

Arguments and Arguing

*The Products and Process of
Human Decision Making*

*Thomas A. Hollihan
Kevin T. Baaske*

Arguments

and

Arguing

The Products and Process of
Human Decision Making

Thomas A. Hollihan
University of Southern California

Kevin T. Baaske
California State University, Los Angeles



Prospect Heights, Illinois

For information about this book, write or call:

Waveland Press, Inc.
P.O. Box 400
Prospect Heights, Illinois 60070
(847) 634-0081

Acknowledgments

"A Model for Systems Analysis," from pages 3–4 of *Public Policy Decision-Making: Systems Analysis and Comparative Advantage Debate* by Bernard L. Brock. Copyright © 1973 by Harper & Row Publishers, Inc. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Bill Clinton's presidential nomination acceptance speech, used with permission, Democratic National Committee.

George Bush's presidential nomination acceptance speech, used with permission, Republican National Committee.

Final round of the Cross Examination Debate Association National Tournament, from *Championship Debates and Speeches*, Vol. 7, 1993, by American Forensic Association.

Copyright © 1994 by Thomas A. Hollihan and Kevin T. Baaske
1998 reissued by Waveland Press, Inc.

ISBN 1-57766-038-2

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

Arguments and Arguing: The Products and Process of Human Decision Making is intended to meet the needs of students enrolled in undergraduate courses in argumentation. Because the text also introduces students to rhetorical theory, and to several of the most important theorists, it may also be suitable for courses in rhetoric. The book offers chapters on arguing in specialized fields and contexts, including: academic debate, courts of law, political campaigns, business and organizations, and interpersonal communication. Thus, it may also be of interest to those seeking materials for courses in these areas.

Why This Book at This Time?

This book, probably like many textbooks, was born as much from a sense of frustration as one of inspiration. The frustration developed because the books available to us did not really suit the approach that we took to our classes. We both teach argumentation at the undergraduate and graduate level. There are many very fine undergraduate argumentation texts available. However, there seemed to be a profound gap between the materials available for undergraduate classes and the recent argumentation scholarship being published in our journals, presented at our conferences, and taught in graduate courses. Most undergraduate texts do not discuss the contemporary theoretical developments in argumentation, and if they do discuss them, they seem to do so only by appending a small explanation of these developments to an already completed manuscript. In essence, most books are not written from any particular theoretical perspective. We hope that you will find our book different.

Ours is the first undergraduate text to embrace the narrative or storytelling approach to the study of argumentation. The narrative approach has attracted significant attention from argumentation theorists and critics for several years, but it has not been the organizing focus of an undergraduate text. Most argumentation books emphasize the “formal” aspects of reasoning. They are written as if their audience was composed almost exclusively of debaters, and as if academic debate was the paradigm for how arguments should be conducted. We think this approach misleads students, and makes learning about argumentation seem unimportant or artificial. Many students will never engage in formal debating, and most will not do so once they leave college. Yet all students will argue throughout their lives.

While this book also teaches some of the techniques and principles of debate, it assumes that debate is but one forum for creating and evaluating arguments. This book emphasizes that arguments exist wherever humans interact, and that the process of arguing is therefore as humanly natural as is eating or sleeping. This book refutes the assumption that rhetorical theory, argumentation, interpersonal communication, and persuasion are separate and unconnected subfields. It stresses their relationship and the ways in which their subject matter overlaps. Finally, the book tries to engage students by offering clear, compelling, and current examples of the principles that are discussed.

The Organizational Plan

Arguments and Arguing is organized into two parts. Part I discusses the general principles and theories of argumentation. It introduces the narrative approach to argumentation, and draws heavily on Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm. We also discuss Kenneth Burke's dramaturgic theory of communication, especially his discussions of the importance of the symbol as an instrument for communication. To establish the claim that arguments are a naturally occurring dimension of communication, we cite the work of Wayne Brockriede. These early chapters also draw upon Karl Wallace and Milton Rokeach in exploring how values shape arguments, and on Chaim Perelman in discussing the importance of audience. We also introduce Stephen Toulmin's notion of argument fields at this juncture to support our view that arguments should be adapted to particular audiences and contexts. The remaining chapters in Part I look at how arguments are actually developed. We examine alternative techniques for analysis, different types of arguments, and the grounds for establishing arguments. Finally, we offer suggestions both for creating and refuting arguments.

