

LECTURE NOTES ON *ARGUMENTATION*

to accompany the reading of: Frans H. van Eemeren, Rob Grootendorst, and A. Francisca Snoeck Henkemans, *Argumentation: Analysis, Evaluation, Presentation*, Mahwah, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002

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PART I: ANALYSIS

1. Differences of Opinion

1. *Difference of opinion.* Only when a difference of opinion has been somehow expressed can it be of interest for the theory of argumentation (be it that parts may remain implicit). An expressed difference of opinion is also called a “conflict of avowed opinions”, or simply a “conflict”.
2. *Propositions.* There can be no conflict unless someone makes some statement. The standard way to make a statement is by uttering a *declarative sentence*. But different sentences can be used to express one and the same content of thought. For instance the French sentence *Le lait est bon pour tout le monde* and the English sentence *Milk is good for everyone* express the same content of thought. This content is what is stated by uttering a declarative sentence; it is often referred to as a “proposition”.

Generally, a declarative sentence does not suffice to pin down a proposition; one also needs the *context of utterance*: Who uttered the declarative sentence? To whom? Where? When? For instance, the declarative sentence *I drove down this road yesterday and saw you standing over there* can, dependent on context, be used to express many distinct propositions.

3. *Contradictories.* For each proposition there is a *contradictory proposition*. Two mutually contradictory propositions cannot both be true, nor can they both be false. In a declarative sentence one may use the words “it is not the case that” to form the *negation* of another declarative sentence. The two sentences will then express mutually contradictory propositions. For instance: *Athletics is healthy* and *It is not the case that athletics is healthy*. If used in the same context of utterance *these two sentences will express mutually contradictory propositions*.

It seems unobjectionable to suppose that adopting a negative standpoint with respect to a proposition amounts to the same as adopting a positive standpoint with respect to its contradictory. The authors of *Argumentation* leave this open.

In order to determine whether a difference of opinion is single or multiple, one has to ascertain whether more than one proposition is involved. But there is a convention at work here: if both a proposition and its contradictory are involved (one party adopting a positive standpoint, and the other a negative one, with respect to the same proposition), this will count as one proposition not two. So, actually, one has to see how

many issues are involved.

4. *Contraries*. Two propositions are contraries if they cannot be both true, but may both be false. Hence, contrary propositions are not mutually contradictory. For instance, the proposition *that athletics is healthy* and the proposition *that athletics is unhealthy* are contraries.

For a difference of opinion in which Peter adopts a positive standpoint with respect to a proposition P , and Olga expresses not to share this standpoint, there are the following possibilities:

Olga did no more than express doubt. The difference of opinion has the elementary form: it is single and nonmixed (assuming there are no other propositions involved).

Olga adopted a negative standpoint with respect to P (a positive standpoint with respect to the contradictory of P). The difference of opinion is single and mixed (assuming there are no other propositions involved).

Olga adopted a positive standpoint with respect to a proposition Q that is contrary to P . The difference of opinion is multiple and mixed.

In practice, it is often hard to determine the borderlines between these cases. Yet, it is important to try and do it as well as possible, because otherwise it will remain undetermined who has asserted or doubted which proposition, and consequently where the burden of proof lies for the standpoints involved, i. e. who has to argue for what, if asked to do so.

5. *Complex sentences*. Declarative sentences can by connectives be connected to form longer declarative sentences. For instance, from *Athletics is healthy* and *Athletics is time consuming* one may construct complex sentences, such as *Athletics is healthy and Athletics is time consuming* (shorter: *Athletics is healthy and time consuming*); *Athletics is time consuming, but healthy*; *Though Athletics is time consuming, it is healthy*; *Athletics is time consuming or Athletics is healthy*; *If Athletics is time consuming, Athletics is healthy*, etc.

How shall we count propositions when they are complex? There are two cases:

(a) *Logical conjunction*. When the connective is “and” (without any special meaning) or a word that is roughly equivalent to “and” such as “but” or “though”, each connected sentence contributes a proposition that counts.

(b) *No logical conjunction*. In all other cases only the proposition expressed by the complex sentence as a whole counts.

6. *Main difference of opinion*: This is the very difference of opinion that a discussion or argument is about.
7. *Spurious differences of opinion, spurious agreement, precization and definition*. About these read Section 10.2 and the corresponding notes.

2. Argumentation and Discussion

8. *Ways to end a conflict.*

(a) *Argumentative discussion*: both parties try by arguments and/or critical questions to convince the other party of the soundness of their standpoints (or doubts). They try to do so in a serious way by critically testing the tenability of each standpoint. If the outcome of the discussion is that at least one party has changed his position with respect to at least one proposition at issue in the original conflict (the main difference of opinion), this conflict counts as *ended*; even if other conflicts have arisen in the mean time, which is often the case. The original conflict has been *resolved* if and only if the outcome of a serious argumentative discussion is that standpoints and doubts of the parties are now in agreement with respect to every proposition belonging to the original conflict.

