

ARGUMENTATION AND DEBATE

CRITICAL THINKING FOR
REASONED DECISION MAKING

NINTH EDITION

USED

AUSTIN J. FREELEY

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JOHN CARROLL UNIVERSITY



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PREFACE



This ninth edition of *Argumentation and Debate* retains and reinforces the features that have led to its wide use for more than thirty-five years by nine “generations” of students, and, at the same time brings before today’s students the significant changes of our constantly developing field of knowledge.

Along with many updates and revisions, this edition provides new material on:

- How different cultures view “good reasons” (Chapter 1)
- How cultural differences influence the way arguments are developed (Chapter 2)
- The recently adopted American Forensic Association’s *Credo* (Chapter 2)
- How definitions can affect national policy (Chapter 4)
- A specific example of research strategies (Chapter 5)
- Expanded material on using computers for research (Chapter 5)
- Current material on negative evidence (Chapter 6)
- A section on “Is only reasonable precision claimed for the statistics?” (Chapter 7)
- CEDA and NDT debate cases (Chapter 12)
- A consideration of “trigger mechanisms” (Chapter 12)
- Consideration of recent trends in CEDA debate (Chapters 12 and 13)
- “Spin control” (Chapter 15)
- Cross-examination debating (Chapter 18)

In this edition many chapters are preceded by a mini glossary. This innovation will help the instructor and the student and make what has been called “a very teachable text” even more so. The appendixes, too, have been updated. There is a new presidential debate in Appendix A, a new CEDA final round in Appendix B, and a new NDT final round in Appendix C. The

listing of CEDA and NDT debate propositions has been updated in Appendixes D and E. The glossary in Appendix F has been expanded.

Throughout the text, new examples have been provided to clarify many issues. Some are drawn from the debates in Appendixes B and C and some come from recent CEDA and NDT debates. Others are derived from recent examples of cultural differences: Taslina Nasrin's (the author of *Shame*) experience with Muslim fundamentalists and Henry Kissinger's discussion of the differences between democracy and Confucianism. Others come from contemporary news: the Centers for Disease Control's revised definition of AIDS, the Persian Gulf Syndrome, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's preparation for cross-examination, the O. J. Simpson murder trial, and similar events.

Today's students have grown up in one of the greatest eras of change in all of human history. The Cold War that dominated and shaped world events for half a century is now history. In its place new problems, crises, options, and opportunities arise. No phase of our lives is untouched by what some see as the rise of a new civilization that will profoundly challenge our old assumptions, ways of thinking, formulas, dogmas, and ideologies. To deal with the clash of new technologies, geopolitical relationships, lifestyles, and communication in cyberspace, we need a means of critical thinking to arrive at reasoned decisions on the complex, urgent, and unprecedented issues that confront us. A knowledge of argumentation and debate empowers us to play an effective role in the world we live in.

Knowledgeable teachers of argumentation recognize that the accelerated rate of change has had a marked impact on the field of argumentation and debate. In many important ways we no longer analyze arguments, undertake research, build cases, or conduct debates as we did even a few years ago. Not only is more knowledge available today than ever before, it is also more accessible. The field of argumentation and debate changes as new theories, practices, and technologies emerge every year. While the change in any one year may be small, the incremental growth over a few years mandates a new edition.

This book is designed for all who are interested in using critical thinking to reach reasoned decisions. It is designed specifically for the undergraduate course in argumentation and debate, but it may be used in any broadly liberal course for students who seek self-empowerment and who desire to prepare themselves for effective participation in a democratic society.

The instructor may assign the chapters in any order adapted to the needs of students. The instructor may take a broad overview of the field of argumentation and debate; focus on CEDA or NDT debate; start with value propositions and progress to propositions of policy; concentrate on value or policy propositions or focus on critical thinking.

I want to thank the following reviewers for help with this edition: Diane Casagrande, West Chester University of Pennsylvania; Gary Phillips, University of Arkansas at Little Rock; and Diana Wynn, Prince George's Community College.

Thanks also are due to Katherine Hartlove of Wadsworth Publishing Company, to Sara Hunsaker / *Ex Libris*, and Elizabeth Judd. Most especially,

I wish to record my thanks to my wife, Trudie, for her incomparable counsel and support in the preparation of this and all previous editions. Over the years many of the students I have taught and judged have contributed to this edition as well as to earlier editions. They have helped me refine my thinking and develop more cogent statements on many matters and have provided many of the examples found throughout this text.