In Part II we introduce the different characteristics and requirements for creating arguments in specialized field contexts. One chapter familiarizes students with academic debate; a second, for students expecting to participate in tournament-type debating, deals with the more complex issues of debate theory. The remaining chapters discuss the unique requirements for arguing in political campaigns, the courtroom, business or organizations, or in interpersonal conversations.

Acknowledgments

This book has been influenced by many people, including those who taught us about arguments, our colleagues (with whom we have argued!), and the many students whom we have taught how to argue. We are reluctant to name people

individually, for we will surely omit someone, but there are some people who must be mentioned. We would especially like to thank: Jim Klumpp, Walt Fisher, Stephen O’Leary, and Randy Lake, colleagues who give meaning to the term “collegiality.” We are grateful to the following reviewers: Jeffery L. Bineham, St. Cloud State University; Pat Ganer, Cypress College; Steven R. Goldzwig, Marquette University; Dale A. Herbeck, Boston College; Jack Kay, Wayne State University; and Robert Powell, California State University, Fresno. Patti Riley deserves a special thank you for her countless ideas, helpful feedback, and supreme patience. A special thank you also to Nancy Baaske for her support and assistance.

Jane Lambert served as our editor, supervising the preparation of the manuscript in its formative stages. Nancy Lyman assumed responsibility next, and actually made sure that the finished product made it to the presses. We would like to thank both of them for their help.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank Alexandra and Sean Hollihan, and Megan Baaske, who had to defer many weekends of fun until after their Dads got this book finished.

T.A.H.

K.T.B.

Los Angeles, California

Arguments

and

Arguing

The Products and Process of
Human Decision Making

Contents

PART I Principles of Argumentation 1

1 Argumentation as a Human Symbolic Activity 3

- Senses of the Term *Argument* 4
- Argumentation and Individual Decision Making 6
- Argumentation and Democratic Decision Making 6
- Argumentation and Values 7
- Ethics and Argumentation 10
- Summary 12
- Key Terms* 12 / *Activities* 12 / *Recommended Readings* 13 / *Notes* 13

2 The Foundations of Argument 15

- The Narrative Paradigm 18
- The Class in Argumentation 21
- The Limits of Argument 22
- Summary 24
- Key Terms* 24 / *Activities* 24 / *Recommended Readings* 25 / *Notes* 25

3 Audiences and Fields of Argument 27

- Knowing Your Audience 28
- Assessing Your Audience 29
- People Evaluate Arguments Differently 32
- The Principle of *Presence* 33
- Argument Fields 34
- Summary 37
- Key Terms* 37 / *Activities* 37 / *Recommended Readings* 38 / *Notes* 39

4 The Language of Argument 40

- Understanding Language 41
- Language and Good Stories 43
- Metaphor 48
- Summary 51
- Key Terms* 51 / *Activities* 51 / *Recommended Readings* 52 / *Notes* 53

5 Argumentation and Critical Thinking 55

Propositions 56

Types of Propositions 57

The Techniques for Analyzing Propositions 60

Summary 72

Key Terms 72 / Activities 72 / Recommended Readings 73 / Notes 74

6 Types of Arguments 75

Inductive Arguments 76

Deductive Arguments 81

The Deductive Syllogism 83

The Toulmin Model 87

Summary 90

Key Terms 91 / Activities 91 / Recommended Readings 91 / Notes 92

7 The Grounds for Argument 93

The Nature of Grounds 94

Premises 94

Examples 98

Statistics 98

Testimony 102

Summary 105

Key Terms 105 / Activities 105 / Recommended Readings 106 / Notes 106

8 Building Arguments 108

Defining Research 108

Planning the Research Process 109

What to Research 110

How to Record the Evidence 117

What to Look for When Researching 119

Recording the Text of the Evidence 121

Organizing Your Advocacy 122

Summary 124

Key Terms 124 / Activities 124 / Recommended Readings 125 / Notes 125

9 Refuting Arguments 126

The Refutation Process Defined 127

Focused Listening (Step One) 127

Critically Evaluating Arguments (Step Two) 128

Formulating a Response (Step Three)	133
Presenting the Response (Step Four)	137
Summary	139
<i>Key Terms</i>	139 / <i>Activities</i>
<i>Recommended Readings</i>	140 / <i>Notes</i>
	140