(b) Any other method may well lead to a *settlement* of the conflict, but never to its resolution. For instance: fighting, voting, drawing lots, mediation, or other types of discussion, such as; quarrelling, wrangling (trying to outsmart the other without willingness to become oneself convinced of another point of view), debating merely for the purpose of influencing a third party, negotiating.

So there are ways to settle conflicts without discussion. Also, there are forms of discussion that do not pretend to either settle or resolve conflicts: jointly conducted inquiries or investigations as well as practical deliberations and brainstorming sessions may serve as examples, provided that no participant has adopted a standpoint to start with. Other examples are informative discussions, such as interviews, didactic conversations and interrogations.

9. *Ideal models*. In literature about argumentative discussion one finds informal and formal ideal models. An important informal model is the pragma-dialectical ‘model of critical discussion’, which provided a theoretical basis for the present book: *Argumentation*. There are also formal models, for instance in dialogue logic, a kind of formal dialectic (see p. 30 of *Argumentation* for literature). Other formal models were presented by Charles L. Hamblin (1922-1985), who also introduced the term “formal dialectic”: *Fallacies*, London: Methuen, 1970, Ch. 8.

10. *Argument(ation)*. The words “argument” and “argumentation” are used in many ways. Focusing on argument(ation) as a product, we may note the following:

(a) In the book *Argumentation*, the word “argument” is used mostly (not always) for reasons adduced to support a standpoint and not for a constellation consisting of both reasons and the standpoint. Argumentation may consist of one or more arguments (reasons). The sum total of all argumentation brought forward to defend a standpoint is called a “case”.

(b) A case (hence argumentation, hence an argument) is presented by one or both parties in an argumentative discussion in the *argumentation stage* of that discussion.

(c) A case can also be presented in a monologue.

The ‘principle’ of *dialectical* theories of argumentation (whether formal dialectic or pragma-dialectics) can then be stated as follows:

A case (argumentation, arguments) in sense (c) should be looked upon as referring to an implicit argumentative discussion, which contains an argumentation stage and hence a case (argumentation, arguments) in sense (b).

3. Standpoints and Argumentation

11. *Progressive/retrogressive presentation.*

Progressive: *A*(rgument). Therefore *S*(tandpoint)
 A; so *S*
 A. Consequently, *S*.
 Because *A*, *S*.
 Since *A*, *S*.

(The argument (reason) precedes the standpoint.)

Retrogressive: *S*; for *A*
 S. Since *A*
 S, because *A*
 S, given that *A*

(The standpoint precedes the argument.)

Some, but not all, indicators are connected to a fixed order of presentation. What is fixed is rather whether an indicator indicates (is followed by) the standpoint: *standpoint-indicators* (therefore, so, consequently, thus, for that reason, ...), or indicates the argument (reason): *argument-indicators* (because, since, for, given that, ...).

12. *Strategy of maximally argumentative interpretation.* Many utterances could perhaps sooner be interpreted as something else than as argumentation, for instance, they would rather be taken for an explanation or an expression of sentiments. But often such utterances can be considered to constitute argumentation as well, and then it is a useful exercise to look at them from that point of view, even if this may not be a very obvious approach. When studying philosophical or other texts in which assertions are made, it is good practice to take the author seriously and to suppose that he or she offers you arguments for these assertions, even if this may not be so obvious. Thus it may be possible to get a lot more from a text than one would think at first glance. In such cases, too, a maximally argumentative strategy seems recommendable.

4. Unexpressed Standpoints and Unexpressed Premises

13. For single argumentations (which consist, if fully analyzed, of a number – mostly two – of reasons, and a standpoint), it is common practice to leave at least one element (the standpoint or one of the reasons) unexpressed. Hence, instead of the fully explicit argumentation:

- (1) The almanac announces good skating weather and the almanac is always right. Therefore we are going to have good skating weather.

one uses either one of the following short versions:

- (2) The almanac announces good skating weather. Therefore we are going to have good skating weather.
 - (3) The almanac is always right. Therefore we are going to have good skating weather.
 - (4) The almanac announces good skating weather and the almanac is always right.
14. *Speech act theory*. In their approach to argumentation pragma-dialecticians apply speech act theory, which was developed by a number of 20th-century philosophers, among whom figure John L. Austin, John R. Searle and H. Paul Grice.
 15. *Communication Principle*. This principle derives from H. P. Grice ('Logic and Conversation', in: P. Cole and J. L. Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, III: Speech Acts*, Academic Press: London, 1975). Grice calls it the "cooperative principle":

'Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.' (Grice, 1975, p. 45.)

Users of language behave, generally, in a cooperative way, and they expect other users of language to do the same.

