ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES OF Crgument



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Essential Strategies of Argument

Preface

The *Essentials of Argument* is a rhetoric on argument. This book has two aims: (1) to offer instruction on understanding, analyzing, and evaluating different types of arguments and (2) to provide guidance on writing effective arguments.

Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 introduce students to the skills of critical reading, note taking, summarizing, and the basic strategies of argument, in order to show them how to identify central ideas and techniques as a first step in understanding and analyzing arguments. The discussion, based on the Stephen Toulmin model of claim, warrant, backing, support, and qualifer, examines different kinds of arguments, explores basic argumentative strategies, and places particular emphasis on the importance of underlying assumptions, definition, and types of evidence in different disciplines. The uses (and abuses) of logic and language in argument are discussed in depth. Selections illustrating points in the discussion are on topics ranging from the serious—questions on AIDS, assisted suicide, and sexual harassment—to lighter analyses of training a pet, political correctness, and the unspoken rules governing friendship.

Chapter 6 provides guidance in writing effective arguments using a process model and discusses the important points of invention strategies, arriving at a thesis, adapting arguments for different audiences, using an outline, and revising a rough draft. The important role of critical thinking in bridging the gap between analyzing someone else's argument and generating one's own ideas is examined in detail. Students are introduced to the criteria important in evaluating the arguments of others and are provided with a sample student evaluation of an argument. The two short arguments for analysis with which the chapter ends include a tongue-in-cheek look at societal stereotyping of overweight people and a defense of the virtues of football for female fans.

Chapter 7 introduces students to the methods of inquiry used to generate an argument from sources. The process of writing an argument from sources is covered step by step, including the crucial aspects of finding a question to answer, using the print and computerized resources of the library, evaluating source materials, formulating the working thesis, note taking procedures, quoting, writing and revising a rough draft, and using both the MLA and APA styles of documentation.

In the text important principles of argument are illustrated by clear and timely examples. These readings include short editorials, adverxvi PREFACE

tisements, personal accounts, articles with graphs and tables, and selections written for academic audiences. Selections on AIDS, alcoholism, data bases, assisted suicide, ecology, immigration, gender roles, poverty, sexual harassment, friendship, pets, political correctness, alternate lifestyles, the jury system, democracy, football, black English, higher education, and primate behavior clarify important features of general reasoning and give students insight into specific characteristics of arguments across the disciplines.

Chapter 2, "Strategies of Argument," includes an in-depth treatment of different kinds of claims, specific advice on how different kinds of arguments might be developed, and full discussion of warrants in the Toulmin model of argument.

A full treatment of "Arguing Across the Disciplines" (Chapter 3) examines how claims are made and supported in different fields of study with sample arguments to analyze. Chapter 4 offers a discussion of traditional inductive and deductive reasoning (with illustrations of the most frequently encountered logical fallacies that appear in Appendix A). Chapter 5, "The Role of Language in Argument," features sections on advertising and other visual means of persuasion along with a discussion of humor, irony, parody, and satire, illustrated by four essays.

More than a hundred exercises and writing opportunities are integrated throughout the text at important stages to bring theory into practice. Many of these activities have been adapted to accommodate the Rogerian method.

Illustrative essays in different academic disciplines and a broad spectrum of exercises and activities give students ample opportunity to practice the skills they will need in writing their argument paper.

An up-to-date section on computerized data bases and on-line catalogs reflects changes in university libraries throughout the country. Chapter 7, "Writing an Argument from Sources," features student papers illustrating both the MLA and the APA styles of documentation, and reflects the latest MLA Handbook (1995, fourth edition).

The spectrum of subjects and points of view represented in the twenty-five readings and their varying lengths and levels of difficulty will accommodate a variety of teaching approaches. The annotated table of contents identifies the subject, purpose, and central idea of each selection. End-of-selection questions explore the substance of each reading and its argumentative strategies. These questions are intended to engage students' interest in the key issues in the text and to direct their attention to the ways in which authors adapt their arguments for specific audiences. Some of the end-of-selection questions might best be handled by analytical essays that evaluate the author's purpose in writing the selection, underlying assumption, tone or "voice" chosen, and success in adapting the presentation for a particular audience or occasion.