PART II Argumentation in Specialized Fields 141

10 Basic Academic Debate 143

The Resolution	144
Two Types of Academic Debating	145
Format	145
The Nature of Debate Arguments	148
Flow Sheeting as Systematic Note-Taking	154
Summary	159
<i>Key Terms</i>	159 / <i>Activities</i>
<i>Recommended Readings</i>	160 / <i>Notes</i>
	160

11 Advanced Academic Debate 161

The Debate Judge as Audience	161
The Resolution	164
Proposals and Counterplans	169
Thinking Strategically	172
Alternative Debate Formats	174
Summary	175
<i>Key Terms</i>	176 / <i>Activities</i>
<i>Recommended Readings</i>	177 / <i>Notes</i>
	177

12 Argumentation in Political Campaigns 179

Questions of Character	181
Stories of History, the Present, and the Future	183
Argumentative Themes and Issues	184
The Structure and Form of Campaign Arguments	185
Political Debating	186
Summary	188
<i>Key Terms</i>	188 / <i>Activities</i>
<i>Recommended Readings</i>	189 / <i>Notes</i>
	189

13 Argumentation and the Law 192

The American Judicial System	193
The Assumptions of the System	194
The Role of the Attorney	196
The Discovery Phase	197

xii ♦ Contents

Developing the Theory of the Case	197
Selecting the Jury	199
The Trial	201
Summary	206
<i>Key Terms</i>	206 / <i>Activities</i> 206 / <i>Recommended Readings</i> 207 / <i>Notes</i> 207

14 Argumentation in Business and Organizations 208

Storytelling in Organizations	208
Preparing Your Arguments	210
Shaping the Message	211
The Oral Presentation	214
Encountering Resistance	215
Follow-up Activities	217
Summary	217
<i>Key Terms</i>	218 / <i>Activities</i> 218 / <i>Recommended Readings</i> 218 / <i>Notes</i> 219

15 Argumentation in Interpersonal Relations 220

A Conversational Theory of Argument	222
Strategic Dimensions of Conversational Argument	225
Argumentation and Self-Esteem	227
The Importance of Empathic Listening	228
Summary	229
<i>Key Terms</i>	229 / <i>Activities</i> 229 / <i>Recommended Readings</i> 230 / <i>Notes</i> 231

Epilogue 233

Appendices 235

Appendix A: Two Political Speeches	235
Bill Clinton, Acceptance Speech for the Democratic Presidential Nomination, New York City, July 16, 1992	235
George Bush, Acceptance Speech for the Republican Presidential Nomination, Houston, August 20, 1992	241
Appendix B: Value Debate Transcript	249
Final Round of the 1993 Cross Examination Debate Association	249

Glossary 285

Index 295

PART I

Principles of Argumentation

Our goal in this book is to demonstrate the important role that arguments play in helping you to understand complex issues, form opinions, shape decisions, and resolve disagreements. We therefore present argumentation as an essential dimension of the human communication process. Part I of the book introduces you to argumentation theory and principles, and Part II considers the unique characteristics of argumentation in specialized fields or contexts.

In Chapter 1 we introduce the notion that humans rely on symbols to create and share meanings. Because humans create different meanings and hold different opinions, the urge to argue is natural. This chapter focuses on the different meanings of the term argument, the importance of argumentation in decision making, and the role that our values play in the arguments we develop. Finally, Chapter 1 discusses the importance of ethics in argumentation.

Chapter 2 examines the stories people use to structure and create their arguments. These stories help people to understand and evaluate arguments, and provide an important means for using arguments to explore complex issues.

Chapter 3 makes the case that because arguments are typically generated to influence someone's opinions or actions and are shaped by human values, arguers should consider the beliefs or values of their audience when creating their claims.

Arguments are, of course, expressed through language. In Chapter 4 we focus on the linguistic dimensions of arguments. Specifically, this chapter looks at our use of linguistic devices in the creation and evaluation of stories.

In Chapter 5 we consider the role that argumentation plays in the development of critical thinking skills. This chapter discusses different strategies used in

2 ♦ Principles of Argumentation

argumentative analysis, and offers recommendations that will sharpen your analytical skills.

Chapter 6 discusses different types of arguments, focusing on the differences between inductive and deductive claims. This chapter also introduces the syllogism, and offers insight into how arguments can be diagrammed.

In Chapter 7 our attention turns to the grounds for argument. We include here a discussion of how arguments are discovered and how they are evaluated. This chapter considers the different types of grounds available to arguers, and also contains a brief discussion of the unique challenge that the use of statistical support poses.