16. *Conversational implicature*. Sometimes a listener may, from the fact that the speaker produced a certain utterance, the context, and the supposition that the speaker will, essentially, abide by the Communication Principle, deduce other conclusions than those inherent in the literal meaning of the utterance. In that case one speaks of *conversational implicature* (Grice).

An example: the speaker (S) says: *The cat sits on the mat*. The listener deduces (using the communication rule 'Be sincere') that S believes that the cat is sitting on the mat, and further (using the communication rule 'Be efficient') that S believed that the listener did not yet know this fact. These are two conversational implicatures. Notice that from the uttered proposition (that the cat is sitting on the mat) by itself nothing follows about what S was believing or not believing. Conversational implicature must, therefore, be distinguished from logical implication.

17. *Speech acts*. According to Austin (*How to Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., and London: Oxford U.P., 1962) philosophers had too long persisted in restricting their attention to 'assertions'. To assert something, however, is just one speech act among many. Searle ('A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts', in: K. Gunderson (ed.), *Language, Mind, and Knowledge*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1975) distinguishes the following main types of speech acts:

1. *Assertives*, in order to assert something;
 2. *Directives*, in order to request for some action, or give an order, or ask a question;
 3. *Commissives*, in order to make a promise;
 4. *Expressives*, in order to express a mood or frame of mind, for instance by offering congratulations or condolences;
 5. *Declarations*, in order to bring about a certain state of affairs, for instance by baptizing a person, or joining a couple in wedlock, or by stipulating a definition for a term.
18. *Correctness conditions*. Each kind of speech act is characterized by *felicity conditions*, (Austin, Searle):

First, the *identity conditions*. If a speech act does not satisfy these, it is not of the kind described. The identity conditions comprise:

1. The *essential condition* (for instance, in the case of promising: the performed speech act counts as an act by the speaker of binding himself to a specified way of acting in the future);
2. The *propositional content condition* (in the case of promising: a proposition must have been expressed that specifies the content of the promise).

Further, the *correctness conditions*. In case a speech act satisfies the identity conditions, but not the correctness conditions, it will display some deficiency, though being of the described kind. These conditions comprise:

1. The *preparatory conditions*, in which the communication rule 'Be efficient' is specified for the speech act concerned (in the case of promising one such condition stipulates that the speaker must believe that the promised ways of acting will be appreciated by the listener);
 2. The *responsibility conditions*, in which the communication rule 'Be sincere' is specified for the speech act concerned (in the case of promising one such condition stipulates that the speaker must intend to keep his promise).
19. *Argumentation* (now in the sense of an action, rather than a product) is, according to pragma-dialectics, a specific and complex kind of speech act, which involves various propositional contents. Arguing implies asserting the propositions that one expresses as a part of one's argumentation, but it implies more. Who argues that 'it is eleven p.m. and, therefore, too late to make a call' is doing more than asserting that it is eleven p.m. and that it is too late to call.

The *essential condition* for the complex speech act of argumentation stipulates that the action as a whole (which comprises various assertives, with their own conditions) counts as an attempt to convince the other with respect to some proposition. The *propositional content condition* stipulates that it be expressed to which propositions the speaker commits himself (i.e., what the content is of the standpoint and of the reasons adduced to support the standpoint). If these *identity conditions* are not fulfilled, the action cannot count as one of argumentation.

(For the *correctness conditions* for argumentation, see p. 53 of the book.)

20. *Indirect speech acts.* If the listener observes that the speaker has been violating one of the communication rules, but nevertheless assumes that the speaker remains basically prepared to comply with the Communication Principle, he or she will have to adopt a nonliteral interpretation of the speech act performed by the speaker. In that case the listener must look for the conversational implicature that is really at issue. Most often, this is exactly what the speaker intended.

An example. S: *Would you like to open the window?* The listener's reasons are as follows: taken literally, the speaker asks about what I would like to do, but such information about my state of mind (a yes-or-no answer) can hardly be supposed to interest him. So interpreted, he would be violating the efficiency rule. But, since it may be assumed that he is not abandoning the Communication Principle, he must intend something else. No doubt, what he intends to do is to request me to close the window.

Another kind of indirect speech act can be found in the phenomenon that parts of an argumentation remain often unexpressed. When the explicit reasoning presented by the speaker happens to be logically deficient (invalid, or failing to lead to a conclusion), the listener may observe that the rule of efficiency has been violated. The argumentation presented by the speaker is inefficient because, generally, invalid reasoning will not be convincing in a serious argumentative discussion. Nevertheless the listener assumes that the speaker is not abandoning the Communication Principle. She concludes that the speaker intends to communicate more propositions than he expresses and, consequently, tries to supply the missing parts in order to get a valid piece of reasoning. (A theorist of argumentation uses the same insights to reconstruct the argument.)