When the author's purpose in a selection is to argue for the acceptance of a proposition or to persuade the audience to take or approve an action, the student's analysis can assess the author's use of evidence (both for and against the position being presented) and his or her reasoning (whether it is clear, logical, compelling, and so forth). When the author's purpose is to demonstrate how to solve a problem or relate how a problem was solved, the student's analysis can address questions of (1) whether there is a clear definition of the problem, (2) whether there is sufficient background presented to demonstrate why there is a problem and what previous attempts have been made to solve it, and (3) why the solution of this problem would be important.

These selections also reveal that the assumptions underlying a particular reading are very closely tied to the author's purpose. For this reason, some questions ask students to draw up a list of these assumptions before deciding what the author's purpose might be. Once the assumptions are identified, students can compare the author's assumptions with their own beliefs, determine whether the assumptions are commonly held, and thus be in a better position to evaluate the validity of the author's statements. Discussion questions direct attention toward the tone or voice the author chooses to project to the audience. Other questions also ask students to evaluate this aspect of argument by focusing on the writer's choice of words, sentence structure, use of punctuation, choice of person, and success in matching the tone of the article with the subject, the audience, and the occasion.

The wide range of selections in this text will give students ample opportunity to see how writers attempt to persuade different audiences: the general public, scholars, or professionals in a particular academic field of study.

Instructor's Manual

An accompanying instructor's manual provides (1) strategies for teaching argumentative writing, (2) suggested answers to the end-of-selection questions, and (3) supplemental bibliographies of books and periodicals for students who wish to follow up any of the opposing viewpoints or in-depth thematic units for their argument papers from sources.

Acknowledgments

No expression of thanks can adequately convey my gratitude to all those teachers of composition who offered thoughtful comments and gave this book the benefit of their scholarship and teaching experience. xviii PREFACE

I would especially like to thank the instructors who reviewed the various stages of the manuscript, including Jennifer A. Black, McLennan Community College; Kathryn Fitzgerald, University of Utah; Christy Friend, University of Texas—Austin; and Stephen Wilhoit, The University of Dayton.

For their diligence and skill, I owe much to the able staff at Allyn and Bacon, to Morgan Lance, editorial assistant and to Rowena Dores for her work as production administrator. I would especially like to thank Stan Kushner for his invaluable advice. Most of all, Gloria Klaiman, of Ruttle, Shaw & Wetherill, Inc., for her outstanding efforts as production manager.

To Eben W. Ludlow I owe all the things that one owes to an extraordinarily gifted editor. Ultimately, to Terry I owe more than words can express.

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1

Understanding Arguments

Whether our argument concerns public affairs or some other subject we must know some, if not all, of the facts about the subject on which we are to speak and argue. Otherwise, we can have no materials out of which to construct arguments.

-Aristotle, Rhetoric

The Nature of Argument

Some of the most interesting and effective writing you will encounter takes the form of arguments that seek to persuade a specific audience of the validity of a proposition or claim through logical reasoning supported by facts, examples, data, or other kinds of evidence. Formal arguments differ from assertions based on likes and dislikes or personal opinion. Unlike questions of personal taste, arguments rest on evidence—whether in the form of facts, examples, the testimony of experts, or statistics—that can be brought forward to prove or disprove objectively the thesis in question.

Although the two are frequently confused, argumentation differs from persuasion. Argument is a form of discourse in which statements are offered in support of a claim or proposition. Argument is based on a rational appeal to the understanding and builds its case on a network of logical connections.

The term argument also refers to the practice of giving reasons to convince or persuade an audience to accept a claim or proposition. Argument is a form of advocacy and a process of reasoning designed to support a claim. Making an assertion, offering a hypothesis, presenting a claim, and putting forward a moral objection are all ways of arguing. Thus, the process of argument is valuable because it provides an arena for testing the validity, truth, or probability of specific ideas, propositions, and claims.

