps. And what if a substance that "alter[s] our state of mind in some specific way" turns out to be nonaddictive (as some people have claimed about marijuana, for example)? Is it therefore not a drug? Maybe addiction defines "drug abuse," but not "drug" as such. D3 Definitions don't replace arguments Definitions help us to organize our thoughts, group like things with like, and pick out key similarities and differences. Sometimes, after words are clearly defined, people may even discover that they do not really disagree about an issue at all. 100 D3. Definitions don't replace arguments By themselves, though, definitions seldom settle difficult questions. We seek to define "drug," for example, partly to decide what sort of stance to take toward certain substances. But such a definition cannot answer this question by itself. Under the proposed definition, coffee is a drug. Caffeine certainly alters the state of the mind in specific ways. It is even addictive. But does it follow that coffee should be banned? No, because the effect is mild and socially positive for many people. Some attempt to weigh benefits against harms is necessary before we can draw any conclusions. Marijuana is a drug under the proposed definition. Should it be banned? Just as with coffee, more argument is necessary. Some people claim that marijuana has only mild and socially positive effects too. Supposing they're right, you could argue that mari juana shouldn't be banned even though it is a drug (like coffee). Others argue that it has far worse effects and tends to be a "gateway" to harder drugs besides. If they're right, you could argue for banning marijuana whether it is a drug or not. Or perhaps marijuana is most akin to certain antidepressants and stimulants—medicines that (take note) also turn out to be drugs on the proposed definition, but call not for bans but for control. Alcohol, meanwhile, is a drug under the proposed definition. In fact, it is the most widely used drug of all. Its harms are enormous, including kidney disease, birth defects, half of all traffic deaths, and more. Should it be limited or banned? Maybe—although there are counterarguments too. Once again, though, this question is not settled by the determination that alcohol is a drug. Here the effects make the difference. In short, definitions contribute to clarity, but seldom do they make arguments all by themselves. Clarify your terms—know exactly what questions you're asking—but don't expect that clarity alone will answer them. Resources The general subject of this book is usually labeled "critical thinking." If you're a student wanting to learn more about the subject, look for Critical Thinking courses or other introductory philosophy courses with "reasoning" in their title that are offered at your school. To read more, you can find dozens of textbooks for such courses online or in college or university libraries, including David Morrow's and my A Workbook for Arguments (Hackett, Second Edition, 2016), a companion keyed exactly to this book. Another good recent text is Lewis Vaughn's The Power of Critical Thinking (Oxford, many editions). Critical thinking used to be called "informal logic," in contrast to the formal kind. The study of formal logic begins with the deductive forms presented in Chapter VI and expands them into a symbolic system of much greater scope. If you want to look in that direction, once again there are dozens of textbooks and other guides available, under the keywords "logic" or "symbolic logic." Some textbooks combine formal and informal logic: a fine example is David Kelley. The Art of Reasoning (Norton, Fourth Edition, 2013). The field of rhetoric examines the persuasive use of language, especially in arguments. One good text in the field is The Aims of Argument: A Text and Reader by Timothy Crusius and Carolyn Channell (McGraw-Hill, many editions). For an "invitational," noncombative approach to rhetoric and oral argumentation, see Sonja and Karen Foss' excellent Inviting Transformation: Presentational Speaking for a Changing World (Waveland Press, Third Edition, 2011). A useful guide to the rhetorical as well as logical "moves" in academic writing in particular is Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein's They Say, I Say (Norton, Third Edition, 2014). On the role of critical thinking in ethics, see my book A 21st Century Ethical Toolbox (Oxford, Fourth Edition, 2018). On the role of ethics in critical thinking, see Chapters 11 and 12 of Toolbox, specifically, as well as Martin Fowler's The Ethical Practice of Critical Thinking (Carolina Academic Press, 2008). On the creative writing of arguments, see Frank Clifton, Imaginative Argument: A Practical Manifesto for Writers (Princeton University Press, 2005). 