Example: See no. 13 above. From either (2), or (3), or (4) the listener reconstructs the argumentation as given in (1).

21. *The logical minimum* or some stronger proposition? What is the weakest proposition one may use to make an invalid piece of reasoning valid? That is the proposition expressed by the "if...then..." statement described in Section 4.7 (p. 57). For instance, the logically minimal addition to no. 13 (2) would be: *If the almanac announces good skating weather then we are going to have good skating weather.* When this statement is added as an argument (reason, premise) to (2), one surely obtains a valid piece of reasoning. In general, for any single argumentation of the form *A, therefore S* the logical minimum will display the form *If A then S*. The reasoning *A and if A then S, therefore S* is indeed logically valid.

The statement *If A then S* is from a logical point of view the very least you can add to *A, therefore S* in order to obtain a valid piece of reasoning (i.e., if you add some *B*, such that *A and B, therefore S* is also a valid piece of reasoning, then *B* will logically imply *If A then S*). Nevertheless, it will in most cases be unlikely that the speaker intends to communicate no more than the logical minimum. There are almost always contextual circumstances that make it plausible that the speaker intends to communicate some stronger and more general proposition. When doing exercises about unexpressed premises (pp. 60-63) it is not the logical minimum that you are asked to re-

construct, but this stronger proposition that the speaker may normally be supposed to communicate to the listener.

5. The Structure of Argumentation

22. *Single argumentation.* This is the structure of argumentation consisting of just one attempt at convincing the other and not admitting a further analysis in parts that are also attempts at convincing the other. Deviating slightly from the book (p. 64), we shall not assume that each single argumentation “in fully explicit form consists of two and only two premises”. This is just the most common case. For instance, we shall also speak of single argumentation in cases where there is just one explicit premise and no unexpressed premise, as in: *Fortune favors the bold; therefore, if I am bold, I shall be favored by fortune.* Here no unexpressed premise is called for because the reasoning is logically valid without any further additions.

But in most cases a single argumentation has just one explicit and one unexpressed premise.

Some single argumentations have more than two premises. In that case the premises are said to be linked: if one of them is removed, the whole argumentation collapses as a house of cards. Example: *He must be a cousin of hers, since she is the daughter of Netty Kolster-van Vlijmen, Netty Kolster-van Vlijmen is a sister of Joop van Vlijmen and Joop van Vlijmen is his father.*

When analyzing an argumentation structure it will often take too much time to reconstruct every unexpressed premise. For that reason, you may focus on just those unexpressed propositions that are somehow interesting, especially those unexpressed propositions that are supported by further argumentation.

23. *Multiple argumentation:* two or more argumentations for the defense of the same standpoint that are each presented as sufficient.

If the first argumentation is sufficient, why add the others? There may be several reasons to do so: (1) *Stylistic:* the speaker or writer wants to reach a climax, producing ever stronger arguments. (2) For *security:* If, subsequently, the first argumentation turns out to be unconvincing, there will be another one that may succeed. (3) To deal with a *heterogeneous audience* which harbors different kinds of doubt with respect to the standpoint to be defended.

Dangers inherent in the use of multiple argumentation are the following: (1) *overkill:* by presenting so many different argumentations one risks to make a weak impression; (2) *inconsistencies:* propositions put forward as parts of different argumentations may be incompatible.

24. *Coordinative argumentation:* an argumentation consisting of two or more arguments (reasons) that are together presented as sufficient for the defense of a standpoint. There are two rather different subtypes of coordinative argumentation:

Cumulative argumentation: each argument contributes its mite; if one of them is re-

moved, this will weaken the argumentation, but will not make it collapse. Example: see p. 65, first example, *The dinner was organized perfectly*. This kind of argumentation will be denoted by using “+” in between premises (whereas we use “&” in the case of single argumentation).

Complementary argumentation: argumentation that deals with a possible objection against the argumentation that has been put forward. This will be denoted by the symbol “⊕” between the main argument (to the left) and the complementary argument (to the right). Example: see p. 65, second example, *We had no choice but to go out to eat*.

25. *Subordinative argumentation*: complex argumentation in which arguments are used to support arguments.