Chapters 8 and 9 are really companion chapters. In Chapter 8 we focus on the process of building arguments. The chapter discusses the importance of research, offers recommendations for conducting research, suggests strategies for note-taking, and gives advice on how to organize your findings into arguments. Chapter 9 then focuses on refuting arguments, or the process of undermining the argumentative claims advanced by others. This chapter also discusses some very common fallacies (arguments that are logically flawed), and provides advice on how fallacies can be identified.

By the time you have finished Part I of *Arguments and Arguing* you should have a well formed understanding of the component parts and principles of argumentation. This groundwork should prepare you for the discussion of the unique traits of argumentation in specialized settings that is offered in Part II.

Argumentation as a Human Symbolic Activity

The feature that most distinguishes humans from other creatures is their capacity for using **symbols**.¹ Symbols might be defined as special types of signs. As the name implies, “signs call attention to significances: they relate to what has been perceived; they point to, indicate, or denote something other than themselves.”² Symbols are the primary building blocks of our language system, and they allow us to name objects, emotions, and actions, and to share our thoughts and feelings with others. The ability to share in a symbol system permits us to build social communities and to jointly solve problems in order to improve the quality of our lives. This symbolic capacity also puts us in touch with the past. Through the sharing of significant symbols, both orally in the form of stories, and through personal journals, books, manuscripts, and even films, we learn of the events, values, and experiences of those who lived before us. Thus, humans have the complex and sophisticated ability to symbolically experience the past and to anticipate the future.

As symbol users we are constantly seeking ways to improve the quality of our lives. No matter how satisfying our current situation, we are apt to imagine ways in which our lives, our society, and our world can be improved. Much of our symbolic “tinkering” is designed to achieve such improvements. We also continually encounter problems that we believe must be resolved. We seek material rewards so that we can live both more comfortably and free from want. We encounter diseases that cut short lives and so we try to find cures. We witness problems in our schools and so we seek ways to improve our educational system. We see the personal and social destruction caused by drug abuse and we look for solutions. We see damage to our environment and we look for ways to conserve and better manage our resources. In all of these activities, we use symbols to name the problems that we face, to develop common understandings, and to propose and evaluate solutions.

Because humans are fundamentally social beings, we derive satisfaction from our interactions with others. Throughout history humans have improved their

condition in life by pooling their knowledge and sharing their discoveries with each other. Despite this instinctive pull to interact with other people and to build social communities, we often pursue objectives that seem fundamentally incompatible with those that are pursued by others. In our personal and public lives, in relationships between friends and lovers, and in relationships between nations and cultures, our problems sometimes seem so great as to be insolvable—beyond compromise, beyond accommodation.

Our collective experience, the accumulated understanding of history, demonstrates that when communication fails and people cannot reach accommodations with each other, the potential for misunderstanding, conflict, and even war dramatically increases. The situations that spark conflict will never disappear. Thus, learning how to reach understanding, how to identify, analyze, name, and then solve the problems that we individually and collectively face is essential if we wish to live in harmony.

This book provides the communication skills required for human problem solving and decision making and for the maintenance of effective and harmonious social relations. This book is about **arguments**—the claims that people make when they are asserting their opinions and supporting their beliefs—and **arguing**—the process of resolving differences of opinion through communication.

Senses of the Term *Argument*

Two different, but equally important, senses of the term *argument*³ correspond to two of argument's most important objectives—effective decision making and the achievement of social harmony. The first, which can be called *Argument 1*, refers to the claims that people make. As we have mentioned, when people encounter problems they seek solutions. To find solutions they must consider the causes of the problems, and they must weigh the costs and benefits of different solutions. Advances in all aspects of human intellectual life evidence the creativity and the reasoning capacity of human decision makers. Our intense desire to understand our world and to improve our condition in it, combined with our ability to reason and to argue, prompts us to assert our knowledge claims—in essence, testing them out through this exposure.

We know that people respond to problems in a variety of ways. As a result of differences in their experience, culture, education, values, interests, objectives, and so forth, people will isolate different problems and propose different solutions. These different opinions compete for acceptance within society. We also know that not all opinions are deemed equal. Some ideas seem more credible and compelling than others, and some people are granted more credibility than others. Just as people's differences cause them to respond to problems differently, they will also evaluate arguments differently. The "marketplace of ideas" is thus a marketplace of competing arguments, where the "sellers"—arguers hawking their worldviews—seek to find "buyers" who will

accept their claims. Eventually, some arguments win support and perhaps gain wide public agreement, while other arguments fall by the wayside and are eventually forgotten. Why some arguments win support while others fail is among the primary issues discussed in this book.