Whereas argument presents reasons and evidence to gain an audience's intellectual agreement with the validity of a proposition, persuasion also includes appeals to the emotional needs and values of an audience to move them to approve an action or to take an action that the writer recommends. In argument, the audience's agreement with the truth of the claim has more to do with the soundness of the evidence than with the audience's response to the speaker's character and personality. Because of this, arguments are usually addressed to a general, unspecified audience, whereas persuasion is usually keyed to the beliefs, prejudices, interests, values, and needs of a specific audience. For example, political speeches employing persuasive appeals are usually keyed to the specific needs of an immediate audience. Persuasion is influenced by the audience's sense of the speaker's character, presence, and reputation. The difference between argument and persuasion can be clearly seen by comparing the following two short paragraphs.

Kirkpatrick Sale in his book *Human Scale* (1980) cites the results of various studies as evidence to support his claim that smaller communities are more neighborly and healthier places in which to live:

There is another way of coming at the question of the human limits of a community. Hans Blumenfeld, the urban planner, suggests starting with the idea of the size at which "every person knows every other person by face, by voice, and by name" and adds, "I would say that it begins to fade out in villages with much more than 500 or 600 population." Constantine Doxiadis, after reducing thousands of data from various centuries, came to the conclusion that what he called the "small neighborhood" would hold approximately 250 people, a large neighborhood some 1,500, with an average around 800–900. Gordon Rattray Taylor, the British science writer, has estimated that there is a "natural social unit" for humans, defined by "the largest group in which every individual can form some personal estimate of the significance of a majority of the other individuals in the group, in relation to himself," and he holds that the maximum size of such a group, depending on geography and ease of contact, is about 1,200 people.

Henry Fairlie, on the other hand, in *The Spoiled Child of the Western World* (1976) claims that life in a small community is subject to intrusion and loss of privacy and characterizes the typical village shop as follows:

But the village shop, as one knew it personally, and as one can read about it in fiction, was usually an unattractive place, and frequently a malignant one. The gossip which was exchanged was, as often as not, inaccurate and cruel. Although there were exceptions, one's main memory of the village shopkeeper, man and wife, is of faces which were hard and sharp and mean, leaning forward to whisper in ears

that were cocked and turned to hear all that they could of the misfortunes or the disgrace of a neighbour. Whisper! Whisper! This has always been the chief commodity of the village shop. And not only whispers, because the village shopkeeper, informed or misinformed, could always apply sanctions against those to whom disgrace or misfortune was imputed.

Notice how Sale relies on evidence and the testimony of experts to support his claim that small communities promote peace, social harmony, trust, and well-being. The character of Sale as a person is less important than the facts he presents to support his thesis or claim.

By contrast, Fairlie's description of the stifling character of small-town life is communicated by picturesque language that is designed to appeal to the imagination and arouse the emotions of his audience against this life. The audience's sense of Fairlie as a person is important, since his own observations are presented as a source of evidence drawn from his past experiences. There is no objective evidence as such in this passage. Fairlie's ability to appeal to the emotions of his audience through skillful use of provocative language is the only evidence he presents. Yet, it would be difficult to say which of these two passages is more persuasive. The point here is that the difference between argument and persuasion is one of degree. Arguments tend to emphasize appeals to logic, whereas persuasion tries to sway an audience through a calculated manipulation of the audience's needs and values. Real-world arguments, however, should be a blend of the two.

Rhetoric and Persuasion

Rhetoric came into existence as a specific field of study in the early part of the fifth century B.C. in Sicily to enable ordinary citizens to make an effective case concerning why they should be entitled to recover property that had been seized by a dictatorial tyrant. The claimants had to present their case without supporting documentation and construct an argument solely on the basis of inference and probability. This emphasis on discovering, arranging, and presenting arguments to enhance the probability of a claim defines the distinctive nature of argumentative discourse from this beginning to the present day.

The term *rhetoric* has acquired negative connotations of language calculated to deceive; "mere rhetoric" is associated with stylistic flourishes devoid of content, or empty talk without action. It was not always thus. For Aristotle, rhetoric meant discovering all the available means of persuasion in any given situation where the truth could not be known for certain (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book I, Chapter 1, lines 26–27). Aristotle, of course, excluded coercive or violent means and concerned