PART II: EVALUATION

6. The Soundness of Argumentation

26. *Inconsistencies*. Notice that the occurrence of logical inconsistencies does not immediately disqualify the argumentation. For instance, in multiple argumentation, the different branches may contain statements that express mutually incompatible propositions, while simultaneously one of the branches may provide us with an independently sufficient argumentation for the main standpoint. Neither is pragmatic inconsistency disqualifying in itself. In fact, the reproach of pragmatic inconsistency is itself notorious as a fallacy (*tu quoque*; see below at no. 35, 1. Freedom Rule (3.3)). One may however wonder whether *tu quoque* should always count as a fallacy.
27. *Types of argumentation and argument schemes*. Pragma-dialecticians distinguish three main types of argumentation, which we shall call: *symptomatic argumentation* (argumentation based on a symptomatic relation), *analogical argumentation* (argumentation based on a relation of analogy) and *causal argumentation* (argumentation based on a causal relation). In addition (or, as pragma-dialecticians would say, as special subtypes) we may mention: argumentation based on rules, definitions, norms, etc., argumentation based on authority, and argumentation based on examples. Anyhow, the three main types can be divided in subtypes (*pragmatic argumentation*, for instance, is a subtype of causal argumentation), until one reaches specific schematic descriptions of ways in which one may connect arguments (reasons) with standpoints, the so-called *argument schemes*.

Each argument scheme is partly characterized by a standard set of critical questions that are to be used when evaluating argumentation that can be subsumed under the scheme. According to the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss (1912-2009), these critical questions divide into two kinds: those that pertain to the *tenability* of the arguments (reasons) and those that pertain to their *relevance* (force of justification) with respect to the standpoint. See: A. Næss, *Communication and Argument: Elements of Applied Semantics*, Totowa, NJ: Bedminster Press, also London: Allen & Unwin, and also Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1966 (translation from the Norwegian by Alastair Hannay of *En del elementære logiske emner*, Oslo, 1947, among other editions).

28. *From symptom to essence*. (See Section 6.5, pp. 96-98. Cancel on p. 98 the question

type: “Aren’t there also other Y’s that do not have the characteristic Z?” This question does not seem to be relevant.)

Argument scheme: Y is true for X, *because*
Z₁, Z₂,...,Z_n are true for X *and*
Z₁, Z₂,...,Z_n are symptomatic of Y.

Critical questions: Tenability:
Are Z₁, Z₂,...,Z_n really true for X?
Are Z₁, Z₂,...,Z_n really symptomatic of Y?
Relevance:
Are Z₁, Z₂,...,Z_n sufficient as collection of symptoms ?
Are Z₁, Z₂,...,Z_n perhaps symptomatic of something else?
Could there be reason to consider X as an exception?

Example: Feike is a Frisian, *because*
Feike is headstrong and a keen yachtsman *and*
headstrongness and being keen yachtsmen are symptomatic of Frisians.

Is Feike really headstrong and is he really a keen yachtsman?
Are headstrongness and being keen yachtsmen really symptomatic of Frisians?
Do these two symptoms suffice to assume that someone is a Frisian?
Couldn’t they be symptomatic of something else?
Could there be reason to consider Feike as an exception?

29. *From essence to symptom.* (See p. 89.)

Argument scheme: Z is true for X, *because*
Y is true for X *and*
Z is symptomatic of Y.

Critical questions: Tenability:
Is Y really true for X?
Is Z really symptomatic of Y?
Relevance:
Are there Y's that fail to display symptom Z?
Could there be reason to consider X as an exception?

Example: Feike is headstrong, *because*
Feike is a Frisian *and*
headstrongness is symptomatic of Frisians

Is Feike really a Frisian?
Is headstrongness really symptomatic of Frisians?
Are there Frisians that fail to be headstrong?
Could there be reason to consider Feike as an exception?

30. *Analogical argumentation* (See Section 6.6, pp.99-100.)

Argument scheme: Y is true of X, *because*
Y is true of Z *and*
Z is comparable to X.

Critical questions: Tenability:
Is Y really true for Z?
Is Z really comparable to X?
Relevance:
Are there any relevant differences between Z en X?
Isn't it better to compare X with something else?

Example: I'm now entitled to a second piece of cake, *because*
you were allowed to have a second piece yesterday *and*
I'm as much entitled to get pieces of cake as you are.

Is it really true that the second person was allowed to have a second piece yesterday?
Are both persons really equally entitled to get pieces of cake?
Are there relevant differences between the first person today and the second person yesterday?
Isn't it better to compare the present situation of the first person with that of someone else at some other time than that of the second person yesterday?

31. *From cause to effect*. (See Section 6.7, pp. 100-102.)

Argument scheme: Y is true of X, *because*
Z is true of X *and*
Z leads to Y.

Critical questions: Tenability:
Is Z really true for X?
Does Z really lead to Y?
Relevance:
Could there be reason to consider X as an exception?

Example: My tea will taste sweet, *because*
sugar has been added to it *and*
sugar makes tea sweet.

Has sugar really been added to the tea?
Does sugar really make tea sweet?
Has no one added gasoline to my tea?

32. *From effect to cause*. (Argument to the best explanation, or abduction. Zie p. 101, *Lydia must have read a lot with poor light*.)

Argument scheme: Z is true of X, *because*
Y is true of X *and*
Z is a plausible cause of Y.

