



ArguMentor

Stan A Lindsay Ph.D.

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This book begins by defining argumentation--not as emotional assertions or in other negative senses--but as a logical, rational approach to making good decisions based upon sound reasoning. The author relies on the contributions of Aristotle (plus Aristotle's teacher, Plato, and Plato's teacher, Socrates) rather than attempting to "reinvent the wheel" of argumentation. Aristotle's perspective on dialectic and rhetoric constitutes the ground on which rhetoricians in the ancient Roman world, and rhetorical theoreticians of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries have built. Contemporary scholars such as Kenneth Burke, Stephen Toulmin, and Chaim Perelman have refined Aristotle's wheel, and hence, improved upon it, but students of argumentation are well-advised to return, first of all, to the invention of the wheel—to examine its construction, to see how the basic structures operate in the argumentation process. Students of argumentation may, then, consider the refinements that have been made over the years. Using insights introduced by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle and, later, fine-tuned by Stephen Toulmin, the book introduces deductive reasoning with its syllogism, rhetorical syllogism (the enthymeme), and Toulmin's six-part expansion of deductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning, with its reliance on examples and statistics is also introduced. Although argumentation is defined by Lindsay as primarily the logical proof presented by Aristotle (logos, as opposed to ethos and pathos), Lindsay extends Aristotle's concept of ethos to demonstrate the concept's reliance on the syllogism (logos), as well. Lindsay lists the eight primary characteristics of argumentation: 1. It is good; it allows rational individuals to reach rational conclusions, to make rational decisions. 2. It consists of offering proofs, not simply assertions. 3. It is the use of logic, as opposed to the use of emotion. 4. It is most successful when the participants do not feel an ego-centric need to win, but instead seek to find the most reasonable position on issues. 5. It may be used to test and maintain either an absolute truth or a probable truth. 6. It, at least, seeks to establish probable, possible, or plausible truth. 7. It is aimed primarily at producing faith/pistis, rather than absolute knowledge. 8. It uses proofs that consist only of logos, not ethos or pathos. To Aristotle's three contexts of rhetorical argumentation (judicial/legal, deliberative/political, and epideictic/cultural), Lindsay adds a fourth: arguments concerning all-time truth. Lindsay ultimately offers a thorough demonstration of how the multiple principles of argumentation are used to demonstrate that a problem exists, what caused the problem, what types of solutions to the problem are suitable, and how a complete proposal argument is put together.

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