

OLET2148

MODULE 1

What is a rational argument?

- A rational argument consists of premises that give us reason to believe the conclusion.
- Premises consist of evidence/justifications that validate the conclusion.
- It is one way of influencing people to believe or do certain things.



Rhetoric

- In the context of philosophy, rhetoric is the art of persuasion.
- ANYTHING can be used to persuade.

How to get people to do things without words

Use facial expressions

- Your angry snarl can cause people to back away.
- Your friendly smile can cause people to approach you.
- Your puzzled look can cause people to point to the exit.

Using hand gestures

- Your beckoning gesture can cause people to approach you.
- Your threatening fist can cause people to back away.
- Your raised hand can cause the lifeguard to rescue you from drowning.
- Your dismissive hand wave can cause the shopkeeper to believe that you are not interested in buying.

Using body language

- Standing up and moving into someone's personal space can cause that person to move.
- Reciprocating eye contact can make people trust you.
- Standing with your shoulders back can make people believe that you are confident.

Physically manipulating people

- Pushing people can cause them to fall over.
- Supporting people can stop them from falling over.
- Kicking people can cause them to get angry.

Using sounds

- Groaning causes people to believe that you are in pain.
- Screaming causes people to believe that you are afraid.
- Playing sentimental music causes people to feel sad.

Using pictures and non-linguistic diagrams

- Advertisements featuring pretty pictures can make you buy a product.
- Pointing at a map can let someone know where the museum is located.
- Showing someone a picture of mistreated farm animals can cause them to stop eating meat.

Modelling behaviour

- Putting rubbish in the bin causes others to put their rubbish in the bin.
- Opening a tricky door can show someone how to open that door.
- Swiping your travel card can show someone how to swipe.

Using physical objects

- Pulling a gun causes people to duck for cover.
- Handing over your ice cream cone causes that person to hold your ice cream.
- Putting up your umbrella causes people to look up to see if it is raining.

Structuring the environment

- Putting products on shelves at eye level causes customers to choose them.

- Narrowing a lane of traffic with traffic cones causes drivers in that lane to slow down.
- Erecting a temporary barrier can cause people to form a queue.
- Locking the door causes people to stay out of a room.

Tell people to do things without convincing them

Examples:

- You can get people to do immoral actions by ordering them to.
 - E.g. Milgram experiment.
- Threatening people that if they don't do something, you will harm them.
- Boring people into agreeing to do something by telling them all the information.
 - E.g. most people are convinced to agree to Terms and Conditions because they don't want to read the wall of text.

Mere rhetoric also works:

- Flattering the audience.
- Insulting people who disagree with the proposed plan.
- Bribing the audience.
- Confidently repeating what people ought to do.
- Exploit celebrity endorsements.

Mere rhetoric falls short of a rational argument because they do not exactly tell the audience a good reason to trust a conclusion/proposed action.

Despite this, mere rhetoric is very effective, hence why it is commonly used in advertising, politics and activism.

Situations where rational argument is used

Legal dispute

- Prosecutors lay out the evidence that the accused is guilty.
 - Besides rational argument, they also make eye contact with the jury and even flatter them.

Scientific persuasion

- Scientists use rational argument, supported by observational and experimental data, to convince other scientists to change their hypotheses/theories.

Business cases

- Businesspeople use rational argument when they make a business case.

Philosophical matters

- Philosophers use rational argument to defend/refute a philosophical idea.

Medical advice

- Doctors use rational argument to convince a patient to pursue a certain treatment.

Political persuasion

- Activists and other politicians use rational argument to convince the existing government to pursue a certain policy or social project.

What is critical thinking?

- The art of making sure that you have good reasons for your beliefs.
 - Make sure you can distinguish between good and bad reasons.
 - Good reasons are often relevant to the belief.
- Critical thinking is important because it ensures that we are rational creatures and gives us confidence to stick with our worldviews. Also gives us the ability to assess the strength of the arguments used by others so that we are not misled.

What is an argument?

- A set of statements/premises that together comprise a reason for a further statement/conclusion.
- Good arguments have premises that make the conclusion likely to be true.
- Being able to distinguish good and bad arguments is part of critical thinking.

Deductive argument

- The truth of the premises guarantees the truth of the conclusion.
- Alternatively, if true, then must be true.