Critical questions: Tenability:
Is Y really true for X?
Is Z really a plausible cause of Y?
Relevance:
Are there no facts that contradict Z's being true of X?
Do other effects that one would expect if Z were true of Y indeed occur?
Is there no better explanation for the fact that Y is true of X?

Example: Sugar has been added to my tea, *because*
my tea tastes sweet *and*
sugar having been added to it is a plausible explanation for my tea's tasting sweet.

Does my tea really taste sweet?
Is sugar really a plausible explanation for the sweet taste of tea?
Is there any evidence that there is no sugar in my tea?
Are there some grains of spilled sugar around?
Are there no saccharine tablets around?

33. *Pragmatic argumentation.* (See pp. 101-102.)

Argument scheme: X is desirable, *because* (Or: X is undesirable, *because*
Y is desirable *and* Y is undesirable *and*
X leads to Y. X leads to Y.)

Critical questions: Tenability:
Is Y really desirable?
Does X really lead to Y?
Relevance:
Is X feasible?
Is X admissible?
Do Y and other benefits of X outweigh the costs?
Is there no better way to achieve Y?

Example: The deficit on the budget is to be pushed back, *because*
inflation should go down *and*
pushing back the deficit on the budget will make inflation go down.

Do we really want inflation to go down?
Will pushing back the deficit on the budget really make inflation go down?
Can we push back the deficit on the budget?

Can it be morally justified that we push back the deficit on the budget?
 Do less inflation and other benefits of pushing back the deficit on the budget outweigh the costs?
 Is there no better way to combat inflation?

7. Fallacies (1)

34. *Fallacies*. Synonyms: *paralogisms*, *pseudo-arguments*, *sophisms*. A fallacy is a flaw, error, or transgression in reasoning, discussion, or argumentation; sometimes it is an error or mistake in the reasoning (German: *Fehlschluss*), often a trick or an attempt to improperly trip up the opponent (German: *Trugschluss*). There is no agreement about a precise definition of this concept. The traditional definition of a fallacious argument is supposed to run as follows: *an argument that seems valid, but is not valid*. Since Hamblin's criticism (*Fallacies*, London: Methuen, 1970) of the traditional theory of fallacies, this definition is no longer considered to be adequate. In pragma-dialectics one finds a dialectical definition: *Fallacies are violations of the rules for critical discussion that prevent or hinder the resolution of a difference of opinion* (p. 109).
35. Below one finds a list of the first five rules for critical discussion (for the other rules, see no. 36) and the most prominent fallacies that constitute violations of these five rules (compare the overview on pp. 182-186):

Discussion rules: Fallacies:

1. Freedom rule *Imposing restrictions on standpoints or doubts:*
- (1) *Declaring standpoints sacrosanct*. For instance:
 The superiority of democracy is beyond dispute. It cannot be discussed.
- (2) *Declaring standpoints taboo*. There is an example on p. 111: *Grandmother*.
- Infringing upon one's opponent's freedom to act:*
- (1) *Argumentum ad baculum* ('argument with the stick'). Two examples on p. 111, *thugs*, *clients*.
- (2) *Argumentum ad misericordiam* ('argument from pity'). Customary at the Athenian people's court, where the accused used to bring in their families to lament and wail for them. Example: p. 111, *failing mark*.
- (3) *Argumentum ad hominem* ('argument concerning the man'). There are three common subtypes:
- (3.1) *Abusive ad hominem*. Example: p. 112, *It made me so drowsy*;
- (3.2) *Poisoning the Well* (discrediting one's opponent's motives or

background). Example: p. 112, *Marilyn French*;

(3.3) *Tu quoque* ('you too'. Your words do not agree with your deeds; therefore, your standpoint or your argumentation is unsound.) For instance:

Dad: You shouldn't smoke, because that's very bad for your health.

Daughter: But you are smoking yourself daddy! So, it can't be so bad.

2. Burden-of-proof *Shifting the burden of proof*. For instance:
rule

Peter: Athletics is healthy.

Olga: Why?

Peter: Why not?

(This is also a *Straw Man* and an *Argumentum ad ignorantiam*, cf. rule 3 and rule 9.)

Evading the burden of proof:

(1) by putting forward a standpoint as something that is *self-evident*.
For instance:

Peter: Athletics is healthy.

Olga: Why?

Peter: That is generally known!

(2) by appealing to one's own expertise or authority (*Argumentum ad verecundiam*, 'argument from modesty' (*1st type*)). For instance:

Peter: Athletics is healthy.

Olga: Why?

Peter: As a physician I certainly know!

(3) by using *word magic* to *immunize* the standpoint against criticism.
(See also rule 10.) For instance:

Peter: Athletics is healthy.

Olga: Why?

Peter: Otherwise it wouldn't be athletics!