Austin J. Freeley

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1



CRITICAL THINKING

MINI GLOSSARY

Argumentation: Reason giving in communicative situations by people whose purpose is the justification of acts, beliefs, attitudes, and values.

Coercion: The threat or use of force.

Critical Thinking: The ability to analyze, criticize, and advocate ideas, to reason inductively and deductively, and to reach factual or judgmental conclusions based on sound inferences based on unambiguous statements of knowledge or belief.

Debate: The process of inquiry and advocacy, the seeking of a reasoned judgment on a proposition.

Good Reasons: Reasons that are psychologically compelling for a given audience, that make further inquiry both unnecessary and redundant—hence justifying a decision to affirm or reject a proposition.

Persuasion: Purposeful persuasion is communication intended to influence the acts, beliefs, attitudes, and values of others.

Propaganda: The use of persuasion by a group (often a closely knit organization) in a sustained, organized campaign using multiple media for the purpose of influencing a mass audience.

A growing number of colleges and universities are requiring their students to study critical thinking. The executive order establishing California's requirement states:

Instruction in *critical thinking* is designed to achieve an understanding of the relationship of language to logic, which would lead to the ability to analyze, criticize, and advocate ideas, to reason inductively and deductively, and to reach



factual or judgmental conclusions based on sound inferences drawn from unambiguous statements of knowledge or belief. The minimal competence to be expected at the successful conclusion of instruction in critical thinking should be the ability to distinguish fact from judgment, belief from knowledge, and skills in elementary inductive and deductive processes, including an understanding of the formal and informal fallacies of language and thought.

Competency in critical thinking is usually seen as a prerequisite to being able to participate effectively in human affairs, pursue higher education, and succeed in the highly competitive world of business and the professions. Since classical times, debate has been one of the best methods of learning and applying the principles of critical thinking.

Many of the most significant communications of our lives are conducted in the form of debates. These may be intrapersonal communications, where we weigh the pros and cons of an important decision in our own minds, or they may be interpersonal communications, where we listen to a debate intended to influence our decision or participate in a debate to influence the decision of others.

Success or failure in life is largely determined by our ability to make wise decisions for ourselves and to influence the decisions of others in a way that is helpful to us. Much of our significant, purposeful activity is concerned with making decisions. Whether to join a campus organization, go to graduate school, accept a job offer, buy a car or house, move to another city, invest in a certain stock, or vote for Smith—these are just a few of the thousands of decisions we may have to make. Often, intelligent self-interest or a sense of responsibility will require us to win the support of others. We may want a scholarship, a particular job, a customer for our product, or a vote for a political candidate.

Some people make decisions by flipping a coin. Others act on a whim or respond unconsciously to “hidden persuaders.” If the problem is trivial—should we go to a rock concert or see a film?—the particular method used is unimportant. For more crucial matters, however, mature adults require a reasoned means of decision making. Decisions should be justified by good reasons based on accurate evidence and valid reasoning.

Argumentation is reason giving in communicative situations by people whose purpose is the justification of acts, beliefs, attitudes, and values. This definition is based on a definition adopted at the National Developmental Conference on Forensics.¹ Toulmin makes a similar point when he asks, “What kind of *justificatory activities* must we engage in to convince our fellows that these beliefs are based on ‘good reasons’?”² *Good reasons* may be defined as “reasons which are psychologically compelling for a given audience, which make further inquiry both unnecessary and redundant—hence justifying a decision to affirm or reject a proposition.”³ Note that what con-

¹James H. McBath, ed., *Forensics as Communication* (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1975), p. 11.

²Stephen Toulmin, *Knowing and Acting* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), p. 138.

³David Zarefsky, “Criteria for Evaluating Non-Policy Argument,” *Perspectives on Non-Policy Argument*, ed. Don Brownlee, sponsored by CEDA (privately published, 1980), p. 10.

stitutes good reasons for one audience may not be good reasons for another. When Taslina Nasrin wrote her novella *Lajja (Shame)*, she became the target of Muslim fundamentalists. Their fury mounted when she was quoted—or misquoted, she insists—as saying that the Koran should be “revised thoroughly” to give equal rights to women. Islam’s central article of faith is that the Koran is the literal word of God and is thus above revision.