The second sense of the term argument, which can be called *Argument2*, refers not to the statements and claims that people make, but rather to the type of interactions in which these claims are developed. This sense of the term *argument* refers to an interaction characterized by disagreement. To argue with someone is to have a dispute with them. From this perspective, an argument does not exist until some person perceives what is happening as an argument.⁴ Most textbooks in argumentation emphasize the first sense of the term argument and not the second sense. These books primarily want to help people learn how to become better arguers, meaning more insightful or analytical arguers. While this is also one of our primary goals, we believe that the second sense of the term argument is also important. The ability to conduct a civilized and polite argument with someone—the ability to argue and disagree with someone while also managing to protect your relationship with them—is one of the most important things that people must learn.

Often, people are taught that they should avoid arguing with others. In our society, arguments are often seen as unhealthy and destructive. Our language system itself is predisposed toward agreement, and those who choose to argue are often viewed as disagreeable or even unpleasant.⁵ These people are often described as argumentative, which is certainly not a flattering term. We believe, however, that arguing can be healthy both for relationships and for societies. People argue to negotiate their social perspective with others and to enhance their understanding of complex problems. Our primary concern is that people learn how to argue constructively. Constructive arguments permit disagreements to surface so that people can examine alternative ways of viewing problems, identify different solutions, and select from the competing positions those that are most compelling.

These two senses of the term argument may be summarized as follows:

Argument1: Claims that people make.

Example: The United States has a moral obligation to send troops to Bosnia to protect the lives of Muslims.

Argument2: Types of interactions in which people engage.

Example: The dispute that would occur when someone disagreed with the above stated claim by, for instance, responding that the United States cannot always play the role of the world's peacekeeper, and that European nations should step in and protect the Muslims.

It is possible to make arguments (argument1) without engaging in disputes or disagreements (argument2). If we agreed on the need to send U.S. troops to Bosnia, for example, there would be no argument2. However, it is not possible to have disputes (argument2) without making knowledge claims (argument1). Disagreements are therefore expressed through argument1.

The distinction offered here between argument1 and argument2 is important because it illustrates that argumentation is not merely a problem-solving capability. Argumentation is a very basic social and communication skill, and it has profound importance for the quality and character of our interactions with others.

Argumentation and Individual Decision Making

We are continually compelled to make decisions in our personal lives. What college should I attend? What should be my major? Should I buy a car? Do I have the money to take the vacation that my friends are planning? For whom should I vote? Should I accept the job offer that will require me to move across the country and away from my friends and family? All of these decisions, and thousands like them that we make every day, test our analytical and argumentative abilities. Whenever we are compelled to carefully consider alternative choices and to make decisions, we make use of arguments. Thus, as a problem-solving activity, argumentation may involve decisions and choices that are distinctly intrapersonal in nature, issues that will never be disclosed to or discussed with others.

Often, however, we are called upon to discuss and account for our decisions. In such discussions we explain our actions to those people whose opinions matter to us. We want them to understand why we made the choices that we made. We make our choices based upon our understanding of the world and of the problems we face. We strive to be rational, and we want others to validate our rationality and to confirm that our choices were, in fact, the right ones. Most of us are accountable to others for many of the choices that we make. Obviously we are accountable to our parents; even after most of us have become adults we are driven by the desire to please them and to make them proud of us. We are also accountable to other family members, to employers, to coworkers, and to our friends. Thus, even intensely personal decisions must be argued out with an assumed audience in mind.

Argumentation and Democratic Decision Making

The ability to argue is a fundamental survival skill for life in a democracy. The ability to argue for the positions that you believe to be true is one important way that citizens are empowered. Our democratic political system assumes that citizens have the knowledge and the ability to decide complex issues for themselves, and the system's continued health and vitality depends upon the respect that citizens have for each other and for the democratic process. Democratic decision making requires an informed, capable, and interested citizenry.

The preservation of democracy also demands that people meet certain accepted standards of civility and decorum in their public lives. It is unseemly when our political candidates level their negative attacks and scurrilous charges