3. Standpoint rule *Straw Man*:

(1) *Foisting a fictitious standpoint upon someone*, for instance by emphatically asserting the opposite of what one wants to foist upon the other:

I, for my part, do believe that the defense of democracy is very important indeed.

(2) *Distorting someone's standpoint*, for instance by omitting qualifica-

tions or nuances, or by presenting an exaggerated version of the standpoint of one's opponent:

Olga: You cannot compel people to donate their organs.

Peter: So you believe that we should just leave those patients in the lurch.

4. Relevance rule *Non-argumentation*. There are two kinds:

(1) *The pathetic fallacy: Argumentum ad populum (1st type)* ('argument for the people', appealing to the sentiments and preconceptions of the audience). For instance:

Raising sentiment against a politician by comparing him to Hitler or calling his opinions "fascist".

(2) *The ethical fallacy: Argumentum ad verecundiam (2nd type)* (parade one's own expertise or authority to fulfill the burden of proof). for instance:

Since I am myself a supporter of cycling races and watch the coverage day by day, for which I thank NOS television, I may assert that the interview Peter Winnen had with Mr. Smeets was just awful. At the last stage, the interviewer thought it proper to raise the issues of salaries.

Ignoratio elenchi (originally: 'not knowing what a refutation is'; the label is now used for irrelevant argumentation: advancing argumentation that fails to be relevant for the standpoint at issue). Example: p. 120, *Amateur sports*.

5. Unexpressed premise rule *Magnifying what has been left unexpressed* (a kind of *Straw Man*). For instance:

Filia: I'm not going to buy it because it is too expensive.

Filius: Why would you never buy something expensive?

Denying an unexpressed premise. For instance:

Filius: John is untrustworthy, since he is a Catholic.

Filia: So, you believe that Catholics are untrustworthy? (*aside*) Shame on him!

Filius: I said nothing of the kind!

8. Fallacies (2)

36. Below one finds a list of rules 6 through 10 for critical discussion (for the other rules see no. 35, above) and the most prominent fallacies that constitute violations of these five rules (compare the overview on pp. 182-186); notice that rules 7 and 8 from the book have changed places and were reformulated (no. 37) to conform with the latest

version of pragma-dialectic standard theory (Frans van Eemeren & Rob Grootendorst, *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation: The Pragma-Dialectical Approach*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) :

Discussion rules: Fallacies:

6. Starting point rule *Denying a premise that in fact belongs to the common starting points.*
For instance:
- In a committee meeting after a job interview, the assessment of the applicants threatens to go wrong for Mr. A's chances to get the job, because of his lack of experience. Then one of the committee members (strongly in favor of Mr. A) exclaims: but who says we are looking for someone with experience?
- Falsely presenting a premise as belonging to the common starting points.* For instance:
- (1) By presenting the starting point as self-evident (see also rule 2: *Evading the burden of proof*, example (1));
- (2) By smuggling away the starting point in a presupposition. Two examples (one in an assertion and one in a question):
- We shouldn't let Peter do this because his wife will interfere with the business. (The speaker tries to smuggle in the starting point that Peter is married.)
- When did you stop to hide your misconduct by lying? (Using this question, the speaker tries to smuggle in a starting point to the effect that *there has been misconduct and there have been lies*; thus he commits the fallacy of *Many Questions*.)
- (3) *Begging the Question* or *Petitio principii* ('asking (to concede) what was the beginning (of the discussion)', i.e. asking to concede that about which the whole discussion started), also known as the fallacy of (*viciously*) *circular reasoning*. For instance:
- God exists, since that is asserted in the bible, and the bible is the word of God.
7. Validity rule (in the book rule 8) *Fallacies of consequence* (confusing sufficient and necessary conditions). For instance:
- (1) *Affirming the Consequent*; occurs in the form *A must be coupled with B, this is a B, therefore this is an A* and in the form *If A then B, B is the case, therefore A*. Example: p.133, *Ann is sick*.
- (2) *Denying the Antecedent*; occurs in the form *A must be coupled with B, this is no A, therefore this is no B* and in the form *If A then B, not A,*

therefore not B. Example: p.133, *Ann is not sick*.

Fallacy of Composition (fallacy in which a property belonging to the parts of a whole, to the members of a collective body, or to the elements of a set is illicitly transferred to the whole, the body, or the set). For instance:

Each word in this sentence is comprehensible, hence this sentence is comprehensible.

Fallacy of Division (the converse of the *Fallacy of Composition*). For instance:

The church is wealthy and Francis belongs to the church, hence Francis is wealthy.

8. Argument
scheme rule
(in the book
rule 7)

Argumentum ad populum (2nd type). This is the *populist fallacy* or *fallacy from popularity* in which a standpoint is defended by pointing out the large number of adherents (the popularity) of that standpoint (using the popularity of popularity). For instance:

Reincarnation exists because millions of people believe that it exists.