101 102 Resources On the fallacies specifically, see Howard Kahane and Nancy Cavender, Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric (Wadsworth, many editions). On style, still unmatched is William Strunk and E. B. White's The Elements of Style (Macmillan, many editions)—a book in spirit much like this one. Keep them together on a shelf somewhere, and don't let them gather dust! From academic writing to personal and public discourse, the need for good arguments and better ways of arguing is greater than ever before. This timely fifth edition of A Rulebook for Arguments sharpens an already-classic text, adding updated examples and a new chapter on public debates that provides rules for the etiquette and ethics of sound public dialogue as well as clear and sound thinking in general. On the previous edition: "This is the ultimate 'how-to' book for anyone who wants to use reasons and evidence in support of conclusions, to be clear instead of confusing, persuasive instead of dogmatic, and better at evaluating the arguments of others." —Debra Nails, Professor of Philosophy Emerita, Michigan State University Also Available from Hackett Publishing Company A Workbook for Arguments: A Complete Course in Critical Thinking, Second Edition David R. Morrow and Anthony Weston A Workbook for Arguments builds on Anthony Weston's A Rulebook for Arguments to provide a complete textbook for a course in critical thinking or informal logic. On the first edition: "Quite simply, one of the best critical-thinking texts I have read. Unlike many critical-thinking books, there is a particular and efficacious focus on helping the reader write an argumentative essay. . . . There are over sixty exercise sets, not one of which is frivolous. The model responses are typically excellent, some providing both weak and strong examples for answers, and the answers are often followed by commentary. . . . The expository clarity is as good as it gets." —Chris Jackson, Teaching Philosophy Anthony Weston is Professor of Philosophy and Environmental Studies at Elon University. ISBN-13: 978-1-62466-654-4 900000 Cover art: False Dilemma by E. L. Wilson. Printed by permission of the artist. 9 781624 666544 Year: 2,018 Edition: 5th City: Cambridge Pages: 120 Pages 11 File: 120 Language: English Identifier: 9781624666551, 1624666558 Org File Size: 823,633 Extension: pdf Tags: Reasoning Logic English language - Rhetoric Toc: Front cover Half title Title Copyright Contents Preface Note to the Fifth Edition Introduction I. Short Arguments. Some General Rules 1. Resolve premises and conclusion 2. Unfold your ideas in a natural order 3. Start from reliable premises 4. Be concrete and concise 5. Build on substance, not overturn 6. Use consistent terms II. Arguments by Example 7. Use more than one example 8. Use representative examples 9. Background rates are often crucial 10. Statistics need a critical eye 11. Reckon with counter examples III. Arguments by Analogy 12. Analogies require relevantly similar examplesIV. Arguments from Authority 13. Cite your sources 14. Seek informed sources 15. Seek impartial sources 16. Cross-check sources 17. Build your Internet savvy V. Arguments about Causes 18. Causal arguments start with correlations 19. Correlations may have alternative explanations 20. Work toward the most likely explanation 21. Expect complexity VI. Deductive Arguments 22. Modus ponens 23. Modus tollens 24. Hypothetical syllogism 25. Disjunctive syllogism 26. Dilemma 27. Reductio ad absurdum. 28. Deductive arguments in multiple stepsVII. Extended Arguments 29. Explore the issue 30. Spell out basic ideas as arguments 31. Defend basic premises with arguments of their own 32. Reckon with objections 33. Explore alternatives VIII. Argumentative Essays 34. Jump right in 35. Use a definite claim or proposal 36. Your argument is your outline 37. Detail objections and meet them 38. Seek feedback and use it 39. Modesty, please! IX. Oral Arguments 40. Ask for a hearing 41. Be fully prepared 42. Signpost energetically 43. Hew your visuals to your argument 44. End in style. X. Public Debates45. Do argument proof 46. Listen, learn, leverage 47. Offer something positive 48. Work from common ground 49. At least be civil 50. Leave them thinking when you go Appendix I: Some Common Fallacies Appendix II: Definitions D1. When terms are unclear, get specific D2. When terms are contested, work from the clear cases D3. Definitions don't replace arguments Resources Back cover.

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