Her challenge of the Scriptures was seen as blasphemy and prompted legal charges and Muslim *fatwas*, or religious decrees, calling for her death.

A crowd of 100,000 demonstrators gathered outside the Parliament building in Dhaka to bay for her blood. . . . One particularly militant faction threatened to loose thousands of poisonous snakes in the capital unless she was executed.⁴

This incident provides a dramatic example of cultural differences. To Muslim fundamentalists in Bangladesh, even being suspected of calling for a revision of the Koran is a “good reason” for execution.

In most of the world “blasphemy” is not perceived as a good reason for murder, and in America freedom of the press, enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution, is perceived as a good reason for allowing an author to express just about any opinion. A debater needs to discover the justificatory activities that the decision renderers will accept and to develop the good reasons that will lead them to agree with the desired conclusion—or, of course, to reject the reasons advanced by an opponent.

First we will consider debate as a method of critical thinking. Then we will take a look at some other methods of decision making and see how they relate to argumentation and debate.

I. Debate

Debate is the process of inquiry and advocacy, a way of arriving at a reasoned judgment on a proposition. Individuals may use debate to reach a decision in their own mind; alternatively, individuals or groups may use it to bring others around to their way of thinking.

Since debate provides reasoned arguments for and against a proposition, it also provides opportunities for critical thinking. Society, like individuals, must have an effective method of making decisions. A free society is structured in such a way that many of its decisions are arrived at through debate. Law courts and legislative bodies are designed to utilize debate as their means of reaching decisions. In fact, any organization that conducts its business according to parliamentary procedure has selected debate as its method. Debate pervades our society at decision-making levels.

From the earliest times to the present, many have recognized the importance of debate for both the individual and society. Plato, whose dialogues were an early form of cross-examination debate, defines rhetoric as “a universal art of winning the mind by arguments, which means not merely ar-

⁴*Time*, Aug. 15, 1994, p. 26.

guments in the courts of justice, and all other sorts of public councils, but in private conference as well."⁵

Aristotle lists four functions for *rhetoric*.⁶ First, it prevents the triumph of fraud and injustice. Aristotle argues that truth and justice are by nature more powerful than their opposites. When poor decisions are made, speakers with right on their side have only themselves to blame. Thus, it is not enough to know the right decision ourselves; we have to be able to argue for that decision before others.

Second, rhetoric is a method of instruction for the public. Aristotle points out that in some situations, scientific arguments are useless; a speaker has to "educate" the audience by framing arguments with the help of common knowledge and commonly accepted opinions. Congressional debates on health care or tax policies are examples of this. The general public, and for that matter the majority of Congress members, is unable to follow highly sophisticated technical arguments. Skilled partisans who have the expertise to understand the technical data must reformulate their reasons in ways that both Congress and the public can grasp.

Third, rhetoric makes us see both sides of a case. By arguing both sides, no aspect of the case will escape us, and we will be prepared to refute our opponents' arguments.

Fourth, rhetoric is a means of defense. Often a knowledge of argumentation and debate will be necessary to protect ourselves or our interests. Aristotle states: "If it is a disgrace to a man when he cannot defend himself in a bodily way, it would be odd not to think him disgraced when he cannot defend himself with reason. Reason is more distinctive of man than is bodily effort."

Similarly, in the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill placed great emphasis on the value of debate:

If even the Newtonian philosophy were not permitted to be questioned, mankind could not feel as complete assurance of its truth as they now [1858] do. The beliefs which we have the most warrant for, have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded. If the challenge is not accepted, or is accepted and the attempt fails, we are far enough from certainty still; but we have done the best that the existing state of human reason admits of; we have neglected nothing that could give the truth the chance of reaching us; if the lists are kept open, we may hope that if there be a better truth, it will be found when the human mind is capable of receiving it; and in the meantime we may rely on having attained such approach to truth as is possible in our day. This is the amount of certainty attainable by a fallible being, and this is the sole way of attaining it.⁷

Some four decades ago, the U.S. Senate designated, as Senate Immortals, five senators who had shaped the history of the country by their ability as

⁵Plato, *Phaedrus*, 261. Cooper and Jowett use slightly different terms in translating this passage.

This statement draws from both translations.

⁶See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I, 1.

⁷John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (New York: Burt, n.d.), pp. 38–39.