Argumentum ad consequentiam ('argument from consequences', also known as *Wishful Thinking*). This is a fallacy which confuses factual judgments with value judgments. It should be carefully distinguished from pragmatic argumentation, where these judgments are combined, but in correct applications not confused. In the *argumentum ad consequentiam* one defends or attacks a (correct or incorrect) standpoint with respect to a factual state of affairs by pointing to the desirable or undesirable consequences that would follow from the occurrence of that state of affairs. Example: p. 131, *It can't be raining*.

Argumentum ad verecundiam (3rd type) (wrongly applied or deficient argumentation from authority). The fallacy occurs for instance because the quoted authority is not an authority in the relevant field, or because he or she is not reliable, or because the authority's statements are not rendered adequately. For instance:

Even Einstein with his magnificent formula about mass and energy believed that there had to be something more than mass-energy. How then could we doubt the existence of God?

Secundum quid ('in a certain respect'). In Aristotle this was the fallacy of moving on from a conceded qualified statement to an unqualified one, for instance from *An Ethiopian is white of teeth* to *An Ethiopian is white*, but nowadays this label denotes the *fallacy of hasty generalization*. Example: p. 131, *Cuba*.

False analogy. For instance:

A young man has an affair with his paternal grandmother. His father objects to it. The son defends himself by saying: “ Why can I not sleep with your mother, aren’t you sleeping with my mother?”

Post hoc ergo propter hoc (‘after this, therefore, because of this’). Example: p. 132, *I like the Milan team*.

Slippery Slope. Example: p. 132, *Those who find sexual violence*.

9. Closure rule *Refusing to accept the consequences of the outcome of the discussion* (for the protagonist: *refusing to retract a standpoint that has not been successfully defended*; for the antagonist: *refusing to retract criticism of a standpoint that has been successfully defended*). Example: p. 135, *I still don’t agree with it*.

Inflating the consequences of the outcome of a discussion. Again, this can be done by either party:

Inflating the consequences of a successful defense (concluding that one’s standpoint must be true or has been proved, while overlooking the fact that one’s successful defense occurred vis-à-vis a particular antagonist with particular concessions and criticisms). For instance:

I convinced my little sister of the existence of Santa Claus. She can’t think of any more objections. Therefore Santa Claus exists; we may take that for sure.

Inflating the consequences of an unsuccessful defense. Two subtypes:

Argumentum ad ignorantiam (‘argument from ignorance’; the antagonist concludes from the failure of the protagonist’s defense that the opposite (contradictory) standpoint has been proved). Example: p. 136, *You must never hit children*.

When the *argumentum ad ignorantiam* is combined with the *black-or-white* fallacy (neglect of intermediate and borderline cases) even a contrary standpoint may be taken for having been proved. Example:

It has never been shown that O.J. Simpson was guilty. Therefore, O.J. Simpson is surely a nice guy.

10. Usage rule *Fallacies of ambiguity or equivocation* (based on different kinds of ambiguity). For instance:

There is no such thing as altruism; for, considering that a free action serves by definition to achieve those aims that the subject has selected for himself, each free action must be egocentric. Consequently, one cannot *really* act in the interest of one’s fellows.

Other violations of this rule are based on various kinds of *unclarity*, including *word magic* (See also rule 2, *Evading the burden of proof*, example (3)).

37. *Reformulations of rules 7 and 8.* These versions are based on Frans van Eemeren & Rob Grootendorst, *A Systematic Theory of Argumentation*, 2004 (mentioned in no. 36). The wording has been slightly adapted.

Rule 7 (Validity rule): Reasoning that in an argumentation is presented as formally conclusive ought to be valid in a logical sense

Rule 8 (Argument scheme rule): Standpoints may be regarded as conclusively defended by argumentation that is not presented as based on formally conclusive reasoning, only if this defense takes place by means of appropriate argument schemes that are applied correctly.

Finally a short commentary on:

10.2 PARTICIPATING IN A DISCUSSION

38. Besides *spurious differences of opinion* (*pseudo-disagreements*, *spurious disagreements*), there is also the phenomenon of *spurious agreement* (*pseudo-agreement*). Consequently, precization may also have the effect of removing a spurious agreement and opening a new discussion.
39. *Precizations.* The concept and technique of precization (clarifying reformulation) were treated extensively by Arne Næss. (See the textbook mentioned at no. 27 above.) Næss defines *precization* as follows:

That an expression U is a *precization* of an expression T means here that all reasonable interpretations of U are reasonable interpretations of T, and that there is at least one reasonable interpretation of T which is *not a reasonable interpretation of U* (1966, p. 39).

40. Among *definitions* one distinguishes *lexical (descriptive) definitions*, which are for instance found in dictionaries, and *stipulative (prescriptive) definitions*, which introduce new usages of language.